

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **“Learning to A Greater Degree” Key to UCM’s New Strategic Position**

WARRENSBURG, MO (Aug. 20, 2012) – From the day he arrived on campus, University of Central Missouri President Charles Ambrose challenged campus members to “clearly define who we are and what we want to be” as an institution. After a series of comprehensive stages involving research, planning and development, the president unveiled a Strategic Positioning Platform that defines UCM as an institution dedicated to “preparing graduates who will shape their world because they have experienced “Learning to a Greater Degree.”

The president provided specific information on the new initiative in his State of the University Address Monday, Aug. 20 in the James L. Highlander Theatre. This was Ambrose’s third State of the University speech since beginning work at UCM in 2010, and the first formal introduction to the foundation of UCM communications going forward. Prior to his remarks, the president and others who were instrumental in the development of this platform explained what it means for UCM and its constituencies.

“Strategic positioning is essential to the continued growth and success of UCM, and to be fully maximized will require discipline and a strong commitment by all UCM stakeholders,” Ambrose said. “It allows us to answer the question, what makes our university distinct in a highly competitive and crowded higher education market, and how do we clearly communicate that to our constituencies?”

He stressed, however, “This is not a new marketing campaign. It is the cornerstone that will serve as the basis for all internal and external communication efforts. In the near future, it will also guide UCM in enrollment management, fundraising, community building efforts, and the further alignment of our resources. In the long-term, it will serve as a compass for the decisions we make on behalf of the university and the behavior that supports the overall direction.”

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The Strategic Positioning Platform was developed through a campus-wide effort led by members of the University Relations staff in cooperation with the consulting firm, Cryder Rinebold, which oversaw several months of research and development that began during the spring 2011 semester. They initiated surveys, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups with key internal and external university stakeholders to determine strengths, weaknesses and general impressions of the university to help build the platform's foundation and strategic content.

Cryder Rinebold applauds the manner in which UCM has embraced this initiative. "While the effort to educate and engage stakeholders is still continuing, it is impressive how UCM has embarked on this process with tremendous vision and commitment," said JoJo Rinebold, principal. "UCM recognized that defining its position in the marketplace is more than a communication exercise. The university understands that advancing its identity is a long-term investment requiring focus and unrelenting discipline."

The platform includes several key components, beginning with the positioning statement describing "who we are" as a university, unique attributes outlining what UCM stands for, key audiences, and benefits of the UCM educational experience for those audiences. It also identifies "reasons to believe" in a UCM education, based on four supporting features: a culture of service, engaged learning, future-focused academics, and a worldly perspective.

"Reasons to believe' are the actual evidence that supports the UCM Strategic Positioning Platform," said Robin Krause, director of marketing and promotions. "As examples of our culture of service, we might talk about our students participating in Habitat for Humanity or Breakers projects. As examples of a worldly perspective, we'd highlight our study abroad opportunities or student groups such as the Talking Mules competing in international debate competitions."

Krause said verbal and graphic design elements have been created to symbolically represent UCM's strategic position. These items will soon become familiar to internal and external audiences through a variety of broadcast, print, signage, and web-based media.

"Learning to a Greater Degree' is the creative expression that conveys and helps people understand what UCM's strategic position is all about," Krause said. "Nearly ever publication, ad or other type of communication that is generated by the university will incorporate creative messaging and symbols that represent this idea."

Krause said the Strategic Positioning Platform does not mean the successful "Choose Red" campaign will go away. Instead, the messages of "Choose Red" will continue to be used in materials targeted primarily towards the recruitment of undergraduate students and it will continue to be used to promote school spirit on campus.

One of the University Relations creative team members, Courtney Niemuth, explained it this way:

"Strategic positioning answers the question of 'Why should I Choose Red?' Students, faculty and staff 'Choose Red' because UCM exemplifies Learning to a Greater Degree. Learning to a Greater Degree is what so many of us are already doing each day as part of UCM, but this gives us a way to bring our voices together and share the UCM story."

According to Rinebold, "Over time, UCM's story will be less about having a strategic platform and more

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about what the platform communicates. While creating a clear communication blueprint was essential at this stage of UCM's history, eventually the words and, more importantly, the actions behind the words are what will strengthen UCM into the foreseeable future.”

Individuals who want to learn more about the UCM Strategic Positioning Platform can visit the web at [ucmo.edu/greaterdegree.relea](http://ucmo.edu/greaterdegree.relea)

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