

DAVE A. KUNTZ

SENIOR DIRECTOR of STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Advance Institutional Reputation through Impactful Communications & Government Relations Strategies

Chief Storyteller and Brand Strategist, elevating the University of Montana and state through high-impact narratives that resonate with legislative policymakers, industry leaders, media, academic peers, and students. Champion high-level strategic projects and messaging to lift the university's visibility, strengthen partnerships, amplify national prominence, and support university priorities.

Inspirational Leader and Strategic Advisor, executing integrated communications and marketing plans through creative direction of MarCom team and teaming with UM executive team, faculty, staff, alumni, and Foundation, translating short- and long-term strategic priorities into comprehensive messaging that delivers sustained reputational impact, enrollment increases, and revenue growth.

Media Relations & Stakeholder Engagement ▪ News Pitches & Amplification ▪ Recruitment & Retention Initiatives
Resource & Budget Management ▪ Policy Advocacy & Impact Analysis ▪ Relationship Building & Networking ▪ Campaign Support
Press Conferences & Media Appearances ▪ Internal & External Communications ▪ Reports, Speeches & Policy Briefings
Content, Brand & Digital Strategy ▪ People & Team Leadership ▪ Strategic Planning & Creative Direction ▪ Crisis Communications

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & OUTCOMES

- ✦ Co-led a bold collaboration, balancing innovation with authenticity to feature Montana's flagship university by launching a **Montana-rooted brand identity**, delivering a 24% increase in applications submitted and 250K website visits in first 6 months.
- ✦ Fueled a consistent **5-year enrollment turnaround (16% growth)** and record-high retention increase (9%), reversing the largest enrollment decline (40%) of any U.S. flagship institution by placing student successes at the center.
- ✦ Drove \$94M in annual consumer spend, added \$58.5M in local economic value to Montana, and powered \$41M in labor income by marketing and growing **Montana Grizzly Athletics** as a regional identity and economic asset. (BBER, June 2025)
- ✦ Championed the **Montana Vintage Program** to revitalize century-old University traditions and celebrate Grizzly pride across generations, restoring iconic copper, silver, and gold colors as a nod to Montana's rich history and mining roots.
- ✦ **Modernized a fragmented analytics system** to improve operations and impact measurement, and lead a MarCom team in marketing, licensing and trademarks, brand management, digital messaging, public relations, and strategic communications.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA, 2020 to Present

Senior Director, Strategic Communications & Government Relations

2025 to Present

Align brand, enrollment, vision, and institutional strategy with clarity and momentum through engaging communications, data-informed integrated brand strategy, and governmental partnerships that advance UM's visibility.

Creative Strategy, Content & Brand Identity

- Spearhead development and implementation of consistent multi-channel marketing, communications, and enrollment plans, aligned with UM's mission, driving measurable outcomes across recruiting, outreach, earned media, alumni engagement, and industry relations, consistently surpassing enrollment targets and amplifying institutional reach.
- Create a shared vision, leading a high-performing 37-person multidisciplinary team, delivering on immediate priorities and long-term goals through strategic collaboration, operational rigor, disciplined workflow, and a commitment to excellence.
- Steward UM's brand identity and position as chief media spokesperson, leading media relations, crisis communications, and public messaging, and delivering authoritative statements, press releases, and announcements that elevate UM's reputation.
- Oversee digital, content, and creative strategy execution by translating data insights, market research, and competitive benchmarking into actionable strategy, driving alignment across shared services and campus-wide communications.

Enrollment Marketing & Stakeholder Relationships

- Grew state appropriations and proportional share to 53% via persuasive communications, advocacy, and engagement with local, state, and federal officials, budget committees, and key policymakers through fiscal planning and stewardship.
- Achieved 5 consecutive years of enrollment growth and increased net tuition revenue 25%, leading recruitment efforts with Montana HS counselors/career coaches, digital enrollment marketing campaigns, and audience-targeted messaging.
- Support Montana's long-term viability and competitiveness, bridging UM and state communications, ensuring coordinated, accurate, and impactful messaging on economic impact, policy initiatives, workforce development, and funding and budget allocations that advance institutional goals and strengthen business, government, and community partnerships.
- Manage *UM News Service* creative asset design, write TV/digital ad scripts, and produced UM's top digital video with Academy Award winner J.K Simmons, and partner with MUS leadership on creative assets featuring MUS's economic contributions.

Director, Strategic Communications**2020 to 2025**

- Championed \$9M state funding investment to launch Cybersecurity, Occupational Therapy, and Physician Assistant academic degrees, aligning offerings with workforce demand, institutional priorities, and state economic development plans.
- Amplified UM visibility and strategic influence by aligning mission-driven storytelling and content production of *UM News*, *Vision* and *Montanan* magazines, social media, and external newsletters to deliver consistent messaging to stakeholders.
- Led external messaging, reputational storytelling, media relations, and government engagement by launching *UM News Service*, a regional wire service, to inform regional and state decision makers, stakeholders, and media outlets (newspapers, websites, radio, TV), thereby increasing regional UM visibility through timely news, stories, events, and updates.
- Advanced mission-driven *Priorities for Action* through integrated storytelling of research impact, scholarly excellence, and student success across all communication channels, ensuring consistency among academic, administrative, and auxiliary units.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND, Washington, DC**Communications Manager****2019 to 2020**

Delivered in-depth strategic messaging through media relations, content creation, and internal collaboration through stories and articles on people and ideas making a difference through their commitment to climate justice, guided by science and economics.

- Spearheaded the 100% Clean Economy Act, an environmental protection campaign, shaping media coverage, forging bipartisan support for policy goals, cultivating partnerships with advocacy groups, and building relationships with communication consultants and national reporters. Developed, aligned, and enhanced traditional and digital messaging strategies.
- Implemented operational research funding structures for short-term, programmatic expenses (C3) and capital project budgets (C4) for long-term infrastructure investments.
- Drafted and executed multiple \$100K nationwide digital ad campaigns, coordinated press events and media strategies with elected officials, and created rapid response and long-term communication plans aligned with organizational goals.

U.S. SENATE, Washington, DC**Deputy Communications Director & National Press Secretary****2015 to 2019**

Curated high-impact speeches, statements, talking points, press releases, and multimedia content, ensuring messaging aligned with legislative priorities; facilitated Senator Tester's state and national media engagement through targeted TV and radio placements.

- Developed and applied short- and long-term proactive communication strategies for the Senator, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Served as senatorial advisor on media, policy, and political matters.
- Co-managed communications team and oversaw digital and online platform staff to ensure rapid response to key priorities and cohesive constituent communications.

EARLY CAREER, State Government

Deputy Press Secretary & Policy Advisor: As Deputy Press Secretary, communications spokesperson, and media liaison for U.S. Senator Walsh of Montana (2014 to 2015), managed strategic public messaging to clearly and effectively convey the Senator's policy positions, responses, and impact; gain public trust; and inform dialogue. As Policy Advisor to Governor Bullock of Montana (2013 to 2014), analyzed state legislation for campaign optimization and to provide strategic counsel on policy impacts. Coordinated with federal, state, and local government entities to advance Montana's interests and priorities. (Washington, DC)

UNIVERSITY & STATE, Volunteer Leadership

Montana State: Board Member, Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce (2023 to present); Board Member Missoula YWCA (2025 to present); Events Lead, Special Olympics Montana (2027-2029 Games); Speaker, MT Public Relationship Society of America (2025); Safe Schools Summits; Membership Chair, Helena Young Professionals (2011 to 2013).

Higher Education: Presenter, "Conveying Value," American Marketing Association (AMA) Symposium for Marketing of Higher Education (2024); Communications Lead, UM and Providence Health System RESOLVE Collaborative; Publisher, *Montanan* (2021); UM Budget Committee; UM Flagship Fund Advisory Committee; UM Strategic Enrollment Planning Committee.

EDUCATION

University of Montana, Master of Public Administration (MPA) & Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Communication Studies & Political Science