Standard 10.
Public Disclosure

1. Description

Bentley University employs various forms of media to disclose information about itself to the public. The marketing division communicates to prospective students, current students, current families, alumni, corporate partners, and other interested audiences with complete, accurate and clear information. Its clear and consistent message is that Bentley University offers a high quality education, a robust student life experience, and that its faculty is nationally and internationally respected. A standard description of Bentley appears on all externally distributed publications. A shorter version appears on invitations and postcards.

The Bentley University website offers comprehensive information to prospective students, employees, corporate partners, the news media and alumni. Visitors will find a campus tour; facts about Bentley and information on undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs; student life; specialized learning centers; athletics; admission processes; financial assistance; news and events; conference facilities; employee benefits and career opportunities. The institutional mission and vision statements are readily available on web as is the academic vision.

Details on the size and characteristics of the student body and the campus setting can be found in dozens of print and web publications. The annual Bentley at a Glance contains lists of percentages and statistics on virtually every aspect of campus operations. Listings of the administrative officers and the governing board are posted on the about section of the website, and in the printed Bentley at a Glance, which is distributed to numerous Bentley-related audiences and in the Commencement programs, which reach the graduates and their families.

Several years of the university’s audited financial statements are available online through the office of Financial Operations. A summary of the most recent statements is also published annually in the Observer magazine (described below). Bentley also provides all information related to the safety and security of the campus community in the annual printed and web-posted Campus Security and Fire Safety Report.

Faculty listings by name, research interest, and department can be found online. Two new initiatives are intended to make the scholarly and intellectual achievements of faculty more widely known. One, Bentley IDEAS, publishes summaries for the lay audience of the scholarly work of faculty. The pieces chosen reflect the real-world relevance of Bentley research. Another initiative, Bentley IMPACT, is a compendium of thought leadership and opinion pieces by Bentley faculty on a range of topical issues.
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Prospective students and their families can find specifics about curriculum, programs, the faculty, costs, student life and policies in both print and electronic publications, on the university website, and through interpersonal interaction with faculty and staff. Also distributed is general information to add value to the higher education selection process, such as helpful material on financing higher education and on living and studying in the Boston area. Prospective students can request additional information about Bentley and apply online.

Current students and other members of the community use the Bentley website for information on all aspects of the university. In addition, they can access important services such as registering for classes, pulling up class lists, and printing out W-2’s through the internal academic and administrative web-based functions found within the MyBentley portal. The Bentley Beliefs (described in Standard 11) and numerous other important policies and procedures for students are delineated in the Undergraduate Student Handbook and presented online via a flipdoc. Students can find specific course information in the Undergraduate Catalogue, posted annually on the website as a flipdoc. The Graduate Student Handbook, which contains policies and resources relevant to our graduate student population, is also a flipdoc, posted online. The Graduate Catalogue has not been printed in several years, and an online version of the catalogue is in process. The Faculty Manual is currently being updated and will also be posted as a flipdoc. The print version of the previous Faculty Manual is available online.

Human resource policies, including Bentley’s non-discrimination policy, are readily accessible on the website.

Bentley’s magazine for alumni is The Observer. Disseminated in print and online forms, it serves as the primary vehicle for promoting the university among our key external audiences of alumni, parents, donors, friends, and corporate and financial partners, as well as in the broader academic community. This quarterly builds pride and creates affiliation among these groups to generate support for the institution.

A centralized content, communication and creative services office assures consistent messaging to all audiences in hundreds of print and web publications. All printed materials targeted to an external audience are written or reviewed by the editorial staff for accuracy and agreement. The News and Communications Office coordinates all press information and media relations. The staff routes inquiries to the individual or department best suited to address the requests.

2. Appraisal

Bentley University quickly adopted technology as one of its defining characteristics beginning in the 1980s. This continued when the university positioned itself as the Business School for the Information Age, between 1997 and 2004. As a result, it embraced the World Wide Web as a means of presenting information about itself to internal and external constituencies. But because this transition to the web was undertaken so quickly, it was not as deliberative or as strategic as it might have been. Therefore, allocating sufficient staff and resources to keep up with the continuing and accelerating growth in the use of the web as the primary means of public disclosure is a key priority. The website is reasonably comprehensive, but it has proven difficult to keep information current and easily searchable. For example, individual department web pages are maintained unevenly, and so some are out of date. It is at times unclear what departments or individuals have the responsibility to maintain aspects of the website. Once the ownership aspect of individual pages is clarified, more comprehensive training in the maintenance of the website is necessary.
One key area for attention is the need to improve the usability and functionality of the website, specifically in terms of searching. The Google search appliance renders site search results less than optimal; implementing a more productive alternative, perhaps Solr™ is under consideration. Redundant servers render the website stable.

In Spring 2012, a director of digital engagement joined Bentley. She is leading all efforts to update and improve our digital means of disclosure to the public. She heads a Digital Engagement Task Force that includes leading faculty and administrators and that meets quarterly.

For the year 2012-2013 the task force identified the following strategic priorities:

- Adopt a user-centered approach to support the needs of key audiences across digital platforms (www.bentley.edu, mobile and social).
- Build transparency and a tiered approach into the prioritization of digital initiatives.
- Leverage the Drupal 7 content management system to deploy engaging, relevant content across digital platforms with a distributed team of content experts and institutional users.
- Adopt a progressive mobile strategy to support the growing population of mobile site visitors with a goal of developing solutions to support devices now and into the future.
- Leverage social media platforms and a distributed team of community managers to build new relationships, and cultivate existing ones, with key audiences

Significant progress is being made toward these goals. For example, mobile applications are currently under development. The coordination of social media Twitter, Facebook, and Linked In platforms to effectively depict Bentley today is underway.

3. Projection

Continue to assure the accuracy and timeliness of the information on the Bentley website and further enhance the usability of the website for both internal and external audiences. **Timeline:** Ongoing: Chief Marketing Officer and Director of Digital Engagement.

Develop an updated online message and style guide to ensure that all editorial content, the tone and style, and design components pertaining to the university’s mission, brand, thought leadership, and outcomes are consistent. **Timeline:** Spring 2013: Chief Marketing Officer.

Continue the initiative to create a richer, more robust online research presence generally, and through Bentley IDEAS and Bentley IMPACT. **Timeline:** Through to Spring 2014: Senior Associate Director of Marketing Communications and the University Academic Publications Editor and Research Coordinator.
4. Institutional Effectiveness

The goals of Bentley’s communication strategy are to insure the consistency and clarity of the university’s message as well as to present accurate and useful information on the website and in all publications. The institution regularly reviews its print and electronic publications in pursuit of these goals. An on-going priority will be improving the usability and functionality of the Bentley website.