East Carolina University is suing the owner of a local publication and website called HealthyPirates.com over its name and use of a purple pirate motif, ECU announced Monday.

The suit, filed Friday, claims HealthyPirates.com owner Roy Hopkins Jr. is engaged in trademark infringement, cyberpiracy and unfair competition. Hopkins denies the claim.

“The university has made every effort to resolve this issue without going to court,” senior associate university attorney Paul Zigas said in a news release. “We have tried unsuccessfully to persuade Mr. Hopkins to stop the practices that we allege violate both federal and state laws. Unfortunately, the university is left with no alternative but to litigate this matter.”

Zigas added that the university has a legal obligation to police its trademarks. Otherwise, he said, it risks losing the ability to enforce its rights.

“It is very important to protect your brand,” David Brody, chairman of the ECU Board of Trustees, said.

Hopkins said he has done all he can to differentiate his community fitness enterprise since the disagreement began more than a year ago, including putting a disclaimer on his website.

“I'm very upset,” said Hopkins, an ECU alumni from the Class of 2006 with a degree in exercise sports science. “This is my passion, this is what I do. I was just trying to educate the community and make it fun. I believe I'm doing right. What I put out there is good.” Hopkins said he is seeking an attorney.
Filing the lawsuit was approved by both the ECU Board of Trustees and the University of North Carolina Board of Governors.

Zigas said the university believes the publication and HealthyPirates.com website use marks and colors that are confusingly similar to East Carolina University logos, colors and registered trademarks, such as the skull and crossbones and the words “East Carolina University Pirates” above a saber.

In addition, he said, “Healthy Pirates” has been used for at least 10 years by an ECU student organization that promotes health and wellness.

Hopkins said he removed the gold from his skull and crossbones logo and changed the bones to dumbbells a year ago at ECU's request.

“They agreed that was OK, and now they're going off their word,” Hopkins said.

He did not sign and return an agreement at the time and said he didn't hear from the university after that for about eight to 10 months. He received a letter last month saying he could not use the phrase “Healthy Pirates,” which Hopkins said was not part of the original agreement.

The “Healthy Pirates” name is a university-owned trademark, Zigas said, and ECU is a nationally respected provider of medical services for eastern North Carolina and Greenville.

“I was never even aware of that organization,” Hopkins said.

He bought the domain name healthypirates.com in May 2009 and said any accusation of him stealing a trademark name was a “complete lie.”

Zigas said the university, through its licensing partner, Collegiate Licensing Co., frequently addresses trademark matters with commercial enterprises that intentionally or inadvertently misuse university-owned marks, and successful resolutions are reached in the majority of cases without litigation.

“So many other businesses around town use the pirate name and purple and gold,” Hopkins said. “For whatever reason, they're singling me out. It's unheard of.”

“We regret that we have not been able to reach an agreement with Mr. Hopkins, but the university will do what is necessary to protect its reputation, good will and intellectual property rights,” Zigas said.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com and 252-329-9567.
Meredith chooses a president
BY ERIC FERRERI - Staff Writer
RALEIGH–For the first time in its 112-year history, Meredith College will be headed by one of its graduates.

Jo Allen, a native of LaGrange who received her bachelor's degree in English literature from Meredith in 1980, will succeed the retiring Maureen Hartford, who made some history of her own 12 years ago as the first female president of the private women's college.

Allen, 53, is the current provost and executive vice president at Widener University in Chester, Pa., just outside Philadelphia. When she took that job seven years ago, she promptly told her boss her career goal was to be president of her alma mater.

She will be, starting July 1.

Allen was introduced to faculty, staff and students Monday and promptly promised to give the college a less-than-gentle nudge. She suggested change may be looming, but offered few specifics.
She promised to bring a new perspective to campus and push people to look beyond what is comfortable. Meredith, and higher education in general, should be fluid and flexible, she said.

"Educated people have to press beyond the familiar," she said. "Comfort is a mixed blessing. It's good to feel at home, but it's critical to travel some new pathways."

Allen will have challenges. Like many colleges and universities, Meredith has dealt in recent years with budget cuts, layoffs, pay freezes, frozen retirement contributions and an academic streamlining that led to some department mergers and program eliminations.

**Faculty reaction**
And last year, divisions between Hartford and some faculty led to an attempted no-confidence vote on the president and her performance. The vote failed, but it illustrated concerns some faculty members had about spending on several campus construction projects.

Meredith is at the end of one strategic planning cycle, and Allen said she plans another soon in order to lay out a new vision and set of principles. That vision and those principles will be determined by the whole campus and not just its leader, Allen said.

"I expect us to work together to figure out what that change should be," she said.

One early goal: Allen said she wants to expand Meredith's partnerships with business, government and nonprofit organizations.

Math professor Tim Hendrix said he found Allen personable and confident, two traits he hopes she can employ to curry favor with the faculty.

The attempted no-confidence vote last year revealed significant concerns among some faculty about several administrative decisions, Hendrix said.

Since then, the relationship between faculty and administration has improved, said Hendrix, who heads Meredith's faculty council. He wants that to continue.
"The faculty are looking forward to building a good relationship," he said. "We're excited for someone who can help us articulate and clarify our vision."

**Cheers greet news**

Allen, who is not married, has fond memories of her time as a Meredith student. But she doesn't expect those memories to dictate decisions she makes as college president.

"One of the greatest dangers of an alumna is to have any expectations that everything will be the same," she said.

Still, the college's choice of an alumna as its next president appeared to go over well. Before identifying her, Sam Ewell, chairman of the board of trustees, told the crowd that Meredith's next president was an alumna. His subsequent attempt to announce Allen by name was drowned out by the boisterous, spontaneous burst of applause and cheering.

"It's huge for students," said Beth Howard, a senior who represented students on the search committee. "Being an alum, you understand all the traditions and the significance of attending an all-women's college."

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**Jo Allen**

**Age:** 53

**Current position:** Senior vice president and provost, Widener University, overseeing academic and student affairs for 6,500 students and 700 full and part-time faculty members on four campuses.

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts, English literature, Meredith College, 1980; Master of Arts, English literature, East Carolina University, 1983; Ph.D., English literature, Oklahoma State University, 1986.
After a large storm system moved through the area Saturday night, residents and neighbors work together to clean up the fallen trees, limbs and structural debris from a destroyed house in a yard along N.C. 91 in Snow Hill Sunday, April 17, 2011. (Justin Falls/The Daily Reflector)

Editorial: Help tornado victims
Tuesday, April 19, 2011

Long before it arrived in North Carolina on Saturday, the line of storms that roared across the state had already given ample cause for concern. The weather system claimed 10 lives in Alabama, Mississippi and Oklahoma before turning the worst of its fury on the Tar Heel State in a daylong demonstration of its destructive power.

Today, North Carolina communities from Raleigh to the coast are still picking up the pieces of shattered homes and businesses, mourning the loss of 22 lives and tending to the injured and homeless. More than ever, those residents need the help of their neighbors from across the state to do whatever they can in this hour of desperation to speed the relief efforts.

With a weekend of events planned, from the Shad Festival in Grifton to East Carolina University's spring football game in Greenville, it was hoped that a temperate spring day would be on tap for eastern North Carolina. As Friday approached, however, advanced weather reports confirmed that was unlikely to be the case. The storms headed this way were not cause for discouragement over a day lost, but rather concern for public safety in the face of severe weather.

Despite the ample warning afforded by those forecasts, there was little that could have prepared North Carolina for the lashing meted out by Mother Nature. Hundreds of tornadoes killed at least 22 people in this state, including three young children in Wake County and 11 people in Bertie County alone. More than 130 injuries, some severe, were reported. Several communities remain awash in debris from broken homes and felled trees, with entire neighborhoods erased in damage that will likely eclipse $100 million.
When Hurricane Floyd's torrential downpours inflicted widespread flooding to eastern counties in 1999, the state moved quickly to provide assistance. The same was true three years earlier when Hurricane Fran roared along the I-40 corridor, slicing through the center of the Triangle with its driving rain and powerful winds. In these moments when the skies turned their darkest, North Carolina's citizens have been a light of hope.

That must again be the charge of those who have the means to help. Organizations like the Red Cross and Salvation Army are accepting financial donations as well as clothing and other supplies. Hundreds of families are rebuilding their lives from scratch and they will need whatever help North Carolina can muster.

Expect federal and state funds to help in this effort, but the healing must begin at once. Please help if you can.
Yvonne Pearce

God quietly called Yvonne Deborah Wilhite Pearce from labor to reward on Saturday, April 16, 2011. She was born in Winston-Salem at Kate Bitting-Reynolds Hospital on April 24, 1954, to Dorothy Wilhite and Willie Elliott. She was a 1969 graduate of Thomasville Senior High School, Thomasville, Pitt Community College and East Carolina University with a BS Degree in Social Work.

Yvonne was employed as a Counselor Assistant with H.B. Suggs School, Farmville, Greenville Community Shelter, East Carolina Vocational Center, Home Health and Hospice, and as a Supervisor of Social Workers at Walter B. Jones Drug & Alcohol Center.

She was united in marriage to Howard H. Pearce on Dec. 18, 1971. To this union is one son, Bryan H. Pearce.

She was a member of many social and fraternal organizations including The Greenville Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Ladies Delight Chapter #10 Order of the Eastern Star, Rofelt Pasha Court 108 Daughters of Isis, Pitt County Salvation Army Advisory Board, Emeritus Member of ECU Alumni Association Board of Directors. She was a 1996 recipient of the East Carolina University Alumni Association Distinguished Service Award.

Yvonne was baptized at First Baptist Church of Thomasville in 1965. Upon settling in Greenville she united with Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church and attended until her health declined in 2009.

Left to cherish her memories are her devoted husband, Howard H. Pearce of the home; son, Bryan H. Pearce of Hope Mills; father, Willie Elliot of Wilson; sister, La Dena Renwick-Tilley and husband, Elder Melvin Tilley, of Greenville; two brothers, Minister Kevin Gibson and wife, Pam, of High Point, and Howard Renwick of Elizabeth, N.J.; nephew, Dexter Gibson of High Point; and a host of extended family, cousins, in-laws, relatives and friends.

Final rites will be given by her sorority, Daughter of Isis and Eastern Star Chapter on Wednesday at 6 p.m. at Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church, 1095 Allen Rd., Greenville. Funeral service will be held at the church on Thursday at noon. In lieu of
flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Educational Scholarship Fund at Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church or the Scholarship Fund at East Carolina University Alumni Association in memory of Yvonne D. Pearce.
RALEIGH–Linda Hubbard traded her usual business-casual attire for heavy work gloves and a backward ball cap Monday.

Hubbard, an assistant vice president at St. Augustine's College, hoisted tree branches into pickup trucks. She was helping clear the worst of the tornado damage, aided by the director of admissions and a student account manager.

Their goal: Shape up the campus so that classes could restart this morning.

"At this point, titles are out the door," Hubbard said. "Let's get the job done."

There is not an undamaged building on St. Aug's campus after the storm that ravaged the eastern half of the state Saturday.

Cleanup crews have worked around the clock since Saturday. The school does not yet have damage estimates.

St. Aug's was the lucky one.

A few miles south, Shaw University had canceled classes for the rest of the semester. The storm ripped the roof off the student union and caused extensive damage elsewhere on campus.

St. Augustine's, however, canceled classes Monday to check the campus for safety and finish clearing the dozens of uprooted trees from roads and walkways, but decided to push through the final two weeks to commencement and tackle major construction projects this summer.

President Dianne Boardley Suber arrived on campus in the storm's aftermath to find it almost impassable.

"It really looked like you were walking into a jungle," Suber said. "There were tree trunks as far as the eye could see, and power lines were down all over the place. It was enough to make you cry."
Dozens of trees toppled onto cars and buildings and across roadways. Windows shattered. Turf was torn up on the newly installed football field. Gutters are torn and hanging. At least a dozen buildings have significant roof damage.

Insurance adjusters wandered the campus Monday carrying cameras, trying to estimate the financial damage.

"We're going to look better sooner than other places, but we're finding more damage as we go," Suber said. "And all of it is going to take its toll financially on an already austere budget."

Students such as sophomore Carlissa Nathan who were on campus during the storm huddled in windowless rooms on the ground floors of their dormitories. It was the first time the school had implemented its crisis management plan.

"We slept in the lobby that night because we felt safer there," Nathan said. Students came back to find a campus swamped by branches and debris, with many buildings still lacking power.

"I saw pictures online first, but it's way worse in person," senior Taneida Turner said.

Students said they are ready to get back to life as usual.

St. Augustine's men's tennis teams will travel to the CIAA championships Wednesday.

And the Kappa Epsilon chapter of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity held its 63rd anniversary celebration Sunday as planned, handing grilled hot dogs to students who were making do in dorms without power.

"You learn to appreciate what you have," junior Brandon Gwaltney said.

Shaw's status

The roof of the Shaw University student union was torn off and its windows were blown out Saturday. The building also sustained significant water damage, President Irma McClaurin said Monday.
The second floor will need "total reconfiguration," she said, and the school has not determined whether there is deeper structural damage. There are shattered windows in dormitories across campus.

The school is still assessing the financial repercussions of the damage. The Shaw University Disaster Relief Fund has been established as a way for people to support the school.

More than 200 displaced students stayed in emergency lodgings on campus Saturday and Sunday, McClaurin said. By Monday, most students had left the campus. The university is arranging travel for those who remain.

The semester was set to end after eight more days of classes and a one-week exam period. Instead, students will be graded on the work completed to date.

McClaurin said faculty will be flexible and work to assist any students who thought that they needed to take their final exam or do additional coursework.

Staff writer Chelsea Kellner
WASHINGTON—Young people give mediocre marks to America's high schools but put great faith in its colleges.

A new Associated Press-Viacom poll suggests most high schools are failing to give students a solid footing for the working world or strong guidance toward college, at a time when many students fear graduation means tumbling into an economic black hole.

Most of the 18- to 24-year-olds surveyed gave high schools low grades for things that would ease the way to college: A majority say their school wasn't good at helping them choose a field of study, aiding them in finding the right college or vocational school or assisting them in coming up with ways to pay for more schooling.

If schools did these things better, it could make a significant difference, because young people already are enthusiastic about higher education. Two-thirds say students should aim for college, even if they aren't sure yet what career they want to pursue. Almost as many say they want to get at least a four-year degree themselves.

The majority of high school students probably won't end up with a college degree, however. Among those a few years ahead of them - today's 25- to 34-year-olds -
only about a third hold a bachelor's or higher degree, according to the Census Bureau. Less than 10 percent get an associate's degree.

So getting students ready for work remains central to high schools' mission. And most young people say their school didn't do a good job of preparing them for work or helping them choose a future career. They also give high schools low marks on exposing them to the latest technology in their field and helping them get work experience, according to the poll conducted in partnership with Stanford University.

Learning real-life job skills is important to students such as Mary Margaret Rice, 18, who likes her regional vocational high school in Wakefield, Mass. "I'm getting training to weld," she said.

Rice is interested in joining the military, but not in more schooling after graduation. "Money is a reason," she said, "but the main reason is I can't really focus on classwork and homework."

Overall, only 4 in 10 young people voice strong satisfaction with their high school education. About as many are "somewhat satisfied." Almost a fifth are unsatisfied - twice as many as expressed unhappiness with college.

Lovina Dill says she wishes the two high schools she attended in California had taught her how to deal with the ups and downs of the real world. She could have used a class in "what happens if you can't get a job, and the unemployment rate rises and nobody can find a job." Dill said she was briefly homeless when she was laid off and unable to find a job using her certification in massage therapy.

Dill, now 21, self-employed and living with her father in Arcadia, La., thinks high schools should offer juniors and seniors workshops on how to get a job, how to build a career and the many educational options besides a four-year degree.

The one category where young people rated high schools best was preparing them for further education: 56 percent say their school did a good or excellent job at that. Those who went on to college or trade school gave their high schools better marks than those who didn't.

The bulk of college students - 6 in 10 - declare themselves either "very" or "extremely" pleased with their higher education.

Most say a career-focused college education is a high priority, and students feel their schools are providing it. A strong majority of students and recent grads give their college high marks for preparing them for the workforce, helping them
choose a field of study, exposing them to the latest technology and helping them get internships.

Six in 10 even say their college was "excellent" or "good" at helping them find money to pay for their education.

Young adults' opinions are mixed on whether the nation's education system understands their goals and values. Almost half of college attendees feel that the schools "get" them. That's significantly more than among those whose education stopped at high school; just 3 in 10 say the school system could identify with them.

Young people credit their own ambition and abilities most for their progress in life, followed by parents, family and friends. But beyond that tight-knit circle, teachers are the heroes, with 4 in 10 saying high school teachers helped a lot. College teachers earn similar praise.

High school and college counselors are a step behind. Most students give them some credit, but less than one-fourth say their counselors were a lot of help, and about 3 in 10 think they didn't help at all.

Nonwhite students were more likely than whites to say their high school counselors helped them, and also gave their high schools better ratings for helping find money for college.

Young adults overall see brighter days ahead for education. About half think kids entering elementary school today will get a better education than they did, more than double the number who predict schools will get worse.

The AP-Viacom telephone survey of 1,104 adults ages 18-24 was conducted Feb. 18-March 6 by GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Stanford University's participation in this project was made possible by a grant from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

AP writer Stacy A. Anderson, AP Polling Director Trevor Tompson, Deputy Director of Polling Jennifer Agiesta and AP News Survey Specialist Dennis Junius contributed to this report.
April 17, 2011

**Colleges Rehab Their Web Sites for Major Payoffs**

Analytics tools, some colleges find, can transform ineffective pages into winners

By Josh Keller

Michael Okoniewski for The Chronicle

After noticing that visitors to Hamilton College's Web site searched more often for financial-aid information than they did about admissions, J.D. Ross, director of new media, prominently posted a letter from the admissions dean explaining why the college was affordable.

Colleges spend dearly to maintain vast, ever-expanding Web sites. They tweet. They blog. They podcast.

But most colleges have no idea just how much bad Web design can cost. Kafkaesque online forms and pages that nobody visits, for instance, can have disastrous effects: A quarter of prospective students decide not to apply to a college because of a bad experience on the college's Web site.

That loss (documented in a survey of 1,000 high-school seniors conducted last year by Noel-Levitz, an enrollment consulting firm) can add up to a lot of money. "Generally, higher education hasn't ever had to think about that before," says Shelby Thayer, a Web strategist at Pennsylvania State University's main campus. "How much does bad design cost us, and how much does good design save us?" As colleges do more crucial business online, "that's kind of my burning question."

For answers, a number of institutions, including Penn State, are now turning to Web analytics. Going far beyond superficial measures like counting visitors or hits on their
Web sites, they track who their visitors are, what they are looking for, why they fail to find it, and—a crucial measure to gauge advertising spending—how much a successful Web visit is worth.

Many of the techniques, such as closely monitoring prospects, are standard practice on e-commerce Web sites and among for-profit colleges, but they are just gaining a foothold in most of higher education.

The Chronicle talked to officials at several colleges that have set up sophisticated analytics operations in admissions, audience tracking, and public relations. They warned that data can be misused, and collecting them can be hard because responsibility for college Web sites is often spread among departments. Plus, many goals in higher education—such as improving reputation—are not easily measured.

But the officials also said analyzing their Web data to drive online decisions brings enormous rewards. "We spend a huge amount of time in higher ed maintaining content that has little return on investment," says Michael Vedders, director of Web services at Bethel University in Minnesota. Analytics has helped Bethel spend money in the right places, he says.

**Funneling Admissions**

Mr. Vedders is blunt about Bethel's old Web site: It looked horrible. But more important, the site for the liberal-arts college, in St. Paul, made it difficult for prospective students to find information that would encourage them to apply.

Many private universities spend upward of $2,000 to recruit each student who enrolls, and their Web sites often form prospective students' first impressions. The critical path leading from prospect to applicant to paying student is known as the "admissions funnel," and Mr. Vedders's goal is to optimize it.

An analysis of Bethel's Web data, drawn from Google Analytics, showed Mr. Vedders that the college's funnel had some problem areas. Prospective students tended to drop off right before starting an application, at the point when they were required to create a new account. The main admissions page, which was supposed to route applicants to different Web pages based on the program they were applying for, had a high "bounce" rate, meaning that people left without selecting any option at all. For those visitors, the "next step" wasn't clear.

"We need to get our 17-year-olds to the undergraduate school and our 65-year-olds interested in the seminary to the seminary Web pages," Mr. Vedders says.

When Bethel redesigned its Web site last year, it clarified where different prospects should go and added a new explanation about the steps required to submit an application. Since the redesign, visitors spend half as much time moving from the main admissions page and are much less likely to leave the page without selecting any option, efficiencies that will help Bethel get more applicants.
Other colleges use search data to make sure prospects' questions are being answered. During the financial crisis in 2008, visitors to the Web site of Hamilton College started searching about financial aid more frequently than they did about admissions. J.D. Ross, director of new media, asked Hamilton's dean of admissions to write a letter to parents explaining why the college was affordable, and he put a link to the letter at the top of the main admissions page.

Effectively using analytics is about "being familiar with the data that you have, and knowing what normal looks like, knowing what abnormal looks like," Mr. Ross says. "Then you can see if there's a problem."

Wayne State University uses an even more rigorous approach to optimize the very start of its admissions process, on the college's home page. Nick DeNardis, associate director of Web communications, tested the effectiveness of that page's "apply" button. Using a strategy known as A/B testing, Mr. DeNardis tested which version of the button led visitors to click through to Wayne State's admissions pages. Changes based on the testing led to a 62-percent increase in traffic to the main admissions pages this year over the same period last year.

But Mr. DeNardis says he is hamstrung by a common limitation of college-analytics programs: Bureaucracy. He works on the main pages on the Web site, but the department that manages the application itself has not installed analytics software, precluding him from tracking how many of those students who hit the "apply" button actually follow through. "It'd be awesome if we could see the entire funnel from prospect to applicant throughout their student life cycle, down to the actual donors," Mr. DeNardis says, "but we do as much as we can."

The 5-Headed Monster
College Web sites must do much more than get prospective students to apply; they must speak to many audiences at once. John Drevs, manager of Web services at Loyola University Chicago, calls the quintet of main university audiences—students, prospective students, faculty, staff, and alumni—the "five-headed monster." It is, he says, difficult to create general Web pages that have the right information for five different groups.

"All universities are challenged with what to put on the home page. Right now, our home page is a shotgun approach" that tries to do a lot of different things at once, he says.

So Loyola Chicago has stopped trying so hard. Instead, the university is building software to identify in advance which audience group a visitor falls into. Mr. Drevs estimates that the university's future Web site will be able to identify the audience group of 60 to 70 percent of visitors by making intelligent guesses. For instance, a visitor logging in from a campus computer is likely to be a faculty or staff member (or possibly a student). A visitor who signs up to attend an open house will be considered a prospective student, and the Web site will remember the distinction if the prospect returns using the same computer.
Automatically tailoring content to visitors is common on e-commerce sites like Amazon.com, but it is rare in higher education. Avinash Kaushik, a leading expert on Web analytics at Google, praises Loyola at Chicago's effort and says colleges could reap big rewards from adopting its strategy. Delivering a good Web experience, he says, depends on finding out what visitors want and then giving it to them.

Mr. Kaushik says learning more about Web visitors will help colleges determine one of the most important metrics, called a task-completion rate: How many visitors were able to complete the tasks they came for? "You let the people who use the site tell you: 'I came here for this. This is how much you stink. Now fix it,'" Mr. Kaushik says.

Loyola University Chicago's first foray into custom content is a home page, called Inside Loyola, designed for internal audiences like faculty and staff members. On a recent Thursday, the college's main home page asked admitted freshmen to make their deposits and advertised a campus tour. But the Inside Loyola home page introduced its new men's basketball coach and noted an on-campus colloquium on Jesuit music.

The internal edition initially worried some employees, who felt like they were missing something on the "real" front page, Mr. Kaushik says. But another metric revealed that Inside Loyola was broadly liked, he says: Most visitors came back.

One persistent limitation of Web analytics at most colleges is that the most important transactions—say, campus visits by applicants or big donations by alumni—take place offline. Web data can track an applicant's online movements, but how can they measure what might ultimately drive an applicant or donor's decision, such as a college's reputation?

In short, they can't. Some colleges use services like Klout to judge their influence on social media like Facebook and Twitter. Each college is given an influence score that reflects how many people follow and share the college's messages. And one company, the Global Language Monitor, scours the Internet to rank colleges based on which is mentioned the most. But those measures are grossly inadequate for determining whom a college's messages reach and whether those messages persuade anyone to donate or enroll.

**Getting Good Press**

But some colleges are finding that less grandiose measures of social-media usage, when combined with other Web data, can at least help them promote themselves. James Madison University gives each of its news releases a "shareability index," a score that combines how many people read it, how long they stay on the page, and how much the release is shared on social media.

The index, generated by software called Vocus, has helped James Madison rethink what kind of news releases it puts out, says Andrew Perrine, associate vice president for communications and marketing. "We need to provide content that actually influences our audience," Mr. Perrine says.
Colleges naturally like to promote news of their successes: a high ranking for a chemistry program, or a program that helps high-school students. But those stories tend to get little attention. "It's always about: The world is beautiful and it's because of us, and there's no reason to read that," he says.

By contrast, releases with the elements of a good news story—a little drama, a person fighting for what is right, a villain—have scores four to five times higher than those about the success of a program, he says. As a result, James Madison has started to tell more human-oriented stories.

For instance, a writer recently turned in a story about nursing students doing community service in rural areas. "I was bored within the first paragraph," Mr. Perrine says. But he edited the piece to highlight a buried fact that roughly half of the homeless people in the surrounding county were children. "Bingo, there's your lead," he says. "And then our nurses are the ones trying to solve the issue."

Mr. Perrine admits that good storytelling predates having the data to track what works. But he says that in a university with competing priorities and faculty who want their research promoted, being able to show what is effective allows him to make the case for a consistent message. "Then I can defend my decision," he says. "It's not just me trying to trade on my good looks."