SCALING THE IVORY TOWER: TESTING THE EXCELLENCE THEORY'S RELEVANCE IN CANADIAN UNIVERSITY REPUTATION MANAGEMENT 1997-2017

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Abstract

Post-secondary institutions in Canada are facing unprecedented challenges. A decrease in funding has required a rise in tuition rates and an ever-narrowing demographic of incoming students has slowed the expansion of the industry while demand for skills-based learning is on the rise. This paper explores to what extent universities are still seen as being the solution to societal problems and attempts to answer the question of if their adoption of certain 'corporate' business practices has led to a fraying of the industry's reputation. This paper applies the principals of the Excellence Theory to an industry that until recently, has not seemed to have much need for public relations practitioners.

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1. Introduction

Despite having the highest per capita number of university degrees in the world (Hess, 2018), young Canadians are experiencing an unemployment rate of 13.9% compared to the national rate of around 5% (Patterson and Dumulon-Lauziere, 2013). But as wide as this gap is, it isn't the biggest problem. The more concerning statistic is the *quarter* of young Canadians experiencing something called 'underemployment'. This is defined as a phenomenon in which people are educated enough to work a skilled job given the opportunity, but they are either not working as much as they want, or nowhere close to the field that would exploit their full potential. This has become such a common problem that it has become a glib cultural touchstone - the rise of the B.A.rista (Patterson and Dumulon-Lauziere, 2013).

This paper seeks to understand the extent to which the current state of un- and underemployment is related to the messages, standards and structures of the Canadian post-secondary education industry. By analyzing the specific roles and responsibilities of the communications profession with Canadian universities, we can better understand what impact this profession can have on aligning the objectives of academic institutions with the wider goals of society.

1.1 The Current Post-Secondary Landscape

Getting an education at a Canadian university was once a rarified experience reserved only for the privileged and exceptional. Today in Canada, provincial governments are betting on an open-access strategy, based on taxpayer-backed loans and grants, that will allow every student the opportunity to learn in an institution of higher learning if they want to. These governments are betting that this increase in access to education will fuel Canadian prosperity in the 21st century knowledge economy (Anderson, 2015).

Since the mid-1990s, the industry of higher learning has faced three distinct challenges: an increase in demand, pressure from governments in the form of generous social policies to accommodate that demand, and a growing number of competitors from degree-granting community colleges and polytechnics. No longer is it assumed that universities are the only way into what is generally considered ‘a good career’ (Edge, et al., 2018).

In this environment, schools are required to make a choice – grow quickly by increasing enrolment or stay small and suffer the consequences of the funding mechanisms that determine the baseline resource pool for each university. Compounding the quickening change of university mechanics is the shift in what the university was in the eyes of the students. The last 40 years have changed the student-institution relationship from a purely pedagogical exercise to one that is more transactional (Usher et al., 2014).

1.2 The Student as Both Customer and Product

Students are investing their money and time in the pursuit of a degree with the hope of finding employment once they complete the gauntlet of the undergraduate experience. There are no guarantees in education, but the workforce in Canada has become reliant on the credential-ism that imbues universities with the status that comes with holding the keys to a ‘good job’. As the main purveyors of degrees, the university would seem to hold all the power; however, that power is diminished just as other services are in the market economy – through competition.

There are 98 universities in Canada (UnivCan, 2017), each with its own admission standards, degree offerings, catchment areas, and organizational structures. A student who is committed to earning, for example, a bachelor’s degree in English has a great deal of choice. The field is narrowed only slightly depending on what that student is looking for in an institution – price, course selection, location, and instructors are all things to be considered.

While university leaders are able to control many of the factors that differentiate their institutions from all the others, one factor above all will determine a school's placement within the constellation of Canada's institutions of higher learning – reputation. This paper studies the inputs and outcomes of institutional reputations as they relate to the communications profession, the workforce and the ability of the post-secondary education sector to fulfill its promises.

2. Research Problem

There is no shortage of complexity when it comes to understanding the intersecting issues of university administration, skills development and economic performance. While the scope of this paper is narrowed to three relatively basic topics (the role of the Excellence Theory in current post-secondary communications, the relationship between communication practices and reputation and the effectiveness in measuring the reputations of universities), it is helpful to first examine the environmental conditions in which we find the topics at hand.

This section features a discussion of the specific contextual challenges professional communicators have in representing universities in the 21st century. These issues are viewed through the lens of the political, sociological and cultural realities of North America.

This section also outlines the ways in which this research adds to the discourse by being relevant and current in its presentation of the three main drivers of the industry's standing in the modern world: university-students relations, university-industrial relations and university-societal relations.

2.1 University-Student Relations: A Public Relations Perspective

Before there can be an analysis of the specific challenges of building and maintaining a university's reputation, there must first be a discussion of how the post-secondary industry is seen by society and the value placed on its presence and activities. There is perhaps no more important a relationship to a university than that with its current, future and past students. Students make a conscious choice to attend a particular university and their expectations will either be met or not met during the course of their time there.

If a service that was promised to a customer is not delivered by any company or organization, it not be surprising to see that organization's reputation suffer. This binary exchange is not as straightforward in the post-secondary sector since a student's success is determined mainly by the effort that student makes at university. The university is only in control of the inputs – services, classroom instruction and campus life while the outcomes are dependent on the student's ability (Usher et al., 2014).

There are, however, public relations strategies in place to maximize the number of students interested in applying to a university's programs while also working to establish or maintain a positive reputation. It is the top communicator's responsibility at a university to meet the following demands:

- Make the university an attractive place for prospective students.
- Maintain positive messaging to make current students feel like they made the right decision in attending this university over others.
- Defend the university's reputation as an asset that past students can use to bolster their own professional reputations (Missouri State, 2013).

These tasks would be difficult under even the best circumstances, but they are made doubly so by the level of competition present within the university system. It is now the responsibility for all university communicators to provide a strategy of public differentiation – to make one's university stand out among all the other universities as a way of both attracting new batches of applicants and appeasing the government's demand for clearly defined strategic mandate agreements (Usher, et al., 2014). The way many institutions have elected to do this is by appealing to the needs of prospective students ("We will give you the tools you need to build a successful career.") The challenge for communicators is to do this while also promoting the greater need for universities within society ("We create a better world through our research and knowledge creation.") If students are coming to university to gain the skills and credentials needed to become employed in an industry of their choice, then why are so many universities still dedicated to messaging that promotes the university's ability to enrich society and create a better civilization?

This dual messaging was not always a disconnect when the institutions had the resources to fulfill both missions, but now budget shortfalls have forced many universities to continue to invest in research and industry partnerships while accepting a greater number of international and domestic undergraduates to fill the budget gaps (Usher, et al., 2014).

Future and current students overwhelmingly claim that building new skills for their careers is the main reason for attending university (Gordon, 2016). The professoriate and academic administrations of universities, however, tend to include more vague skills to the balance sheet of a university education.

According to a recent study by the Conference Board of Canada (2018), the most acute gaps between professors and students are differences in the extent to which a university degree teaches creativity, verbal communication skills and adaptability. "Ninety per cent of professors, for example, believe that undergraduates are learning to be proficient verbal communicators, an opinion held by 42 per cent of students. Similarly, only a third of undergraduates feel their academic work is preparing them to be creative, but almost four-fifths of professors think students are graduating with enhanced creative skills" (Edge, et al., 2018, p. 4).

The two groups are more likely to agree that a university education develops time management, civic-mindedness and social integrity (Edge, et al., 2018). While these are noble pursuits, they have a less direct impact on economic performance for the student entering the job market after graduation. The chief communicator must now contend with an institution that may be saying it “trains the leaders of tomorrow” but produces graduates who feel they have only gained time management skills and a sense of civic mindedness.

The second cohort of stakeholders to which a university’s top communicator must pay attention is the alumni. This paper contends that recent graduates are essentially the product a university is putting out into the world and if they cannot leverage their education into a stable career then the transaction between university and student goes unfulfilled.

Luckily, degrees from Canadian universities continue to be highly valued around the world, even while post-secondary institutions in other English-speaking countries are facing declines in their reputation with employers (Chiose, 2017). The results of a recent survey suggest that Canadian universities are training undergraduates with the skills employers need, particularly in areas like business, computer science and engineering, which represented 80% of the industry sectors polled. The results are a contrast to the drop in reputation that British universities have suffered this year. “In a shocking tumble, Oxford dropped eight points to No. 15. British graduates may be lacking the technical skills employers value because British universities insist that their job is to produce graduates who are "well-rounded" (Chiose, 2018).

This brings up a key interest group to which the university’s top communicator must also be sensitive - the employers who are hiring university graduates. By ignoring their demands, the university risks hurting its reputation by promoting the ambiguous intricacies of higher education instead of the skilled workforce employers are seeking.

2.2 University-Employer Relations: A Public Relations Perspective

In his 2015 report for the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, entitled *Career ready: Towards a national strategy for the mobilization of Canadian potential*, author Ken Coates warns of the risks universities face by ignoring the needs of employers. Risks not only to the university's reputation, but risks to the entire post-secondary industry's credibility, not to mention the national economy.

Institutions, Coates writes (2015, p. 8) "are tradition-bound entities. Tradition is, in fact, their strength. In times of economic churn, however, tradition and inflexibility become barriers to innovation" (Coates, 2015, p. 8).

The "bums in chairs" funding approach embraced by governments has encouraged colleges, polytechnics and universities to adopt expansive enrolment strategies, leading to increased class sizes in most institutions and often reducing educational quality in the process (Coates, 2015).

University administrations and faculty argue for greater access to higher education, without sufficient regard for the ability of their students to find suitable jobs after graduation. Funding for post-secondary institutions is based on the number of students rather than the career experiences of graduates (Coates, 2015).

Canada currently has a demand-driven approach to higher education. With the exception of externally controlled and accredited professional programs, the system is expected to accommodate virtually any young person who wishes to study at a post-secondary institution. Every marginally talented student in the country can get into a college and most can get into a university, even though many are ill-suited or unprepared for the experience (Coates, 2015).

Coates' report suggests that Canada needs to shift away from this open-access approach – based on the idea that everyone "deserves" a degree, or at least the chance to try to earn one – to one that is based on achievement, motivation and compatibility with national needs.

It is often suggested that post-secondary institutions, overseen by government departments, should manage the flow of students into and out of programs. The reality, particularly for universities with their longer program cycles (four or more years), is that it is extremely difficult to anticipate downstream market demand for employees. Governments have a poor track record when it comes to picking "winners" in the economy and have often missed targets, even in areas such as nursing and teaching in which they control both the supply and demand for labour (Coates, 2015).

Hence, Coates continues, "we should be highly skeptical about suggestions that system planning will ensure a better match between graduates and workplace needs. Rather than trying to anticipate precise employment trends, governments and institutions should focus on teaching core skills and competencies that prepare graduates for a wide range of possible career options" (p. 8).

While this suggestion works on an industry-wide notion, the individual university's marketing and communications team is left struggling to find the differentiating factors that help market the university to prospective students and define the university for current and former ones. This paper contends that it is perhaps an even taller order for university communicators when compared to managing the university-student relationship. The university-employer relationship is fraught with unmet expectations because no one entity is in control. The result can be confusing for outsiders to watch as tuition rates increase alongside the youth unemployment numbers. This brings us to the greatest challenge of a university communications professional – navigating public opinion at a societal level.

2.3 Higher Education's Reputation in Society: A Public Relations Perspective

The third group of stakeholders, after students and employers, to which a university communicator must pay attention is the most difficult to define. The media provides an effective platform for criticism of institutions of higher learning that are sometimes directed at one university in particular and sometimes offer indictments of the industry as a whole.

The current wave of political populism has touched every aspect of society from legislation to trade and finance. Post-secondary education has not gone unnoticed as a target of criticism and, for some, the cause of many of the ills of post-modern society.

"Edu-skepticism" is beginning to challenge the belief that a four-year degree is the key to a successful life. As Jaschik (2017) explains, "Now comes a new poll with skepticism about higher education – this time based on a survey of white working-class voters of all political affiliations. The findings indicate attitudes in this group that run directly counter to the views of college educators – that higher education is essential to individual economic advancement" (p. 2). The key findings reported by Jaschik are that a majority (57%) said a college degree "would result in more debt and little likelihood of landing a good-paying job." A larger majority (83%) said a college degree was "no longer any guarantee of success" (Jaschik, 2018, p. 2).

The surge to the service industry and other white-collar occupations has been pronounced for decades. "The trend was accompanied by a pandemic of socioeconomic snobbery that made it unseemly to have what was once called a blue-collar job" (Black, 2017). The percentage of people with a university degree has skyrocketed, but the utility of the degree has deteriorated. Fifty years ago, a degree in almost anything was a virtual guarantee of employability; now, far more people graduate from university than there are jobs to be filled and the quantity of governmental and private-sector resources dedicated to education keeps increasing, but the laws of supply and demand are not being allowed to influence the career ambitions of the young (Black, 2017).

These harsh interpretations of where universities sit within the national zeitgeist pale in comparison to some of the things being said south of the border by the self-proclaimed champions of the common people. “Trump Jr. went on to say that many universities offer Americans a raw deal: “We’ll take $200,000 of your money; in exchange, we’ll train your children to hate our country. We’ll make them unemployable by teaching them courses in zombie studies, underwater basket weaving and, my personal favorite, tree climbing” (Sullivan and Jordan, 2017, p. 2).

It may seem unlikely for a university communicator to think that pushing against the ocean of negative opinions is worthwhile, but they do employ tools that address this criticism while also setting themselves apart from their competitors, namely the university ranking list.

By establishing their university’s ranked position relative to their competition as a point of pride, the university communicator can quantify the evidence that their efforts have paid off. This, of course, provides a false sense of security as ranked lists of institutions of higher learning are compiled by independent third parties who have final say on what metrics they use to determine which universities are ‘the best schools.’

The case for university rankings is made by P. Baty at the Times Higher Education (THE), one of the many publications that releases an annual ranking of universities. “The results are a vital resource to students and their families as well as to academics and university administrators and governments across the world. They help to attract almost 30 million people to our website each year, and as they make headlines around the world they touch hundreds of millions more individuals" (Baty, 2018, p.4).

But amid the annual media circus that surrounds the results of who is up and who is down, and beneath the "often tedious, torturous ad infinitum hand wringing about the methodological limitations and the challenges of any attempt to reduce complex universities to a series of numbers, the single most important aspect of THE's global rankings is often lost: the fact that we are building the world's largest, richest database of the world's very best universities" (Baty, 2018, p.5).

There is no such thing as a perfect university ranking. There is no "correct" outcome as there is no single model of excellence in higher education, and every ranking is based on the available, comparable data, and is built on the subjective judgement of its compilers. This may be the strongest case against using rankings to determine the quality of such large and complex institutions.

As Professor Michelle Stack at the University of British Columbia points out, "popular global university rankings say very little about the quality of education offered at the schools they rank" (Stack, 2017).

Another problem is that many post-secondary institutions place too much value in these rankings for determining their own reputation. Stack herself works at a top-ranked, highly reputable university, which is what got her interested in the issue. "I kept going to faculty meetings and university meetings where we were told, 'We're up in the rankings! We're up in the rankings!' and we'd clap. I started to think, maybe I should know a bit more about why I'm clapping" (Stack, 2017).

The ranking results should be taken with a grain of salt because they can be manipulated. This was the case with one university in Saudi Arabia that rose rapidly in the rankings after paying top academics at other universities to list their institution as a secondary institution on the papers they published — even though they did no meaningful work with that university (Stack, 2017).

The issue of university reputation is one that intersects many aspects of society – social, political and economic. This paper seeks to construct a lens through which these issues can be viewed in a way that is most useful to professional communicators working at a Canadian university. By exploring the theoretical concepts behind communications, institutional design and reputation management, it will add to the literary discourse of public relations as it is practiced in large, public institutions of higher learning.

This research problem is important because it shows the complexity of a communicator's role at an organization as multi-faceted as a university. With so many different interest groups and stakeholders in the mix, the communicator must balance the needs of the university against the expectations of its publics all while managing an inconsistent number of resources. This paper will show that across Canada, there is no uniformity to institutional design when it comes to placing a communications professional within the dominant coalition. This lack of consistency across the industry has left it vulnerable to critiques of all the aforementioned stakeholders: future students, current students, former students, employers and even society at large.

This paper will also determine to what extent university rankings are even effective in determining an institution's reputation because if universities are choosing to live by the ranking, they must be willing to die by the ranking as well. It is the chief communicator who is ultimately responsible for managing expectations when administrations choose to value the easy-to-read quantifiable ranking over the myriad of foundational factors that build a lasting institutional reputation.

3. Research Questions

RQ1: *To what extent have Canadian universities adopted the Excellence Theory's preference for a communications professional to be positioned within the dominant coalition?*

RQ2: *To what extent is there a relationship between a university's performance on the Maclean's magazine reputational ranking and the presence of a vice-president responsible for public relations and reputation management?*

RQ3: *Are the metrics used by Maclean's magazine still a relevant gauge of reputational standing within the post-secondary education sector?*

4. Literature Review

The literature consulted for this paper can be categorized into three distinct, but related topics. The first is an accounting of the seminal 20^{th} century work of James and Larissa Grunig's Excellence Theory as discussed by its proponents and detractors. The second is an investigation into the historic sociological field of institutionalism and its ongoing discussion of how the design of organizations impacts their ability to act. The third group of literature examines the theoretical and practical implications of reputation building as discussed by leading writers on the subject. *Figure 1* illustrates the relationship between these concepts and their relationship to professional communications.

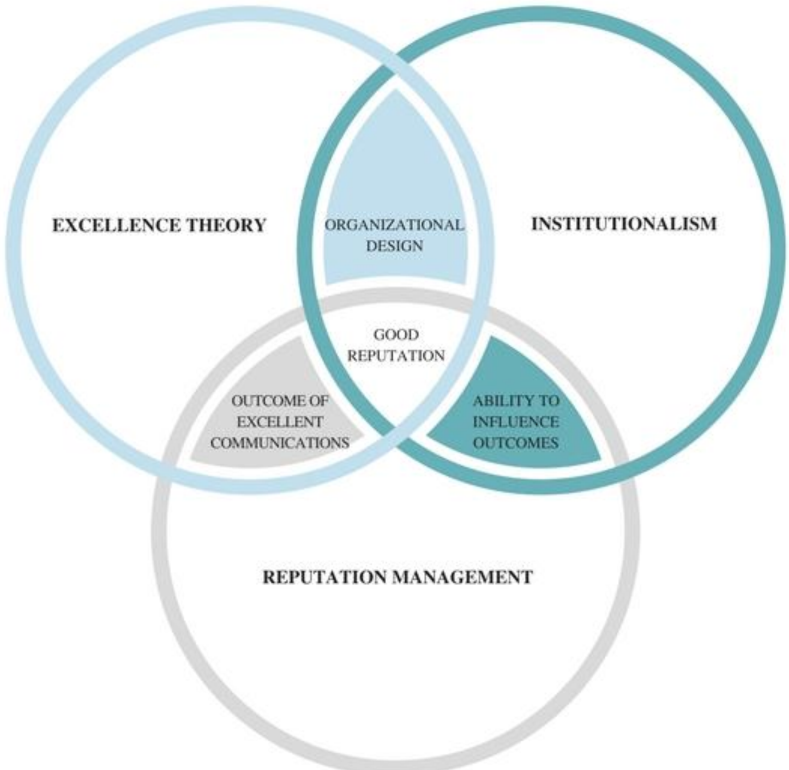


Figure 1: The relationship between the Excellence Theory, Institutionalism Theory, Reputation Management Theory and the maintenance of a good reputation.

4.1 The Excellence Theory

The literature surrounding the Excellence Theory addresses the fundamental questions concerning the proper placement of a professional communicator within an organization's dominant coalition. The Excellence Study, which began in 1985, brought together evidence across multiple industries to produce a "general theory, a theoretical edifice, focused on the role of public relations in strategic management and the value of relationships with strategic publics to an organization" (Grunig, J., 2013, p.1).

The research was built on a comprehensive environmental scan and a thorough analysis of the key functions of communications professionals. The theory ties together previously disparate aspects of communications research including: publics, scenarios building, empowerment of public relations, ethics, relationships, ROI, evaluation, relationship cultivation strategies, specialized areas of public relations, and global strategy (Grunig, J., 2013).

Grunig's theory does not attempt to explain everything in public relations, rather it is a comprehensive way of thinking that can be "used to solve many positive and normative public relations problems" (Holtzhausen and Voto, 2002, p. 57).

Grunig himself admits the theory functions more as a prescription than a full explanation of how everything works. "The symbolic, interpretive paradigm strives to influence how publics interpret the behaviors of organizations after they occur, to secure the power of the decision makers, embodied in concepts of image, reputation, brand, impressions, and identity. Practitioners who follow the interpretive paradigm emphasize messages, publicity, media relations, and media effects, which they believe allow the organization to buffer itself from its environment" (2003, p. 57).

For the Excellence Theory, everything ties back to the importance of strategic management which Grunig defines as a "behavioral paradigm focused on the participation of public relations executives in decision making so they can help manage the behavior of an organization" (Grunig, 2003, p. 57).

As the creator and main proponent of the Excellence Theory, Grunig has responded to its critics and worked to evolve the theoretical model to include their suggestions. The latest iteration of the theory expands the strategic management of public relations paradigm within an organization beyond merely interpreting it to the various publics. This is a bridging activity designed to build relationships with stakeholders which emphasizes two-way communication of many kinds to provide publics a voice in management decisions. "It does not exclude traditional public relations activities, but broadens them to fit into a framework of environmental scanning, research and listening. As a result, messages reflect the informational needs of publics as well as the advocacy needs of the organization" (Grunig, 2003, p. 57).

This application of two-way symmetrical communication, however, is not a universally accepted practice. Coombs and Holladay (2015) contend that mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and publics are not genuinely possible because there can never be a personal relationship with an organization.

It is interesting to note that while Grunig's work took place before the advent of social media, it establishes practices that support and encourage its use as a tool of symmetrical communication. Coombs and Holladay, writing well after social media's arrival, are less inclined to see its value. "Although the interactive potential and widening use of social media have resulted in talk about "joining the conversation," and while social media has facilitated greatly the ability of organizations and individuals to act as both senders and receivers, organizations do not have the resources to cultivate and maintain relationships "for their own sake" (2015, p. 692).

They go on to criticize the Excellence Theory's assertion that there can be true dialogue between organization and public because of the presence of brand loyalty. Coombs and Holladay describe brand loyalty as 'intimacy at a distance' and 'the illusion of intimacy' – a kind of media creation, much like following celebrities online – that has been redefined as 'parasocial interaction', "throwing into question whether the goal of adding value to the organization is genuinely achievable. Discussions of mutuality in relationships, especially in terms of mutual influence, often seem distorted from the reality of the research or the practice" (Coombs & Holladay, 2015, p. 694).

The idea of brand loyalty comes into play when discussing the university-publics dynamic. Students are exposed to variety of indoctrinating activities that attempt to instill a sense of ‘school spirit’ while at the same time the university is investing in the potential future returns of generous alumni benefactors.

Love of one’s alma mater can be a strong feeling, as strong as any brand loyalty described by Coombs and Holladay, but it is the power dynamic expressed through these relationships that are the true impediments to symmetrical dialogue, according to Gregory and Halff. Their research studied symmetry and two-way dialogue, finding that they are closely linked with the notion that power is distributed and exercised between multiple groups that aspire to and achieve equilibrium (Gregory & Halff, 2013). There are inherent inequalities in the spread of globalization and one way of dealing with the complexities is to “impose order and certainty by simplifying, accepting and perhaps enforcing convergence across time, space and cultures. Converging public relations to a single tradition amounts to hegemony, that is, the domination without physical coercion through the widespread acceptance of a particular ideology and associated practices, at the expense of local cultural norms” (p. 237).

Gregory and Halff build on the Excellence Theory’s prescriptive model of ideal professional communications practices by arguing for a hegemonic standard of the profession as a way to move the role beyond public relations and into the realm of public discourse and diplomacy.

The theories being presenting in support of Grunig’s work, or in defiance of it, share one question in common – is the pursuit of true symmetry in all interactions even desirable? The idea behind public diplomacy is not to assert the power of a state or organization, but “instead, to harness the dialogue between different social collectives and their cultures in the hope of sharing meaning and understanding” (Nye, 2010, p. 333). Public diplomacy today is based largely on the notion of soft power espoused by Joseph Nye, who explains that it is the act of “getting others to want the outcomes that you want – it co-opts people rather than coerces them" (Nye, 2010, p. 333). It does so in three key ways (2010a): first, daily communication, particularly involving interpersonal communication; second, strategic communication which typically involves mediated public communication; and third, "the development of lasting relationships" (Nye, 2010, p. 338).

Nye's model fits perfectly with the university communicator's mission to establish dialogue with the three key publics of higher education – future students (mediated public communication), current students (interpersonal communication) and former students (development of lasting relationships).

Building on the work of Nye, Coombs and Holladay, Kenny has also focused on the problem of true dialogic interactions. "Two-way symmetrical communication, dialogue and genuine relationships have been described as unachievable in practice. Despite the advent of enabling technologies, dialogue with and commitment to stakeholder groups in business is essentially instrumental, providing analysis and contributing to strategic planning" (Kenny, 2016, p. 88). Kenny adds to the discussion by stating that, "where the company's interest is profit-driven, the dialogue inevitably becomes normative, leading to debate over whether consequences of dialogue can really be considered for the common good" (Kenny, 2016, p. 88).

University academics would likely argue that these conditions do not apply to the university sector because universities are not profit-seeking corporate entities (in Canada). However, university administrations are designed to mirror corporations and while the virtue of collegiality is expected, they continue to move closer to the pure corporatist model as resources become more and more scarce. The communicator, therefore, is required to find a useful place within the university in a way that maximizes effectiveness.

As previously stated, one of the key findings of the Excellence Study concerned the importance of the position of public relations within the organizational hierarchy. The theory holds that public relations is unlikely to be excellent unless the dominant coalition is supportive and the 'top communicator' is both a member of the dominant coalition and has the knowledge to practice public relations strategically. In other words, public relations must enjoy autonomy and should not be subordinate to other management functions such as marketing or human resources. (Dozier, et al., 1995). However, the line between autonomy and authority was not well-defined by Dozier. It took de Bussy's research to provide more definition on the relationship between the top communicator and the organizational leadership.

de Bussy found that CEOs saw themselves and their fellow board members as the ultimate stewards of corporate reputation with the public relations role providing advice and overseeing communication activities. "There are two major implications of this discussion." de Bussy writes, "strategic public relations management is inevitably the responsibility of leaders at all levels in the organization, not just public relations specialists. The policy setting and communication aspects of strategic public relations management, the organization's behavioural and symbolic relationships are indeed inextricably linked. However, the policy setting must always come first" (de Bussy, 2013, p. 89).

Although de Bussy defined the internal organizational relationships, it was also necessary to be able to separate the profession from the practice. This was done by Hallahan, who admits that although behavioural and symbolic relationships are intertwined like strands of rope, there are inherent dangers in over-emphasizing strategic communication as a paradigm for understanding the field of public relations. "Strategic public relations management and strategic communication are by no means equivalent concepts" (Hallahan et al., 2007).

In a further attempt to define the environment versus practice of communications, Van Ruler adds that "mediatization requires managed mediation. Mediated (mass) communication is a surrogate for interpersonal communication in the face of increasing size and complexity – it has a fundamental deficit over the original needs to be filled in with work: public relations work" (Van Ruler et al., 2008, p.4). Therefore, if public relations is where management and communication meet, then the Excellence Theory is correct in its assertion that the meeting place should be within the dominant coalition.

Now that the preferred placement of where a professional communicator should exist within an organization's hierarchy is settled, the question becomes, 'what should that person do once they've achieved that position?' The debate surrounding this question continued well into the first decade of the 21st century by a new generation of communication theorists who had accepted the Excellence Theory as a sound platform from which to launch further investigations into the ideal role of the top communicator in light of the sometimes inauspicious history of the profession.

Benn suggested that if public relations itself has a public relations problem which constrains its ability to contribute strategically at the highest organizational levels, one potential solution is to "inculcate the values of strategic public relations among specialists in other fields who are already – or potentially could become – organizational leaders" (Benn et al., 2010, p. 14).

The differences of opinion on how best to demonstrate the role of the communicator are more than just semantic. They are providing examples that attempt to meet the conditions of the real world, conditions that are more dependent on circumstance than any kind of designed professional standards. Case in point, De Beer (2001) argued that senior management expects top communicators to make a strategic contribution to organizational decision making which is in keeping with the expectations of the Excellence Theory. However, counting the reporting lines to the CEO or another senior manager is not a good indicator of a top communicators' strategic contribution to decision making and they can make a bigger strategic contribution in large PR departments where technical tasks can be delegated. (De Beer, 2001).

This paper acknowledges the limitations described by De Beer but finds value in ‘counting the reporting lines’ as a way of gaining an understanding of where the entire communications profession sits within a specific industry, in this case that of post-secondary education sector in Canada.

Steyn develops the role of the communicator further by stating the public relations strategist interprets and synthesizes information with regards to stakeholders on societal issues and informs top management of the consequences of management's behaviour on stakeholders and society. “The public relations manager (with inputs from the strategist) develops deliberate and emergent PR strategy by means of a strategic thinking process, indicating what should be communicated to whom” (Steyn, 2007, p. 149).

Finally, it is Hagan (2007) who warns against the common practice of relegating a professional communicator to a supporting role. “Some organizations subjugate public relations under another departments, such as marketing. In those organizations, public relations serves as a support staff for sales and marketing primarily to get 'free advertising' for products and services through media publicity activities” (Hagan, 2007, p. 419).

Hagan goes on to explain that public relations professionals may also act as the support staff for the legal department to defend the company in the court of public opinion by putting the right spin on stories or just getting the facts out to the media (Hagan, 2007).

Both of these instances of professional misappropriation are a reality throughout a wide array of industries, but this paper's focus is to determine to what extent Hagan's caution is justified among Canadian universities.

While the research community that has grown up around the Excellence Theory is concerned with the minute details of the appropriation and practice of the communications professional, their discussions neglect the larger context of institutional design. Without a discussion of institutional domain and the impact organizations can have on society at large, the communications theorists risk limiting their understanding of their field within a constrained set of pre-determined factors that either lend or deny legitimacy to their profession.

4.2 Institutionalism

Including the theoretical concepts of institutionalism is a useful way to frame the larger discussion of how organizations impact society and, in turn, how society influences the design and function of organizations. This subset of sociology gained traction in the 1950s and '60s and focused primarily on public sector organizations as the role of post-war federal governments expanded during that time. The theory framed the discussion around how civic society operated within the social constructs of their environments. Berger and Luckmann defined it as an investigation into the parallelism between organizations and their environments and promoted the idea that organizations structurally reflect socially constructed reality. (Berger and Luckmann, 1967)

Beyond the environmental interrelations suggested in open-systems theories, institutional theories "in their extreme forms define organizations as dramatic enactments of the rationalized myths pervading modern societies rather than as units involved in exchange - no matter how complex - with their environments" (Meyer and Rowan, 1991, p. 47). This idea of organizations as incarnated myths realized within a civil society is a relevant notion, especially among certain industries. For example, the finance industry relies on society's collective belief in the socially constructed myths of the money and bond markets. In the same vein, universities rely on society's collective belief in the myth of professional credentials such as degrees, diplomas and certificates. Do these credentials have value because of their intrinsic nature or is their value derived from their association with collectively acknowledged organizations?

This idea was first proposed by Weber (1947) who argued that as relational networks in societies become more dense and interconnected, increasing numbers of rationalized myths arise. Some of them are highly generalized to diverse occupations, organizational programs and organizational practices. Other myths describe more specific structural elements such as a particularly effective practice (having professional firefighters), occupational specialty (maintaining lawyers as legal experts) or principle of coordination (students must graduate from high school before attending university). "Under these conditions a particularly effective practice, occupational specialty or principle of coordination can be codified into myth-like form. The laws, the educational and credentialing systems, and public opinion then make it necessary or advantageous for organizations to incorporate the new structures" (Weber, 1947, p. 39).

The value of Weber's work is that it is perhaps the most effective argument made for public relations as a profession. As institutionalism evolved as a theory in the 1970s, it began to look at organizational power structures and the ways in which objectives are communicated to their publics. "Powerful organizations attempt to build their goals and procedures directly into society as institutional rules. For example, school administrators who create new curricula or training programs attempt to validate them as legitimate innovations in educational theory and governmental requirements" (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975, p.123).

In describing these dynamics, Dowling and Pfeffer argue that organizations seek legitimacy among both society and their peers. “If they are successful, the procedures can be perpetuated as authoritatively required or at least satisfactory. New departments attempt to professionalize by creating rules of practice and personnel certification that are enforced by the schools, prestige systems and the laws in an attempt to establish themselves as central to the cultural traditions of their societies in order to receive official protection” (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975, p.124).

It is important to note that Dowling and Pfeffer make a point of mentioning the prestige system as being a driver of legitimacy. Within the post-secondary education sector this once mattered a great deal since very few people used to attend university. Now, in the era of open-access education, the prestige system has degraded and the communicator’s role of maintaining a distinct and respectable institutional reputation is all that is left of this once influential social driver.

It was not until the establishment of inter-organizational analysis as an important sub-discipline in sociology that this research agenda began to emphasize the importance of internal social structures of organizations (Perrucci and Potter, 1989, p. 1).

As Laumann and Knoke (1989) describe, “the social structure of a policy domain refers to those stable, recurrent patterns of relationships that link consequential actors to each other and to the larger social system (p. 25). Research on social networks during the past decade indicates that social structure may be usefully conceptualized in terms of the multiple types of ties among system members, the patterning of which may be used to identify a sub-system's fundamental social positions and the roles performed by particular organizations (Laumann and Knoke, 1989).

This research dovetails nicely with the Excellence Theory which applied the same basic framework to one profession in particular.

Further research on inter-organizational relations and local community political systems suggests that three generic relationships are especially significant in identifying social structure: “information transmission, resource transactions and boundary penetration” (Laumann and Knoke, 1989, p. 25). These relationships of course, would be the purview of the top communicator within an organization as adherents to the Excellence Theory would argue.

Beyond the internal structures of institutions, they also exist as a function of a network or roles, sanctions and ideologies that may be “studied in and of themselves, but they cannot be understood completely without an understanding of the environment in which they operate and evolve” (Galaskiewicz, 1991, p. 294).

Actors within the system must be careful to keep the analytical distinction between the micro- and macro-social orders clear. With respect to institutions the “macro-order is made up of roles, incentive systems, and ideologies or belief systems. The micro-order is made up of the preferences, capacities, and expectations of individuals” (Hernes, 1976, p. 520).

Institutional theory intersects with the aforementioned work of Coombs and Holladay (2015) when it contends that corporate actors do not have social selves. Social sanctions can be levied against the agents of the corporate actor, for example, the plant manager or even the CEO and directors, but the corporation is still bound – in fact, legally bound – to pursue the interests of its shareholders within the limits of the law (Coleman, 1974).

While the natural persons in the larger community can make life unpleasant for its agents, the “corporate actor itself remains immune from these social controls. Because they are immune from the social control of natural persons in the community, corporate actors can leave a community if they are unhappy; they can also abuse the physical environment, withdraw from community affairs, or "muscle" local officials without fear of social retribution” (Coleman, 1974, p. 115).

This paper agrees with Coleman that organizations are amoral but disagrees with his assertion that external actors can have little effect on corporate actors. As Coleman was writing in 1974, before the production of mass media was made available to everyone through social media channels, it is understandable that he would have little regard for the efficacy of public campaigns. The advent of this new constituency of organized public opinion only serves to further illustrate the Excellence Theory’s advocacy for a professional communicator to be among the dominant coalition.

By the 21st century, institutional theory did acknowledge that professional standards of reputation management were a key factor in becoming effective mythmakers. Walker (2010) made the distinction between the two fields but added that they were related enough to provide mutual context. “Scholars who used institutional theory were the weakest with regard to defining corporate reputation. This may indicate that institutional scholars have yet to find a satisfactory definition that fits with institutional theory. In contrast, however, the same scholars were generally successful at meeting the five attributions in their measurements of reputation” Walker, 2010, p. 378).

Institutional theory provides a unique perspective by highlighting the importance of the institutional environment and context to corporate reputation. If this insight can be combined with a strong definition and measurement, institutional theory could offer even more to our understanding of reputation. (Walker, 2010).

This paper follows Walker's suggestion by committing to interrogate the relationship between measuring reputation and institutional design.

4.3 Reputation Management

As institutions move beyond conceptual social constructs into the public realm, they begin to require physical and social attributes that allow them to be distinguished from one another and to give the public a sense of what they do. The public's perception of an institution's value, integrity and ability relies on its reputation. In other words, "from a branding point of view, there's evidence that a company's reputation affects the attractiveness of its products to potential customers and so influences the company's ability to generate revenues" (Goldberg and Hartwick, 1990, p. 172). Goldberg and Hartwick add that high-reputation organizations are more likely to be credible to their publics when they make extreme claims about their products in their promotional campaigns. This speaks to the kinds of claims that universities are forced to make to appeal to both prospective students and the public at large. Phrases like 'Where the best get better' and 'Committed to creating a brighter world' are broad statements that require a strong reputation to be taken seriously.

But a reputation does not exist in a vacuum. Messages are received and interpreted by a multitude of audiences, the most organized of which is the media. McCombs and Shaw's 1972 study was the first in a steam of research that confirms the "agenda-setting" role of the media in shaping the public's view of events and their importance. McCombs and Shaw found that "the number of times a story is repeated in the news affects peoples' perceptions of an event's importance, regardless of what is said about the topic" (McCombs and Shaw, 1972, p. 176). This theory has proven to be accurate in the current state of national media regarding post-secondary education. The content analysis results presented in this paper will re-create McCombs and

Shaw's research in assessing the frequency of stories that impact the reputation of the post-secondary education sector.

If reputations matter, it is because they are intrinsically connected to the strategic positioning of the company as a whole. "A corporate reputation is a mirror that reflects a company's relative success at convincing upstream, downstream, and diagonal stakeholders about the current and future validity of its strategic direction" (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2003, p. 14). Fombrun and Van Riel's mirror is also a magnet – if stakeholders like what they hear and see, they support the company and an upward spiral occurs attracting more resources to the company. (Fombrun and Van Riel, 2003). In the case of universities, those resources come in the form of new applicants, corporate partnerships and government grants.

The reputation value cycle described by Fombrun and Van Riel illustrates how financial value and stakeholder support are dynamically intertwined. Endorsements build value and enable a company to expense funds of corporate activities such as advertising, philanthropy, and citizenship that generate media endorsements, attract investors, and add financial value. This interconnectedness is an echo of the networks described by the institutionalist theories that have come before. In both fields of study, the net effect is a reinforcing loop through which recognition, endorsement, and support from stakeholders produce equity and financial value (Fombrun et al., 2000). "The downside of such a reinforcing look is that a decline in operating performance is generally followed by cutbacks in communications and initiatives that alienate stakeholders, reduce operating performance and fuel a downward spiral of both fame and fortune" (Fombrun et al., 2000, p. 105).

Visibility is only a precursor to reputation. The question before us is therefore this: if we focus on any single company, what specific criteria do people think about when they evaluate the company? And how do companies really compare when we “go beyond the 'beauty pageants' that characterize the nominations-process, and actually ask people to rate companies on a standardized list of criteria?” (Fombrun and Van Riel, 1997, p. 13).

Once an organization’s reputation is up and running in the public realm, it becomes necessary to compare it to others within a similar industry. This is where ranking helps an organization’s leadership to assess the qualities and shortcomings of their reputation when it stands next to the competition.

Fortune magazine publishes one of the best-known measures of corporate reputation, one that is derived from answers to eight questions about the company's products, leadership, and results. “Over the years, many have criticized Fortune's instrument and data collection methodology” (McQuire et al., 1990, p. 167). This paper builds on McQuire’s work by testing the methodology of the Maclean’s university reputation ranking list. As with Fortune magazine, list, the Maclean’s list provides an at-a-glance assessment of the top universities in Canada. The reputations of each university are tested among a group of industry, education and media leaders to determine a ranking. Responding to the annual publication is the responsibility of the top communication’s officer if the Excellence Theory is to be adhered to.

Falling significantly in the rankings can cause a crisis at any university and Hagan (2003) concurs with the Excellence Theory’s proponents that the role of public relations officer within an organization must use their strategic management function and response capabilities when faced with a crisis and support the organization's ability to recover from the crisis. (Hagan, 2003).

Much of the research into reputation management strategies and theories took place at the end of the 20th century. In the new century, Lyon and Cameron (2004) have argued that public relations researchers and practitioners must continue to challenge theories and look to strategies to support organizational communication effectiveness. They implore future researchers to move away from case analysis and explanatory studies that offer prescriptions for utilizing quantitative methodology for theory building.

"If public relations is to become the process owner of crisis communication, then practitioners must speak the language of executives in a convincing manner, which typically must include quantitative arguments more than qualitative data. Much more research needs to be done on response strategies and message testing" (Lyon and Cameron, 2004, p. 76). Their view aligns with the Excellence Theory's description of the communicator as trusted advisor; however, it is unclear whether Lyon and Cameron are looking to quantifiable data as a way of levelling the playing field with other advisors (financial officers for example) or if they think data analysis is the correct path for public relations as a profession.

Another critique of public relations research presents a number of concerns with two-way symmetrical communications. First, as Stack and Watson argue, the theory does not specify in detail exactly what variables should be measured and how they relate to each other. Second, much of what is studied in two-way symmetrical public relations is perceptual – that is, more attitudinal (e.g., reputation, credibility, trust, relationship) than behavioural. "Reputation, also defined in a variety of ways, has been used in the practice to establish a two-way measure of relationship" (Stack and Watson, 2007, p. 73).

Donaldson and Preston (1995) provided the foundation for this critique when they wrote, "It is essential to draw a clear distinction between influencers and stakeholders. Some recognizable stakeholders have no influence, and some influencers (e.g. the media) have no stakes" (Donaldson and Preston, 1995, p. 85). This describes the asymmetry that is constantly present with third party reputation rankings. The organization has no mechanism for response that matches the effectiveness of stakeholder appeal when compared to the potential damage done by a poor placement on a ranking. The theorists have therefore begun to place these kinds of lists and their creators (the media) on spectrum of concern.

Coombs (1998) noticed that stakeholders are more precisely conceptualized as two distinct variants: primary and secondary. Coombs defined primary stakeholders as those who “can harm or benefit the organization, and secondary stakeholders as influencers who can affect or be affected by the actions of an organization but not to the same degree as primary stakeholders” (Coombs, 1990, p. 298).

This distinction is important when assessing where to dedicate resources within an organization’s outreach and messaging efforts. Das and Teng suggest that the key stakeholder group should be the one that benefits most from the creation and nurturing of trust. They describe trust as a critical coping mechanism for pressing the claims of dependent stakeholders because, in the tradition of the Excellence Theory, the collaborative symmetrical communication between the firm and the stakeholders is critical. (Das and Teng, 1998).

Reputation management theory came to the same conclusion as other communications theories once it began to discuss prescribed designations of those within the organization who should be responsible for reputation management. Hon’s 2007 study sought to find the most effective placement of a communications professional within an organization and found that “most professionals' experiences with empowerment were mixed, depending on the mindset of other managers at the organization about public relations. (T)he managers also had differing ideas depending on the function's position in the organization about public relations, the function's position in the organizational structure, and type of industry” (Hon, 2007, p. 11).

Several of Hon's research subjects said that they were fortunate to work with enlightened managers who truly valued public relations or, as one noted, were easy to convince: "I made it clear to the CEO and shareholders that there is no way but to report to the CEO or myself being part of the dominant coalition...This worked out very positively and was most effective." (Hon, 2007, p. 11).

A good reputation can lead to "numerous strategic benefits such as lowering firm costs, enabling firms to charge premium prices, attracting applicants, investors and customers, increasing profitability, and creating competitive barriers" (Turban and Greening, 1997, p. 65).

Using a strong reputation effectively then become the responsibility of the top communicator who can use the organizational reputation as a particular type of feedback, received by an "organization from its stakeholders, concerning the credibility of the organization's identity claims" (Whetton and Mackey, 2002, p. 393).

The creation, transmission and ultimate assessment of the organizational identity is a useful tool in determining where the messaging should lead the audience; however, as Flanagan and O'Shaughnessy point out, "corporate reputation is an issue-specific, aggregate perception. Unfortunately, it is next to impossible for one paper to measure the perceptions of all stakeholders, and any measurement of reputation is likely to represent only a portion of overall corporate reputation" (Flanagan and O'Shaughnessy, 2005, 445). This point identifies an important gap between the theoretical perception of reputation and our ability to measure it, highlighting the limits to engaging with reputational rankings as a way of truly seeing public sentiment – but for now, they are all most organizations have.

The literature reviewed for the paper has shown the extent to which three separate fields of study have evolved in parallel with one another beginning with the purely professional

Excellence Theory with its attempt to provide legitimacy to the evolving profession of communications. Their work built on much of the research done by the institutionalists who used audience segmentation theories to define the organizational actors' impact on society. And finally, the reputation management researchers helped define the interaction between the owners and the creators of an organization's reputation vis-à-vis its function as an outcome of public perception.

This paper aims to test each of these theories against the reality of the last twenty years of reputational measurement of the post-secondary education industry in Canada. It will also add to the discussion of the accuracy of reputational rankings through a content analysis of the entire industry's perception in the media.

5. Methodology

5.1 Method 1: Data Analysis

The data analysis conducted for this paper examines two bodies of data. The first being the annually published list of universities' reputational rankings from Maclean's magazine from 1997 to 2017. The performance of each university's reputational standing within its category was recorded for this 20-year period.

The second data set collected was each relevant university's organizational chart from 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017. Relevance was determined by that university's presence on the Maclean's reputational ranking list. If a university was never featured on that list, its organizational charts were not recorded.

Once both data sets were collected, they were placed along the two Y axes of a graph with the years 1997 to 2017 represented in the X axis (see *Appendix 2*). Once both sets of data were graphed they were then analyzed for any apparent relationship over the 20-year timespan.

Sources of data:

- Maclean's University Ranking (reputation ranking index) 1997-2017.
- Senior administration organization charts from ranked universities: 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017.

5.2 Method 2: Content Analysis

A content analysis was done on national media publications related to the topic of university reputation and the state of higher education from a critical perspective. A coder form was developed (see *Appendix 1*) to record and categorize the findings of the content analysis.

The purpose of the content analysis was to determine if the reputational drivers promoted by the Maclean's magazine reputational rankings over the last 20 years are still relevant in today's media coverage of the post-secondary industry.

Sources of data:

- Articles and editorials from Canadian and international publications and broadcasts related to university reputation 2017-2018.

5.3 Data Analysis

5.3.1 Operationalization

The metrics examined are intended to match conceptualization by indicating two factors:

- The numerical placement of the university's reputational ranking within its peer group (medical doctoral, comprehensive, primarily undergraduate).

- The binary measurement of the presence of a VP-level communicator over a 20-year time period. (Positive presence of VP Communication = Yes/Negative presence of VP Communication = No)

Variable measurement of reputation ranking: numerical value of rank position over 20-year period.

Variable measurement of VP Communicator status: binary numerical value assigned to the presence of absence of VP Communications (professional nomenclature will include Government Relations, External Relations, University Relations, Public Affairs).

No coding is necessary for data collection as it was a straight transcription of the historic rank position of each university's reputational standing. In addition, this study will include the tracking of the historical progression of the existence of the VP Communication role at Canadian universities over 20 years.

5.4 Content Analysis

5.4.1 Theory and Rationale

The media published between January 1, 2017 and February 28, 2018 should indicate the most relevant and pressing issue of today's post-secondary environment. The content of published and recorded news sources will be examined for the presence of reputational drivers in the stories. The reputational drivers will be identified, extracted, coded and compared to the reputational drivers used in the ranking methodology of Maclean's magazine:

- highest quality
- innovation
- leadership

5.4.2 Conceptualization

The variables used in this study will be the reputational drivers of the post-secondary sector's current media are reporting on. The objective is to ascertain if there is a difference between what the popular discourse surrounding university reputation says and what Maclean's deems to be the three pillars of reputation.

The Maclean's drivers have not changed since the survey began more than 20 years ago. This part of the study investigates to what extent the Maclean's ranking measurements are still relevant to current media issues collected through the content analysis. This will inform the communications profession as to which issues, measures and benchmarks should be used to gauge the efficacy of their reputation management efforts.

5.4.3 Operationalization

Each piece of collected media was analyzed through the coder form (see *Appendix 1*).

6. Results and Analysis

6.1 RQ1 Results

In its analysis of the research results, this paper maintains the categorization of Canadian universities as established by Maclean's magazine in its annual rankings edition. "Using factors as research funding, diversity of offerings and the range of PhD programs to define peer groupings, Maclean's places each university in one of the following three categories:" (Maclean's Magazine, 2002, p. 31).

Primarily Undergraduate: Universities largely focused on undergraduate education, with relatively few graduate programs.

Member Universities

- St. Francis Xavier University
- Mount Allison University
- Acadia University
- University of Winnipeg
- Wilfrid Laurier University
- Bishop’s University
- Trent University
- University of Northern British Columbia
- University of Prince Edward Island
- St. Thomas University
- Saint Mary’s University
- Mount Saint Vincent University
- University of Lethbridge
- Brock University
- University of Moncton
- Lakehead University
- Laurentian University
- Nipissing University
- Brandon University
- Cape Breton University

Comprehensive: Universities with a significant amount of research activity and a wide range of programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Member Universities

- Ryerson University
- University of Guelph
- University of Waterloo
- Simon Fraser University
- University of Victoria
- Memorial University
- University of Regina
- York University
- University of New Brunswick
- Carleton University
- Concordia University
- University of Windsor

Medical Doctoral: Universities with a broad range of PhD programs and research, as well as medical schools.

Member Universities

- University of Toronto
- Queen's University
- McGill University
- University of Western Ontario (Western University)
- University of British Columbia
- Université de Montréal
- University of Saskatchewan
- University of Alberta
- University of Sherbrooke
- University of Ottawa
- McMaster University
- Dalhousie University
- Université de Laval
- University of Calgary
- University of Manitoba

6.1.1 RQ1 Results: Primarily Undergraduate

RQ1 asks to what extent Canadian universities have adhered to the advice of the Excellence Theory in maintaining a communications professional among the dominant coalition.

Table 1 Presence of Vice-Presidents of Communications at Primarily Undergraduate Universities

University	**2017**	**2012**	**2007**	**2002**	**1997**
Acadia	0	0	0	0	0
Saint Francis Xavier	0	0	0	0	0
Lethbridge	0	0	0	0	0
Trent	1	1	1	0	0
St. Mary's	0	1	1	1	1
UNBC	1	1	0	0	0
Winnipeg	0	0	0	0	1
Bishop's	0	0	0	0	0
Prince Edward Island	0	0	0	0	0

Lakehead	1	1	0	0	0
Mount St. Vincent	0	0	0	0	0
Laurentian	0	0	0	0	0
Moncton	0	1	1	1	1
Cape Breton	0	1	0	0	0
St. Thomas	0	0	0	0	0
Brandon	0	0	0	0	0
Nipissing	0	0	0	0	0
Mt. Allison	0	0	1	0	0

Note: 1= VP Communications was present, 0=VP Communications was not present.

6.1.2 RQ1 Results: Comprehensive

Table 2 Presence of Vice-Presidents of Communications at Comprehensive Universities

University	**2017**	**2012**	**2007**	**2002**	**1997**
Waterloo	1	1	1	1	1
Simon Fraser	1	1	1	0	0
Ryerson	1	0	0	0	0
Guelph	1	0	0	0	0
Victoria	1	1	0	0	0
Concordia	1	1	1	1	1
Memorial	0	0	0	0	0
York	0	0	0	0	0
Carleton	0	0	0	0	0
Laurier	0	0	0	0	0
New Brunswick	0	0	0	0	0
UQAM	0	1	1	0	0
Brock	0	0	0	0	0
Regina	0	1	1	0	0

Note: 1= VP Communications was present, 0= VP Communications was not present.

6.1.3 RQ1 Results: Medical Doctoral

Table 3 Presence of Vice-Presidents of Communications at Medical Doctoral Universities

University	**2017**	**2012**	**2007**	**2002**	**1997**
Toronto	1	1	1	1	0

British Columbia	1	1	1	1	1
McGill	1	1	1	0	0
Alberta	1	1	1	1	1
Queen's	1	0	0	0	0
McMaster	0	0	0	0	0
Western	0	0	1	1	0
Montreal	0	0	0	0	0
Calgary	1	1	1	0	0
Dalhousie	0	1	1	0	0
Ottawa	1	1	1	1	0
Laval	0	0	0	0	0
Sherbrooke	0	1	1	0	0
Saskatchewan	1	0	0	0	0
Manitoba	1	1	1	1	0

Note: 1= VP Communications was present, 0=VP Communications was not present.

6.2 RQ2 Results

Maclean's Magazine surveyed high school guidance counsellors, university officials, heads of organizations, CEOs and recruiters at corporations across Canada to compile its ranking of university reputations (Maclean's, 2002). The magazine asked questions that led them to compile three lists of reputation drivers (leaders of tomorrow, most innovative and highest quality) and place each university on that scale adjusted for university category (primarily undergraduate, comprehensive, medical doctoral). The results of the three lists were combined to produce a 'best overall' ranking; it is this ranking that is used in this paper's results.

The analysis for this section relies on three conditions being applied to each university:

1. Positive relationship – the presence of a C-Suite communications professional coincided with a net positive effect on the reputation of the university.

2. Negative relationship – the presence of a C-Suite communications professional coincided with a net negative effect on the reputation of the university.
3. Null relationship – the presence of a C-Suite communications professional did not coincide with a significant change in a university's reputation.

The universities that did not have a vice-president of communications during the timeframe studied for this paper have been left out of this analysis.

6.2.1 RQ2 Results: Primarily Undergraduate

Table 4: Net Effect of VP Communications on Reputation Ranking

University	Positive Relationship	Negative Relationship	Null Relationship
Cape Breton			X
Lakehead	X		
Mt. Allison	X		
Saint Mary's			X
Trent	X		
Moncton			X
UNBC	X		

6.2.2 RQ2 Results: Comprehensive

Table 5: Net Effect of Presence of VP Communications on Reputation Ranking

University	Positive Relationship	Negative Relationship	Null Relationship
Waterloo	X		
Simon Fraser	X		
Ryerson			X

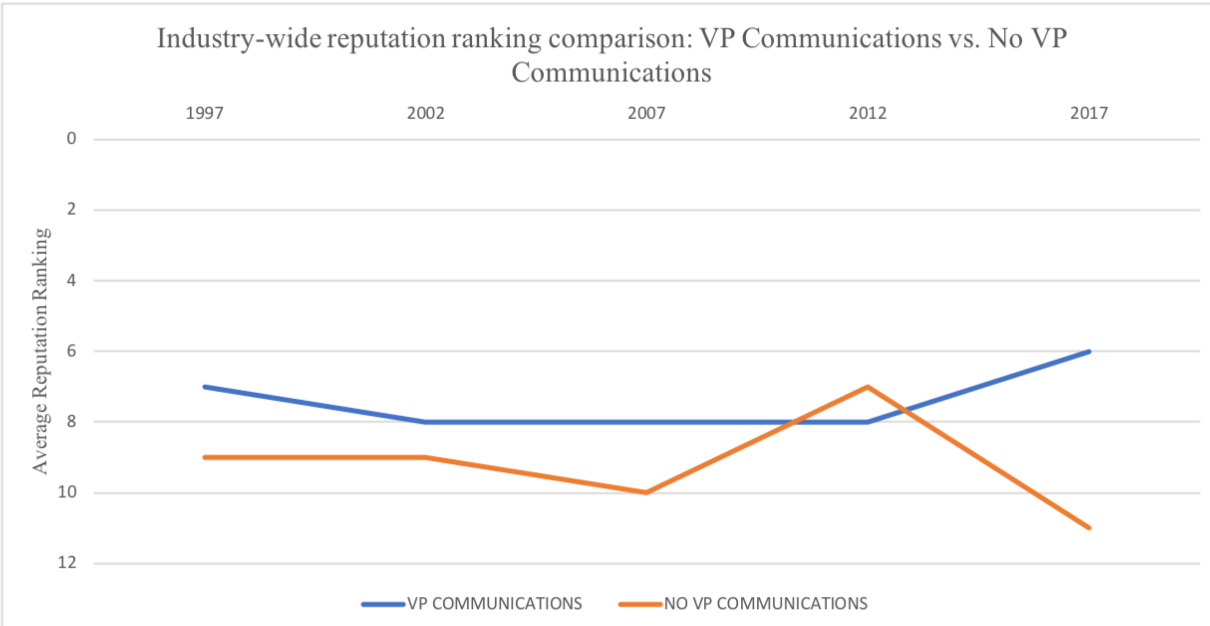
Guelph			X
Victoria		X	
Concordia	X		
UQAM			X
Regina		X	

6.2.3 RQ2 Results: Medical Doctoral

Table 6: Net Effect of Presence of VP Communications on Reputation Ranking

University	Positive Relationship	Negative Relationship	Null Relationship
Toronto			X
UBC			X
McGill			X
Alberta			X
Queen’s			X
Western			X
Calgary			X
Dalhousie			X
Ottawa			X
Sherbrooke		X	
Saskatchewan			X
Manitoba			X

6.2.4 Comparison of industry-wide averages of reputation (VP Communications vs. no VP Communications)



6.3 RQ3 Results

The final research question of this study explores the accuracy of Maclean's magazine's stated drivers of reputation. The magazine has been using the same three drivers to produce its ranking of reputational leaders for the last 20 years.

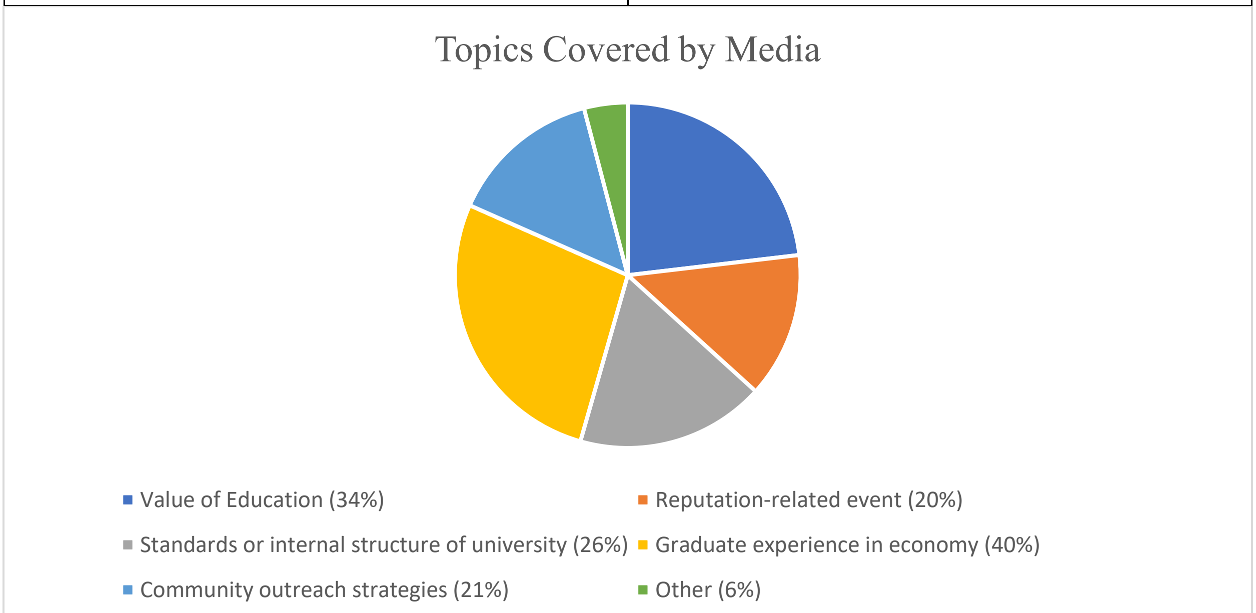
While RQ1 and RQ2 relied on a data analysis to produce results, RQ3 employs a content analysis to determine if media publications and broadcasts from the last year support Maclean's claim that *innovation*, *leadership* and *quality* are the determining factors of a university's reputation.

As shown in the coder form (*Appendix 1*), a series of questions were applied to 75 publications and broadcasts from Canadian and international media outlets that were concerned with the state of either the higher education or one university in particular. While the subject matter ranged from commenting on internal design flaws of universities to broad, societal commentary on higher education's usefulness, all articles provide insight into the current discourse of issues related to Canadian universities.

6.3.1 Topics Covered by Media

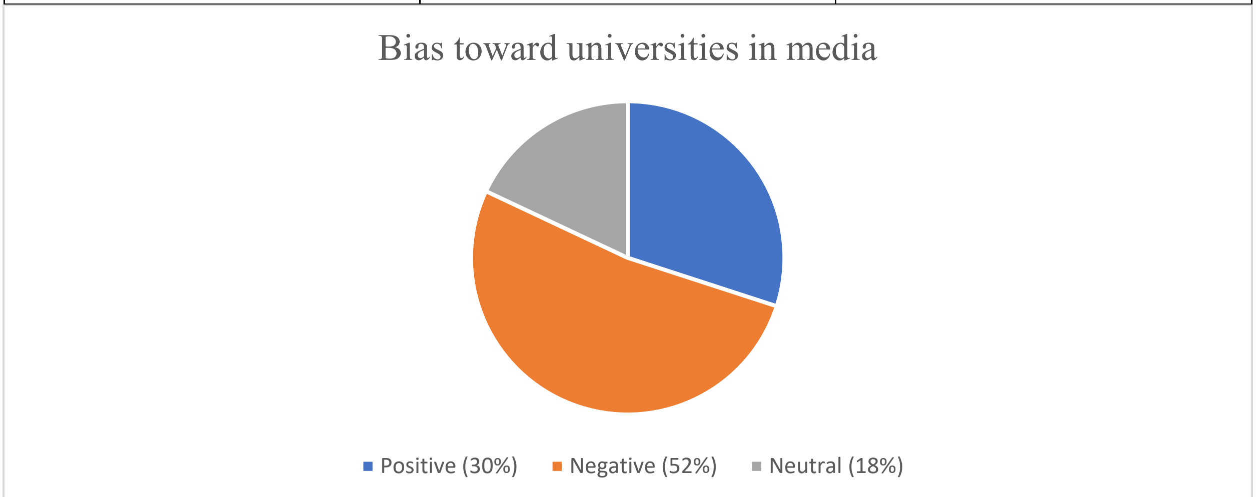
*Some broadcasts and articles mentioned more than one topic listed below.

Topic Discussed	# of publications
Value of education	26/75
Reputation-related event	15/75
Standards or internal structure of university	20/75
Graduate experience in the economy	30/75
Community outreach strategies	16/75
Other	5/75



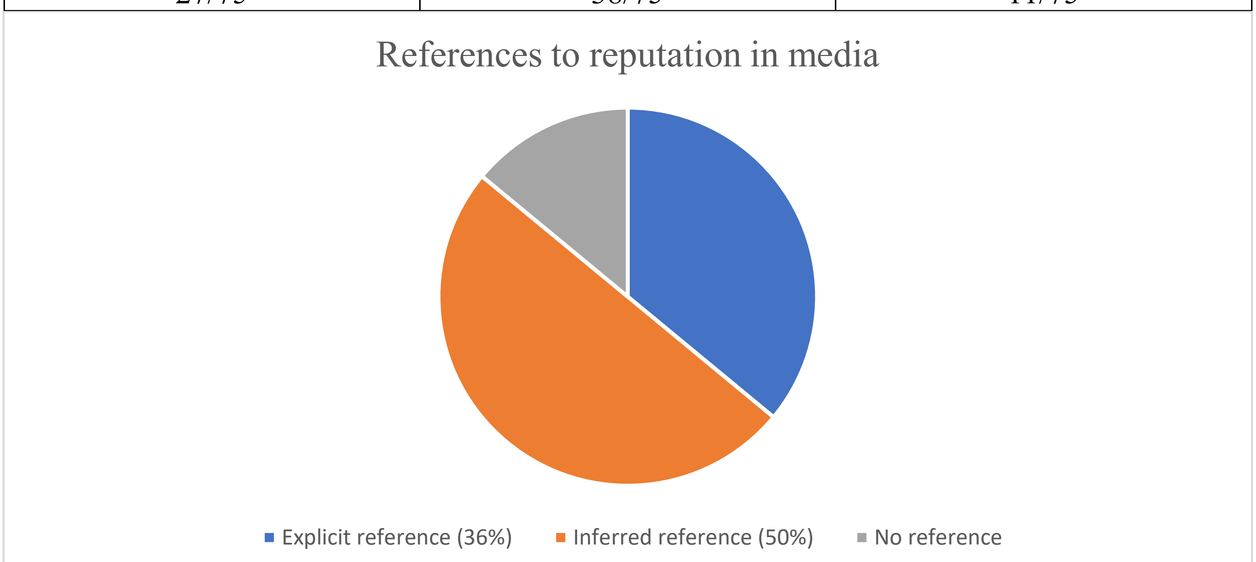
6.3.2 Bias toward universities in media

Positive Bias	**Negative Bias**	**Neutral**
23/75	39/75	14/75



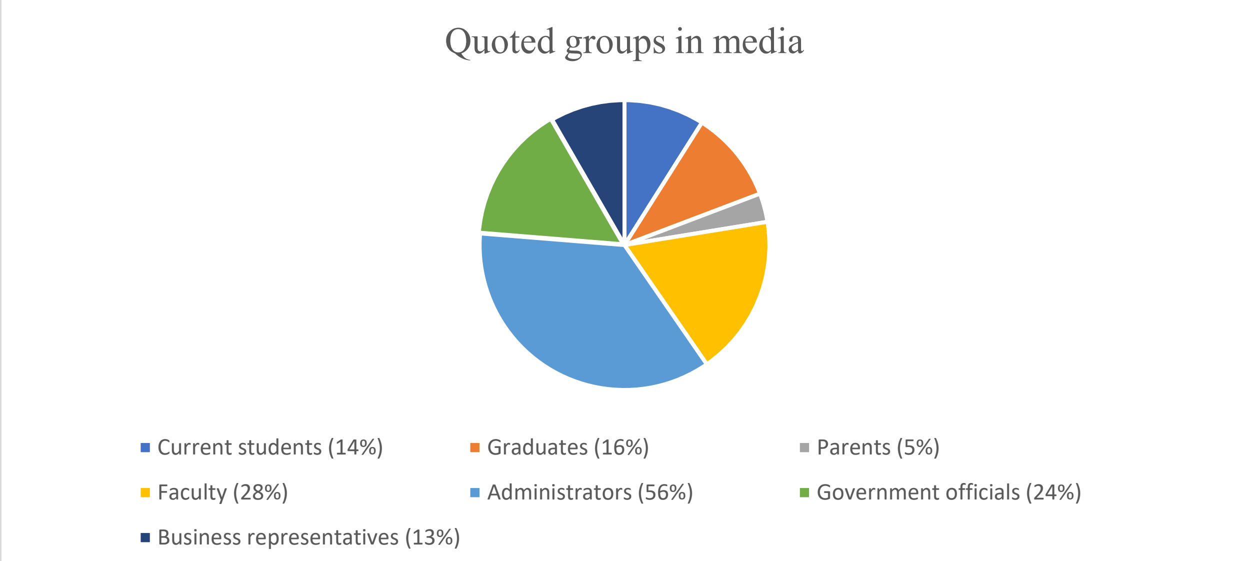
6.3.3 References to reputation

Explicit Reference	Inferred Reference	No Reference
27/75	38/75	11/75



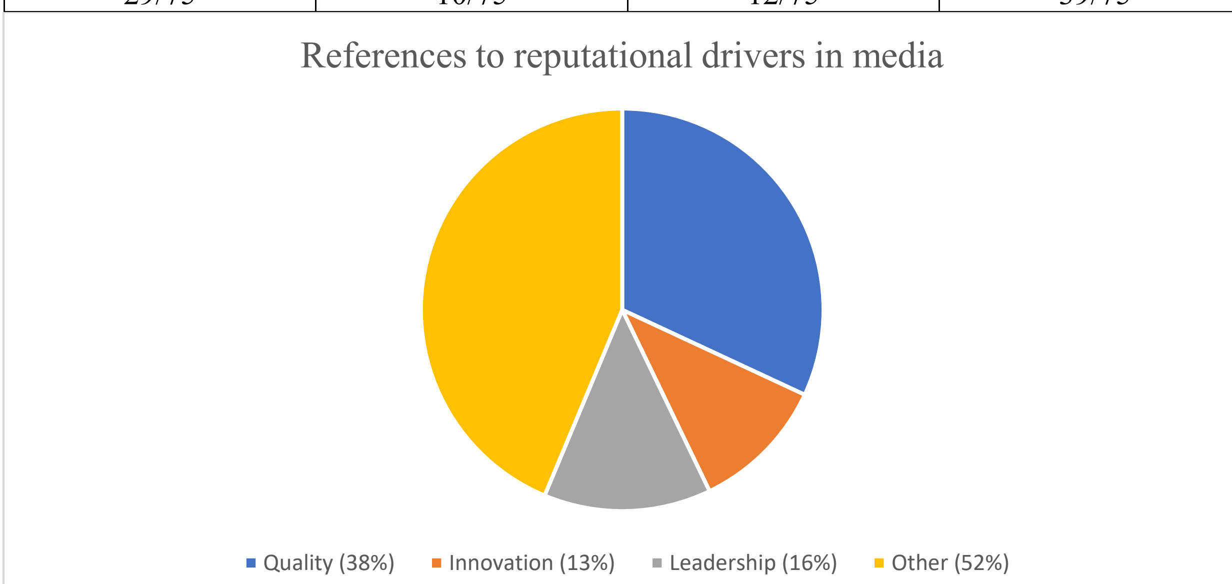
6.3.4 Quotations in media by group

Quotation from:	**Frequency of quotable group**
Current students	11/75
Graduates	12/75
Parents	4/75
Faculty	21/75
Administrators	42/75
Government officials	18/75
Business/industry representatives	10/75



6.3.5 References to reputational drivers

Quality	Leadership	Innovation	Other
29/75	10/75	12/75	39/75



6.4 Analysis of Results

6.4.1 RQ1 Results Analysis

RQ1 set out to determine how and to what extent professional communicators found themselves in senior executive positions within the dominant coalitions of Canadian universities. The research presented in this paper is the result of a thorough analysis of each university's senior executive organizational chart to determine if a vice-president level officer had responsibilities that included communications, public relations, external relations or any job title that suggested they oversaw the reputational management of the university.

Of the 235 years represented in the RQ1 results (across all three university categories), a vice-president of communications was only present during 76 of those years or 32% of the time. Therefore, these results can answer RQ1 by saying that professional communicators found themselves in the dominant to a low extent over the past 20 years.

Breaking down the results by university category shows that the medical doctoral universities had the highest number of years with a vice-president of communications present (37 out of 75 years, or 49% of the time). These results are not surprising as the medical doctoral universities in Canada maintain the largest operating budgets and have little trouble filling their programs to capacity given how selective their admission requirements are. It would also make sense for the most complex institutions to have a unifying executive to maintain consistency over all branding, marketing and messaging coming from the multiple schools, faculties and departments.

Conversely, the primarily undergraduate and comprehensive universities did not have as many top communicators located within their executive leadership teams. Of the 90 years of executive leader charts analyzed for the primarily undergraduate universities, only 18 had a position dedicated to communications (20% of the time).

For the comprehensive universities, the results show that of the 70 years studied, there was only a communicator present in the dominant coalition for 21 of those years (30% of the time).

These universities have fewer resources to dedicate to an expansive senior leadership team and are generally smaller institutions compared to medical doctoral universities. As post-secondary education is the responsibility of the provinces, regionalism is also a factor. For example, half of the universities in the primarily undergraduate category are located within Atlantic Canada, a region that has been cutting post-secondary education spending steadily for the past 15 years (StatsCan, 2015).

On the topic of cuts, it is notable that of the 47 institutions studied, 10 decided to eliminate the position of vice-president communications at some point over the last 20 years. This phenomenon was not limited to one university category in particular as all categories experienced this loss; however, 50% of the losses were seen in the primarily undergraduate category which coincides with the argument that budget constraints are often a determining factor.

Viewing the results of RQ1 through the lens of the Excellence Theory provides perspective of how the post-secondary industry is performing in that regard. The standards for excellence established by Grunig and his contemporaries require that the top communicator be empowered to promote the idea of strategic management within all aspects of communication practices and to find the value of relationships with all strategic stakeholders (Grunig, 2013).

Only when the top communicator is found within the dominant coalition can they help manage the behaviour of the organization; this can only be done if the communicator is autonomous and subordinate only to the chief executive (Grunig, 2003 and Dozier et al., 1995).

Held to these standards, the post-secondary education industry receives a below average grade as, of the 47 universities studied, only 18 (38%) currently have a vice-president of communications present. This figure shows that as a sector, Canadian universities have much room for improvement in designing leadership teams that reflect a willingness to achieve symmetry in public communications (Nye, 2010).

6.4.2 RQ2 Results Analysis

The purpose of RQ2 was to determine to what extent there was a relationship between having a communicator at the executive level and a university's standing in the Maclean's reputation ranking. The results of this part of the study were largely inconclusive as the majority of the 27 universities studied (those with a vice-president of communications in place at least once in the past 20 years), 17 had no relationship at all. Three universities exhibited a negative relationship by showing that the reputation standing of the university decreased after the vice-president communications was brought on, and seven universities saw in increase in reputational standing.

This paper did not pursue a rigorous statistical investigation and therefore cannot say that these relationships are in fact correlative; however, by looking to reputation management theory, one can apply meaning to the results.

This study only incorporated one set of metrics into its analysis of reputational ranking – Maclean's magazine – and, as Donaldson and Preston (1995) pointed out in their discussion of the difference between stakeholders and influencers, media outlets like Maclean's may have influence but have no stakes.

Reputation management theory views reputation rankings as a window into how effective two-way relationships are measured (Stake and Watson, 2007). However, the theory does not elevate reputational outcomes beyond anything more than indicators of distinctiveness and ultimately, a means to attract customers (Goldberg and Hartwick, 1990). Therefore, the reputational ranking results are inconclusive from this perspective as a university with a consistently low reputation may be meeting its enrolment objectives.

Reputation management theory also speaks to the agenda-setting role of communicators (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) as a way of gauging an institution's impact on its stakeholders. This study does not measure the importance each university placed on its position within the reputation ranking list and thus cannot say if these universities are successful in meeting their objectives. Take for example the University of Manitoba which scored the lowest for every year of the reputation ranking but also never (until last year) employed a vice-president of communications. A casual look at the rankings chart would suggest that the university is failing; however, if it chose to avoid investing in public relations efforts in favour of something else, say research publications or student experience, the University of Manitoba may be succeeding beyond the limited scope of this study.

The second data analysis part of RQ2 sought to compare the overall differences in reputation standing between universities that have had vice-presidents of communication with those that have not. Each university was placed in one of two groups for each year in which the organizational chart was recorded (1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017). The first group included the universities that had a vice-president of communications in that year; the second group included those universities that did not. The reputational ranking of each school was then listed, summed and divided by the number of schools by group and by year which produced an average reputational ranking for that year's group.

The results show a very close accounting how each group's reputation performed over time. This paper expected the differences between those universities with vice-presidents of communications and those without to be much more pronounced in keeping with the teachings of the Excellence Theory. While the universities with top communicators in the dominant coalition do perform slightly better in the reputation ranking, it should be noted that for 2012, the universities without top communicators in executive positions out-performed their contemporaries who did. This phenomenon raises a question of efficacy in both the institutional design of the universities and the professional practices of the chief communicators. While it is impossible for every university with a vice-president of communications to exist in the number one spot on the ranking list, one would assume that their performance would have produced a better result when compared to those universities who invest nothing into their dominant coalition's ability to meet public relations challenges.

6.4.3 RQ3 Results Analysis

The objective of RQ3 was to determine if the three reputational drivers Maclean's uses to create its annual ranking are, in fact, still relevant after more than two decades of use. The results for this section were gained by conducting a thorough content analysis of Canadian and international media broadcasts and publications about the topic of higher learning.

The findings of this content analysis show that the majority of media collected (52%) have a negative view of the higher education industry in either Canada or abroad. While this is not a consensus, it does suggest that the industry is subject to more criticism than was assumed.

Industries that are more often than not the subject of media criticism (such as the energy or pharmaceutical industries) have more justification for a centralized, externally-focused chief communicator to manage with the image of both the specific organization they work for and their industry at large. It would appear from this content analysis that the post-secondary education sector is moving closer toward the reputational condition of an industry like energy and further away from an industry that receives less media scrutiny such as the non-profit sector.

The publications and broadcasts examined also had a clear preference in subject matter. Combining for a total of 74% of the topics covered, "value of higher education" and "the experience of university graduates in the economy" were the most common subjects in the media. The focus on outcomes and return on investment was expected as more jurisdictions are choosing to cut funding to the operating budgets of universities, leaving them to rely more heavily on ever-increasing domestic and international tuition fees.

The remaining quarter of the media covered focused mainly on the standards and internal conditions of the university sector which have come under scrutiny lately as universities work to appeal to a broader audience while trying, counterintuitively, to maintain an image of selectiveness in order to maintain the value of their degrees for both graduates and future students. The content analysis shows that this paradigm is both understood and subject to criticism by the media.

Building on the media's coverage of how universities influence society is their assessment of what matters most about a university's function. The overwhelming intersection of societal perception and institutional activity hinges on reputation with 86% of the articles and broadcasts studied referencing reputation either explicitly or implicitly. This aligns with institutionalism's assertion that while organizations act individually, their actions are perceived collectively by society as being positive or negative. As more media coverage focuses on the reputations of individual universities through either their standing on ranked lists or specific events that impact reputation, the societal perception of the entire industry is reinforced.

A confounding result from this content analysis was the source of the majority of quotes. The articles and broadcasts studied overwhelmingly focused on quotes from internal stakeholders such as administrators and faculty (86%) while external stakeholders such as students, parents, graduates and business representatives were consulted only 38% of the time. If institutionalism is to be an effective lens through which to view the higher education sector, it must reflect the opinions of those outside of the social construct being studied. Journalists likely rely on the ease of getting an institutional quote from administrators and faculty members as it is more difficult to track down specific alumni, current students and relevant business leaders to speak broadly about the topic of higher education.

These findings provide a useful background to the main purpose of RQ3 which was to determine if the three reputational drivers promoted by Maclean's magazine are still relevant. Of the three reputational variables on which Maclean's bases its ranking, only "quality" was represented to any large degree in this content analysis with 38% the media analyzed mentioning it.

The majority (52%) described other reputational factors that lead to an opinion being formed about either the industry or specific institution depending on the scope of the article or broadcast. This result shows that Maclean's should update its reputational litmus test to include additional standards of success. These could include the number of graduates who would attend an institution again if they had the choice or the opinion of the local businesses who hire graduates with the greatest frequency. Do those employers need to provide extensive training or has the university equipped the graduate with the kind of essential knowledge and skills the market demands? Using these metrics to produce a reputation ranking would more accurately reflect the current needs of those students who value preparation for work over the prestige of their alma mater.

7. Limitations

This study was limited by the sample size of the universities studied. As Maclean's magazine only ranks publicly-funded universities, this paper did not include the additional degree-granting institutions in Canada that are privately funded, not universities or too specialized to one field of study. It would have been interesting to include these institutions to compare their performance in both organizational design and reputational standing against the more traditional, four-year university archetypes with which the public is most familiar.

Another limitation was the number of articles and broadcasts consulted for the content analysis of this paper. Seventy-five pieces of media was not a large enough sample to provide a compelling argument of the findings based in evidence; however, the results did tend to skew into common majorities, so it is possible that a larger sample size would have reinforced those results.

8. Conclusions

This study has attempted to show that the post-secondary education industry in Canada has become a victim of its own success at operating with a corporatist model. This success reflects the astounding ability of universities to market and attract new students from around both the country and the globe who then have the opportunity to partake in a selection of courses, degrees and programs unmatched in their variety. The downside to this success is a job market inundated with highly-credentialed young people without the experience or skillset to meet the market's demands. The ultimate effect of this practice is proving disastrous to both Canada's economic potential and, more to the point of this paper, the reputation of the entire higher education sector.

There is real and palpable displeasure with the ways universities are currently operating in Canada and one need only to look south of the border to see what lies ahead if institutions continue to treat students as consumers who are always right. As Finn (2018) writes in *University Affairs*, students are quietly being replaced by customers who, instead of being offered an education, are buying an experience. "My own institution even launched a 'first-year experience' task force designed, as you might guess, to ensure that students are having a good experience. This transition is no accident and can be read first and foremost as a direct consequence of the changing landscape of higher education as…universities are being forced to recruit ever higher numbers of students" (Finn, 2018).

In the United States, what likely began as an exercise in maximizing student happiness has evolved into a race to offer the nicest amenities, best facilities and fastest internet connections. The posterchild for this kind of thinking is Louisiana State University which installed an "opulent, man-made 'lazy river' recreational pool because the leaders of such cash-strapped institutions feel obliged to service the whims and desires of tuition-paying students, whose satisfaction has become ever more crucial as state support wanes" (Finn, 2018).

The lazy river is one in a series of incentives that form part of the rising experience industry in higher education. This industry brings together a conglomeration of staff, services, resources, programs, initiatives and facilities designed to enhance the student experience and guarantee students' satisfaction. The goal is to entice students to campus and keep them there. If students have a negative experience, they may leave the university early, depriving the institution of much-needed tuition. Even worse, they may make their negative experience public, influencing the choices of prospective and current students, thereby harming metrics of ‘student satisfaction’ which is another metric heavily used as an indicator of institutional success by Maclean’s magazine. “It is therefore essential that the experience industry provides an exceptional, positive experience for its clients” (Finn, 2018).

If universities are deciding to move to a business-customer model of operation then the standards of that model should be applied to them. In the regular business world, if a company says its product does something but the customer finds that it does not, then the company suffers a loss of reputation and, eventually, profit.

An organization’s reputation is built on two distinct parts. The first part is the brand or what that organization tells the world it does through a combination of messaging and marketing. The brand is entirely controlled by the organization and should be designed in a way that is both honest and different enough from its competitors to make an impact with potential customers. The second part is an organization’s identity, or what the organization actually does in the world. These actions (or inactions) become messages to the public who judge them to be authentic or inauthentic in comparison with the branding messages they have also received. If the branding and identity of an organization are perceived to be compatible, then the organization will likely have a high reputation.

Applying this standard to a university is possible if one looks at what the branding says versus what the university does. An institution’s marketing material may assure the audience that it is the best place to learn because of its high academic standards and ability to turn students into productive members of society. But if this messaging conflicts with the reality of cohorts of graduates experiencing un- or underemployment and the majority of classes are taught by sessional contract instructors, all while new athletic complexes and shopping mall-like ‘student learning spaces’ are being built, the disconnect begins to impact reputation.

When taxpayers, potential students, parents, and governments see where universities are choosing to make investments, the question often turns to ‘what exactly are we paying for?’ These publics are becoming increasingly wary of the rise in tuition with little to show for the extra costs beyond a stable of well-paid administrators who insist that cuts to programming and services are the only way to fix structural deficits. While university administrators are easy targets for a spend-thrift politician’s criticism, “there’s a strong argument to be made that university presidents across North America are paid too much. There has been huge salary escalation over the last 15 years” (Simons, 2018).

Simons references the recent conflict between the University of Alberta’s president, David Turpin and the Minister of Advanced Education of Alberta who insists that Turpin’s salary is one of the reasons the university is facing a structural deficit.

“I’d submit that over the past 15 years, the U of A’s own management structure became dangerously top heavy, with too many well-paid senior administrators pushing paper while underpaid sessional and adjunct lecturers actually teach the classes. But those are huge, systemic problems that bedevil big universities right across the country. Attacking Turpin’s character or his salary doesn’t begin to address the structural flaws in our post-secondary system” (Simons, 2018).

Speaking systemically, the issue of an individual administrator’s salary or a single university’s decision to cut programs or raise tuition are not important in and of themselves. The wider problem is a system of funding and incentives that has driven the current condition into being. There is no national education strategy as there is in Germany or France. No centralized plan to have a higher education system that pulls in the same direction. Instead, there are 10 different governments with varying levels of capacity all trying to apply their standards of success to a multi-tiered population of universities, colleges and vocational schools.

If one is looking to provincial governments to save the day by creating a more effective higher education industry, faith in those governments seems less than full. According to a new OCUFA survey, 60% of respondents said they have little or no trust in the Ontario government's ability to make decisions about the quality of education. Only corporations scored lower on that question, while faculty were trusted by 75% of respondents. As Chiose (2018b) reports, "there is almost unanimous support for the idea that universities should be a model employer and provide good jobs."

If university administrations are not trusted to right the ship and even fewer people trust governments to help, where then is the solution going to come from that will improve the reputation of the industry?

This paper has shown that the reputations of particular institutions can rise and fall regardless of if the top communicator sits within the dominant coalition. This does not disprove the Excellence Theory but rather reinforces the need for true investment in communications as a function not only of messaging and reputation guarding but as a trusted source of advice on key decisions.

Currently, there are likely many opportunities at universities across the country that could use the long-sighted skillset of a professional communicator to tell the hard truths and ask the tough questions as a way of illuminating the growing disconnect between stated intention and delivered action. These communicators can influence decision-makers into staying true to the mission that institution has publicly promoted simply by questioning if expansion is always the right decision. They could ask if additional degree offerings, based not on economic demand but of applicant interest, are in the best interest of the institution's future. They could re-frame the discussion of whether to build another campus (the answer is always yes) to a discussion of how the university could move closer to being an integrated force for good in society.

Take for instance, the issue of international students. Canadian universities have no trouble findings students from outside of Canada to fill their lecture halls and seminars; in fact, Canada has recently replaced the United Kingdom as the second most popular destination to study after the United States (O'Malley, 2018). The immediate benefits of admitting a high number of international students is obvious – the ability to raise tuition rates higher and faster than for domestic students. Canadian universities are preoccupied with attracting foreign students to boost revenues but as Francis (2018) notes "they should be concentrating on preparing the country to meet future technological challenges by identifying those credentials and skills that are strategically important to meeting the needs of the future economy such as science, technology, engineering, and computer science. These courses must be offered to Canadians only and not to outsiders who will take these skills home and build their economies in order to compete against Canada" (Francis, 2018).

Francis' argument is economic, but from a communications point of view it seems shortsighted of universities to be relying so heavily on international student fees to meet short term financial goals while damaging the long-term reputation of the institution. The Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education said that foreign student attendance in universities soared by 88.5% since 2010, while enrolment of domestic students grew just seven per cent. There are now

192,000 full and part-time overseas university students in the country, out of a total of 1.7 million enrolled students (Francis, 2018).

A professional communicator needs the ability and position to ask whether the industry can sustain this level of subsidy for more international students into a domestically-funded public education system without any negative public relations blowback.

The institutionalists referenced in this paper would likely point to the financial crisis of 2008 as an example of what could happen. The myth-making apparatus of the real estate and financial industries were victims of their own success in establishing homeownership as the gold standard of financial stability and happiness. So too has the post-secondary education industry made it abundantly clear to the population that the road to success and a lifetime of opportunity runs through their campuses.

If an undergraduate degree was not enough to secure gainful employment universities are quick to offer their suite of graduate programs as the solution. The bubble burst in the housing and financial sector when the system could no longer sustain the kind of debt-financed expansion that fueled the housing and credit boom. A similar bubble exists in Canada, one inflated by a hyper-credentialist mentality that is perpetuated by universities and governments who keep expanding access to students with little consideration of cost and potential for positive outcomes. New degree programs, new buildings, new campuses – all are contributing to the accelerating devaluing of undergraduate education. The communicator's role in this bubble should be to use the power of persuasive messaging to let some air out of it before it bursts.

This paper has attempted to make sense of the overwhelming number of factors that influence the public's perception of an industry as complex as high education. It has attempted to do this by applying comprehensive research strategies to learn more about the real-world effects a professional communicator can have on an institution’s reputation. It has tried to determine to what extent the industry is even asking the right questions when it comes to the pursuit of reputation drivers among its intended audiences. And it has measured the capacity for the current system, in all its variety of structure and design, to affect real change for good in a populist society that grows ever-suspicious of large, elite organizations that over promise and under deliver.

What the future of professional communications practices and theories will be in this new social context remains to be seen, but surely there is always going to be a place for the integrity, honesty and capacity for excellence of the communicator’s mission.

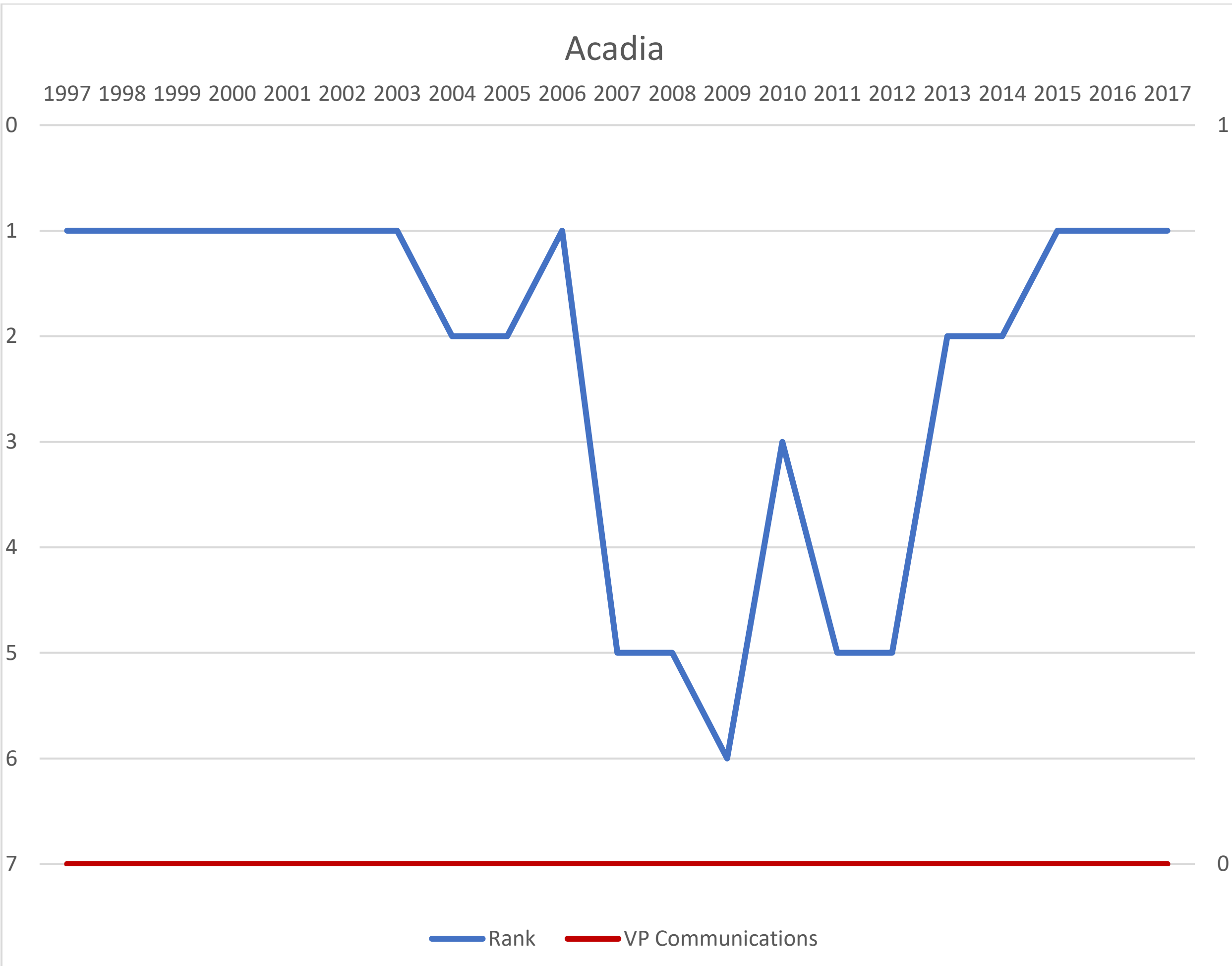
9. Appendices

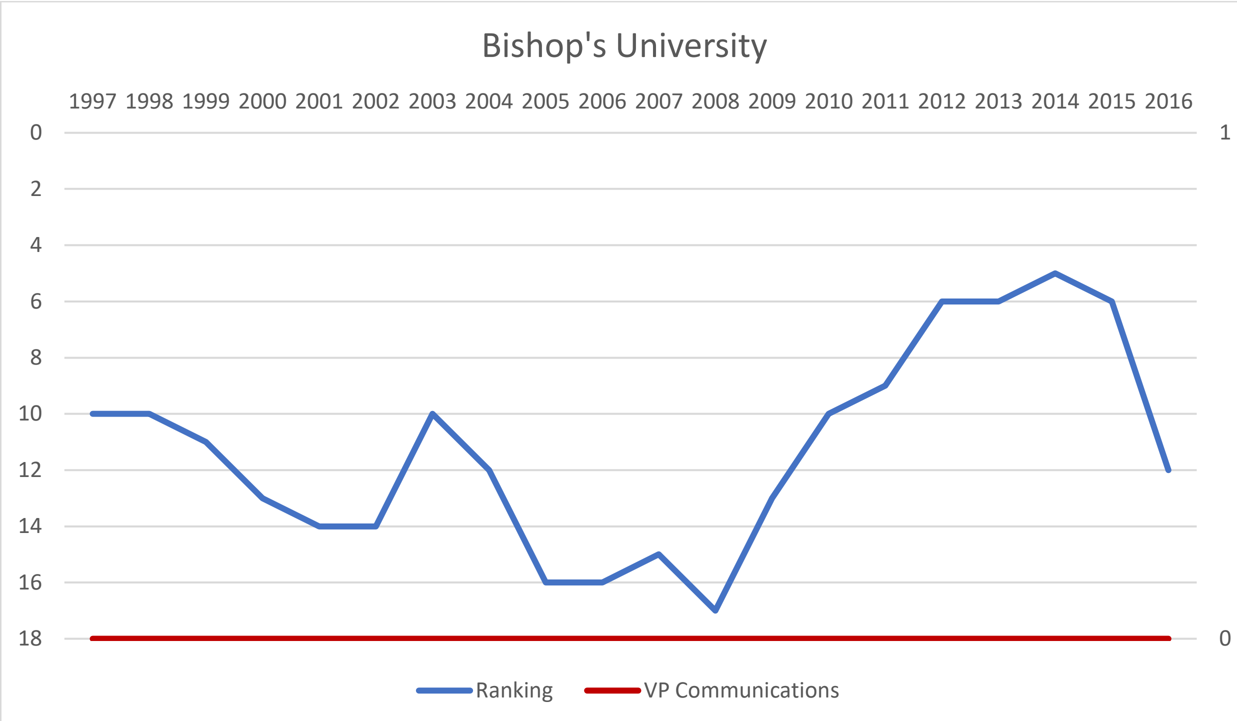
Appendix 1: Coder Form

Publication/Broadcast Name: *Example Name*
Publication/Broadcast Date: *Example Date*

Coder Questions	Yes	No				
Subject Matter Relevant to university reputation?						
Explicit reference to reputation?						
Inferred reference to reputation?						
Majority of quotations from:	Students	Graduates	Parents	Faculty	Administrators	Gov't Officials
Explicit or inferred reference to education quality?						
Explicit of inferred reference to leadership in the field of post-secondary education?						
Explicit reference to innovation?						
Explicit reference to additional drivers of reputation? (If yes, what?)						
Inferred reference to additional driver of reputation? (If yes, what?)						

Appendix 2: University reputation rankings performance and presence of VP Communications

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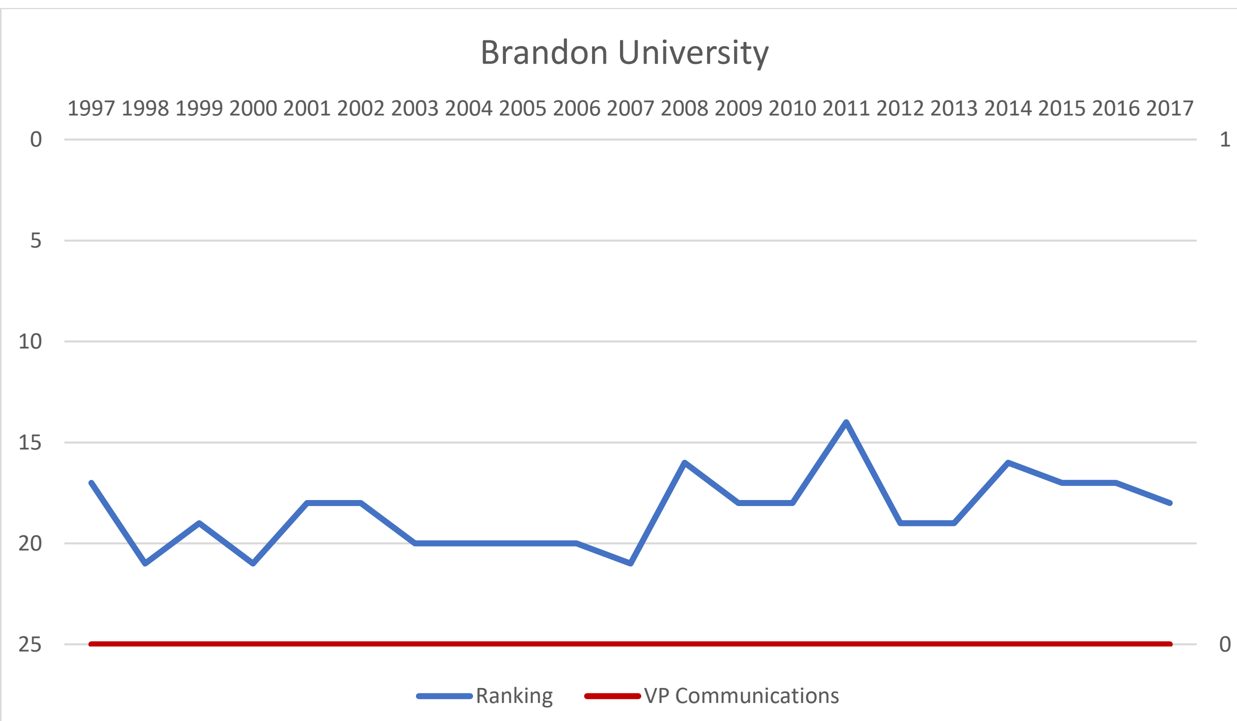
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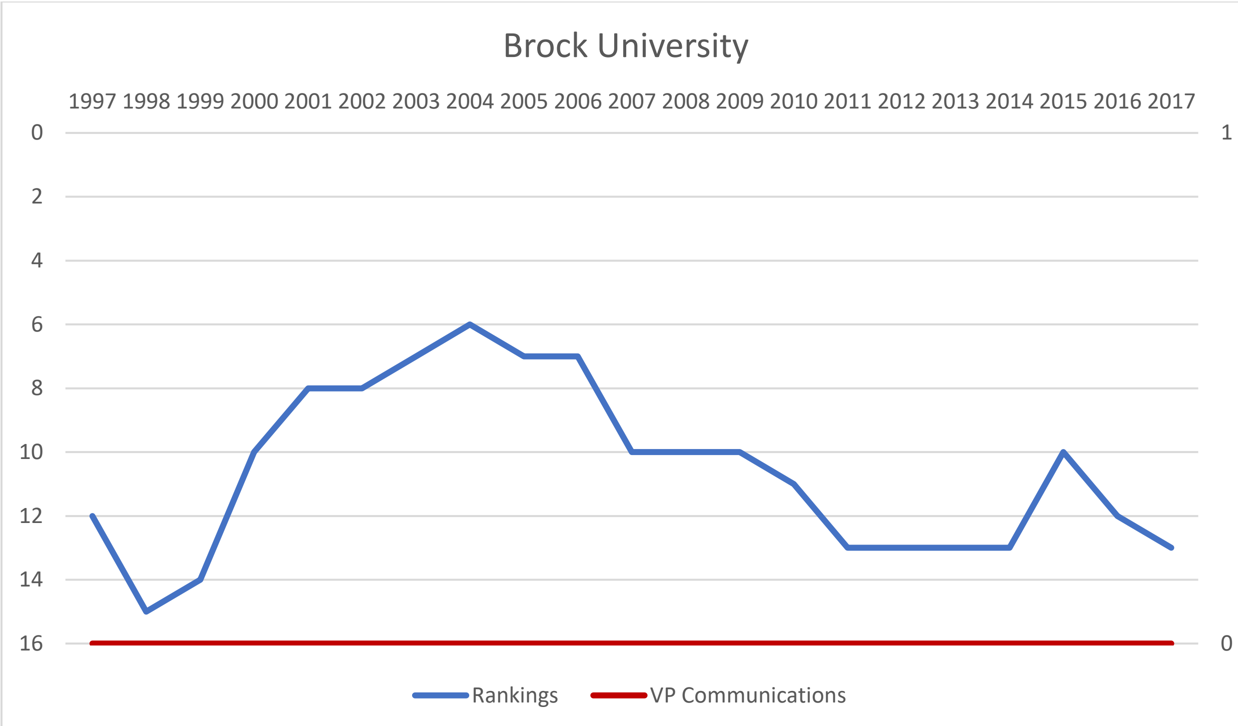
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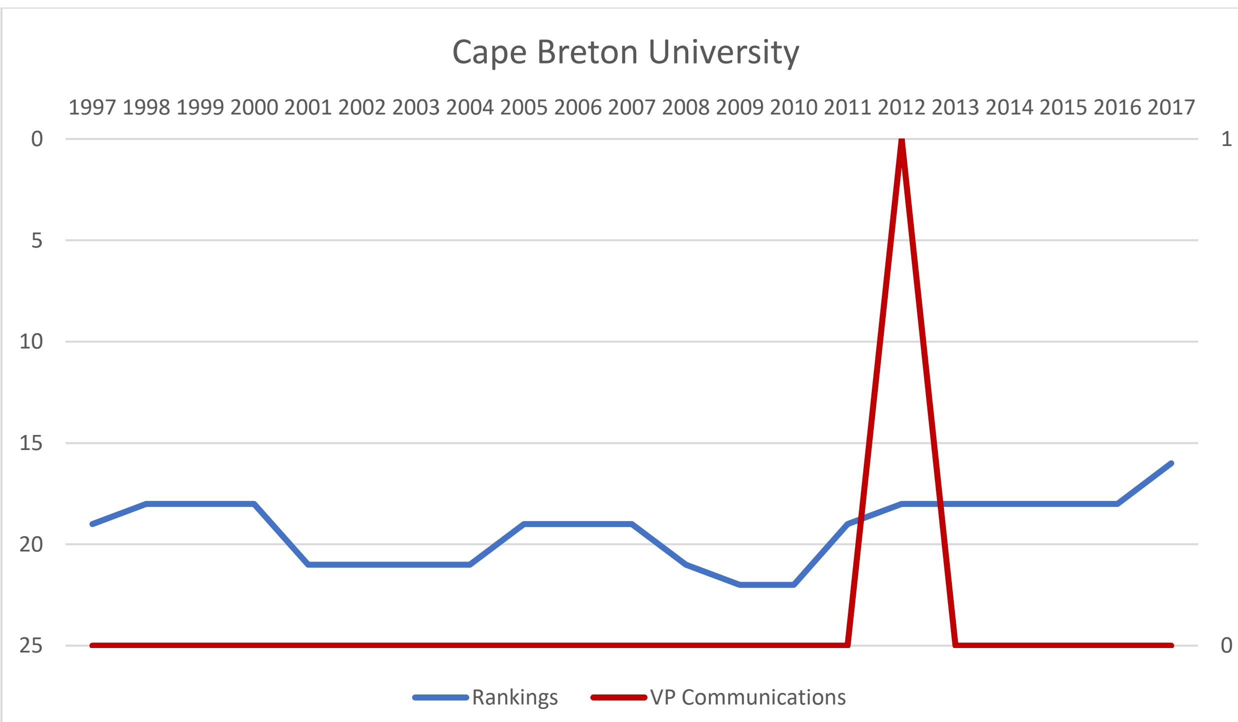
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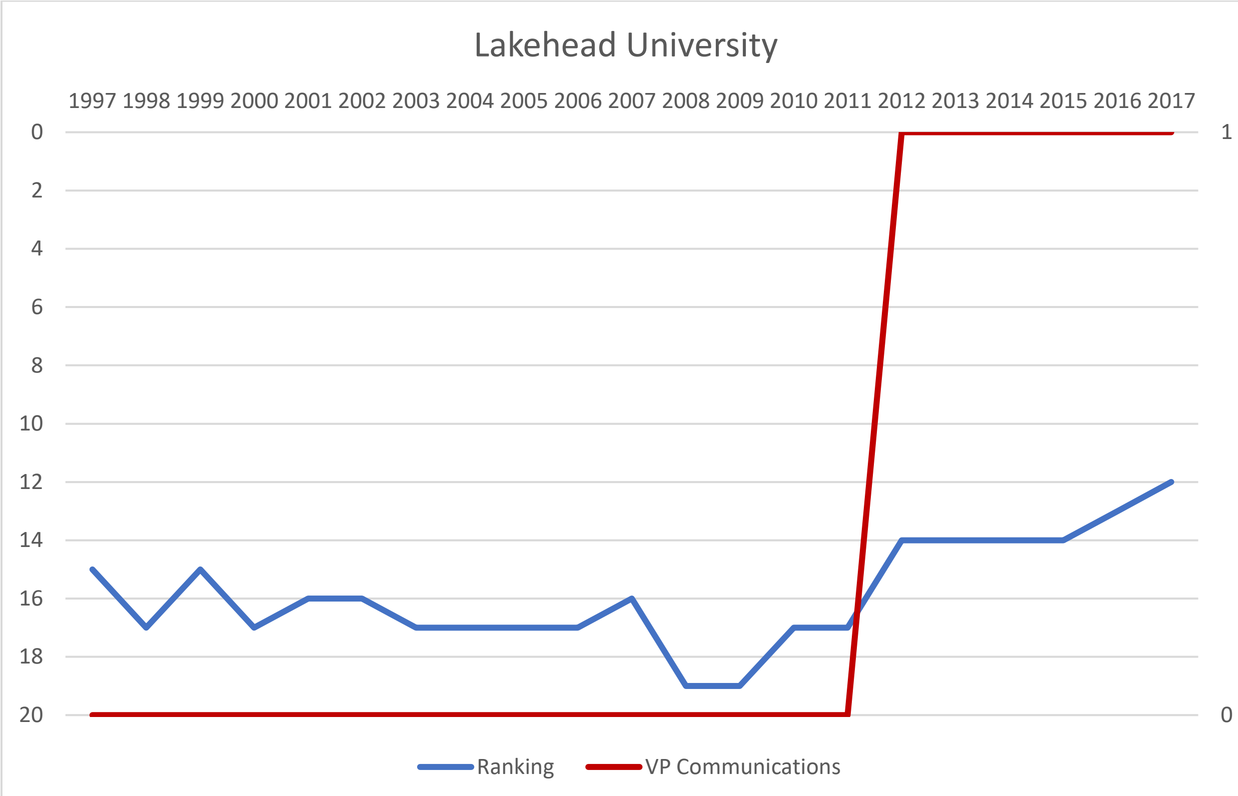
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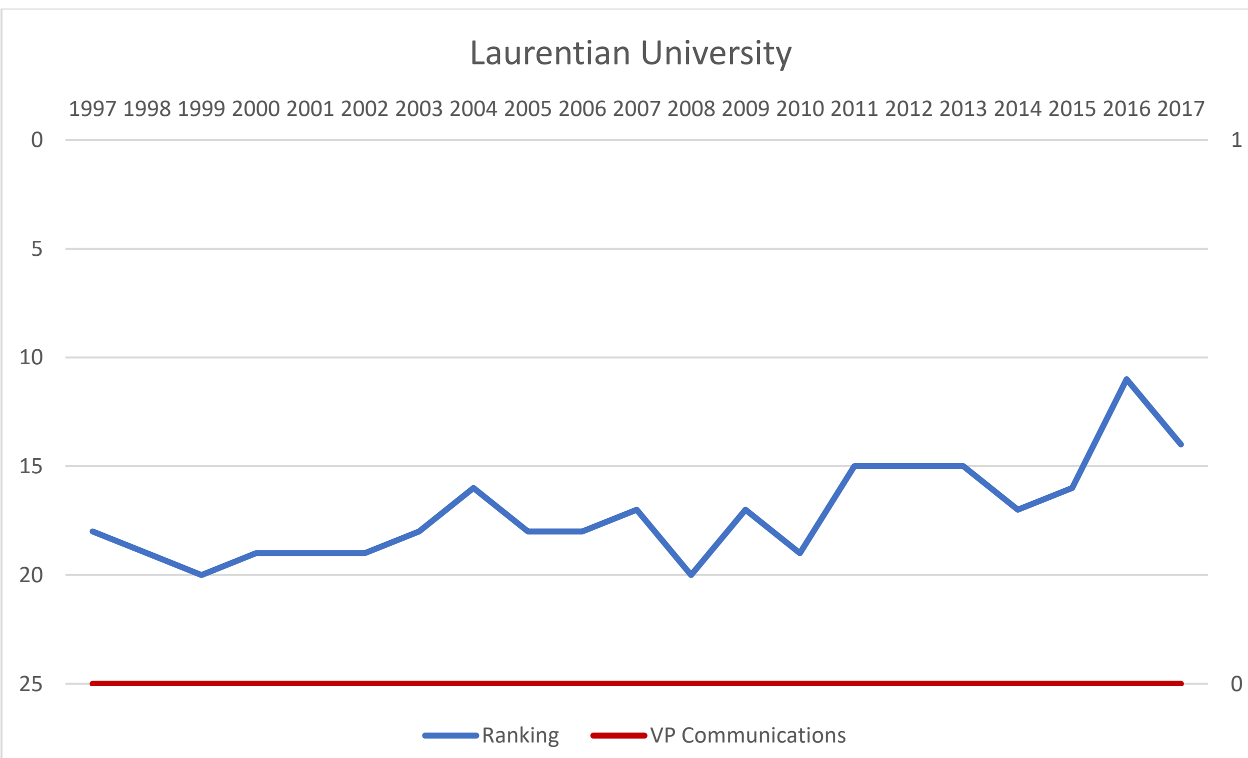
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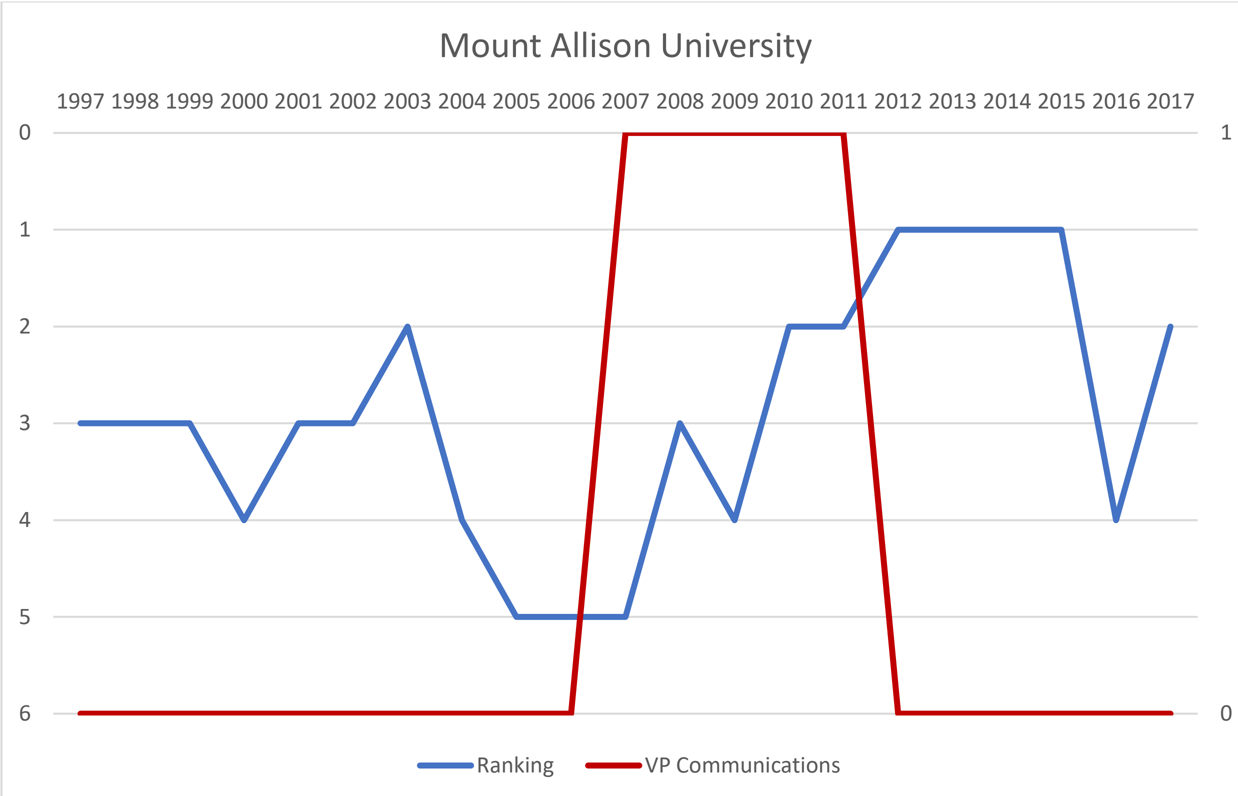
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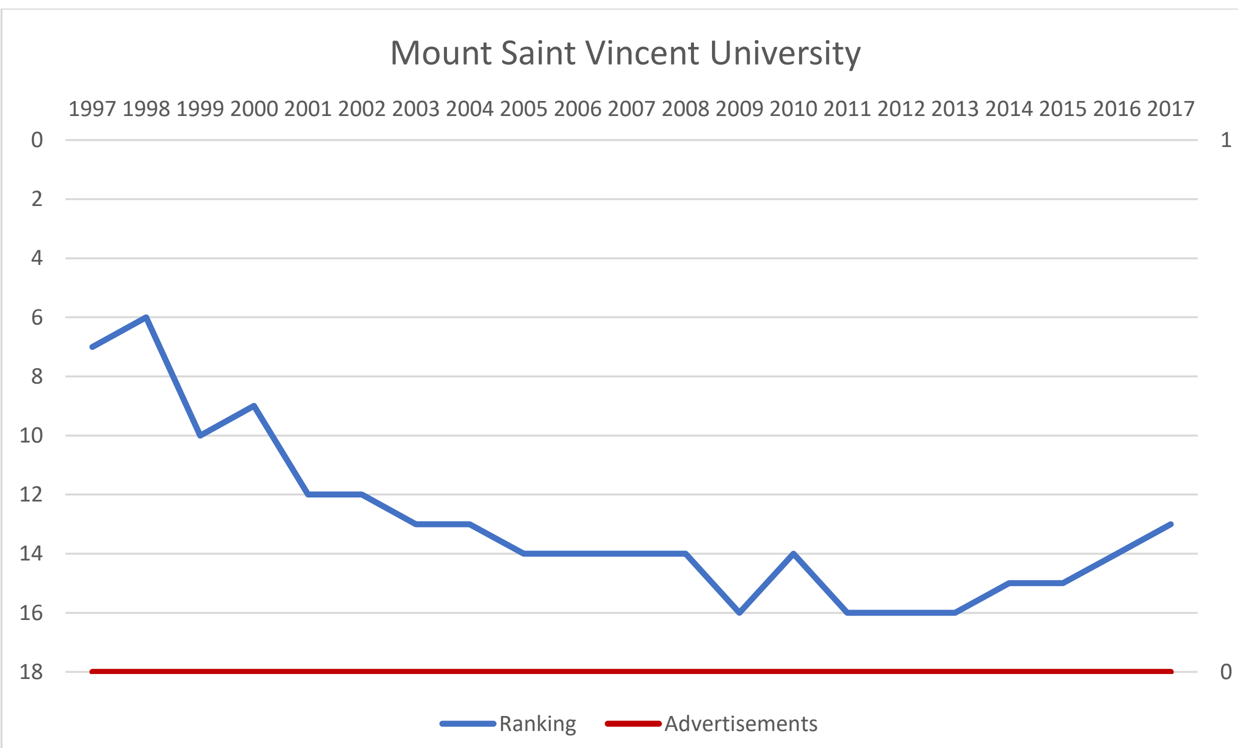
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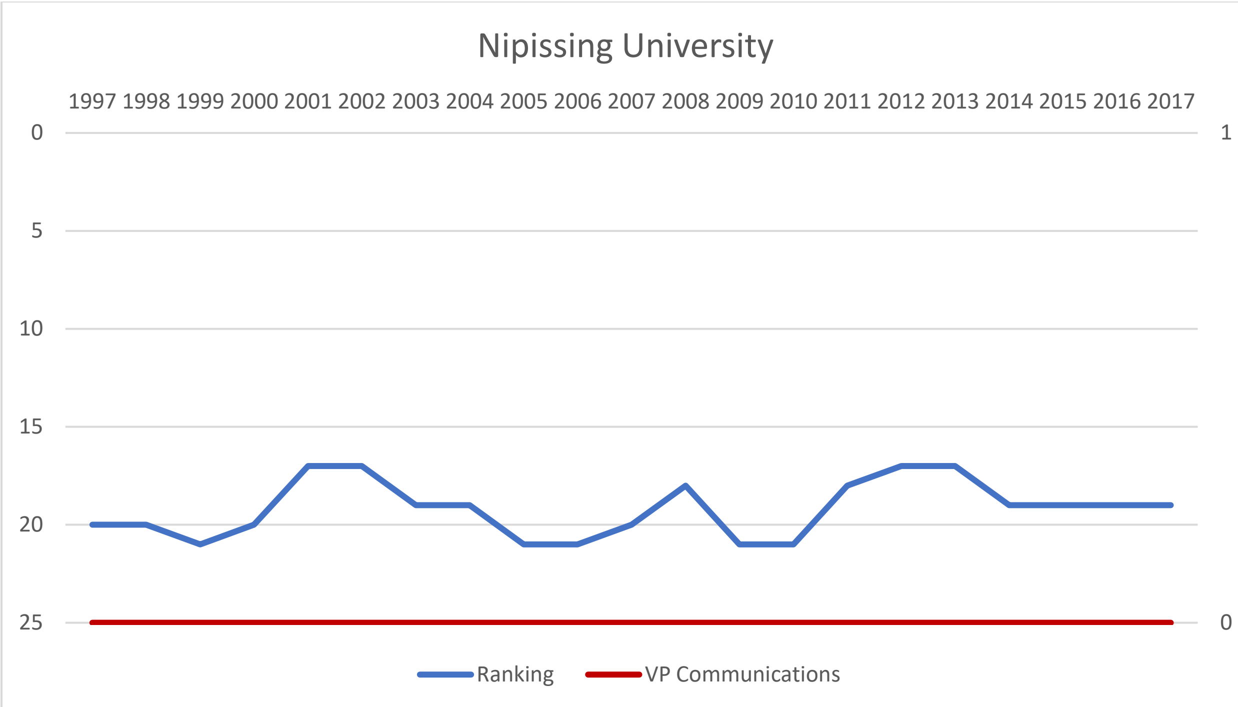
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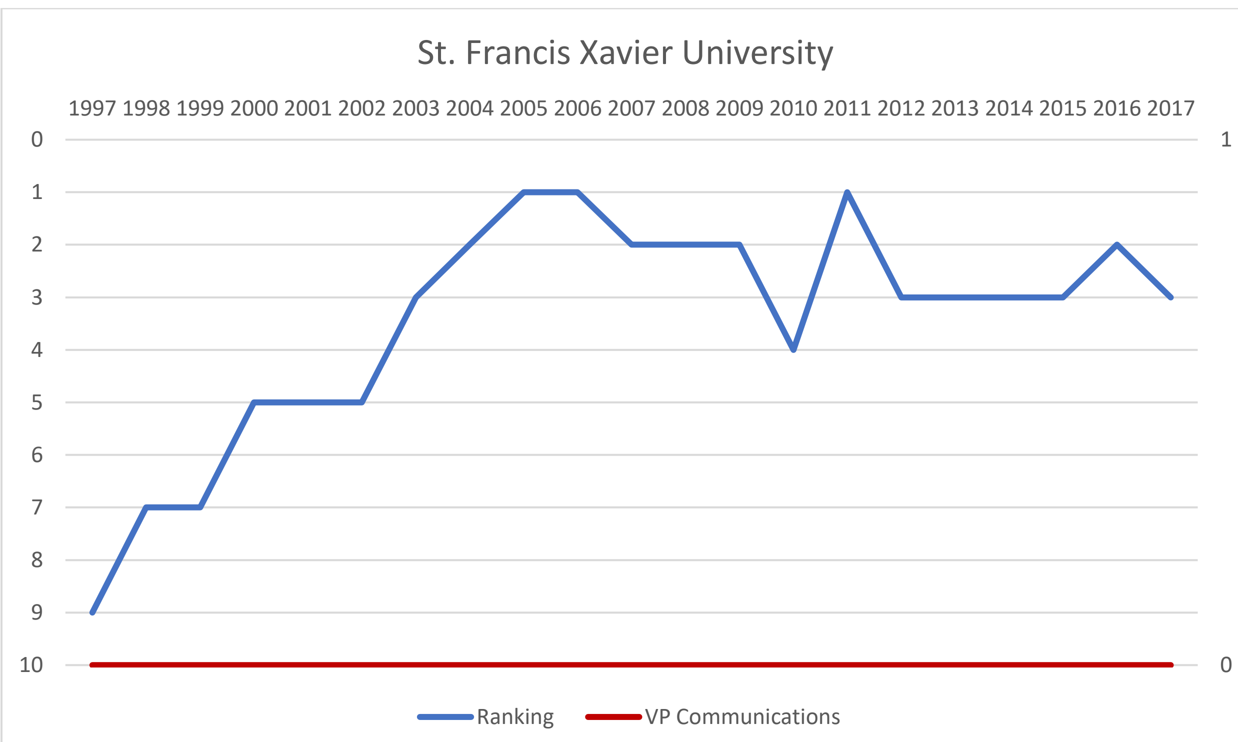
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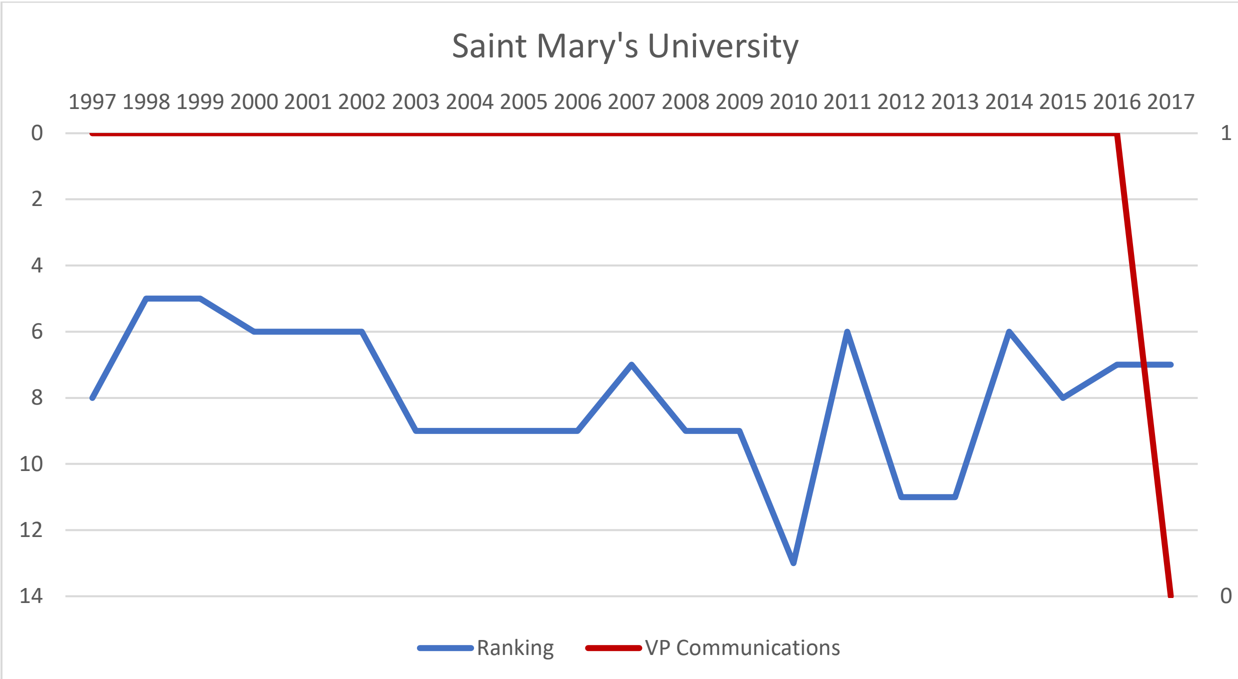
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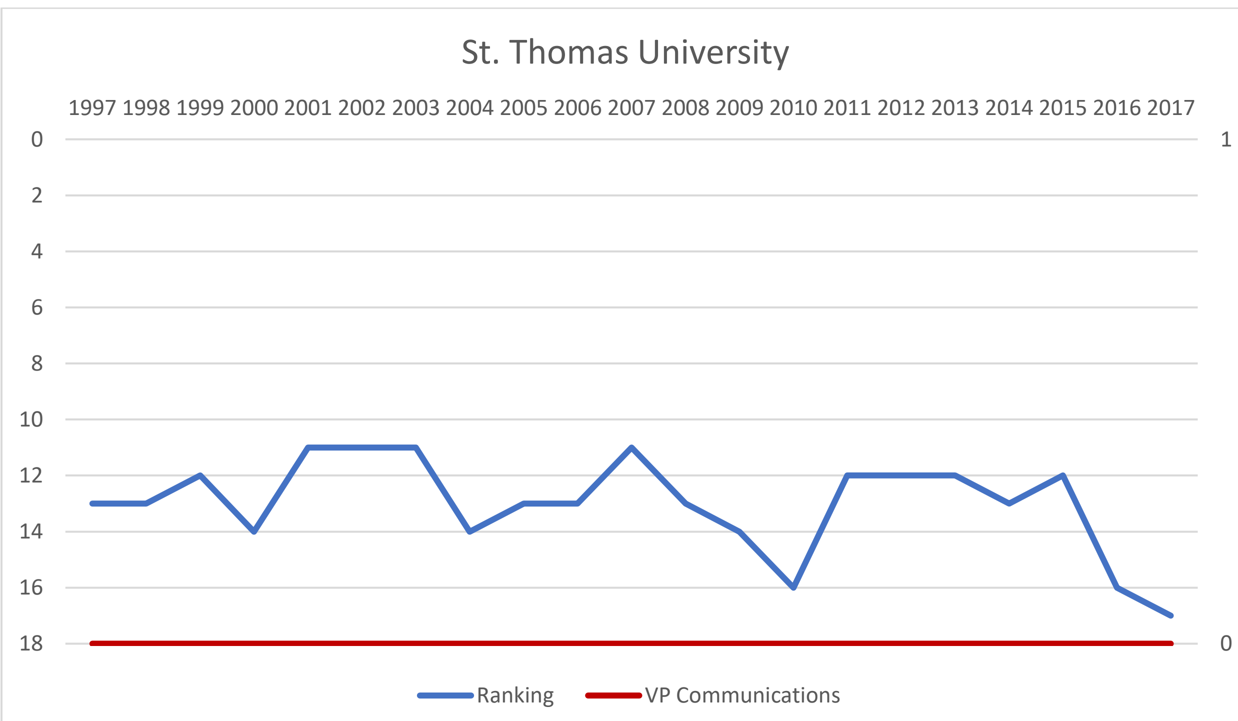
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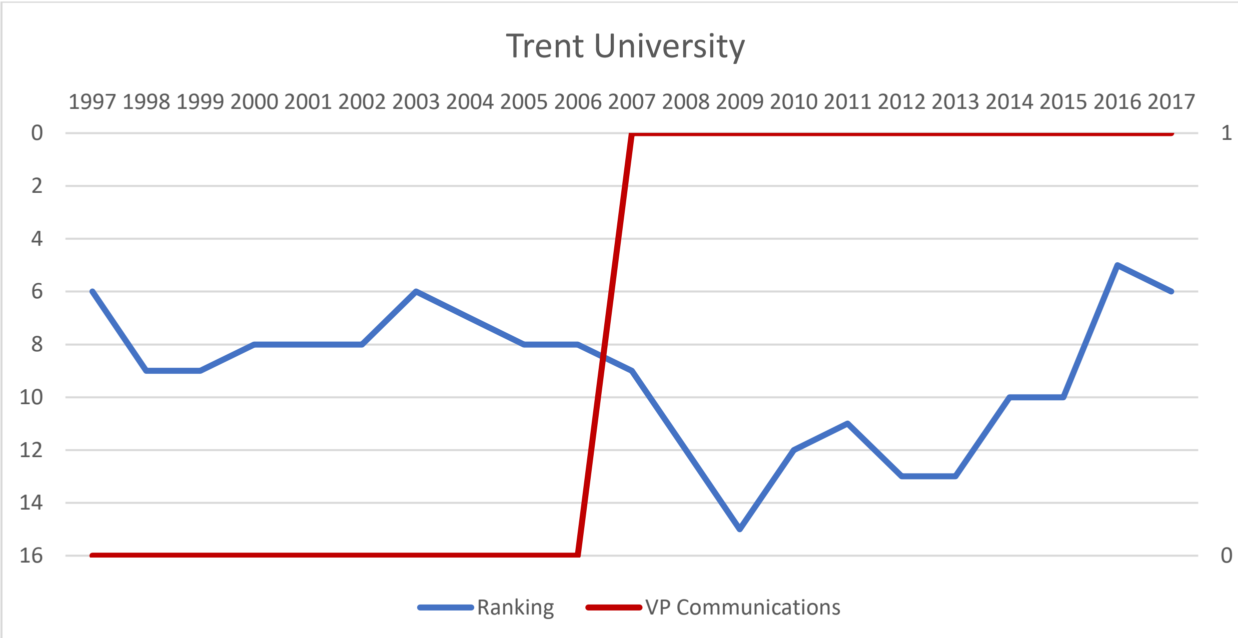
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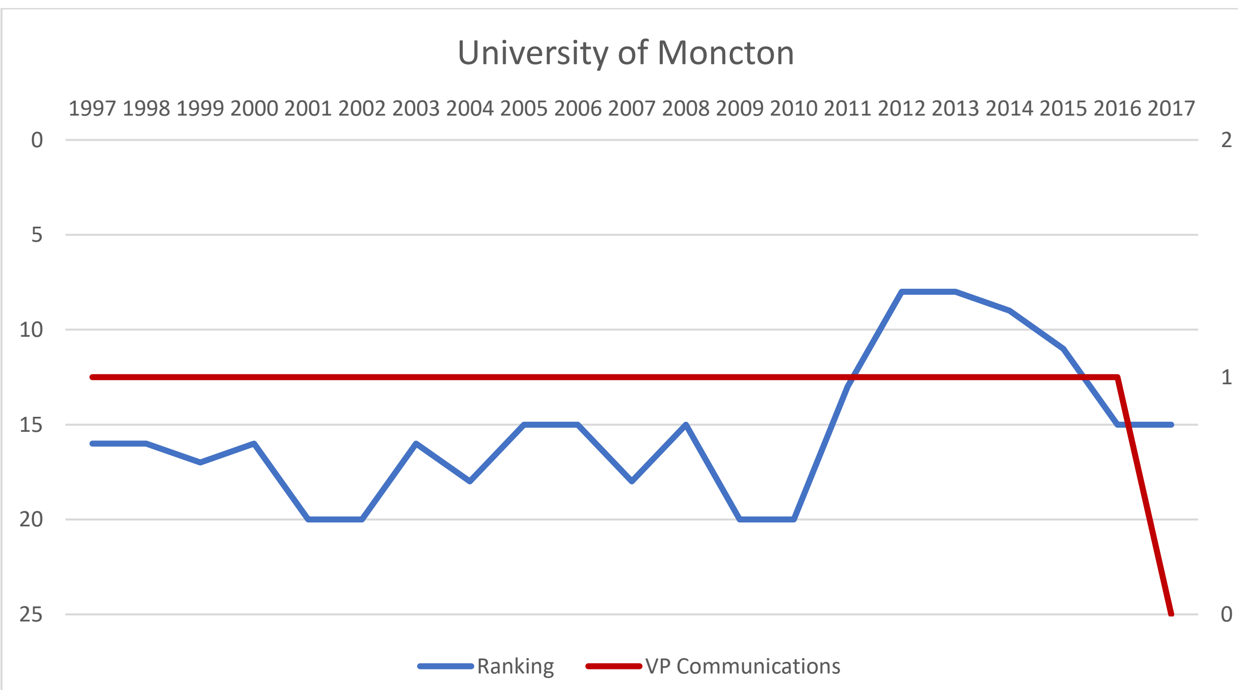
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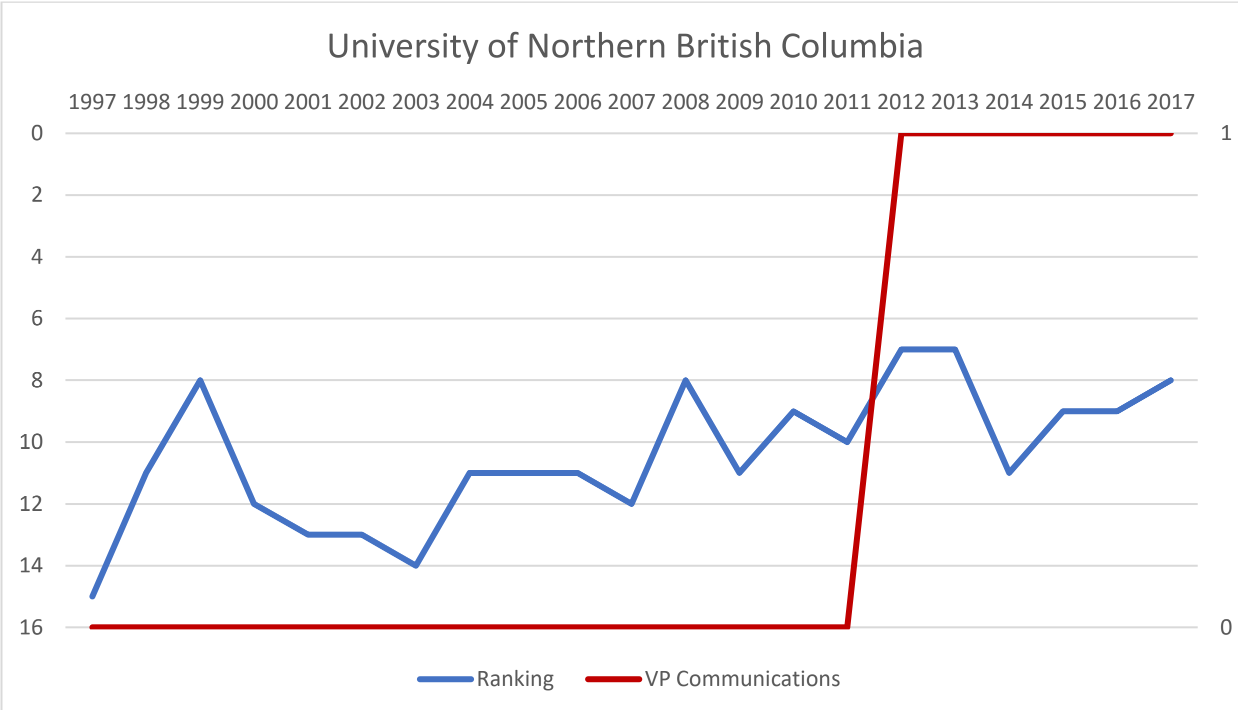
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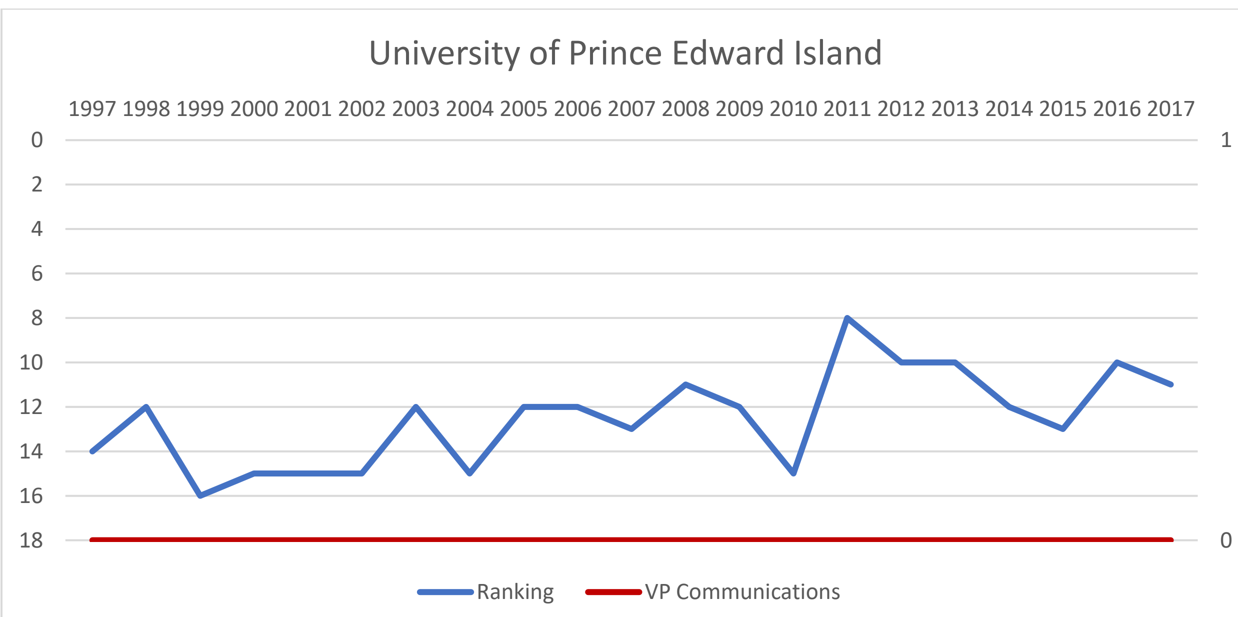
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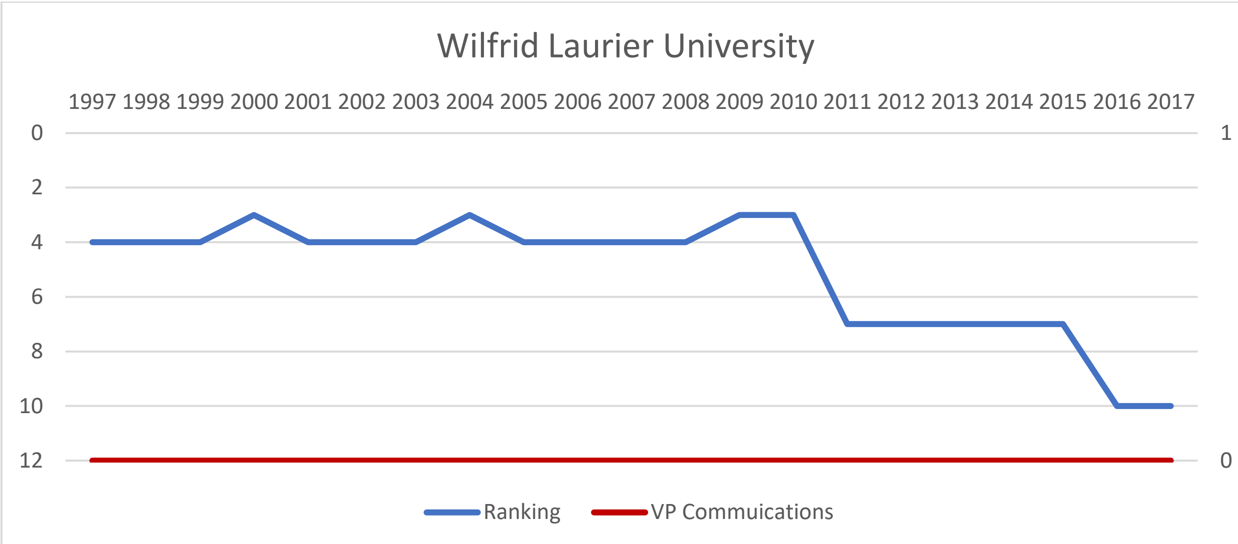
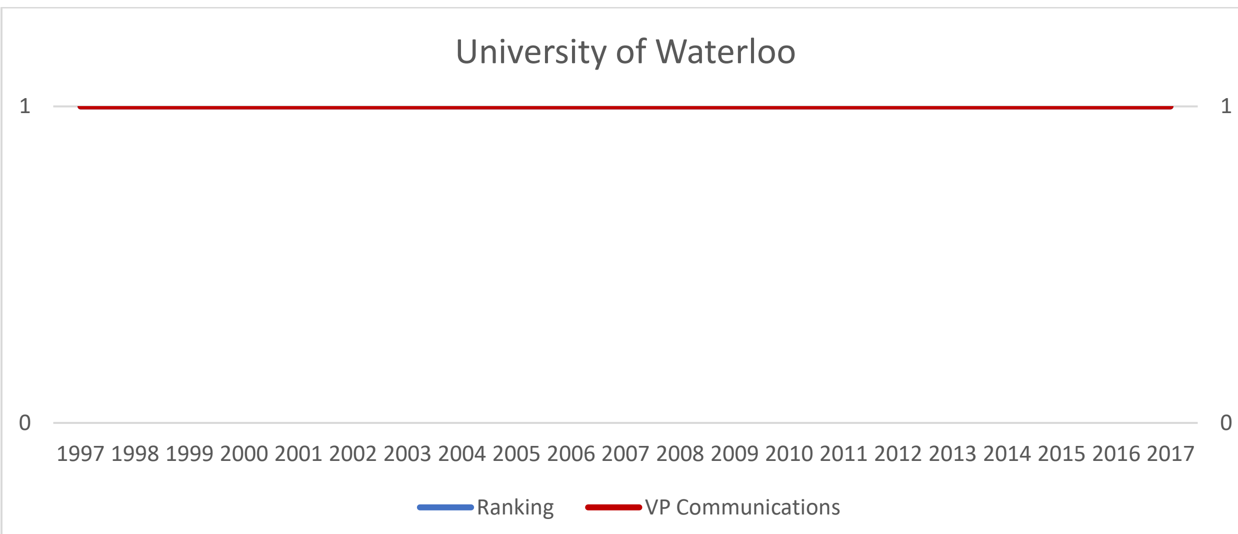
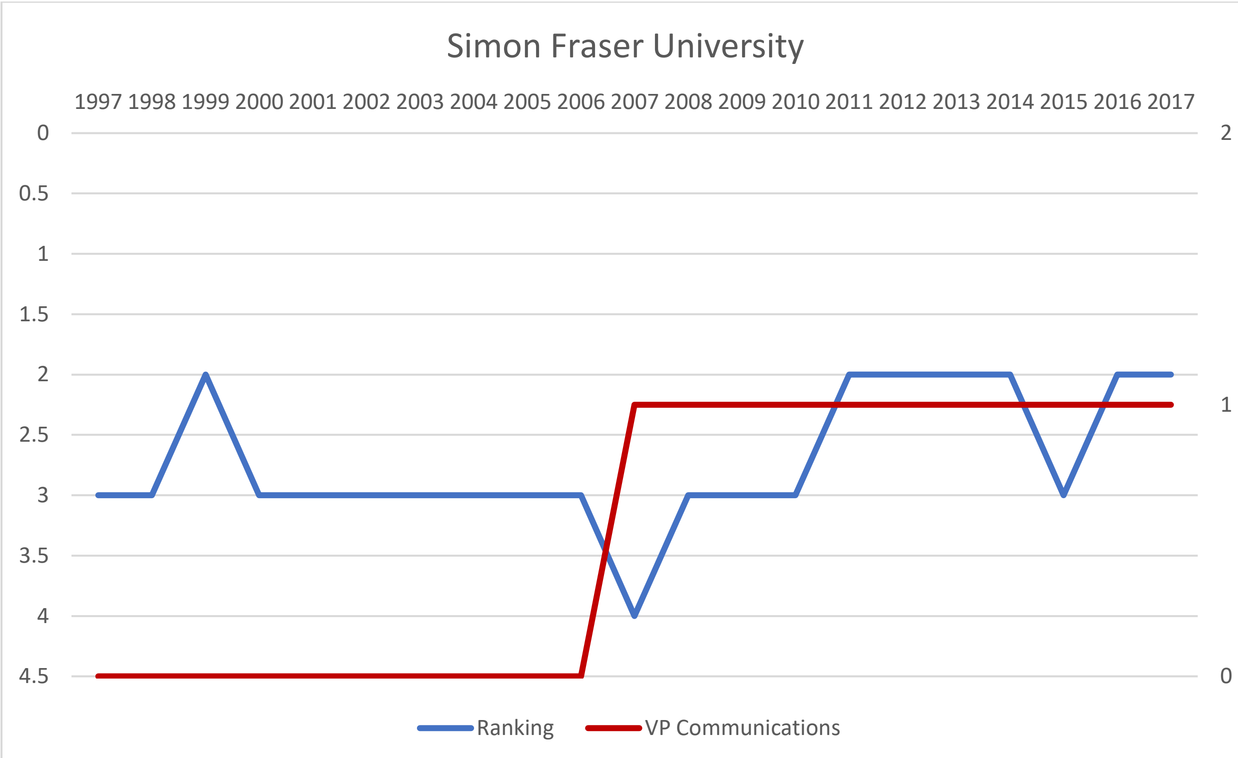




*University of Waterloo maintained #1 position in reputation from 1997-2017.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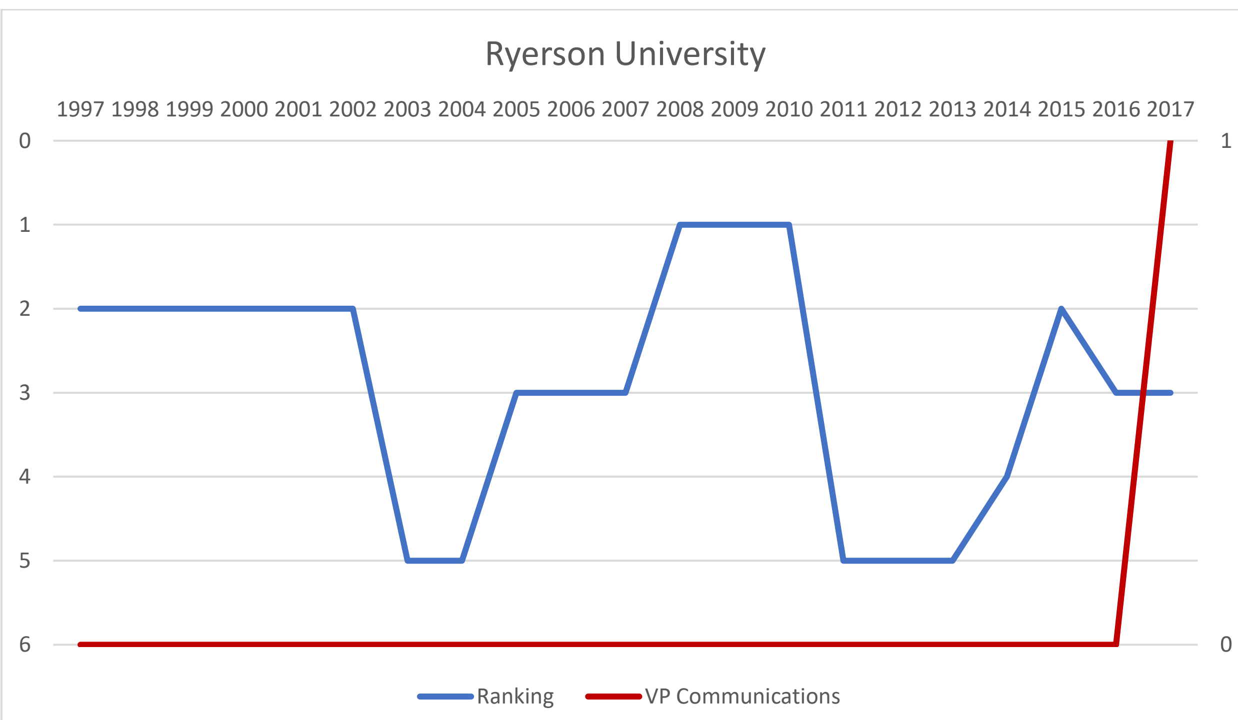
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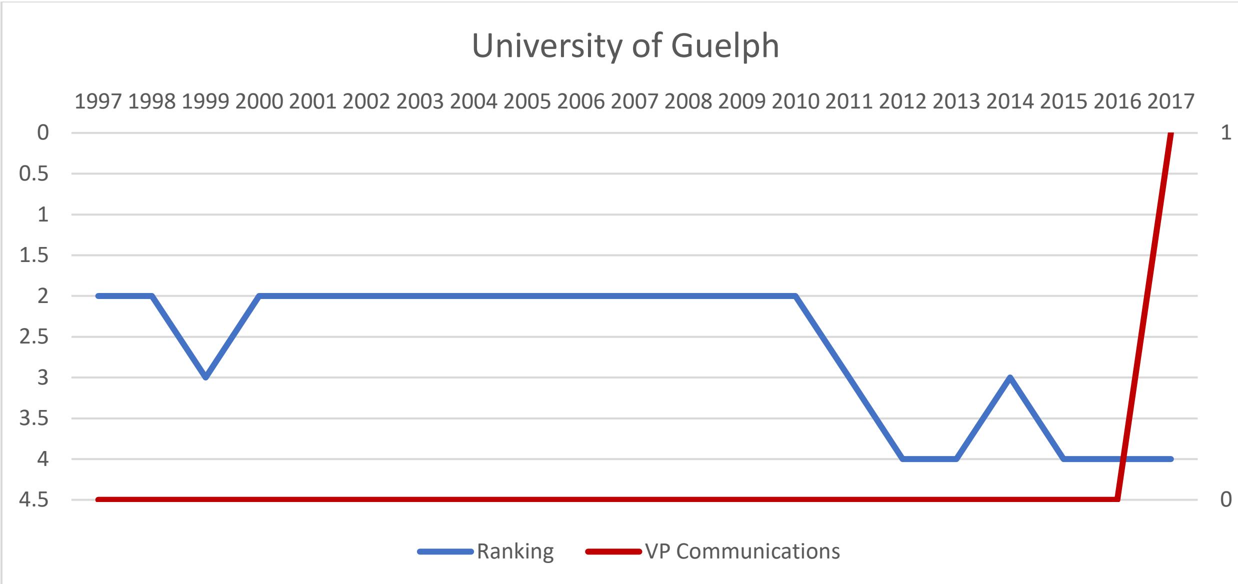
University of Guelph
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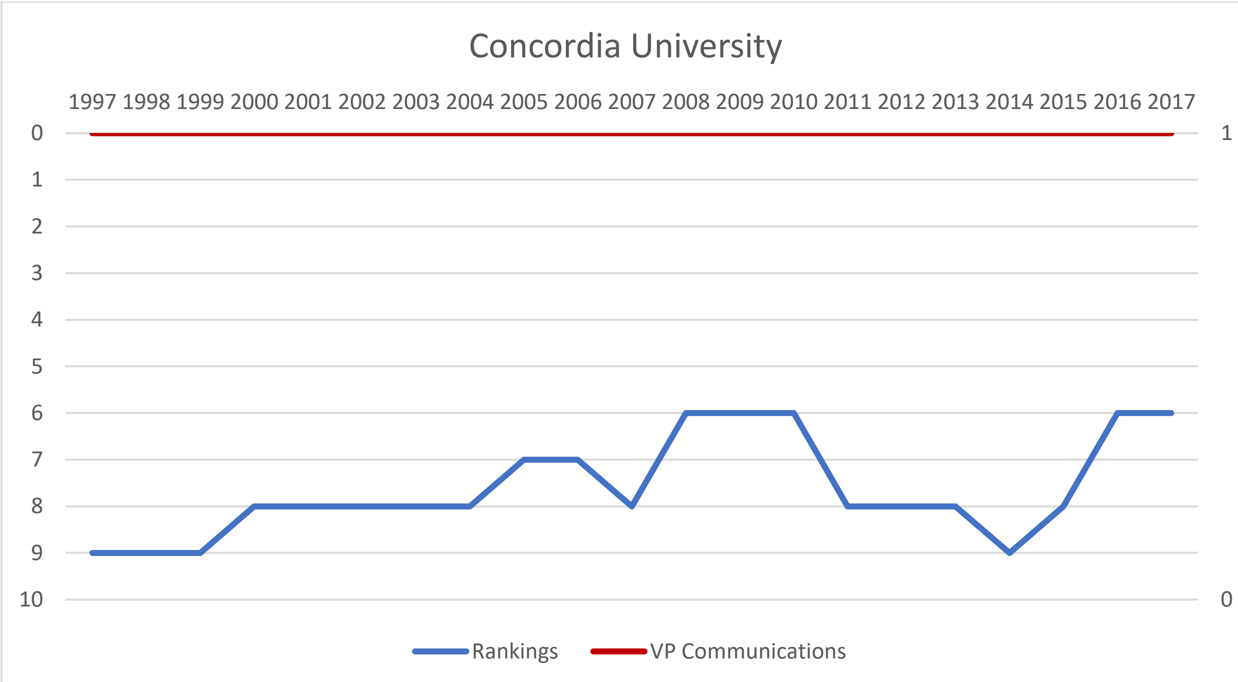
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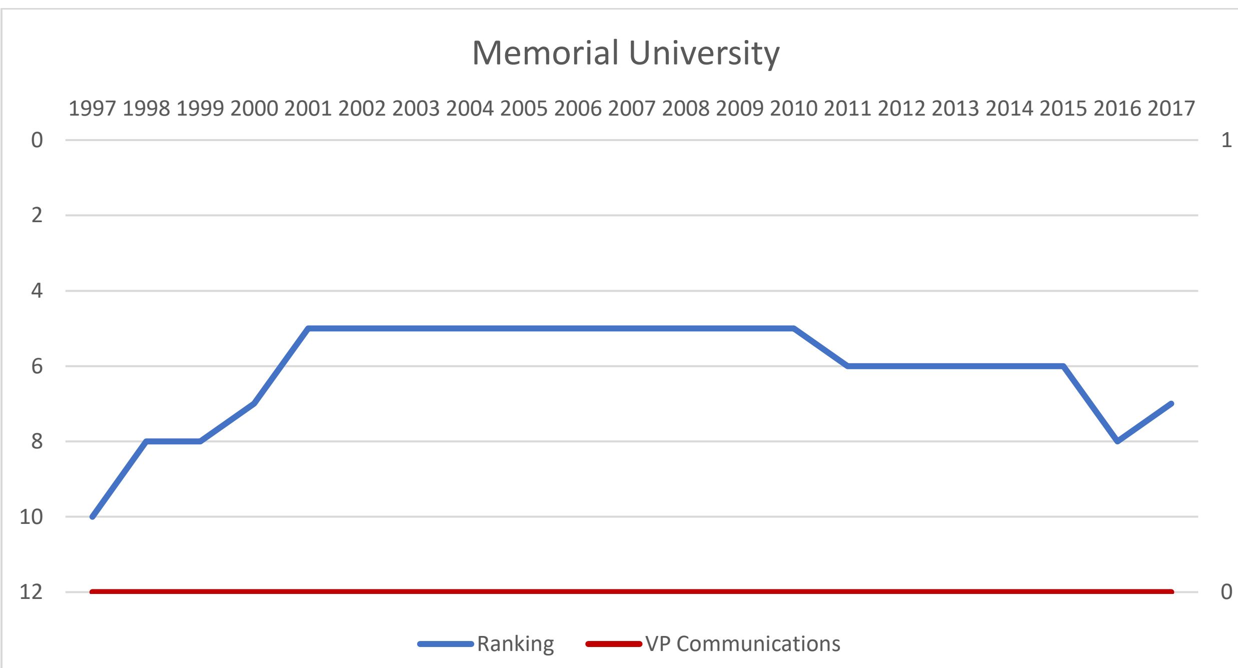
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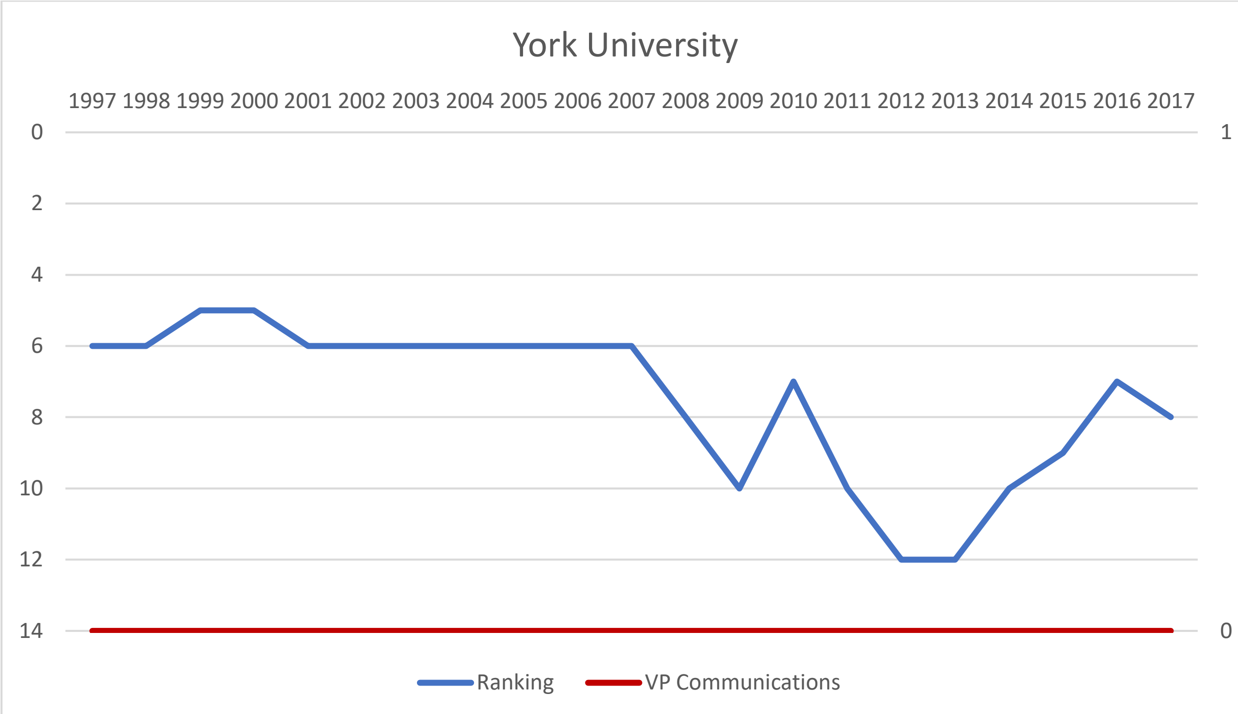
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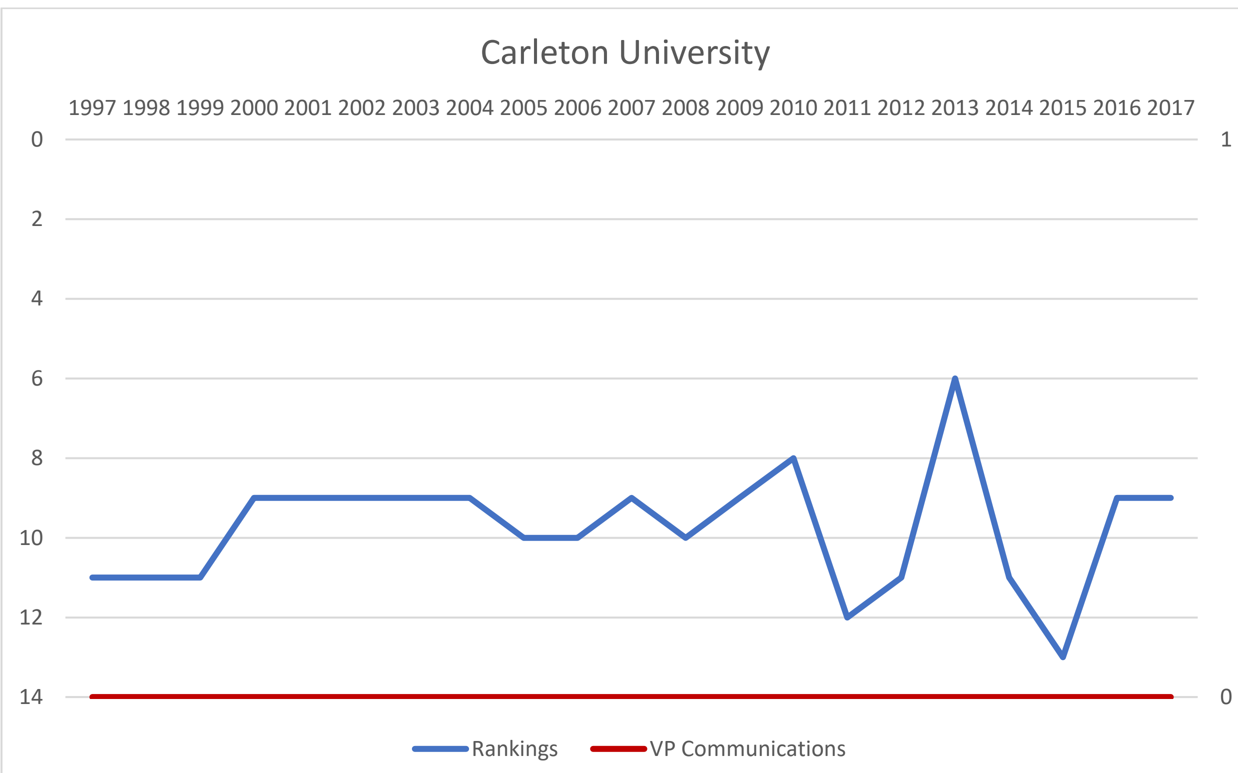
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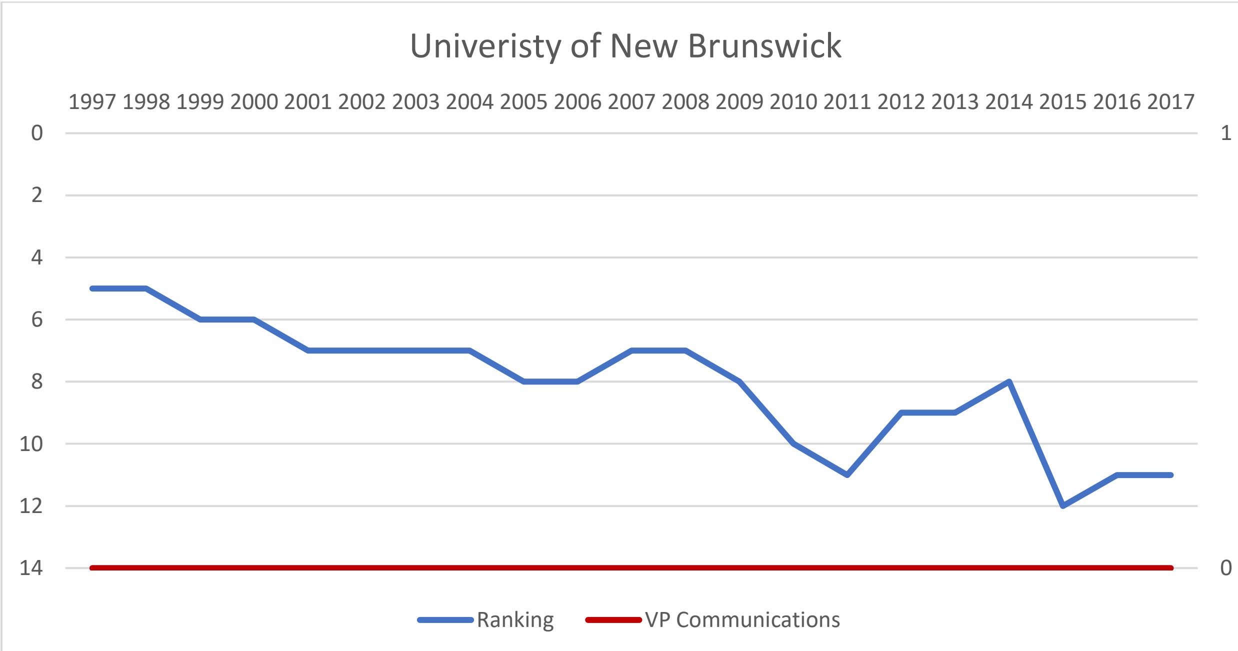
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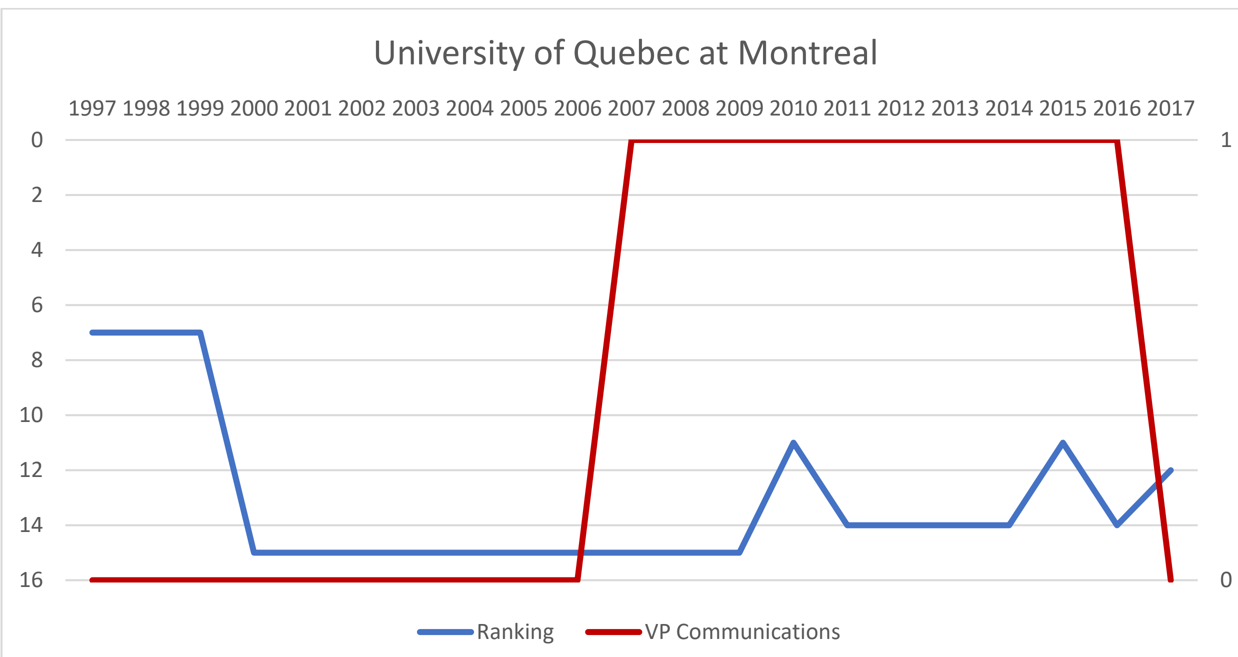
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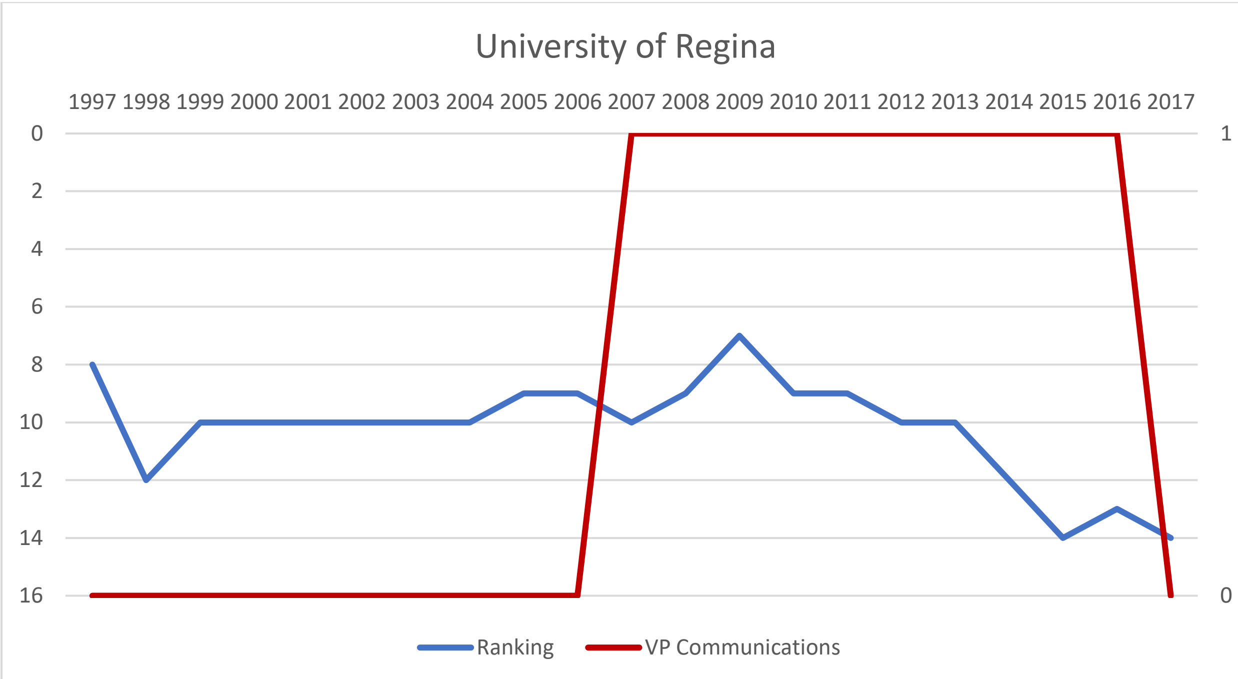
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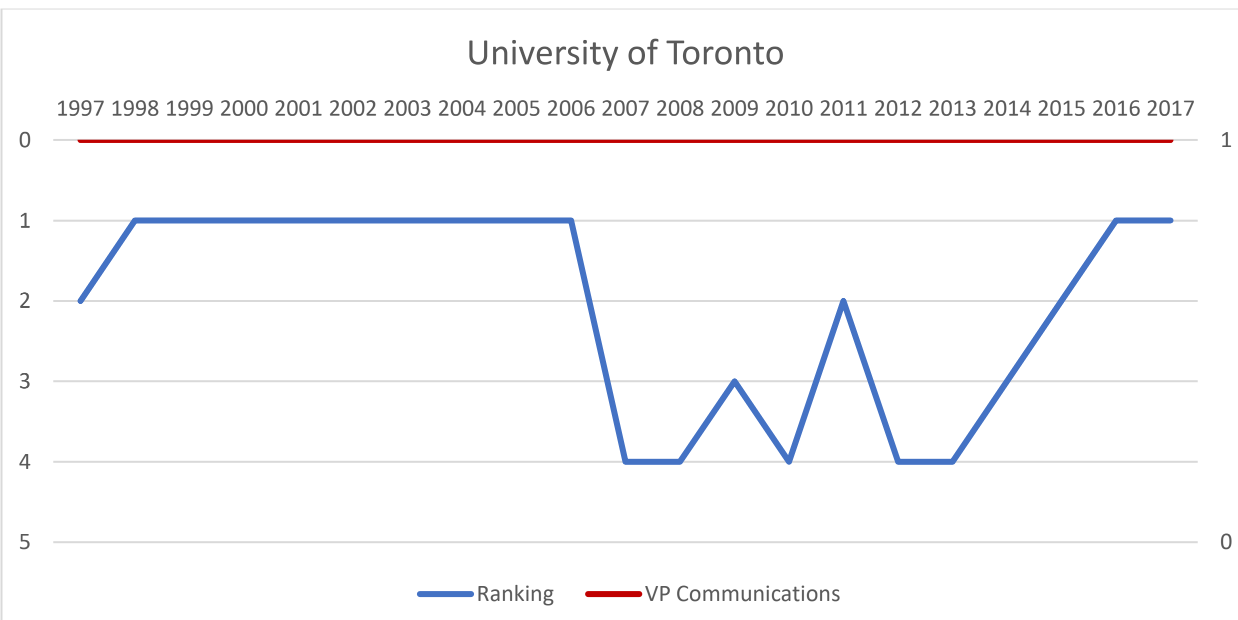
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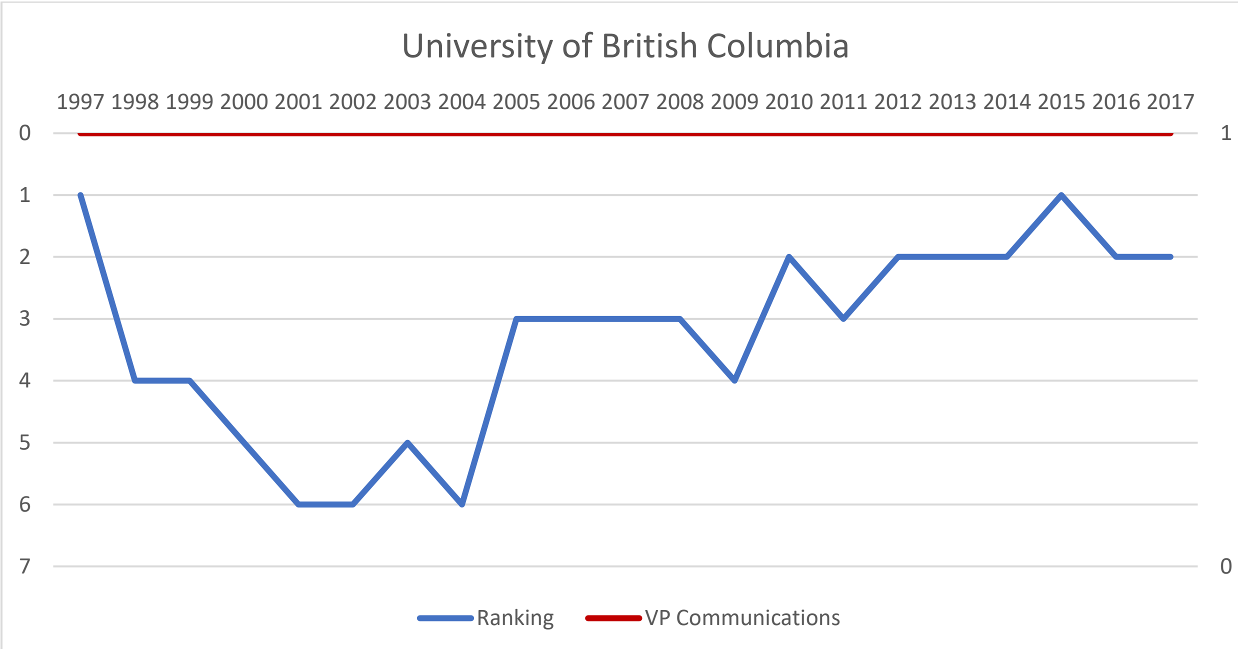
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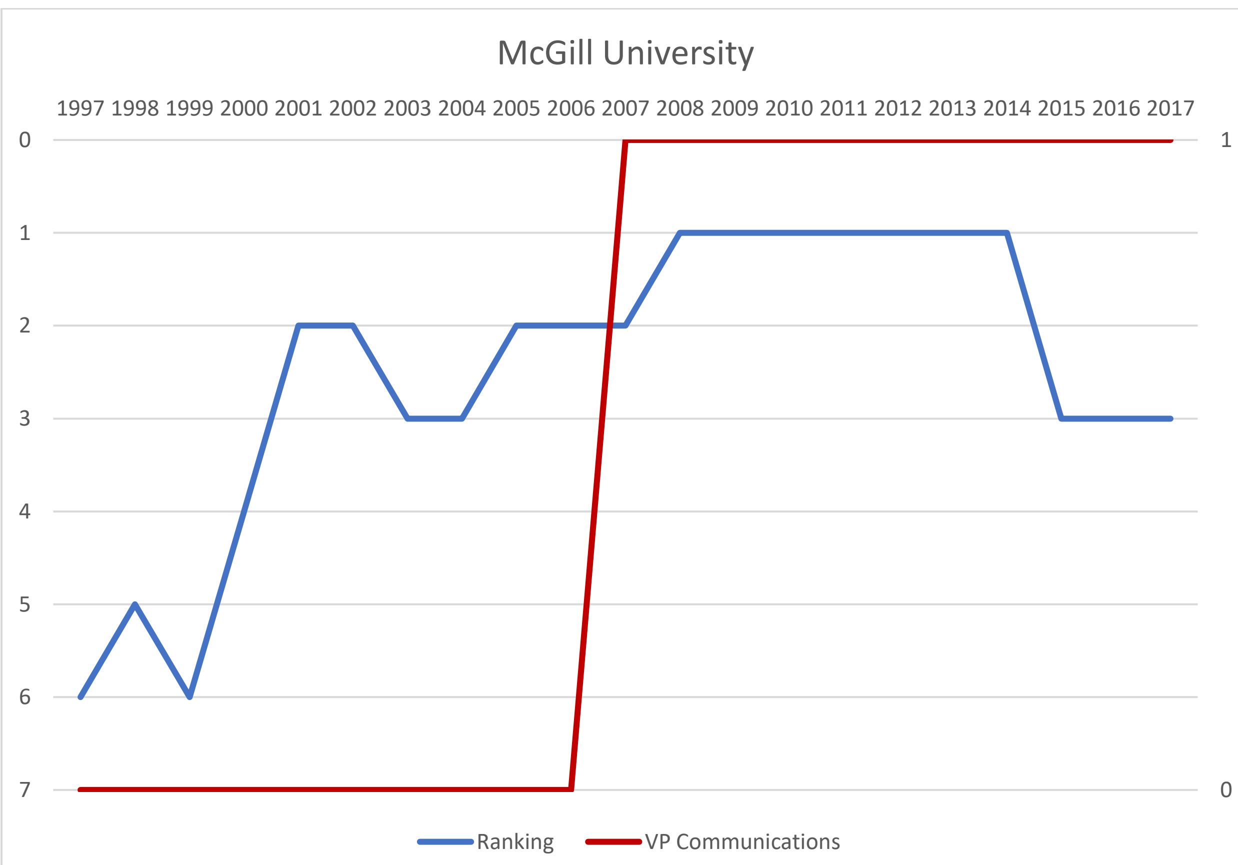
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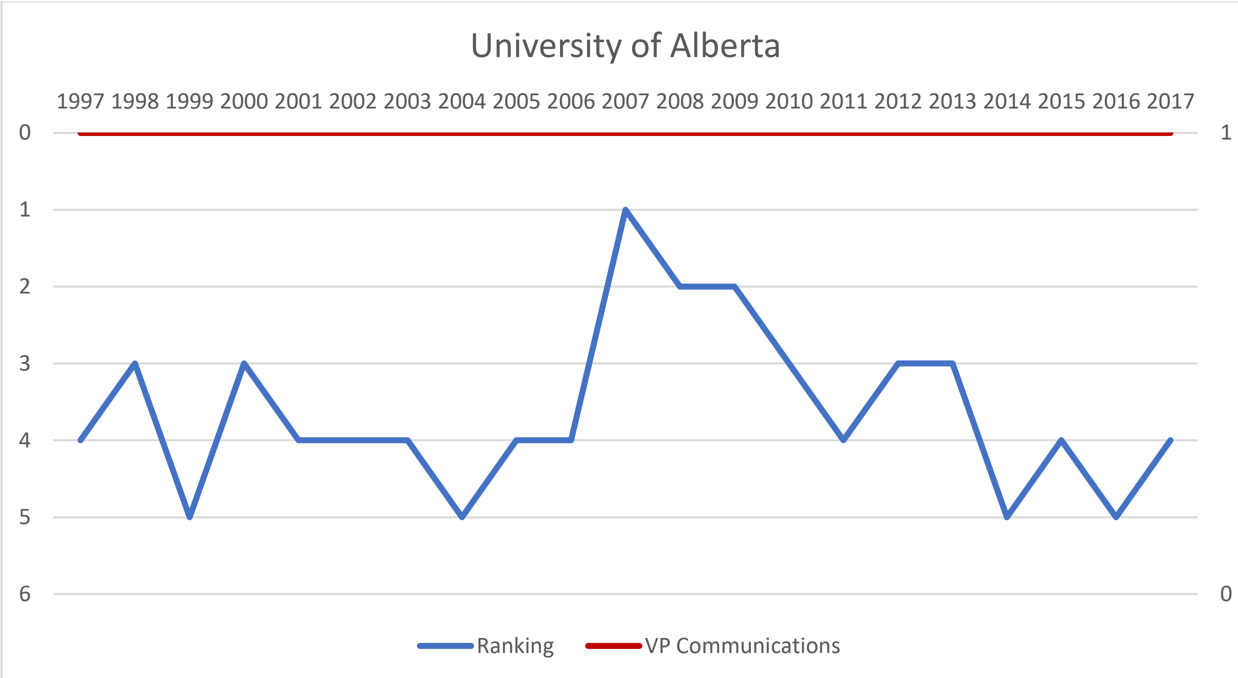
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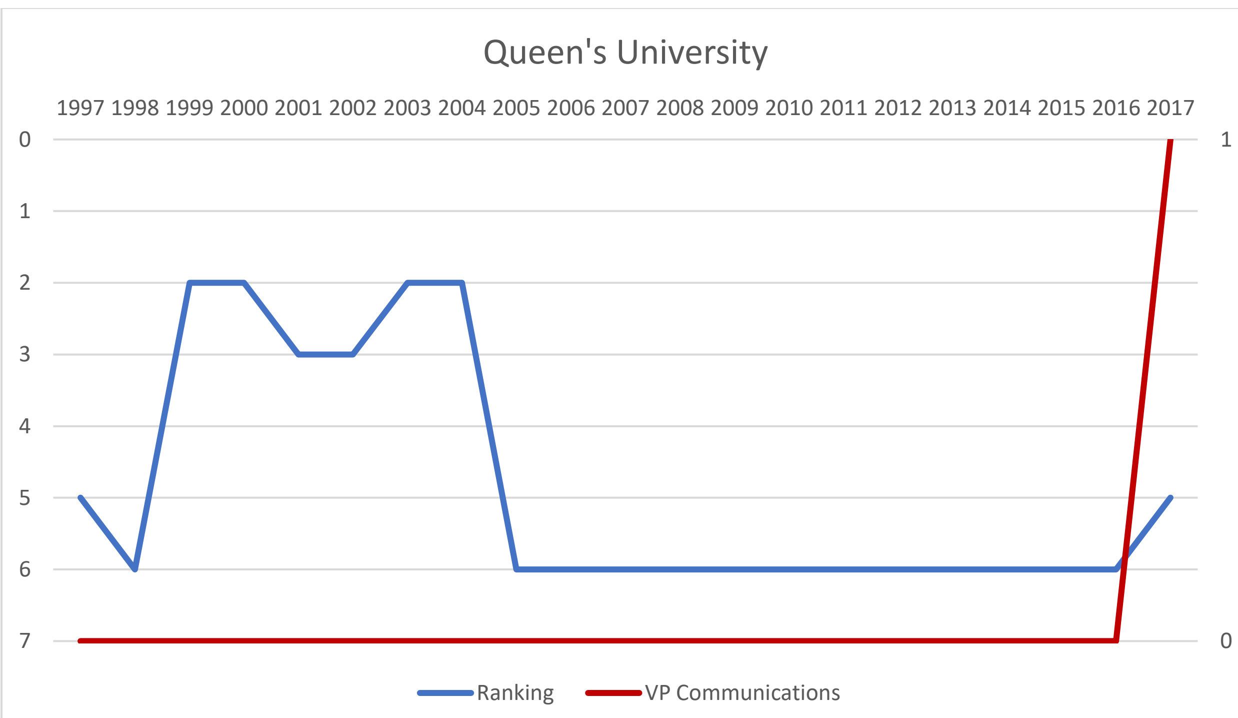
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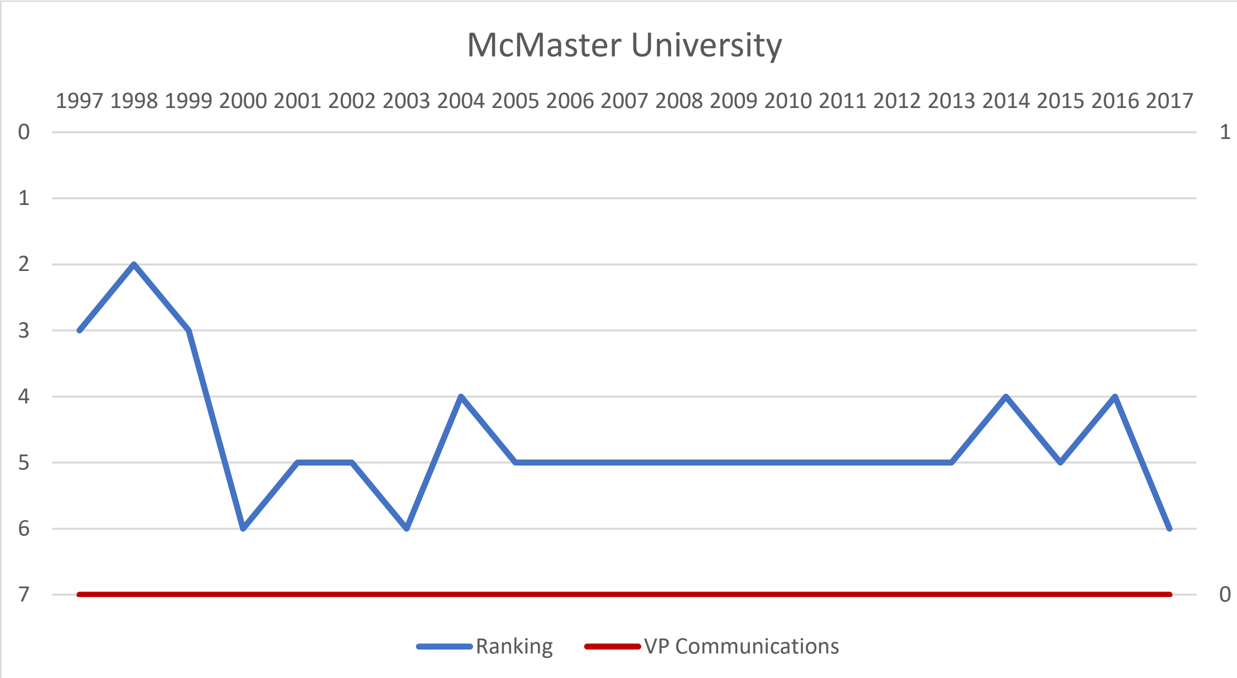
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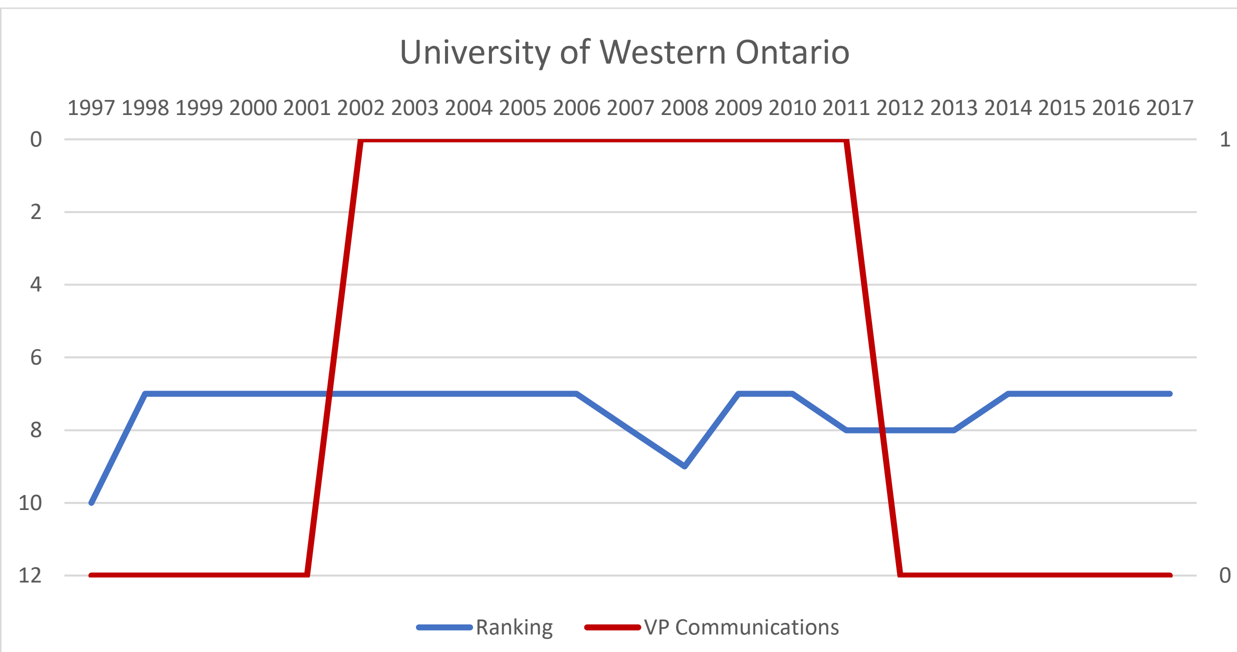
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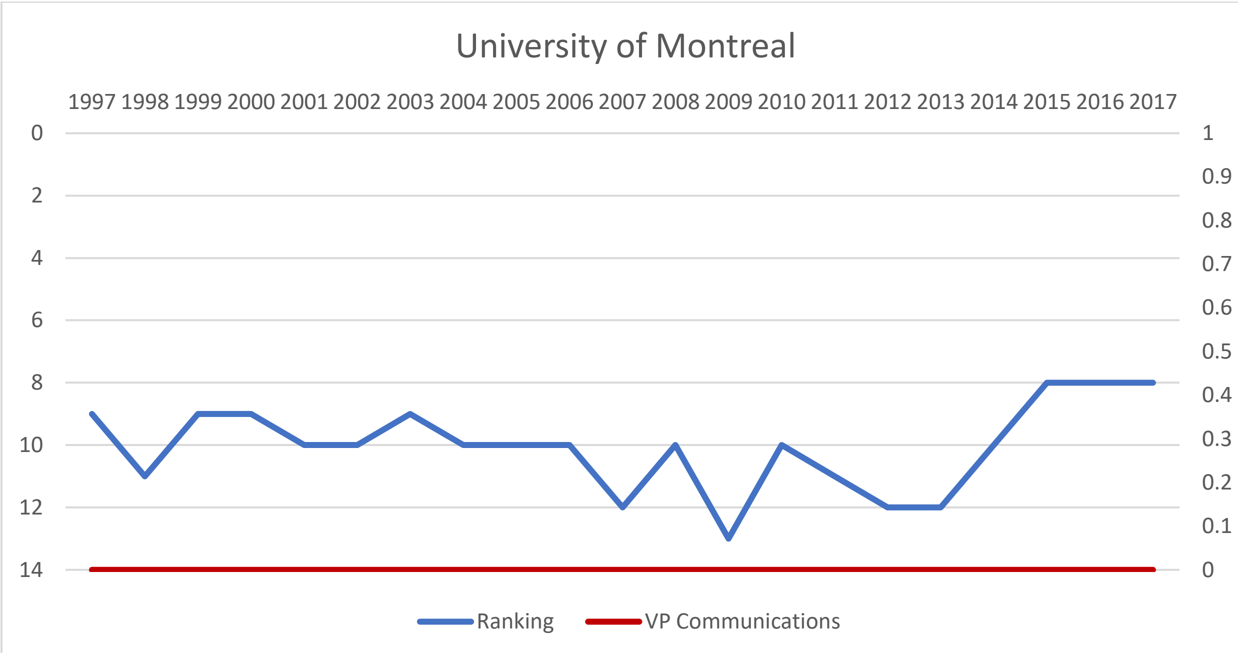
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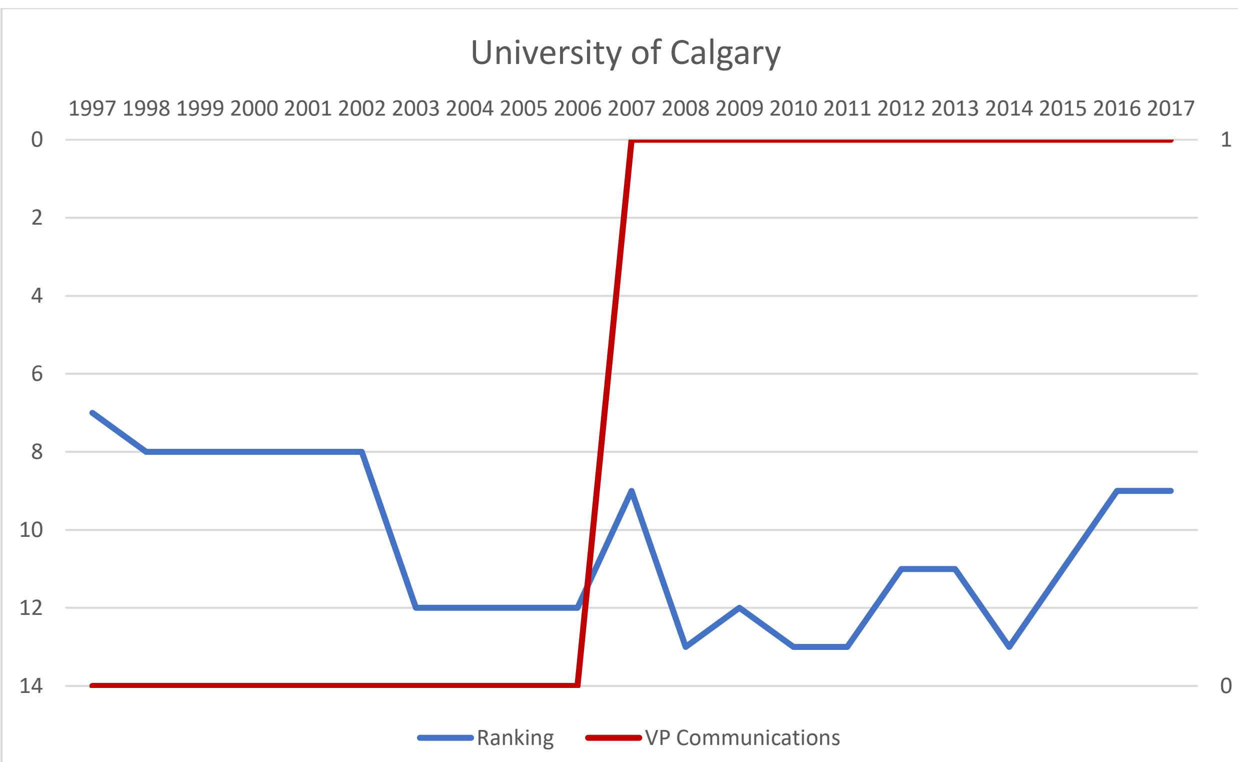
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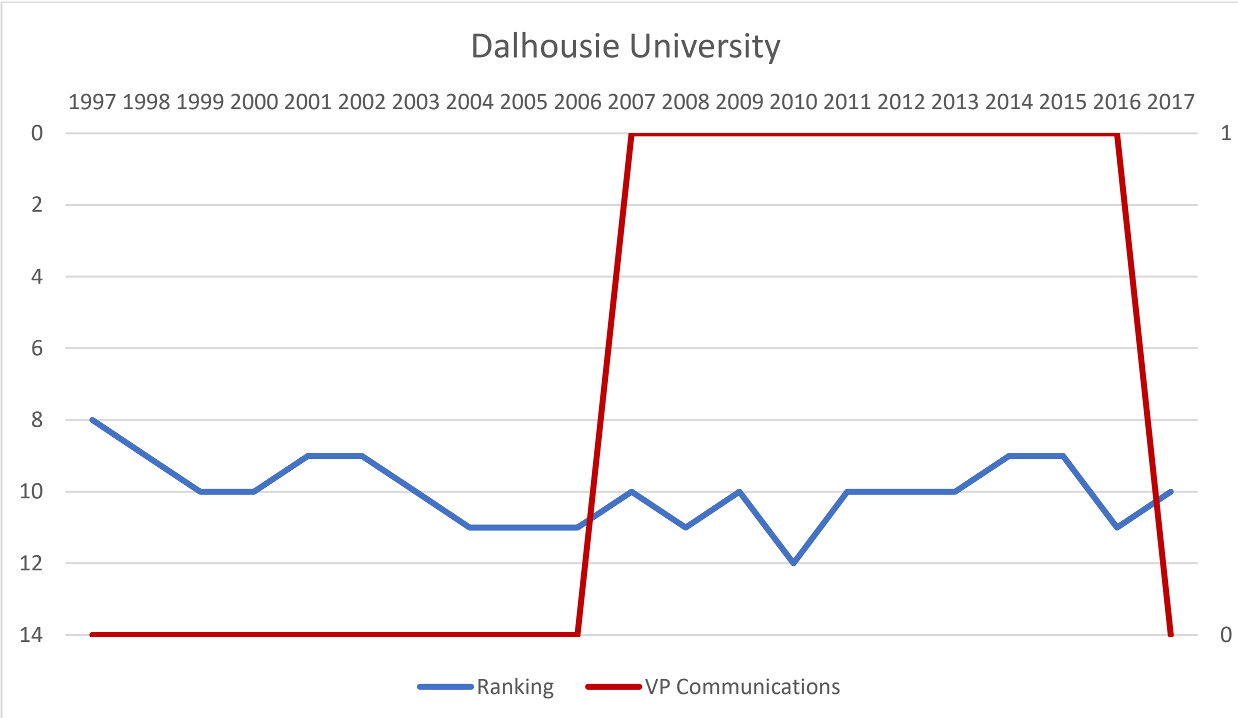
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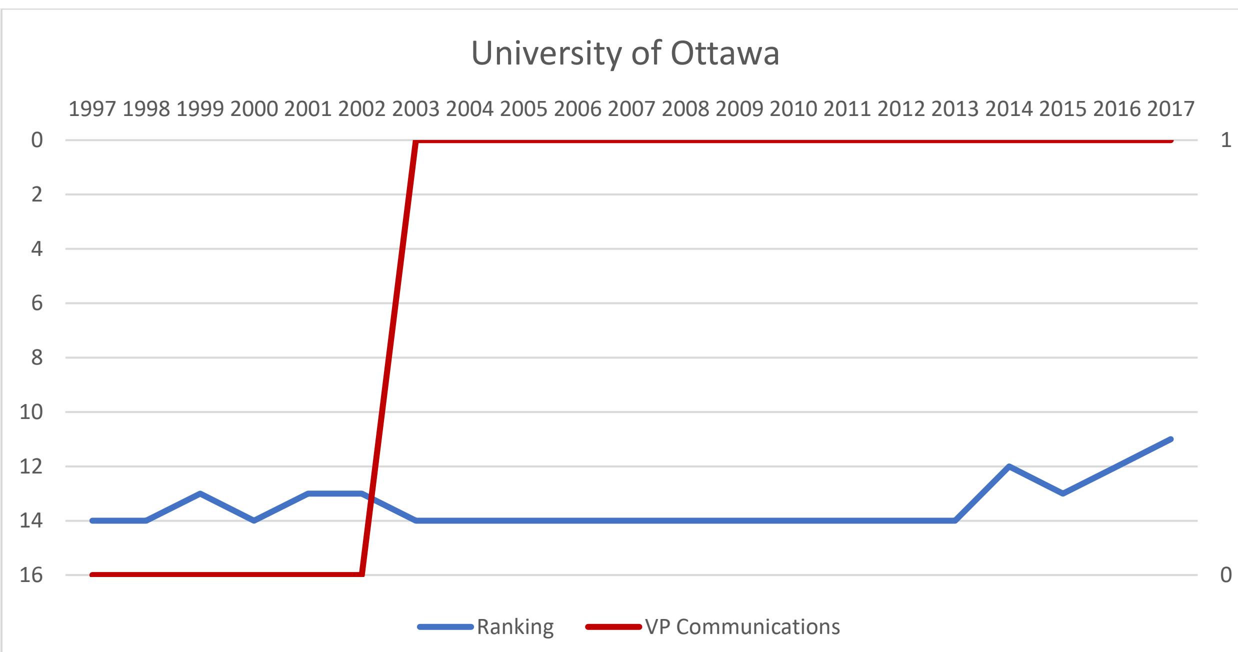
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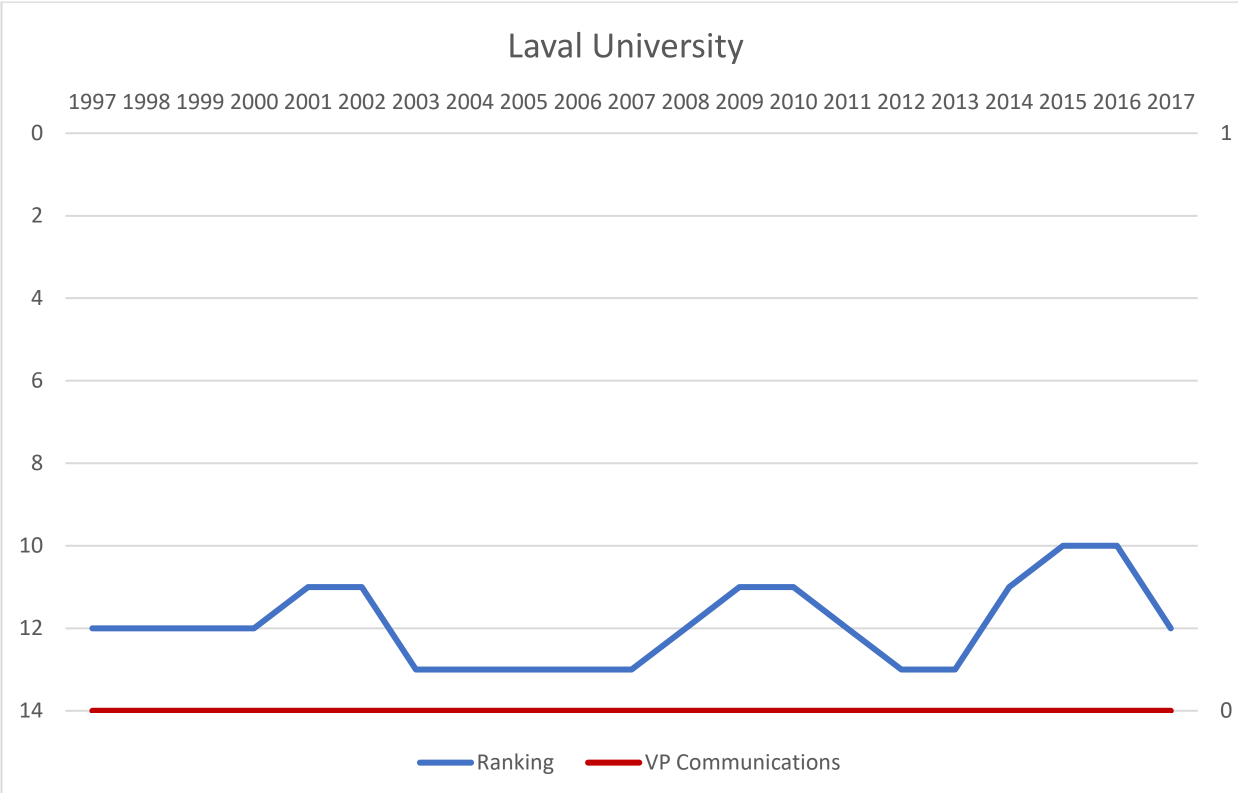
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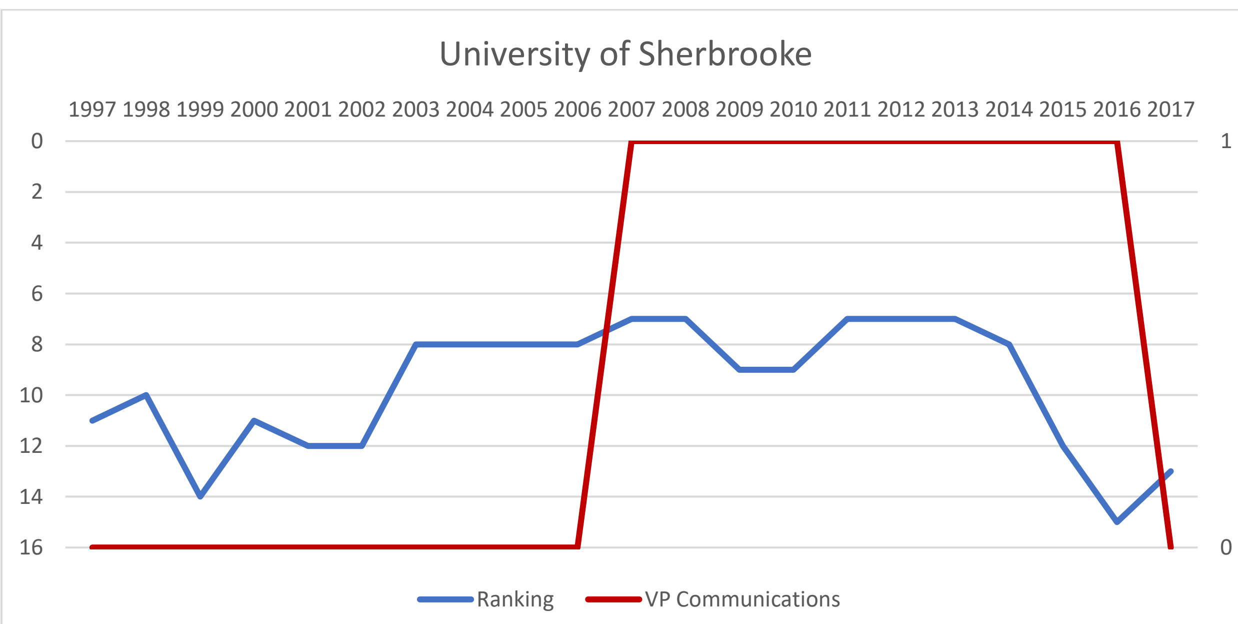
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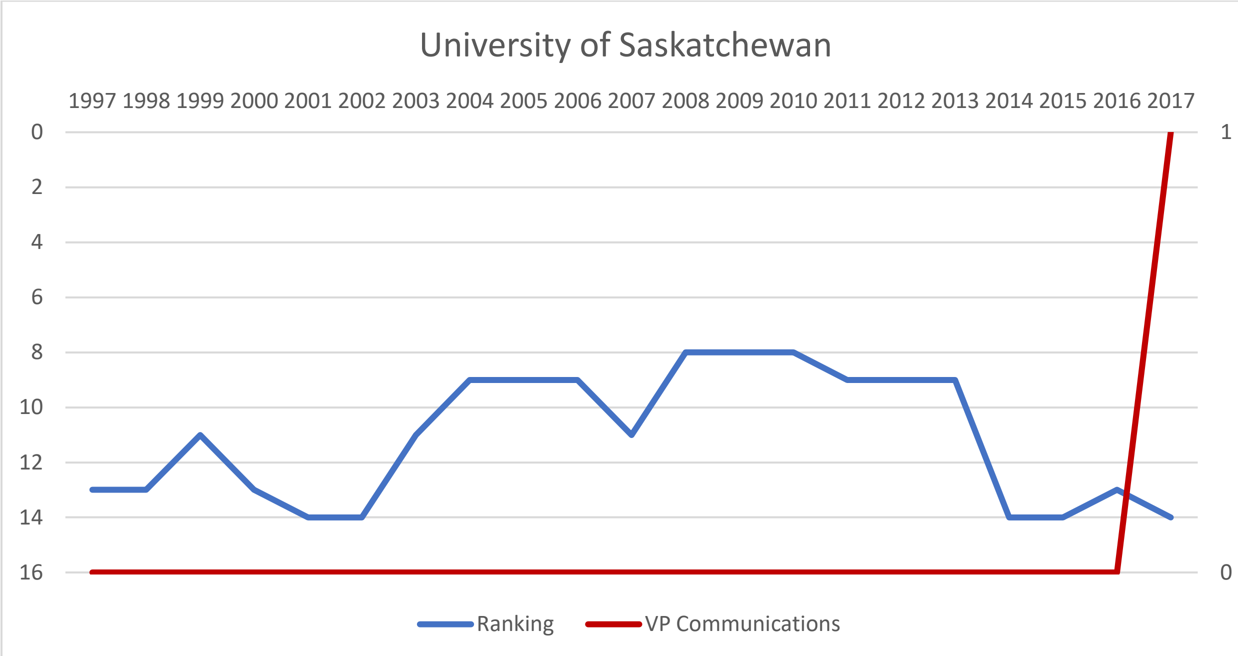
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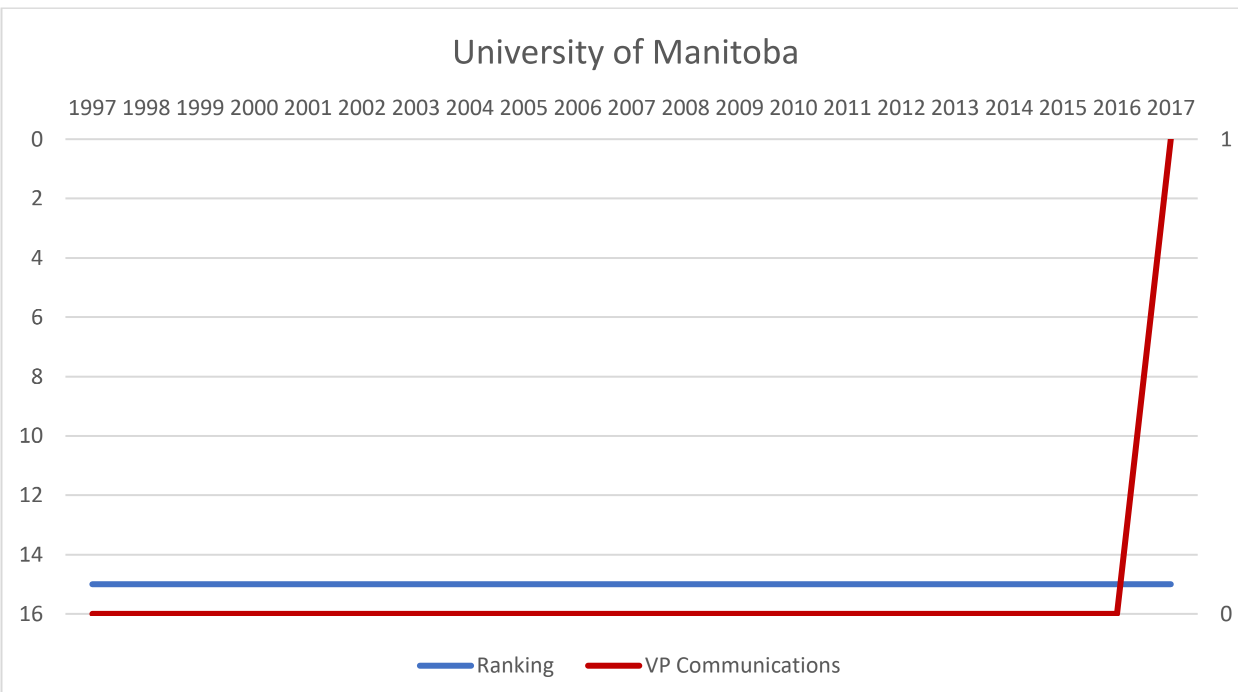
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