



# BRAND STRATEGY RECOMMENDATION

JUNE 2018

**SUZANNE**  
**OLDHAM**  
CONSULTING



## YOUR TEAM

**SUZANNE**  
OLDHAM  
CONSULTING

A brand and marketing consultant with over 25 years of experience. Suzanne Oldham and her team have worked with some of the most respected brands in the U.S.

Suzanne holds an undergraduate degree from Davidson College and an MBA from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business.



Jim White and his team have more than 20 years of experience in consumer insights, marketing and brand strategy.

Jim holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Kentucky and a doctorate from Northwestern University in Communications Studies.

ABInBev



Anthem



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## TODAY'S GOAL

- Share what we learned about the **challenges and opportunities** for UK from a brand perspective
- Share the **recommended Brand Strategy** for UK going forward



## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

- To define a *unique* Brand Strategy for the University of Kentucky that is *relevant and compelling to both internal and external constituents* (current and prospective students, faculty, staff, donors, alumni and patients.) This brand strategy will:
  - Spring from where we are today but be *aspirational* tomorrow
  - Act as the “*north star*” for University messaging
  - *Galvanize* all University stakeholders behind a *unified purpose*



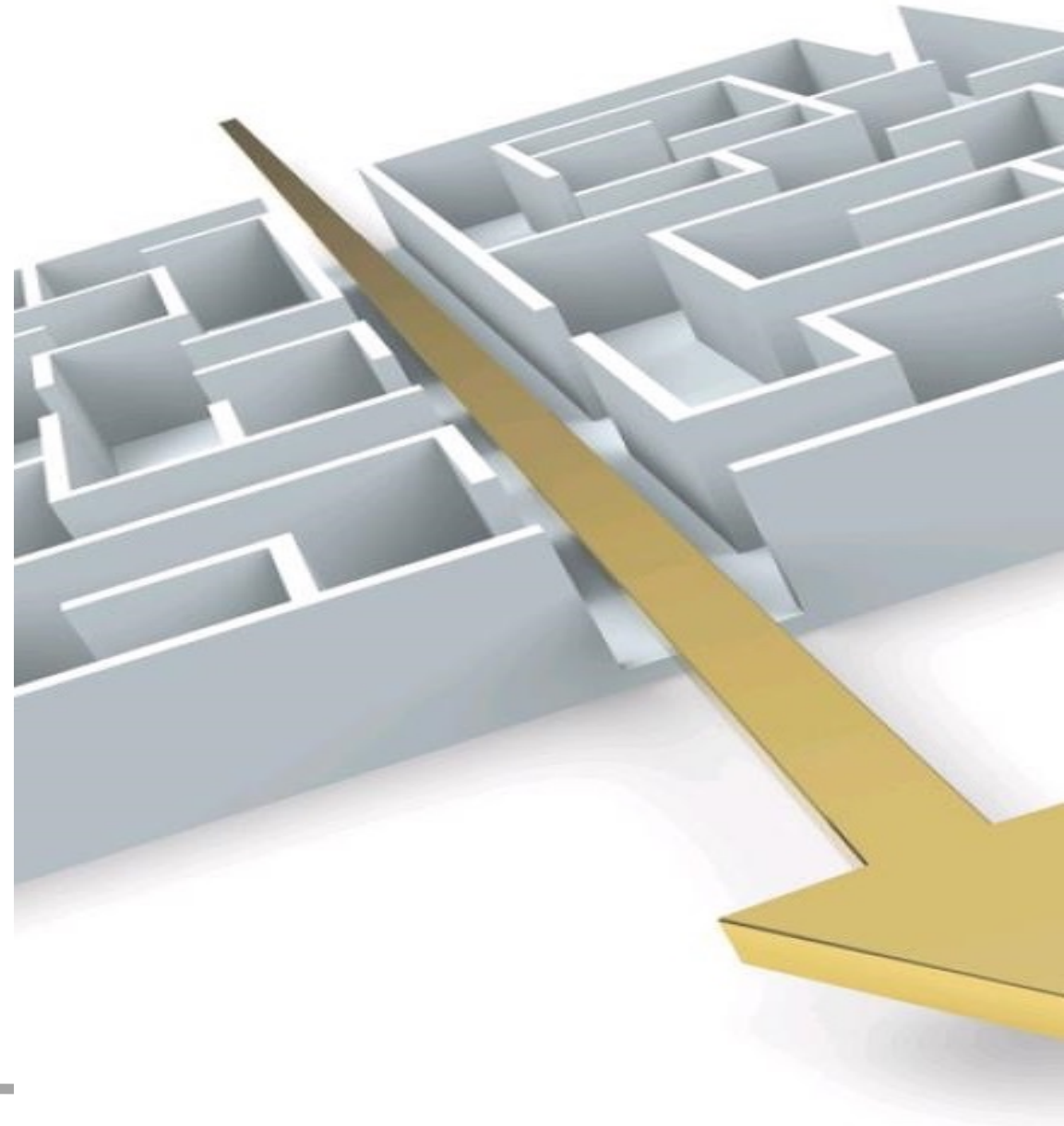
## DEFINITION OF A BRAND

*Simply put, your brand is your **promise** to your customer. It tells them what they can expect from your products and services, and it **differentiates** your offerings from your **competition**.*

*Your brand is derived from **who you are, who you want to be and who people perceive you to be**.*

## BENEFITS OF A STRONG BRAND

- Drives **CHOICE**
- Engenders **LOYALTY**
- Commands a **PREMIUM** Price
- Builds **TRUST**
- **PROTECTS** against bad PR

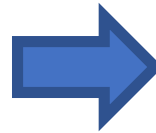


# TODAY WE WILL SHARE THE BRAND PURPOSE – *NOT THE TAGLINE*

Apple's Brand Purpose:

Apple's Tagline

*Imagination, Design  
and Innovation*



## OUR PROCESS

### 90+ INTERVIEWS

- 90+ interviews with alumni, current students, prospective students and families, faculty and administration

### EXISTING RESEARCH ANALYSIS – UK and Syndicated studies

- To gain an understanding of progress, challenges and strengths of UK from a “customer” viewpoint – in state & out of state

### UK BRAND EXPRESSION TODAY

- How is UK expressed today from a brand perspective?

### ”COMPETITIVE” ANALYSIS

- How do other Universities “brand” themselves?

TO UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES  
THAT FACE UK AS IT DEFINES ITS BRAND



**KEY TAKEAWAY #1:** From a brand perspective, UK is “A Tale of Two Brands.”  
In a narrow sense it is a strong and enabling brand. In a broader sense it is complacent, traditional and ordinary.

**KEY TAKEAWAY #2:** While ‘See Blue’ achieved many of its “narrow” goals in state, in a broader, out of state context it **did not successfully drive preference** for UK.

**KEY TAKEAWAY #3:** “See Blue’ and other marketing related efforts have not successfully driven an understanding of UK on attributes that drive college choice – quality of academics, faculty, personal attention and grad success.

**KEY TAKEAWAY #4:** “See Blue’ has become the UK brand and in its most positive sense has become a **passive**, “welcome mat” for the University. More negatively, it **lacks meaning and emotional resonance** and its **overuse** has diluted any meaning it once had.

**KEY TAKEAWAY #5:** The **time is right** for a new brand strategy for UK from both an external and an internal perspective with many eager to **build a strong academic brand**

**KEY TAKEAWAY #6:** While today most universities do not embrace branding best practices, category dynamics will make branding an essential practice

# BRAND IMPERATIVES

## UK BRAND STRATEGY IMPERATIVES

- I. The new brand strategy **must change perceptions** of a prospective student who believes UK is “ordinary, limiting, traditional, and complacent” while **staying relevant** to our current raving fans.
- II. The new brand strategy must motivate prospective students and faculty to **choose UK** rather than settle for UK.
- III. The new brand strategy must **raise the regional/national profile** of UK to match the esteem of UK within Kentucky.
- IV. The new brand strategy will **create a clear understanding of the value/ROI** of a UK education.
- V. The new brand strategy will provide the lens for a **successful comprehensive campaign**.
- VI. The new brand strategy must have **the resonance to galvanize** internal UK audiences.
- VII. While a UK prospective student is the priority for the new brand strategy, other **entities (athletics and healthcare)** **will coalesce** around the brand strategy in the future.

# The WAY FORWARD





## THE WAY FORWARD– *REAL, RARE AND RELEVANT*

*It all needs to begin with a robust, evidence-led process that evaluates what's real, rare and relevant about you. Real, because what you say is special about you must be true and authentic to what your university is like; rare, because if you can't claim any difference, it's hard to see why you would be chosen from among the competition; and relevant, because what sets you apart must matter to the people you want to engage with.*

- Susannah Baker and Anna Myers - June, 2017  
*THE (Times Higher Education)*

## PERSPECTIVE – THE *ROLE OF BRANDS IN OUR STORYTELLING*

**Brands** can play a significant **ROLE** in telling us and others stories about **who we are and want to be**

*We are all storytellers. We tell ourselves stories in order to create our sense of self....our identity.*



## PERSPECTIVE – IDENTITY AND UNIVERSITY BRANDS

People's university affiliations can be deeply connected to their identities.

*For many of us, the college or university we went to can say a lot about who we are in the world. University affiliations have important symbolic value.*



# KEY INSIGHT #1: COLLEGE IS ABOUT TRANSFORMATION



- It is a time of transitioning from home to away
- It is a place where you are nourished and prepared to stand out from the crowd
- It is an experience where your unique passions and skills are stoked and ignited
- It is a time when your tastes and values expand, shift and then gel

***WHAT IS THE UNIQUE “BRAND” OF  
TRANSFORMATION THAT UK OFFERS?***

## KEY INSIGHT #1: UK AND OUR BRAND OF TRANSFORMATION

*Most who were interviewed gave credit to UK for transforming their lives*

*“Kentucky is my state  
and UK is MY school.  
It was the bridge that  
led me to the rest of  
my life and it has  
been a good one.”*

- Alumnus

*“UK provides all the  
ingredients required  
for an individual to  
grow and reach their  
full potential.”*

- Current Student

## KEY INSIGHT #1: FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION VIEWS ON TRANSFORMATION

*They, too, believe it is a place for growth and transformation*

UK has the power to transform a student and to expand a students' understanding of their "world"

- *"We exist to **make a difference** in a person's life so they can turn around and make a difference in someone else's life."*
- *"We ready **students for life** and prepare them to **embrace opportunities**."*
- *"We develop **the human spirit** of every student."*
- *"They will be **exposed to such a vast array of students** – a once in a lifetime opportunity to **live, learn and grow**,"*

## KEY INSIGHT #2: SAFETY VS. EXPANSION

*UK has a clear equity in providing a safe place to grow*

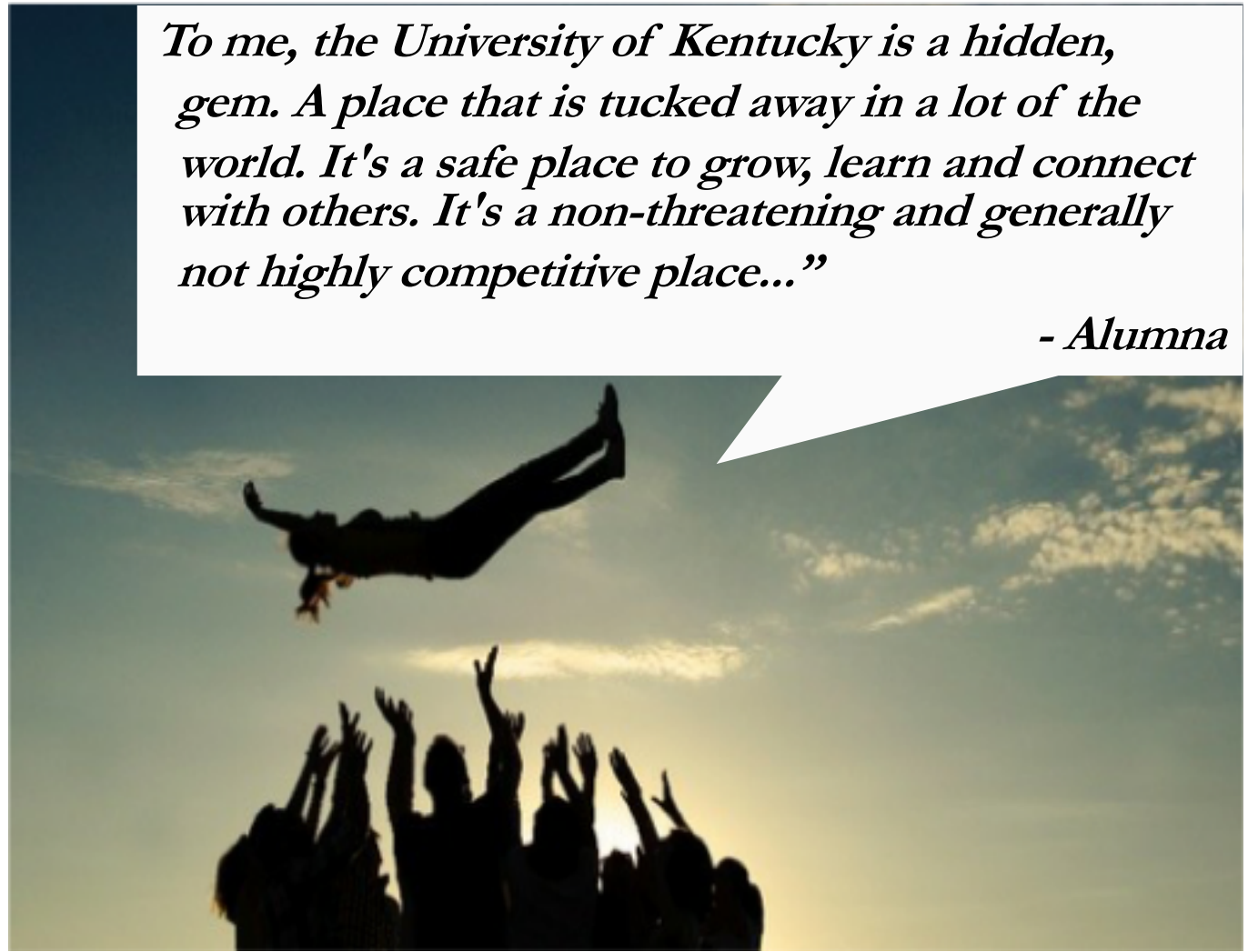
In interviews, many expressed associations of **safety, security, comfort and nurturance** with UK.

*For many, the university represents an environment and “feel” that is reassuring and familiar.*

*There’s something about UK that is non-threatening, welcoming and safe.*

*To me, the University of Kentucky is a hidden, gem. A place that is tucked away in a lot of the world. It's a safe place to grow, learn and connect with others. It's a non-threatening and generally not highly competitive place...”*

*- Alumna*



## KEY INSIGHT #2: SAFETY VS. EXPANSION

*Faculty and staff also expressed a safe and secure community*

A place that welcomes its students, faculty and administration. A community where students feel comfortable taking risks.

- *"You set foot on this campus and your life will be changed for the best because of the quality of the community, the facilities and **the comfort of this place.**"*
- *"A sense of belonging. They feel part of this place."*
- *"We have evolved from an academic setting to being a community and now we are a family - you belong to this institution and this institution belongs to you."*
- *"This sense of belonging that **everyone is cheering everyone on** - this is not what you typically find at a large university."*



## KEY INSIGHT #2: SAFETY VS. EXPANSION

*And some, but far fewer, want a place to expand and be challenged*

*“UK is the key that **unlocks** the opportunity to pursue a career in any field regardless of a person’s economic class.”*

*- Alumna*

They want a university to offer opportunities for them to **evolve** as people, to meet different kinds of people, and to **experience a kind of diversity and acceptance** they may not otherwise be exposed to.

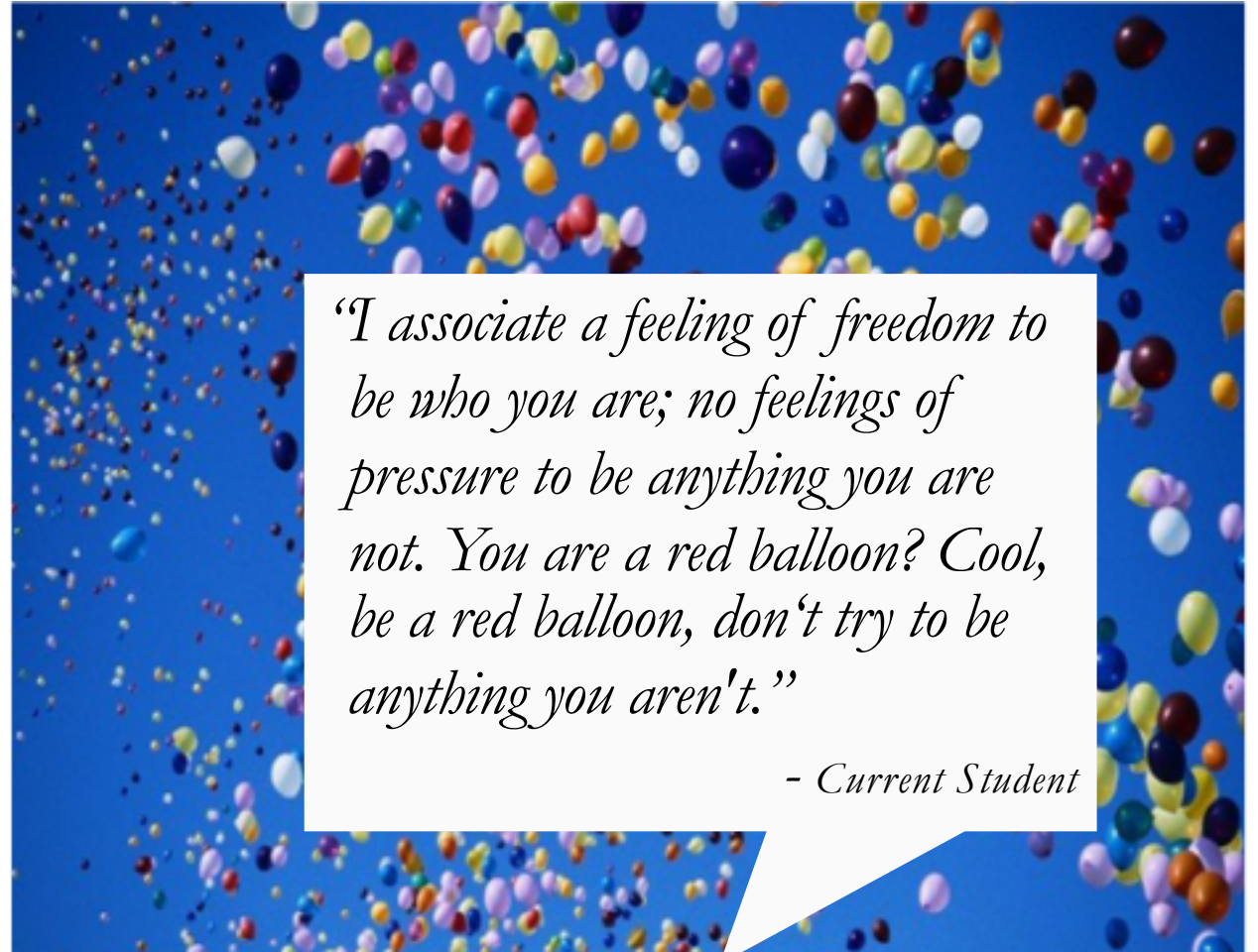
For some, UK offers these kinds of experiences.

## KEY INSIGHT #3: COMMUNITY AND AUTONOMY

Many told stories of finding acceptance and belonging in the UK community.

*Being part of the Big Blue Nation, provides a strong sense of **belonging** that is reinforced through rituals like UK athletics.*

*Some feel UK offers them the ability to become a **unique person**. These respondents talked about the acceptance and diversity of UK*

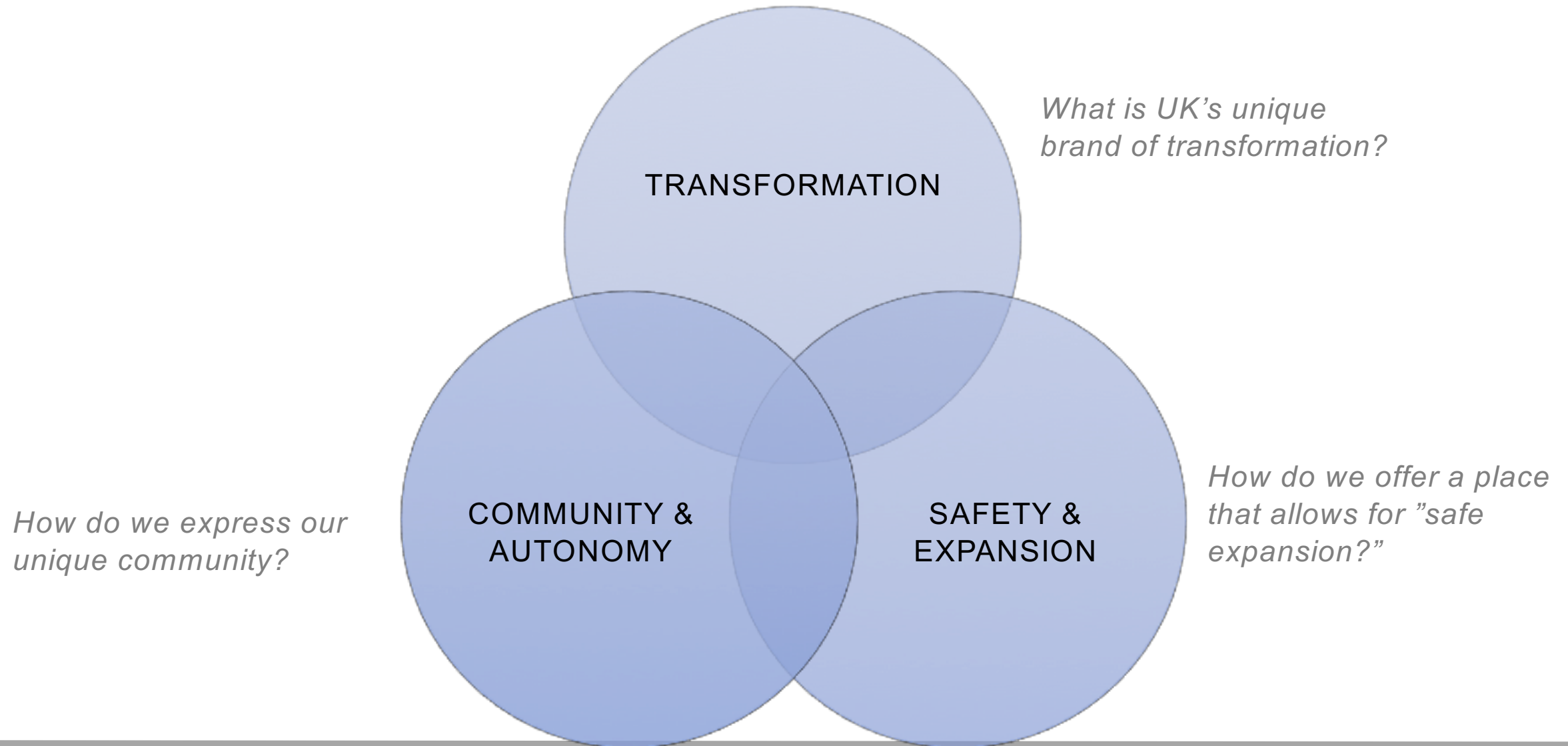


## KEY INSIGHT #3: A UNIQUE KIND OF COMMUNITY

UK has a grit about it - a come from behind, fighter brand that is unique to us and the state of Kentucky

- *“I think UK does well as a **come from behind horse – the one who no one thinks can win the race but does.**”*
- *“**We have grit** because we are from Kentucky – there is a grittiness from the people who are born here.”*
- *“We work hard and we **get knocked down but we get back up.**”*
- *“UK punches above its weight.”*

# THE WAY FORWARD – WHAT MAKES US RARE, RELEVANT, AND REAL?



A pair of hands, shown in grayscale, gently cradles a small, vibrant green plant with three leaves growing out of a mound of dark soil. The background is solid black, making the hands and the plant stand out prominently. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the veins on the leaves.

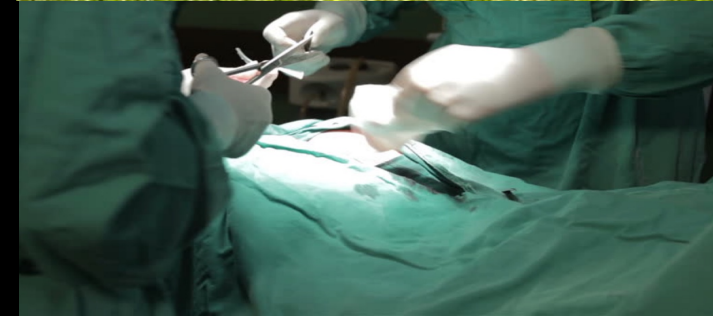
*UK BRAND DESCRIPTION & PURPOSE*



## GRACE AND GRIT

The goal of any great institution is to prepare its people to **compete on the highest stage**. It sets **high expectations** and **then encourages effort, determination and perseverance** to achieve these goals. The higher the bar is set, the greater the personal reward.

UK programs in academics, healthcare and athletics empower its students with **the grit and persistence to succeed**, but the way it goes about it is different from other places. UK programs are characterized by **grace--that commitment to community, generosity** toward colleagues and peers, **self-reliance** without selfishness, **diversity** without divisiveness. There is room for us all at the races.



## YOUR BRAND PURPOSE

*Why you exist and the single minded reason people should understand – NOT A TAGLINE*

Achieve More Through Grace and Grit

- Achievement is relevant to what students want from a college experience (**relevant**)
- Bold and Confident – gives UK a little swagger
- Defines UK's unique value/ROI

Achieve More Through Grace and Grit

- Speaks to our unique way of delivering our education (**rare**)
- Authentic to UK (**real**)
- Emotionally resonant



THANK YOU