

A photograph of two young men sitting outdoors, laughing heartily. The man on the left has dark curly hair, a beard, and glasses, wearing a light blue sweatshirt. The man on the right has short blonde hair and is wearing a light grey sweatshirt. They are both smiling broadly, with their eyes closed in laughter. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with trees and sunlight filtering through, creating a warm, golden glow.

CARLOW
UNIVERSITY

Devoted to the Future of You.

Devoted to the Future of You.

Transforming the Carlow University brand
from transactional to transformational.

4's / Jay
Chiat
Awards



Reintroducing Carlow with Purpose

Carlow University launched *Devoted to the Future of You*, a transformative brand campaign designed to confront challenges around enrollment decline, brand confusion, and an unclear position in the higher education landscape. More than a rebrand, this was a strategic repositioning of Carlow as a university committed not just to academic excellence, but more importantly embracing their almost 200-year-old heritage and creating a more just and merciful world by developing ethical, empathetic leaders.



The Strategic Challenge

Carlow University, a private Catholic institution founded in 1929 by the Sisters of Mercy, has long held a distinctive mission centered on social justice, ethical leadership, and community service. However, like many regional universities, Carlow faced increasing challenges: declining traditional college-age demographics, rising competition in the Pittsburgh higher education market, and internal confusion about its brand promise.

The strategic problem wasn't just about awareness — it was about clarity. What does Carlow stand for today? How can it distinguish itself in a saturated, transactional educational marketplace?

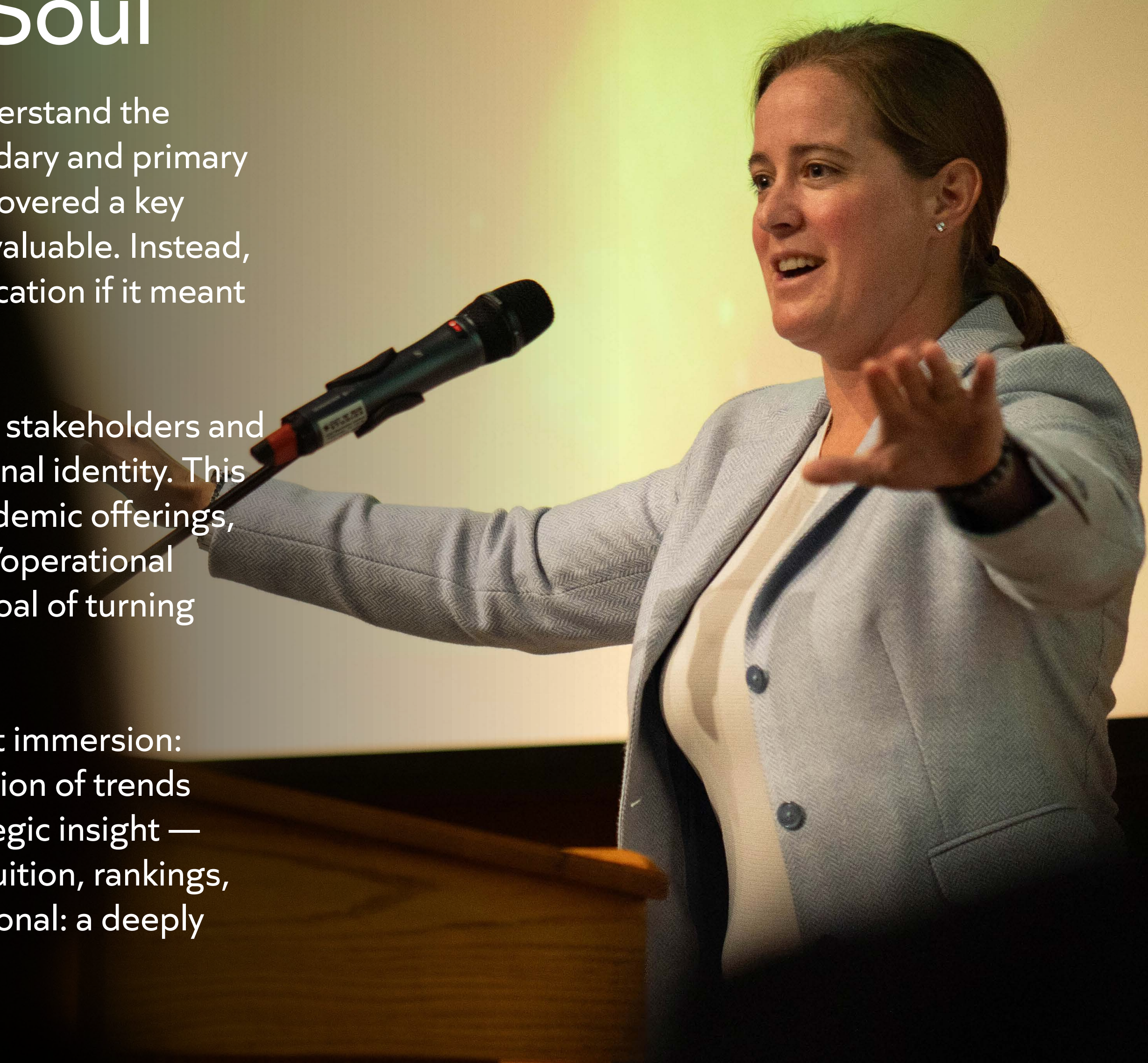
Strategy Development: Where Strategy Meets Soul

Our strategy was two-fold. First, we looked externally to understand the demographic interested in the product. Through both secondary and primary research focused on secondary education audiences, we uncovered a key insight: this group didn't inherently see higher education as valuable. Instead, they valued *impact*. They were willing to invest in higher education if it meant gaining the ability to make a tangible difference in the world.

Next, we turned inward. We began by convening key internal stakeholders and university leadership to define Carlow's current and aspirational identity. This session explored the brand's purpose, target audiences, academic offerings, and market perceptions. Importantly, we conducted a brand/operational analysis to surface both opportunities and risks — with the goal of turning internal influencers into brand champions.

This foundational insight phase was followed by deep market immersion: competitive landscape analysis, media audits, and an evaluation of trends in higher education branding. From this emerged a key strategic insight — while other institutions emphasized transactional benefits (tuition, rankings, outcomes), Carlow's greatest differentiator was transformational: a deeply personal, values-driven educational experience.

Associate Provost





Strategic Positioning: Devoted to the Future of You.

Rather than promoting Carlow through facts and figures alone, we redefined its brand positioning around the emotional, life-shaping nature of its education. The result: Devoted to the Future of You — a promise that transcends academics to focus on each student's full potential, aspirations, and their ability to impact the world in a positive way.

This brand idea became the guiding force for all creative and messaging strategies moving forward. It reflects both the institution's Mercy heritage and its future-forward mission — a blend of personal attention, social responsibility, and leadership development.

Integrated Campaign Execution

With positioning established, we developed a fully integrated communications plan to ensure consistency across paid, earned, and owned channels. The campaign launched in phases:



[VIEW THE PLAN](#)



1. Internal Rollout: Brand Starts at Home

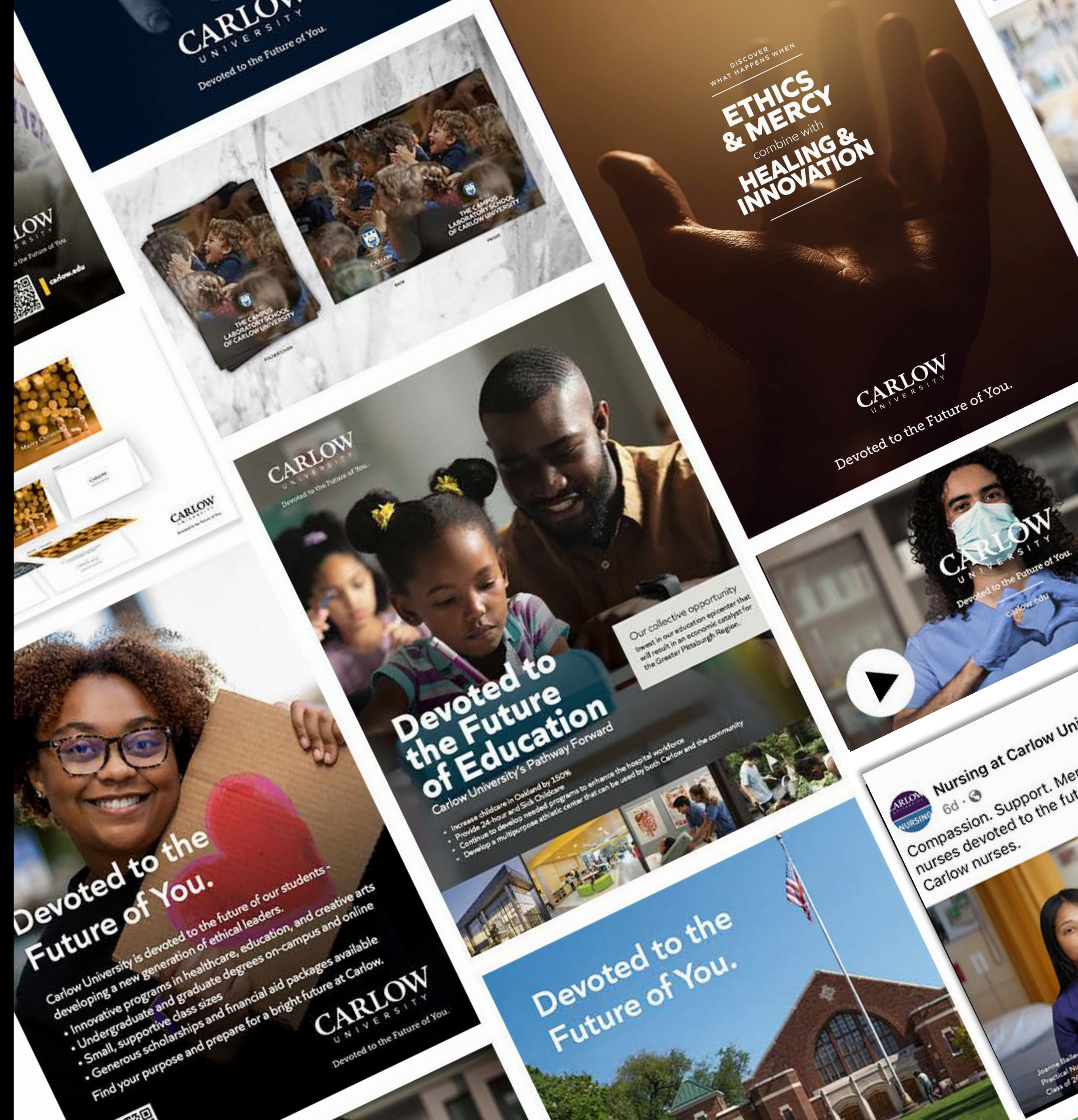
The campaign was first introduced to Carlow's internal community during a large-scale campus reveal. This was more than a launch — it was a rallying cry. Staff, faculty, alumni, and trustees were educated on the new brand language, visuals, and messaging through ongoing communications. Building internal alignment was critical to ensure authenticity and long-term brand adoption.

2. External Launch: Saturating the Market

Following the internal reveal, we launched an 8-week paid media blitz throughout the Pittsburgh region. Touchpoints included:

- Television and OTT
- Digital advertising and paid social
- Outdoor signage and print media
- PR and editorial storytelling
- Cross-device targeting and custom audience segmentation

The message was clear and consistent: Carlow is not just another college. It's a values-driven launchpad for purpose and progress.



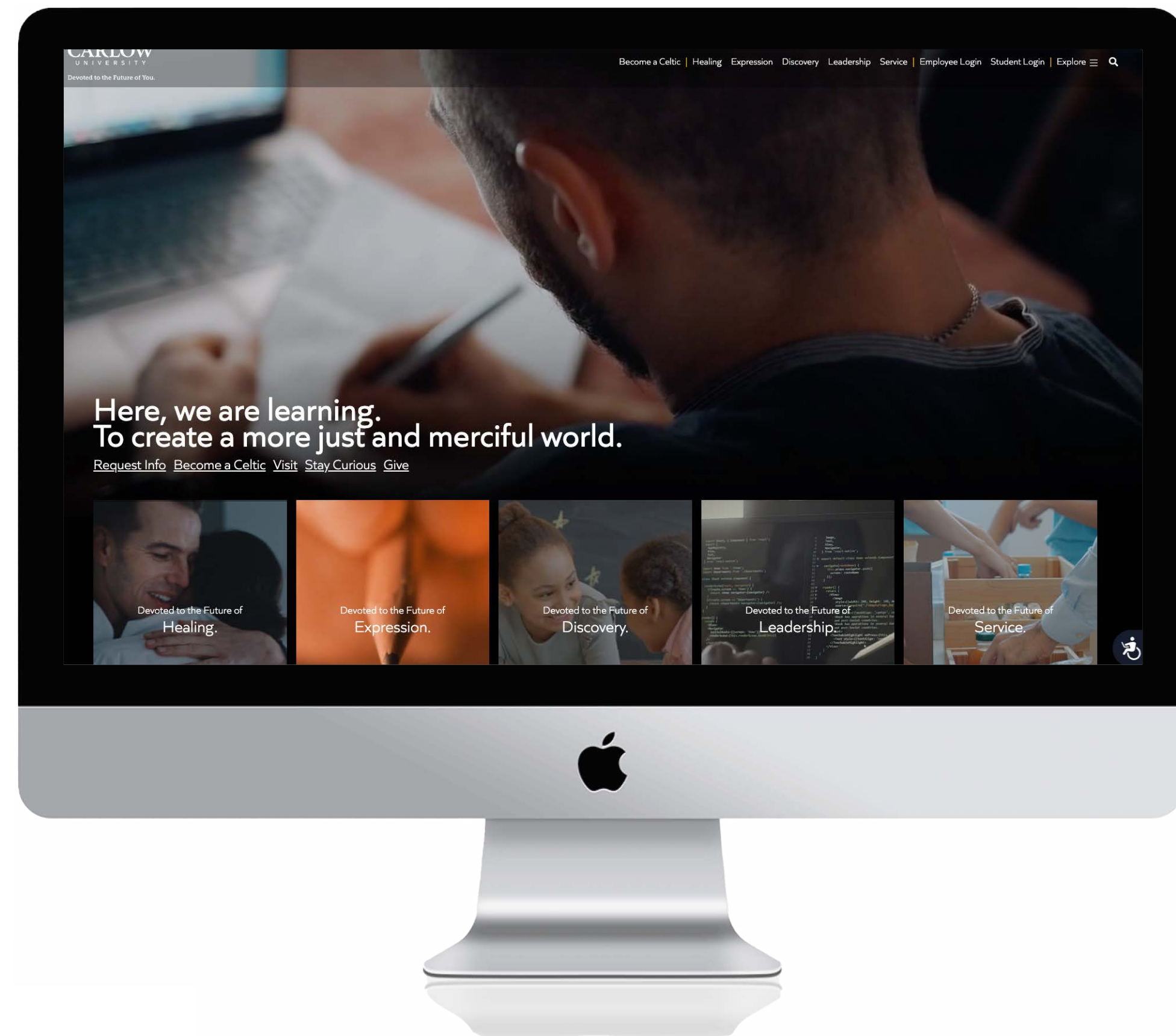
3. Sustaining Momentum: Content & Thought Leadership

Once initial paid efforts concluded, we shifted into brand sustainability mode. Campaign content continued through university channels including digital signage, department-specific social media, the university website, and internal platforms — all aligned to reinforce the core positioning.

We also extended the brand's thought leadership through new initiatives. These efforts elevated Carlow's role as a voice for change — beyond the classroom and into the cultural conversation.



To learn more about A More Just and Merciful World Podcast and the Impact Series, go to carlow.edu/podcast & www.carlow.edu/impact-series.



VISIT CARLOW.EDU

Aligning the Brand with Carlow's Educational Mission

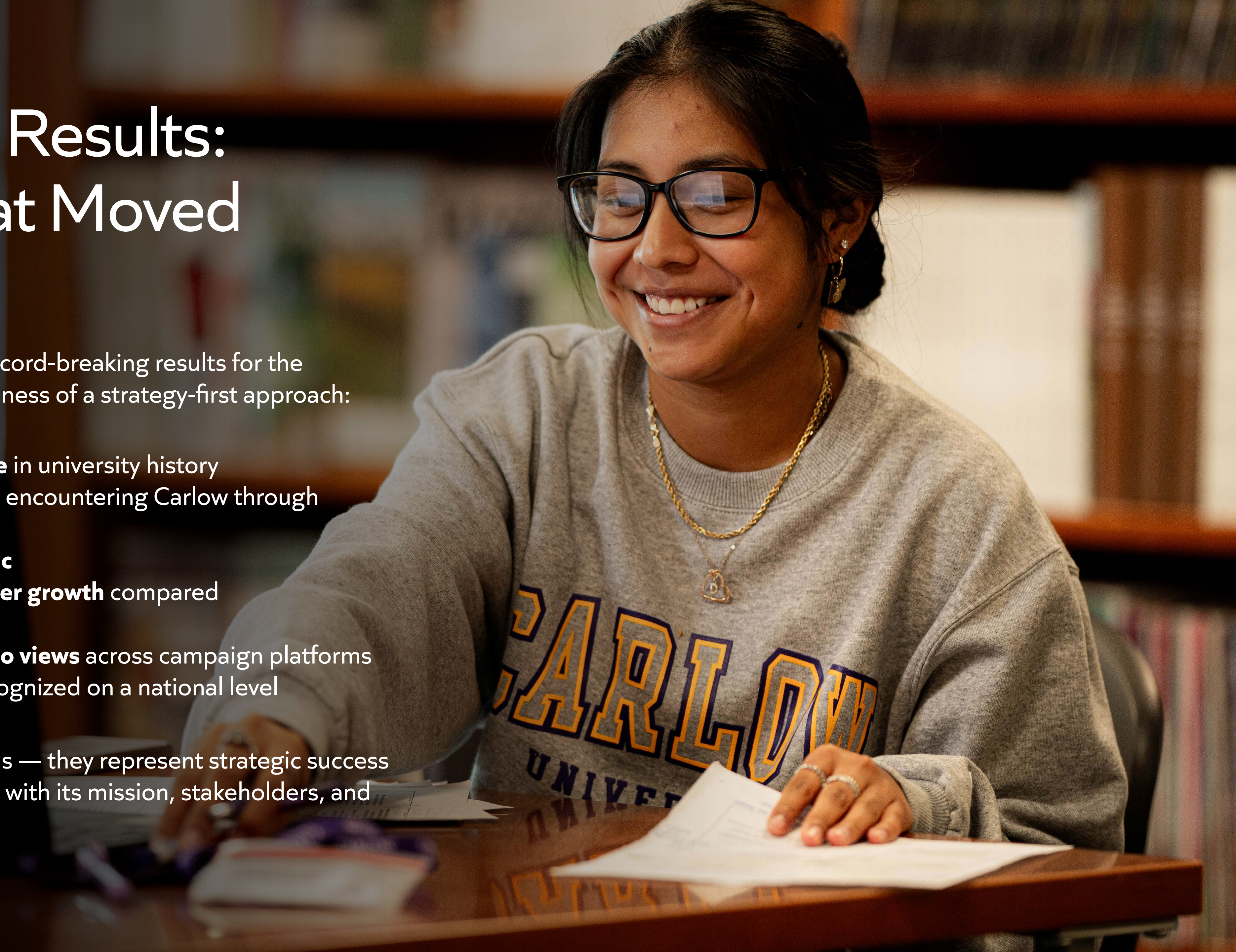
To bring full strategic cohesion, we aligned Carlow's five educational pillars — healing, expression, discovery, leadership, and service — with the new brand narrative. These verticals were no longer just academic categories; they became storytelling engines for the transformational outcomes Carlow offers. Every tactic, from web updates to social storytelling, was designed to reflect this narrative integration.

Measurable Results: Strategy That Moved the Needle

The campaign has produced record-breaking results for the university, proving the effectiveness of a strategy-first approach:

- **Highest enrollment increase** in university history
- **65% of applicants** reported encountering Carlow through marketing efforts
- **Nearly tripled website traffic**
- **Highest social media follower growth** compared to peer institutions
- **1.3 million+ combined video views** across campaign platforms
- **Award-winning creative** recognized on a national level

These aren't just marketing wins — they represent strategic success in reconnecting Carlow's brand with its mission, stakeholders, and the communities it serves.



A close-up photograph of a young woman with curly brown hair and glasses, smiling warmly. She is holding a large, rectangular piece of brown cardboard in front of her. On the cardboard, there is a large, hand-painted red heart with a pink outline. The background is softly blurred, showing an indoor setting with light-colored walls.

Strategy as Transformation

Devoted to the Future of You was never just a tagline. It was a strategic commitment to transform perceptions, inspire internal culture, and drive measurable institutional success. Through insight-driven planning, stakeholder alignment, and purposeful execution, Carlow University re-emerged as a beacon for the next generation of leaders. This campaign didn't just reposition a brand — it helped reimagine its future.

Bringing Purpose to Life Through Bold Creative

From evocative visuals to values-driven messaging, every execution of *Devoted to the Future of You* was crafted to reflect Carlow's deep commitment to personal transformation. The creative didn't just inform — it inspired. Whether through emotionally resonant video or thought-provoking digital storytelling, the work invited students to see themselves as part of something bigger: a future shaped by compassion, leadership, and purpose.

