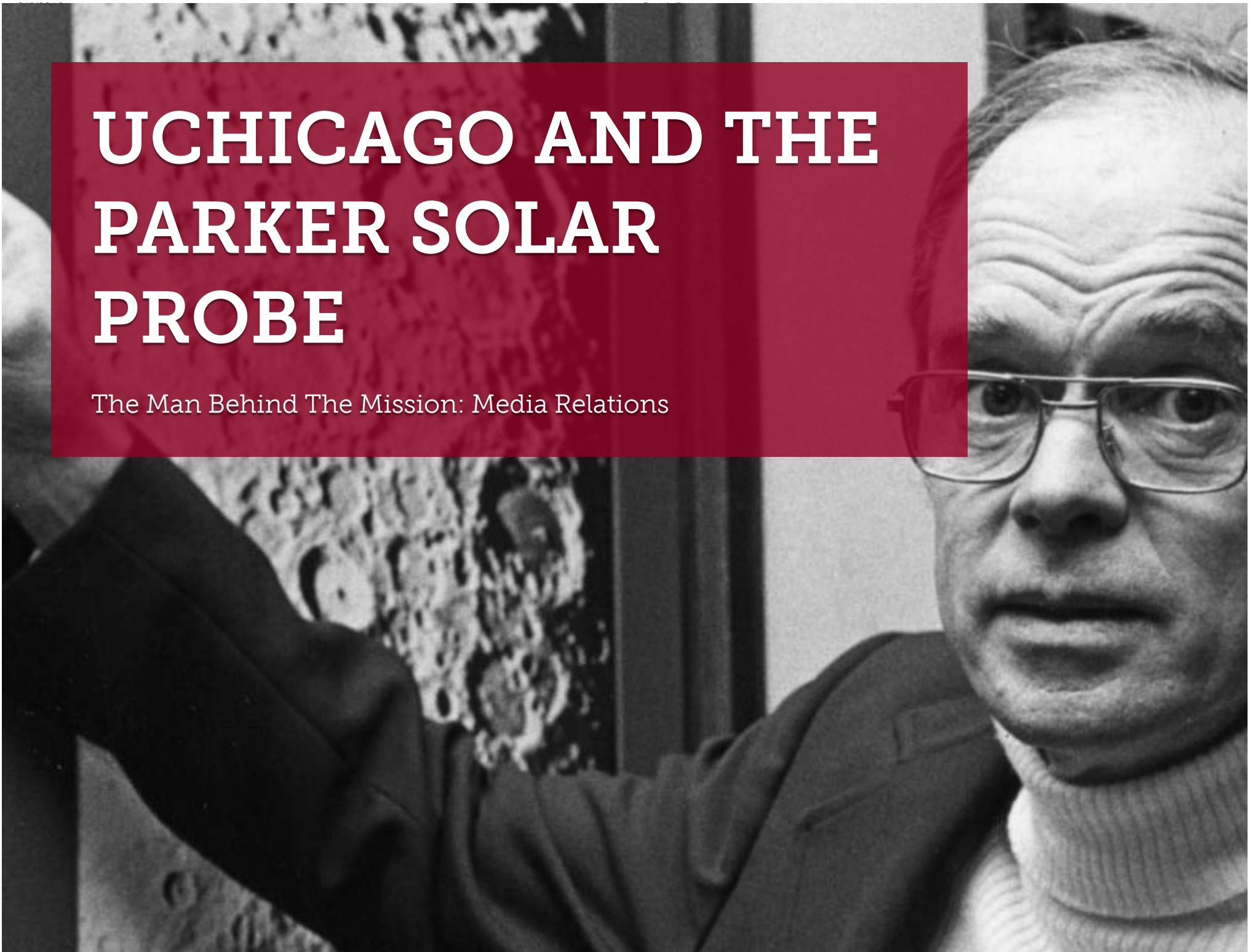


UCHICAGO AND THE PARKER SOLAR PROBE

The Man Behind The Mission: Media Relations

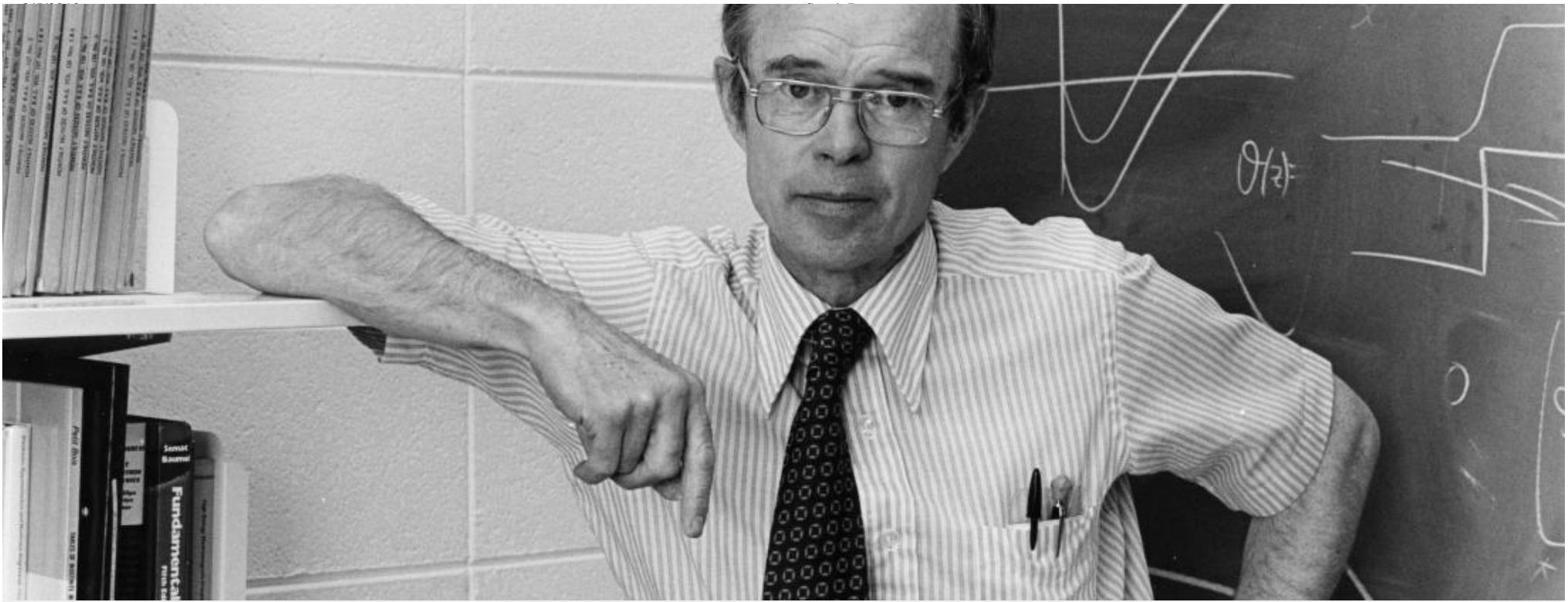


INTRODUCTION



Eugene Parker's discovery of solar wind made him a legend in the field of astrophysics, but his research wasn't widely known outside of academia. Then NASA made him the first living person to have a space mission named in their honor.

The decision presented a distinct opportunity and challenge for the University of Chicago Office of Communications. Our mission: Put Prof. Eugene Parker and UChicago at the center of the story, telling a personal narrative that would build up—and not be drowned out by—a NASA mission to touch the sun.



The campaign started with Parker's story, which embodies the ethos of UChicago: challenging conventional wisdom and rigorously testing ideas.

Sixty years ago the widely accepted theory was that outer space was desolate—void of any and all matter. Parker's calculations said otherwise. He insisted the sun had to be emitting radiation that moved like waves out through our solar system—a "solar wind." The scientific community rejected the idea, but Parker persevered and fought to have his work published. His theory was confirmed through NASA missions, and today underlies our entire theory of the solar system.

As NASA readied for launch, UChicago Communications crafted a comprehensive media relations campaign that contextualized and humanized the mission. The result was Parker's story—and by extension UChicago—became the context in which a global audience understood the NASA mission, drawing widespread media coverage.



THE CHALLENGE

The challenge throughout the campaign was to develop and deploy a narrative that wouldn't be drowned out by NASA. While NASA launches traditionally receive extensive attention, the story is usually focused on science and technology.



NASA "Touch The Sun" Promo

UChicago Communications saw the opportunity to tell a story that would humanize and contextualize the science, and resonate with media outlets and the public—especially because Parker would attend the launch of his namesake craft.



Prof. Emeritus Eugene Parker

Our core audience takes pride in UChicago's preeminence in the physical sciences. However, the public and media outlets were not aware of Eugene Parker's story, his role in the advancement of astrophysics, nor the University's history of field-defining research. And aside from Parker himself, no one at the University of Chicago was working on this specific NASA mission with Johns Hopkins University engineering the spacecraft.

To share Parker's compelling story to a national audience, the Office of Communications planned and executed a media relations campaign that

succeeded well beyond our expectations. It was composed of a concerted media relations push, combined with UChicago-developed content for digital, social and email channels.

$$NMv \frac{dv}{dr} = - \frac{d}{dr} (2NkT) - GNM\frac{M_{\odot}}{r^2},$$

Prof. Parker's Proof

equation of continuity,

$$\frac{d}{dr} (r^2 N v) = 0,$$

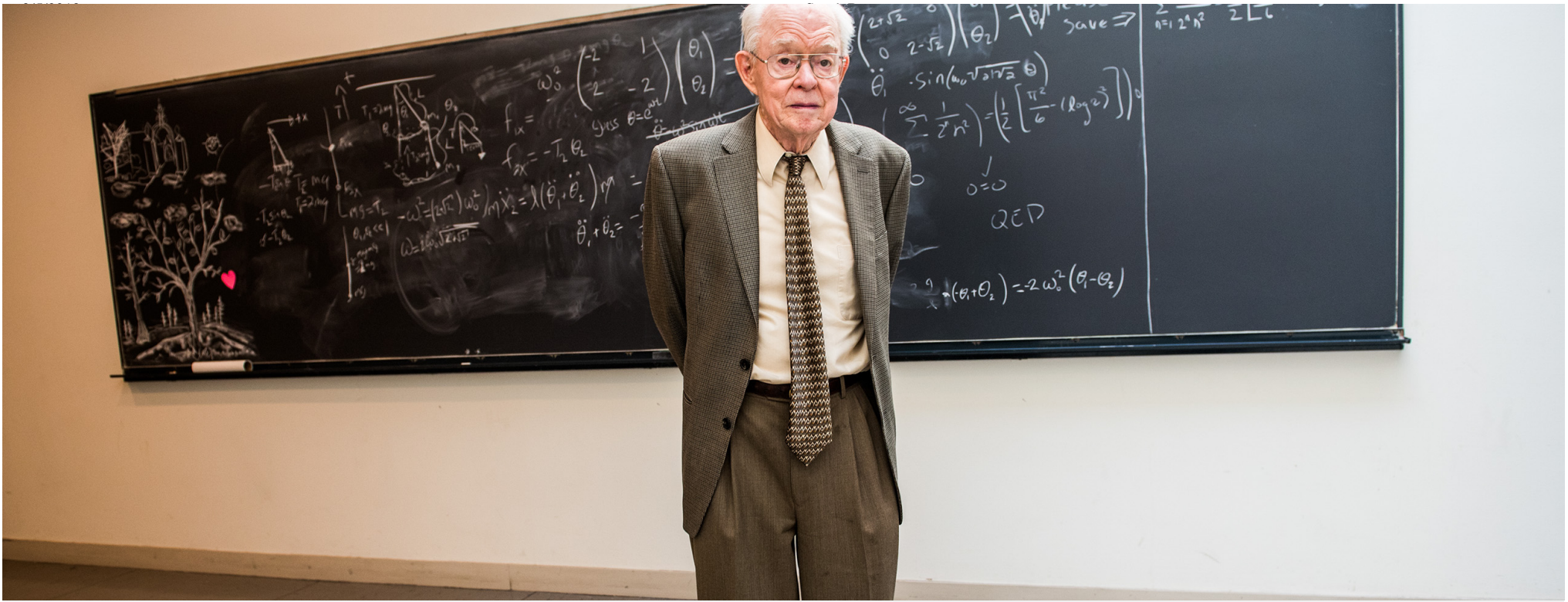
pose that the corona possesses spherical symmetry. It follows immediately from (11) that

$$N(r) v(r) = N_0 v_0 \left(\frac{a}{r} \right)^2.$$

We shall find it convenient to introduce the dimensionless variables $\tau = T/T_0$, $\lambda = GMM_{\odot}/2akT_0$, $\psi = \frac{1}{2}Mv^2/kT_0$. Then, using equation (12), we may reduce equation (10) to

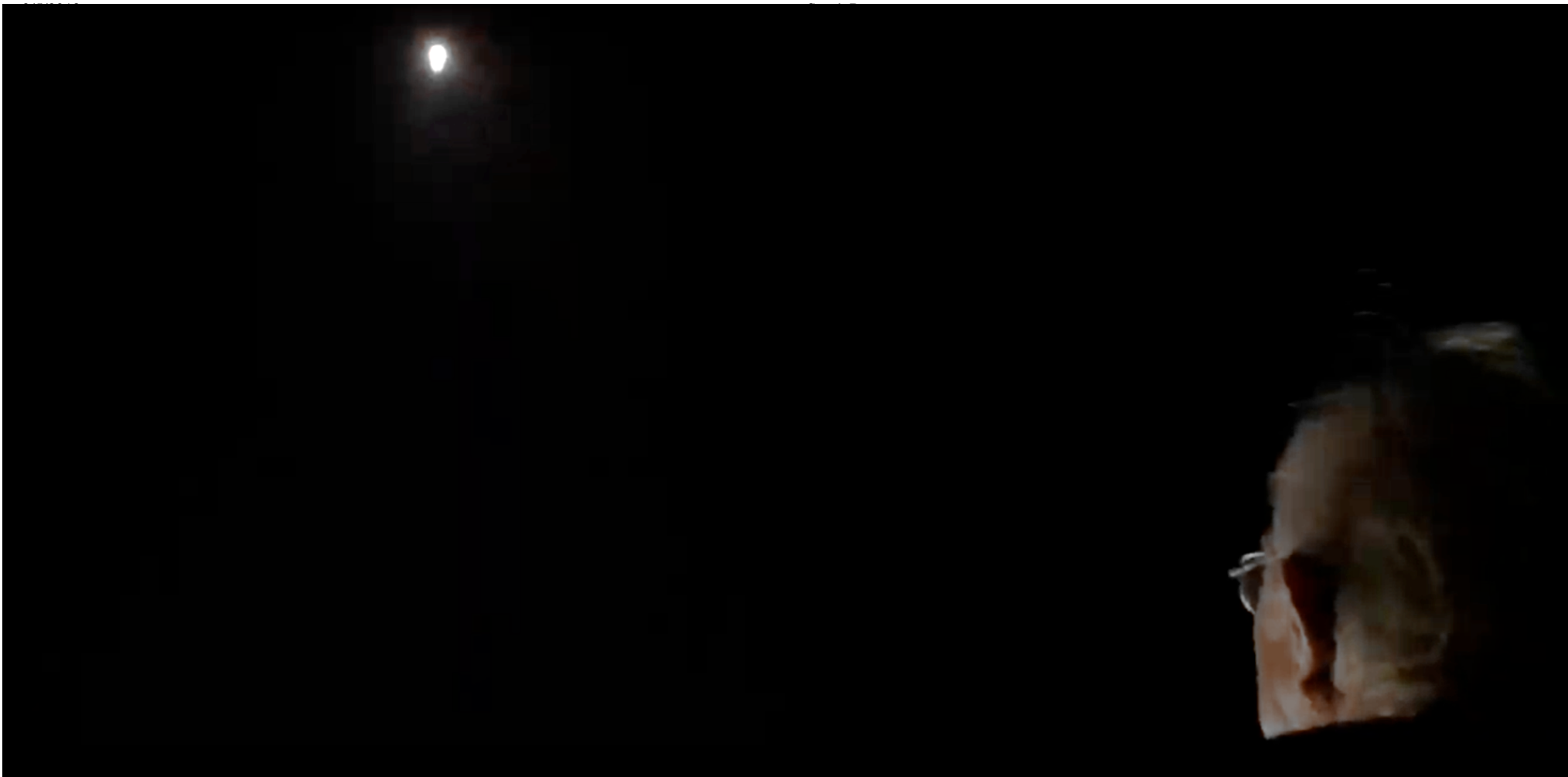
$$\frac{d\psi}{d\xi} \left(1 - \frac{\tau}{\psi} \right) = - 2\xi^2 \frac{d}{d\xi} \left(\frac{\tau}{\xi^2} \right) - \frac{2\lambda}{\xi^2}.$$

Integrate equation (13),¹ obtaining ψ as a function of ξ , let us suppose that the temperature is maintained (by heating mechanisms) at the uniform value



Expanding the focus from a rocket headed to the sun to include a scientist on the South Side of Chicago had additional challenges. UChicago, along with the Parker family, had to balance our shared interest to affirm Parker's legacy with the physical limitations faced by a 91-year-old.

Other challenges included limits on time and resources and timing uncertainty: The campaign had to build to a flexible 12-day NASA launch window in August, with the chance that mission complications could postpone a launch indefinitely. UChicago planned and executed this campaign within a compressed five-month planning and execution schedule with no assistance from outside vendors...



Eugene Parker Witnesses the Launch of his Namesake Spacecraft

Media Placements Highlights

NASA's Parker Solar Probe Is Named for Him. 60 Years Ago, No One Believed His Ideas About the Sun.

Eugene N. Parker predicted the existence of solar wind in 1958. The NASA spacecraft is the first named for a living person.



The New York Times

[NASA's Parker Solar Probe Is Named for Him. 60 Years Ago, No One Believed His Ideas About the Sun](#)

A man in a white striped shirt and a dark patterned tie is pointing his right hand towards the left. He is standing in front of a chalkboard with some faint markings. The video player interface is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

INSIDE NASA'S FIRST MISSION TO 'TOUCH THE SUN'

NIGHTLY
NEWS

00:41 / 01:49



CC



NIGHTLY NEWS

NBC Nightly News

[The mission of NASA's Parker Solar Probe: to touch the face of the sun. It's named for Professor Eugene Parker of the University of Chicago, honoring his scientific discoveries and testing his theories.](#)



CBS News

[Meet the astrophysicist who inspired NASA's First Solar Probe](#)

By Angela V. Olinto
Aug. 9, 2018 6:54 p.m. ET



The astrophysicist Eugene Parker found out about dark matter 60 years ago when he

The Wall Street Journal

[NASA's New Probe Sails Into the Solar Wind. Its namesake, Eugene Parker, is a living legend of astrophysics.](#)

RESULTS

The overall goal for the Parker Solar Probe campaign was to reassert the University of Chicago as a preeminent institution of higher education and to affirm the University's legacy as an intellectual destination where research defines fields, enhances society and has lasting global impact.

In the context of Eugene Parker's remarkable career, we aimed to demonstrably show that our core values— the pursuit of original ideas, free expression, and rigorous inquiry—create a personally enriching, transformative educational experience. The campaign also provided an opportunity to create pride among the UChicago community in one of its field-defining faculty members and his transformative scientific research.



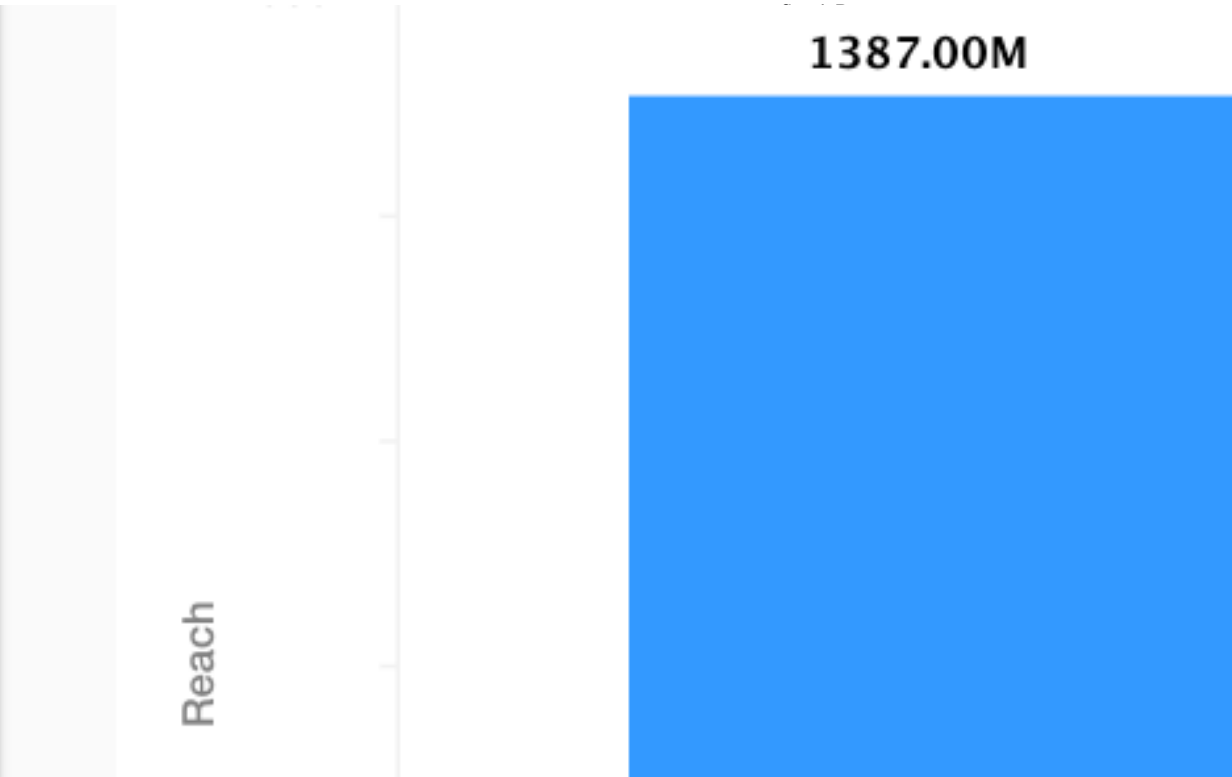

Goals & Measurement

UChicago applied Meltwater and Sprinklr software to track digital performance, media hits, and to benchmark historic performance.

UChicago's goal was to surpass the amount of news coverage the Office of Communications was able to garner from previous initiatives:

- **Media:** 1,100 media mentions. (Benchmark based on 2017 media campaigns)

As a secondary measure of influence, UChicago promoted coverage of the event with the hashtag "#ParkerSolarProbe," in the hopes of bringing Parker's name to the forefront of the NASA mission coverage, which was using tags including #TouchTheSun and #SolarProbe.



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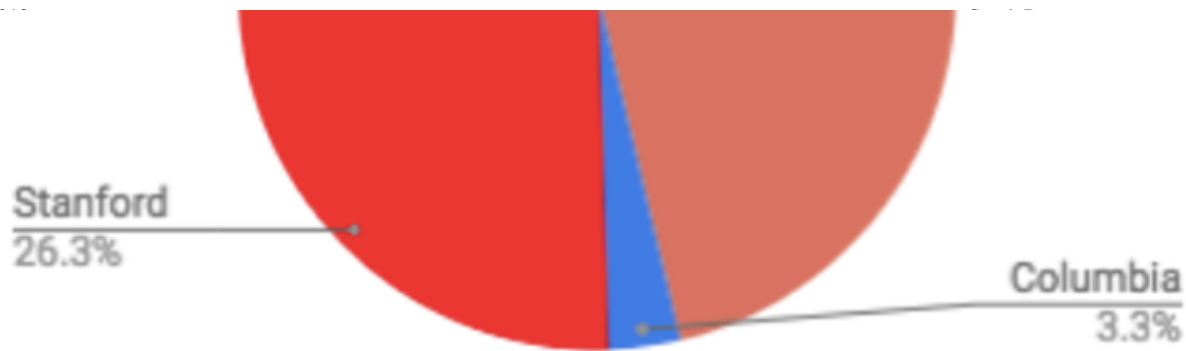
Reach

Media Relations Results

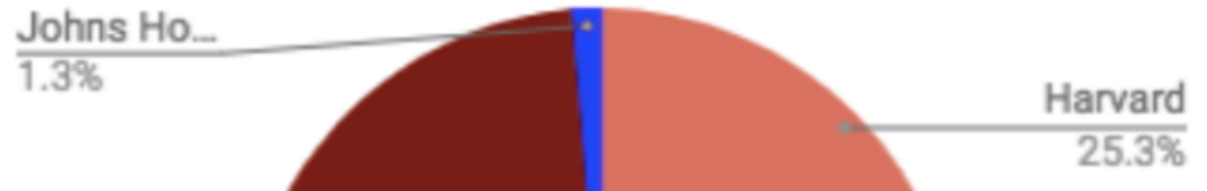
The Parker Solar Probe campaign was able to generate **nearly six times the amount of media mentions** the Communications team had set as its benchmark.

UChicago tallied 6,346 Parker Solar Probe media placements that mentioned the University of Chicago, with more than half of them relating directly to Eugene Parker and the University of Chicago. Our

measurement tools estimated Parker Solar Probe media placements to have **reached a potential audience of 1.38 billion people.** *[Meltwater]*



Parker Launch Window



Share of Voice %

Overall, UChicago's online share of voice among higher education peers **increased from 5.1% to 57%** during the Parker Solar Probe launch window – the largest share of the higher education conversation we have ever recorded. [Sprinklr]

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Media Assets

- [Parker Solar Probe Press Conference Live Broadcast](#)
- [Eugene Parker Feature Video \(Screened to Press\)](#)

Media Placement Highlights

- [New York Times Feature Story](#)
- [Wall Street Journal Op-Ed](#)
- [NBC Nightly News](#)
- [CBS Saturday Morning](#)
- [NPR All Things Considered](#)
- [CNN.com](#)
- [Scientific American](#)
- [Chicago Tribune](#)
- [The Independent](#)
- [Newsweek](#)
- [BBC News](#)
- [Huffington Post](#)

