

Marketing & Niche Development Working Group Minutes
April 13, 2006 @ 1:00pm

Members Present: Marge Fadden, Rob DeMezzo, Peter Madonia, Paula Rice, Ellen Beatty, Meg Elliot, Elise Williams, Cathy Christy, Shyam Lodha

- Shyam Lodha started off the meeting by showing a newspaper ad for Iona College in which the advertisement clearly showed the highlights of the institution. Lodha explained that a successful advertisement should “affect the minds of consumers.” Lohda further explained that a successful advertising campaign should identify attributes to highlight for the institution, identify what the institution is currently known for and identify what the institution wants to be known for in the future.
- Meg Elliot added that it was essential to identify “key points” to market and it was important to develop a positioning statement. Meg also added that it was essential to develop a message which could be communicated in a consistent way. It is important that this message avoid being “all things to all people” and the message be unique and have the characteristic of being able to resonate with all people. Shyam added that we cannot compare ourselves with other institutions in our marketing efforts and that we must provide value to our consumers. We agreed that as an institution we must identify key selling points and make these selling points a reality.
- Meg stated that she believed that we should add to our message that we are connecting our students to New Haven. It was pointed out that many of the other area colleges and universities were much more connected to the community, particularly New Haven, than SCSU. Connecting our students to the community would enhance their experience at SCSU.
- Meg shared her experiences at a recent branding conference she had attended. She stated that we must take the critical elements from the university mission & vision statements and from the strategic plan to develop our image. It is important to identify weaknesses and strengths and get over stumbling blocks. It is important to identify what people are saying about the institution and develop a plan to show the consumers that we are tackling these issues. Marge stated that all of this sounded like it should be included in an initiative for the strategic plan.
- We thoroughly discussed the essential elements of the marketing plan as asked in the discussion prompt. Essential elements were identified as the following:
 - Mission / Vision
 - Strategic Plan
 - Market Research (Has the market or the perception changed)
 - Community Goals
 - Consistent message
 - Identifying Target Audiences

- Refining a Media Plan
 - Developing Unified Materials
- The group agreed that we had the basic framework for what was needed for a marketing plan and that we would work to develop these into an initiative.
- At Shyam's request, Elise Williams spoke about her perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the institution from her student perspective. Elise commented on the lack of a shuttle to connect our students to the city. Ellen Beatty added that the university markets itself as an "urban institution", however, we lack a connection with the community. Elise added that there is no connection with the state park neighboring the campus. Elise pointed out a strength of our campus resides in our DRO office.
- We discussed how Quinnipiac University creates an image of itself as a safe suburban campus just 65 miles from NYC.
- Paula Rice and Shyam discussed that they had found that the professions/disciplines/fields that expect increased needs in the future included nursing, education & business. Paula suggested that we should promote these programs through various means. Paula suggested that a possible initiative would include surveying various employers and alumni to develop the best practices to ensure that our academic programs meet the needs of the state. In addition, our marketing efforts should target those segments which hire our students. Shyam suggested analyzing our programs by dividing them into 4 categories: star programs, potential problems, dying or shrinking programs, and programs which are no longer relevant. Programs such as nursing, education & business most likely would represent the "star" programs.
- Marge pointed out that the Academic Development Group is discussing the question, "What process should we use for identifying signature programs?" For subcommittee #3, it may not be possible to identify which academic programs we want to be "signature programs" at this time. It was suggested that Paula Kennedy and Elise touch base with the academic program development working group.
- Peter Madonia discussed the issue of advocacy for the institution. Questions such as what is advocacy and how to create advocacy were discussed. Dr. Beatty mentioned that one of our goals might be to cultivate the stakeholders of the institution to act as "ambassadors" of the institution. The challenge is to develop a plan for developing advocacy for the institution. One necessary item needed for an advocacy plan would be data from select focus groups and data from the community. It is important to ask the tough questions to determine how people feel about the institution. The focus groups should be conducted in such a way that they are open enough for people to be able to discuss negative perceptions of the university. Peter also pointed out that we should look at reaching out to the 169 school districts across the state. In addition, we must find a way to cultivate

all stakeholders of the university and advocate ourselves through word of mouth. It was also discussed how we can reach the political realm and the community in our advocacy efforts.

- It was stated that the university should perhaps “brag” about itself more regularly. Much of the perception of the university may be based on myth. Meg stated that while press is good for the institution, presence has a much greater impact. The group agreed that the development of a presence should be a priority and developing a presence in the community, specifically by creating connections and relationships with the community, should be formed into an initiative for the plan.
- The group agreed that internal marketing and the need to motivate internal employees to be positive about the institution is a priority and should be included in an initiative.

RCD