

## Introduction

Sandra Golden, President, and Lawrence Golden, Executive Vice President, Sandra Golden & Associates, visited Very Nice Community College Spring, 2001 to conduct an audit of its college marketing and public relations programs and activities. They met with more than 100 individuals, including focus groups/interviews with faculty, administration, deans, support staff, marketing/public relations, admissions and student services, students, community and board members, and high school students and counselors.

Prior to the visit, they reviewed college print and promotional materials, as well as college data and a previous Image/Development Assessment Report. The promotional materials are analyzed in the following report.

Outlined in the audit report are the observations, recommendations and summaries of the group interviews/focus groups. Interviews discussed what is happening now, what perceptions there are of image, what individuals feel is effective in marketing and what they feel could be improved. *Consultants' recommendations introduce each section in bold/italics.* Following each is a discussion for each recommendation.

The observations in this report will also shape the presentation and development of a follow-up marketing workshop designed to continue to achieve increased enrollment and ongoing student service and success by creating a marketing-driven operation through the following elements:

- Create a college-wide understanding of marketing and a process of marketing empowerment by all personnel who have contact with the college's clientele.
- Develop a Marketing Task Force that cuts across college lines and operates on team-building principles. Create a Marketing Task Force with an in-depth understanding of marketing and a mandate to:
  - Become an organizational framework for the ongoing college operation of marketing
  - Develop a marketing plan based on input from diverse college constituency and empowerment to those who will implement the plan
  - Create a process for implementation through a written plan of doable, measurable activities with assigned responsibilities, timelines and evaluation and reporting processes and activities

## Strengths/Observations

Very Nice Community College is well-positioned to take advantage of a number of opportunities to grow and provide services to fill the county's educational needs. The county includes a large geographic area, with population growth, including many older citizens and a sizeable population influx in summers. With the large geographic area, it has no other two-year colleges or other state colleges as competition close by.

The college has a number of strong points on which to build, including:

- VNCC is known for its large core of liberal arts curriculum, with more than 70 percent of its students transferring to four-year institutions. Faculty are committed to quality teaching to prepare students for academic success.
- A number of degree and certificate programs exist in career areas. Passage rates on some, such as nursing, are in the high 90 percentiles.
- A new facility in the southeast part of the county has already shown potential with an opening of 700 students. The site director understands marketing and has already set directions for informing and involving the community through events, offerings and promotion.
- The president has been commended at every level for bringing a new energy and new dynamic to the institution and reaching out to the community. He is supportive of marketing efforts to reach new audiences and promote activities for student success, from recruitment to retention.
- Many staff, including new leadership in student affairs and personnel in marketing/PR, have an understanding of marketing and have begun creative efforts to enhance activities in marketing areas. Among these are beginning designs of a new logo, a fairly new recruitment position allowing for broader community recruitment, and the introduction of technology and approaches to begin systematic inquiry follow-up.
- Many personnel throughout the institution are capable and interested in moving an enhanced marketing agenda forward.
- Some flexible scheduling exists to serve community needs, including off campus sites, distance learning and such approaches as Short Term.
- An alumni organization with a number of good programs exists. This is not typically found in community colleges.
- Successful alumni abound and can be used for image campaigns and other supportive programs. These success stories were pointed out in all our interview groups.

- Several on-campus activities, such as the Kids on Campus and the Fine Arts Center bring people to the college and can be used to further enhance awareness and recruitment.
- Students love the institution, commending support staff for being helpful and faculty for challenging them and helping them. They pointed to a friendly campus, and indicated student groups had T-shirts saying VNCC is One Caring College.

## **Recommendations**

### **Marketing plan and team**

#### ***Develop a college-wide marketing team and plan***

The college needs to develop an overall college-wide marketing team and plan. Such a coordinated overall marketing plan would identify goals, target audiences, activities, along with action steps including milestones, timelines and person responsible and evaluation outcomes.

A full marketing plan would include all areas referred to in the marketing cycle the consultant discussed, to include market research, curriculum delivery, services, promotion, recruitment, inquiry follow-up and retention. To be most successful, marketing needs to be understood by a broad base of college personnel and the plan needs to have wide input in its development and implementation.

The audit and the follow-up marketing workshop will serve as steps to provide this understanding and will create the structure and activities for the marketing plan

Once the plan is developed it needs to be implemented and monitored, under the leadership of a permanent Marketing Task Force. The college community also needs to be kept informed of marketing plans and progress.

## New Target Markets

### *Identify new target markets and develop full plans to effectively reach and serve them*

Very Nice Community College has extensive opportunities to reach new target markets. These were identified and discussed in many of the interview/focus groups. To begin some of this planning, as part of the marketing workshop, a target market worksheet will be introduced in the first afternoon session, and a separate sub-committee will be assigned as part of the permanent Marketing Task Force to look further at these opportunities.

These target markets provide the college with enormous potential for both growth and unique service to its county and should be a priority in market planning. The planning needs to include careful research and discussion with representatives of these groups to identify actual needs and then appropriate programs and services to fill these needs, consideration of partnerships, development of appropriate programs and services, and finally promotion and follow-up once programs are developed.

Among target markets the college should investigate are:

**Senior citizens.** Very Nice Community is unique with a population comprised of more than 40% (and growing) senior citizens, including many retired professionals. Models exist for programming for this group, including on-site offerings in community centers and locations, special “Elders Campus” weekly programs on campus with topics from humanities and the arts to computers and recreation. Seminars and travel programs could also be considered.

**Summer residents.** As a resort area, summer residents increase the population from 500,000 to more than double that. There is also great potential for programming here if topics and packaging can be appropriately developed. Clearly, this audience wants to keep time for its vacation and recreational activities, but to many, interesting educational programs would be a welcome addition to their visit. Models along the lines of a Chautauqua Institute, timely subjects like “Elections and the Electoral College,” speakers and entertainment in short-term seminars or programs could be considered, perhaps partnering with county chambers or other groups. Models also exist for one-week seminars for professional development that can be programmed around vacation time and could be examined.

**Expanded career program areas related to the unique geography of Very Nice Community.** Consideration to developing and expanding programs in marine study, possibly ship building, use of programming around the forest and arboretum, hospitality industry, real estate, should also be explored.

**Small business resource centers.** While the county has no major large industries, many small businesses exist that need skill updating in computers, management, small business operations etc. Courses, workshops and consulting would assist these businesses.

**Naval base.** Special programming on-site on the naval base, both for the enlistees and their spouses, could be offered. Programming needs to be packaged around enlistees' time schedules, and transfer considered since many may be moving elsewhere after their enlistment. To succeed, such programming must also include some level of on-site support services such as counseling, financial aid, bookstore, etc.

## Research

### *Consider ways to gather and apply information on community needs and awareness*

This audit report, as well as a two-year old Image/Development Assessment report, give information on internal and external perceptions. Quantitative information from a broader community survey and specific cross-tabs of targeted audiences would also give useful data on such areas as community awareness, important benefits, reception to alternative delivery options and sources of awareness. This information would help set marketing directions as well as provide a baseline to evaluate new marketing initiatives.

On-going internal information gathered from prospective and new students should also assess how they heard about the college and why they chose it. Other future types of research that would be helpful include evaluation of student satisfaction with services and surveys of students who drop out.

## **Curriculum/Curriculum Delivery**

### ***Identify new target markets and develop full plans to effectively reach and serve them***

New targets provide great potential to VNCC and as such were as discussed in a separate section on page 5.

### ***Continue to review curriculum and curriculum delivery, considering alternative delivery modes, as appropriate, to meet the needs of business and individuals in the community.***

The college has some alternative delivery modes, including such programs as evening, distance learning, Short Term and intersession classes. Expansion of these options, particularly to reach a working adult and business audience, should be explored, including short term delivery, modules, course packages, weekend college, etc. as appropriate.

Programming through the new Northwest Center and approaches being considered to reach the business community with customized training are also important and provide opportunities for growth.

### ***Involve faculty and programs in target marketing as appropriate***

The role of faculty and divisions in marketing individual programs through all stages (curriculum development and delivery, services, promotion, inquiry follow-up, retention) is also important.

Determining and defining where faculty expertise would be most critical is an important issue so that limited time is used efficiently and effectively (e.g. in follow-up phone calls and talking with visiting students clearly interested in a program, working directly with professional contacts in the field, in teacher to teacher contacts at other colleges or high schools, in identifying ideas for news stories) and where other professionals at the institution need to provide the support (e.g. writing/designing brochures and press releases, placing stories in the media, doing mailings to the prospective student.)

The workshop will give a number of examples of ways faculty and staff can be involved, and the session on target marketing will provide a worksheet for looking at individual program marketing, from creating programs and services to meet needs, to developing targeted outlets for promotion.

One successful example given in the interviews involved individuals from the nursing program visiting high schools along with hospital administrators and program grads.

***Standards/quality***

Faculty in the interviews strongly emphasized the need to maintain standards and quality, and we would agree on their importance.

We also feel strongly that providing customer service and focusing on student success need not be contradictory to this mission; in fact, the purpose of this attitude is to help students succeed.

***Evaluate ways to enhance faculty role in advising***

This is discussed under retention on page 14.

## Services

### ***Continue to create a friendly, helpful atmosphere Enhance internal communication systems***

Overall comments on services were good. A few individual examples were given of poor customer service and attitude and understaffed areas. Such reports should be examined.

Internal communication is always a difficult area to institute effectively. Some suggestions were made to help keep people, especially front line staff, informed. An employee orientation was suggested to let employees know what is going on and why they are important to the process. Regular e-mail on new programs and services would also be helpful, and needs to come in advance so offices can make necessary adjustments to accommodate new changes. Some colleges use an intranet e-mail bulletin board system to send and then file key information that employees can easily call up.

Training was also suggested, especially with new equipment such as Datatel.

### ***Review phone and in-person information systems***

A number of comments were made regarding voice mail and phone forwarding. While much of the information requested on the 800-number is related to admissions, the calls don't go directly there now.

A staffed information desk would also be helpful in the lobby of the admissions building. There used to be a switchboard operator who sat at the desk that is still currently there.

These systems should be reviewed, considering staffing availability and training, keeping in mind the best way to meet customer service needs of students and potential students.

### ***Create better internal and external signage***

There needs to be a full signage plan at campus entrances and throughout the campus. Other than a map on the main road into the campus (that can't be studied while driving) there appear to be no directional materials. Signs should be designed utilizing the new logo when it is developed (see promotion section). Other suggestions in relation to this include considering informational kiosks on campus and putting a box with campus maps at the various entrances.

Internal signage should also be reviewed to help students and visitors easily find offices and events.

### ***Update facilities and enhance maintenance services***

While this is a beautiful campus in a lovely setting with several new buildings, a number of the older ones need renovations. For example, the bathrooms in the student center,

which is one of the first things many visitors see, were pointed out as needing renovation. Other physical plant issues such as heating, landscaping, setting clocks, fixing faucets and clean up were also pointed out.

Maintenance assistance in set up and break down for special events and recruiting set up is also important in order for these projects to be effective.

There apparently are plans for both the maintenance and signage improvement and these should move forward as quickly as possible.

### ***Review hours, staffing in support services***

The college may need to look at when offices are open and how well they are staffed. We heard several comments on financial aid; a high school counselor indicated parents said they can't get help because the offices aren't open at night. We later learned they are open some nights with part time assistance. But if counselors don't know, this is a problem.

There apparently was also no transfer advisor for the past six months and this is the major college academic area.

Cross training between areas, such as admissions and financial aid, for example, would also be helpful so students can get at least basic information in one place.

### ***Consider a job placement position***

Several groups indicated a need for a placement office. For some programs, funding also depends on placement of students in jobs. Some departments indicated they received phone calls from employers and some posted them, others referred students, but there is no central system that tracks and coordinates these efforts.

### ***Consider child care***

It was indicated there might be some efforts to develop a child care center. This is a service available at many community colleges, and clearly makes a difference for those parents who could not attend without it.

## **Inquiry Follow-up/Recruitment**

### **Inquiry Follow-up**

*Implement a comprehensive college-wide communications flow system to do written and telemarketing follow-up through the inquiry/admissions/registration process and track information for future decisions*

The college has the technology in place to implement a computerized communications flow system. Currently, the recruiter brings completed cards from her visits back to the college and enters the information in a database and then does follow-up mailings and telemarketing with those names. Some special programs such as the Multi-Cultural and EOF also contact and track their inquiries.

College-wide, however, there is no single office or system for comprehensive inquiry follow-up. Those who call the admissions office get a packet with a viewbook, catalogue, schedule when available, and a cover letter. Unfortunately, once this is sent the name of the recipient is not kept and used in any systematic fashion. The letter could be enhanced by being personalized and being more motivational by containing bulleted benefits and outlining and encouraging next steps, such as tours, counseling appointments, departmental contacts, application etc. Financial aid information, at least in a general way, might also be included; currently it is only sent when asked, and often is sent separately.

Those who call a department directly get information from that department, but the departments do not send the overall admissions or financial aid information or send their names to admissions for follow-up. They also do not keep a database of their department names for follow-up through the department.

The new VP of Student Affairs has indicated plans to develop a system that would bring together a full packet of relevant information from different areas such as financial aid, admissions and departments and would give next steps to encourage students to move through the process. This is what is needed.

An ideal inquiry system, that should be implemented here, would include coordination of all college contacts in a central database with a process of written and telemarketing follow-up with segmented, incremental communications including a set of mailings, direct mail campaigns and phoning/telemarketing to move students through the various steps to enrollment and retention. Letters and phone contacts need to be friendly, motivational and encourage next steps. Points of contact, for example, could be made with students who inquired but didn't apply, those who applied but didn't enroll, those who indicated specific departments, those who enrolled one semester and didn't return etc. Special letters and contacts should come from departments to follow through with students interested in those areas.

This database should also provide information for evaluation of efforts, keeping track of how students found out about the college, what services, such as tours, may have led to enrollment, etc. The tracking should also help evaluate what follow-up efforts work and what may need to change. Information on how many apply after each contact would help evaluate which mailings are needed. Regular reporting on numbers of inquiries, applications and enrollment and yield rates from each should also be part of the system.

## **Recruitment**

### ***Continue and enhance high school recruiting efforts***

There is regular contact with high school students and counselors, and more than 25% of area high school students attend VNCC. Some creative new approaches should be commended including having VNCC students write and sign a letter to high school students and also join in the high school visits. Other approaches including giveaways, perhaps even CD-ROMs, bringing high school editors and their faculty advisors to the campus, etc. might also be considered.

A more overriding issue that was brought up a number of times was the pressure on high schools to encourage their students to attend a four year college rather than a two-year because of state rankings. It was indicated this was on the state community college presidents' agenda; it is an issue that should be continued since VNCC is the right alternative for so many students.

### ***Continue and enhance adult and community recruiting efforts***

Through the assignment of a fulltime recruitment coordinator for community contacts, as well as efforts through such groups as EOF and Multi-Cultural, the college is reaching pro-actively a wide variety of community targets, which is good, including libraries, fairs, chambers, shopping centers, community centers, churches etc. This should be continued, tracked to determine most valuable outlets and expanded as possible. Efforts from different areas also need to be coordinated in a systematic way.

A suggestion was also made to consider renting a storefront at the Very Nice Community Mall, and even having classes there. This possibly could be examined.

### ***Utilize campus events to expose individuals to the college opportunities and encourage groups to come to the campus***

The college has a number of programs that draw community members to the campus, including the Planetarium and fine arts events. Ways to use these for informal awareness and recruiting should be considered; e.g. have a booth with college materials, staffed when possible, give younger visitors a bag or other giveaway saying they've been to VNCC.

## Retention

### *Develop and analyze data on retention and add new programs to assist students as needed*

We were told that college data showed retention high for first time, fulltime students (more than 70%). Including information over several semesters on part time and other cohorts of student who had planned to continue would also give valuable information. Based on data, new or expanded retention services may be needed. The college should review or enhance such programs as early alert, mentoring, orientation, advising, etc.

**Orientation.** A new orientation program was included this summer; it was commended both internally and by high school counselors. Such efforts should continue.

**Mentoring.** Some special programs such as Multi-Cultural have begun mentoring programs. These should be examined and enhanced, and expanded more broadly, if possible.

**Advising/Counseling.** There were comments made in the interviews that advising is currently done by faculty with no more than 25 students assigned to a faculty member. However, this approach results in having some students (in programs with large numbers of students, but fewer faculty) unable to meet with an advisor in their own field who would have much better information, e.g. business or computers. This is something that should be reviewed.

It was also pointed out that only fulltime students are assigned a counselor, probably because of limited staffing. This should also be reviewed.

**Returning students.** Direct mail can be quite useful in assisting in retention. Its use to contact non-returning students has proven successful at many colleges with which we have worked. One of the simplest yet most effective approaches is the use of a postcard with the message "It Won't Be the Same Without You" and a fading picture of a student. (An example of this from another college was shared with the marketing department.)

## **Promotion**

### ***Enhance promotion activities and budget to create a positive image and awareness of key college benefits and success stories***

One of the critical areas to move the college marketing agenda forward is in promotion. Every group we spoke with was concerned about the college image and the lack of significant awareness of the college benefits and success stories which exist. The current college marketing/PR staff is also aware of these issues and has the talent and ability to create publications and programs that bring an increased positive message to the community. Some efforts have already begun; others directions can easily follow with college support. Outlined in detail on the next pages are an assessment of the current marketing materials and recommendations for enhancing them.

Key improvements needed, with a budget to support them, include the following:

- Develop a new logo and family look design, and templates to apply these consistently
- Revise key materials: viewbook, schedules, immediately; program brochures, magazine/newsletter and others to follow
- Develop a full, integrated advertising campaign, including radio, newspapers, billboards
- Use new materials to highlight key assets such as student success, transfer, and financial aid in order to demonstrate quality with concrete examples such as testimonials, and address the quality issue and misperceptions of “Hooper High.”

### ***Develop a written promotion plan***

Current college promotional materials were reviewed and are discussed below. The college also needs a written plan for marketing communications materials. A full plan would include specific benefits, specific audiences, and the description, purposes/audiences, sequence for level of interest, status of production, for both publications and advertising. (A sample for creating such a plan was shown during the audit.)

Outlined below are a review of current promotional materials and recommendations for improvement.

### **Logo/family look//theme/benefits**

#### ***Create and consistently use a new logo and family look, along with a college theme and focus on key benefits***

**Logo/family look.** The college currently has no graphic “family look” that ties its publications together, other than the logo. While the logo does appear on most publications, it has a somewhat outdated look and should be modernized. The college is

currently working on creating a new logo design, which will be an important part of a new graphic family look. Once designed, the standards for its usage should be created and it should be used consistently.

A family look and design will also be important to create an awareness and recognition for the college, which is a first step in building support and interest for the college.

Creation of a new logo and family look should be a priority in the publications area. Included should be a package of key pieces that carry this look – including at least the schedule books, catalogue, viewbook. (Sample family looks were shared with the PR/marketing staff during the audit meetings)

**Templates.** “Templates” – pre-designed formats -- should also be created to make it easy to apply the design to a variety of pieces and have a standard look at a given level of quality. A college this size and this active will have many publications for a variety of events and audiences. While you will want some differences in design and content to be effective with a variety of target audiences, it would still help image and awareness to carry at least the standard logo and a similar graphic look on pieces. The template design can be modified with photos, art and copy to fit a specific program or event, but would be easier to put together than starting from scratch for every piece. The template would also ensure a certain level of quality and recognition.

**Photographs.** High quality photographs focusing on students (diverse by gender, age, ethnicity, program of interest) in college and work settings are necessary for all the new publications and advertising. Hiring a freelancer for a few days to develop a portfolio of photos that can be used throughout the year would make this possible.

**Slogan.** In addition, the college may want to create a slogan to be used consistently. (Samples from other colleges were shared with marketing staff) Something like “It Begins at VNCC,” or “VNCC first” used in your radio ad, could work.

Comments in the focus groups suggested themes emphasizing VNCC as a place to start – “Want to go to a great four-year school? – Start at a great two-year school!” “VNCC as a pathway where you can start and stop along the way” “Princeton loves our students. Penn loves our students. Why aren’t your students here?” or ads exploding some of the myths e.g. showing how well our students do at four-year institutions or why you can pay less and still get a great education.

The actual theme selected needs to be a simple slogan that is broad enough in its message to encompass the transfer element, but also career programs, business training etc. One comment in the focus groups, in fact, stated, “Evening and part-time students are thrilled with the dedication and quality of the faculty; corporations are very happy with what we do.”

Again, the purpose is to create an ongoing awareness and recognition in a continuous marketing effort. Slogans can carry a powerful, easily remembered promotion that could be used on all promotional pieces, billboards, etc. for quick recognition and impact.

**Benefits/Image.** Most groups indicated a need to have the VNCC image improved and assets better known in the community. Community colleges nationally fight the misconceptions of lower quality and need to address the image of “second choice.” To address these, the college needs to identify its key benefits that will be promoted (beyond cost and convenience that most already do acknowledge) : e.g. strong transfer program, availability of financial aid, unique career programs, small classes taught by qualified faculty, a caring atmosphere, flexible schedules, etc.

A number of approaches can be used to get these points across. Developing the “Top 10 reasons to attend VNCC’ and then using these on all materials will keep emphasizing these points. Using students success stories as testimonials, along with testimonials from employers and four-year schools where the students transfer, would also make these points. The testimonials need to select success stories that also represent a diversity of gender, careers etc.

***Revise publications using new logo, design and benefits discussed above***

In addition to the overriding comments above on family look, design and image, the following are comments on some of the key pieces which were reviewed by the consultants. (Samples from other colleges of viewbooks, schedules, etc. were also shared and discussed during the PR audit meeting and will be shown in the workshop as well.)

**Viewbook**

The current VNCC viewbook covers the key information and does so in an organized way. The first page lists benefits in an easy to read bulleted format, which is good. It has an application and return envelope, but might also include a card for those who want more information, but are not yet ready to apply.

A revision using the new graphic design and theme might also create a design that is less copy intensive. Other factors to consider in a viewbook and other key pieces include:

- Sections organized by benefits, with attention-getting heads about each that stand out
- Testimonials from successful alumni and employers
- A bright, clean design with strong photos, subheads, callouts, and limited large copy blocks
- A call to action with return card
- Full list of programs (which you do)

Once a good viewbook is designed you don't need to create a new version each year; it should last for several years.

### **Catalogue**

Catalogues are usually used as a follow-up piece once students show interest and want more detailed information. Your catalogue works for that. It contains the basic information in an organized way.

### **Credit Schedule Book**

A schedule book is a key marketing tool for two-year colleges. Many use it for mass mailings to the community residents, as you do. You might also explore the possibility of a more targeted mailing e.g. by age to households with individuals 17-55, to save dollars that could be used for other marketing, and then send the special senior programs to those audiences.

Yours has a number of good features. The Open House promotion is good on the back cover. The front cover might also be used to highlight key benefits in some way. There are several good promotional aspects inside: e.g. "Yes, financial aid is available," "Is an Internet course right for you?" (add self-motivation), Short Term, "Hey, new students! Thinking About College? It's easy..." These kinds of promotional items should be continued and even expanded.

Other aspects to add might include top benefits (e.g. 10 reasons to attend) and testimonials from students and employers.

In terms of design, some of the purple was difficult to read and many of the photos could be sharper, even on newsprint.

### **Continuing Education Schedule Books**

A separate schedule book is often used for continuing education as you do, given different distribution and timing from the credit schedule. The format size seems to work (as does the one for credit even though they are different). I would again consider using a graphic look that ties it to the college, especially in the cover design, while also showing it as continuing education.

It, too, has some good areas of promotion and headlines showing benefits e.g. registration as flexible as your active lifestyle, 3 reasons why you'll want to say yes to these terrific courses. "Red tape" should read something like "no red tape" or "we help you cut the red tape"

In terms of color, some of the yellow is also hard to read. Photos are preferable to clip art, but need to be sharp. Even on newsprint, photos should be sharper than many of yours; different printing specifications may need to be designated to achieve this.

### **Program Brochures**

There are a variety of program brochures, but again they don't fit into a format or identifying look. Apparently, many are now simply done by individual departments. A series should be created through the college's marketing department. As another option, or additionally, creating "cluster" brochures for such areas as all health careers, could also be considered. When the program brochures are redone, they should have a template design and also consider the following elements:

They need to be more promotional and motivational. Give reasons the field is exciting. Use testimonials from successful alumni and employers. Use a standard section on the college e.g. "VNCC – The Right Choice" that you use in the health and physical education brochure. The Joint Admissions brochure also has some good sections with "Why Choose the Joint Admissions Program?" and a quote from the transfer school on the cover.

I would also consider a return card for those who want more information or follow-up (and make sure the department getting these then is ready to do the follow-up). You might also consider omitting the course sequence and just inserting a sheet designed to fit the look, so you don't have to update these as often. A motivational accompanying letter from each department could also be part of the follow-up system described in the inquiry section of this report. Again, examples will be presented at the workshop.

Although program brochures are needed, creating brochures for the very large number of programs at VNCC is a major, time-consuming undertaking. It is suggested that a freelance writer be hired to concentrate on this project, since it would be difficult to do in any timely framework with the existing staff and on-going projects.

### **Targeted flyers/special pieces**

Programs such as the Short Term and Jump Start are good, targeted programs, and such special targeted campaigns should be continued.

Having a Speakers Bureau can be a very effective marketing and community relations program. This listing looks good.

The photo sleeve is a nice idea, and should be used to create good community relations etc.

## **Annual Report**

This piece is nicely done and full of great information about the college. It has rightly won a number of awards.

## **Alumni newsletter/ Internal newsletter**

There seem to be some good programs organized for the alumni, including RAFT recruiting and the mentoring. The newsletter highlights the activities well. Most community colleges do not have as extensive an alumni organization and this one should be commended. One aspect that might be reviewed is the definition of “alumni.” Given the nature of the community college student, many colleges define alumni at a level less than needing to have completed an associate degree; VNCC should consider readjusting this.

The internal newsletter also focuses on some key college news items.

The college should also consider an external/internal magazine/newsletter, published perhaps twice a year, targeted to a broader audience, including donors, community leaders, as well as alumni and internal audiences. (Samples were shown) The college is currently planning such a piece, and we would encourage this type of publication. It could include new college directions, features about alumni success, new programs, faculty etc. plus highlights on alumni and fund-raising campaigns. The advantage of one piece is it can be larger and a higher quality design and the audiences do overlap e.g. you want donors to know about college programs which is why they support you, and you want community leaders and the public to know about programs so they can become donors and potential students, employers etc.

## **Radio ad/ Need for full advertising campaign**

The radio spot does a good job of listing benefits and basic information, including the Open House and registration. The jingle creates attention. The “It Begins at VNCC” and/or “VNCC First” serve as themes that could be used on publications as well.

What is needed, as referenced briefly earlier, is a full blown advertising campaign, that includes several media, probably radio, newspapers and billboards. Television, other than cable, is not realistic given the cost to use such major markets as Philadelphia or New York. VNCC is fortunate, however, that it has regional radio with a large listening audience. Radio can also be targeted by age and other demographic factors. Local newspapers that are read are also available. The use of a testimonial campaign as discussed earlier would work very well for the overall advertising. A schedule for these

should be designed, probably in flights around registration periods, but early enough to allow students to get through the process effectively.

Advertising purchases need to take into account allowing enough reach and frequency (how many people hear the ad, how many times) in order to make an impact. Significant additional dollars will need to be budgeted to achieve this.

Once developed, the recognition and awareness of the campaign should be evaluated through on-going community and student surveys.

### **Media relations**

#### ***Continue media relations and enhanced pro-active features, especially for individual programs***

The college regularly sends press releases and makes media pitches that result in regular coverage. Local newspaper as well as radio are available in the VNCC geographic area. One of the difficulties with TV is that the key network stations are in Big City I and Big City II, making it unlikely for the stations to send a reporter except for some truly unique items. Nonetheless, the college should continue to look for newsworthy angles and stories, particularly for feature stories on college programs for newspapers and radio, and for the local cable TV.

Expanded coverage, however, requires programs identifying newsworthy angles and human interest approaches so that the PR department has items to pitch that would be likely to be used. PR personnel might visit faculty meetings regularly (e.g. once a semester) to explain the importance of PR stories, highlight past examples from other programs – and the results that they generated – and solicit new stories. The cardboard canoes built by high school tech-prep students is one example that has received coverage because it is unique and visual. Having a clip scan would help the marketing department circulate stories that have appeared.

The college should think about ways to use existing programs for unique newspaper and broadcast angles (additional examples will be given in the target market workshop ) and focus on faculty as experts for topics of general interest. (e.g. accounting at tax time, healthcare tips, safety tips from criminal justice). This could provide an opportunity to get media attention even beyond the immediate geographic area. These same faculty can be used for a college speakers bureau and topics from the speakers bureau can be considered for media pitches.

### **Web page**

The college web site has a number of good features. The home page has a number of categories, including several promotional ones such as What's Happening and Short Term, which are good. The home page is a place where other areas the college wants to focus on could also be promoted.

The quiz on whether to take on-line courses is good.

There was no direct way to ask for further information on line (only phone numbers to call.) This should be a goal for the web site. Once on, it also becomes critical that a system be in place to provide immediate on-line response, followed up by materials in the mail and placing the name in a college-wide follow-up database.

The site includes the current college logo, which it should; a new logo, when developed, and consistent family look should also exist through the web site.

Although under construction, the page with faculty information was very hard to read over the design background.

Eventually, the web site should be developed to include interactive approaches, such as on-line requests, applications, and registration. Colleges today are even using virtual tours, chat rooms and personalized micro-sites for potential students.