

Introduction

Sandra Golden, President, and Lawrence Golden, Executive Vice President, Sandra Golden & Associates, visited XYZ CC on July 17 and 18, to conduct an audit of its college marketing and public relations programs and activities. They met with nearly 100 individuals, including faculty, administrators, marketing/PR, institutional research, division chairs, front line staff, enrollment services, career and technical education, student development and academic support, XYZ CC students, and high school students and counselors.

Our thanks go to these individuals for their time and information. We especially want to thank xxxxx zzzzzz and his staff for organizing and coordinating our visit.

Prior to the visit, the consultants reviewed college print and promotional materials. These are analyzed in the following report, along with additional information and observations based on the meetings.

Discussed in the audit report are the consultants' observations and recommendations. Summaries of the group interviews/focus groups are available in a separate document. Interviews from the audit look at 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 audit is the second phase of analysis for the college. The first, a community perception research study, is currently conducting interviews of 400 individuals in the service area. A separate report will be available on that research.

Results from the audit and research will also help shape the presentation and development of a marketing workshop to be held in October and designed to continue to achieve enhanced image, 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 colleges' 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; and
 - Create a process for implementation through a written plan of doable, measurable activities with assigned responsibilities, timelines and evaluation and reporting processes and activities.

Observations and Strengths

XYZ has many strengths and opportunities as it looks to continue to grow. It is relatively new, now in its 13th year. The communities of XY and YZ and the overall college service area are among the fastest growing in the country, sitting in the Greater Big City area which itself continues to grow. Enrollment has reflected this growth, with double digit increases in past years. While enrollment is still growing for the most part, the growth has slowed. The college should be commended for looking at its marketing at this point in time, as well as for its previous efforts that have resulted in its growth.

The college has local competitors including Biggie State University, University of Phoenix, proprietary schools and other two-year colleges. The college's average age of 25 is somewhat below the national average of about 29, indicating a potential market in the older, working adult, in addition to gaining a larger share of the high school market and an emerging minority market.

The college has many positive aspects on which to build and has the opportunity to create new approaches and enhance existing ones to grow enrollment. Among current strengths:

- With its current size and culture, the college was described by many in our audits -- and was also apparent to us -- as a caring, friendly campus.
- The exploding growth in the area offers an opportunity for increased enrollments.
- The upcoming extension of the New Freeway gives additional opportunities for area growth and ease of access and awareness of the campus locations.
- The college has three sites serving the community.
- The curriculum includes a broad range of transfer courses, career programs, continuing education, support services, and flexible scheduling including evening and distance education.
- Passage of the recent bond issue will enable building of additional facilities. Several attractive new buildings currently exist, including the Student Center and Performing Arts Center.
- Many capable staff, faculty and administrators are in place across the board and are supportive of enhancing marketing efforts.
- The president was acknowledged in many of our audit groups for her involvement in the community.
- Learning Communities, Service Learning and an Honors Program are available.

- The college has a number of unique programs including its aviation, electric utility and a growing number of career programs including a new nursing program.
- Its Sun Lakes Education Center serves a retiree population, among others.
- Support services were praised in a number of groups. New initiatives for retention are in place, including an early alert program.
- Comments from students included: “Services are amazing.” “Advisors seem to get to know you quickly.” “(You) get help faster here.” “Advisors made me feel much more at ease with coming back than the other school I looked at.” “They want you to succeed.” “Good place to start building your life.”

Recommendations

Integrated marketing plan

Develop a college-wide marketing team and integrated marketing plan. Such a plan needs to involve a broad constituency, approach marketing broadly, be action-oriented, and consider an overall college-wide approach.

The college needs to develop an overall college-wide marketing team and integrated plan.

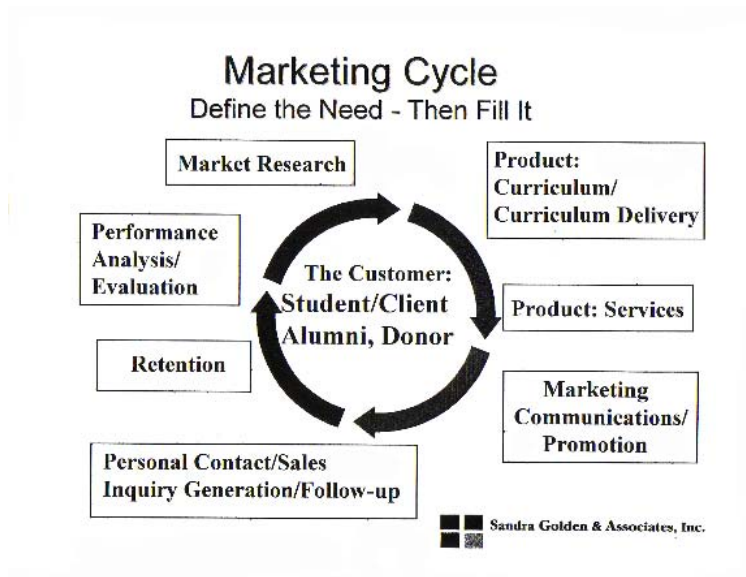
The audit, research and the follow-up marketing workshop will serve as steps to provide this understanding and will create the structure and activities for the marketing plan.

A full marketing plan would include all areas referred to in the marketing cycle/model that the consultants discussed in the audit. (Copy on next page.) It includes research, curriculum delivery, services, promotion, recruitment and personal contacts, inquiry follow-up and retention.

We heard a number of comments during the audit supporting such an effort to create an overall plan and to integrate efforts across departments. Some good written planning and analysis for marketing already exists, including an environmental scan and analysis of marketing trends and strategies. These can serve as a good basis for planning as this process builds an integrated marketing plan with specific action steps.

To be most successful, marketing needs to be understood by and involve a broad base of college personnel and the plan needs to have wide input in its development and implementation. 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.

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.



As the chart shows, marketing is an on-going process, focused on meeting student needs. Effective marketing considers the following elements:

Research. We need concrete answers to questions such as why students choose our institution, how they found out about us, what services and programs they want, etc. These answers can come from such sources as formal research studies, focus groups, logging responses to inquiries.

Product: Curriculum/Curriculum Delivery. Here we look not only at what you are teaching, but also when, where? Are alternative delivery methods such as TV, Internet, short-term classes, and evenings and weekends part of the mix?

Product: Services. How customer-friendly are services from phones to front line offices?

Promotion/Marketing Communications. How effective are print materials, ads, media, and the web in reaching target audiences with the right message?

Recruitment/Inquiry Follow-up. What kinds of personal recruiting are included, from high school visits, to fairs, Speakers Bureau, contact with campus visitors? Is there a follow-up system that moves students from inquiry through application and enrollment? Does the system track the yield through the various stages and include segmented, sequential contacts and communications?

Retention. How well are we retaining students and providing services such as early alert, orientation, tutoring, mentoring, etc., to encourage student success?

Evaluation. How do we evaluate our efforts and build a system to improve and implement changes?

Include reaching community stakeholders and audiences, in addition to students/potential students, as a full PR/marketing plan is developed.

While much of the focus of typical college marketing plans is to reach and serve students, the college has many other stakeholders and audiences (see chart below) who need to be informed of the college's mission, directions, value and needs in order to gain their support as well.

How to use marketing communications effectively to reach all these audiences is discussed in more detail in the promotions section of this report.

What should be understood is that a college's marketing and overall public relations messages are *interrelated* and should create a *shared* image and branding. The same ad or news story that features successful alumni, for example, not only attracts potential students, but also helps create an image for legislators, business leaders, donors and the public that highlights the college's value in providing trained workers for economic development. As XYZ CC continues to enhance its image and communicate its message, it is important that each of these audiences is reached as part of its marketing communications.

Target audiences

Higher education serves a diverse set of target audiences listed below.

Typical Target Audiences in Higher Education	
Students	Business
Potential students	To employ students
Employees/prospective employees:	To use college for education and training of their employees
Faculty	To serve on career advisory committees
Administrators	Community groups/civic leaders
Support staff	Education groups and leaders
Board members	Legislators
Alumni	Voters, taxpayers
Donors	Individuals who may attend college events
Media	

Research

Use information from community study for marketing implications and baseline.

Develop new and continue existing systematic approaches to analyze data and to measure and evaluate marketing efforts.

The consultants will have completed a comprehensive community perception research study for the college as part of this overall project. The data and marketing implications will be contained in a separate report. The report and its marketing implications will be used in the marketing workshop to help develop the college-wide plan. It should also serve as a baseline for later follow-up surveys to evaluate new and continuing marketing efforts.

In addition to this outside survey, the college is involved in a national Community College Survey of Student Engagement. The college also has an internal research function, which is working with marketing. A number of trend/analysis reports, as well as marketing surveys of existing students and focus groups with students have been conducted. These also provide good information. Again, this type of survey work should be continued and the data regularly analyzed for marketing implications, which should be communicated and applied.

Other systematic approaches to internal marketing evaluation should also be implemented, tracked and communicated on an on-going basis. Students phoning admissions and applying, for example, could be asked how they heard about the institution; these results should be tabulated and used. Questions should ask students to name all sources where they saw or heard information, not just one.

The Marketing Action Plans developed through the workshop will all also contain recommendations to evaluate each of the projects.

Other surveys, beyond the community perception one, that could be of value would be of dropouts and of students who had inquired but not enrolled or applied but not enrolled, among others.

Curriculum/Curriculum Delivery

Continue to evaluate and expand, as appropriate, curriculum and flexible delivery systems.

- Expand curriculum

As stated in the strengths, the college has a broad transfer curriculum, a growing number of career and technical programs, continuing education, three sites and a number of flexible scheduling options – including evening, late start and distance learning. Model programs also exist in Learning Communities and Service Learning – all of which show responsiveness to diverse community needs.

Comments in our audit groups were also made on the quality of faculty and instruction and the availability of one-on-one relations in smaller classes.

New programs have been added including a nursing program this year. Unique programs include the aviation and electric utility programs. The college is examining other possible areas for new career programs and this should continue, both to meet community needs for trained workers, as well as to give students broader options for attending classes at XYZ.

- Expand flexible delivery and evaluate scheduling of courses

One of the issues that was mentioned a significant number of times was the course scheduling matrix with most of the classes now Monday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Thursday, with less scheduling on Fridays. Some of what does exist on Friday is more hybrids or longer time-block one-day offerings. As the college grows, it needs to best utilize existing space, which includes how it schedules classes, while at the same time meeting student needs and considering likely class time selections. While setting up a class schedule is complex, reevaluating how and when courses are offered should be a priority.

Information we obtain in the community perception survey should also give us data on how the general population, probably primarily the adult population, is interested in taking classes.

This information can also be a guide in looking at expanding and initiating other types of flexible scheduling, including weekend classes, Friday night-Saturday options, Internet, intersession classes, short-term modules, etc., all of which have been successful at other two-year institutions.

As these options are developed, it is also important to make sure they receive adequate promotion to make the public aware of them.

Evaluate cancellation of classes

While some classes are likely to be cancelled for small enrollment, we heard several times that class cancellation was an issue where classes were dropped at the last minute and students didn't have options for other open classes available. This should be reviewed. If possible, a more flexible approach should be instituted (e.g. a sliding scale for faculty based on teaching a low enrollment section.)

Enhance targeted program marketing

The role of faculty and divisions in marketing individual programs through all stages (curriculum development and delivery, services, promotion, inquiry follow-up, retention) was discussed as part of the marketing model shown in the sessions.

In some of the career programs, faculty and divisions are already marketing their programs with visits to high schools and follow-up on inquiries from potential students. A number of faculty indicated they would be willing to make such visits with recruiters. This type of involvement should be encouraged with a well-communicated process to get involved.

The issue is determining and defining where faculty expertise would be most critical to marketing so that limited time is used efficiently and effectively (e.g. in follow-up phone calls, e-mails, 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 prospective students, assisting in designing department web pages.)

Availability of program brochures is also needed and is discussed further under Promotion. While some exist, our understanding is that many supplies are low or have been exhausted; yet this is a key recruitment period when they need to be available.

The upcoming marketing workshop will include an afternoon session on target marketing, providing a worksheet for looking at individual program marketing, considering not just targeted outlets for promotion, but also considering personal contacts and creating and modifying programs and services to meet needs. The workshop presentation will also give a number of examples of ways faculty and staff can be involved throughout the marketing cycle.

Services

Employees we met with seemed caring and capable, and many employees and students pointed out the warmth and the friendly, supportive culture at XYZ. While there did not seem to be serious service issues, there were some items brought up that could be enhanced.

Continue caring, supportive culture, and continue to consider ways to enhance communications.

Good internal communication is both important and difficult; it is something we have heard the need for at virtually every college with which we have worked. There seem to be tools in place for good communication at the college, including e-mails, newsletters, and a directory that includes office functions. A once-a-semester in-person meeting is also held. It was suggested that everyone be able to attend it (Perhaps it can be offered in two shifts so all staff can attend without totally emptying critical offices.) With all the changes in titles, offices and new programs, an opportunity to learn about these in this in-person setting was suggested. Discussion between key offices would also be helpful so it is clear where students should be directed for various issues to ensure they aren't sent from one office to another, or even from one campus to another.

Other colleges have developed intranet systems with folders of key information that are searchable. Another approach to help communication that some colleges have used is developing a list of Frequently Asked Questions and their answers and having these on a card or on the computer so staff can easily access them.

Create a campus signage and map system

Signage to and on the campuses is also something to enhance visibility, awareness and ease of entry. Some highway signs currently exist. It will be very important to assure with the appropriate authorities that highway signs to the college are included when the new freeway extensions open.

We also had a suggestion that the college "Adopt a Highway" for a section of the new freeway or elsewhere. This could also give visibility and could be investigated.

Beyond that, there should be better signage identifying the campus. The new entry wall is attractive, but could use lighting. Other signs that identify the campus as you drive by should be developed. This could include a signage board that could have changing messages about the college. We heard a number of times that even local people aren't aware of the location of the campus and a suggestion that signage could start at XY Blvd. Another suggestion was to refer to the address as 56th and YZ, rather than just the 56th street number.

On campus, a full signage system of attractive signs, using the logo, should be developed and needs to consider the new buildings that are being planned. This is a major

architectural initiative that we understand is already being investigated by the college. A map system available in strategic points around the campus, giving clear directions, is also needed as part of this.

While some printed college maps do exist, these could be designed in the logo, family look and could even contain some basic promotional materials.

Finally, the personal touch is always valuable. The Student Services area sets up a welcome desk outdoors during the first few weeks, and this is commendable.

Review and enhance the “purge” contact system

Students who have been “purged” for non-payment have been called and gotten invoices. We were told there were some who had already paid since the list was generated and were upset at this. A script indicating they may already have paid does exist. We feel calling these students, as well as other telemarketing, is a good idea and the issues can be resolved. Results should also be tracked to see how effective the retention is in students that are reached.

Review how West classes are identified

The issue of students signing up for dual classes at East and West campus was brought up. Students need to assure that they have the time to drive from one to the other. Further, students sometimes do not realize the class they are signing up for is at West. The schedule book does designate West classes in each course area. The college should see, however, if there is a way for the dual campus selection to be clearly pointed out on the web and when students receive their schedules (something like the airlines that indicate you are going into one city and leaving from another if you book that way).

Investigate reinstating day care

While there are expenses and issues involved with day care, it is an extremely important service for those who need it and should be investigated.

Continue to create programs and attitude to recognize employee contributions.

As indicated above, employees we met with seemed caring and capable and morale seemed generally good.

We would encourage employee recognition programs to continue to show that employees are valued and to encourage good customer service. Some may already exist. Others that could be considered and that we’ve seen colleges use, for example, include a “Catch me at my best” program where anyone can fill out a form any time commending an employee for a special effort. These are then continually posted, listed in newsletters, on email etc. This and other recognition efforts will be part of the customer service section of the fall workshop.

Promotion/ Marketing Communications

Promotion plan

Current college promotional materials were reviewed and are discussed below. The college needs a full, integrated marketing plan, as stated earlier, which will develop from the consulting and workshop. In addition, the college needs a written plan for marketing communications materials. Some good written planning and analysis for marketing communications already exists, including an environmental scan, surveys and focus groups with current students, and analysis of marketing trends and strategies. An action plan outlining materials, costs, audience and timelines also exists. A sample of a full marketing communications plan including specific benefits, specific audiences, and the description, purposes/audiences, sequence for level of interest, status of production, for both publications and advertising, was shared during the audit and may be adapted as well to include further details in planning.

Use research results for promotional directions

As stated earlier, the consultants are also conducting a community perception survey, which will interview 400 participants in the service area. Results of this survey will give statistically valid data on such aspects as awareness of the college, key benefits that are important, whether and where individuals have seen advertising, as well as data on when and how they would like to take courses. This data will further assist in enhancing promotional efforts that are discussed below.

Overall recommendations

While many good materials and planning do exist, the college can enhance promotional efforts by the following recommendations. Each is discussed later in more detail:

- **Create a consistent graphic look and compelling message and campaign that help the promotional materials stand out. We feel a campaign, using some attention-getting approaches such as testimonials, might make the ads, as well as some printed materials, more compelling and create an emotional connection to encourage action.**
- **Develop lists of key benefits and testimonials to help get a message across.**
- **Use some tool to reach a mass audience so that awareness and recognition can increase. Since major paid advertising, especially broadcast, is probably not a real option because of costs in the Greater Phoenix area, some type of direct mail is needed to get across a strong message. This can be the schedule book, but could also be a promotional tab or series of standout postcards.**

- **Continue to use movie, cable TV and newspapers for advertising messages, also developed to be compelling and around a campaign theme.**
- **Continue and enhance major promotional materials as discussed.**
- **Continue to put importance on media relations and maintaining a high quality website.**

Implementing all these items will take additional resources. We heard comments in the focus groups indicating and supporting this as well.

Image Campaign

Create a full image campaign to enhance the college image and communicate the benefits of XYZ CC, focusing on the key elements described in the sections that follow.

Image

What we heard through the focus groups many times was that the college is not well known in the community. Those who knew it, considered it friendly, caring, welcoming supportive, saw quality instruction and services, programs for transfer and careers. Cost and close to home were also viewed as strengths. “I think the quality of the faculty and staff is one reason that the students want to stay and keep going here. There’s always a way to problem solve and not to let students walk out the door.”

Its description of “small” was viewed both as an asset and as a negative. Small meant friendly, welcoming, homey, better teacher contact and more individual attention and encouragement to succeed. To others, it is still looked upon as the “country bumpkin,” less social life or “bustling atmosphere” etc.

In shaping the image, the college needs to build on the positive factors, as well as the benefits that the perception survey will show important to your target audiences and focus and communicate these through a campaign that is compelling, as discussed further in the following section.

Logo, graphic look, theme

Continue use of logo and theme, and create and use consistently a graphic family look.

A graphic identity, a major component of branding, is one of the first steps to create awareness of an institution. XYZ has a well-done logo that is used consistently on most of its materials. This should be continued.

The college has been using “Connect To Your Future” as a slogan and that seems to work well and should be continued on a variety of pieces to again create awareness. It takes

time to develop recognition of a slogan and, if one works, the college should continue it for at least a number of years.

A family graphic identity would help create further awareness. The college is moving in this direction with a graphic format that shows up on its schedule book, viewbook, occupational education brochure, postcards and web site. Creating and applying this kind of design should be continued in all major pieces, including the catalogue, which is somewhat different. We like the look with brighter colors as in the Occupational Education, Welcome to a World of Opportunity and viewbook pieces. The photos used in these new pieces are also good quality.

Currently, materials from other areas of the college do not fit the graphic design recognition, including some of the continuing education pieces. Developing some templates, discussed below, might help gain some consistency in recognition while still allowing for uniqueness in reaching a variety of target audiences.

Templates

“Templates” – pre-designed formats - should then be created to make it easy to apply a family design to a variety of pieces and have a standard look at a given level of quality. While you will want some differences in design and content to be effective with a variety of target audiences and brochure content, 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. There might be at least one 8-1/1 11 and one three-fold design, as well as a design that could be used for web communication.

Branding message

Create a branding message with key facts, benefits, testimonials presented in a compelling, attention-getting approach.

Beyond the graphic design, effective branding includes developing consistent messages to create an enhanced image and branding for the college, and applying this to all key pieces. Key facts, benefits, possibly top 10 reasons, and testimonials can create this message. Samples of using this were shown in the audit session. While the college discusses benefits in publication materials, there isn't a consistent set that is repeated. The “outstanding features” list in the viewbook is one good list to start from.

The Connect to Your Future theme can apply to many of your messages. But beyond that, some type of campaign, clever headlines, etc. need to be developed to create pieces that are attention-getting, compelling and create an emotional connection to encourage action.

The college may want to consider using an outside firm to create the graphic design and message initially that could then be applied in the future.

Once new materials are designed, the look and message should be continued for at least several years to create an awareness and impact.

Testimonials

A testimonial campaign can effectively illustrate the success of XYZ CC students, as well as serve as an overarching theme and message that make a major impact by helping target audiences understand the value of the community college.

Such a campaign would gather a representative sample of success stories (at least 5-10) that show through actual people stories and testimonials the positive effect of the college on their lives and on the community. Virtually all groups we speak with at colleges -- students, high school students, internal and community representatives -- agree that showing success stories would influence opinions, and we would concur. We've seen this approach used very successfully across the country and shared examples in the audit.

While the institution is and needs to be portrayed as the same place to different audiences, the emphasis can be somewhat different. For example, for the individual, getting skills that lead to a career and personal development is important. For business and the community, the value of this trained individual provides an economic impact and skilled workers.

The testimonials need to be a selection of success stories that represent a diversity of gender, age, ethnicity, and careers. Testimonials from employers should also be included that show that they are anxious to hire XYZ CC graduates, as well as from transfer colleges, and stories on faculty and their accomplishments.

Once these testimonials are identified, they can be used as part of a campaign, with a unified, recognizable theme and graphic design in ads in newspapers, radio, video/CDs and in the schedule book, tabloid, and first contact piece, among other outlets. Stories about who these real people are can also be placed in media outlets.

A bank of professionally done photos should also be developed to accompany the testimonials.

Tool Kit

Another part of an overall campaign should develop a list of benefits and facts on the college's contributions and accomplishments and put these into a "Tool Kit" including such "tools" as a fact/impact list, talking points, and PowerPoint shows.

Benefits should include those to the student, as well as to the economic impact and return on investment to the community. Fact sheets should be developed with impact statistics, e.g. number of students, percent who stay in the community, taxes paid into the community, percent of health care workers/ first responders trained, increase of income potential of grads, number of community partnerships. It could also include impressive facts such as honors for students and faculty, national recognition, student passage rates on state boards, employment rates, and include unique programs.

A list of key benefits and descriptors of the college should also be gathered, possibly presented as top ten reasons to attend. Items that might be included for potential students are: transfer, job training in hot careers, quality faculty and instruction, wide array of courses, convenience, affordability, flexible scheduling, friendly support services, small classes, personal attention, diversity. Other items that could be added for community leader materials are economic impact, community partnerships, and workforce training.

These facts should then be put in such materials as a “fact sheet,” talking points for college presentations, on the web, developed into a PowerPoint show, used in publications, ads and media, etc. and constantly updated.

New and Existing Materials

Create new materials and/or enhance existing materials as discussed below.

Outlined in this section are comments and recommendations on the various pieces, which the consultants were sent and reviewed prior and during the audit. Samples of similar effective materials from other two-year colleges across the county were shared with the marketing department during the audit.

Catalogue

Catalogues are usually used as a follow-up piece once students show interest and want more detailed information, rather than as an initial marketing tool. The college’s works well for that. It is well organized, easy to read, with a clean layout, and has the needed information. Its cover should follow the graphic design of your key pieces.

Schedule book

Distribution. Because of its wide circulation and regular publication, the schedule book is a major marketing tool for community colleges. Many colleges do a full community mailing of these books; others do a targeted mailing of this or a recruitment tabloid. With today’s growing web use, colleges are also considering limiting their mailings of this piece and putting versions on the web, as XYZ does. The college had been inserting its schedule in newspapers in the past. Mainly for budget reasons, it is now using direct mail postcards and dropping the schedule at about 30 locations such as libraries, post offices and chambers. These drops are good and should be continued.

Consideration should also be given to targeted mailing of either the schedule book (e.g. targeted by age, key zip codes) or a recruitment tabloid or expanding the postcard mailing.

Regardless of the decision on mailings, the schedule book should continue to be distributed by drops at community locations as you are doing, such as libraries, and possibly adding community centers, unemployment agencies etc. It should also be distributed to previous students (perhaps back three years) and all current inquiries.

Content. As such, it needs to be enhanced as a marketing tool. Currently, your schedule has some good features. The layout is clean and easy to follow. The three campuses are prominently identified. The logo, theme and design fit a family look. If it is possible to go to four-color with photos, or brighter colors like the viewbook or occupational ed, it could be more eye-catching. The use of the covers and inside covers as stronger promotional tools should also be enhanced.

An enhanced schedule would involve adding promotional sections such as listing benefits, testimonials, success stories, and program promotions. The cover could be better utilized with photos and promotional materials e.g. testimonials and top benefits that stand out and catch attention. A standard set of key benefits should be agreed upon (preferably based on research of what is important to potential students) such as affordable, convenient, “hot” career programs leading to jobs, small classes, caring faculty, transfer opportunities.

More marketing language and headlines could be used: e.g. “We’re open” to head office hours list; “hot careers are our specialties” to head the list of programs. Samples of schedule books with promotional approaches were shared during the audit.

Separate sections you now have for such flexible scheduling as afternoon, distance, online, learning communities etc. are good. They should also be indicated in the “What’s inside” to encourage people to seek them out. The pages for Williams and Sun Lakes should also be listed in the table of contents.

Recruitment postcards

The college is using promotional postcards as a mass mailing to call attention to registration and the availability of the schedule book. These do give this information along with information on benefits, and follow a family look for recognition.

Since major paid advertising is not a real option because of costs in the Greater Phoenix area, some type of targeted direct mail is needed to get across a strong message.

Postcard mailing could possibly accomplish this awareness if they carry a stronger, compelling, attention-getting message and are possibly also sent more frequently. A

larger size would also give more room for messages. Some samples were shared during the audit.

Viewbook

A basic distribution brochure/flyer like this is typically used as an initial marketing publication. Some colleges will have a simpler, smaller version as a first contact and a more comprehensive one for a follow-up piece. Again, this piece should be one of the major ones fitting a consistent graphic family look. Samples were shown during the audit.

Among elements to consider for an effective first contact/viewbook are:

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

Your viewbook piece has a bright cover and good photos throughout. It uses the Connect to Your Future theme and logo. Its design allows for inserts in the back cover. It has good information including a list of “outstanding features.” You may want to focus sections through benefit headlines e.g. transfer – Two Years Here, Two Years There; careers/jobs, flexible scheduling, affordability, caring services, etc. Your internal research has shown prospective students want to know what programs you have, what they cost and how they register. Samples of viewbooks were shown in the audit.

Program brochures/ services brochures

A series of program brochures exist, many in a family look format that is attractive. This kind of “template” family look shows them as part of the overall awareness of the college, and will make it easier to create and maintain the numbers needed for all the programs. We assume the plan is to develop similar versions for all the program areas. Some have a logo on the cover and others do not; we would suggest using the logo there. Currently, they are in a variety of design formats. A similar template and format should be developed for special programs and services as you already have for many of them, and could be used on various department communications as well.

One major issue we heard is that many of these program brochures are currently out of print or the supply is very low. Keeping supplies available should be a priority, particularly at this critical recruitment period when many high school visits take place. Systems should be in place to make sure adequate supplies are on hand.

Among elements that can be in program brochures to make them promotional and motivational are the following, some of which you have in some brochures:

- Promotional language that highlights the attraction and benefits of the career and any special facts about it; e.g. job placement statistics, growth, passage rate on boards, special projects or opportunities -- what makes this career desirable.
- Testimonials and photos if possible in work settings from successful alumni and employers.
- Bulleted information if possible to avoid large copy blocks.
- Job description, where a graduate works, how to prepare, unique aspects of the XYZ CC program etc.
- How to get further information, with a reply card built in if possible.
- General information in bulleted form about the college overall – list of benefits. For some individuals, this may be the only piece they have, so all materials should contain a general benefits list about the college.
- The actual course sequence could be developed as a single page insert to slide into the brochure. This will give you a much longer shelf life, so the brochure doesn't need to be reprinted every time there is a change in a course.

Another option for update is to have the brochures available to faculty and counselors on-line to print out copies as they need them rather than printing a large supply. Some colleges also have the program pages from the catalogue available for printout from the web.

The overall Occupational Education folder/brochure is attractive, has good information and is benefit-oriented. Rather than use the large space on the back for the full list of service phones, perhaps you can focus on where you want them to make contact to start and use the space for other promotion such as testimonials.

International brochure

The international brochure, Welcome to a World of Opportunity, is well done. It has the family look, is bright, focuses on messages important to an international student and positions the college and area.

Facilities/ Strategic Plan

These pieces are nicely done. They are attractive and have good information.

Bond election

The piece makes a good case. Obviously, it worked since this major bond issue passed.

Continuing education materials

The Online Education and Non-Credit Schedule present a different approach to get attention and have won awards. We would be interested in hearing reactions, however, from the target audiences, who might not be attracted to these approaches. The information and benefits of these programs are included in the copy.

The template design suggested earlier could be adapted to continuing education as well, so that it builds on college awareness and makes it easier to create the many pieces continuing education needs. The non-credit schedule does use the family look format on the cover.

Advertising

XYZ does some limited advertising in print, movie theatres and cable TV. Given the cost of the large city media market, it is probably too expensive to make the kind of radio and network TV buy that will give you the necessary reach and frequency to make an impact. Further, the mass radio and network TV cover a service area for the entire county and can't be targeted just to your area. The college, however, might consider joint district-wide ads for the ABC Community College system. Similar systems such as Dallas have done this successfully. While system-wide ads can't give major attention to any single college, they can set a framework and general recognition for the individual college efforts, and people tend to relate the information to the college in their area that they know.

The community survey will give us some data on whether and where people have seen advertising and what messages they recall.

The new draft cable TV ad is well done, using the Connect to Your Future theme and focusing on such benefits as individual attention, special training, transfer, quality education, affordability and flexible scheduling. The visuals are good, although we would suggest more career-oriented photos during the "special training" benefit message.

The current print ads do continue the Connect to Your Future theme and give some benefit information. We feel a campaign, using some attention-getting approaches such as testimonials, might make the ads, as well as some printed materials, more compelling and create an emotional connection to encourage action. Examples were shown in the audit.

The large poster could also use the space for a more attention-getting message.

Newsletter

The *Connection* newsletter has good information for its primarily student audience and has a pleasant format.

It is also sent to some community lists. What we might suggest is that a newsletter designed for the community is developed for community leadership, alumni, and development as an upgraded community newsletter/magazine that is published 2-4 times a year. Such a piece should carry stories on college accomplishments, enrollment, along with regular features on student, alumni and faculty success stories, Foundation news, etc. One issue could also serve as the annual report issue. The newsletter should then be distributed widely to a community list including legislators, leaders in business, education, advisory committee members, donors and alumni. Samples of such newsletter/magazines were shown at the audit.

Media relations

The college seems to be doing a good job with media relations. Recent feature stories included student success stories on a single mom getting her degree, another grad starting a new career, an oral history class project, and news stories on nursing and other programs.

Continued emphasis should be on gaining such good feature coverage, particularly of programs, in the newspapers as well as on the broadcast media. Since this is free media coverage, it is worth the efforts, even though any given coverage cannot be guaranteed. A typical feature can often generate 100 phone calls to a department.

The October workshop will include a session on target marketing for programs that includes examples of how program faculty can identify good media ideas for the marketing office to follow-up and pitch to the media. The marketing staff should also visit faculty and department meetings in person at least once a semester to discuss kinds of stories and should regularly circulate examples of what kinds of items get published. Some key stories and press releases are also included on the XYZ CC website, which is good.

Enhanced media relations would include continuing personal contact to pitch stories and an organized pro-active plan outlining key messages and activities to pitch, angles that would attract specific reporters, editorial visits with key college executives, etc. This could provide an opportunity to get media attention, especially in broadcast outlets, even in as competitive a media environment as the Greater ABC market.

Promotion for freeway extension opening

As will be discussed in the recruitment section, the opening of the new freeway extension is an opportunity for attention that could include an event. In addition, it offers opportunities for media attention and possibly direct mail. This might include postcard mailers to the community, signage on the freeway if possible, tie in with media stories to make sure the XYZ campus site is shown on maps designating the new freeway, news stories commenting on the convenience and impact on the campus etc.

Web

Web sites have grown in importance as a way to reach and communicate with a variety of target audiences. All the students in our high school and XYZ CC group had used the web to check out college options, including XYZ CC. The ability to use the web for interaction and immediate and targeted communication is the key advantage of today's web sites.

The XYZ web site is very well done and received many compliments during the audit. Among positive features: it has good photos, carries the graphic look, has a search and quick links on the home page, is organized by future student, current student and community to make it easy to identify relevant information; has FAQs; online and phone registration and an online request form. (There should be an immediate, friendly return e-mail response to this if this isn't already there.) The news/student success feature is also good.

A more promotional section might be added pointing out benefits (e.g. Why XYZ CC?) and testimonials, and should be able to link from the home page and/or the future students.

Web hits are currently measured. This information, including hits by section, should continue to be monitored and applied to help in future development and promotion.

The web potential for marketing and student services continues to expand as new technology comes on board, from podcasts to permission e-mail targeted communications. We believe the current webmaster can help the college implement new approaches to best utilize the website.

E-mail permission marketing. The web also offers an opportunity to capture e-mail names and then create lists to send materials to regularly. This kind of information capturing and then sending out regular updates can work effectively college-wide as well as with individual departments. The college can develop a template design, and then departments can fill in information on courses, new programs, awards etc. that they e-mail to individuals who have indicated an interest. This gets directly to targeted, interested people at no cost.

Recruitment – Personal Contact

Continue and enhance a pro-active recruitment program in the high schools, community, and for special targeted groups, including minorities.

Develop special events to bring community members to the campus, including some events/promotion around the opening of the new freeway extensions.

Personal, pro-active recruitment is another key component to successful marketing/enrollment management. The college currently uses a number of successful approaches. The main tier high schools around the valley are visited regularly. Other planned visits include high school meetings statewide and some community events for businesses. A high school counselors contact list exists and a counselors breakfast is held. Plans are currently in place to hold a series of teacher days for various subjects, which is an excellent idea. Students are also brought to the college to Preview Days, which draw several hundred students for a good event. A recent Hispanic Heritage Day also drew that target market.

In order to gain a larger market share, however, the college needs to implement additional pro-active activities to reach various target markets. Discussed below are ways to consider for expanding on current successful efforts.

Fill currently open recruiter positions

While we heard very good comments on the current interim person in the recruiting position, it is important to fill the two recruiting vacancies with effective personnel that can relate well to high school students, as well as the adult market.

High school market

Enhance existing approaches to recruit high schools students.

Good ideas for recruitment focus on personal contact, including bringing students to the college, as well as going to the high schools, as you are doing. Typical mailings, including letters, brochures, CD-ROMs, as well as going on the web, will appeal to other students. What this means is the college needs to use a variety of approaches to appeal to diverse interests.

In speaking with guidance counselors and high school students from your area, following are some recommendations we heard and would concur with:

- **Develop a mailing** for high school students, whether it's a letter, brochure or CD-Rom that is designed for a high school audience. The CD might link to the web

site that could have a special section for high school students, possibly with contests with questions about the college or entries to win a prize such as an iPod. As one counselor indicated, “They (XYZ CC) used to do a lot more mailings than they are now. I think that there is a real population that doesn’t get anything in the mail; they’re not recruited. I think the community colleges could do more for them.”

- **Create additional opportunities to be recognized at the high school and to bring students to campus.** Counselors pointed out, for example, that MCC was coming to present a presidential scholarship in person. They also present a scholarship night at the high schools on how to find scholarships, how to write an essay etc. Big College provides a chartered bus to bring students to their campus, give a tour and scavenger hunt, a student panel and lunch. (XYZ’s Preview Days do bring students to the campus for orientation, refreshments, sitting in a class and this should be continued). Tour programs would also be valuable. West currently does have a tour program.
- **Create programs for 8th graders.** Counselors also pointed out a program at Central State that involves 8th graders and picks up their college tuition if they maintain a 2.75 in high school. They also offer the top 30% scholarships at some of the high schools closer to them.
- **Bring XYZ faculty and students** to high schools to meet with interested students and teachers. Many faculty in our audit groups indicated a willingness and interest to accompany recruiters. The high school students also said they would be interested in hearing from other students that attend the college.
- **Create materials and information targeted to parents that emphasize the career opportunities and salaries that are available today.** The cost factor and class size are a plus to emphasize.

Other ideas that have been suggested and used at other colleges and that can be considered as enhanced programs are developed, include:

- **On-the-spot admissions.** Some colleges have held sessions on-site at high schools to help students complete admissions forms during the visit. It was also pointed out, however, that students then need follow-up from admissions to enrollment. Therefore we also suggest:
- **Create a comprehensive follow-up program once students are accepted.** One counselor said to “imitate schools of excellence in terms of the recruiting programs. (Students need attention) in between application and September. Have an Admitted Student Day where they’re taken around. Have a faculty advisor call. Send a bumper sticker. Let them shadow a student.

“Model after the 4-year colleges. Students pick the place that makes them feel special. Send a letter based on what they fill out on their applications; e.g. if they were on the school newspaper, invite them to be on the college paper.”

- **Create and/or host events that bring high school students and their families to the campus;** e.g. science fairs, math contests, music events. Take advantage of such events for recruiting by making materials available, perhaps a booth or table to pick up information, as well as using a college ad/testimonial in the printed programs for these events. Faculty involved in judging such contests could also interact with teachers and students.
- **High school editors.** Invite high school editors and advisors for a visit/tour. Provide information and photos they can then use in their high school newspapers.

Tracking. For all these activities, develop ways to track enrollment so the most effective approaches are continued and others may be dropped.

Recruitment - Adults

Develop an equally pro-active, systematic recruitment effort for the adult community.

Many of the suggestions mentioned above for high school students can also apply in some version for adults.

Visits. In addition to the high school recruiting, a set of visits on a regular basis to businesses, chambers, service groups such as Rotary and Kiwanis, PTAs, unemployment and service agencies such as workforce and welfare-to-work mothers, should also be continued in a formal, systematic way. Informing the social workers at these organizations of college programs and services would also be helpful. Some of this does take place, but needs to be organized in a pro-active way equal to the high school recruiting.

Special workshops or open houses for the non-traditional student should also be considered. This can make it more comfortable to come to a college and to see they are not the only older person there. Use adult students to talk with the students at these events.

Speakers Bureau. A college Speakers Bureau is an excellent way to create awareness and recognition by making personal contacts in the community and demonstrating the quality of college personnel and the breadth of topics.

Topics can cover the variety of areas where faculty and staff are experts. Interesting titles can draw further attention, e.g. rather than “Why attend XYZ CC?” use “Hot Careers for the 21st Century” or “How to attend school if you’re not a kid anymore.”

The same people and topics could also be adapted to a media experts list and then pitched for appropriate media topics, e.g. accounting professors during tax time, child care tips, health professionals on staying fit or dealing with stress, workforce areas on starting a business, etc. Once the brochure/list is developed it can be mailed to community organizations and media and placed on the web.

Insert in new resident welcome packets. Especially in an area like the XYZ service area where many residents are new to the community, making information available in a new resident Welcome Packet is a good idea. Perhaps some type of coupon e.g. toward a bookstore purchase, could be given for those who visit the campus and/or enroll.

College events. The college has many events in the Performing Arts Center and elsewhere on campus and should take advantage of such programs to make college literature available, have a college member welcome groups to the campus, etc.

Other target groups:

Other target groups that have been contacted at other colleges and are worth reaching, with a direct mail letter or other approaches, include:

- Students who go to four-year colleges and then drop out and come back home
- High school graduates who by fall have not enrolled in college. A letter can recognize their graduation accomplishment, indicate they are probably working, (although not in a job that's a career), but pointing out they can still start school part-time and continue to work if they need to
- College students who return home for summer and could take courses as a transient student
- Alumni who could take post-graduate courses or career upgrading

Recruitment – Hispanic

The college is interested in recruiting a growing Hispanic population in the area, as well as other minority populations. Efforts such as the recent Hispanic Heritage event should be continued. The college also has an Hispanic Student Organization, which is good.

Other factors to consider in Hispanic recruiting, based on many national studies, as well efforts at other colleges, include:

- Consider the importance of family and community in influencing decisions. Create events and have the college represented at events where you can involve family members across the generations.

- Develop a program of in-person contacts - to give the message that, “Yes, XYZ CC is for you.” Many people who could benefit from XYZ CC aren’t aware of it or don’t see it as open to them and need this message brought to them in person.
- Involvement in Hispanic community events and media. This especially includes churches and community centers, events such as Cinco de Mayo, etc.
- Translation into Spanish as appropriate. What is generally recommended is having some bilingual materials that create interest – let people know how education can help them, what services exist and that they can contact someone (in Spanish) to help them further – but not necessarily a full brochure totally translated. Testimonials and photos could prove very effective here as well.
- One area in particular that is important and can be intimidating because of its complicated forms is financial aid. We especially recommend translation here, but more importantly having bilingual workshops geared to the parents, either at the college, high school or in locations in the community where there can be a comfort level.

Finally, efforts for inquiry follow-up and retention, which are discussed later, may need special Hispanic components as well, e.g. peer mentors for new students. Clubs like the Hispanic Student Organization should also help provide a comfort level and support system for minority students on campus.

Develop special events to bring community members to the campus, including some events/promotion around the opening of the new freeway extensions.

We heard a number of times that people in the surrounding community are not aware of the college and its locations or its new facilities. The fact that this is an expanding community with many new residents makes it even more of an issue. In addition to promotional mailings discussed later, we feel a major, annual community event(s) held at the campus could help bring people to the campus and make them aware of its location and its offerings as well as create a comfort leveling visiting the campus.

We would recommend an annual, major community festival type activity, including a wide range of events to draw interest, such as children’s activities, entertainment, sports, health screening, lectures, tours, demonstrations from career programs. Involve community groups such as high school bands in a parade, high school and church choirs etc. Look for area sponsors. Consideration should also be given to a way to tie in sites other than the 56th Street campus. (We did hear comments in several focus groups that “at Williams we are second class citizens”).

This type of event might be good tie-in with the opening of the freeway, emphasizing how convenient this makes the campus. If it is not done in conjunction with the freeway opening, such an event should still be planned at another time, and some significant type of promotion should still be part of the freeway opening. As was indicated in the promotion section, this might include postcard mailers to the community, signage on the

freeway if possible, tie in with media stories to make sure the XYZ campus site is shown on maps designating the new freeway, news stories commenting on the convenience and impact on the campus etc.

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.

Currently, there is very little systematic follow-up to potential student inquiries. Calls come in and material is sent, but usually names are not then entered into a database. There is a contact form that comes back from the high school visits and those names usually get a one-time follow-up letter. Some individual program areas do keep names and do their own follow-up.

Creating a formal collegewide system and enhancing this effort is a major recommendation we would make. Implementing this kind of system with follow-up calls and letters has resulted in very measurable increases in enrollment in many colleges we have worked with.

An ideal inquiry follow-up system, that should be implemented, 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 **series** 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. The initial packet should include a letter.

Follow-up 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 or student preview days, 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.

Systems such as these have been extremely successful at many colleges, and are now used more commonly at two-year colleges as well. (Samples of letters and contacts in such a system will be shared with materials following the audit.)

Retention

The college has been concerned with retention and has instituted a number of new approaches, including early alert, discussed below. National studies have shown that students who are integrated into the academic and social environment of the college are more likely to continue. Further, since much of the “leaving” takes place during the first year, early efforts and intervention are critical to retention success. The college has been part of the national Community College Survey of Student Engagement; results from this should be valuable in determining directions for both retention and service initiatives.

Develop and analyze data on retention and add or expand programs to assist students, as needed, considering such programs as orientation, early alert, special programs for at-risk students, tutoring, mentoring.

Data is needed on various cohorts to analyze retention among students who had planned to continue. While some general reports on retention may be available, analysis of which students continue in various demographic cohorts is needed, as well as information on what criteria make at-risk students. Surveys of dropouts to determine reasons for leaving would also be valuable. Based on such data, new or expanded retention services may be needed.

Create and evaluate programs for at-risk students.

Based on analysis of data, at-risk students should be identified, with special programs set up. One college we have worked with, for example, identified first year students most likely to be at risk (such factors as placement scores, undecided majors etc). These students were then involved in a pilot program that included a letter welcoming them to the college and pointing out support services, assigning each student a mentor to meet with during the semester, and having at least two phone calls during the semester to see how they were doing. Results showed an increase in retention.

Continue and evaluate newly instituted services in early alert and allowing early registration for continuing students.

Retention is something the college has been examining. New services include an early alert process with faculty to help identify student needs and refer students. As someone indicated in the focus group, “You just don’t know what the issues are. If you go that second step, it makes a difference.” Another new initiative is allowing early registration for continuing students. We believe these should be effective. They should be evaluated and enhanced as needed.

Review orientation

We heard a number of times that orientation was not mandatory. While successful orientation approaches can be mandatory or optional, they should, of course, be encouraged. While they can vary from simple sessions to full three-credit hour courses, some type of orientation is critical to any successful retention program. An evaluation of current approaches, as well as tracking of future enhancements, should take place.

Develop a Student Handbook

It was also suggested that a separate booklet with information on services XYZ has to offer should be given to all students that register. (Information like this is now incorporated in the catalogue.) Many schools do have student handbooks with this information, some designed as a calendar so they are more likely to be used and read.

Advising, Tutoring

We heard a number of comments on the excellent support services and the caring staff and faculty. The college has advising, tutoring, including peer tutoring and mentoring, tutor supported study groups, special programs such as ACE to help high school students transition to college, a Career Planning and Placement Center, among other services. These should continue and be expanded as possible to enhance student success and retention

Use direct mail, phone calls for retention.

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 to current students who have not re-registered with the message “It Won’t Be the Same Without You” and a fading picture of a student. Depending on the numbers, phone calls to students who have not returned or re-registered can also be extremely effective.

Create e-mail systems to contact students.

Once student e-mails are created and/or captured, some of this contact can be done effectively by e-mail as well. The issue of student e-mails was raised in the focus groups. While the college does provide student e-mail, it apparently isn’t well subscribed to. Ways to encourage its use and/or get students’ other e-mail addresses so they can be contacted that way should be investigated.

Evaluation

Responses to these efforts should also be given follow-up and the responses tracked and evaluated.