

End of Year Report

President's Marketing and Communication

Advisory Committee

2014-2015 Academic Year Report

Committee Membership

Timothy Walsh, Associate Vice President for College Relations, Chair

Bonnie Durand, Chief of Staff, President's Office

Susanne Bair, Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Erin Alonzo, Associate Vice President, Enrollment Management

Jerod Dahlgren, Public Relations Director

Christine Lai, Associate Professor, Business/Marketing Department

Seth Oyer, Assistant Professor, Communications Department

Kevin Railey, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Deborah Silverman, Communications Department

Carmela Thompson, Director, Admissions

Kevin Williams, Earth Sciences/Science Ed

Robert Wood, Professor, Design Department

Danny Valez, Associate Vice President, Student Success

Undergraduate Student Representative

The President's Marketing and Communication Advisory Committee met five times in 2014-15: January 28, March 9, April 13, May 11, and June 15.

2014-15 Charge:

The President's Marketing and Communication Advisory Committee will develop recommendations to enhance or facilitate Buffalo State College's communication/marketing messages or broaden the range of messaging to prospective students or others that influence the college choices of current students.

Marketing and Communications Advisory Sub Committees 2014-15:

Developed and initiated during the Committee's 2013-14 meetings under interim president Howard Cohen, the 2014-15 Committee continued under president Katherine Conway-Turner to hold discussions relating to four key groups:

- College Relations Marketing Updates, Plan, Strategies, and Actions
- Parent Communication
- Undergraduate Student to Graduate School
- High School Admissions Counselors

In addition to the established sub committees, the group discussed opportunities, initiatives and recommendations to increase Buffalo State's marketing and communication presence via:

- New York City/Long Island Metro Region
- Digital Video Marketing Content
- Buffalo State's Brand Identity Communication Standards and Policies

OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE'S WORK:

- **College Relations Marketing Updates, Plan, Strategies and Actions:**
At each committee meeting the College Relations Office presented a brief update related to current Buffalo State marketing plan strategies and activities that occur throughout the academic year from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015
- **Highlights:**
 - Coordination and implementation of President's Blog (Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook-weekly insights and reflections) – Throughout the year
 - Transfer Student Opportunities Campaign - July/Aug
 - Graduate School Open House Call-to-Action Campaign – Sept
 - Undergraduate Open House Call-to-Action Campaign – Sept/Oct
 - Continued Buffalo State Identity Campaigns to increase awareness and encourage applications from September through January
 - Presentation and coordination of the Buffalo State Visual Identity Program (VIP) Communication Standards and Policies
 - Buffalo State Points of Pride items for web, social media and "Did You Know" Publications
 - Presentation of marketing assessment/ROI reporting
 - Preview 2015-16 Marketing Plan Overview
- **Parent Communication Recommendations and Activities:**
Parents are increasingly involved in a student's decision on where they attend college all the way through their time as students enrolled in college. The ability to engage parents in parallel to the prospective student through impactful and important information is essential. The committee has spent time discussing how the campus can execute this type of communication with the current resources across various departments.

Highlights:

- Seek best practice examples of electronic communication (enhanced email, eNewsletters, social media) to parent populations (both prospective students and enrolled) from private and public colleges

- Recommending the development of a system, through Admissions and Registrar, to capture parent email contact information garnered from the prospect, applicant, and enrolled stages of a student's cycle
 - Once targeted email lists are secured, develop appropriate messaging for each stage
 - Enhance important, impactful content within Buffalo State's "Parents and Families" website on Buffalostate.edu
 - Noted discussion on the research pointing to the increasing Hispanic population of students attending college. How can we develop unique, targeted marketing initiatives to address this increasing audience?
 - Small campus committee formed to discuss Hispanic parent communication, culture, challenges:
 - When recruiting Latinos, it is important to recruit the "entire family," as there is a strong family bond and an "overprotectiveness" that can occur
 - Consider a dedicated Spanish speaking staff member in various areas including Admissions, Financial Aid, and Orientation.
 - Currently, existing Spanish-speaking staff members are often asked to assist on "an as needed basis" in various scenarios with students and parents
 - Seek to continue additional student campus tour guide training from the Athletics Department in support of Undergraduate Admissions program
- **Undergraduate to Graduate School Marketing/Recruitment Recommendations and Activities:**
Under the charge as an "advisory group," the sub-committee and Graduate School staff developed multiple ideas and initiatives. Many have been implemented in addition to the school's strategic enrollment plan. The Graduate School leadership and staff members, working in collaboration with various departments and units throughout campus, execute the majority of the activities.
 - **Highlights:**
 - Memo to all graduate chairs and coordinators asking them to maintain rolling admissions deadline for their programs to contact all accepted students to assure they enroll to contact all rejected students to explore further options.
 - Letters to all Buffalo State seniors encouraging them to consider attending Buffalo State for graduate school.
 - Change in recruitment strategies, reaching out to a wider audience of students
 - Explored tuition discounting with Adult Education and Institutional Advancement.
 - Dr. Railey gained approval to offer five half-tuition scholarships to out-of-state adult education students from the provost. Only one was utilized. Seek to offer this type of incentive again.
 - Worked with GSA to plan a graduate student conference to which undergraduate students and all accepted graduate applicants were invited.
 - Working with Creative Studies to admit international students into a new program. Looking to create a certificate for another cohort of international students.
 - Will be doing more advertising in Buffalo State publications targeting undergraduate students as well as placing ads in other colleges' newspapers.
 - Will target undergraduates as well through meetings sponsored by department sand/or schools to discuss graduate education and our programs.
 - Graduate School office held a series of information sessions for undergraduates who had questions about or interest in graduate school. Departments did not accept the invitation to sponsor sessions with their students that the Graduate School would run.
 - Working with departments that have students on probation to see if we can keep these students at Buffalo State.
 - Reviewing all denied applications to see if there is a way to work with these students to improve their credentials.
 - Drs. Severson, Christy and Dr. Wendy Paterson solidified a number of new 3+2 agreements with Chinese universities.

- Recommendations from the Dean and sub committee moving forward include:
 - The ability for the Adult Education Department to develop an online information session for its program.
 - Streamlining appointment/hiring process for graduate assistants in the sciences.
 - Search engine marketing for specific degree programs including Adult Education and Music Education programs.
 - Work with Alumni Affairs Office to secure a list of alumni of the SPA/HESA program in order to seek their help in recruiting students.

- **High School Admissions Counselors**
 - This sub committee has established an annual communication plan that communicates to New York State high school counselors through the Admissions Office and survey opportunities related to Buffalo State Awareness.
 - Recommended continued collaboration through Admissions and College Relations through digital communications strategies will increase awareness among this important population. The use of video testimonials from students and faculty was recommended as good content within eNewsletters.

- **New York City/Long Island Metro Region**
 - Recommended NYC Initiatives from College Relations and committee members include
 - Unique NYC-based PowerPoint and video vignette presentations for prospective student events, web, and social media channels
 - Utilize Buffalo State students from NYC through video, web, and publication testimonials
 - Start a “Bengals in the Burroughs” series complete with photos and videos of Buff State students in campus gear at key NYC landmarks
 - Enhanced email and eNewsletter targeted communication to the metro NYC area prospects
 - Continue with Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Facebook targeted paid advertising within key zip codes and community college enrolled students
 - Support Admissions on-the-ground recruitment at NYC community colleges with student newspaper ad placements promoting Buffalo State
 - Establish a “Buffalo State and Buffalo” presence in the NYC Admissions Office and meeting space. Campus and Buffalo signage, images and video that reflect the vibrancy of the campus
 - Narrow down the NYC target market to utilize funds and resources (i.e. Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester counties)

- **Digital Video Marketing Content Priorities:**

Video communication is critical in telling the story of Buffalo State through its people, programming, and activities. The past few years have seen a significant increase in requests and needs related to video student and faculty testimonials, campus and department highlights, special events, web and social media content, and paid television spots.

 - **Examples of on-going video recommendations, needs and opportunities include:**
 - Recruitment Video (best of Buffalo State in 2 minutes) for Web, social media, and eCommunication
 - Student Stories (mini student testimonials across departments)
 - Faculty Features (in the spotlight)
 - Television - :30 second ad spots and YouTube advertising
 - Annual Fall Forum Academic Year Highlights
 - Transforming Lives Campaign Celebration Video
 - Annual President’s eHoliday Video
 - College Relations is considering the hire of a TFA student assistant

- Recommendation for campus to hire a full-time staff member as a Digital Video Coordinator to exclusively work on these important marketing content needs
- **Buffalo State’s Brand Identity Communication Standards and Policies**
 - The committee was presented an overview of the campus’ Visual Identity Program that includes the official Communication Standards and Policies.
 - College Relations presented multiple “Bengal Pause Buffalo State Open Marketing Sessions” to provide strategies and receive feedback from students, faculty, and staff. Will continue in Fall 2015.
 - Discussion was also held in relation to the official SUNY “short-form” name utilized in marketing and campus communication. Buffalo State, Buffalo State College, and SUNY Buffalo State are all approved names for campus to use. President Conway-Turner indicated that the 2015-16 College Planning Council will hold discussions on this during the strategic planning process with additional insight from throughout campus.
 - It has also been recommended to seek an updated Buffalo State Awareness and Perception Study within an agreed upon timeframe after the new Strategic Plan for campus has been established.

Key Accomplishments:

- Established marketing plan execution, campus communication, and recruitment initiatives have produced the second year of record applications for First Time Freshmen
- Greater awareness of Buffalo State’s annual marketing plan, budget resources/distribution, strategies, and actions executed through the College Relations Office via advisory committee engagement, VPIA/Deans meetings, and multiple open “Bengal Pause Marketing Presentations” to campus
- Continued, enhanced communication on a consistent basis to nearly 4,000 New York State High School Counselors (Admissions messaging and Buffalo State highlights)
- Detailed presentation and discussion on the Admissions Office Recruitment Communication Stream laying out multiple touch points for recruiters to engage with prospective students through college fairs, open houses, electronic communication, direct mail, campus visits, and the web
- Significant increase in “on-the-ground” and “grass roots” marketing recruitment and awareness planning and activities within The Graduate School

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Seek to establish a more “unified campus marketing plan” integrating the plans and strategies of College Relations, Admissions, Instructional Resources, and additional entities that represent Buffalo State
- Limited dedicated marketing funds for The Graduate School and Transfer student populations need to be considered when seeking increased applications and enrolled students
- Overall contractual funds available to market and promote Buffalo State to prospective students along with brand/identity campaigns are not maintaining budget levels that compete with competitive colleges and universities
- Declining community and 2-year college graduation rates have a deep affect related to potential transfer enrollment at Buffalo State
- Although Buffalo State’s residence population and interest from students wanting to live on campus have increased, how does our institution balance the positive, increasing interest from a vast pool of students in Metro NYC with the shortage of housing?

Respectfully submitted:

For presentation at the September 11, 2015 College Senate Meeting,

Timothy Walsh, Chair