Marketing & Communications -
Assessment Report Summary

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7. Summary of Assessment Results with Focus on Program Improvement: Describe evidence-based changes that have taken place within the last few assessment cycles because of assessment. Statements must be supported by evidence from the assessment report(s).

Recruitment: To Enhance University Brand Among Prospective Families

Marketing and Communication (MarComm) will implement a print and digital marketing campaign (developed in spring 2016) to enhance the College’s image and reputation among prospective students (traditional, nontraditional, transfer, graduate and international) and parents to increase the enrollment of a more diverse and higher quality student population.

Diversity, as it pertains to recruitment, is defined by the MarComm division as attracting students from different cultural, socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, sexual and other diverse backgrounds.

Measure 1.1: Implement and continue to refine (as appropriate) a multimedia recruitment strategy in fall 2016 and spring 2017 to increase male students by selecting content that appeals to this specific demographic.

Target: To maintain the percentage of male deposited students (32 percent of the fall freshman class), which represents a 1 percent increase as compared to Fall 2015 freshman class (30.9 percent). NOTE: The Fall 2017 freshman class will not be finalized until October 2017.

Strategies: Generating content of interest (messaging, video content) to male demographic and distributing through direct email campaigns to this target audience. The college marketing team will also explore two new strategies: 1. A multimedia marketing strategy directed at gamers and gaming channels (i.e., video game players); 2. Use of 360-degree video content to immerse prospective students in a classroom, field trip and/or campus setting.

Results: The Division of Marketing and Communications developed and implemented a multimedia recruitment strategy beginning in spring 2016 to increase male deposited students by selecting content that appeals to this specific demographic. At the time of reporting (July 2017), the deposits for males are 30.2 percent (584 of 1,934 deposits). The target had been set at 32 percent.

Methodology: The Division of Marketing and Communications used reports generated by the Office of Admissions regarding deposits of accepted students (which determines the incoming class).

While the 360-degree video content and “male-specific” content had higher open rates in various email campaigns throughout the admissions cycle, the overall male deposited students percentage dropped slightly. More insight for why the drop in male deposits may come to light after the summer survey of those students who did not deposit/enroll (conducted through the Office of Admissions). Through this admissions cycle, the College Marketing team (responsible for assisting the recruitment efforts of the Office of Admissions) has identified several ways in which the College Marketing team can be more effective in assisting the communications efforts of the Office of Admissions.

Action Items for FY17: While shaping the gender balance of the incoming class is important work, it is far outweighed by the actual number of students coming in (i.e., the revenue the incoming class represents and contributes to the business of the College). Therefore, the target for Measure 1.1 needs to more closely align to the goals of the Office of Admissions and the College: namely – the Division of Marketing and Communications will help secure and yield 900 non-resident and 1,100 resident students for the Fall 2018 freshman class through its integrated multimedia marketing strategies.

Measure 1.2: Implement an annual media/advertising plan targeting prospective students and their families by June 2016.

Target: To generate more than 500 interactions within a 3-month multimedia campaign (up from 200 the previous year).

Strategies: Making advertising buys and generating advertising content that drive deeper engagement in College of Charleston offerings for target audience.

Results: The Division of Marketing and Communications implemented an annual media/advertising plan targeting prospective students and their families starting in June 2016. For the time period measured (as compared to FY16 – January 30 – April 30, 2017), the Division of Marketing and Communications did not generate 500 interactions – rather, it generated 196 interactions.

The Division of Marketing and Communications defines interactions as unique users engaging in content beyond the landing page. Click-throughs are not the best measure of engagement in digital content.
Methodology: The Division of Marketing and Communications, using Google Analytics, ran a report on user engagement for this three-month time period.

The failure to meet target 1.2 is a little nuanced. Several factors were involved: 1. Our team is getting a better understanding of digital advertising and determining metrics that better measure the success of an advertising campaign (time on page, for example); 2. The team also spread advertising resources over a greater time period (not just a three-month period), so the investment from FY16 to FY17 is a little skewed.

Action Item for Measure 1.2: Again, the Division of Marketing and Communications needs to be better aligned to the institution’s recruitment goals – choosing targets that best support the business functions of the College. While advertising campaigns will continue to be tracked, the division needs to align its resources so that its advertising and call-to-action messaging leads to a greater applicant pool. Based on last year’s yield rate, in order to meet the College’s goal of 900 nonresidents and 1,100 residents, the applicant pool would need to grow to 13,705. This is the number that matters.

Engagement: Support Advancement and Fundraising

OUTCOME: The Division of Marketing and Communications (MarComm) will assess engagement with its community through fundraising initiatives and interaction through the College’s social media channels.

Community, as defined by MarComm, is the greater College of Charleston family: faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends and state legislators.

Engagement, as defined by MarComm for this outcome, relates to interaction with the College’s official social media channels (likes, followers, comments, impressions) as well as philanthropic participation in current and future fundraising initiatives.

Measure 2.1: Implement a multimedia communications and marketing strategy to assist the Office of Development in reaching its fundraising goals by June 2016.

Target: Increase the number of alumni donors by 1 percent (as compared to the institution’s three-year average), which represents an overall increase of 31 donors (over 3,100).

Strategies: Print materials to alumni with call to action (CofC Magazine, Momentum, Donor Report, direct mail), social media messaging and alumni-centric event messaging

Results: The Division of Marketing and Communications provided multimedia communications and marketing strategies to assist the Office of Development and the Office of Alumni Affairs; however, the number of alumni donors actually decreased to 2,352. The good news: IA fundraised roughly $13 million, which was within their targeted range. The bad news: the number of alumni participants declined.

Methodology: The Division of Institutional Advancement ran a report of unique alumni donors for FY17.

Several factors contributed to the drop in unique alumni donors. The previous year, the Division of Marketing and Communications helped IA achieve 10,000 unique donors during the final year of the BOUNDLESS campaign, which represented a fairly significant institutional, all-hands-on-deck push. In post-BOUNDLESS (which officially ended June 30, 2016), the combination of post-campaign fatigue among alumni as well as a less-unified integrated campaign theme may have contributed to the drop.

Action Items: In the post-campaign environment, what has become evident is the need for the division’s advancement communications team to serve as a liaison between all of the IA teams in better coordinating their marketing/communications efforts. This will be partially addressed through staffing. In July 2017, the MarComm division added a new senior director of advancement communications (a repurposed line that was vacant for all FY17 due to an extended recruitment timetable). This new role is responsible for linking the various communications efforts of IA (annual fund, major gifts, planned giving, corporate philanthropy and alumni affairs) and leading the current advancement communications team.

Also, the Division is going to change its strategy so that unique donors is not the target, rather the division focus on dollar amount raised, specifically for the College of Charleston Fund (an area of unrestricted philanthropy that has been in decline for some time, which mirrors a national trend as well). Unrestricted dollars are important because they serve as financial support – or scholarships – in recruiting the next year’s class. For the institution to meet its recruitment goals, unrestricted giving goals must be met. The IA Division has set their goal for unrestricted giving at $975,000 for FY 18, and the MarComm division will work to support them in exceeding that target.
Measurement 2.2: Increase audience reach on the College's social media channels by creating captivating content that appeals to CofC community.

Target: Increase total number of "connections" by 5 percent (specifically, likes on Facebook and followers on Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn for a total of 7,855) as compared to FY17 (as of June 2016, the College's total social media reach was 164,955).

Strategies: More video content, more posts showing the "personality" of the university

Results: The Division of Marketing and Communications worked to increase its audience reach through the College's social media channels by creating captivating content that appeals to CofC community. The social media team successfully reached its 5 percent target (7,855) with a total of 184,689 (that represents a 17.5 percent increase (27,589).

Methodology: The Division of Marketing and Communications counted social media reach through those channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and SnapChat).

The social media target continues to benefit from having a dedicated staff member focused on social media content and monitoring.

Action Items: The College’s digital presence is only growing, and the division will continue to augment and expand its efforts on social media and the College’s website. In the next fiscal year, the division’s social media director is pulling together a pan-campus group to help grow the digital footprint of various academic and administrative areas. Also, the division has created a dedicated social media work group/task force focused on aligning recruitment goals with social media content.

Visibility: Extend and Enhance the College’s Brand and Reputation

The Division of Marketing and Communications will enhance the national reputation and brand of the College of Charleston and educate external audiences to the quality and value of a liberal arts and science education through multiple media channels.

External audiences, as defined by MarComm, are made up of prospective students and their families, community members, state legislators, alumni and friends of the College.

Measure 3.1: Implement annual media plan to increase visibility among local, statewide and national target audiences (i.e., prospective families, business community and alumni).

Target: Make 10 media pitches a month (10 being the baseline target) for a total of 120 for the year.

Strategies: Drive more content from division-wide efforts (The College Today, CoF Magazine, Momentum, etc.) as well as general campus news and engage more journalists with pitch ideas regarding the College’s students, faculty and academic programming.

Results: The Division of Marketing and Communications implemented a media pitch plan to increase visibility among local, statewide and national target audiences (i.e. prospective families, business community and alumni). The media relations averaged 14 media pitches per month for a total of 172 for the year.

Methodology: The Division of Marketing and Communications recorded the number of pitches and outlets pitched throughout the year, which was reported monthly to the division head.

This target represents a different approach for the College’s media relations strategy, which before emphasized placements and their circulations. Those number, while high, are not representative of our division’s work to shape the positive image of the institution and reinforce the College’s brand as a top-tier university. The focus on story pitches (which may result in a variety of placements) is a better measure for positive coverage and supporting the institution’s focus on visibility and reputation enhancement.

Action Item: The media relations team exceeded its pitch goal for FY17 and is raising its target to 15 pitches per month. What was previously handled by one staff member has benefitted from other members of the division's communications team (of which the media relations function is one part) helping make media contacts and pitches.

Measurement 3.2: Increase the average monthly audience of The College Today, the College's main news hub, as compared to FY16 by improving search engine optimization, improving site navigation, design and functionality and adopting best practices for content marketing.

Target: Increase the average monthly audience by 5 percent (or 1,312 total page views) for The College Today as compared to the target baseline set of 25,000 as set in FY2015.

The target baseline of 25,000 total page views per month was determined by MarComm based on the average total page views from the first two months of the current design of the College Today (December 2014 and January 2015).

Strategies: Provide more timely content, increase use of social media channels to share The College Today content, weave College of Charleston Magazine content into The College Today platform and improve search engine optimization, site navigation, design and functionality.
**Results:** The Division of Marketing and Communications implemented a strategy to increase the average monthly audience of The College Today, the institution's main news hub. The target was for 27,562 average monthly page views, and, as of June 2017, The College Today averaged 69,888 page views.

**Methodology:** The Division of Marketing and Communications used Google analytics to track the number of pages views between July 2016 and June 2017.

The College Today continues to grow in importance and relevance to the division's function in recruitment, visibility and engagement. The division will continue to add staffing resources from different division teams (specifically, photography and videography services) to raise the level of content and increase the number of stories being produced.

**Action Items:** The division will continue to allocate the necessary resources to support this vital communications function – editorial, photography and videography.