REPORT TO THE CABINET

From the Marketing Collaboration Team
February 7, 2014
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While discussions about better integrating marketing and developing a more coherent brand for the University have been taking place for several years, the national focus on FGCU as a result of the run to the “Sweet 16” brought the problems and weaknesses within the University's marketing program into sharp focus.

Marketing initiatives at FGCU are decentralized, with the major marketing efforts taking place in the departments of Community Relations and Marketing (CRM); Admissions; Student Affairs; Athletics; and Academic Affairs, including individual Colleges, the Renaissance Academy, Continuing Education, and WGCU. Further, each of these departments creates its own marketing messages, which are seldom integrated with the messaging of other departments.

Increasingly, universities are becoming more sophisticated in launching marketing initiatives designed to effectively differentiate one institution from its peers or competitors. In this environment, in order to remain competitive, it is critical for FGCU to refine its brand, develop its core messaging and build a well-integrated, strategic marketing and communications program.

In an effort to refine the University's brand and develop a process and organizational structure to more effectively and coherently market the University, FGCU engaged Neustadt Creative Marketing to develop a brand strategy and to make recommendations on the marketing tactics essential to communicating that brand to the University's many constituents. At the same time, a Marketing Collaboration Team (MCT) was appointed to examine marketing at FGCU, and to make recommendations about incorporating best practices into the University’s marketing program.

The work of the MCT complements that of Mr. Neustadt. While Neustadt Creative Marketing worked at the brand strategy level, the team worked at the operational level. In this document, the team is offering a set of recommendations for the president and University Cabinet to consider. In developing these recommendations, the team has taken into consideration discussions with Mr. Neustadt, as well as the results of research and discussions at the team's biweekly meetings.
BACKGROUND

University's approach to marketing
Marketing initiatives at FGCU are decentralized, with the major marketing efforts taking place in the departments of Community Relations and Marketing (CRM); Admissions; Student Affairs; Athletics; and Academic Affairs, including individual Colleges, the Renaissance Academy, Continuing Education, and WGCU. These departments—and the marketing initiatives in many of the academic departments and programs, administrative departments and in graduate student recruitment—make independent, individual decisions about how they will market their programs to their audiences.

While there has been interest, there has been no strategy in developing coherent, integrated messaging on which to base various pan-University marketing campaigns, nor has there been extensive collaboration or sharing of information between marketing units across the University. The University has not regularly invested resources to conduct research into how the University is perceived within the community, or to measure the effectiveness of University marketing campaigns.

Challenges the university faces with its current approach to marketing
Increasingly, universities are becoming more sophisticated in launching marketing initiatives designed to effectively differentiate one institution from its peers or competitors. In this competitive environment, FGCU’s current approach to marketing offers many challenges in effectively telling the University’s story in a way that distinguishes it from other universities.

- FGCU has not clearly defined its brand and developed marketing tactics to support and communicate that brand.
- FGCU has not identified academic programs that differentiate it from its competitors.
- Messaging is not integrated and often does not reinforce messages being used by other departments, which can make the University seem fragmented or its image confusing and unclear.
- The University’s web presence is internally-oriented, difficult to navigate, and lacks a contemporary “feel.”
- With no coordination among marketing programs, FGCU is not able to take advantage of financial savings through efficiencies in its marketing tactics.

Decision to collaborate with Neustadt Creative Marketing
While discussions about better integrating marketing at FGCU and developing a more coherent brand for the University have been going on for several years, the national focus on FGCU as a result of the run to the “Sweet 16” brought the problems and weaknesses within the University’s marketing program into sharp focus. One staff person, who was interviewed after the game with Georgetown University, told the MCT that when a reporter asked him to talk about FGCU (other than its athletic teams), he didn’t know what to say. There was no core message or set of messages that he could fall back on to tell the University’s story.

It was decided a few months later that FGCU must take a comprehensive look at its brand, and at the strategy and tactics it uses to market that brand to the community. After evaluating a number
of proposals, the firm Neustadt Creative Marketing was selected to develop a brand strategy and to provide comprehensive recommendations for the implementation of the brand strategy.

It also was decided that a Marketing Collaboration Team, comprised of FGCU staff and faculty, would work closely with the consultant, while conducting their own evaluation of issues surrounding marketing at the University.

MCT members include:

- **Chris Simoneau**, Chair / University Advancement
- **Denise DaSilveira** / Athletics
- **Tiffany Jackson** / Academic Affairs
- **Rick Johnson** / WGCU
- **Marc Laviolette** / Admissions
- **Reid Lennertz** / Career Services
- **Joe McDonald** / Administrative Services and Finance
- **Hudson Rogers** / Lutgert College of Business
- **Ken Schexnayder** / Community Relations and Marketing
- **Dr. Paul Thornton** / Renaissance Academy and Continuing Education
- **Lindsey Touchette** / Alumni Relations
- **Professor Christine Wright-Isak** / Lutgert College of Business

**Charge to the Marketing Collaboration Team**

The MCT was charged with taking a comprehensive look at marketing at FGCU. Specifically, the team was asked to evaluate and make recommendations about incorporating best practices in marketing at Florida Gulf Coast University. Further, the team also was asked to assess current marketing practices across the University in order to make recommendations about how to create effective, integrated marketing at FGCU.

**Summary of work by the Marketing Collaboration Team**

The MCT held its first meeting on September 5, 2013, and has met biweekly since that date. The team designed a series of exercises to provide context; gather information and perspectives; and generate statistics to help guide the process of the group’s work and to inform recommendations from the MCT to the University leadership.

1. **Definition of Marketing at FGCU**

To provide a framework within which to begin assessing the effectiveness of current marketing strategies and tactics at FGCU, the team agreed upon a definition of marketing in order to better understand exactly which practices fall into the category. Research conducted by team member and Dean of the Lutgert College of Business, Hudson Rogers, provided a historical perspective on what has traditionally been considered marketing. In 1967, Kotler stated that “Marketing is the set of human activities directed at facilitation and consummating exchanges” (Kotler, 1967). Interestingly, how marketing is defined has changed little over the years. The MCT agreed on the following definition as a guide for its work:
Marketing:

“Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, Approved July 2013).

This definition of marketing encompasses a range of activities at FGCU, and includes:

- Electronic communications and the web
- Social media
- Mobile apps
- Advertising (print, television, radio, billboards)
- Publications
- Proactive media relations
- Community relations
- Speeches
- Sponsorships
- Donor relations

2. Organizational structure of marketing at FGCU

Marketing at FGCU is decentralized. The major efforts to market the institution take place in the departments of Community Relations and Marketing (CRM); Admissions; Student Affairs; Athletics; and Academic Affairs, including Renaissance Academy, Continuing Education, and WGCU. Additionally, there are modest marketing initiatives in many of the schools and colleges, administrative departments and in graduate student recruitment.

There is no single department charged with overseeing the broad messages used in marketing the institution’s brand. One department, Community Relations and Marketing, is charged by the president of the University to ensure that the logo is used correctly. However, there is no current structure that requires submitting logos for approval.

3. Institutional investment in marketing

The MCT has identified the majority of resources across the University that are committed to marketing. The total non-personnel costs spent on marketing annually is approximately **$962,435**. Athletics and WGCU receive in-kind marketing opportunities worth **$348,000**, bringing the total non-personnel resources dedicated to marketing FGCU to **$1,103,795** per year. There are small departments engaged in marketing initiatives that did not report their resources. The team believes the total resources not reported to be relatively small, probably less than $100,000.

The MCT believes that a primary difficulty with funding for marketing at FGCU is that there is little coordination or financial collaboration among departments. Thus, the University cannot take advantage of efficiencies. For example, with coordinated advertising, the University could earn discounted advertising rates for multiple placements of ads, while more effectively spacing the timing of advertisements.
4. Elements of the FGCU brand

Understanding how the University is perceived by its constituents is critical to understanding how successful FGCU’s marketing campaigns penetrate the market.

The team conducted an exercise in which each team member was to identify 5 characteristics—or brand elements—that immediately come to mind when thinking about FGCU. Responses ranged from very broad characteristics (enlightenment, comprehensive) to characteristics more personal (laughter, camaraderie). As the team examined the characteristics at the end of the brainstorming portion of the exercise, clusters of words began to emerge. “Community” rose to the top of the list as the most frequently cited characteristic. “Sustainability and the environment” and “growth”—all were frequently cited.

The purpose of this exercise was to identify some clusters of brand elements that we, as marketers, have identified as important. Comparing these brand elements to the responses from the University’s constituents to Neustadt’s research questions, helps the MCT understand what messages are getting through, as well as what characteristics of the University are important to these constituents.

5. SWOT analysis of marketing at the University

Identifying and examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) can provide important insights that inform recommendations made to strengthen marketing strategy and tactics at the University.

Of interest during the SWOT analysis was that some descriptions of the University or its programs fell into multiple categories. For example: “Dunk City”/“Sweet 16” fell into all four categories. What is important to note about this is that while “Dunk City” can resonate very well with one constituency (prospective students, for example), it could hold no interest or no ability to motivate another constituency (prospective student employers, for example). “Undifferentiated brand” fell into more than one category as well. Again, understanding that “undifferentiated brand” is both a strength and a weakness is critical as we tell the FGCU story to multiple audiences.

The insights gained through this SWOT analysis—and an ongoing examination of its results—is important for marketers at the University as they incorporate messaging recommended by Neustadt Creative Marketing into their marketing efforts.

6. Constituent Analysis

Universities are complex organizations, with a number of unique constituencies. Thus, it is extremely important to analyze these various constituencies and examine exactly what action we hope they will take as a result of our marketing initiatives.

An hour-long brainstorming session identified more than 20 audiences ranging from prospective students and their parents, to legislators and trustees. Identifying audiences is important, but for effective marketing it’s critical to understand which department has primary ownership of marketing to that audience; what we want them to do as a result of our advertising; and what vehicles are available, and which of those vehicles are most effective for that particular audience.

The constituent analysis the team conducted will be important in determining the most effective marketing tactic to motivate a particular audience.
7. Metrics for assessing marketing and what is reasonable at FGCU

Metrics provide the means to assess the effectiveness of individual marketing campaigns, or even of individual marketing vehicles. Therefore, it was important that the MCT have a clear understanding of branding metrics, how they can be used, and the kinds of metrics that are reasonable for FGCU.

Team member and marketing professor Chris Wright-Isak led a discussion on branding metrics for the team. In the conversation that followed, MCT members reinforced the importance of annually using metrics to assess changes to the University brand, as well as to assess the success of our strategic marketing objectives. The metrics to be used in the future could include surveys, focus groups, one-on-one conversations, or even conversion rates for individual marketing vehicles.

It is important to note that regardless of which metrics or combination of metrics are used, the resources necessary to conduct this research annually should be built into the marketing budget. Typically, conducting annual research totals 1-2 percent of the overall marketing budget. All of the research conducted by Neustadt Creative Services is the property of the University, and as such can provide a benchmark to gauge the success of future marketing efforts.

8. Launching an information repository

As a result of its work, the MCT has determined that a central repository of data and information about the University is necessary regardless of the organizational structure adopted to support improved marketing efforts at FGCU. The group is exploring a number of ways of making information available.

One method of providing centralized, accurate information is already under way, and is designed specifically for FGCU faculty or staff that are going out into the community to speak with large or small groups. A PowerPoint presentation is being developed. From this comprehensive program, a faculty or staff member can select a number of slides that cover areas he or she expects to discuss. It’s a user-friendly way to ensure that the messages going out into the community are consistent, up-to-date and represent the marketing strategy of the University.
The Marketing Collaboration Team appreciates the opportunity to provide this input and would welcome further conversations about the team’s work. The team presents the following recommendations to the University Cabinet for consideration:

- Evaluate the marketing assets that are currently distributed across multiple divisions on campus for strategic alignment
- Invest additional resources in marketing across the University to leverage the great exposure and positive momentum of the University over the past year
- Integrate public relations as an instrumental element of our outbound marketing messaging and branding platform
- Invest in measuring brand equity over the long term – up to 2% of total marketing expenditures should be directed to assessing progress longitudinally
- Develop consistent policies and procedures for marketing across the University
- Integrate community relations activities and investments as key elements of marketing strategy – Rotaries, Chambers, Kiwanis, other talks and lectures
- Stay true to the adopted brand and marketing recommendations over a sustained period and measure progress
- Develop a marketing information repository where departments and individuals can share and access best-practice marketing materials and ideas
- Hold departments and programs accountable for adherence to University marketing messages and brand standards
- Rebuild the University website as a key marketing vehicle in a way that is aligned with our core branding messages primarily for external audiences
- Continue to support a cross-University marketing collaboration team to ensure ongoing discussion and partnerships on marketing issues on a long-term basis