Marketing

2016 Administrative Program Review

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WCU UNIVERSITY MARKETING
Unit Self-Assessment

(1) DESCRIPTION OF THE UNIT

In order to understand the role and assess the performance of Western Carolina University’s Marketing Unit, it is first important to be aware of our place within the structure of university administration as well as when and how the unit was formed.

WCU’s Director of Marketing reports to the Chief of Staff, who sits on the Chancellor’s Executive Council. The Chief of Staff oversees external relations for WCU, including government relations, communications & PR, special events, and marketing. Although a review of various universities would show that external relations units are structured differently across various universities, two things seem to stand out as making our structure particularly unique:

1. Our Chief Communications Officer and our Director of Marketing are parallel reports to the Chief of Staff. They work very closely together, but often these functions both report either to a Chief Communications Officer or a Chief Marketing Officer.
2. Our Office of Development and Alumni Affairs is led by a Vice Chancellor position parallel to the Chief of Staff and has a seat on the Chancellor’s Executive Council. At some institutions the development function is structured to report to the same leader as Marketing and/or Communications, but that is not the case here.

This particular structure was devised late in 2012 ahead of the retirement of a long-time Vice Chancellor of Advancement and External Affairs, who previously led all of these functions. At that time, a secondary leader in Development and Alumni Affairs was elevated to lead that function reporting directly to the Chancellor, and the Chief of Staff position was redefined to oversee external relations in its current form.

Two new director-level positions were created under the Chief of Staff. One was a Director of External Relations to oversee government relations. The second was the Director of Marketing. Both were new positions for the campus. The Director of Marketing position was structured to oversee two units that were being newly brought together under one leader – the Office of Creative Services and the University Print Shop. The latter handles production for the majority of university collateral, signage and direct mail, and the campus had identified a need for more collaboration and unity between the office providing design and the production arm. (Note that the scope of this review does not include review of the WCU Print Shop, which will be reviewed separately.)

In addition to overseeing these two existing service units, the new Director of Marketing was charged with working closely with the Chief Communications
Office to develop an Integrated Marketing and Communications Plan for the campus.

A search for the Director of Marketing began in the Spring of 2013 but was not concluded until January of 2014. The Director of Marketing began work in March of 2014.

Unit History

This review focuses on WCU’s University Marketing unit, which was formed through the reorganization and expansion of WCU Creative Services.

The Creative Services unit was originally formed in 2003. Prior to that, the unit was called Publications and was a unit within the Office of Public Relations. It operated with a staff of one writer, one designer and a part-time administrative support assistant. Work consisted of promotional collateral such as brochures, fliers and posters, all created by request of units on campus.

In 2002-03 the university allocated resources for a Director as well as for equipment upgrades, training and funding an additional designer. The office reorganized and began working to create new recruiting materials and messaging that better represented the growing university in the eyes of potential students.

In 2006-07 The University began work with an external branding agency to refresh the visual elements representing WCU both in Athletics and institutionally. August of 2008 saw the launch of the new Athletic marks, with the institutional mark launch in October of the same year. During the next two years Creative Services worked to incorporate the new logos and design elements producing up to 1,200 projects per year for various clients across campus with a staff of 4-6 employees. These services were and continue to be provided to units across the university at no cost to the units.

Reorganization as University Marketing

Over the last two years, a phased reorganization of the former Creative Services unit has taken place in part in response to needs as outlined by the University’s strategic plan, Vision 2020, and in part in response to needs as identified in the Integrated Marketing and Communications Plan.

Prior to the reorganization, the staff included the Director of Creative Services, a Production Manager and three graphic designers. The work of the unit was primarily request-driven with the exception of the design of the Western Carolina magazine, which is printed three times annually. The magazine represents a significant volume of work each year. Projects to support Athletics and Fine Arts also took up a great deal of time each year.
Under the newly restructured Chief of Staff division, there was renewed focus on strategic enrollment marketing. In addition, there was a need to catch up with digital trends in marketing through more strategic social media activation as well as an updated university website. With that in mind, the following changes were made:

- The Director of Creative Services position was reimaged as a Director of Brand Experience to oversee brand management, campus signage, sponsorships and brand activation in collaboration with campus stakeholders. A budget was developed for student brand ambassadors to support the Director’s efforts.
- An old, unfilled position for “e-marketing,” which primarily handled email communications with alumni, was reworked to identify and hire a social media strategist for the university.
- One of the three graphic designer positions was reworked into a Digital Designer position with a focus on web design, front-end development, HTML email marketing and digital ad design.
- Of the two remaining graphic design positions, one was assigned as lead on the university magazine in order to streamline execution; the other was assigned as lead on admissions marketing.
- The production manager role was expanded to also assist on paid media planning in coordination with a newly contracted media buying agency.

In addition to these position changes, part-time auxiliary positions were created in web content and design for handling projects that fell outside of the unit’s primary mission. These auxiliary services are in the infancy stage and have not been broadly advertised across the university. Rather, at this time they are operating to support a handful of units who had expressed the willingness to pay for services outside of the primary role of University Marketing.

Marketing Team

The restructured marketing team consists of the Director, six full-time employees, two part-time positions (one of which is currently open), and temporary part-time student employees.
Full time employees include:

**Robin Oliver, Director of Marketing** – Oversees strategic planning for marketing the institution and consults with units and divisions across campus on their marketing needs. Handles campaign planning, oversees university website presence, provides directional input on admissions and recruitment materials, and writes branded content as needed to ensure execution of campaigns.

**Rubae Schoen, Director of Brand Experience** – Handles brand management including approval of all merchandizing requests, provides direction for use of and ongoing updates to logo marks and graphic style guides, consults units on event activation and manages institutional event sponsorships.

**Donna Presnell, Social Media Strategist** – Manages all university-level social media accounts, including overseeing content calendars, scheduling posts and supervising student workers. Provides strategic planning and direction to unit-level social media managers and works closely with the Office of Communications and PR to manage communications issues in the online space.

**Haley Medford, Digital Graphic Design** – Serves as lead for most digital design projects, including designing and developing campaign microsites and creating email templates to meet university and unit-specific needs. Currently project managing the migration of the university website to new web templates launched in December of 2015, including consulting on information architecture and user experience.

**Will Huddleston, Graphic Designer** – Serves as lead designer for the Western Carolina magazine, which circulates to all alumni three times a year. Also designs...
print collateral, print and digital ads, environmental graphics and more to support the needs of the university.

**John Balentine, Graphic Designer** – Serves as lead designer for undergraduate admissions materials including collateral used on and off campus by recruiters as well as direct mail sent to students. Also designs ad campaigns, print collateral and more to support the needs of the university.

**Ashley Beavers, Production and Media Manager** – Manages request-based job traffic, including working closely with requestors across campus on strategy and content to best meet their goals. Handles print production including generating quotes and managing vendors. Also works closely with Director of Marketing to manage media traffic, ensuring all campaign elements are delivered to vendors in a timely manner.

University Marketing also employs part-time student employees (2-4 per semester) assisting with social media, graphic design and brand activation.

**Unit Purpose**

The newly reorganized University Marketing unit defined its purpose as follows:

University Marketing manages institutional marketing as part of the Chancellor’s Division, working closely with Admissions as well as all academic programs and departments. The unit’s mission is three-fold:

1. to continually strengthen Western Carolina University’s brand awareness and reputation through collateral development, advertising design, paid media planning and execution, strategic social and website content marketing and brand management;

2. to support units and programs throughout the university in the development of unit-specific marketing strategy and creative design that bolsters the overall university brand reputation and/or the recruitment of students, with a particular focus on the curricular focus areas as outlined in the 2020 Vision;

3. and to provide marketing strategy and collateral design to support the Special Events, External Relations and Development units in the Chancellor’s Division as well as other university events and special initiatives as assigned by the Chief of Staff or the Chancellor.
(2) ALIGNMENT WITH UNIVERSITY MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

The development of WCU’s University Marketing unit was largely born out of Western Carolina’s strategic plan: Vision 2020. Strategic Direction No. 6 in the plan is to “Garner Support for Our Vision.” This section of the plan calls for the development and implementation of a comprehensive marketing and communications plan and ensuring the appropriate organizational structure to execute the plan.


The Integrated Marketing and Communications Plan (IMCP) was completed in June of 2015 and is included as an appendix to this document. Through the alignment of the Integrated Marketing and Communications Plan with the university’s 2020 Vision, University Marketing will ensure that internal and external stakeholders are informed about the people, programs, priorities and progress of the university.

The IMCP outlines four primary marketing goals – driving awareness, reputation, engagement and recruitment, in that order. It defines that recruitment will be bolstered by improvement in awareness of the university and reputational messaging. The strategies and tactics of the IMCP are largely institutional in scope but also reference working specifically with various units to reach mutual goals. This includes partnering with the Provost Council, the Graduate School, Educational Outreach, Undergraduate Admissions, and specific colleges and programs to support the recruitment effort.

Evolving Unit Purpose

The IMCP represents a shift in focus from years prior. Before the recent reorganization and the completion of the IMCP, the Marketing unit operated primarily as a design support unit to the many needs across campus. Under previous campus executive leadership the focus of the unit was to manage the brand by executing all design of promotional materials, advertising, fliers, posters, banners, etc. At one point it was mandated that units use what was then called Creative Services to create any marketing materials needed.

While this direction ensured some brand consistency, it was also met at times with resistance from units. Plus, the department was overwhelmed with the volume of requests. It was not able to turn projects around quickly and had no time left for strategic, institutional marketing strategy.

In the past two years, Marketing has loosened the reins on units, allowing and in fact occasionally encouraging the use of student and freelance talent to support design needs. In particular, it has worked with the College of Fine and
Performing Arts and Athletics to shift event advertising and collateral design aimed at the local community away from the central marketing unit. Both have utilized auxiliary design services as well as identified student or freelance talent to support this need, collaborating with University Marketing on strategy as needed. The College of Fine and Performing Arts has now created an in-house position to support strategic event marketing.

However, campus needs for marketing support still remain and are in fact growing. Following the recent marketing-led redesign of the university website into a responsive format and the continually increasing dominance of social media, departments are finding a need for part-time or full-time help with online content. Plus, units continue to have design-based needs that are not well aligned with the overall goals of the IMCP.

To support these needs, University Marketing is offering related auxiliary assistance for a fee. This is currently staffed with part-time positions. These services are in their infancy, and it is unknown whether or not we will continue to need them or will see them grow.

In addition, more units are considering adding positions to support marketing or design needs and to drive unit-specific strategy and content development.

Over the next few years, we anticipate that University Marketing will continue to evolve. Its evolution will be in response both to changing internal pressures and a shifting external marketing landscape. Will units within the university find resources to hire talent, moving us to more of a decentralized model and compelling University Marketing to reorganize resources to ensure marketing personnel across the institution have the direction and support they need? Will the demand for our auxiliary services increase to the point that we need to hire full-time employees and possibly a director for this side of the operation? Will the shift to a mostly digital marketing landscape necessitate the identification or reallocation of resources to better support our online footprint?

These and many other questions exist. With all this uncertainty, however, we feel confident that the central purpose of University Marketing – ensuring consistent and timely information about our university reaches our intended audiences – will remain ever-present.
(3) DEMAND FOR THE PROGRAM

Even as the use of freelance talent and unit resource development has grown across campus, the demand for services and direction from University Marketing has remained high across the institution. This is primarily due to a strategic institutional focus on enrollment growth that has everyone on campus thinking about how they might grow their particular program. Most new, unit-specific resources have been focused on graphic design, but units also need assistance with content writing, website development and maintenance, social media, advertising strategy, event activation and much more.

In addition to our enrollment focus, the institution has recently hired a new Vice Chancellor of Development and Alumni Affairs who will be continuing movement toward a comprehensive campaign to support scholarships. This campaign has already and will continue to bring with it the need for marketing and messaging support. At this time, marketing support for Development is handled by University Marketing.

The demand for our unit’s services have historically been measured by the number of creative jobs initiated and completed. Units on campus requesting assistance submit project requests via an intake form on the university’s intranet, which assigns each project a unique identifying job number. When requests include multiple deliverables, each is usually assigned an appropriate sub-number. Jobs initiated within the Marketing unit, such as institutional advertising, also receive a job number and are tracked in the system.

However, this job tracking process has not been expanded to reflect support provided to units in terms of event activation, social media support and paid media strategy. We may need to evaluate how to include these services in our overall volume tracking in the future.

Units Supported by Marketing

University Marketing supports any and all units on campus. However, our primary partners may be defined as the following:

1. Undergraduate Admissions – University Marketing collaborates with Admissions on the development of printed collateral, design of direct mail pieces and any other design needs to support their program.
2. The Graduate School – University Marketing develops digital advertising plans to support student recruitment and designs all advertising and collateral to support graduate student recruitment.
3. Academic Departments - University Marketing supports academic units across campus with recruitment materials, including program brochures, flyers, and Open House signage. Departments can request specific products or request to meet in person to explore possible deliverables.
4. Office of Development – University Marketing works with Development to develop, write and design mailings and materials supporting the university's annual fund and capital campaign. We have also developed microsites to support specific fundraising initiatives and created the preliminary Case Statement to support the leadership phase of the upcoming comprehensive campaign.

5. External Affairs – Another unit within the Chief of Staff division, University Marketing handles all materials needed to support government affairs, including invitations, mailers, social media activation, online advertising and more.

6. Special Events - University Marketing supports the Office of Special Events with invitations, signage and print advertisements.

7. Alumni Affairs – University Marketing works with Alumni Affairs on pieces mailed to alumni, primarily the university magazine and event invitations/brochures.

8. Division of Athletics – Although this is shifting, University Marketing has historically supported Athletics in the creation of a design theme for each academic year, creating the look for schedule posters, billboards and print ads. University Marketing also plays an important role in the writing and design of Catamount Club solicitations including the development of the annual membership guide.

In addition to these client partners, it should be noted that University Marketing works extensively with the Office of Public Relations and Communications, the Office of Web Services and the University Print Shop as collaborators.

University Marketing works with PR/Communications to craft messaging for items and seeks their support for proofreading assistance for special projects. Collaboratively, the units produce the university’s alumni magazine three times a year. University Marketing works extensively with University Photography (and their assets) to identify or request photography needs for projects initiated by units across campus. University Marketing works closely with Video Services to create university TV spots for media execution.

With the recent redesign of the university website, University Marketing works extensively with Web Services on the ongoing migration to the new design. The new design has initiated a shift in ownership of the external website from Web Services to University Marketing. Very recently, the two offices worked to establish clearer roles and responsibilities moving forward as they collaborate on ongoing support of the website. University Marketing will be taking lead on content direction and development. Web Services will be taking lead on CMS maintenance and support, hosting, and technical trouble shooting.

The University Print Shop reports to the Director of Marketing, and the two units work collaboratively to determine print project specifications, communicate deadlines, and more. Together, they provide quotes to clients. The Print Shop
may identify print orders coming from campus units that need design assistance and route those projects to Marketing. In the past, Marketing would on occasion ask the Print Shop to execute template-based design projects to free Creative Services to tackle other design-heavy work. Marketing is working to move away from this in order to keep Print Shop resources focused on production and revenue as it is a revenue-dependent auxiliary.

**Units with related resources**

As indicated earlier in this report, units are increasingly looking to identify resources to bolster their unit-specific marketing goals as University Marketing focuses on goals that are institutional in scope. Today, this includes:

1. **Student Affairs Design** - A component of Student Affairs Marketing, Student Affairs Design offers design services to units falling under the Division of Student Affairs. The student affairs designer also collaborates with Marketing on some Admissions projects, and handles some design for items that are on-campus student-focused but not under Student Affairs.

2. **Educational Outreach Marketing Specialist** – The Office of Education Outreach, which oversees community and professional programs, camps and conferences, military student services and distance and online programs, employs a marketing specialist who assists with press releases, social media activation, web content, ad design and media planning and placement to support the office’s many initiatives.

3. **Fine & Performing Arts Marketing** – On July 1, a new employee is joining the College of Fine and Performing Arts as the college’s Marketing Specialist. Her primary focus will be on driving attendance to events at the Bardo Fine & Performing Arts Center as well as the WCU Fine Arts Museum. That said, she may also be working on projects associated with driving enrollment in CFPA academic programs.

4. **Individual Units and Offices** – Increasingly, units/offices on campus are purchasing the Adobe Creative Suite to produce materials on their own. While be believe these tend to be for on-campus activation, some are used at Open House and other recruiting / external-facing events. Units doing items on their own include Campus Recreation & Wellness, Hunter Library, Coulter Faculty Commons, and the Center for Career and Professional Development. Additionally, design software can also be accessed on computers within Technology Commons.

**Unique Contributions of Marketing**

University Marketing is the best source for creative, strategic solutions to strengthen WCU’s brand awareness and reputation through collateral development, advertising design, paid media planning and execution, strategic social and website content marketing and brand management.
We offer:
- Expertise in print, web and environmental design
- Expertise in social media strategy and implementation
- Experience working with outside vendors on items beyond the capacity of the WCU Print Shop
- Expertise in paid media planning and implementation
- Expertise in WCU’s brand and style guidelines
- Expertise in content generation/writing

(4) QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Historically, program quality has been difficult to measure because the unit's goals were tied to the number of completed jobs rather than the performance of produced collateral in the marketplace. Marketing has won a number of design awards over the years, and the quality of their work was generally recognized and appreciated across the university.

In recent years, Marketing has increased its use of defined goals, often tied to recruitment goals, and measurement against those goals. Recent successes include:
- 2015-16 Accepted Student Communication Plan. Marketing worked closely with Admissions to write and design a new accepted student mailer and execute a four-week communication strategy in an attempt to increase yield after seeing a drop in yield in the entering 2015 freshman class. Yield is up in every category this year and nearly doubled in certain categories including out-of-state students and high-performing students.
- 2016 Spring Graduate Student Marketing. Marketing planned, designed and implemented a digital marketing strategy for target graduate programs with specific goals for driving prospects. The plan has exceeded expectations in prospect delivery, although not all have matriculated to applications or enrollment for fall.
- 2016 Annual Giving Fundraising Effort. Marketing designed and developed a microsite and mailer to support a push this spring for 400 new or renewed donors. The campaign exceeded its goals, delivering more than 500 gifts.

With that said, there are still a great number of major projects, including the recent redesign of the website, the branding of major university events such as the 125th celebration and the annual Mountain Heritage Day, support of advocacy efforts, development of the Case Statement for the comprehensive campaign, and much more, that have not been tied to specific, measurable goals.

In addition, as we move forward with the implementation of the Integrated Marketing and Communications Plan, we have identified the need for market research to benchmark our institutional awareness and reputation in order to measure effectiveness of our overall brand campaign moving forward.
**5) BUDGET AND COST EFFECTIVENESS**

One of the things motivating our relatively new goal setting and measurement is our commitment to the most effective use of funds allocated for institutional marketing.

It is important to note that until the 2014-15 fiscal year, Western Carolina University was spending almost nothing on institutional marketing. WCU had one billboard in Asheville that cost approximately $10,000 a year and an annual commitment of $5,000 in underwriting with our regional public radio outlet. The unit also supported occasional unit-specific advertising with design. That summed up our investment.

In the past two years Marketing has been able to use year-end dollars and successfully advocate for recurring dollars to support an annual media plan. The unit has also contracted with a media buying agency and brought all unit-specific buying under one umbrella. A copy of the current annual media plan (fiscal year 2015-16) is attached.

Below is a look at the evolution of Marketing’s budget:

**2013-14 Fiscal Year**
- $75,000 annual budget for all expenses, including professional development, printing and phone charges, capital and equipment needs and paid media.

**2014-15 Fiscal Year**
- $75,000 recurring budget
- $100,000 one-time amount allocated to website redesign
- $100,000 recurring allocated to continued digital support
- $250,000 one-time amount funded out of roll-up for paid media

**2015-16 Fiscal Year**
- $75,000 recurring budget
- $100,000 recurring for digital
- $20,000 recurring to support advertising for Biltmore Park
- $100,000 recurring approved to support institutional advertising
- $450,000 one-time amount funded out of roll-up for paid media

**2016-17 Fiscal Year, looking ahead**
- $75,000 recurring budget
- $100,000 recurring for digital
- $20,000 recurring to support advertising for Biltmore Park
- $100,000 recurring to support institutional advertising
- $200,000 one-time amount funded out of roll-up for paid media
- Any additional one-time support pending

Overall, the annual recurring budget now amounts to $295,000, which is intended to cover all expenses and all paid media aside from salaries.

Note that following significant investment made in marketing in 2015-16, the university is anticipating the arrival of the largest freshman class in the institution’s history. Our deposits are at an all-time record high. Graduate school enrollment is bucking national trends and is also on the climb.

Regarding investment in staff, no new unit staff positions have been added in recent years, although new services have been added through the reorganization of staff and the filling of an open position to lead social media strategy. Leadership is currently considering the addition of a Web Content Specialist to support university needs related to content for the external website.

(6) OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

As we look ahead, we see many opportunities for University Marketing to continuing improving on the value it provides to the university. Some of these opportunities raise questions as to how we can best collaborate with other units in the university. Opportunities include:

1. Measurement of Results – As noted earlier, we see many opportunities to improve how we measure results, including an immediate need for market research to establish a baseline for measuring improved awareness and reputation.
2. Communicating Our Services – One of our projects for the summer includes a website for our unit that would communicate to campus the services we provide, those available for a fee, and the many consultative opportunities. We believe we have a need and opportunity to better communicate our resources and offerings.
3. Developing Brand Buy-In – Related to No. 2, we see a need to develop buy-in among university stakeholders so that they know, understand and can articulate our unique brand position. As we communicate our services, we also hope to communicate our brand voice and visual style and provide improved tools and templates for campus. We are modeling this after North Carolina State University’s online brand guide: brand.ncsu.edu.
4. Content Marketing – As we look ahead, we know one of the best opportunities to improve university reputation is to improve dissemination of the many incredible stories of our institution. We see a need/opportunity to better collaborate with University Communications and PR and with units across campus on strategic content marketing. This could include the writing of articles and distribution via social or paid media. Our four writers in University Communications are primarily focused on press
releases and magazine content, and we see an opportunity to create
direct-to-consumer content.

5. Website Management – We still have work to do in terms of perfecting our
shared ownership of the external website with IT Web Services as well as
determining the best collaborative staffing model for website management
moving forward.

6. Auxiliary Services – We see an opportunity to grow our fee-for-service arm
in the future. That said, we have a lot of work in front of us to measure
demand and to staff and charge effectively to deliver that growth.

7. Budget Growth – We continue to see a need for added budget support to
fund paid media in a sustainable way. The university has seen the positive
effects of paid media, but it is incumbent upon us to effectively measure
and report the impact of our efforts and to advocate for sustained budget.

In addition to these opportunities, we would be remiss to not mention
opportunities and challenges related to organizational structure. Examples
include:

- In most institutions, PR/communications and marketing report to the same
leader. While that is also true at WCU (both report to the Chief of Staff),
we wonder if there are ways these units could and should be more
integrated, especially as the marketing and PR landscape continues to
evolve.

- The redesign of the website has brought with us challenges as to how we
best partner with Web Services moving forward. In some organizations,
the external website is completely owned by marketing. While this is
somewhat out of our unit’s control, we struggle to define the best way for
managing the website moving forward.

- As the university grows and we organically move to a decentralized
model, how do we help facilitate the best marketing resources within
units? Should we be pushing for more or less decentralization? What do
we need to put in place now to ensure collaboration across marketing
resources in the future?

These are a few of the big-picture organizational questions and challenges
ahead of University Marketing.