

Research Briefs

KEY FINDINGS

- Students liked the marketing materials developed and disseminated by STC & were especially pleased with graphics, layout, and colors utilized.
- Students felt that the commercials promoting STC engendered a sense of pride.
- Improvements need to be made in some of the information provided via marketing materials including use of maps and clear contact information.
- Study participants felt that more variety is needed in the students portrayed in the different materials.
- Students found the covers of the View Book and College Catalog to be too similar.
- Color coding of College Catalog would make it easier to navigate.

IMPLICATIONS

For Practice:

- Include maps in more of the materials that are produced.
- Provide clear presentation of contact information in all materials that are produced.
- Use of a wider variety of students portrayed in marketing materials.
- Use of distinctive covers for View Book & College Catalog.
- Inclusion of color coding in College Catalog.
- Develop internet marketing materials.

For Policy:

- Marketing materials should be made readily available throughout campus and via the internet.

For Research:

- Continued inquiry to discover what other materials could be developed to assist students in finding pertinent information.



Marketing Materials Study

As part of its effort to continually provide South Texas College students and the community with accurate and engaging information a variety of different marketing materials have been produced and distributed. A focus group was conducted to evaluate students' opinions and comments regarding the various materials that have been developed. This study suggests that students are pleased with the various materials that are provided, but that certain improvements could be made.

Background

As part of its principles to guide student recruitment and institutional integrity, South Texas College (STC) has a specific approach to achieve adequate enrollment and towards student recruitment. As part of the effort to improve enrollment numbers, STC took a close look at the connection between marketing and student services. This led to the college's divisions of Public Relations and Marketing and Outreach to combine resources. Through the collaboration of these areas an increase in productivity and maximized resources were realized.

Some of the institutional and enrollment marketing deliverables that were produced included, but were not limited to: the South Texas College View Book, South Texas College Program of Study, division brochures, joint marketing campaigns with other regional institutions, bilingual marketing initiatives, mail outs such as "Register Now", tuition postcards, and the college catalog.

Purpose of Study

As part of its preparation for the upcoming SACS visit in Fall 2009, STC has been charged with examining recruitment materials and presentations to ensure that they accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. It has been suggested that STC include feedback from the student body regarding the resources used as part of its recruiting effort. The purpose of this particular study is to examine students' opinions and attitudes about the various marketing deliverables and publications produced by STC..

Methodology

In order to gauge students' opinions and gather feedback, a focus group was conducted in February 2009 with students who currently attend STC (n=9). For the course of one hour students were presented with a wide-range of the different marketing materials developed and distributed by STC. This included a presentation of the various marketing deliverables previously mentioned. Students were encouraged to share and voice their opinions regarding these materials. Participation in the focus group was completely voluntary.

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Research Questions

This study sought to examine what students' opinions are in regards to marketing materials developed and provided to STC students and the community at large to relay information about the college.

Key Findings

Overall, students articulated satisfaction with different aspects of the marketing materials presented to them and only had a few suggestions regarding improvements that could be made in the development of future marketing materials.

Brochures

Students expressed an overall positive opinion about the coloring, layout, and information provided in the various division brochures produced by the college. They described these particular materials as "eye catching" and feel that the mixture of graphics and text is engaging.

Marketing Materials Study

A number of the students expressed the desire to have campus maps or identifying photographs and more clearly outlined contact information as part of the brochures.

Mail-Outs (Postcards)

While students felt that mail-outs reminding students about registration and financial aid were a good idea and appreciated the design aspects of the postcards they examined, they felt that certain improvements could be made to better disseminate information among the student populations.

As with the brochures, it was suggested that maps and/or pictures be included as part of the materials. Additionally, many of the students had a difficult time finding contact information for the various offices. They felt that the other information provided was not clearly outlined. It was also suggested that information regarding alternative forms of registering and learning about financial aid, such as Jagnet, be included in any materials produced regarding these services.

View Book

Students felt that information provided throughout the STC View Book is helpful to potential, incoming, and current students. They did feel that particular sections of the View Book are "too busy" and that the inclusion of too much text on a single page deters students from examining the information that is being presented. Several of the students suggested that presenting the

information in the View Book in a more "magazine-like" format would be helpful in attracting and keeping students' attention.

College Catalog

While students felt that the College Catalog provides vital information to students, they felt that some improvements could be made to the way in which this information is presented and formatted.

Students felt that there needs to be more of a distinction between the STC View Book and College Catalog stating that the cover of the two are too similar therefore making them easy to confuse and interchange in some situations. Students also suggested that color coding the catalog by division would make it easier for students to find the information that they are looking for.

Commercials

Of all the marketing materials presented, students expressed the most satisfaction with the commercials produced by STC. Commercials were described as being attention-grabbing, interesting, and engendered a sense of pride among the student population. The only suggestion offered was that contact information, such as a web address or phone number, be included at the end of the commercial. .

Community Materials

Among the other marketing materials presented to the students were a full-page advertisement and a tray insert that was used at local chain restaurants that were run as part of joint campaigns with other post-secondary education institutions in the area. These materials were developed to encourage the local population to continue their education at area institutions.

While they stated that the information provided in these materials is helpful and interesting, they also felt that the position of the STC logo and information seemed to hold a secondary position compared to other institutions listed on the material.

Other Suggestions

Students felt that all the materials (with the exclusion of mail-outs, commercials, and community materials) should be located throughout campus rather than the few strategic places that the materials seem to be located now.

It was also suggested that a wider range of students than those portrayed in the materials be included. Students pointed out how the same students are used repeatedly in various marketing materials and they felt that inclusion of a more diverse group of students would make the materials more appealing.

In addition to the materials that are already available, students felt that it would be useful to produce brochures that inform the student body about what online amenities are available to the student body (i.e. email, registration information, etc.) as well as a brochure offering information about transferability of courses to other institutions in the area.

Implications for Further Research

This particular study included a very limited sample of students ($n=9$). A more wide reaching study involving more focus groups could shed further light on where there are gaps in the information being presented in STC marketing materials.

