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Strategies to Enhance Out of State Enrollment at VCU Focusing on Name Recognition, Successful Alumni and Out of State Students

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GRACE E. HARRIS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE
PROJECT PROPOSAL

*Strategies to Enhance Out of State Enrollment
at VCU
Focusing on Name Recognition, Successful
Alumni and Out of State Students*



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**Virginia Commonwealth University
Grace E. Harris Leadership Scholars**

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I. Project Name

“Strategies to Enhance Out of State Enrollment at VCU Focusing on Name Recognition, Successful Alumni and Out-of-State Students”

II. Project Description

The project team has conceptualized several possible university marketing initiatives. These initiatives revolve around a central concept: *increasing out-of-state student enrollment at VCU*. In concert with the Office of the Vice President of University Outreach, Team 3 will study and test the effectiveness of outdoor and other strategically located VCU advertising along major northeast corridor transportation routes and hubs to attract out-of state undergraduates.

III. Background/Statement of Issues

The university has set a goal to increase the enrollment of out-of-state students over the next several years as a leading priority. The Office of University Outreach and university departments have been charged to expand undergraduate recruitment activities using a number of creative methods. The result of increased undergraduate enrollment will have several positive outcomes for the university. First, additional out-of-state undergraduates will further enhance the VCU’s uniquely diverse campus culture. Second, increased revenue derived from out-of-state tuition will fund new programs and activities for all students and, thereby, will improve student life and the campus community.

VCU has conducted extensive surveys of its name recognition in Richmond, regionally and nationally. These surveys have shown that VCU’s name recognition among high school students is good in the metro Richmond area, but suffers from a lack of exposure, regionally and nationally. The Out-of State Enrollment Initiative will select areas proximate to the Interstate 95 corridor to promote name recognition to potential undergraduate candidates.

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IV. Vision

The vision of our project team is to support the efforts of The Office of University Outreach in succeeding in its goal of increasing out-of-state enrollment. The expectation that Virginia Commonwealth University will be clearly recognized among its peer institutions, along the Interstate 95 corridor, as a premier public university with a nationally diverse student culture. Team 3 members are uniquely qualified to support this project as two of our three members recently lived out of state and were recruited to Medical College of Virginia Hospitals, and then learned of Virginia Commonwealth University upon arrival.

V. Objectives

1. To increase high school student, parent and traveler awareness of the VCU name through a combination of marketing techniques in strategic locations along the corridor. These techniques will focus on successful alumni, alumni with unique careers and recognized alumni.
2. To involve current VCU students in the School of the Arts--Communication and Design Program in the strategy and implementation of the project, for synergy and refinement of plan.
3. To evaluate methods of marketing along the corridor, including airport signage, out door advertising, kiosks and print media advertising, in the D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia and Boston metropolitan regions, that showcase our successful alumni and promote VCU.

VI. Goal

To provide sufficient topical research, creative initiative and strategic planning assistance to the Office of University Outreach so that the project plan may become integrated into the overall recruitment initiative.

VII. Target Population / Audience

1. Office of University Outreach
2. Current VCU School of Arts (The Ad Center) students
3. High school students and other prospective recruits living in targeted regions

VII. Available Resources within the University

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The Ad Center, Faculty and Students
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VIII. Implementation Plan

Certain preparations must occur before implementation. The project plan intersects with efforts that are the responsibilities of others and currently underway in the Office of University Outreach. Sue Ann Messmer, Vice President and her staff have reacted positively to the project plan and we all expressed mutual interest in collaborating to bring forth parts of the project plan in compelling and exciting ways.

The following tasks, and others to be identified, need to be performed to determine feasibility, market, demographics, other university experiences, and presentations to The Ad Center staff and students to professionally refine aspects of the plan prior to implementation:

- A. Literature search on college and university advertising techniques.
- B. Review VCU resources, including prior VCU surveys on community perceptions of billboards.
- C. Survey other colleges and universities that have engaged in marketing, showcasing prominent and successful alumni in various media.
- D. Outdoor advertising: Identify visibly strategic entrance points into Virginia which offer the greatest exposure to out-of-state individuals.
- E. Indoor advertising: Identify high traffic transportation centers along the corridor where there are many out-of-state travelers, such as airports and train stations.
- F. Identify a pool of successful VCU alumni to be featured in advertising that will attract attention to the VCU name and its alumni who have achieved prominence, or unique career paths.

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(Implementation Plan continued)

- G. Present project plan to Ad Center students for further refinement and further extrapolation of the project plan.
- H. Coordinate a joint session with Ad Center students, University Outreach staff and Team 3 to discuss all aspects of the project plan.
- I. Select a method of either outdoor, newspaper or transportation hub ads to showcase successful alumni and increase name recognition and set up a trial.
- J. Perform cost analysis for project.
- K. Develop measurement techniques for evaluating the effectiveness of the project plan

IX. Evaluation Plan

Our plan to evaluate effectiveness will include the following:

- A. Evaluation of increase of out of state recruitment after plan is implemented.
- B. Design survey results from first year students to include a measure of ad visibility and subsequent interest in VCU.
- C. Establish dialogue with other, non-competing universities who have employed similar ad techniques to learn additional methods of evaluation.

