

Integrated Marketing and Communications Task Force

Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2006

MINUTES

Meeting opened at 10:00 AM in the College of Charleston's Stern Center Ballroom.

I. Welcome and Introductions:

Mike Haskins, chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all present. He thanked everyone for coming and introduced the format of this and future meetings. He noted that each meeting will include a presentation from an on-campus or off-campus representative related to the task force's work, follow-up to discuss the substantive issues and directions of the Task Force, and open discussion of marketing, communications and branding issues.

Mr. Haskins gave a summary of the Task Force mission, functions and purpose. He then asked members to consider the make-up of the Task Force and suggest additional members. A suggestion was made to include Leslie Shields, marketing director for Aramark Dining Services, and Mr. Haskins said he would follow up to invite Ms. Shields to join.

All present members then introduced themselves, giving their name, what department they represent, and how long they have been at the College of Charleston.

Mr. Haskins then gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Task Force's mission, goals and process, explaining how these goals will be accomplished. The presentation outlined how the members of the Task Force will act as Brand Ambassadors, but also emphasized that they are not alone and will be assisted by additional resources, including internal assistance from the Division of Marketing and Communications, and external help from Stein Communications/Latham & Associates. The presentation concluded with a list of the names and titles of the College of Charleston's Division of Marketing and Communications staff.

II. Task Force Goals

- Build a stronger regional and national identity for the College
- Enhance the College's reputation
- Create awareness and relevance among audiences
- Build a College-wide visual identity
- Enhance direct marketing efforts (recruitment, participation, support)

Discussion on Task Force Goals:

- As Brand Ambassadors, our job is to bring forth concerns and issues from our individual areas, collaborate on solutions with the Task Force, and communicate decisions to our units. We don't want to limit creativity, but we need to have consensus on the foundation on which all of our marketing efforts will build.
- We need to look internally before externally. We can't introduce ourselves to our target audiences if we don't have internal consensus on who we are.
- The new Division of Marketing and Communications can relieve some of the financial burden for design and production costs, but campus-wide personnel and financial resources for overall marketing are very limited, and individual areas should plan their budgets to anticipate the need to go external and spend their own marketing funds for design and production, depending on the request.
- As the Division of Marketing and Communications evolves, the focus will be on adding more on design and editorial support, with a Web design position to come soon.

- Brian McGee asked what the budget was for Marketing. Mike responded that after taking out fixed costs such as personnel, printing, postage, etc., the College has about \$50-75,000 for institutional marketing initiatives, a modest marketing budget. It was agreed upon that it was a small amount of money to work with. Compared to other institutions, the College has very little money for overall marketing initiatives, but additional non-recurring money was given to Marketing this year that will hopefully be built into a recurring budget.
- The College should develop institutional advertising funds.
- Mr. Haskins said we are the very beginning of this process, but we do aspire to do much more in the future.

III. Partnership and Process with External Consultant

Mr. Haskins stated that the College of Charleston has just developed a partnership with Stein Communications/Latham & Company of Atlanta, a creative agency with more than 40 years experience working with schools, colleges, and universities to create and clarify branding and visual identity. He reviewed some ways Stein will be able to help us:

- Define where our brand is today.
- Conduct internal research.
- Conduct interviews with campus constituencies to find points of consistency with regard to our internal views of our identity.
- Help us develop a brand portfolio and a brand toolkit for use throughout campus.
- Apply the brand to complete marketing portfolios for schools, divisions and departments.

The target date for launching the brand toolkit is September 2007. Mr. Haskins noted that this is an aggressive timeline, but that he believes this can be accomplished and that we have the institutional will to make it happen.

Discussion on Partnership and Process with External Consultant:

- With regard to research, the Task Force voiced concerns about doing any web-based surveys, and agreed that it's better to take a more personal approach. Mr. Haskins stated that the Latham & Company approach includes all one-on-one interviews, with some focus groups. This process takes longer but it will produce better results. The focus is on learning what is in the hearts and minds of people when they think about the College of Charleston.
- Andrew Bergstrom asked about previous work conducted by consultant George Dehne Associates. Mr. Haskins responded that:
 - George Dehne Associates is a marketing & branding consulting firm that was previously hired by the College of Charleston.
 - Although the RFP that resulted in the hire of GDA was very open-ended, the work turned out to be limited in scope, but that it is very useful in providing some temporary bridges between where we were and where we want to go.
 - GDA did significant work for Admissions (viewbook, website, research). This research will be made available to the Task Force and the consultants, who will make use of it as we move forward.
 - The GDA research was largely quantifiable, the next phase will be qualitative.
- The Task Force agreed that part of its mission is to help everyone on campus to understand that we all take a role in defining who we are as a college.
- A question was raised about the contract with Stein, with Mr. Haskins responding that the two-year agreement with Stein Consultant for \$120,000, and that Stein, who was the company of choice of the RFP panel, was also the lowest bidder on the project. Task Force members agreed that this was a very reasonable cost for a project of this scope. Mr.

Haskins noted that copies of the RFP and the response will be made available to the Task Force.

- Victor Wilson noted that the branding project is much-needed, because: there is no style guide for College of Charleston; we need to clarify our identity, internally and externally; we need guidelines for design, printing, etc.
- Stein will produce a Branding Manual and will provide training. In the early stages, we may not be able to get 100 percent compliance, but that is the goal. Brian McGee suggested we discuss some sort of action with if we do not get 100% compliance down the road, especially when it comes to Admissions pieces, the magazine, and the website.

IV. Discussion of General Marketing/Branding Issues

A question was raised with regard to the website, and Mr. Haskins asked Bob Cape, Senior Vice President for Information Technology, to respond.

Mr. Cape briefed the committee on some of the history of the College's website, and noted that there are several issues of design and content, including: a lack of integrity in the basic factual information as it is presented on various sites (for example, discrepancies in the presentation of information on tuition rates); lack of standards for the look and feel leading to a confusing array of navigational tools and visual presentation; the need for the College to become completely compliant with ADA accessibility requirements.

Mr. Cape stated that IT and Marketing are working together to solve these issues, and that one major goal is the acquisition of a Content Management System (CMS). A CMS is software that can improve the website issues by: creating a shared look and feel, with shared standards that are easy to update; allowing web pages to all derive factual information from a central source, thus improving the accuracy of content; filtering web pages for 508 compliance before they are posted; adding a system that is universally understood, thus allowing better transition from one web author to the next within a department.

Mr. Cape reported that he and Mr. Haskins have met with President Conrad Festa about the purchase of a CMS, and that the president was supportive of moving forward. Mr. Haskins added that a CMS is a tool for people to constructively create and update their websites, and will allow them to do their jobs better and more successfully, bringing consistency and accuracy. He noted that if our websites share a common theme, it will pull the entire institution together. Mr. Cape added that the focus should be on optimizing the whole, not just individual departments.

V. Next Meeting

Mr. Haskins thanked everyone for coming and expressed his appreciation for everyone's willingness to participate in this process.

The next meeting will take place Wednesday, November 1, 2006, from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. in the Stern Center Ballroom. Everyone was asked to bring copies of all major publications from their areas and a list of their publications, indicating where they are in their business cycle, with them to the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 12:00 PM