

# 2007-2008 STRATEGIC MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

## MAJOR GOALS

- 1 Advance awareness and understanding of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and its value to the state, and build support for the system among lawmakers, opinion leaders and business leaders.**
- 2 Enhance the ability of the colleges and universities to recruit students, including those in groups underrepresented in higher education, by raising awareness of and appreciation for the value of a college education and the accessibility, affordability, wide variety and high quality of the system's programs and services.**
- 3 Increase the sense of belonging to a system among the system's employees by informing them of systemwide news of interest, and enlist them to be strong advocates for the system.**

## **Continuing the progress**

The 2007-2008 strategic marketing and communications plan continues to focus on building awareness and understanding of the system, helping colleges and universities recruit students, including those in groups underrepresented in higher education, and communicating with the system's employees.

Marketing and communications strategies are guided by a cross-functional Communications Team made up of representatives from academic and student affairs, finance and facilities, government relations, human resources, information technology and the system foundation. The team generally meets every two weeks to assure a consistent and comprehensive approach to communications.

Institution presidents play a major role in guiding the plan through the Leadership Council Advancement Committee, and key communicators at the colleges and universities also participate through meetings, advisory committees and e-mail communication.

## **Key messages continue**

- We educate Minnesota; we make it work.
- We are an essential contributor to the economic and social vitality of Minnesota in a changing environment. We help build communities and a strong work force.
- We offer students more choices, better value and unlimited possibilities.

**Goal 1: Advance awareness and understanding of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and its value to the state, and build support for the system among lawmakers, opinion leaders and business leaders.**

**Strategy:** Use a strategic mix of events, speaking engagements and story and opinion piece placements in local, state and national news media and system publications. Reinforce the system's key messages with advertising.

**Research:** An economic impact study completed in 2006 by economist Paul Anton has been followed up with in-depth reports for certain specific colleges and universities. Results of the additional studies will be used in speeches, news releases and publications.

**Target audiences:** Legislators who act on the system's funding requests and those who influence them, including public officials, community leaders, business leaders and other opinion leaders across the state.

**Tactics:**

- NEW: Develop a new publication, in conjunction with Academic and Student Affairs, to **inform employers** about the system's educational services and to promote the value of the colleges and universities as comprehensive resources for businesses.
- NEW: Refresh the system's advertising and marketing campaigns to raise awareness and appreciation of the system's contributions to the state's economic and cultural vitality.
- NEW: Explore the possibility of producing a **public television series** of episodes featuring how the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities contribute to the state's future. This effort would require raising \$500,000 to \$750,000 to cover production costs and would take more than a year to complete.
- Support the **work of the system and the Board of Trustees** with publications and public relations strategies. (Ongoing)
- Use public relations strategies and other communication tactics to **promote and publicize initiatives and accomplishments of the system's strategic plan**. (Ongoing)

- Develop and implement a plan to **advocate for the system's biennial capital budget request** at the Minnesota Legislature. Elements will include a publication making the case for the system's request; templates for opinion pieces and letters to the editor, and legislative presentations and talking points for the chancellor, presidents, trustees and others. (Publication to be issued in time for the 2008 legislative session and other materials developed as needed for the session.)
- In conjunction with Government Relations, support and expand the **advocacy network** introduced in 2006-2007 to build support for the system's legislative agenda. (Ongoing)
- Continue twice-annual publication of *Minnesota State Colleges & Universities magazine*. The magazine provides in-depth coverage of systemwide issues and significant developments, and highlights significant accomplishments of faculty and staff, and college and university collaborations and initiatives. The magazine is mailed to friends of the system, business leaders, foundation board members and others as appropriate, and is posted on the Web. (Published in November and April)
- Develop other new publications to **highlight innovative programs and services** as needed. (Ongoing)
- Expand and promote the system's **media-based media resource guide**. The guide should be seen by local and national reporters as an essential resource to reach knowledgeable sources within the system on a wide range of issues. (Ongoing)
- Create **newsworthy contexts** (events, studies, programs) that raise awareness of the system as a powerhouse of higher education and communicate system messages. Arrange for the chancellor to meet periodically with editorial boards of newspapers in the metro area and in communities where colleges and universities are located. Submit opinion-editorial pieces or columns by the chancellor and board members for the state's major daily newspapers on issues of importance to public higher education. Offer timely news story possibilities about customized training programs and other collaborations with businesses and industries and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development to local, state and national news outlets. Respond to opposing views quickly and effectively. (Ongoing)
- Continue to develop **business-related key messages** for use in speaking to individuals and groups. Continue to send periodic letters from the chancellor to business leaders who participated in focus groups and other

friends of the system. Offer story ideas and proposals to business publications, and reinforce those messages with advertising. (Ongoing.)

- Continue to highlight the long-term benefits the system brings to the residents of Minnesota through a new series of advertisements expanding on the ongoing “Amazing Facts” campaign. (Ongoing)

**Evaluation:**

- Media coverage of the Chancellor, the Board of Trustees, the system and the system’s key messages will be carefully monitored and evaluated.
- Response to the magazine will be monitored and evaluated.
- Feedback from the chancellor’s public appearances will be monitored and evaluated.
- Story placements will be quantified and evaluated on whether key messages were communicated. The goal is to offer at least two story proposals per month to major media outlets and to earn placements of at least one per month.
- Quantitative outcomes of the legislative strategy will be measured through annual state budget appropriations. Measures will include the percentage of budget requests achieved, benchmarked with the University of Minnesota and other higher education entities.
- Regularly assess the effectiveness of advertising media used, as measured by reach and number of impressions and responses to call to action, if appropriate.

**Goal 2 Enhance the ability of the colleges and universities to recruit students, including those in groups underrepresented in higher education, by raising awareness of and appreciation for the value of a college education and the accessibility, affordability, wide variety and high quality of the system’s programs and services.**

**Strategy:** Through a targeted advertising campaign, reach key segments traditionally underrepresented in higher education, with an added focus on attracting the attention of younger middle-school age audiences. The strategy will feature positive, inspirational messages that college can be a part of their future.

**Research:** A series of focus groups was conducted in spring 2007 among middle school-aged audiences, including underrepresented students of color, to ascertain the most effective ways to reach this group. Supporting substantial previous research, focus group participants responded favorably to messages that were positive, welcoming and informative and that deal with basic questions these

groups have about higher education. Given the growing inclination of poorly prepared students to attend college, we must work harder to persuade middle school and high school students to properly prepare for post-secondary education. Key messages should emphasize affordability, opportunity and possibility.

**Target audience:** Students traditionally underrepresented in higher education and those who influence them, including parents, guardians, high school counselors, teachers and mentors.

**Tactics:**

- NEW: Create a new **statewide advertising campaign** that continues to deliver messages to underrepresented youth about the positive benefits achieved from attending a higher education institution.
- NEW: Explore the use of **social media technologies** such as social networking sites, blogs, podcasts and others to reach and recruit prospective students.
- Update and revise *Go Places*, the system's main student recruitment guide. (Complete by August 2008 for fall distribution.)
- Produce and distribute the *Got Plans?* brochure developed in 2007 to recruit applicants who were denied enrollment at a state university to consider attending a two-year college. (First distributed spring 2007; repeat in fall 2007 and spring 2008.)
- Offer **timely news story possibilities** about programs and special populations served by colleges and universities to national, state and local news outlets. (Ongoing.)
- Ensure all publications reflect the **wide-ranging diversity** of our students, faculty and staff. (Ongoing.)
- In consultation with the Diversity and Multiculturalism unit, expand a plan to **reach students in groups underrepresented** in higher education with key messages about the importance of higher education. Tactics will include publications and advertising in media that reach these audiences and an expanded "Super Sunday" program of personal visits by system leaders to religious gathering places of underrepresented populations. (Ongoing)

**Evaluation:**

- Measure the number of requests for information about the system. The goal is to increase the number of inquiries over the previous year.

- Monitor and measure visits to the system's Web site. The goal is to increase the number of visits over the previous year.
- Monitor and measure news coverage about the system, and evaluate whether key messages were communicated.
- Measure the number of successful story placements, and evaluate whether key messages were communicated.
- Evaluate impact of advertising and public relations strategies through quantitative measurement and response tracking devices; and qualitative focus groups and surveys with primary target audience groups.
- Monitor feedback from any radio and cable television appearances by members of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.
- Long-term effectiveness will be measured by enrollment trends over time.

**Goal 3: Increase the sense of belonging to a system among the system's employees; inform them of systemwide news of interest, and enlist employees to become strong advocates for the system.**

**Strategy:** Strategic integration of internal communications involves incorporating mission, vision and strategic planning in all systemwide communications. Establishing regular and multiple channels of communication among faculty and staff and the Office of the Chancellor will make it easier to support the system's missions and goals. These channels will be used to recognize achievements and accomplishments and to reinforce the system's key message.

**Research:** Ongoing input from the system's key communicators, including a discussion forum at twice-yearly system communications conferences, is conducted to gather feedback on two e-newsletters distributed to internal constituents; feedback from other internal constituents also to be gathered.

**Target audiences:** The system's employees – faculty, staff and administrators – located throughout the state, and the 300 or so employees in the Office of the Chancellor.

**Tactics:**

*College and university employees*

- Continue to produce *The Review*, a monthly e-mail newsletter containing system news of interest or importance for all employees. The newsletter is e-mailed to key communicators and presidents, who are encouraged to forward it to all employees or to publish the items in their own e-mail or

print newsletters. (Published monthly September through April, except for December.)

- Produce videotaped **greeting** from the chancellor to broadcast to the colleges and universities over MnSAT for use in in-service training events and other meetings of faculty, staff and administrators. (Early August 2006)
- **Recognize achievements** and outstanding contributions by staff. (Ongoing.)
- Monitor and enforce use of the "Minnesota State Colleges & Universities" **brand and tagline** in communications. (Ongoing.)

*Office of the Chancellor employees*

- Continue publication of *The Chronicle*, a monthly electronic newsletter focusing on people and events in the Office of the Chancellor, distributed to all Office of the Chancellor employees through the system Web site. (Monthly except December and August)
- Hold **all-staff meeting**. (Complete by Sept. 30)
- Conduct **informal staff meetings** around specific topics, such as the system's legislative initiatives. (Ongoing)

**Evaluation:**

- Use Internet surveys of employees to gather feedback regarding the electronic newsletter.
- Measure and monitor hits to the Web version of the electronic newsletter.