



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

2006-2007 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 and appreciation about 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 become strong advocates for the system.**

Continuing the progress

The 2006-2007 strategic marketing and communications plan is for the second year of a three-year plan. It continues a focus on building awareness and understanding of the system, helping colleges and universities recruit students, including those in groups under-represented 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 foundation,. The team 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 play a major role through meetings, advisory committees and email communication.

The plan for 2006-2007 is a detailed plan for Year Two of a three-year strategic communications and marketing plan. The plan will be continuously improved and revised as new issues arise. Some recommended tactics, such as advertising, will depend on the availability of resources.

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 build communities.
- 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 outlets and system publications. Further reinforce the system's key messages with advertising.

Research: An economic impact study has been completed by economist Paul Anton. Results of the study 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:

- 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 budget request** at the 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 issued as soon as possible after board approves request; other materials developed as needed in time for 2007 legislative session.)
- NEW: In conjunction with Government Relations, develop and support **new advocacy network** to build support for the system's legislative agenda.
- Publish **two issues of *Minnesota State Colleges & Universities* magazine.** The magazine's focus is on the accomplishments of numerous faculty and staff, recognition of significant college and university collaborations and initiatives, and in-depth coverage of systemwide issues and significant developments. The magazine is mailed to existing lists of friends of the system, business leaders, foundation board members and others as appropriate, and posted on the Web. (Published in November and April)
- Develop new publications to **highlight innovative programs and services** as needed. (Ongoing)
- NEW: Create a **new brochure featuring the seven state universities** to increase public appreciation for the quality and scope of their academic programs, research and accomplishments of faculty, students and alumni. (Complete by spring 2007)
- NEW: Expand and promote the system's **Web-based faculty resource guide.** The guide should be seen by local and national reporters as an essential resource to reach knowledgeable sources on a wide range of issues. (Rollout in fall 2006 or as soon as technical issues can be resolved; ongoing additions and updates)

- 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 the **television advertising campaign** begun in 2005-2006 to leverage production costs and reinforce key messages. Develop related print and Web advertising with themes and images consisted with television ads. Explore the feasibility of producing related radio, bus and transit and outdoor advertising. (Media plan developed in fall 2006; execution complete by June 30)

Evaluation:

- Media coverage of the Chancellor, the Board, 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 and appreciation about the accessibility, affordability, wide variety and high quality of the system's programs and services.

Strategy: Create recruitment materials that colleges and universities can use to reach key segments of the consumer marketplace, with an emphasis on reaching groups traditionally under-served in higher education.

Research: Though the number of high school graduates is declining, more high school graduates are continuing their education. Substantial research has been conducted in previous years into how to reach students in various groups. The research points to a need for specifically targeted publications and outreach efforts that are welcoming and deal with basic questions these groups have about higher

education. This is a continuation of efforts begun in the 2001-2002 marketing cycle and expanded during the last few years. Given the growing inclination of poorly prepared students to attend college, we must work harder to persuade high school students to properly prepare for post-secondary education. Key messages should include affordability, opportunity and possibility.

Target audience: Prospective students and those who influence them, including parents, guardians, high school counselors, teachers and mentors.

Tactics:

- Update and revise *Go Places*, the system's main student recruitment guide. (Complete by August 2007 for fall distribution.)
- NEW: Develop materials to recruit applicants who were denied enrollment at a state university to consider attending a two-year college. (Complete by fall 2006; repeat in spring 2007)
- 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.)
- NEW: In consultation with the Diversity and Multiculturalism unit, develop and implement a plan to **reach students in groups underrepresented** in higher education with key messages about the importance of higher education. Tactics could include publications and advertising in media that reach these audiences. (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 systems 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.
- Conduct focus groups with prospective students in the target audience groups to evaluate impact of advertising and public relations strategies.
- Monitor feedback from any radio and cable television appearances.
- 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: Web-based surveys will be conducted to gather feedback on two e-newsletters distributed to internal constituents.

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

- Use the chancellor's State of the System speech in September to convey key system messages. Invite reporters to attend the speech and issue a news release about it. Distribute the speech widely to employees through posting on the Web site, electronic distribution to presidents and key communicators for use in their publications, and other means as appropriate. (Completed in September 2006.)
- Continue to produce *The Review*, a monthly email newsletter consisting of system news that would be of interest or important to communicate to all employees. The newsletter is sent electronically to key communicators and presidents, who are encouraged to forward it to all employees or to publish the items in their own email or print newsletters. (Published monthly September through April, except for December.)
- Produce videotaped back-to-school message 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 distribution of *The Chronicle*, a monthly electronic newsletter focusing on people and events in the Office of the Chancellor and distributed to all Office of the Chancellor employees. (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.

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.
- Invite employee feedback on the State of the System speech and videos; evaluate feedback.