



Education
Advisory
Board

Academic Affairs Forum

Integrated Marketing Strategies and Resources



Custom Research Brief

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Academic Affairs Forum

Anna Krenkel

Research Associate

202-568-7894

akrenkel@eab.com

Nalika Vasudevan

Research Manager

202-568-7107

nvasudevan@eab.com

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Centralized marketing offices develop integrated marketing strategies to ensure campus-wide departments emphasize the same institutional strengths and use logos appropriately. The creation of a centralized marketing office does not typically change the content of institutional marketing material; rather, it ensures that all advertisements for the institution appear uniform in their message and branding. Institution-wide marketing messages should be consistent with the message outlined in the strategic plan.

Marketing offices increase their spending on digital media but continue to purchase advertising buys on traditional media platforms to reach parents of prospective students and raise brand awareness. Contacts use traditional media platforms (e.g., billboards, televisions, radio, etc.) to reach parents and expand brand awareness of the institution within local markets. Print media also raises brand awareness, and advertisements in industry publications reach students interested in under enrolled programs. The marketing office at **University D** allocates 77 percent of its budget to traditional media platforms.

The marketing budget at contact institutions is about \$500,000, which may include advertising by individual departments and central marketing office staff salaries. In addition to purchasing advertising buys, marketing directors also procure project management software to track progress on campus-wide marketing initiatives and media outreach and software to coordinate social media content. Earned media (i.e., coverage from news outlets) and web site re-design allow central marketing offices to raise brand awareness of their institution at lower costs than methods that require purchasing advertising space.

Central marketing offices track web site usage through Google Analytics and survey prospective students after campus tours and enrolled students during their first semester to measure the effectiveness of traditional media. Contacts collect information about the number of unique visits to a web page, the average amount of time individuals spend on it, and the links they click on to enhance web sites' appeal to prospective students. They also ask students about how their parents and guidance counselors use different media platforms to improve outreach to these audiences. Informal conversations with the director of admissions allow marketing directors to track the impact of marketing initiatives' success on the number of applications an institution receives and reuse successful messages or platforms in subsequent admissions cycles.

2) Integrated Marketing Strategies

Marketing Content

Integrated Marketing Messages Support Institutional Strategic Plans

Coordination of all marketing materials through a single office ensures that each piece of marketing collateral aligns with institutional goals outlined in its strategic plan. During the strategic planning process at **University A**, administrators determined key words administrators wish to associate with the institution are “premier,” “residential,” and “public.” Contacts at **University C** concur that the implementation of an integrated strategy has little impact on the message marketing materials convey; rather, it ensures that all materials emphasize the same themes. At University C these refrains include traditional institutional strengths such as sustainability, creativity, and the benefits of a small research university (i.e., small class sizes, faculty attention, and research opportunities as an undergraduate). The marketing office asks departments that submit materials with different messaging to reframe their announcement in language that aligns with these ideas. Departments still decide what messages their web sites and literature communicate (e.g., program promotion, event announcements). However, these messages must align with the institutions’ standards.

Marketing Staff Review Materials to Ensure Appropriate Logo and Brand Usage

In an effort to create uniformity across departments, marketing staff at all contact institutions publish guidelines for how to use the institutional logo available for download from the offices’ web sites. They conduct informational sessions with representatives from student organizations, academic departments, and auxiliary departments to educate them about regulations and encourage compliance. At **University C**, only chapters of national organizations such as Reserve Officers’ Training Corp (ROTC) retained their organizational logo after the creation of integrated marketing initiatives. The guidelines may also require that the marketing office grant approval to departments and organizations that produce any materials using the institution’s name, trademark, or service mark.¹ At institutions where the marketing office includes a print shop, staff typically review all materials for incorrect logo use prior to printing a departmental order. When they identify an erroneous application of the institution’s logo, the print shop staff communicate directly with the offending department about the necessary changes; if the requesting department resists, the executive director of marketing may also contact them about institutional policies. At other institutions, a staff member dedicated to trademarks and licensing will review all advertising materials to ensure brand continuity.



“When I first started as marketing director, every department and organization had its own logo. When institutional organizations sponsored an event off-campus, the advertising materials would include three different departmental logos but not one would state the name of our institution. With the support of the University chancellor we implemented strategies to review every piece of marketing material and ensure the institution gets credit for our efforts in the community.”

Forum Interview

1) University A institutional web site.

Marketing Mediums

Digital Media Messages Target Students and Traditional Media Targets Parents

Although all marketing departments increased their presence on social media platforms in the past five years, contacts emphasize they have not abandoned traditional media such as outdoor advertising and direct mailings.

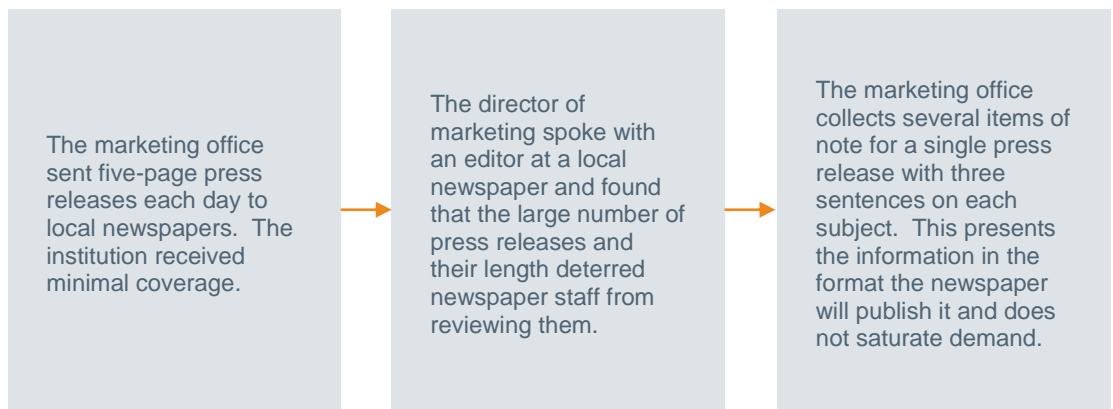
- **Social media:** Institutional surveys indicate that prospective students use Facebook more frequently than other social media platforms. The advertising budget at **University D** reflects this, as Facebook is the only social media platform on which they purchase advertisements.
- **Outdoor Advertising:** Contacts at **University A** identify digital billboards in airports as a marketing strategy that effectively reaches parents. The marketing director also continues to invest in marketing platforms such as billboards to raise brand awareness. They note this strategy is more effective in rural areas where billboards are less concentrated and each retains greater visibility.
- **Television:** The marketing office at **University D** spends 20 percent of their budget on television advertisements targeted to reach parents of prospective students. Contacts at **University A** advertise on cable channels such as the History Channel to reach students.

At **University A**, the marketing office develops 16-page view books to send to prospective applicants that include paper applications. Contacts hope to reach students with limited internet access in the rural areas surrounding campus.

Earned Media Promotes the Institution at Low Costs

Marketing offices with small advertising budgets rely on earned media from local news outlets to raise awareness of institutional success and programs. Marketing offices seek coverage for events such as grants awarded to faculty, community activities hosted on campus (e.g., music competitions), and student athletic achievements.

Process to Increase Earned Media Coverage at *University C*



Institutional Web Sites Target Prospective Students and are Compatible with Mobile Platforms

Contacts indicate that prior to the implementation of an integrated marketing strategy, no process existed to determine which campus events or faculty achievements to emphasize on web site home pages. After marketing offices redesign institutional web sites, content highlights information important to prospective students through prominent links to pages that explain the admissions process, academic departments, and campus life. The institutional homepage also features links to web pages where students can learn about visiting campus and access an online application. Contacts describe new web sites as “paired-down” and “minimalist” in comparison to previous version. This ensures that perspective students can easily locate information about academic programs, financial aid, and the application process.

At most institutions, the central marketing office manages web site content. However, at **University A**, faculty, staff, or graduate assistants use a template the central marketing office provides to update departmental web sites. Although this requires additional web site oversight to ensure departments do not alter the template, it is less time intensive than developing all web site content through the central office.

Marketing offices continue to upgrade institutional web sites and aim to improve the viewing experience on mobile platforms (i.e., tablets and cellphones) and include more videos of students and faculty describing their personal experiences at the institution. At **University B**, the marketing office designates a tier-level to each web page depending on its content to dictate the level of oversight the marketing department provides on content changes.

Tiers of Marketing Office Oversight on Web Pages

- **Tier One:** Web pages deemed strategically important such as academic department homepages and admissions pages targeted to prospective students follow the same template. All changes to content must receive approval from the marketing office; this review occurs within 24 hours.
- **Tier Two:** Web pages frequently visited but of low strategic importance such as student life pages follow the same template but content changes do not require approval from the marketing office.

- **Tier Three:** Faculty personal pages do not follow the institutional template and receive no oversight from the marketing office.

Marketing Directors Conduct Training Sessions and Collaborate with High Profile Departments to Build Trust

Contacts note that faculty in many departments are excited to collaborate with the marketing office to develop their web sites and program specific brochures; they recognize their lack of expertise in advertising and seek input from marketing professionals. For those who are more reluctant to participate or resist what they perceive as the commercialization of the academy, contacts recommend several strategies to improve institutional buy-in.

Strategies to Engage Departments in Integrated Marketing Initiatives

Collaborate with high profile departments	The completion of exemplary projects on behalf of one or two large departments such as admissions or advancement motivates others to seek out the services of the marketing offices to receive similar products.
Present data on marketing outcomes	Contacts indicate faculty respond best to data and research during presentations of services by the central marketing office. They recommend including metrics gathered from Google Analytics, changes in web site usage, and citing scholarly journals during discussions with department representatives.
Initiate change from a top administrator	At University C , the chancellor led efforts to implement an integrated marketing strategy. The chancellor's authority, vision, and ability to articulate the benefits of integrated marketing strategies facilitated campus-wide acceptance.

3) Marketing Resources

Marketing Budget

Non-personnel Marketing Budgets are Less than \$650,000 to Support Advertising Expenses

Contacts indicate digital media budgets continue to grow. The salary for a web designer often includes the cost to develop these initiatives rather than a separate item in the office budget.

At **University D**, the total advertising budget for the institution is \$500,000; the marketing office spends \$295,400 on advertising annually. Departments such as admissions and continuing education manage their own direct mailings and retain separate marketing budgets that account for the remainder of the advertising budget. Marketing offices at other institutions operate with budgets of about \$500,000; however, they may also pay salaries for marketing office staff from the office budget and therefore spend less on advertising. Institutions' general funds pay for integrated marketing campaigns and fund the marketing offices' budgets; at **University B** and University D, administrators reallocated money from high-end users of marketing services (e.g., admissions, advancement, etc.) to the central marketing office to create its budget.

At **University B**, the marketing budget is divided into two budgets; one for public relations and publications and the other for admissions collateral. The public relations budget is between \$150,000 and \$200,000 and the admissions budget is between \$350,000 and \$450,000. Contacts indicate that due to state budget cuts, marketing budgets have decreased recently.

Marketing Office Budget Breakdown at *University D*

Marketing Medium	Total Expenditures	Percentage of Marketing Office's Budget	Target Audience
Billboard	\$90,000	30.5%	Brand awareness
Television	\$61,000	20.6%	Parents of prospective students
Print	\$47,600	16.1%	Brand awareness through college magazines, newspapers, and admission directories, certain majors through industry publications
Program Ads (including theatre and music)	\$35,000	11.8%	Not available
Cinema	\$12,500	4.2%	Brand awareness
Out of State (emails, pURL, postcard) ²	\$10,000	3.4%	Out of state students
Retargeting ³	\$10,000	3.4%	Admissions
Facebook	\$7,000	2.3%	Admissions, nursing

2) pURLs (i.e., persistent uniform resource locators) are a custom link to a web site. Marketing offices use them during mass mailing campaigns to track which direct mail recipients access the institution's web site after they receive a piece of print media such as a postcard or view book.

3) Retargeting tracks visitors to an institution's web site and displays banner advertisements for the institution on other web sites they visit.

Radio	\$7,000	2.3%	Parents of prospective students
Online Banner Ads	\$5,000	1.7%	Event driven, deadline driven, continuing education
Transit Buses	\$4,800	1.6%	Latino campaign
Sponsorships	\$3,000	1.0%	Not available
Direct Mail Campaign	\$2,500	.9%	Nursing

Marketing Staff

Marketing Offices Employ Between 6 and 12 Staff and Collaborate with Departmental Representatives

Staff at all marketing offices include an executive director, photographer, web designer, and graphic designer. Institutions may also employ one or two communications specialists and a part time magazine editor. At some institutions, staff that fulfill these roles do not report to the marketing director. For example sports information staff may work out of the athletics department and event coordinators report to the chancellor's chief of staff. The executive director typically reports to a vice president for advancement or a vice president for admissions.

Marketing offices rarely employ contractors due to the time required to fulfill state bidding requirements and manage vendors.

The executive director at **University C** coordinates integrated marketing strategies with 40 non-marketing office staff responsible for department-level marketing initiatives in units across the institution.

Staff Positions in Centralized Marketing Offices

Position (typical number employed)	Responsibilities	Institution
Executive director (1)	Communicate with rest of institution, conduct educational sessions for departments, manage office budget	All institutions
Graphic designer/ creative services staff (2)	Coordinate with departments to create marketing collateral aligned with institutional mission and brand	All institutions
Photographers (2)	Attend campus events to provide pictures to departments and the central marketing office, frequently a part-time position	All institutions
Web designers (2)	Coordinate with departments and other central office staff to develop new web content and improve site structure	All institutions
Communications specialists/ news release writers (2)	Write press releases for distribution to news media outlets	University A, University C
Event coordinator (1)	Coordinate on-campus events the chancellor hosts such as commencement and graduation	University A, University C
Magazine editor (1)	Edit the campus magazine distributed to the families of current students and alumni	University A, University D

Assistants to the executive director (1)	Provide project management assistance to the executive director	University A
Sports information staff (2)	Manage student athlete-press interactions and publish media guides about institutional athletics	University A
Print shop staff (4)	Print marketing collateral on behalf of the central marketing office, departments, and campus organizations	University D
Student social media specialists (5)	Manage the institution's accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and the intranet peer-to-peer social network after completion of training from the executive director	University D

Software

Integrated Marketing Strategies Rely on Project Management Software to Track Outreach and Ongoing Projects

Centralized marketing offices require project management software to track progress on multiple projects occurring in conjunction with departments across campus. Contacts at **University B** note that project management software is not effective if employees do not also receive training on project management procedures. The marketing director at **University C** plans to purchase either Focus or Emailvision to track press outreach. They currently use an Excel spreadsheet, but seek a more sophisticated tool with greater analytical capacities and designated marketing functions. Considerations to determine which software to select include:

The executive director of marketing at **University C** used institutional funds to purchase an iPad; she hopes to secure additional money to purchase tablets for each staff member. This will encourage them to consider different viewing platforms during content development and facilitate data sharing between staff members.

- **Cost:** If a vendor offers a significantly lower price the marketing director will select that product to conserve the marketing budget.
- **Staff Trials:** Staff offer input on each interface and its ease of use to avoid purchasing a tool staff will not integrate into their workflow.
- **Director Experience:** The director will select the software they are most familiar with if both vendors offer similar prices staff members do not express strong preference for either software.

Marketing Office Software and its Functions

Software	Functions	Institution
Microsoft SharePoint	Facilitate the sharing of information and web site templates between marketing office staff members and with departmental contacts	University A
Teamwork PM	Track progress on campus-wide marketing initiatives that involve staff in multiple offices with many deadlines	University B
SmugMug	Share marketing office's photos with the rest of the campus community for use on their web sites and print materials	University B
Ignite	File storage and large data transfers	University B
Cascading Hard Drive	Store the marketing office's photo archive (not all photos available to the entire campus community)	University B
Homegrown Content Management System	Update web site content; contacts recommend buying a product from an external vendor that receives regular software maintenance and updates	University B

4) Marketing Assessment

Data Collection

Marketing Offices Collaborate with Admissions Offices to Analyze Data from Google Analytics and Enrolled Student Surveys

Contacts at **University B** spend more time analyzing failures than successes; although they consider analytics of individual marketing efforts the ultimate measure of marketing success is the number of applicants and the level of philanthropy.

- Marketing offices collect data on digital media initiatives (e.g., social media campaigns and web site re-designs) through Google Analytics, which allows them to track the number of times a student views the institutional web site and the length of time they spend on each page. They also consider:
 - **Emails and Online Banner Campaigns:**
 - Open rates: Divide the number of emails recipients open by the total number of emails sent (excluding those with incorrect emails address)
 - Click through rates: Divide the number of times a viewer clicks an add by the number of times an advertisement appears
 - Heatmaps: A geographic representation of the locations of web site visitors and the number of viewers per location
 - **Social media:**
 - Number of likes: Number of times Facebook users “like” a post
 - Number of comments: Number of Facebook users who comment on a specific post

- Number of shares: Number of times Facebook users re-post a message or comment; number of time Twitter users re-tweet a tweet

- **Print:**

- pURL open rates: Number of pURLs accessed divided by the number of direct mailings sent
- Quick Response (QR) codes access: Number of QR codes accessed divided by the number posted

Prospective students who visit campus complete surveys at the end of their tour, as do enrolled students during the first semester of classes. Each of these surveys ask questions to understand not only how students and parents found out about the institution, but also whether their high school guidance counselor referenced any specific piece of marketing collateral during advising appointments. The director of marketing at **University D** collaborates with the director of admissions to track the impact of marketing initiatives on enrollment trends. Contacts note the tendency to change multiple strategies simultaneously (i.e., new content and new mediums) makes it difficult to isolate the impact of a specific change on the number of applications an institution receives.

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- What themes or content do integrated marketing methods address? What marketing mediums do they use to promote these messages?
- What emphasis do other institutions place on web development as a marketing strategy?
- What is the organizational structure for institution-wide marketing offices? How does the central office coordinate marketing initiatives across the institution?
- What the budget for the central marketing office? How do directors of marketing allocate these resources across different marketing mediums?
- What technology do integrated marketing initiatives require?
- What metrics do contacts consider to evaluate the success of integrated marketing campaigns? What is the impact of integrated marketing strategies on enrollment?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- Advisory Board's internal and online research libraries (www.eab.com)
- The Chronicle of Higher Education (<http://chronicle.com>)
- Institutional web sites
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed executive directors of marketing and public relations at public institutions.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total)	Classification
University A	Mid-Atlantic	8,000 / 8,700	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
University B	Northeast	5,800 / 6,400	Master's College and Universities (larger programs)
University C	Midwest	9,100 / 9,400	Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)
University D	Northeast	5,400 / 6,100	Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics