

**SUNY Potsdam  
Administrative Unit  
Assessment Summary Form**

**Administrative Unit:** College Communications

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**Assessment Year:** 2022-2023

**PURPOSE**

This annual assessment summary form provides the opportunity for units to follow-up on their assessment plans, track progress toward goals, and to highlight actions taken to improve processes and/or efficiencies in functioning that lead to outcomes that benefits students, staff, or the college. These could be process changes or improvements in efficiency, skill level of staff, opportunities for the college, or other aspects over which the unit has a certain amount of control.

**SECTION 1: ASSESSMENT PLAN FOLLOW-UP**

A key component of the continuous improvement assessment process is regularly following up on [your assessment plan](#). Please review your plan and select one-third of your unit goals, along with related desired outcomes and objectives to report on the progress made.

**Selected Goal**

Copy/Paste or enter the goal(s) from your unit plan that you wish to highlight and summarize.

Increase outreach to prospective students through targeted and strategic communications and marketing plans in an effort to increase applications.

**Desired Outcomes/Objectives**

Copy/Paste or enter the desired outcomes and objectives connected to your selected goal that you will be reporting on.

2A: Identify key outlets and methods for reaching target audiences; concentrate new efforts accordingly.

2B: Develop a multichannel marketing campaign that reaches target audiences in multiple platforms and spaces.

2C: Determine effectiveness of marketing campaign using key metrics.

**Related Targets/Measures**

Copy/Paste or enter the target desired outcomes and objectives connected to your selected goal that you will be reporting on.

2A/2B/2C: Track inquiries based on targeted campaign major areas. Target an increase of 5%, which can be seen in Slate reports and landing forms.

2A/2B/2C: Evaluate effectiveness of multichannel marketing campaigns by tracking key performance indicators such as click through rates (CTR), impressions, users on landing pages, time on site.

- Target an average click through rate for digital campaigns of 6%.

- Average time on marketing campaign landing page should meet or exceed 1:00.

**Describe the progress made toward the selected goal and the related desired outcomes and objectives. Be sure to include steps taken and any information/data collected and results.**

In the Fall of 2022, College Communications ran an integrated marketing campaign from October 1 through November 30. The campaign aimed to attract prospective students across multiple target areas, utilizing various channels to maximize reach and engagement.

Campaign Objectives:

1. Recruit students for Crane & arts related programs.
2. Target STEM majors offered at SUNY Potsdam.
3. Promote Teacher Education Programs offered at the College.
4. Drive enrollment for Online Graduate Programs.
5. Increase attendance at Admissions Events & highlight new initiatives (Open House, Visit, Free Application Week).

Campaign Execution:

The campaign employed a multichannel approach, leveraging diverse advertising channels and platforms to engage the target audience effectively. The following channels were utilized:

Social Media Ads:

- Facebook: Targeted ads were deployed on Facebook to reach a wide range of potential students based on demographics, interests and behavior.
- Instagram: Engaging visual content and targeted ads were deployed on Instagram to captivate and attract prospective students.
- TikTok: A select number of ads were experimented with on TikTok to explore new avenues for engagement.

Digital Ads:

- YouTube: Video ads were strategically placed on YouTube, targeting relevant audiences based on search history and preferences.
- Display: Display ads were featured across various websites and platforms to increase brand visibility and generate interest.
- Gmail: Ads were integrated into Gmail inboxes, reaching potential students directly and increasing campaign visibility.
- Search: Paid search ads were implemented to ensure visibility when prospective students conducted relevant searches.
- Discover: Ads were placed within Google Discover, delivering personalized content recommendations to potential students.

Television Ads:

- Television ads were broadcasted in Northern and Central NY and Vermont regions to reach a broader audience and generate awareness among potential students.

#### Traditional Advertising:

- Billboards: Strategically placed billboards showcased compelling campaign visuals, capturing attention and creating brand recall.
- Airports: Advertisements were displayed in key Syracuse airport to target individuals traveling to and from the region.
- Local FM Radio: Radio advertisements aired on local FM stations, capturing the attention of a diverse audience.
- Spotify Ads: Targeted audio ads were played on Spotify, reaching students through their preferred music streaming platform.
- Newspaper: Print advertisements were published in local newspapers to engage with the community and promote the campaign.

#### Landing Page Strategy & Slate Drip Campaigns:

The campaign directed users to landing pages specifically designed for each target area. These landing pages were built using Slate forms, which allowed for the efficient capture of inquiry data. The landing pages were optimized to provide relevant information and facilitate the enrollment process. In addition to the landing pages designed for each target area, College Communications implemented Slate email drip campaigns to nurture prospective students and encourage them to apply. The email drip campaigns were tailored to specific target audiences and featured engaging content, including success stories from current students, faculty spotlights, virtual campus tours, and information about scholarships and financial aid opportunities. The content aimed to build a sense of connection and excitement about joining the SUNY Potsdam community. Each email in the drip campaign included clear call-to-action buttons and links, directing prospective students to the application portal. Regular application reminders were incorporated into the email sequence to ensure that interested students had a timely and straightforward application process.

#### KPI Assessment for Fall 2022 Integrated Marketing Campaign:

##### Crane School of Music & The Arts Campaign:

- CTR for Digital Ads: 0.37%: The CTR for the Crane & The Arts campaign was significantly below the target of 6%. This indicates a need for improvement in ad targeting, creatives, or messaging to increase engagement and click-through rates.
- Time on Landing Page: 2:12: The average time spent on the landing page for Crane & the arts was well above the target of 1:00, indicating strong user engagement and interest in programs.
- Inquiries: The campaign successfully achieved a 13.6% increase in inquiries, surpassing the 5% target. This suggests effective marketing efforts in generating interest and engagement for Crane & The Arts.

##### STEM Majors Campaign:

- CTR for Digital Ads: 9.36%: The STEM Majors campaign achieved an excellent CTR, surpassing the 6% target. This indicates highly engaging and effective digital ads for this particular target audience.
- Time on Landing Page: 2:00: The average time spent on the landing page meets the target of 1:00, indicating strong interest and engagement among visitors.
- Inquiries: There was a decrease of 11.7% in inquiries from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023. Further analysis is required to understand the factors contributing to this decline and develop strategies to reverse the trend.

#### Teacher Education Campaign:

- CTR for Digital Ads: 14.29%: The Teacher Education campaign achieved a fantastic CTR, exceeding the 6% target. This indicates highly effective digital ads that resonated well with the target audience.
- Time on Landing Page: 1:01: The average time spent on the landing page meets the target of 1:00, indicating satisfactory engagement.
- Inquiries: There was a modest increase of 3.5% in inquiries, indicating a steady interest in teacher education programs.

#### Online Campaign:

- CTR for Digital Ads: 0.96%: The CTR for the Online Campaign was below the target of 6%. It is recommended to review and optimize the digital ads to improve engagement and click-through rates.
- Time on Site: 1:54: The average time spent on the website meets the target of 1:00, indicating satisfactory user engagement.
- Inquiries: The campaign achieved a 24.5% increase in inquiries from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, exceeding the target of a 5% increase. This indicates effective marketing efforts in generating interest and driving engagement for online programs.

#### **Based on the assessment data and information shared above, what planned actions were or will be taken as a result?**

The email drip campaigns supported the overall integrated marketing campaign by nurturing leads and guiding them towards the application stage. Personalized and segmented emails demonstrated higher open rates and click-through rates, indicating the importance of tailored communication in maintaining engagement. Email analytics and tracking allowed for continuous optimization of the drip campaigns, enabling the identification of effective content and adjusting strategies as needed.

Prospective students who engaged with the email drip campaigns exhibited higher conversion rates, demonstrating the impact of consistent and targeted communication in driving application submissions.

#### Lessons learned and improvements for future Crane / arts campaigns:

- Separate The Crane School of Music from other arts majors: The campaign highlights the importance of differentiating Crane, which has name recognition, from other arts-related majors. Separating these campaigns may allow for better targeting and messaging tailored to each audience segment. This was essentially done as a cost savings measure but could have hurt campaign performance.
- Marketplace Trends: Changes in marketplace trends could have contributed to the varying performance across campaigns. Regular monitoring and analysis of market dynamics can help identify trends and adjust marketing strategies accordingly.

#### Lessons learned and improvements for the future STEM / teacher education campaigns:

- Replicate Success of STEM Majors Campaign: The high CTR achieved in the STEM Majors campaign suggests successful targeting and messaging strategies. Analyze and replicate these strategies for other campaigns to improve engagement and performance.
- Optimize Teacher Education Campaign: While achieving a good CTR, there is room for improvement in generating inquiries. Assess the factors contributing to the modest increase and identify opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of the campaign in driving conversions.

Lessons learned and improvements for the future online programs campaigns:

- Digital Ad Optimization: Given the lower-than-desired CTR, we'll need to assess and refine the digital ads for future online campaigns. Experimenting with different ad formats, targeting strategies, and messaging could help us improve engagement and click-through rates.
- The significant increase of 24.5% in online graduate inquiries highlights the demand for online programs. We should be able to capitalize on this growth by developing tailored strategies to nurture and convert these leads into enrolled students.

Moving forward, leveraging Slate's email automation capabilities and continuously refining the email drip campaigns will contribute to improving conversion rates and optimizing the recruitment process for future integrated marketing campaigns.

## SECTION 2: ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Please use this space to share an example from this past year when you used assessment and data to plan and/or take action. Be sure to include any available information relating to the results and impact. Your example for this section does not need to be directly tied to your previously submitted administrative unit assessment plan.

In 2023, the Office of College Communications undertook a project to revamp the landing pages for undergraduate majors on the potsdam.edu website. The objective was to enhance the user experience for prospective students by providing more comprehensive information while streamlining navigation. This assessment evaluates the project's implementation and its effectiveness in achieving the outlined goals. Below are several key improvements made to the landing pages of each program site.

### **Program Learning Outcomes:**

The inclusion of detailed program learning outcomes on the landing pages is a commendable improvement. By clearly outlining the skills and knowledge students can expect to gain from each major, prospective students can make more informed decisions about their academic pursuits. This addition demonstrates the Office of College Communications' commitment to transparency and helping students align their goals with the programs offered.

### **Career Outlook:**

The incorporation of career outlook information, including mean annual wage and career growth projections from the US Department of Labor Statistics, is a valuable addition to the landing pages. Providing data-driven insights regarding potential career paths associated with each major empowers prospective students to make informed decisions about their academic and professional futures. This enhancement demonstrates a proactive approach by the Office of College Communications in addressing students' concerns about post-graduation employment.

### **Feature Stories:**

The inclusion of feature stories highlighting the outcomes of current students and recent graduates is a powerful way to showcase the success and impact of the programs offered. These stories provide real-world examples of how students have benefited from their education at Potsdam, thereby building confidence and trust among prospective students. This addition adds a personal touch to the landing pages, making them more engaging and relatable.

### **Streamlined User Experience:**

The goal to reduce the number of clicks required for prospective students to access relevant information is a significant improvement in user experience. By optimizing the navigation and organizing content effectively, the Office of College Communications has made it easier for users to find the information they need quickly. This streamlined approach increases the likelihood of prospective students staying on the website and exploring the various majors in more detail.

**Embedded Slate Form:**

The decision to embed a Slate form on each major page, allowing prospective students to request information directly, is a smart move. By distributing the request form across multiple pages, the Office of College Communications ensures a higher likelihood of capturing leads and engaging potential applicants. This approach simplifies the process for students and improves the efficiency of the admissions process.

**Featured Videos:**

The incorporation of featured videos showcasing current students or success stories from Potsdam adds a dynamic element to the landing pages. Videos can provide an immersive experience and foster a deeper connection with the institution. By showcasing real people and their achievements, these videos inspire prospective students and give them a glimpse of the vibrant community at Potsdam. Including videos enhances the overall appeal and engagement of the landing pages.

In evaluating website traffic data comparing May 2022 to May 2023, a significant increase in the average time spent on site has been observed, indicating a successful capture of users' attention. Notably, the landing page for Exercise Science witnessed a remarkable improvement, with the average time spent on site increasing from 55 seconds in 2022 to 1 minute and 29 seconds in 2023, representing an 61% increase over the previous year. It should be noted though that these changes to the program page listings have not been live for a full year.

These findings demonstrate the positive impact of the Office of College Communications' project to reformat the landing pages for undergraduate majors on the potsdam.edu website. By incorporating comprehensive information, such as program learning outcomes, career outlook data, feature stories, streamlined user experience, embedded Slate forms, and featured videos, users have been compelled to spend more time exploring the content.

The drastic increase in average time on site indicates that the revamped landing pages have successfully engaged prospective students and piqued their interest in the various undergraduate majors offered at Potsdam. This improved user engagement reflects the effectiveness of the project in capturing the attention and interest of website visitors.

The notable success seen in the Exercise Science landing page is a testament to the project's impact. The substantial increase in average time spent on site signifies that users found the provided information compelling and relevant, resulting in a deeper exploration of the program. This increase highlights the success of the project in creating more engaging and informative content for prospective students.

Overall, the Office of College Communications' project to reformat the landing pages for undergraduate majors has not only enhanced the user experience but has also demonstrated tangible results by increasing the average time spent on site. It should be noted though that these changes to the program page listings have not been live for a full year and will need to be reevaluated once it has been a year. By providing detailed program learning outcomes, career outlook data, feature stories, a streamlined user experience, embedded Slate forms, and featured videos, the landing pages have become more informative, engaging, and user-friendly. These enhancements demonstrate the Office of College Communications' dedication to providing prospective students with comprehensive and compelling information to make informed decisions about their academic journey. These improvements have effectively showcased the programs offered at Potsdam, fostering a deeper connection with prospective students and supporting their decision-making process.