

Response of Marketing/Communications Framing Team

1. What is the college's primary purpose given the current educational context?

Martin Methodist College is a liberal arts institution offering a student-centered, “high touch within a high tech” learning environment that values communication, critical thinking, and content of character. The College aims to support each student from the initial of admissions inquiry all the way to the completion of the degree and beyond. By providing instructional models, coaches and guides to synthesize information and analyze knowledge, Martin Methodist nurtures intellectual, spiritual, social and personal growth in each of its students, creating a family-style sense of community among students, faculty, staff, administration, trustees, alumni and friends in the community. The result is a campus that integrates academics, community service, faith, family and friendship.

2. What are the principal values that inform this sense of purpose?

The principal values of Martin Methodist College are:

- Student-centric service and nurture;
- Challenging, faith-informed academics;
- Servant leadership;
- Honor and trust;
- Family-like friendships with a committed level of care and concern for one another;
- “High touch within a “high tech” learning environment.

3. What are the key opportunities that the current context offers for the subject of your Framing Team?

Among the opportunities that the Integrated Marketing and Communication Framing Team see are:

- Highly effective and targeted marketing through the personnel and professional connections of alumni, UMC clergy, and friends on behalf of the College;
- Coordinated efforts of talented, creative staff who already are in place in offices and programs across campus to create major marketing events;
- Highly focused use of media across the board: print, broadcast, digital, and on-line in the areas of newspaper, radio, television, web-based internet and social networking;

- Integrated marketing events to involve prospective students and local residents in the Martin Methodist experience;
- New web-based public relations, such as the College's ever-improving website, the new RedHawk athletic website, Facebook page(s) and the new campus photo website.
- More efficient structure for event promotion and event management across campus.

4. What are the key challenges that will be encountered as the college seeks to respond to the opportunities for the subject of your Framing Team?

- Ineffective internal communications on campus;
- Monetary limitations;
- Lack of manpower to master effective marketing/communications tasks;
- Lack of a presence/identity in community, region;
- Geographic distance from major media markets;
- Lack of timely, comprehensive planning that allows maximum marketing impact across campus offices.

5. Methodology of Engaging Identified Key Opportunities and Overcoming Key Challenges.

Currently, we probably have up to a dozen people doing some fashion of marketing and communication with varying degrees of success and effectiveness. That "do-it-yourself" style of PR might have worked when there were 400 students, but with 1,100 it becomes mandatory to have some structure.

Ideally there would be a marketing/communications office in which all of these individuals work side-by-side, strategically planning how they are going to announce/present/promote/execute/assess each marketing/communications initiative. In a perfect world, this office would include the director of communications (who also handles the cultural events series), the campus photographer/videographer, the college website coordinator/webmaster, the sports information director, director of sports marketing, the coordinator of the new photo archives website, and the person in charge of admissions marketing, for starters. But no world is ideal, and the trick is to find a strategy that still brings all those individuals together on a routine basis.

To that group I would also add a representative from the Center for Church Leadership, the alumni office, the faculty, and the student newspaper – keeping in mind that this task force will be charged with communicating across our campus as effectively as we want to communicate with our off-campus constituencies.

That group should be convened as soon as the *Martin 2020* plan is approved, if not sooner. It should hold a meeting at least once a month, in some cases that more often than that.

6. What are the broad goals that should be established for the decade?

Besides creating this standing Marketing/Communications Task Force, there will need to be more dollars allotted to the area of marketing. No matter what projects this group chooses to do, it will require far more spending than what is currently allotted. One of the benefits of this “team approach” is that several offices currently have funds for communications; it’s possible that, with good strategic planning well in advance of an event or a series of activities, the offices involved can each contribute funds to make a greater impact than what each could do separately.

Along with that funding, there will no doubt need to be additional staff members in the area of marketing and communications during the course of the *Martin 2020 Plan*. In fact, a new entry level person or two at the outset of the *2020 Plan* period will probably be a must.

7. What are the financial implications of engaging the goals you are recommending?

See “Conclusions” section.

Conclusions

- **An integrated marketing task force should be created to meet regularly.**
As discussed in question 5, the college has several people doing marketing, largely independently of each other. The Framing Team recommends that a standing integrated marketing task force be created that would meet at least monthly, if not more often, to examine the calendar for: (a) upcoming events to promote/advertise; (b) opportunities to combine resources for larger event marketing involving several campus offices/programs; and (c) continually evaluate and implement effective communications/marketing strategies to both external constituencies and internal, campus wide audiences.

Among the existing positions that should be included in this task force would be:

- Director of Communications (also in charge of cultural events)
- Director of Admissions
- Director of Alumni
- Coordinator of college website
- Director of Athletics Operations (in charge of athletics marketing)
- Sports Information Director (in charge of athletics website)
- Campus photographer/videographer
- Coordinator of photo archives website
- Representative of Turner Center for Church Leadership

- Representative of the faculty
- Student editor of the RedHawk Reporter

With these areas represented and communicating on a regular basis, the overall marketing of the college and individual events and announcements should greatly benefit. More importantly, the marketing message would be consistent, and the college's identity and mission would be strategically advanced at every available opportunity.

- **The position of Director of Marketing should be created.**

When the college was significantly smaller in enrollment and programming, a single position to handle all public relations/publications/marketing was adequate. Today, however, the reach of the college has expanded to the point that coordinating the marketing of Martin Methodist College has become a full-time task. Granted, there is much connection and coordinating that exists in the areas of communications and marketing, but they are, at the core, separate tasks with independent skill sets.

The Director of Marketing would oversee the proposed integrated marketing task force, mentioned above, and bring new strategies to the table to advance the college in its market recognition and identity. Advertising projects in the areas of alumni and cultural events, academic activities, and institutional branding would be handled directly by the Director of Marketing, in coordination with the task force; this person would also work closely with athletics and admissions in advertising in those areas.

The Director of Marketing would report to the Vice President of Institutional Advancement.

- **Several existing positions related to marketing/communications should become part of the Advancement Office.**

Currently the Director of Communications reports to the Vice President of Institutional Advancement, and the Framing Team recommends that the positions of Campus Photographer/Videographer and Coordinator of the new photo archive website also be part of the Advancement Office. They are key functions in the marketing and communications efforts of the college and would function more effectively under Advancement.

- **The position of Campus Events Manager should be established.**

The Framing Team determined that one of the most vexing challenges related to campus communications/marketing is the growing number of events and activities on campus and beyond. While we have a master calendar, it was agreed that the effectiveness of that particular calendar application is limited; and while the actual time and venue might be open on the calendar, the needed resources (i.e. technology, tables/chairs, food, labor) might already be in conflict with events or activities earlier and later in the day.

The Campus Events Manager would be responsible for (a) “logistically” scheduling events for the college, (b) executing contracts/grant proposals related to visiting artists, and (c) serving as “day of” manager for events, as needed (i.e. hosting guests lecturers/artists, managing the box office and stage/house, coordinating with A/V, food, physical plant personnel).

This position would report to the Vice President for Finance and Administration.

- **Increased funding for marketing will be required to effectively advance the institution and its events/activities.**

In addition to the salaries of the proposed positions of Director of Marketing and Campus Events Manager, the recommendations of the Framing Team will require an increase in funds for marketing. Outside of admissions, a fair estimate of current funds specifically allotted to marketing would be in the neighborhood of \$20,000-\$25,000, which covers the promotion of all cultural events, institutional brand marketing, and athletics. When a single full-page ad in the United Methodist Reporter’s higher education ad costs \$7,500, a promotions opportunity with the Nashville Predators or Tennessee Titans can reach \$10,000 and above, and an advertising package in the Nashville or Huntsville television markets can equal those amounts, this level of funding has its limitations in marketing an entire campus for a full academic year.

Even doubling that amount to \$50,000, with the coordination of a marketing director and the integrated task force, would make an appreciable improvement, especially considering that this amount does not include admissions-related expenses currently being budgeted. During a 12-month period, that would still only be a little less than \$4,200 per month – not an outrageous level of marketing funding for a vital liberal arts college with an enrollment of 1,100.

(These numbers are certainly more of a “guesstimate” than would be required for serious budget discussions.)