Annual Assessment Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the final step of the AES assessment process, each AES unit is required to submit an Executive Summary. The Executive Summary is a short document which provides an overview of the Unit, and the overall assessment process, highlights key findings and provides recommendation and next steps.

Unit name: **Marketing and Communications**   Assessment year: __**2019-20**_____

Mission

The Marketing and Communications Department (M&C) develops and implements strategies supporting the achievement of LaGuardia's mission and goals for student recruitment, enrollment, education, retention and graduation. M&C provides direction, expertise and oversight of marketing and communications to the College community and external audiences; assures adherence to LaGuardia's brand messaging and visual identity; and ensures communications are effective and efficient.

Assessment results by goal and objectives

Goal 1: Develop and implement marketing and communications strategies that increase the number of prospective and current students.

Supporting Strategic plan goal:

1. Build Student Access and Success
   a. Develop new enrollment strategies (off-sites, iGen and older students) and more fluid connections from ACE to credit, and credit to ACE

Objective/outcome 1.1

Work cross divisionally to increase percentage of prospective and current students that are recruited, apply and enroll at LaGuardia.

Measures
- Print materials – measure via quantity distributed by Admissions and contact cards returned.
- Social media
  i. Organic - measure impact through follower growth and engagement rate
  ii Paid - measure through unique clicks, cost per click and click through rate
- Website – measure via unique pageviews, time spent on page and bounce rate

Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps
Results
- Print –
  Admissions estimates they distributed 4500 pieces July 1- Dec. 31 2019. Total applications were up for Fall 2020 vs Fall 2019.
- Social Media -- Organic

A substantial increase in new followers across three social platforms and an increase in engagement rates.

- Social Media - Paid
Paid social media campaigns was new in 2019-2020, which brought thousands of visitors to the website.

See Appendix A - Apps & Social for details.

- Website
See Goal 3, Objective 1 &
Appendix B: Website for details.

Analysis recommendations and next steps

- Since applications we're slightly up in 19/20 from 18/19 but enrollments down, one can assume COVID-19 may have impacted student's intention to attend college, either because of illness, uncertainty or financial hardship.

Future initiatives include:
- Print -- expand materials in other languages.
- Social – more consistent monthly social media reports are being generated (as of January 2020) which allow for ongoing assessment and immediate improvement.

Goal 2: Support the Momentum goal of increasing the percentage of full-time freshmen students completing 30 credits in their first year.

Supporting Strategic plan goal:
1. Build Student Access and Success
    f. Build graduation and transfer success, advancing the 30-credit initiative.

Objective/outcome 2.1
Work cross divisionally on initiative designed to increase percentage of new students and current students who enroll for 15 credits in the fall and complete 30 credits in June.

Measures
- Compare rates of emails included in 2018-2019 Strategic Plan for 30-credit initiative.

Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps
- N/A -- emails sent in 2020 deployed through Hobson's were not successfully delivered as their parent company email server was blacklisted during this campaign.
- This is no longer a College communications priority, given the PAR (Proactive Advisement & Registration) for Continuing Students and NSPAR (New Student Proactive Advisement & Registration) initiatives.

Goal 3: Improve website and keep content relevant, current, easy to find, easy to understand and visually compelling to targeted prospective and current students.

Objective/outcome 3.1
Increase in LaGuardia website unique page views, average time spent on pages and reduction in bounce rate

Measures
- Measure via unique pageviews, time spent on page and bounce rate

Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps

Results
- Website
laguardia.edu changed significantly with a new homepage design. Current students now get content via email and My LaGuardia, and faculty and staff access key pages and services via the My LaGuardia Portal rather than the website, so a clean comparison is not possible.

See Appendix B: Website for details.

Recommendations and next steps
- Although a clean comparison was not possible due to significant changes between content that shifted from website to portals, the tremendous drop in Bounce Rate on the website indicates that these changes were beneficial.

Objective/outcome 3.2
Increase in number of visitors to key student-facing landing pages, e.g., Admissions, Academics and Paying for College

Measures
- Measure via unique pageviews, time spent on page and bounce rate

Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps etc.
Results
- There was an increase in the Admissions pageviews (13%) and a drop in Academic (-24%) and Paying for College (-23%) compared to 2018-19. Bounce rates were similar in both year and average time spent on page improved compared to 2018-19

See Appendix B: Website for details.

Recommendations and next steps
- Similar to other website data, there was a drop in total pageviews but not in other key metrics; indicating that prior years' total pageviews were inflated by current faculty/staff.
- These pages are seeing an increase in time spent on page and a drop-in bounce which is positive.

- As social media advertising expands; we will embed tracking pixels to monitor real prospect navigation and action on our website.

Overall summary

- **Goal 1:** **Develop and implement marketing and communications strategies that increase the number of prospective and current students.**

  Having more applications, which we're up slightly, usually would lead to more students, but instead enrollments were down. We assume COVID-19 may have impacted student's intention to attend college, either because of illness, uncertainty or financial hardship, which also reflects the trend for community colleges within CUNY and nationwide.

  For 2020-21, in addition to enhanced social media, we will be adding targeted paid advertisements to increase prospective students going into the recruitment funnel. We will support continuing student retention through continued refinement and implementation of communications plan.

- **Goal 2:** **Support the Momentum goal of increasing the percentage of full-time freshmen students completing 30 credits in their first year.**

  The evaluation of this program was not possible due to unforeseen technical issues with the vendor used to communicate with students.

  For 2020-21, the communications campaign created for 30 Credit Momentum is not a priority as a standalone initiative (although student persistence messages are part of continuing students' communications).

- **Goal 3: Improve website and keep content relevant, current, easy to find, easy to understand and visually compelling to targeted prospective and current students.**

  The College shifted much of the content from the external facing website to internal facing portal, which prevented a clean comparison to past performance. Given that, the tremendous drop in Bounce Rate (the percentage of visitors who enter the site and then leave rather than continuing to view other pages within the same site) on the website indicates that these changes were beneficial.

  For 2020-21, we will have cleaner comparison numbers vs. the previous year and see the effect on rates [Unique pageviews (maintain); average time (increase); bounce rate (decrease)] of new designs and layout implemented during the year.

  We will also be focusing on increasing student engagement through social media.

Appendices
- MC AES Annual Assessment Plan_2019-20 appendices:
  Appendix A - Apps & Social and Appendix B - Website