

# 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: 2020-21

### The unit's 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**

Increase number of prospects and applicants through targeted and strategic communications and advertising plans.

#### **Measures**

- Contact Cards received
- Total applicants
- Paid social media Click Through Rate (CTR)
- Related website pages unique page views, time spent on page, bounce rate
- Pipeline student email open/click rates

#### **Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps**

##### Results

- No contact cards (no in-person activities)
- Total applicants increased by 210 over prior year;
- July '20-May '21 Stats:
  - Year avg. 1.42% CTR on paid social ads
  - 42,664 unique pageviews
  - 1 minute 16 seconds average time spent on page
  - Bounce rate 10.14%

Analysis recommendations and next steps

- The numbers were only slightly increased - many challenges faced by the pandemic have potentially hindered that lift.
- Continue to maintain strong engagement through paid advertising and a low bounce rate.

Future initiatives include:

- Deploy clone pages for ad campaigns to ensure results are tracked separately.

**Objective/outcome 1.2**

Support continuing student retention through continued refinement and implementation of communications plan.

**Measures**

- Email open rates

**Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps**

Results

- Continuing student emails regarding enrollment and retention averaged 17.87% Open Rate.

Analysis recommendations and next steps

- Continuing student email open rates are trending down for targeted communications. Students have become increasingly difficult to communicate with and that challenge increased in the pandemic. We are hopeful that the new texting service will supplement email efforts.

Future initiatives include:

- New texting software was recently acquired that should help boost reach for student messages. That software will provide analytics that can be tracked in addition to the email open rates.

**Goal 2: Increase student engagement through social media.**

**Supporting Strategic plan goal: 3. Enrich the Student Experience**

- a. Advance communication and interaction, linking students with faculty and administrators and focusing on students as active agents of their own education

**Objective/outcome 2.1**

Increase social media engagement rates.

**Measures**

- Engagement rate. (Measurement achieved dividing the number of channel specific interactions related to content by reach).

## Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps

### Results

- Average engagement rate July 2020 thru May 2021 was:  
IG = 8.7% (benchmark = 4.73%)  
FB = 3.66% (benchmark = 4.76%)  
Tw = 2.36% (benchmark = 0.90%)

### Analysis recommendations and next steps

- Instagram and Twitter are exceeding benchmarks. Facebook is lagging which may be a result in the decline of international students' attendance due to the pandemic (international students are one of the primary audiences on the platform). The content strategy for FB should be reviewed and updated.

### Future initiatives include:

- Continuously improve social media engagement strategy.

## **Goal 3: Improve website by keeping content relevant and current through enhanced user experience.**

### **Supporting Strategic plan goal: 3. Enrich the Student Experience**

- a. Advance communication and interaction, linking students with faculty and administrators and focusing on students as active agents of their own education

### **Objective/outcome 3.1**

Maintain benchmark number of annual unique visitors, increase average time on page, and maintain bounce rate for pages designed for prospective students (Admissions section and campaign landing pages).

### **Measures**

- Unique pageviews (maintain); average time (increase); bounce rate (decrease)

## **Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps**

### Results

- Project on hold as full website redesign is underway

### Analysis recommendations and next steps

- In fall 2020 the majors page redesign was put on hold in favor of a total website redesign.

### Future initiatives include:

- This project extends to June 2023 and will include new pages for the academic majors.

### **Objective/outcome 3.2**

Maintain benchmark number of annual unique visitors, increase average time on page, and reduce bounce rate for pages designed for current students.

## **Measures**

- Unique pageviews (maintain); average time (increase); bounce rate (decrease)

## **Overview of findings, recommendations and next steps**

### Results

- All Student Affairs pages have been converted.  
July '20-May '21 Stats:  
2,027,587 unique pageviews on site  
2 minutes 11 sec. avg. time spent on pages  
16.78% bounce rate

### Analysis recommendations and next steps

- Continue to monitor page metrics and maintain content.

## **Overall summary**

Throughout 2020-2021 enrollment marketing activities were hindered by the pandemic—particularly by eliminating in-person recruitment and big shifts in trends regarding people seeking to go to college. As a result, there were only minor outcomes related to Marketing & Communications' goal of increasing applications.

The overall vision and goals for Marketing & Communications will remain consistent, but many tactics may shift to adapt to current trends. The promising lift in digital engagement and low bounce rate indicate that efforts may need to shift to increase electronic communications to external audiences. Conversely, continuing student email open rates decreased as a lack of engagement with the college was experienced. Additional methods for communicating with this population are being explored and more emphasis is being placed on social media as a means to communicate with existing audiences. This is also reflected in the strong engagement rates on all platforms.