District Outreach and Marketing Committee Report and Plan

April 27, 2012

This Committee is charged with addressing the DSP Goal 6.1 Enhance the District’s value and image in the communities, and with the objective set out in 6.1.1: Develop a comprehensive district marketing and outreach plan, coordinated with those of the colleges, to raise the communities’ awareness of education and training services.

Given that the District and its Divisions, particularly the Colleges, have undergone years of budget cutbacks, which have resulted in class cutbacks and more students seeking classes than available seats, the traditional outreach and recruitment efforts to bolster enrollment were not deemed appropriate at this time.

Given that CHC has only a part-time public relations and marketing person, SBVC has one full-time person with no assistance, and the District has only a part-time person, the emphasis from those staff has been on public relations and media information rather than on marketing. No marketing plans exist at either college or for the district because the colleges are not seeking to increase their enrollment.

The Committee, in determining the plan’s construction, felt it necessary to consider the following stakeholders, whose knowledge or lack of knowledge regarding the District and its Divisions needed to be considered:

* Current students
* Current faculty, staff and administrators
* Potential students
* The business community
* The general community
* Our current partners

The Committee gathered baseline information regarding the views of students on the financial value of and customer service aspects of their attendance at the colleges. The survey was sent to the students which garnered a good response.

The Committee attempted to gather information from the business community regarding their knowledge of the various divisions and their views of them. They also tried to gather information from the business community and partners of the colleges and EDCT regarding their views of skills needed by students who complete training or a degree at either college or the EDCT. Surveys were designed to be sent to employers through the Workforce Investment Board, initially with their agreement. However, they decided not to disseminate the surveys, and responses to the surveys sent to college and EDCT partners garnered negligible results.

However, based on the information received, the Committee recommends the following:

* The District:
* Ask the Community:

The Chancellor, in conjunction with the college presidents and the EDCT executive director and GM of KVCR, after promotion through the media and on social media, should consider visiting at least one service club or chamber organization in each community in the district service area per year on a Listening Tour and ask those present specific questions along the lines set out below and gather responses to get a sense of how the communities view the district and its divisions.

* What are the biggest challenges and opportunities facing the IE?
* What role should the SBCCD play in addressing the economic priorities in the community?
* What actions would the audience like to see the SBCCD take to respond to the most immediate needs of the community – within our missions?

The Chancellor should participate in KVCR talk shows and open up the conversation to listeners and perhaps use KVCR’s Education Today to highlight successes and events.

The Chancellor and the college presidents, KVCR GM and EDCT ED should create a Leadership Roundtable as a radio call-in show through KVCR FM to showcase issues of importance to the SBCCD.

The District should host an annual community event – potentially rotating through both campuses – again to solicit input and gauge the views of the community regarding the services being rendered by the SBCCD divisions – and perhaps allowing the divisions to showcase their successes so the community can learn more about what we do.

At each event, distribute a short (no more than 3-5 questions) survey asking what the attendees know about each division and then distribute the same survey afterwards to document whether the sessions are useful.

* The Board should consider hosting one Board meeting per year on each campus and notifying the surrounding community of the upcoming event.
* Media Communication:

The District should continue to communicate regularly with the media through the dissemination of media releases regarding the events that involve the Chancellor and the Board or both colleges, and assist with the dissemination of those involving the EDCT. Newspaper columns and media stories are great ways to focus community views on the positive and on the biggest challenges facing the community colleges.

The District should also continue to and expand on its use of social media to get the word out about the various successes at the District and its divisions.

Given the budget issues, the District should weigh whether or not to disseminate the Community Newsletter or an Annual Report, and perhaps should consider working in conjunction with the Foundations to reach donors, politicians, and others of impact in the community.

* Internal and External Information:

Consider creating a master calendar of events happening district-wide that is easily available on the District homepage. Consider a daily email from the District highlighting that day’s or week’s activities of interest.

* EDCT:

The survey responses made it clear that the EDCT is an unknown quantity in the community and throughout the District community – at least as the EDCT. There was some knowledge of the PDC, but a great deal of confusion over the roles and potential conflicts between those served by the PDC (now EDCT) and the students served by the Colleges. The committee recommends the following:

* Development of a new, comprehensive website for the EDCT linked to the SBCCD site. This is already in the works and should be completed within the next 60 days. EDCT is to be acknowledged for undertaking this huge process, since it was not a matter of simply a redesign, but a whole new site, encompassing all the various aspects of the EDCT.
* Continue a quarterly newsletter distributed within the District at least, but only one or two pages, containing the most recent news and continuing to clarify the role of the EDCT. The EDCT has a very extensive partners list, and email distribution of the newsletter to that list would also be encouraged.
* EDCT should also continue their current practice of media release distribution of upcoming programs and events, and post those on their new website and the district website as well.
* EDCT should work with the Community Outreach DSP Committee (6.2)
* Colleges

The Student Survey revealed a clear need for Customer Service training – across the board – at both campuses. Current students can be the best marketers for the colleges, and the current lack of a customer-centric service attitude on campus was reflected in their responses to whether the colleges were customer-friendly.

* The Committee would recommend a bi-annual training of no more than two hours per session – well delivered, but mandatory for everyone, if possible including adjuncts. There were particular concerns raised about student services offices – perhaps because they deliver more bad news, are more crowded, are a point of first contact, and are short staffed due to budget cuts. A tone of customer value needs to be set.

The surveys of partners and business owners indicated that they would really like to see students’ skills in customer service and other soft skills improved. Given the particular demands of curriculum in the academic programs, the committee is not sure if or how that can be accomplished. However, the committee would encourage career centers and transfer centers and others who work with the students directly to consider offering workshops that address these issues – perhaps even offering certificates that indicate successful completion of the workshops.

The Committee also would like to encourage the Colleges to continue to disseminate media releases about the various successes and events at each campus so that the community can see how its tax dollars are being spent and might attend the events in hopes of seeing the students in action. The use of social media to support the dissemination of information regarding the students is encouraged. The more releases sent out and posted on the college websites, the better.

* KVCR

KVCR needs to clarify why it does not show every SBVC athletic event – not just to its viewers and listeners but to the athletics department at SBVC.

KVCR should continue to disseminate good news to its audience about the District and its successes.

KVCR should continue to find ways to work with the faculty at both campuses, such as providing the list of upcoming programs that might be of interest to faculty as curriculum enhancements.

KVCR should work with the Chancellor and the other administrators of the District and its Divisions as set out above.

* Message Deck

The Committee has decided that a message deck, while potentially useful, is not a priority at this time, since it must be updated regularly and is used by very few people. Those currently available at SBVC and CHC were created in 2008 by outside PR agencies at substantial expense. It is not a priority to do again at this time.

Thank you,

Committee Members:

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