Recommendation #12

Clackamas Conduct Formal Market Research to Determine Clackamas’ Strongest Competition Related to Curriculum, and Adjusts Offerings to Compete More Effectively

The Charge: Recommendation #12

Vision: Develop a comprehensive, data-driven marketing research plan, supported by solid market research

Rationale: A comprehensive series of data gathering activities will support this action plan. CCC’s broad selection of programs serves a wide variety of students who are diverse in their academic and personal goals, demographic and psychographic characteristics, and their geographic location within CCC’s service region. To support increased enrollments, CCC must generate greater awareness of programs among these populations, connect CCC’s offerings to potential students’ wants and needs, encourage these individuals to take action (i.e. enroll at CCC), and ensure that CCC’s programs and services continue to be relevant to the needs of the communities it serves. By understanding its strengths and weaknesses relative to competing education providers, CCC will be able to compete for new student enrollments more effectively. Because CCC has limited marketing resources to reach potential students, this data-driven strategy will help CCC’s focus marketing efforts on the right target populations, generating the most enrollments/awareness for the dollars expended. To inform future marketing activities, outcomes of these marketing activities will be measured and evaluated.

A two-phased marketing research plan is recommended:

Phase 1: Short term (Summer - Fall 2008)
CCC will market to traditional, first time in college students who desire an AAOT or transfer degree. Departments serving other student population such as ESL, Professional/Technical, Adult Education, and Community Education will be encouraged to increase outreach efforts to grow enrollments in these areas, as well. These populations can be easily identified and they are the most cost effective populations to reach in the short time available before the start of the Fall 2008 term.

Phase 2: Medium - Long Term (Fall 2008 – Winter 2010)
Beginning in the fall of 2008, CCC will lay the foundation for a comprehensive, data-driven marketing plan, supported by solid market research. Market research will help us better understand the needs and characteristics of various student populations and how to best reach them, the needs and perceptions of businesses and the community, macro trends that may affect future enrollment and retention efforts, and our competitive position in the marketplace compared to other education providers. To the extent that time, human resources, and economic resources permit:

- Demographic data should be gathered on the student populations who currently participate in CCC’s various programs. This data will allow us create a demographic profile of a “typical student” for each program. These profiles will allow us to focus our marketing efforts on populations of potential students that best match the “typical” profiles of current CCC students in each program “segment”. Demographic data for CCC’s service area should also be gathered.

- Psychographic research should be conducted with current students to better understand the attitudinal and perceptual factors that influence their thinking about CCC and competing education providers. Similar research should also be conducted with non-CCC students. This
information will provide insights into ways that CCC can improve its competitive position in the education marketplace and craft marketing messages that resonate with potential students.

- An environmental scan should be conducted to capture social, economic, and other macro trends that might influence enrollment at CCC.

- A thorough competitive analysis should be conducted. CCC operates in an environment that includes a variety of direct and indirect competitors which actively compete with CCC for future students. CCC must better understand its strengths and weaknesses (programs, services, and community perceptions) compared to these competitors, if it is to be successful in competing for new student enrollments from a shared, regional population of potential students.

- A needs/gap analysis should be conducted with business and community stakeholders to ensure that CCC is meeting the needs of business, industry, and community within its service area. A concurrent review of trends and forecasts relevant to business and community needs should be conducted as well. This information will allow CCC to improve its competitive position in the marketplace by making changes that are needed to be responsive to market needs both now and in the future.

- Finally, CCC should evaluate the effectiveness of past and present marketing efforts, identifying specific successful and unsuccessful elements and strategies.

This information will be used to create a SWOT analysis that will identify CCC’s strengths and weaknesses (from a marketing perspective), as well as market-based opportunities and threats. Analysis of this information will drive the creation of a marketing strategy that will permit us to capitalize on our strengths, exploit market opportunities, minimize/address our weaknesses within the market, and deflect/neutralize outside, marketplace threats.

Current data will be used whenever feasible. However, a modest budget for research may be needed once a survey of existing data has been compiled and we know what data must still be gathered to support the SWOT analysis.

Specific measurements for anticipated outcomes (increased awareness, applications, retention) will be generated after student segments have been identified and a marketing strategy has been created, and a budget has been established.
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July ‘08
- Demographic Data
  - Evaluate existing data to develop profiles of target student populations (market segments)
  - Gather community demographic data

Summer / Fall ‘08
- Needs/Gap Analysis: Gather regional job market data (trends, current & future needs)
- Develop strategy to gather psychographic data for targeted market segments
- Implement short-term strategies to:
  - Increase enrollments of degree seeking AAOT and transfer students
  - Increase enrollments of ESL, Professional/Technical, Adult Education, and Community Education students

Winter / Spring ‘09
- Conduct SWOT analysis for CCC & its service region
  - Identify and evaluate competing providers and programs
  - Identify strategies to retain existing students in ESL, Protech, Adult Ed, and Community Ed, by converting them to degree seeking
  - Complete environmental scan
- Develop marketing plan reflecting SWOT – driven marketing recommendations, enrollment goals, and an on-going evaluation strategy

Summer ‘09
- Launch Knowledge Network
  - Leverage the Knowledge Network to involve the broader community of CCC stakeholders in marketing related efforts

Fall ‘09 / Winter ‘10
- Implement the marketing plan
- Evaluate results that can be attributed to specific marketing strategies