I. Overview
Marketing and Recruitment Task Force discussions revolved primarily around what we could and should be doing internally, rather than externally, to improve our ability to recruit, accept and enroll a larger number of students. The timing of this task force was awkward, in that both our Marketing and our Enrollment Services departments have already initiated major efforts this academic year to recruit in a larger way and have expanded their target markets. The task force, after hearing about these efforts, decided our scope would not evaluate those activities.

a) Task Force Charge
“This task force will explore issues related to expanding USCA’s marketing and recruitment efforts to attract new students and tell the University’s story. Examples of areas to explore could include, but are not limited to: developing key messages regarding areas of excellence for each academic and non-academic department; opportunities for academic and non-academic departments to more fully participate in marketing and recruitment; and opportunities for growth and recruitment with new populations (veteran/military students, adult students, international students, honor students, Hispanic students, Asian students, etc.)”

b) Membership of the Task Force (alphabetical order by group)

**Staff**
- Maria Ansastasiou
  - Student Life and Services
- Christina Berkshire
  - Marketing & Community Relations
- Sandra Besley
  - Business and Financial Services
- Randy Duckett
  - Enrollment Services
- Judith Goodwin
  - Advancement
- Brian Hand
  - Sports Information
- Andrew Hendrix
  - Enrollment Services
- Patti McGrath
  - Marketing & Community Relations
- Angel Miano
  - Student Life & Services
- Gary Senn
  - Ruth Patrick Science Education Center
- Angel Miano
  - Student Life & Services
- Deri Wills
  - Housing

**Faculty**
- Jack Benjamin
  - Fine & Performing Arts
- Ed Callen
  - Communications
- Peggy Elliott, Chair

**Students**
- Phylesha Hiers
- Joseph R. Miller
- Crystal Edwards
c) Meeting Schedule / Timeline
1/25  General discussion of the charge and the university’s challenges
2/1   Report on new activities in Marketing; discussion of perceptions of
      marketing
2/8   Report on new efforts in Admissions activity; discussion of challenges
2/20  Report on admissions data being prepared about aspirant peer institutions,
      discussion of Noel Levitz data as it applies to USCA’s situation.
      Determination of major points to work on for final report.
3/6   Overview of aspirant institutions, individuals assumed responsibility to scan
      websites of aspirant institutions to learn about their niche, marketing and
      other important information.
3/21  Aspirant reports received

Brief Overview of Issues Discussed
No “culture of recruitment” – We all know certain great things about our work and
our campus, but we, especially faculty, are loathe to openly recruit because “we have
a department for that.” One example given in our meeting was a faculty member
who agreed with a prospect that he/she should go to another university, and the
department head could not then try to change the recruit’s mind without demeaning
the professor in front of the prospect. Newsletters are good, but do not involve
people to decide to help recruit and enroll students. We need keener awareness and
involvement.
Little Branding Cohesion – Print materials and posters, Facebook pages and
groups, and many other forms of communication on campus seem to be
disconnected from the hub (marketing department) and are even, in some instances,
inappropriate quality for a university. We need a system and policy to coordinate
our external messages.
Lack of Visibility – USC Aiken is not well known or understood in the state or
region. The campus is isolated from main traffic arteries and it is unclear where to
enter the campus. Parking lots obscure most buildings, and despite recent
improvements, visitors and first-timers still have trouble knowing where to park
and finding their way around. The historic and newly renovated Pickens-Salley
House is tucked away in a corner, when it should be our frontispiece. We hear that a
new entrance is planned that would bring visitors into the campus from 118 and
allow visitors to see the Pickens Salley House as a prominent feature of the campus,
and agree that this would be an excellent selling point. If you visit any of our sister
campuses, you will find a beautiful and identifiable entrance.
Lost Opportunities for Marketing with non-academic forces on campus – The
Ruth Patrick Science Education Center had 90,000 visits last year. None of those
elementary and middle school students left with any information about USC Aiken,
not even a pencil. No campus materials are available to the public attending events
at the Convocation Center. The Etherredge Center is hard to find if you don’t already
know where it is, and university markings do not appear on all of its promotions.
Student housing needs to fill beds, especially in the summer, and needs traditional
students and camps or meetings to do so. All of these are untapped opportunities to reach potential students.

**Evolving “Institutional Niche”** – We need further development and understanding of our niche. Once this is clearly defined, further target marketing opportunities will be apparent. Our niche is still being defined by science professors who are beginning to publicize student research, by Student Life leaders surveying for examples of common memories, and by every department that is seriously trying to upgrade its message and responsiveness. It is being defined by our adoption of an equine management program and our Honors programs. We land on three factors to begin: liberal arts and service learning in an equestrian community. The Marketing & Recruitment Task Force feels we need deeper discussions about what these mean and further definition of more niche specialties to fully arm ourselves to compete.

**II. Relevant Factors**

**a) Data and information examined along with conclusions drawn**

**1. Current Situation**

Activity in both marketing and recruitment is at a higher level and faster pace than ever seen on this campus. Both are responding to the opportunities for growth among populations of equine, honors, ex-military, and other new categories of students.

Enrollment Services has expanded staff to include a person dedicated to Atlanta and central Georgia; one of our admissions counselors is assigned to the Greenville/Spartanburg area, another to central South Carolina, and one to Charleston and the PeeDee. Augusta and neighboring areas of Georgia are also covered. The department has also initiated a special day for high school honors students and other activities to reach deeper for students who will thrive in our environment.

The Marketing Department has developed television commercials, a new video for recruitment, and advertising (primarily billboard) to expand USCA’s recognition in the Augusta and North Augusta areas and in other states with heavy equine-interest regions. We learned that marketing and enrollment services share information regularly and are budgeted together.

Key elements of the current marketing and recruitment program are:

**Theme**

“Choose ___(quality, subject matter or result)___. Choose University of South Carolina Aiken.” Examples of quality include “community service,” or “undergraduate research.” Examples of subject matter are “exercise and sports science” or “business.”

**Expenditures**

Billboards and television are funded by a one-time allocation that is not likely to be repeated.

**Website Rework**
Although launch of the new website has been underway for many months, it is still incomplete. Responsibility for departmental pages has been given to individuals in the each department, who indicate they need more training and help.

Farming for Prospects
Admissions is under contract with a firm to search, mine and communicate with high school sophomores, juniors and seniors on our behalf. This is also a one-time expenditure, with no provision to continue the contract.

New Media
Admissions staff use e-mail, texts, and social media with individual prospects, but it seems that no one person is responsible for regularly gathering the analytics of the web page, Facebook, You Tube, and other social media to find trends in the data.

While the Task Force understands that both the Marketing and Admissions departments are working toward solutions, we must acknowledge that the university community is frustrated and fragmented.

2. Overview of Best Practices/Benchmarking
The area of marketing and recruitment is researched and reported as being two separate topics, yet when looking at surveys by consultants, academic research and a handful of recent academic articles and blogs, an overall picture does emerge. We learned that other institutions are far ahead of us in terms of mobile and handheld device development, that we have inspiring aspirant institutions, and that we must unify what we say about ourselves to the outside world.

Noel-Levitz, the leading consulting firm in the field of academic recruitment, and its co-researchers provide so much information about recruitment, it is difficult to summarize their findings except by subtopic. We focused on two select studies regarding the World Wide Web, social media, and handheld communication devices:

2012 E-Recruiting Practices and Trends at Four-Year and Two Year Institutions
Among the findings:
• E-mail communication topped the list of popular practices for e-recruiting, slightly ahead of Facebook (both about 50% of respondents).
• Less than half of the colleges and universities reported offering mobile-optimized Web site experiences, while more than half of the students surveyed reported viewing college and university websites on mobile devices, including tablets.
• Prospective students rated printed brochures and Web sites almost evenly among ways to communicate about academic programs. This indicates that both traditional and online materials are still being used.
2012 E-Expectations Report. The Online Expectations of College-Bound Juniors and Seniors

Among the findings:
• More than 50 percent said the Web played a significant role in their decision to apply to a school.
• Three out of four emphasized simplicity in navigation and written content rather than pictures. Fifty-five percent of respondents said they couldn't find what they wanted because of challenges with the site navigation.
• Content priorities were academics (55%), cost/aid (23%) and the admissions process (11%)
• Sixty-nine percent of prospective students would participate in live chats with current students or faculty if it were offered; 75% said they would communicate with college representatives via Webcam.
• Sixty percent said they are open to receiving text messages from college representatives.
• Forty-six percent have visited a college’s Facebook page; 69 percent of those “liked” a college’s page.
• Fifty-six percent said that faculty e-mail is one of the best ways to learn about an institution’s academic program; this ranked fourth behind Brochures (71%), Web Page (69%), and Campus Visit (60%).
• Net price calculators that are visible and customizable on web pages are used by 49% of prospects to compare costs of colleges and universities. The best net price calculators can position the campus competitively on price, especially if the calculator includes merit aid in the estimate.

3. Indicators

Information prepared using 2011-2012 records by Lloyd Dawe, director of Institutional Effectiveness, provides data for reflection:
• Population Growth
South Carolina’s population is growing by about 50,000 per year.
• College Attendance
The rate of high school graduates attending college is increasing. However, South Carolina is home to 61 accredited technical, private and public, two- and four-year colleges and universities reporting a total student population of 244,986. ([http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=SC&l](http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=SC&l)) If all 50,000 new residents attended college for four years, we would still have empty seats in classrooms.
• In-Migration
About 8,800 students came into South Carolina to go to a college or university in 2011; about 3,000 South Carolinians went out of state, providing a net in-migration of about 5,800 students, mostly from northern states. This is encouraging data for our target market of equestrians from northern areas.
• Veteran Base
Almost 400,000 veterans live in South Carolina, providing a large base of potential USCA students. Another 2,000 are reservists or National Guard personnel. More research is needed to confirm and/or update this data. The opening of our Veterans Resource Center is a positive step toward serving this population well.
• **Low Share of International Students**
South Carolina’s share of international students is only .38 percent. Most students coming from other countries to study in the United States go to institutions in the northern and northeastern states. Florida and Georgia each have about 2% of international students in the U.S. These numbers indicate there is room for growth in the South as costs climb in northern states.

b. **Aspirant Peer Review**

• **Admission-to-Enrollment Efficiency**
Lloyd Dawe helped us prepare a list of 38 aspirant institutions, those with whom we share some characteristics and that we aspire to emulate in two or more characteristics. USCA out-performs 37 of our selected 38 aspirant peer institutions in terms of actually enrolling freshmen who are admitted. Coastal Carolina, for instance, admitted about 60% of its 2010-2011 applicants, then only 25% of those admitted actually enrolled for classes. USCA’s figures for the same year are 51% of applicants admitted and 45% of those enrolling. This means the admission-to-enrollment efforts and expenditures at USCA are more efficient than that of others. It also indicates that we are not lowering our standards in hopes of increasing enrollments. However, our actual numbers in the prospect pool, applicants and enrollees are much smaller, so our efforts need to be directed toward increasing the pool of applicants to get higher numbers moving through the system from the start. This puts the burden on marketing and institutional response.

• **Institutional Support Efficiency**
We can also claim efficiency in providing institutional support (financial, business, records, and other offices, as well as admissions, marketing and student support areas like the writing room or math lab) as a percent of our total budget. In 2010-2011, institutional support claimed about 11% of USCA’s total expenses, lower than most of our 38 aspirant institutions, which had a range of 7% to 22%.

Our aspirant peers spend far more total dollars on institutional support, however. None of the 38 spent fewer total dollars than USCA in 2010-2011. In order to compete prospect-by-prospect, a larger overall budget will be essential, even though we keep our efficiency high and percentage of administrative costs low.

• **Comparison on key indicators**
Several comparison factors were available using IPEDS data with a free program called Tableau, in a set of plug-in-information charts created by Jon Boeckenstedt, Associate Vice President of DePaul University. The charts can be modified to compare any eight universities. The chair chose seven of our aspirant peers to compare with USCA on factors set up by Boeckenstedt. Our resulting chart shows that our SAT/ACT scores are slightly above USC Upstate but in the same range as all aspirant peers except University of Minnesota-Morris.
The Admit and Graduation Rate data indicate that we are lower in admissions and graduation rates than our peers. The Freshman class diversity comparison points out that USC Aiken is a leader in enrolling African Americans (28%) and Caucasians (61%), with a very tiny proportion of our incoming classes being Asian of any type (2%), Hispanic (3%) or International (1%).

Finally, the Tableau charts emphasize a deficit we have acknowledged: endowment. Fundraising efforts have been much more aggressive in recent years, and we consider this beyond the scope of our task force. However, our students' reliance on Pell Grants is startling when compared to our aspirant peers. Only the University of Tennessee – Martin has a higher reliance on Pell Grants. While the cost of tuition and availability of financial aid is beyond the scope of our task force, this does rise as an area to watch during federal budget discussions.

USCA in Comparison to Aspirant Peers
On Entrance Scores, Admit and Graduation Rates, Diversity, and Endowment / Pell Dependence
So, let’s take a look at some of our aspirant peers. Who are they? What do they do well to brand and market themselves?

**University of Minnesota Morris** (research by Judith Goodwin)

*Great Branding: “Liberal Arts – Renewable, Sustainable”*

University of Minnesota Morris has financial aid for most of its students (82%). A responsive Office of Financial Aid seeks to serve all students through scholarships, grants, work study, loans, and off-campus employment. They land in our category of High Success with Low Institutional Support by their sustainability efforts. Seventy percent of the Morris’ campus electrical requirement is met by wind. It was one of...
the first public colleges to generate on-site renewable power from local sources through a biomass gasification plant, fueled by crop residues from nearby farms, generating steam. It is part of an integrated system for heating and cooling campus buildings. Locally manufactured solar thermal panels heat the campus swimming pool. Much of this was made possible through research grants from the state legislature. The campus has the right to boast in its marketing: “Liberal Arts – Renewable, Sustainable.”

**Coastal Carolina University** (research by Angel Miano)

**Great “customer” service**

A tagline for Coastal was not readily apparent, so one must suppose that the name “Coastal Carolina” is enough of a tagline. The student activities office recently took on Orientation. They also have a new Director for Service Excellence who is starting CHANTCierge (named for the Chanticleer on campus) service. The program will focus on providing quality customer service to students and guests.

As if having a beach just nine miles away isn't enough to keep students happy, the Office of Student Activities and Leadership started the First 54 Initiative this year, promising at least one program per day (like our PUB events) for the first 54 days of classes, including weekends.

Contact quote: “About 50% of our student population is from out-of-state, so we offer a lot of scholarships for both in-state and out-of-state. I do not know all of the specific scholarships, but I know that one of my students gets in-state tuition to attend the marine science program, because her home state does not offer one.”

They cannot build buildings fast enough. They just opened Penny Hall (academic), and are about to start phase 1 of 2 this summer for a new 100,000 ft² student center expansion. Housing is set to begin four new residential buildings, which will include a residential college with faculty-in-residence and classrooms. There are also buildings under construction for Public Safety, Scholars Academy, and a new cooling plant. The Experiential Learning program has grown in prominence. The campus is known for business management, marine science, and professional golf management (PGM) programs, and just started its first doctoral program (in marine science).

Coastal also has a well-defined Marketing materials policy: “Quality communication enhances Coastal Carolina University's image and conveys the University’s mission to students and prospective students, alumni, parents, faculty and staff, potential donors and the general public. To assure consistency in graphic and editorial communication, the Office of University Communication prepares and reviews all University materials for external audiences. Classroom materials and personal correspondence are exempt. The Office of University Communication is responsible for assuring that all items meet writing, editing and design standards, and comply with graphic identity standards of the University. The University name, logo, athletic logo and seal are registered and fully protected identifiers and their use is carefully
controlled. The University’s licensing and trademarks program is administered through the Office of University Communication.”

**University of South Carolina Upstate** (research by Gary Senn)

**Niche:** “Metropolitan University”

Key selling position: “The University aims to be recognized nationally among its peer metropolitan institutions for its excellence in education and commitment to its students, for its involvement in the Upstate, for its operational and managerial effectiveness, for its civility and common purpose, and for the clarity and integrity of its mission.”

“...set in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains along the thriving I-85 corridor. One of the things that we simply can’t duplicate on a web site or in a brochure is what it’s like to actually be on the University of South Carolina Upstate campus. You have to see it firsthand.”

New populations of students being attracted include the Summer BMW Manufacturing Outreach Summer Camp. Upstate is starting new master’s degree programs in education and informatics, which is possibly a recruiting benefit.

“Informatics is the study of information. We study how information is generated, acquired, stored, retrieved, organized, managed, utilized and exploited. We teach students how to create bottom-line impact for their employers using information resources. The program involves courses in computer technology, information technology, business, management and communication. In today’s job market, breadth of knowledge and expertise is the key to remaining upwardly mobile and flexible.”

**University of Tennessee-Martin**

**Tagline:** “Value, Experience, Opportunity”

The University of Tennessee at Martin was founded in 1900 as Hall-Moody Institute. 7,751 students enrolled for the 2012 fall semester. Increases were noted in first-time freshmen and graduate enrollment. The freshman class numbered 1,320 students, the third largest in university history, which was up almost two percent compared to last fall’s freshman class of 1,276. Meanwhile, graduate enrollment was up almost three percent from 413 students last fall to 425 students for the current fall semester. *UT Martin is home to UT Online, the University of Tennessee’s online programs for both undergraduate and graduate degrees.*

UT Martin and Hirosaki University entered into one of Tennessee’s oldest formal university relationships in 1980 that continues today. UT Martin currently has agreements with eight university education groups in six countries. Since 2008, $62.5 million in capital improvement and maintenance projects have been completed at UT Martin. Almost $30 million in additional capital improvement projects are under way or set to begin. UT Martin completed the most ambitious fundraising effort in the university’s history, bringing in just over $58 million during
the past seven years for scholarships, academic and athletic programs and campus enhancements. UT Martin led the UT System with 145% percent of its campaign goal achieved.

**University of North Carolina Pembroke**

Tagline: “Experience the Pembroke Personal Touch”

The website's primary audience and purpose are evident from the start:

*Experience the Pembroke Personal Touch*

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**Welcome to UNCP**


Use this site to learn more, personally connect with our staff and faculty and take your education to the next level.

AND ... UNC Pembroke is willing to give something away, just to get students to come for a campus tour.

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**FREE TUITION and FEES!!!**

Tour campus between September 4, 2012 and May 1, 2013 and you will be entered in the drawing in which two freshmen will be awarded up to four years of tuition and fees, and two transfer students will be awarded up to two years of tuition and fees.

But that’s not all! Two freshmen and two transfer students will win

*$300 UNCP BOOKSTORE VOUCHERS!*

All you have to do to enter is sign up and attend an [Open House](#) November 17, February 9 or April 13 Or schedule an official [campus visit](#) with the Admissions Office. Make your reservation online or call 910.521.6262.
University of Texas at Tyler
Tagline: A centerpiece for learning, culture and natural beauty
Preview Day seems to be one of their largest recruiting events, and it sounds a lot like ours:

UT Tyler Patriot Preview Day Scheduled Each Fall and Spring
April 6, 2013
Online registration has closed but attendees are still welcome to arrive at 8:30 a.m. for on-site registration on the day of the event.

• **Preview Day Schedule**
Deciding which college or university to attend can be an overwhelming decision. At UT Tyler, we are committed to providing you the information you need to identify the type of college or university at which you will be the most successful. Patriot Preview Day will provide you the opportunity to visit our campus; meet our faculty, staff and students; and ask the college-related questions you need answered!
**Patriot Preview Day planned activities include:**

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**Academic Sessions**
You will have the opportunity to hear from advisors within the academic department of your intended major. The discussion will include general information about various degree offerings, the programs in general, and requirements.

**University Showcase**
Join us for lunch and meet faculty advisors from each department, and representatives from student organizations.
Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Office of Admissions at 1.800.UT TYLER or 903.566.7203.

**Special Interest Sessions**
Hear about our many opportunities for student involvement, career exploration beyond the classroom, the athletics meet and greet, and the parent interest panel with staff representatives.
Fitchburg State University
Tagline: “Fitchburg State Leads to ____________.” (on home page, this blank is filled by: International Nursing, Center Court [basketball], National Geographic [one prof’s summer], Strengthening Communities, the Emmys, Washington D.C.)

Language from its website:

YOU’RE DRIVEN TO DO MORE WITH YOUR CAREER AND YOUR LIFE. WE’RE DRIVEN TO HELP YOU.

• Pursue an education that meets your needs. Graduate programs Undergraduate evening programs Professional development

• Work with top-notch faculty invested in your success. Full-time faculty, practitioners, and content experts in every discipline.

• Choose a program that fits your busy schedule. Five semesters with varied scheduling options, including face-to-face, online, accelerated, and hybrid courses. Extended campus partners bring our programs close to you.

• Join a university that feels like home, and provides what you need to succeed. We are a community of learners. Our average class size is just 14.

Discover high-quality and affordability. A quality education for a fraction of the price. APPLY YOURSELF TO REACH YOUR POTENTIAL. APPLY TO FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY.

Section Close
Some of our aspirant peers are more blatant than others. Like physicians and attorneys, professors don’t feel right about marketing, but need to realize they have to do it. We have some interesting examples to consider, but our approach needs to be our own.

José Antonio Bowen, Dean of the Meadows School of Arts at Southern Methodist University, recently published an article in Spectra, the journal of the National Communications Association, imploring colleges and universities to differentiate themselves. A university needs “a focused and unique mission,” instead of relying on platitudes about excellence and quality. “We need a better, more refined message, but that will require a better and more refined mission ... there are millions of niche markets to fill, and all of us already enjoy some local advantage.”
III. Recommendations

Overall Strategy: Branding, Cohesiveness, and a Culture of Recruitment

We should continue finessing the definition of our brand, our “niche,” so we are not selling the same excellent 120 hours in four years that everyone else is marketing. This may mean refining our mission, being flexible and indulging creativity.

Businesses have known it for years: Volvo means safety, and it will always mean – not speed or sleek design – safety. Companies far larger than our small university have poured millions over decades into cohesive branding statements, even making fun of themselves at times. Remember the Maytag repair man? Surely you know the gecko and the Energizer bunny. Universities are not the same as they were when the girl with the umbrella meant salt that pours when it rains. We need to learn marketing lessons from successful companies, starting with being more cohesive in the presentation of our brand. We also need employees who are willing to talk about how and why they believe in our product.

Tactics Group A - Recruitment

*Acknowledge our culture of joy in our work and recruit with enthusiasm. Break down barriers to who should be recruiting, when and for what. Empower all.*

We need to admit that we are a business, that we want to stay in business and grow. Here’s the rub. Our customers stay with us only a few years instead of a lifetime. We don’t even have a football team to rally alumni. If we are going to get ahead, it’s everyone’s job to attract new customers. Everyone on campus needs to be prepared to act as a recruiter for USCA.

1. Develop a postcard or bookmark highlighting USCA’s top annual achievements on one side and the “University of Choice” on the other. Provide at least one of these to everyone who works on our campus, part-time and full-time. Update annually or semi-annually. Give everyone the words to say and what to hold up with pride when faced with ignorance or indifference. We could use components of the QEP’s DEEP campaign as a model.

2. Hold Sharing Rally events to periodically celebrate achievements – academic to maintenance – so all employees can know about them and talk about them with others. Schedule these at least once a semester, and limit the participants to five or six departments or areas. We’re not talking a series of PowerPoints or posters, but skits, demonstrations and other creative means of conveying how an achievement came to be. Make it fun.

3. Create a “Pacer Maker” designation within the faculty so that Admissions has a pool of faculty who will text and/or talk and/or e-mail and/or instant message and/or Skype with prospective students. Pacer Makers can volunteer for a one-year position, and it should be weighted as important as sitting on an Assembly committee in terms of university service. These
faculty need special training and information about talking with potential students. Terms of service should rotate, just like teaching Critical Inquiry. The key time for faculty participation would be after a student has been admitted, to help bring the student to the decision to enroll. Further details should be worked out by a committee composed of faculty and enrollment services personnel.

4. Regularly produce videos about features and events on campus. Involve students, staff and faculty in the videos and place a title list on the home page of the USCA website, so prospective students can get a feel for what it’s like to be a student here. Until last year, students did this and were given a small payment for producing such videos; we feel they should be re-instated.

5. Re-invent the Quicklist to divide people by department and provide e-mail addresses, so that everyone can find quickly a faculty or staff contact for a prospect or to get an answer to a prospect’s question. It’s on the website, but what if the server is down? (as it was a couple of days last week.)

6. Invite new-student involvement by using enrollees’ comments about the impact of working with a faculty or staff member to make their USCA decision. Produce a video or internal newsletter featuring these comments.

7. Consider outside evaluation of our recruitment strategy and process to learn ways for improvement.

Analysis
a. These actions will help grow the University, thereby improving the funding situation. It will also allow us to be responsive to a broader range of potential students by effectively increasing the personnel to follow up with students who been admitted but have not enrolled. Increasing that percentage from 45% to 55% (using 2011-2012 numbers) would yield an additional 63 students. It may mean that faculty will need to work during the summer, but most do already.

b. Balanced scorecard
i. Costs will include printing of “brag cards,” paying students for videos, and providing Sharing Rally teams up to $50 each for props, if needed. Total expenses should not exceed $2,000.
ii. Additional personnel capacity should not be necessary.
iii. Promotion and tenure policies should be revised to acknowledge participation in Pacer Makers as a leading service to the university.
iv. Those who participate in Sharing Rallies and Pacer Makers will feel valued and respected. All should enjoy their experiences rather than feeling it is “just another thing on our plate.” As our student body grows and classes fill, participants will see the fruits of their labor.

Tactics Group B - Marketing
Polish our marketing, push electronic communication
We need to tune our work to the primary keys of the brand.
1. Coordinate marketing/messages/printing/web
a. All marketing items going off the USCA campus (or on the World Wide Web) should be designed according to pre-set standards and approved by the Marketing and Community Relations Department for branding purposes. The department personnel will put together templates for others on campus to use for ads, brochures, posters and newsletters so they can design their own if they prefer, then submit to the Marketing Department for an OK or recommendations. Approval or changes should be given to the creator within 48 hours. Complete instructions regarding color sets, logo usage and other design standards will be available on the USCA website, easy to understand and use (no jargon.)

b. Social Media unification and/or coordination is needed. Marketing assistant Christina Berkshire reported that if one types “USCA or USC Aiken” into the search bar in Facebook, the choices include 30 individual pages ranging from “USCA Government Documents and Information” to “USCA Aiken Girls are Hot!” Another 17 profiles may be selected in addition to 14 Facebook groups. These are the options just in Facebook. We did not look at Pinterest, LinkedIn, or other social media. While we do not intend to control anyone’s expression, the Marketing department should be empowered to discuss cohesion with all of these page-holders.

c. More attention should be paid to the website. With sites being so important in every step of decision-making, we would like to these specific things happen as soon as possible:

i. Our website should become “responsive” so that it works equally well on a computer, a tablet or other handheld device, or a smart phone.

ii. The net cost calculator should be prominent on the home page, and it should be as specific as possible. Financial aid personnel and admissions personnel can refine the calculator, we hope. Since value is one of our key selling points, this needs to be easy to access and use.

iii. Continuous improvement will mean that rather than looking at the site as how we want it, refine it from the user’s point of view. College of Charleston, for instance, has a one-page, easily printable, fact sheet about the college on its home page. All of the same information is on our website, but it is not collated so that a quick overview is possible.

iv. Put links to .pdfs of the Pacer Times and Stall Wall Weekly on the home page, so that prospects can get a “look inside” what’s current on campus.

v. Increase funding for web work if that is necessary to achieve any of the goals above (i.e. consultant review, student hires, focus groups).
d. Social Media need more attention. Advertising on social media, using geo-local and hyper-targeted messages, may be essential to recruitment. Social Influence Marketing (SIM) should be part of our package. Blogging, Facebook, Twitter should be monitored through Google analytics (this is true now, but the frequency and emphasis could be higher). We need to know what others are saying about us as well as telling our own stories.

2. Enhance Community Awareness
   a. If the people in our community know more about us, they can help our word-of-mouth marketing. To this end, our dedicated series of news releases should be accompanied by a list of university professors who can respond to current events – to give the local viewpoint – (prepared twice a month or so according to current events) and the university calendar for the coming two weeks.
   b. Continue making light pole banners for downtown Aiken and North Augusta that direct attention to the university. One example would be celebrating the recent NCAA Div. II Elite 8 appearance of the basketball team. Another set could be made emphasizing our scientific research or our launch of the equestrian management program. When an accreditation (School of Education, School of Business, School of Nursing) is renewed, we should celebrate with banners. While these are relatively expensive ($200 to $300 each), they provide repetition of the message in several places over time. It's like having billboards everywhere people drive and walk. We could also provide the banners to the equestrian farms and golf courses that support our programs.
   c. Drive more media attention to USCA's community service and internships. This will help the university appear more mature in the eyes of the community, and perhaps drive them to the website to learn how they can benefit from our service and experiential learning.

3. Bring athletics into the “fold.”
   a. Use its expertise in recruitment. The one-man-band SID with buzzing interns is doing a terrific job reporting on and promoting USCA athletics. Athletics would like to be involved in major marketing decisions, such as further definition of our niche capabilities and target markets. In this way, the Pacer Sports can help support USCA marketing in its branding themes, and the Marketing team will also have the benefit of SID thinking.
   b. Entice golfers. One new target market we could be reaching is golfers. The Aiken Visitor’s Bureau lists 14 golf courses in Aiken County alone. A total of 47 golf courses are within a 45-minute drive of USCA. Whether we enlist the Athletics department’s help
with this is beyond our scope of work. However, it is a strong, vigorous market that we can pursue with the right packaging.

4. a. International marketing.
We know that the majority of our international students come to USCA because of sports scholarships. We need more information about how we serve their academic needs, so we can highlight these while recruiting international students on the basis of academics. We also need information about how we can serve the needs of international students.

Note: the following is a personal recommendation from the chair. A consultant should be brought in to conduct interviews and research to help us identify possible international reciprocal programs (sister universities), collaborative research and other means of making our campus attractive to international students. Antonieta Reyes Echezuria, USCA Outstanding Graduate of 2008, holds an M.S. and is completing a Ph.D. in International Marketing Communications at Florida State University and would welcome the opportunity to conduct this research.

b. Reach outside the South.
Many of our locally based students have never witnessed the world outside South Carolina or the Southeast. Reciprocal agreements may be made with one or more of our aspirant institutions for one semester or one year of study. Travel courses should be developed that allow students to get credit for traveling with a group to other areas of the U.S.

4. Involve non-academic areas on campus.
   a. Let every child who visits our campus (Etherredge Center plays, Ruth Patrick SEC visits, SEED Day, Future Cities) leave with a pencil embellished with the USCA name and tagline. The student will at least be exposed to us as long as the lead lasts.
   b. Ask RPSEC and Etherredge Center to also conform to university marketing guidelines. Gary Senn has already indicated that RPSEC will do so.
   c. Improve signage directing visitors to the Etherredge Center parking, then the entrances.
   d. Look into having more stay-on-campus summer camps for both high school students and students from other colleges. We used to have a five-day journalism camp for college students, for instance. This will help our student housing defray costs.

5. Have a brief (two-week?) task force review every year. We heard from staff that they are so busy with day-to-day achievements that there is seldom time to look at what other campuses are doing and get opinions from other areas of campus.
Sources


Department of Education listing of accredited institutions in South Carolina, http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=SC&l=3+5+7+8+9+10+17+18+19

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