

Wytheville Community College

Marketing Plan

2009-2010



Prepared by the

WCC Public Information Office

July 2009

Wytheville Community College Marketing Plan

Introduction:

The goal of the Wytheville Community College Marketing Plan is to promote the college's programs and services to many diverse audiences—including traditional and non-traditional students, businesses and industries, and the general public. Aspects of this marketing plan also address the need to enhance the college's "image" or reputation in the eyes of those same audiences.

The success of any marketing plan depends upon several factors, including effective advertising, public relations, and market research. Flexibility and innovation are also key factors. These and other marketing activities make up the whole of the marketing plan and no individual factor is necessarily more important than any other. However, all aspects of the marketing plan should compliment one another and in no case should one activity conflict with or adversely effect another activity.

Marketing vs. Advertising

Laura Schneider, writing about marketing for the Internet, points out the differences between marketing and advertising. She notes that *advertising* is "The paid, public, non-personal announcement of a persuasive message by an identified sponsor; the non-personal presentation or promotion by a firm of its products to its existing and potential customers." Schneider defines *marketing* as "The systematic planning, implementation and control of a mix of business activities intended to bring together buyers and sellers for the mutually advantageous exchange or transfer of products."

Many people are confused by the difference between advertising and marketing, and so Schneider emphasizes the fact that "advertising a single component of the marketing process" and marketing is "everything that an organization does to facilitate an exchange between company and consumer."

Wytheville Community College's Marketing Plan, while incorporating appropriate advertising activities, does not rely solely on advertising efforts for the purpose of promoting the college's programs and services. Consequently, this Marketing Plan relies on specific marketing strategies to achieve its goals.

Employee Involvement

This Marketing Plan also embraces the concept that each and every employee of the college (including administrators, faculty, and staff) is responsible for assisting in the marketing of the college and its programs through their own personal, professional, social, and business activities. Indeed, without the active involvement of college employees, no marketing plan can be truly successful.

Past student surveys have shown consistently that a majority of WCC's students choose the college because of the influence of another individual—a parent, a friend, a counselor, or another student, for instance. Consequently, it is often the power of word-of-mouth endorsements that bring us many of our students.

Advertising executive Ray Johnson has pointed out that "ordinary people can spread good and bad information about brands faster than marketers." Jeff Bezos, the

founder and CEO of Amazon.com, has also addressed this issue, noting that: “If you do build a great experience, customers tell each other about that. Word of mouth is very powerful.”

For this Marketing Plan to be successful, the active involvement and positive influence of every college employee is essential.

Students as Our Customers

The WCC Marketing Plan is based on the key concept that our students and others who use the college’s services are our customers.

Most businesses will go to great lengths to ensure that their customers are, at the very least, “satisfied” with the product or service they receive. Highly successful businesses will further take it upon themselves to guarantee that their customers are, in fact, happy with the product or service. Exceptional customer service provided by WCC and all of its employees is crucial to the success of our marketing efforts, as dissatisfied students will tell others and they can spread bad information more quickly than the college can disseminate the good.

WCC can advertise that we are a caring campus with state-of-the-art facilities. We can declare in a promotional document that we offer an excellent education and comprehensive academic programs. We can claim in a news release that student learning and success are our main goals.

However, if students encounter college personnel who are unsympathetic to their problems; if they are provided outdated instructional equipment; if they can’t get the classes they need when they need them; or if they feel themselves “slipping through the cracks” and becoming overwhelmed by their WCC experience, the college’s reputation will most certainly suffer.

We cannot simply declare that we are a caring institution, for instance, we must be a caring institution. Hollow promises will quickly be discovered for what they are by our customers. And it is inevitable that our customers will tell others about their experiences. No amount of flashy advertising, slick website design, and positive image-building activities can overcome the ancient and effective communication method known as “word of mouth.”

Simply put, dissatisfied customers can easily dissuade potential customers from seeking out the college’s programs and services in the first place.

The Wytheville Community College Public Information Office:

The WCC Public Information Office is the central coordination point for the college's marketing efforts, especially news releases, advertising, web design, print and web-based promotional publications (catalog and student handbook, schedules, college view book, brochures, newsletters, etc.), photography, and overall media relations.

Per established college policy, all news releases and publications designed for dissemination to the public must be approved by the WCC Public Information Office. In fact, all college news releases must be processed through the Public Information Office, which distributes news releases to the appropriate media. This process ensures that the college maintains a consistent message and satisfies all college, Virginia Community College System, state, federal, and other directives pertaining to content.

The Public Relations Coordinator is always available to discuss specific marketing and advertising needs for individual programs, services, and activities.

As part of its ongoing recordkeeping, the Public Information Office maintains a log of news releases and photos sent to area media. Dates of publication of releases, including the total column inches taken up by each article, are recorded so that the Public Relations Coordinator may determine the value of the "free advertising" received by the college for the publication of news releases.

During one recent period (April 2, 2007 through April 29, 2008), WCC received a total of **\$30,625** in free advertising. This figure is tallied by multiplying column inch of news releases by the newspaper's open rate for advertising. This method is commonly accepted practice among public relations offices, including many within the VCCS.

Analysis of WCC Target Audiences:

In any marketing plan, it is vital to identify the constituents who represent the college's target audiences.

A past WCC Marketing Committee examined a list of potential target audiences and suggested changes and additions before seeking a review by selected campus personnel. Further changes and additions were incorporated upon the completion of this review and appropriate changes were made based on the input received from the campus community.

The revised, comprehensive list of the college's target audiences is as follows:

Potential Target Market Audiences for WCC

Wytheville Community College:

- Administration/Boards
- Faculty (full time & adjunct)
- Staff

High School Students:

- Transfer-bound students seeking first two years at a community college
- Career & Technical Education students seeking advanced skill training
- Dual-enrollment students
- Seniors undecided about their future educational plans after high school
- Top academic high school students
- Students with few college choices
- Juniors making college choices
- Freshmen and sophomores in early stages of planning educational future
- Recent graduates with no college plans
- Students who do not meet SOL requirements—potential “Middle College” students
- Low-income students who think they can't afford college

Current Curricular Students

- Full-time students (primarily day students)
- Part-time evening students with full-time or significant part-time jobs
- Students taking fewer than four credit hours per semester
- Transfer Program students
- Occupational-Technical students

Current College Students

- WCC students who are undecided as to curricular choice
- Potential “reverse transfer” students

- Students at four-year institutions seeking courses over the summer
- Students at four-year institutions seeking additional courses in order to graduate sooner

Graduates and Former Students

- Alumni
- Non-completers

Area Workforce

- Individuals seeking skill upgrading for current job
- Individuals seeking skill upgrading for job promotion
- Individuals seeking skill upgrading for career change
- Hourly employees in retail
- Hourly employees in manufacturing
- Management/human resource personnel/supervisors
- Apprentices
- Business/industry credit and non-credit students

Others

- Parents of high school students
- High school guidance counselors
- Donors/Prospective donors to WCC Educational Foundation
- Single Parents
- Displaced Workers
- Welfare recipients
- Retired individuals seeking personal improvement
- Four-year college graduates seeking occupational/technical or career/skills
- Individuals seeking personal development/special interest
- Public school teacher recertification
- Individuals seeking professional development/recertification
- Students who register for WCC classes but do not persist in the application process
- General Public

Key WCC Target Markets* (as previously identified for intensive activity)

- WCC administration, faculty, staff
- High school students who are undecided about their future
- Area workforce seeking skill upgrading
- Current WCC curricular students
- High school vocational-technical students

- High school transfer-bound students
- General Public

*Not listed in order of importance

Main Marketing Points:

In order to achieve significant results, WCC's marketing message should be focused on a few specific points that will resonate with the college's various constituents.

The main points for *student recruitment/parent* marketing should include:

- **Affordability**—WCC, as a member of the Virginia Community College System, offers the lowest tuition of any state institution of higher education.
- **Variety**—The college offers a wide variety of transfer and occupational-technical degree, diploma, and certificate programs, as well as many, shorter-term Career Studies Certificate programs.
- **Close to Home**—WCC is the only institution of higher education located within the college's service region. The college also offers courses at the Crossroads Institute in Galax and at the Smyth County Education Center near Atkins.
- **Transfer Opportunities**—By enrolling in a transfer program and attending WCC for two years a student may transfer easily to a four-year college or university in order to complete a bachelor's degree.
- **Cutting-Edge Learning Technologies**—WCC strives to provide its students with the most up-to-date technology available in order to prepare students for the workplace.
- **Financial Aid & Scholarship Availability**—WCC offers a wide variety of financial aid and scholarship programs for students who qualify.
- **A Caring Place to Learn**—Students won't be just another face in the crowd at WCC. Small class sizes, tutoring services, and college personnel whose primary goal is to help students reach their academic goals all enhance student success.
- **Student Success**—WCC's students go on to higher-level degrees and great careers across the region, state, and the nation.

The main points for *workforce development* marketing should include:

- **Flexibility**—WCC training can be provided during the day, the evening, on weekends, and on site for the convenience of employees and employers. Training can be provided in a synchronous (traditional classroom) setting or an asynchronous (online) setting.
- **Customized Training**—The college can develop specialized training programs to meet the needs of specific industries and employees. WCC can also provide pre-employment training for businesses and industries.
- **Quality**—WCC is committed to providing the highest-quality training available.

The main points for *general public awareness* marketing (image building in the community) should include:

- **Comprehensive Services**—The college offers a comprehensive program of transfer and occupational-technical degrees, diplomas, and certificates. WCC is also home to many programs and services that benefit students, business and industry, and the general public.
- **Cultural Activities**—WCC presents a wide variety of cultural events during the year, to which the public is invited. Events include drama productions, musical performances (including the WCC Concert Band), author readings, storytellers, and children’s puppet production.
- **Facilities**—The college’s library, bookstore, and the Academic Resource Center are open to the public to assist with computer access, online and print-based research, job searches, and other related activities. The college’s Dental Clinic is also open to the public.
- **Student Success**—WCC’s students go on to higher-level degrees and great careers across the region, state, and the nation.
- **Partnerships**—WCC partners with a wide variety of agencies, businesses, industries, and other entities in order to provide services to its students and the community. The college also seeks and receives significant grant funding, which allows WCC to maintain and expand its services even during financially-difficult times.

Wytheville Community College Marketing Activities, 2009-2010:

Ongoing Activities

- The Public Information Office will promote college activities/programs/services, faculty/staff/student accomplishments, and other news worthy events.
Method: Promotion will be achieved via news releases, feature articles, and photographs distributed to area media.
Anticipated Cost: \$0
- The Public Information Office will promote the three college enrollment periods (fall, spring, and summer).
Method: Promotion will be achieved using a variety of methods, including news release, paid newspaper and radio advertisements, and use of the college marquee.
Anticipated Cost: \$8,000
- The Public Information Office will promote special events, programs, and classes as needed during the year via paid advertising. These ads may include those identified by the Deans and other college personnel.
Anticipated Cost: \$2,000
- The Public Relations Coordinator will utilize the WCC website for the promotion of events/programs/services offered by WCC.
Anticipated Cost: \$0
- The Public Information Office will produce three issues (fall, spring, and summer) of the *WCC Current* newsletter annually for distribution to both internal and external audiences.
Method: The Public Relations Coordinator will provide articles, photography, and layout prep. Duplication will be accomplished using full-color copier/printer in the Foundation Office. Newsletters will be bulk mailed.
Anticipated Cost: \$900
- The Public Relations Coordinator will write the scripts and the Audio-Visual Technician will produce/record the monthly 10-minute "Access WCC" radio program for airing monthly (every third Friday) on WXBX FM (Wytheville) and WWWJ (Galax).
Anticipated Cost: \$25

- The Public Information Office will produce three annual class schedules in PDF format via the WCC website. The class schedules will include special promotional articles intended to market WCC programs and services to students.

Anticipated Cost: \$0

- The Public Relations Coordinator will make faculty/staff/administrators/retirees aware of pertinent articles about WCC that appear in the media.

Method: Links e-mailed using GroupWise.

Anticipated Cost: \$0

- The Public Information Office will produce an updated *WCC Catalog and Student Handbook* for posting in PDF format to the college's website.

Anticipated Cost: \$0

- As needed, the Public Information Office will produce an updated college view book.

Anticipated Cost: \$3,000

Special Activities

- The Public Relations Coordinator will take steps to expand the airing of the "Access WCC" radio program to at least one other radio station in the college's service region (preferably in Smyth County).

Method: Contact will be made with programming personnel of radio stations not currently airing "Access WCC." CDs of sample programs will be provided to the stations. Following up calls will be made to encourage acceptance of the program as a public service.

Anticipated Cost: \$50

- As funds are made available, the Public Information Office will arrange for advertising to appear on area television stations, including WSLs (Roanoke), WDBJ (Roanoke) and WVVA (Bluefield). Advertising will specifically target enrollment periods and may include image-building ads.

Anticipated Cost: \$10,000

- The Public Information Office will expand its radio advertising in Smyth County and the Twin-County areas as funds are available. Ads will include enrollment periods and special programs/events of interest to residents of the areas in question.

Anticipated Cost: \$2,000

- The Public Information Office will endeavor to place a WCC advertisement in the football programs of each area high school during the 2009 season.

Anticipated Cost: \$600

- As funds are made available, the Public Information Office will contact area cable companies to arrangement for targeted enrollment/image-building ads in the specific areas of the service region. These ads will air during fall, spring and summer enrollment periods.

Anticipated Cost: \$8,000

- The Public Information Office will purchase a variety of promotional items (coffee mugs and other appropriate items) as giveaways to visiting guests, local and staff officials, accreditation teams, etc.

Anticipated Cost: \$3,000

- The Public Information Office will prepare a variety of promotional multi-media presentations for broadcast over the new plasma TV screens installed in each of the buildings.

Anticipated Cost: \$0

- The Public Information Office will plan and present a Media Appreciation Day to which representatives of area media will be invited. The event will highlight one or more programs/activities of the college.

Anticipated Cost: \$400

- The Public Information Office will produce a business card-sized information product bearing importation telephone numbers for campus/off campus offices, the bookstore, the weather hotline, etc. The card will also note that the college's catalog and class schedules are online and will include WCC's web address. The card can be distributed to students and the public by any college office or employee as a convenient information reference tool.

Anticipated Cost: \$150

- The Public Information Office utilize Internet-based sites such as YouTube.com, MySpace.com, and others to promote the college and its programs to potential students and the public. The Public Relations Office will also investigate the use of social networking sites such as Facebook and others for the same purpose, while developing appropriate policies concerning their use as necessary.

Anticipated Cost: \$0

- The Public Information Office investigate the use of blogs by students/faculty/staff and linked to the WCC website, while developing appropriate policies concerning their use as necessary.

Anticipated Cost: \$0

- The Public Information Office will investigate the placement of strategic outdoor billboards promoting the college.

Anticipated Cost: \$3,000

- The Public Information Office will begin placing regular rotating ads within the classified sections (help wanted) of area newspapers that promote workforce training and retraining for a new career.

Anticipated Cost: \$1,500

Miscellaneous Issues Pertaining to Marketing:

Official Ink, Typeface, Seal, and Logo of WCC

The Official Burgundy Ink of WCC

The official burgundy ink of Wytheville Community College is (Pantone Matching System[®]) PMS 208.

The Official Typographic Font of WCC

The official typographic font of Wytheville Community College is the Della Robbia font. This font is normally utilized only in circumstances where the name of the college is used in a stand-alone fashion on an official publication with or without the WCC Seal or Logo.

Use of the WCC Seal

The WCC Seal, which consists of the mountains graphic above the date “1963” and surrounded by the names of the service region counties, is to be used primarily on official documents such as letterhead, degrees, diplomas, certificates, etc.

Use of the WCC Logo

The WCC Logo normally refers to the stand-alone mountains graphic used with or without the name “Wytheville Community College.” The WCC Logo may be used in virtually any application in which the official Seal is not appropriate. The WCC Logo should be used liberally in communications and publications for both internal and external markets.

Distribution of the WCC Seal and the WCC Logo

Both the WCC Seal and the WCC Logo are registered trademarks of Wytheville Community College. Neither the seal nor the logo should be transferred in printed or electronic formats to individuals outside the college unless for the purpose of preparing authorized documents or materials for use by the college. Suspected unauthorized use of the WCC name, the Seal or the Logo should be reported promptly to the Public Relations Coordinator or the Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services.

Informational Items Required for ALL publications:

- College Name
- Address
- Telephone Number
- 800 Number, where appropriate
- Web Address

- V/TDD Number
- EEO Statement*

*EEO Statement (Required on all publications: use the statement best suited to publication)

WCC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, handicap, age, or any other non-merit factors in admissions, access, treatment, or employment in its programs and activities. Inquiries may be directed to the Affirmative Action Officer in Smyth Hall or by telephone at (276) 223-4869.

or

Wytheville Community College is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

or

EOE/AA

or

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer/Americans for Disabilities Act.

Disclaimers

The statements and provisions in any Wytheville Community College publication are not to be regarded as a contract between the student and the college that cannot be recalled. The college reserves the right to change, when warranted, any of the provisions, schedules, programs, courses, or fees, as might be required.

Accreditation Statement

Wytheville Community College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097: Telephone number 404-679-4500) to award the associate degree. *(Note: Inquiries to the Commission should relate only to the accreditation of WCC, and not to general admission information.)*

Model Release Form

Individuals have a legal right to their image. This means that if an individual is displeased with the placement of his/her photo for any reason then he/she is able to pursue legal recourse. One of the exemptions is if the photograph or image is used by the news media. In college publications, WCC's use of an individual's photograph(s)

falls under promotion and advertising. To protect the college and to ensure that the individual has given permission for WCC to use a photo of him/her, the individual(s) are normally required to complete and sign a model release form.