

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MINUTES

June 24, 2020

The Administrative Council met on Wednesday, June 24, 2020 at 10:30 a.m. in the Ballroom. Present were Ms. Tonyia Bowling; Ms. Pam Clark, Recorder; Mr. Jonathan Craft; Dr. Joe Delap; Ms. Jackie Gooch; Mr. Jeffrey Guenther; Ms. Belinda Krigel; Dr. Kim LaFevor; Ms. Sarah McAbee; Mr. Mike McCoy; Mr. Rylan Pendleton, SGA President; Mr. Derrek Smith; Dr. Jackie Smith; Dr. Stephen Spencer; Ms. Debra Vaughn and Dr. Philip Way. Mr. Richard Collie, Mr. Chris Latham and Dr. Katherine Quinnell were absent.

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Way convened the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

A. Meeting Topic

Dr. Way stated the focus for today's meeting is public relations (not marketing) and each table represents the different stakeholder groups.

B. Coronavirus Precautions on Campus

Mr. McCoy stated protocols are in place to make every effort to provide a safe campus, but it takes each individual doing their part and practicing social distancing. Mr. McCoy strongly suggested wearing a mask where social distancing cannot take place.

II. STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS

The council was divided into eight groups representing the stakeholders of the University. They were asked to answer the questions on the handout and be prepared to present their answers to the council.



Strategic Public
Relations.pdf

A. Alumni Group - Mr. Jeff Guenther and Dr. Jackie Smith

a. Why is this audience important to us?

They are a source of free advertising, word of mouth, legacy enrollments; biggest indicator of student success, such as post-graduation employment, post-graduation salaries, and community engagement; leaders in our community; they are our best commercial and potential donor pool.

b. What view of us do we want this group to hold?

Warm, fuzzy community; sense of belonging; good investment; post-graduation resource; caring faculty and ring-knockers.

c. What is the group’s current perception of us? Do we need more data?

Not sure of the perception. More data is needed. We have the Graduate Follow-Up Survey; however, response rates have been going down steadily. There have been discussions with Alumni Affairs on how to better communicate with students. Alumni benefits are too local and we don’t capitalize on alumni success.

d. What is the gap between this group’s current perceptions and the view of us we want it to hold?

We want the perception to change from “so-so” to “1st choice.” How can we change that perception? There is a lack of diversity in activities. We want to diversify our student body. What activities or events will bring diverse alumni back to campus?

e. What message/themes would have the greatest impact? What matters to alumni?

Data on employment and wages. The message that we are innovative. We were one of the first institutions to educate women and to offer online course offerings in broad fields of study. Personal success stories.

f. Which media do alumni prefer?

Depends on the generation. Radio, trade publications, print and email for older generations; social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) for the younger generations.

g. Who should be responsible for communications?

Alumni Affairs with support from other campus constituencies; program faculty and staff who build individual relationships with students.

B. Donors/Prospective Donors Group – Ms. Bowling and Dr. Spencer

a. Why is this audience important to us?

Funding support, to promote University image, outreach beyond institution, can reach other donors.

b. What view of us do we want this group to hold?

We provide high quality education; our students are successful; we are innovative, future-oriented; we are financially sound; we occupy a unique place in the market; we are student-centered, all efforts are directed toward student success—not just limited to their financial success but how we prepare students to succeed for life.

c. What is the group’s current perception of us? Do we need more data?

We don’t really know what the perception is. We need more data. Upper-division institution not understood by some constituencies.

d. What is the gap between current perceptions and the view of us we want donors to hold?

Need more information to understand the gap. Need to understand how perceptions vary among groups. Perceptions are based on age and the time period they think of Athens. Some people still refer to us as Athens College.

e. What messages/themes would have the greatest impact? What matters to the group?

Depends on the demographics of each subgroup (need data on perceptions of various groups). The message should be simple and clear on who we are and where we are going.

f. Which media does the group prefer?

Demographically driven and location driven.

g. Who should be responsible for communications?

Director of Public Relations, Marketing and Publications to ensure consistent message and protect our brand/identity.

C. Lawmakers Group – Dr. LaFevor and Mr. McCoy

a. Why is this audience important to us?

Major influencers on state and national level, dependents, supporters, competing priorities.

b. What view of us do we want lawmakers to hold?

Value proposition, good quality and effective at what we do at a good cost; we are good stewards of public resources.

c. What is the group's current perception of us? Do we need more data?

Locally we are seen as high value but statewide there are mixed views. Seen as a community college sometimes instead of baccalaureate or graduate degree institution. Feedback would be helpful to better discern.

d. What is the gap between the group's current perceptions and the view of us we want it to hold?

There are gaps in our value proposition as seen between local lawmakers and lawmakers from other parts of the state. Sometimes we are seen as small and may not have the capabilities compared to flagships – lack clout. We are able to accomplish great things because of our nimbleness.

e. What messages/themes would have the greatest impact? What matters to lawmakers?

ROI (Return on Investment) of Athens State academic programming in workforce development, creating a pipeline of talent, and bringing key solutions by offering a valuable education.

f. Which media does the group prefer?

Town halls, lobbying and executive summaries.

g. Who should be responsible for communications?

Advancement and the President.

D. Community Group – Dr. Delap and Dr. LaFevor

a. Why is this audience important to us?

We serve them and we belong to the community. We are their product and they are our product.

b. What view of us do we want the community to hold?

Athens State is invested in the community in which we serve. We also hope that the community, in turn, would invest in us.

c. What is the group's current perception of us? Do we need more data?

Mixed bag – known and unknown commodity – data can be collected to clarify what we are known for.

d. What is the gap between this group's current perceptions and the view of us we want it to hold?

Gaps in our value proposition. Seen as having small capabilities compared to larger institutions.

e. What messages/themes would have the greatest impact? What matters to the community?

High ROI, economic and workforce development matter to the community. We want to be a leader in innovation.

f. Which media does this group prefer?

Print and online, local publication and face-to-face.

g. Who should be responsible for communications?

Marketing and key stakeholders who are our faculty. Faculty drive our relationships with our community, students and administration.

E. Current Students Group – Ms. McAbee and Mr. Pendleton

a. Why is this audience important to us?

Target group for why we exist.

b. What view of us do we want students to hold?

Faculty and staff care; they work toward each student's success.

c. What is the group's current perception of us? Do we need more data?

Unknown. Prospective and online students are sometimes unaware of what we have to offer. Yes, we need more data.

d. What is the gap between the group's current perceptions and the view of us we want it to hold?

Online students, in particular, miss opportunities to experience the caring qualities of campus.

e. What messages/themes would have the greatest impact? What matters to students?

"Your University, Your Way." Inclusive, caring and welcoming community.

f. Which media does the group prefer?

Social media – Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn. Texting via Hebrew the Bear and phone.

g. Who should be responsible for communications?

Students – identify modality; Marketing and Student Services.

F. Staff Group – Ms. Clark, Mr. Craft, and Mr. Smith

a. Why is this audience important to us?

Staff establish strong personal networks/contacts and are advocates for Athens State University.

b. What view of us do we want staff to hold?

Staff want to be proud of the institution; want to be seen as a team with a common goal/mission.

c. What is the group's current perception of us? Do we need more data?

Staff does not always feel informed or valued. We need more communication.

- d. What is the gap between the group's current perceptions and the view of us we want it to hold?**

No means of structured communication across areas.

- e. What messages/themes would have the greatest impact? What matters to staff?**

Monthly communication from the President/Cabinet directed to staff. Feature different areas on campus so that others know what we all do.

- f. Which media does the group prefer?**

Town halls separate for faculty and staff; group discussions; coffee/informal gatherings; newsletters; more inclusive meetings with Staff Senate; staff group on an internet portal.

- g. Who should be responsible for communications?**

President, Vice Presidents, Staff Senate Presiding Officer, and supervisors.

G. Faculty Group – Ms. Krigel and Ms. Vaughn

- a. Why is this audience important to us?**

Faculty deliver the product; are the face of the University to students; represent program quality; and core to legitimacy.

- b. What view of us do we want faculty to hold?**

Understanding and appreciating the importance of the faculty; resource geared to what faculty do; and faculty are central to the mission.

- c. What is the group's current perception of us? Do we need more data?**

Not good at listening and responding; not good at communicating; and not good at paying attention. Faculty want more timely feedback and time to respond. It is not possible to over-communicate.

- d. What is the gap between the group's current perceptions and the view of us we want it to hold?**

Communication and consistent messages and valuing the faculty.

- e. What message/themes would have the greatest impact? What matters to faculty?**

Quality, relevance, being appreciated. Program reviews have been done but the faculty have not seen them. Highlighting those things would make faculty feel more relevant and appreciated.

f. Which media does the group prefer?

Everything – website and particularly one-on-one.

g. Who should be responsible for communications?

Leaders and internal stakeholders. University leadership should more frequently communicate new initiatives and activities. Could we develop some type of internal public relations channel?

H. Board Group – Ms. Gooch and Dr. Way

a. Why is this audience important to us?

They have ultimate responsibility.

b. What view of us do we want this group to hold?

We want them to see that we are transparent and truthful, innovative, student-focused, and good stewards of our resources (both financial and human/talent).

c. What is the group's current perception of us? Do we need more data?

The perception is positive. They believe in the mission; and believe we are delivering. Need to share more data from them and to them. We need to find out from the Board what data they want. We only have the Board on campus for a small amount of time each semester, which makes it hard to pick out what the most important things are to discuss.

d. What is the gap between the group's current perceptions and the view of us we want it to hold?

Little gap

e. What messages/themes would have the greatest impact? What matters to the Board?

Data/stories of our students and financial stability. It is very important for the Board to have time with students, as students' stories often make the strongest impression.

f. Which media does the group prefer?

In-person. They are busy people, but they like one-on-one conversations.

g. Who should be responsible for communications?

Dr. Way, Jackie, and University Communications. Recommended that students and faculty attend the meetings and tell their stories.

Dr. Way stated there is room for improvement and more data is needed; we can discuss what data can be gathered internally and what might need to be outsourced. We need to come up with a strategic plan in terms of communicating with our constituents. Dr. Way invited members to continue brainstorming these questions and sharing any additional thoughts on the topics. He thanked everyone for their time and stated we would meet in a month.

The meeting adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Pamela Clark