The Graduate College
Strategic Marketing Plan

2017 - 2022
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OVERVIEW

This marketing plan was developed to provide a roadmap of The Graduate College's current marketing strategy. As with any plan, this is not a static document but, rather, one that has been created to reflect the current climate and objectives that guide the college’s marketing efforts. This plan is based on observations and feedback provided by staff and graduate students. It will be fine-tuned and adjusted as necessary to ensure that the marketing activities are well coordinated and continuously improved to create the most impact with the available resources. This plan is based on the sound basis of The Graduate College brand. The marketing plan aims to strengthen the college’s reputation, promote and provide visibility to all of the college's graduate degree and certification programs. Also, it will encourage alumni, friends, donors, students, prospective students, faculty, and staff to appreciate and cherish their association with Kennesaw State University. It will inspire those who are not directly connected with the institution to take notice of its academic reputation and contributions to the community and beyond.

Brand Statement

The following brand statements are the foundation upon which much of the College's marketing plan will be built:

1. Reach your Potential.
2. Climb

Mission

Our mission is to promote excellence in graduate teaching, research/creative activity, and professional growth. We are dedicated to ensuring the development and implementation of sound educational planning, policies, procedures, and standards for all graduate programs, including doctoral programs.

The Graduate College is responsible for overseeing and guiding strategic planning for graduate programs, promoting the accomplishments of KSU's Graduate Faculty, and students and advocating for graduate education to both internal and external constituents.

Market Niche

Providing hands-on and researched based innovative graduate degree programs to equip our graduating students with workplace-ready experience and knowledge or the ability to teach in higher education.

Loretta Daniels, MSCM
Executive Director of Communications and Strategic Planning
The Graduate College oversees and advances the University's graduate mission, establishing and maintaining institutional standards for graduate program quality while promoting the University's graduate enterprise.

In the last decade, Kennesaw State University has experienced dramatic changes. Between 1985 and 2016, the graduate student population increased from 276 to 2852. The University grew to 83 graduate degrees, certifications and programs, consolidated with Southern Polytechnic State University, and achieved an R3 Carnegie classification.

Concurrently, The Graduate College has expanded its research base by increasing graduate assistantships stipends from $50,000 to $3,000,000 - providing a research and learning infrastructure unprecedented in the history of the University.

The Graduate College Bridge Strategic Plan builds on this foundation, energizing the College's mission and vision. The plan plays a critical role in realizing the focus of the University to be a dynamic, student-centered, comprehensive doctoral institution committed to quality undergraduate and graduate education, collaboration, engagement, innovation, research and creative activity, and a supportive, inclusive environment.

Additionally, this plan provides visibility of the College's goals and strategic priorities and affirms the mission of developing graduate student and faculty success in the areas of curriculum, program development and research through initiatives which are designed to create opportunities for student growth academically, professionally, and personally.

Emphasis is placed on strategies for action over the next year and is designed to access the progress of each area and to evaluate and reevaluate the effectiveness of each strategic initiative.

The plan provides a framework for future planning and implementing new initiatives.
This section will explore some of the most effective methods of branding and marketing designed to attract the graduate student population.

Strategic planning and brand management require more than the standard advertising or distribution of promotional items. Instead, institutions must design, develop, present and manage a relatable branding message to gain a competitive edge [particularly in graduate education].

Marketing and branding efforts include both recruiting and retention. Communicating a brand successfully to graduate students, both current and prospective, requires strategic planning and implementing the current trends as listed in a 2014 article published in Trends in Higher Education Marketing, Recruitment, and Technology:

- **Responsive Website design**: Emphasizing on responsive web design to create intuitive and easy to navigate websites that can be viewed on multiple devices and platforms.
- **Search engine optimization**: Receiving a prominent spot in search engine results, particularly Google. Especially for niche programs.
- **Web analytics**: Relying on data-driven analytics to determine who, how, and where they are reaching their audiences.
- **Social media**: While recent polls indicate nearly every institution of higher education uses some form of social media, it is unclear that many are realizing any ROI on simply establishing Facebook or Twitter accounts.
- **Mobile development**: Adding mobile technology and connected devices which includes not only mobile versions of websites and other content but also making a greater amount of course content mobile-friendly.
- **CMS and CRM systems**: Harnessing “big data” as a tool for admissions professionals engaged in outreach to prospective students.

Additional trends include establishing relationships with:

- **University research center models**
- **Relationships Between Admissions and Counselors**
- **Relationships With Professors To Gain A Recruiting Edge**

To build a brand to attract the best graduate students, we need to identify employment opportunities beyond what the career center offers and build relationships with the faculty who know and can influence the decisions of college students.
LISTED BELOW ARE THE TOP 10 MOST EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR RECRUITING GRADUATE STUDENTS TO PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER ADVANCED DEGREES.

**FIGURE 1.1** shows the top 10 most effective practices as specified by public master’s institutions.

**FIGURE 1.2** shows the percentage of these respondents who use each of the ten tactics.

**FIGURE 1.3** shows where graduate students look for information.

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**Figure 1.1: Most Effective Practices at Public Institutions**

- **Assistantships awarded with a work obligation attached**: 58% very effective, 32% somewhat effective.
- **Follow up by phone with students with incomplete applications**: 58% very effective, 29% somewhat effective.
- **Search engine optimization to ensure we appear in search results**: 50% very effective, 25% somewhat effective.
- **Graduate program Web pages to attract inquiries**: 47% very effective, 39% somewhat effective.
- **Campus visits for admitted students**: 46% very effective, 39% somewhat effective.
- **Phone calls to admitted students from faculty**: 45% very effective, 51% somewhat effective.
- **Follow up by e-mail with students with incomplete applications**: 44% very effective, 51% somewhat effective.
- **Institutional aid awarded based on student financial need**: 39% very effective, 39% somewhat effective.
- **Open house and campus visit days to generate inquiries**: 39% very effective, 38% somewhat effective.
- **Web pages designed to enhance international student interest**: 35% very effective, 24% somewhat effective.

Source: Noel-Levitz

**Figure 1.2: Percent of Respondents Using Top 10 Recruiting Tactics**

- **Assistantships awarded with a work obligation attached**: 100% used.
- **Follow up by phone with students with incomplete applications**: 95% used.
- **Search engine optimization to ensure we appear in search results**: 82% used.
- **Graduate program Web pages to attract inquiries**: 82% used.
- **Campus visits for admitted students**: 62% used.
- **Phone calls to admitted students from faculty**: 62% used.
- **Follow up by e-mail with students with incomplete applications**: 61% used.
- **Institutional aid awarded based on student financial need**: 57% used.
- **Open house and campus visit days to generate inquiries**: 51% used.
- **Web pages designed to enhance international student interest**: 42% used.

Source: Noel-Levitz
**Figure 1.3** shows where graduate students look for information

STAMATS, 2013. *Adult Students TALK: Information Sources Used-Graduate Degree Students*. Survey Question: Which of the following do you use to find information about colleges or universities you might consider? (n=224). Multiple selections were allowed.
Employers are basing their hiring decisions on a combination of knowledge and skills.

![Pie Chart]

- 55% Knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position
- 29% A range of knowledge and skills that apply to a range of fields or positions
- 16% Both field-specific knowledge and skills and a broad range of knowledge and skills

Acquiring an advanced degree can make a significant difference in salary increases.

![Bar Chart]

- Humanities and Social Sciences: $19,500
- Professional and Preprofessional: $14,214
- Physical Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Mathematics: $33,560

Liberal Arts Graduates and Employment Setting the Record Straight, Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2014.
The Communication and Strategic Planning Office will bring about increased awareness of the role it plays in the lives of the graduate students attending Kennesaw State.

The Graduate College will launch a targeted awareness campaign by utilizing a variety of tactics to achieve the outlined campaign goals and objectives.

**Goal Summaries:**

1. Develop and launch a branding campaign that will provide visibility of all graduate degree and graduate certification programs offered by the University.
2. Develop marketing strategies centered around recruiting initiatives designed to increase visibility targeted to key internal and external audiences.
3. Expand efforts to position The Graduate College at Kennesaw State University as a nationally recognized university that offers degree programs the meet the needs of today's job force.
4. Create awareness to the local and regional companies about The Graduate College's business solutions through close collaboration with corporate, government and nonprofit partners.
5. Create awareness to the business community about The Graduate College's ability to provide business solutions through close collaboration with corporate, government, and nonprofit partners and a pipeline of world-class graduate students in the areas of leadership, research, and executive development.

**Proposed Marketing Objectives**

The strategies in this marketing plan are designed to emphasize our distinctive programs which make The Graduate College a leader in higher education.
Goal #1. Develop and launch a branding campaign that will provide visibility of all graduate degree and graduate certification programs offered by the University.

- **Strategy 1.1** Publish the TGC Magazine
- **Strategy 1.2** Publish a bi-monthly Newsletter
- **Strategy 1.3** Design overall degree program Brochures
- **Strategy 1.4** Digital Signage/OWL TV
- **Strategy 1.5** Develop a 2-Year Tagline
- **Strategy 1.6** Design a 2-Year Campaign Mark
- **Strategy 1.7** Create Social Media Accounts

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<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>TACTIC</th>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>Publish a bi-annual magazine starting in September 2017. The primary purpose of “The State of Graduate Education Magazine” is to present accurate and balanced stories that will intrigue the audience with the stature of the university, including its programs, alumni, faculty, administrators, and students. The magazine promotes The Graduate College as a world-class quality college that extends the reach of the campus to wherever people live, advocates the university’s core values and expresses The Graduate College (TGC) brand. The intent indirectly cultivates student and faculty recruitment, as well as foster relationships to cultivate alumni involvement, campus visits, and positive public relations.</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
<td>Publish a bi-monthly newsletter is to educate readers about the exciting new developments and ongoing programs.</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
<td>Design a two-year overall brochure (both domestic and international) for student recruitment and image development as a first look at The Graduate College degree programs. (See Exhibit A)</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
<td>Design OWL TV digital ads and announcements to promote graduate college programs, degrees, events, student and Graduate faculty accomplishments.</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>Create a tagline to assist in branding The Graduate College as a whole (all graduate degree programs offered by the university). The purpose is to capture the essence of our brand and to provide positive imagery out our programs. (See Exhibit B).</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>Design a 2-year campaign mark. The purpose of a campaign mark is to give a visual representation of the college's brand. It will be unique, eye-catchy and leave an unforgettable impression. It will be designed to convey the college's brand message and image effectively. (See Exhibit B)</td>
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<td>1.7 a</td>
<td>Manage and rebrand existing FB social media page to reflect current graduate college resources, events, and faculty mentorship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.7 b</td>
<td>Add new social media accounts such as Linkedin to promote graduate degree programs and certificates.</td>
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**Goal #2.** Develop marketing strategies centered around recruiting initiatives designed to increase visibility targeted to key internal and external audiences.

- **Strategy 2.1** Design events, promotional and marketing materials for The Graduate College Student Ambassador Program (GCSA).
- **Strategy 2.2** Develop and design recruiting materials for Graduate Fairs (National and International).
- **Strategy 2.3** Create recruitment collateral for Georgia-based College Program

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<td>2.1 a</td>
<td>Develop student informational events, campus tours, and overall graduate program open house sessions.</td>
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<td>2.1 b</td>
<td>Design GCSA tee-shirts for branding and recruitment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 c</td>
<td>Design marketing and promotional materials (e.g., pull-up banners, giveaways, and a graduate degree program brochure packet).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Design international brochures to promote overall graduate degree programs as well as promotions packets with program specific items.</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>Design recruitment videos to share with Georgia-based college program directors which both explain the process of referring interested students and testimonial videos from currently enrolled KSU graduate students.</td>
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Goal #3. Expand efforts to position The Graduate College at Kennesaw State University as a nationally recognized university that offers degree programs the meet the needs of today’s job force.

**Strategy 3.1** Create ongoing Press Releases

**Strategy 3.2** Design and publish annual reports for specific graduate degree programs

**Strategy 3.3** Develop an Expert Graduate Faculty and Staff Speakers Bureau

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<td>3.1 a</td>
<td>Create a public relations system designed to promote and share unique student, faculty and program achievements.</td>
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<td>3.1 b</td>
<td>Submit media alerts to select outlets to promote program recognition to regional, national and international audiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 a</td>
<td>Design and publish both printed and digital annual reports for The Graduate College to promote external visibility of program descriptions, student enrollment and demographics, faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 b</td>
<td>Provide content and design consultation for graduate degree programs interested in publishing an annual report to summarize the achievements of its graduate faculty and graduate students in the past year. The report will include financial achievements (e.g., research advances, scholarship, enrollment trends, degree programs and student enrollment).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 a</td>
<td>Create and maintain a list of Graduate Faculty and Staff who are prepared to speak on various topics for off-site venues based on their expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 b</td>
<td>Distribute expert speakers list to media, service clubs, and the local Chamber of Commerce.</td>
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Goal #4. Create awareness to the local and regional companies about The Graduate College's business solutions through close collaboration with corporate, government and nonprofit partners.

- **Strategy 4.1** Develop Social Media campaigns
- **Strategy 4.2** Design and conduct Marketing Research (Surveys and Focus Groups)
- **Strategy 4.3** Update and enhance Web Pages and Sites
- **Strategy 4.4** Design a Video Production Studio

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<td>4.1 a</td>
<td>Develop social media campaigns that focus on current student research and activities.</td>
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<td>4.1 b</td>
<td>Collaborate with GSA to create graduate student-managed blog designed to discuss current events and editorial postings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 a</td>
<td>Conduct TGC based surveys and focus groups to determine effectiveness of recruiting and marketing efforts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 b</td>
<td>Collaborate with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to conduct student and faculty surveys and focus group to determine behavior, needs, concerns, and program effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 c</td>
<td>Collaborate with the Office of Strategic Communications and Marketing to conduct research, demographics, behavior and other data for the purpose strategic planning, advertising, and marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 a</td>
<td>Update and enhance current website by adding new pages and sites as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 b</td>
<td>Add Google Analytics to all websites to gauge page and site activity and provide dashboard reports to all stakeholders.</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
<td>Design a video production studio used to create a series of video productions. The purpose of creating high-quality videos is to serve as the marketing hook. Prospective students are drawn to something different and unique—to something they can relate. The videos will consist college program commercials, student testimonials, orientation footage, and training sessions.</td>
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Goal #5. Create awareness to the business community about The Graduate College's ability to provide business solutions through close collaboration with corporate, government, and nonprofit partners and a pipeline of world-class graduate students in the areas of leadership, research, and executive development.

**Strategy 5.1** Design Marketing Package for The Graduate College Corporate Partnership Program (TGCCP)

**Strategy 5.2** Create and design a dedicated Website for The Graduate College Corporate Partnership Program

**Strategy 5.3** Publish a quarterly Alumni Newsletter

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<td>5.1</td>
<td>Design and develop marketing high-end marketing material and package for The Graduate College Corporate Partnership Program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Create and design a dedicated website for the purpose providing TGCCP description and enrollment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Collaborate with the Office of Alumni Relations to publish a quarterly newsletter featuring alumni, their career updates and additional higher education needs and aspirations.</td>
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The FY 2017-2018 budget (see Exhibit C) will reflect the vision, mission, and goals of The Graduate College. Its purpose is to fund existing and future goals, as the College deems necessary. Funds will be made available to ensure that the College continues to promote the prominence of its graduate degree programs and opportunities to its students, faculty, and staff.

**Funds**

Funds should be allotted for marketing and promotional materials to be produced and published to used for the purpose and branding and recruiting for all targeted audiences (internal and external).
Overall Graduate Degree Programs Brochure (Includes individual inserts representing each college offering graduate degrees.)
Exhibit B
2-Year TGC Tagline and Campaign Marks

2-Year TGC Taglines:
1. Reach Your Potential
2. Climb

2-Year TGC Campaign Marks: