

# Overview

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Aspirational/Cohort Institutions  
Recommendations

“Santa Monica College offers students a visionary and pragmatic way to approach education. It can be a stepping stone to a career and a global learning opportunity. The campus is beautiful and the setting is intellectual and supportive. SMC has blasted open the expectations of the community college experience.”

Santa Monica College Trustee

# Project Introduction

Goals

Research

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# Goals

Create a virtual 'coming out party' to reintroduce Santa Monica college to;

- the school's leadership
- other academic institutions
- thought leaders in the field
- current and prospective students locally and globally
- alumni
- current and prospective supporters
- Santa Monica and extended community/community leaders

Develop a communication plan that fuels the College's upward trajectory

# Research to discover:

How current constituencies — internal and external — perceive the College's distinctions, assets, and vulnerabilities

How the College's unique brand assets and distinctions can be communicated to all constituencies

How best to visually and editorially express the Santa Monica College identity

How to strategically communicate what sets the College apart from cohort institutions, and sets it on a path with aspirational institutions.

# Deliverables

A situational analysis, based on review of existing and new data from Santa Monica College and from a positioning assessment of cohort and aspirational Colleges/Universities

Brand platform, including an identity statement, a set of messages targeted to external and external constituencies, and a recommended set of communication vehicles

Visual expression of the College's identity

# Discovery Process

*One-on-one conversations with:*

- Dr. Chui L. Tsang, superintendent and president
- Ruth Seymour, key supporter/consultant and former general manager of KCRW
- Teresita Rodriguez, VP of enrollment development
- Sonali Bridges, associate dean, outreach and recruitment
- Don Girard, senior director, government relations and institutional communications
- Trustees
- Parents of current students

*Review of current Santa Monica College print and digital communications*

# Discovery Process

Workshop convergence (long groups) will be

- Students (2 groups)
- Alumni
- Foundation board members
- Faculty
- Enrollment development/outreach team
- Supporters/volunteers

Audit of cohort/aspirational institutions

# Research Findings

Assets

Challenges and Vulnerabilities

# Assets

“The quality of the education is excellent. We have university-level professors teaching at a community college. The faculty is happy, motivated, and here for the right reasons — we come here for the students and we stay here for the students.  
**faculty**

“It’s a very open and welcoming environment, and the student body is so diverse. There are students from all over the world. I think that adds to the education we’re getting.  
**student**

“You can’t argue with the results. Having the highest transfer rate for the U.C. system, the Cal State system and USC — that’s huge. It’s due to the school offering strong support and the students coming in focused and motivated.  
**staff member**

## Location

- In Santa Monica, a place known as a creative incubator and a trend-maker
- Access to all L.A. has to offer
- Beautiful campus, close to the beach
- Close to top-ranked universities with strong relationship ties, e.g. USC and UCLA

## High-performing results

- Transfer rate
- Preparing students to succeed
- Excellent retention rate for students after they transfer

Quality of education

- Teachers committed to teaching
- University-level teachers

Diversity of student body

- Mix of local and international students enhances learning; prepares students to be ‘global citizens’

## Reputation

- Regarded as one of the best community colleges in U.S.
- Drawing students from far and near

## Commitment to innovation

- Creative solutions pursued and encouraged

## Inviting and friendly

- Warm, open feeling for students/staff/faculty

# Challenges and Vulnerabilities

Santa Monica College Strategy, Identity • August 2011

Peterson Skolnick & Dodge • *Miriam Moroka*

“The messaging from the college has not kept up with what it actually has to offer.”

**SMC Foundation Board member**

“AAAAAH!!! My son passed up the chance to go to a Cal State school because he was told he could develop his athletic ability here while earning credits and preparing to transfer. But now, he can't get any of the classes he needs. Nothing he is taking this fall will even count toward transfer. What's the point?”

**parent**

“The communication needs to be better — from the website to counseling to just how to get around this place. And lots of departments don't answer the phone. Getting the information we need is harder than it should be.”

**student**

Challenges created by education funding shortfall; state of California economic woes

Course availability, better coordinated advising resources — current resources can be perceived as duplicative and non-productive

Need for a single, coherent, comprehensive ‘calling-card’ message and vehicle

Website is difficult to navigate

Basic information (registration, financial aid, etc.) needs to be given to students in ways they can understand easily

Space — for new facilities, parking, etc.