EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report was compiled from a series of ten focus groups and written surveys conducted by my firm and Susan Shaw of UWF. The schools were contacted and asked to supply 10 to 12 students who were in student government, National Honor Society, Beta or a combination thereof. The written surveys were given to larger blocks of students within the aforementioned organizations.

The participating schools were identified during the course of meeting with members of the marketing communications team as well as the recruitment staff from the university. In addition to aiding in the process of selecting schools these same UWF staff members assisted with the focus group objective development and the creation of the written survey questions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to conduct this research on behalf of the University of West Florida. If I may be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 850.712.0538 or sabrina@insightfulconcepts.com.

Best Regards,

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GOAL & OBJECTIVES

GOAL
To develop marketing materials which are functional and appealing to those being recruited to attend the University of West Florida.

OBJECTIVES
- To determine how high school students prefer to receive recruiting materials and information about attending a college/university.
- To determine what factors high school students consider when selecting a college/university to attend.
- To determine what appeals aesthetically to high school students and offers the most visual appeal making them want to open up, read and/or use recruiting materials.
- To determine what high school students know and feel about UWF.
- To determine what would make a high school student select UWF as their 4-year institution of choice.
- To determine what theme/approach the recruiting materials should utilize to be attractive to high school students.
- To determine what steps UWF must take become the most admired, respected and student-selected regional university in America?
All students are dual enrolled at Chipola or will be dual enrolled by the summer. In addition, one of the students was a “Top 5” and already committed to UWF.

WHAT YOU THINK OF WHEN SOMEONE MENTIONS UWF?

- Really “cool” extra curricular activities: karate, wall climbing, fencing and things like that.
- It’s close.
- The area is safe and not far from home.
- Many of the students have family living in or near Pensacola.
- “We know a lot of people that went there.”
- Don’t know a lot about the programs that are offered, but would like to know more about what they offer.
- “Career opportunities, but a longer drive.”

WHAT COULD UWF DO TO MAKE IT A MORE RESPECTED SCHOOL?

- “I love the Troy spots that show what the alumni are doing...like to see that alumni are doing really well in their lives...they are showing us results.” Mentioned specifically the radio spots that Troy did.
- Officer turnout for the ROTC program and the careers — I want to see what they are turning out in terms of scores and training. Also, for those interested in the medical fields (had 5 of the participants in medical related fields) would love to know that UWF has the highest acceptance rate to medical school in the state.
WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A COLLEGE?

- “What percentages of students go on for higher degrees.”
- “Clean and well-kept.”
- Parents number one concern is how much it costs per semester and how far away it is from them. They want to know if it is safe.
- Want to make sure dual enrollment transfer credits will be accepted.
- “College materials are sometimes deceiving.”
- Looking at the scores they take from the ACT/SAT scores. Specifically what kind of scholarships can I get based on scores and what are the minimum requirements.
- “I would like to know that a school is looking at what I did in terms of extra curricular activities, teacher recommendations, leadership skills and grades over a score on a test. Some people are just good test takers and it is not fair that some scholarships or enrollment is determined just based on test scores.”
- In going through orientation I would like to hear from current students (maybe seniors), not just the advisors.
- “It’s all about the money. I want to know about everything in terms of the finances — I worry about the unexpected expenses. In addition to that information I would like to know what job opportunities are in the area. My brochure from Yale actually gave the minimum wage for enrolled students.”
HOW DO YOU PREFER TO BE COMMUNICATED WITH IN TERMS OF COLLEGE RECRUITMENT MATERIALS?

- All agree that they prefer things in the mail.
- Likes look books, catalogs and things that explain information vs. generalizations…not just a post card! At least like to be told where to go on the website to find the complete book.
- If they put things on the website it needs to be easy to navigate.
- Would like to see recommendations on course work as you progress through the degree. Also, it should be very clear by career path and not just major. We care about what we can do with that degree. We look by jobs because that is what matters in the end.
- “Show what the campus looks like; a big fold out piece with detailed information about the school.”
- If you have a reply card to get more info and I return it, don’t send me the same thing again. Send me another piece.
- “I like to know that the environment is small and friendly.”

WHAT DO YOU LIKE VISUALLY?

- Pictures of the campus — aerial views. Don’t show us the one pretty building or just people. No cheesy grins. Don’t try to “sell” me on that’s what I’ll look like that if I go there. I want to see the campus.
- I never really read the testimonials. I just want to see successful people and identify with them based on what I want to do and how I can be successful doing that same job.

HOW DO YOU VIEW COMPLETING A DEGREE?

- Most of them will finish up at Chipola and then go off to another college because they will be so close to finishing—that gives them an “AA” which will allow them to get a job and finish up a bachelor’s degree while working.
As an observation this group of students asked as many questions of the moderator as she did of them. These were some of the top students who hold leadership positions within the school and all planning to attend college. These students are desperate for UWF representation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU HEAR UWF?

- Tight community, but that you have variety.
- “The beach.”
- “Medium sized university.”
- “Good soccer program.”
- “I don’t really know too much about UWF.”
- According the to the teacher who supplied the students, “UWF has done a great job of re-establishing their presence here.”
- “FSU and UF are more recognizable because of the sports and different events and sometimes UWF gets lost in the shuffle.”

HOW DO YOU PREFER TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGES?

- “Getting mail makes me feel special.”
- My parents typically see the mail before me and then will look online.
- All participants in the room use the website to review a school and prefer a piece that has actually been mailed to them. They ignore emails and think of it as SPAM.
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A COLLEGE?

- “I like to see what the campus looks like, what their majors are and the actual coursework. I also like to see if they have a football team and if they are going to accept my AP classes.”
- Half and half considering in-state versus out-of-state.
- “Our grades should reflect more than just that one test. Some people just don’t take tests well, but they have great grades and lots of extra stuff. You want people who are well rounded, not just good test-takers.”
- “I want to feel secure - I want to make sure that I can be safe and walk around and not worry.”
- Sophistication.
- I want to have fun and at the same time pursue my career.

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN RECRUITING MATERIALS?

- I like to see the campus.
- Information on certain programs, study abroad opportunities, etc.
- If it “looks really cool” that’s what I look for. Not people.
- “I want to know the student/teacher ratio.”
- “I want to make sure what they offer is something I will be able to get a degree in and then have a successful career in.”
- “That it’s a legitimate university, but that it is small.”

WHAT NEGATIVES TURN YOU OFF ABOUT A SCHOOL?

- Cold weather.
- Reputation as a party school.
- If any of the professors have had trouble with the law. They need to have a clean reputation.
- Food service is an important issue.
- “When I think of honors program I think of a lot of extra work.”
WHAT POSITIVES ABOUT A COLLEGE DO YOU LOOK FOR?

- Do the students give back to the community?
- Is it a liberal campus? If so, that’s a big turn off for me.
- How the campus is integrated. Student demographics.
- “It’s like Panama City, but it’s away in a different environment.”
- “Can they help place you in jobs and internships?”
- “Knowing what kind of part time job I can get in Pensacola or on campus and what I can expect to make.”
- “Showing me the safety statistics and promoting how you keep your students safe.”

WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU COME OVER FOR A CAMPUS VISIT?

- We want you to come here and talk to us.
- “The President coming over would make us want to go there. It would really show us that UWF cares especially if the President brought over students who graduated from Mosley.”
- An overnight program that allows you to experience a class, a tour, staying in the dorms with a current student. That is a program that gives you a “real experience.”

WHAT ARE YOUR PARENTS TELLING YOU?

- Make sure that my major is going to get me where I want to go.
- Make sure that I have the “drive” to do it.
- Cost considerations for tuition and scholarships.

WHY WOULD YOU PICK UWF?

- Student/Teacher ratio.
- Location.
- I can be successful.
WHAT COMES INTO YOUR MIND WHEN I SAY UWF?

- Pensacola
- “I don’t know much about it except that it is a small school.”
- “Small classes like what we have here.”
- “I consider it to get my course work started.”
- “It is really close to home.”

WHEN YOU LOOK AT SCHOOLS, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

- Majors and how strong the program is at that school.
- The environment is really important. In a “college town” it seems there is less opportunity for jobs and activities.
- Safety. “I was accepted to a school in Jacksonville, but I don’t think that town is very safe, so I probably won’t go there.”
- The way that the curriculum is setup to graduate. “I am already enrolled at Flagler and they let me have two majors and a minor instead of just a major and minor or double major.”
- “I think about how work-ready I’ll be.” They want to walk out of school and into a job.
- Class size is a factor for suiting different people’s needs. Some people need smaller classes.
- Dorms are really important.
- None of these students knew what an honors program was and how it functions.
- “I am looking for sororities and other activities to be a part of.”
- The first contact person (admissions, welcome center or whoever) is so important. “I was interviewed by an admissions counselor at one school who made me feel bad about going to school online. Don’t put yourself on a pedestal.”
- “I have been impressed by the schools that simply start by asking, “what do you want to do or what are you interested in.” And that’s what they showed me first and foremost about the school.”
WHEN YOU LOOK AT SCHOOLS, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? (CONT.)

- Our buildings have numbers; our students have names.

- I am looking for a school that is really organized. “When I was accepted to UWF, I got a login to Lighthouse and it is really well organized and keeps me organized to get everything in.”

- “Show me one place to search for scholarships and financial aid info. Flager actually filled out my FASHA application for me.”

WHAT DO YOU RESPOND TO IN TERMS OF RECRUITING MATERIALS?

- The group was split between email and hard copy print pieces.

- I like pictures of the campus. Show me the campus and tell me where it is. “I got something from Huntington College and the only thing that told me where it was is the mailing address.”

- The website is the most critical informational tool. “I want to know what the admission requirements are, the programs, pictures of the campus, and campus life.”

- “I would rather go to a school that looked at me as a whole person instead of just a person who is a good test taker.”

- “Wake Forrest doesn’t even ask. That tells me they are looking for a well-rounded student. Some people have test anxiety, but that doesn’t mean I won’t be a good student.”

- I would rather get brochures/booklets and not post cards.

- “Stop sending me the same thing over and over again.”

- “I got a piece from Huntington College that said why come to our school “Because our squirrels have personality and you’ll love our fried chicken.” Don’t try and insult me or be funny. Be somewhat serious and act like you really want me there.”

- “I like when you can tell that I got a brochure on purpose. They seem interested in what interests me and that really does matter and show me that you care.”

- “Invite me and make it personal. I want to hear from the specific schools or departments in that university.”
WHAT CAN UWF DO TO MAKE THEMSELVES MORE ADMIREd AND RESPECTED?

• “This right here. Having people come out here and talk to us face-to-face. Not a general assembly. Small groups would be the key to spark an interest with me.”

• I would like to know what UWF has accomplished.

• “I know that sports is big at FSU, but you can still promote the sports that you have because they are nationally ranked in D2.”

• Tell me that I can get to know my instructors on a personal level.

WHAT ARE YOUR PARENTS SAYING TO YOU ABOUT SCHOOLS?

• “Don’t leave.” That’s why UWF is so great is because Pensacola is just far enough, but not too far.

• My parents stress that everything counts, take your ACTs and don’t slack off.

• Most of the parents of these students didn’t go to college and if they did they are not pressuring them to go to “their school”.

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FOCUS GROUP

Transcript Summary
South Walton High School
Students Participating: 10
The majority of the students are Anchor and Key club students, but are all honors students. Two of the ten are going to attend UWF.

What is the first thing you think of when we say UWF?

- Pensacola
- The most western side of Florida
- Argonauts
- Green
- Homey — close to where we are from and looks like where we are from
- Most of the students are healthy who go there.

What do you like in recruiting materials?

- All of our materials come at the same time and look alike.
- All of the students prefer print to email. “We get so much email that we don’t know what’s important.”
- “I like to see my name on the brochure/booklet and what the campus looks like. Those are the ones that stand out and that I open.”
- “I got one that had a letter from a student on it and had things from a student’s perspective that most people wouldn’t know.”
- Graphically, we want it to be visually appealing to me. “No scary, serious college type thing. I don’t like it. Make it colorful and look inviting.”
- The big brochures make me feel important. “I got this goofy poster in the mail and I totally didn’t read it. What would I want with a poster?” Several of the students also agreed with this point.
- Give me information on the programs/major as well as the location. I am looking for certain types of jobs and a school that is in Florida.
- I also look for sports facilities — tell me what we can do when we are not in class, i.e. list of intramurals, activities, surrounding area.
- Housing is huge to everyone in the session. “I am not sleeping in my car. I also want my own bathroom and want to see how big the room is. I really want to try and live on campus.”
WHAT DO YOU LIKE IN RECRUITING MATERIALS? (CONT.)

- Tuition and fees are really important.
- All of the participants use the website to get information, but they all agreed that the sites seem to be laid out for students who are already there and know what's going on. “It should also be geared to perspective students and easy to navigate.”
- On the site show me information on your majors, pictures of the campus and your costs.
- “Anything that you can do to make it not overwhelming to me.”

ANYTHING THAT UWF COULD DO TO MAKE IT MORE PRESTIGIOUS AND/OR ATTEND?

- Free swag with free food.
- “Invite me to come in a personal way.”
- The teacher in the session commented that if you walked into any of our honors classes and asked them to write down the first three schools that popped in your head, 90% of them wouldn’t have UWF on the list.
- “Tell me about your honors programs and other information that is personal to me. Send me something and let me tell you what I am interested in.”
- “Send me a letter — but nothing that says “Dear Prospective Student.””
- “I would like to see specific information on what that major can do for me, like what the professors have done, etc.”
- The teacher also noted that if you provide comparison on tuition between UWF and the schools the students are considering like FSU and UF. You can also provide other comparisons.
- If you could lower or remove the ACT/SAT scores that would be wonderful. Those scores don’t tell anyone if you will do well at college. If you lower the score to let people in, I make an assumption about that school — that they are not going to challenge or push me. Just take it off and you’ll get students like me who have a high score, but not intimidate students who will do well and not just test well.
Anything that UWF could do to make it more prestigious and/or attend? (Cont.)

- All students agreed that if UWF pushed looking at the student as a whole instead of scores they would get a better crop and more students interested.

- The teacher pointed out that they have kids here who have 30+ and you wouldn’t want them on your college campus.

- The students also agreed that most schools just look at you as a number and that you are on a random list. “It should be personal, you should say that you want us there.”

- “I want to hear from an alumni. Don’t have it come from a professor that is paid say that.”

- “It would be attractive to have a student from this high school, come back here when they show up for college fairs.”

- “I would like to meet the professors who teach in the major I am interested in.”

- If UWF sent us a letter with information in it, an email (and phone number) to a professor there would be great for that personal touch. “If you want to be 21st century, someone I can text.”

- The teacher also pointed out that many kids (because this is a rural community) think they cannot go to school because of the expense.
WHAT IS THE FIRST THOUGHT THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN I SAY UWF?

- West of me.
- All of the participants said small.
- Close.

WHAT KIND OF RECRUITING MATERIAL HAVE YOU SEEN THAT HAS IMPRESSED YOU?

- How the website is laid out is HUGE. It’s the number one thing that I use.
- Indiana would send me postcards that were very personal. They had “Go Brad, Go Niceville.”
- “I want to see your trees and buildings. I don’t want to see students smiling in front of a camera. Show me your campus. I want to see specifically what your college looks like. I want aesthetically pleasing.”
- “I love to see stats, like average GPA.”
- “I got mail from the colleges that I was looking at that encouraged me to vote during the election. It was unexpected and it made me think that you should be connected with the world around me.”
- “I hate that you actually have to get off the school’s site and Google something like average SAT score just to find it. That’s crazy.”
- “I like to see ranges when it comes to ACT and SAT scores — that it is not a specific score.”
- “I was attracted to the University of Chicago because they said that their standardized test scores take a back set to everything else that you do as a student…my grades, teacher recommendations and my activities.”
- “I don’t know. That would make me skeptical (not using ACT/SAT scores). Just like you can’t just look at grades. Here some teachers are easier, so some people have inflated GPAs.”
- “In my experience standardized tests either show two kinds of student — either students who have a horrible work ethic in school to obtain good grades and just test really well and you have students who have glaring weaknesses in certain testing areas — but what about those of us who are caught in the middle.”
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A COLLEGE WHEN YOU DECIDE?

- “I was really drawn to University of Chicago because I was studying my favorite author and found out that he went there. Information about successful alumni is huge.”
- “The majors and programs of study.”
- “How the school is ranked is a huge factor as well as their website.”
- “If a school takes the time to be professional than they are worthy of my time.” A school's website is the first impression . . . as if you were meeting a person.”
- “The school that I am going to has students in the admission's office blogging about their experiences, answering questions and just having conversations with prospects.”
- “Schools should really own up to what you are best at and promote those programs, so they get the best students who apply there.”

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO?

- “I am excited to be a Tiger, Knight or Gator.”
- “You have a clean slate and don’t bring your baggage from high school.”
- “Getting away from here.”
- “UCF brings you in and let’s you stay in the dorm with an actual student. Very cool!”
- “UWF doesn’t get their name out there like the other D1 schools.”
- “The rec center is so amazing, so why wouldn’t you feature it? Tell the story about how it got wreaked during Ivan.”
This session was conducted with students from the National Honor Society. Of the students one was committed to Ole Miss, one to Auburn, one to FSU and one to Purdue. In addition, all of the participants were in the top 20 including both students tied for number one as well as the number two student.

WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN I SAY UWF?

- “Close to home.”
- “I know a lot of people who go there. I am going there too.”
- “Close to home, but far enough away.”

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A SCHOOL?

- Scholarship opportunities.
- I want to see specific information on my major.
- “Intramural sports.”
WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN RECRUITING MATERIALS?

- I toss it if it is from an out of state school.
- Over half of the students will stay in state because of Bright Futures.
- The group was split between email and mail, but many like both. “I like getting large packages with lots of information — everything that I need.”
- “I like the big catalogs.”
- If it is just a post card or just a business-sized envelope I ignore it.
- If they send me an email send me links within that email to find the most basic questions people like me have. “I like freshman specific information on programs, dorm information, admissions, starting college, applying, all of that.”
- All of the participants use the website for most of their information and are really relying on it as a tool. One student noted Ole Miss’ site for incoming freshman that includes a timetable, all of the deadlines, forms (all in the order in which you should do them), etc.
- “I really like video tours of the campus, but some are obnoxious. Overkill of the students looking to ‘peppy’ or silly — like they are trying to be happy.”
- “I actually looked on the UWF calendar to find their spring break and I couldn’t find it immediately. It took me forever.”
- After I am accepted I like a university that sends me check lists or reminders about what I should do and when.
- Make contact information for departments/programs really accessible. Both email and phone numbers are important. The group was split half and half on preference.
- I use “RateMyProfessor.com” already even before I apply for admissions. I want to see overall what the professors in their departments are like and how they are rated.
WHAT CAN UWF DO TO MAKE THEM MORE REPUTABLE OR DESIRED AS A SCHOOL?

- Money is the biggest factor for everyone in the group and in fact several of them would have stayed in state, but the other schools offered them more money.

- Even though several of the students had 30+ ACT scores they all agreed that an institution that looked beyond a standardized test and more at the students' grades, activities, essays, letters of recommendations, etc. would be really attractive. “There is so much pressure on it and some people are just good test takers.”

- Only one of the participants knew about the “Top 5 Scholarships.”

- Student activities are not really a determining factor. “It is just a plus.”

- Make more information available on research opportunities, study abroad and things that really make UWF stand out or show that compete with the big schools.

- “Purdue is pretty ridiculous. You have to get a 34 on your ACT for the school and then a 31 specifically for my major to get into their honors program.”

- No one in the session had received information on the honors program for UWF, even though they were all in the top 20. In addition, the one student who has committed to UWF had not received the information — she was the student who is ranked number 2 in the class.

WHAT ARE YOUR PARENTS SAYING?

- “Check on your deadlines.”

- “Go to college or I will force you to go to school.”

- “My mom actually made me a to-do list.”

- “My parents have been very involved, but my mom has taken me to the campus, reviewed my essays, reminded me of deadlines, etc.”
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU HEAR UWF?

- I’ll be going there. It is a great location for me to get a wonderful education.
- “UWF offered me less money than any of the other state universities ($4,000 less to be exact).”
- I used to think that I didn’t want to go there. No one knows about it because they don’t have a football team.
- I am in the archaeology class here and they are so amazing about working with us. The professors are great and they let us use their equipment.
- It’s so close. I just want to see and experience more...rather than go somewhere just down the road.
- I am already so comfortable here I just want a totally new experience.
- “My mom went there.”
- “I think of that poem the Chambered Nautilus.”
- When asked if they knew who Jason and the Argonauts were, the majority of the class knew what the mascot represented and knew it was different from the logo.

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY?

- Student life. I want to be able to have fun while I am there.
- “Dorm life is very important. I have been to schools where I thought I would NEVER live here.”
- I don’t like the HUGE freshman classes, so the student/teacher ratio is very important.
- Finding the right learning environment is important.
- Majors. If they don’t have the programs nothing else matters.
- Financial aid. “I need to know how I am going to pay for school and if I can afford it.”
- “I look for a school that wants to help me. They should care about every single person as an individual.”
- Safety is important! Several shared stories about visits at other schools that really showed they care about the safety of their students.
WHAT DO YOU RESPOND TO IN TERMS OF RECRUITING?

- “I feel important when I get to open up a big envelope from a school. Much rather have that than an email.”

- “I would like to get information directly from the program/major, not just the general information. It would be personal and make me feel like you were really aware of what I wanted to do at your school.”

- “I have been working with Katie Condon and she was awesome. She said that if you want me to set up an appointment with the department head and I couldn’t believe that she could even do that.”

- “I would like to hear from the students and what they think about the program. Tell me that I could call one of your students and talk to them. It makes it more believable.”

- “I don’t like post cards. You are not on vacation. Put a letter in an envelope and put a stamp on it. I am important.”

- “My big thing is Bright Futures, so I have to go to a Florida school.”

- “I want to see students interacting, but NOT something posed... things that show real interaction. Candid shots. I don’t know about having professors in the piece.”

WHAT CAN UWF DO TO MAKE THEM MORE DESIRABLE?

- Get a football team.

- UWF needs more promotional items like t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc. “It makes you feel like you belong and you want to show your pride for where you go. I see more stuff out from PJC.”

- Billboards that you have up are in terms of the facts. “I want to know that people who graduate from there are successful.”

- “You should promote the sports that you do well even more so because you are in the top.”

- “Your community outreach is really important. I went to a physics competition and the workshop on student government and both were really great. Basically if you can get us on campus for anything like that is a really great way to promote your school.”

- The sign at the back entrance and the landscaping should be improved because that’s really the entrance I think of as the front entrance. To those of us who live in Milton and Pace that is our first impression and it is NOT impressive at all. PJC has up banners and is very inviting.”
WHAT OTHER THINGS MAKES UWF STAND OUT TO YOU?

- “Really cool student classes and activities like rock climbing, pilates, intramural sports.”
- Only a couple of students were interested in sororities/fraternities.
- “I would like to know more about your honors program. I was accepted to FSU and they immediately sent me stuff and I didn’t get anything from you.”
- “I only got one thing from UWF and it was a post card.”
- “I went on a campus tour a couple of weeks ago and that was the first time I was on campus. That’s what sold me.”
- “Send me a letter and invite me. We are excited to just get mail.” All of the students said that if they get mail with their name on it, it is read.
- “I didn’t get my scholarship offer from UWF until two weeks ago and that’s ridiculous. I got all of my other offers months ago and I applied everywhere at the same time...back in September.
- Recruit to students based on the fact we are in AP classes, not just because we end up a list for scoring high on ACT. I got a 31 and I would rather know you are sending me stuff for another reason.
- “Stalk me. UCF sent me stuff that told me they knew what I was interested in. I send off the cards that come in the brochures asking to tell them what programs I am interested in.”
- “With other colleges you hear about where their programs rank and what the professors have accomplished. With us being so close you just take it for granted.”
- “You get all of this stuff from UCF, FSU, and then the school down the road doesn’t want me that is not good.”
- “Give me in-depth information not just superficial stuff.”
- “People should know where your professors have taught. How awesome is that to know you are getting more one-on-one time with a professor who taught at Princeton.”
- “Bring in students who graduated from Milton who are successful UWF.”
It is interesting to note that eight of the ten participants in the room are in the IB program. Seven of the students have toured other campuses (Duke, Yale, Tuskegee, Oklahoma State, Stanford, USA Florida Gulf Coast).

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU HEAR UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA?

- The environmental sciences program.
- The library. “I use the library there.”
- “Trees”
- Big swimming pool and nice soccer fields.
- The shell.
- I cringe because it reminds me of staying at home!
- I’ll go there at least my first year so I can get one-on-one time with my professors that I know I won’t get at a bigger school.
- I think about the archeology program.
- “I think UWF is pretty good in terms of their athletics for their division.” Most in the group agreed that you should tell people what sports you do well in because most people don’t know.
- “I like that the campus has so much land.”

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A SCHOOL?

- Most agreed that they think people would be more likely to apply if you showed students that you looked beyond ACT/SAT scores.
- Invite me to campus—when you invite me tell me what you are going to show me while I am on campus.
- I would like to know what’s on campus for students to do — what clubs they have, activities, intramural sports, etc.
- Would like to know if you have sororities and fraternities available.
- “When I toured Florida Gulf Coast all of the students seemed busy with things and seemed happy.”
- Dorms. “I am not high maintenance, but it is nice to see where you will be living.”
- Architecture and history of the university.
- “Don’t just show us the best dorm. Show us the honors dorm, the cheaper dorms and any other options.”
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN RECRUITING MATERIALS?

- Most in the group like the printed materials. It is more personal.
- “I actually don’t like mail. I throw it away.”
- Most agreed that they want to see pictures of the landscape and layout of the school.
- “I like “to the point” brochures because I don’t like to read a lot.”
- If something is addressed to me and from the department that I am interested in, I would read it. I would read a letter.
- Several freshmen were part of this group and they felt that they would like to see materials as early as their sophomore year.
- If I get something that encourages me to go to the website for more information I will visit the site.
- I like a site that is straightforward, easy to navigate and find answers to questions I have. “It is really hard to find information on costs, core classes and admission requirements.” That information should be prominent. Also, we should be able to easily see specifically what classes I’ll need to take to get the degree.

WHAT CAN UWF DO TO BE PERCEIVED AS A SCHOOL OF CHOICE?

- I would like to know how successful the alumni are.
- Letting us know about prestigious awards.
- “When you click into a program on your website, put a successful graduate right there. You could also put that information in a letter if you send one to me.”
- “Maybe something that shows not only will going to UWF help you the four years that you are there, but what careers you can go into after you graduate.”

WHAT ARE YOUR PARENTS SAYING?

- The group was mixed on staying in Florida for school or moving away to go to school.
- “Get scholarships and apply for everything.”
It is important to note that this focus group was conducted inside of a class built around marketing projects and students interested in marketing.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN WE SAY UWF?

- Natural type setting.
- Too close to home.
- “U Will Fail”
- My brother (who attends UWF) says there are a lot of activities and he really likes it.
- “I think that it is really hard to get in to. A lot of people I know applied and did not get accepted.”
- “I down play the school because we have it in our back yard. I don’t think of it as a “university.”
- Teacher noted that in the 80’s they published a lot of information that the freshman student drop out rate was extremely high.
- “My brother said that it is easier to take the general education classes at PJC and then go to UWF.”
- “Why would I go to UWF, it’s like being in high school again.”
- “I think that it is convenient.”
- “A lot of kids around Pensacola don’t like UWF because it is not a party school.”

WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO GO TO UWF AND NOT GO TO A COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

- Go ahead and get accustomed to a four-year setting.
- A better understanding about what makes UWF different in terms of activities, programs, etc.
HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE COMMUNICATED WITH?

- The class was split between a preference of online and printed materials.
- Do not keep sending me the same thing. Do not overwhelm me with stuff. “If I don’t respond, stop sending things to me. It really annoys me.”
- “If you have a MySpace page, you should just send us a brochure or something that told us to visit your page.”

WHAT DO YOU RESPOND TO IN MARKETING PIECES?

- Security is not really an important issue because we live here and we know the area.
- I would rather hear it from my peers and know what they think.
- We want to know what activities are offered and what careers I can get with the degree. “I would really like to hear from someone working in the career vs. someone still in school.” It is important to see if they were successful or not.
- We don’t really care that the school is close to the beach, but people outside of our area would. Especially those who you are marketing to in the north.
- “I would like something that allows me to tell you what kind of information that I want.”
- “PJC sent us a CD that had all of the information we needed.” The majority of the class agreed that if you gave them something to put in the computer they would want to check it out as opposed to visiting a website.
WHAT KIND OF THINGS ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A COLLEGE?

- Sports
- Sorority/Fraternity
- What I major in.
- “If you go to FSU, then you have a great football team to associate yourself with. It’s tradition and I want that.”
- “I have no idea what your mascot is. That is so confusing.” After discussion about the new logo launch, the class agreed that an education campaign about what the mascot is and where it came from would be really very helpful.
- “We don’t know about UWF because they don’t have a football team.” A sport serves as a built-in “advertising” method.

WHAT COULD UWF DO OR SAY THAT WOULD MAKE THEM MORE RESPECTED?

- Tout that famous people have graduated from UWF. “I saw that students from UWF discovered those shipwrecks.”
- “I am impressed that six astronauts graduated from UWF.”
- “I am impressed by athletes who came from UWF.”
- “Not really impressed that the Florida’s Professor of the Year came from there.”
- The teacher noted that we are not diverse in the programs that are offered. It seems that everything revolves around the archeology and marine biology programs.
FOCUS GROUP

Transcript Summary
UWF Emerald Coast Transfer Students
Students Participating: 11

The following statements were made during a brief focus group session with a class of UWF Emerald Coast transfer students.

WHAT DO YOU PREFER TO SEE WHEN YOU RECEIVE RECRUITMENT MATERIALS?

- “I am most concerned with the programs.”
- “I like to see the actual environment – don’t show me head shots of students.”
- “Personalize the information to me as a transfer or non-traditional student. Everything that UWF does is cookie-cutter and lacks personal touch.”

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ISSUES THAT YOU HAVE NOTED SINCE STARTING SCHOOL HERE AS A TRANSFER STUDENT?

- “I want you to show me that your programs, classes and the campus itself is also accessible to me as a non-traditional student. I get stuff from main campus and it has nothing to do with me. Unfortunately, this campus is touted as a place where I can receive all of my course work and as it turns out—it is not. I feel really deceived.”
- “In the communication arts department we can’t even get advised over here nor can we get most of our classes. I feel that I was pretty much lied to about this being an accessible campus and when I do take classes in Pensacola they forget that I am a non-traditional student.”
- “When I registered I received UWF’s information and clearly they didn’t even pay attention to the fact that I was a transfer student. I had forms and information that pertained mostly to incoming freshman. No wonder people are leaving here and going to Troy, FSU in Panama City or one of the new four-year programs at NWFSC.”
The information below represents the aggregate totals from the students’ responses:

1. WHAT FACTORS DO YOU CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY TO ATTEND?

- The most important reason was degree programs offered, second most important was tuition and fees, third was location and fourth was student activities. All other options were of minor consequence to the survey respondents.

2. HOW DO YOU RANK THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOURCES THAT YOU RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL COLLEGES OR UNIVERSITIES FROM?

- The most important way they receive information is via printed materials, second to the college’s website and third via word of mouth. Social media and emails were significantly smaller in numbers by comparison.

3. WOULD YOU PREFER A PRINTED BROCHURE MAILED TO YOUR HOME OR A DIGITAL COMMUNICATION VIA EMAIL?

- 80% (245 respondents) said that they prefer regular mail versus emailed materials.

4. ON A SCALE OF 0-10 HOW LIKELY WOULD YOU BE TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA?

- 47% of the respondents ranked this question between a 3 and a 5 on the scale.

5. PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY YOU SELECTED THE ABOVE RANKING WITH REGARDS TO YOUR LIKELINESS TO ATTEND UWF: (SOME OF THE OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION INCLUDED)

- I am considering another school – 64
- I haven’t really heard of that school/I don’t know anything about it – 25
- “It is close to home” - 18
- UWF doesn’t have the majors I am looking for – 4
- I want to be further away from home” - 2
- I have heard good things about it - 2
5. CONTINUED...

• “The academic reputation is very good.”
• “The availability of scholarships is high.”
• “The academic reputation is not good.”
• “If my other schools fall through I’ll go there.”
• “I am considering it because of the dual dental program with UF.”
• “I am planning on going to Troy. UWF isn’t my type of school.”
• “I believe I would be accepted.”
• “I am planning on attending UWF in the Fall.”
• “It is not a leader in the field I wish to study in.”
• “I might go there my first two years for core course work.”
• “The academic program and courses seem to be a good fit for me.”
• “I am getting a scholarship for tennis at UWF.”
• “The small college environment is great for the first year student.”
• “They do not appeal to the things I plan to do with myself.”
• “UWF is close to my home and I think it is a nice, easy going school that meets my needs.”
• “I want to go to college in Arizona.”
• “UWF is my second choice.”
• “I plan on going to another school, but the location might make me go there.”
• “I am moving and I don’t want to come back for school.”
• “I don’t like it and I don’t think they have a program I would like.”
• “I haven’t been given enough information about UWF and I don’t think it has my future occupation, in electronics and robotics.”
• “I have never heard of it, but I might look into it.”
• “I plan to go to an out of state college.”
• “I would like to check into it and learn more about it.”

*For a copy of the survey questions please proceed to the next page.
High School Survey Questions:

Please tell us what class you are in:

_____ Freshman  _____ Sophomore  _____ Junior  _____ Senior

1. What factors do you consider when selecting a college or university to attend? (Please rank each answer 0 to 5, with 5 being the extremely important and 0 being not important at all.)
   a. Location: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   b. Tuition/Fees: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   c. Degree Programs Offered: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   d. Student Life/Activities: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   e. Sibling or Parent Attended: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   f. Academic Reputation: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   g. Availability of Online Courses: 0 1 2 3 4 5

2. How do you rank the importance of the sources that you receive information about potential colleges or universities from? (Please rank each answer 0 to 5, with 5 being extremely important and 0 being not important at all.)
   a. Printed Materials: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   b. Emails: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   c. College’s Web site: 0 1 2 3 4 5
   d. Social Media: (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) 0 1 2 3 4 5
   e. Word-of-Mouth: 0 1 2 3 4 5

3. Would you prefer a printed brochure mailed to your home or a digital communication via email? (Please mark one.)

   ______ Email  ______ Mailed Brochure

4. On a scale of 0 – 10 how likely would you be to attend the University of West Florida? (0 is not at all and 10 is already applied and decided to attend UWF.)

   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Please explain why you selected the above ranking with regards to your likeliness to attend UWF. (Please continue on back if needed.)
After carefully reviewing both the focus group responses and the written surveys, Insight Marketing Communications, Inc. was able to determine the following key issues that the University of West Florida must factor in so that a successful recruitment campaign can be built. Failure to listen to and implement the advice of your target audience could be extremely detrimental to your marketing efforts.

- Websites are a key information portal for students. Without a properly designed website that is both aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly, much of the university’s marketing efforts fail before they even begin. This demographic is incredibly fickle in regards to what they expect from a website…and expectations are high.

- Personalization is the key to getting noticed. These students expect that you will send them information that targets what they are interested in and that you will pay attention to what you are sending them.

- Believe it or not, they prefer to be communicated with via postal mail. Oddly enough as comfortable as they are with email and social media, they feel “special” if they receive a piece of mail from the post office.

- Don’t send the same thing over and over or a ridiculous collateral piece that they don’t know what to do with. Students notice when you send them the same post card over and over without thinking and we confirmed they are tossing it out with the trash. They also do not respond to collateral pieces that don’t provide valuable information or serve a specific purpose of some kind.

- Safety is a huge concern to students who grew up in the wake of Columbine and the Virginia Tech shootings. These are students who were taught to be cautious of their surroundings even in a learning environment and expect that you are going to keep them safe.

- They love statistics. They expect recruiting materials to contain valuable information about all costs associated with an average semester, what the average wage paid for a job in the town will be and ways you can help them finance their education.
These kids do their homework. Since Google has become a verb instead of simply a search engine this demographic literally has the world at their fingertips. They want the information instantly and they want it to be easy to find whether it is on your website or your brochure.

They want to see the campus. This demographic does not respond to photography of “posed” students. They want to see what the campus looks like and what it has to offer them.

They want to be treated like more than just a number. Not only does this demographic have exceedingly high expectations in how they want to be communicated with, they have even higher expectations that you should be looking at them as people and not an SAT/ACT score. Taking grades, teacher recommendations and activities into consideration before standardized tests would make the university stand out to them.
Below you will find a list of suggestions that directly correlate the findings to the objectives we established before beginning the focus group sessions and administering the survey. As previously stated the goal of these sessions and the survey was to assist in the development of recruitment marketing materials for prospective students of the University of West Florida. These are ways in which you can apply our findings:

OBJECTIVE

To determine how high school students prefer to receive recruiting materials and information about attending a college/university.

- It was clear during every session that students would rather receive printed mail versus electronic. They also noted that they wanted it personalized — they wanted to feel like more than just a number.

- They want user-friendly websites that are easy to navigate and that layout useful information such as costs associated (tuition, housing, fees, book estimates, etc) with school in addition to specific information like jobs (and average wages) that they can expect to find in our local economy.

- Do not send the same thing more than once. To these students you are insulting their intelligence and they notice. They also prefer brochures, catalogs and other collateral pieces with complete information. Postcards should be reserved for open houses and very basic events, but even then they should be “personalized.” They also noted that they often times will receive large fold-out pieces that turn in to a poster — those pieces “go directly in the trash and won’t be hanging on walls”.

OBJECTIVE

To determine what factors high school students consider when selecting a college/university to attend.

- These students care tremendously about where their major will take them in life and hearing from successful graduates in their programs is a huge factor when they are considering a program at one school versus another. They could be told about the number of UWF graduates who are astronauts, CEO’s of the three largest accounting firms in the area, have the highest percentage of students accepted into medical schools, etc.

- Surprisingly “safety” is one of the biggest factors that these students in every focus group were concerned with. Since UWF is one of the safest (if not the safest) state school, that should be heavily promoted in the brochures and on the website.
SUGGESTIONS

OBJECTIVE
To determine what appeals aesthetically to high schools students and offers the most visual appeal making them want to open up, read and/or use recruiting materials.

- Students in every focus group sent a clear message that they do not want to see posed pictures of students. They want to see the campus and people interacting in a natural way. They also like to see activities and social interaction that is authentic in nature.

- Almost every focus group noted that if you included a reply card inside the collateral piece that would allow them to ask for additional information from a specific department they would return it. Simply “asking” them for the information shows that you care. I will caution you that if you ask for the information you must follow through with providing it to them. Students suggested sending a personal letter from the department chair with information about the program that highlights alumni and lists the department’s accomplishments. Also, a contact person that they can email or call with concerns or questions.

OBJECTIVE
To determine what high school students know and feel about UWF.

- Because of geographic proximity these students see UWF as a “fall back” option if they cannot leave the area because of cost of living issues. The branding must reflect that the university is much more than the “college in their backyard.”

- That it is a very small “down home” setting with lots of lush vegetation, pristine wooded areas and a beach that’s close by. You have to make them forget that they might be on campus with many of the people they went to high school with and focus on the small class sizes and more personal attention that UWF offers which the other larger universities cannot.

OBJECTIVE
To determine what would make a high school student select UWF as their 4-year institution of choice.

- As previously stated UWF can recruit students in a more effective manner by simply using a “personalization” message strategy in their marketing. Students would like to feel that UWF wants them to attend and will do everything it can to aid them in completing their degree program.
OBJECTIVE
To determine what theme/approach the recruiting materials should utilize to be attractive to high school students.

- This is a generation that wants to be talked “with” and not talked “to”. They want to know that you know what their interests are and care about them on a personal level. This type of candid approach will help solidify the UWF brand in the hearts and minds of the students.

OBJECTIVE
To determine what steps UWF must take become the most admired, respected and student-selected regional university in America?

- As previously stated UWF has a variety of successful graduates from a variety of programs. Using these successful alumni as “testimonials” to what these students can accomplish will not only make them want to come to UWF to seek that same kind of success, but really showcase that UWF is an academic institution that can compete with the larger state university systems. UWF has the ability to show that you don’t have to have a football team to turn out thriving graduates.

- Consider letting the ACT and SAT scores “take a back seat” in the admissions process. This would allow for a unique positioning strategy for UWF. It would be the university that focuses on the “whole student” and not just a number.
Report Compiled by:

Insight Marketing Communications, Inc.

Additional Services Include:

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