

**Imperial Valley College
Public Relations/Marketing Plan
2017/18 to 2020/21**

Introduction

The purpose of the Imperial Valley College Public Relations Plan is to increase the overall visibility and enhance the reputation of the college. The hallmarks of the college are academic excellence, responsive student services and student success, advanced technology, community and industry partnerships, and workforce and economic development. IVC's Public Relations efforts are meant to develop two way communication with stakeholders, highlight the excellent education and dynamic services it provides to the community, and ensure the college's growth, prosperity and future.

Public relations should be recognized as a central, core operating principle of the college. The Public Relations Society of America defines Public Relations as "a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics." That is the working definition that has been incorporated into IVC public relations practices

PRSA notes as a management function, public relations also encompasses the following:

- *Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.*
- *Counseling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.*
- *Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organization's aims. These may include marketing; financial; fund raising; employee, community or government relations; and other programs.*
- *Planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy. Setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities — in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above.*

<http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/PublicRelationsDefined>

Justification of Organized Public Relations Efforts at IVC

The College's Mission Statement specifically addresses the need for development of "Mutually Beneficial Relationships" as defined above by PRSA: "The mission of Imperial Valley College is to foster excellence in education that challenges students of every background to develop their intellect, character and abilities; to assist students in achieving their education and career goals and *to be responsive to the greater community.*"

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats regarding current public relations program

Strengths

1. Even without an established public relations/marketing department, a professional team has been put together to promote the college. IVC has won several statewide marketing awards.
2. IVC has a robust social media platform with 14,044 people following its main Facebook page as of May 10, 2017, an increase of more than 42 percent since September 2015 when the last PR plan was put together. Data show that 64 percent of people on the page are female and 71 percent are under the age of 34. This data indicates that IVC's Facebook page is a viable communication tool to students. Instagram has 435 followers and Twitter, 1394 followers.
3. Surveys of graduating high school seniors give IVC high marks when it comes to affordability, quality of education and proximity.
4. The Imperial Valley College Visioning Program was developed and implemented by this department. It has fostered excellent two-way communication with stakeholders since its inception in 2004. It is held every three to four years and monitors shifting needs in the IVC service area. The next visioning process is scheduled for the Fall of 2017.
5. Technology improvements on the IVC campus have opened other potential avenues to cutting edge communication.
6. Even with no staff, this department conducts an effective governmental relations effort in cooperation with other community colleges in the San Diego/Imperial County region through its involvement with the San Diego/Imperial County Community College Association. In January 2016, the PIO coordinated advocacy legislative visits for SDICCCA that resulted in meetings with eight legislators from the region.
7. IVC has excellent relations with the local media.
8. Visioning meetings have shown that IVC has a reservoir of goodwill among citizens of Imperial County. This has been borne out through the success of major bond elections in 2004 and 2010. The 2013 Visioning findings indicated public demand for more information and involvement with IVC.

Weaknesses

1. There is a lack of consistency in advertising and promotional messages due to the fact responsibilities for promotion are diffused throughout various campus departments rather than in a centralized in a fulltime Public Relations/Marketing Department.
2. Although there is a Public Relations Consultant who coordinates outreach activities on a part-time basis, there is no employee on campus with the full responsibility and budgetary authority for coordination of public relations/marketing activities.
3. There are no video production capabilities on campus. While Imperial Valley College has a robust Facebook presence, and growing Instagram and Twitter activity, IVC needs to expand its social media presence to YouTube as well as improve its video capabilities on Facebook. It has a YouTube Channel but there is no consistency in when items are posted. This is due to a lack of personnel who can concentrate on social media presence.

4. Visioning outcomes show IVC needs to review its brand and messages need to be more targeted to needs of specific communities. In some quarters of the Valley, IVC is lightly regarded because of lack of knowledge.
5. There is a lack of knowledge of IVC's initiatives with elected leaders in the county which occasionally surface with misstatements at public meetings.
6. There needs to be more complete quantifiable analysis of the higher education market in Imperial County, especially as it pertains to the broader community. As a result, marketing and public relations efforts are really a "shot in the dark" when it comes to identifying the publics that the college should be serving.

Opportunities

1. IVC needs to evaluate its "brand" in every community it serves. For example, political data through bond election results as well as registration data indicate IVC is more accepted in the southern part of the county than it is in the northern part. An in-depth market analysis would identify the broader needs of potential students and where they are.
2. Visioning outcomes show that there is an interest in the community for more engagement and community outreach through such events as open houses, tours, etc. People want to visit the campus.
3. IVC has lots of good will in the community that it can translate into political support as well as additional students if the college can respond to the demands of this market.
4. Recent programs, such as Student Success and Strong Workforce initiatives, dual enrollment and noncredit courses provide excellent opportunities for IVC to positively impact higher education in the Valley in new ways.

Challenges

1. Adequate funding
2. With the serious budget reductions in Public Relations/Marketing over the past several years, any efforts to restore previous amounts are interpreted as substantial budget increases.
3. There are some differences between what the community perceives IVC to be and what the campus community thinks the community perceives. This was evident in differences in content between on-campus visioning meetings and those that were held in the community.
4. The media have changed drastically in the past 36 months due to consolidations and staff reductions—both in print and electronic. That requires a more proactive approach in development and placing of earned media submissions, such as press releases, etc.

IVC's 2018-2021 Public Relations goals and strategies are to:

1. Establish a fully functioning comprehensive Public Relations capability with appropriate fiscal resources and dedicated personnel. **Key Strategy:** Develop a three-year staffing and resource plan commensurate with those colleges and work to have it approved through shared governance.
2. Increase knowledge among IVC Stakeholders regarding programs and issues at IVC through consistent two-way communication that promotes and fosters student and community

relations as well as institutional value. **Key Strategy:** Reach all Valley communities to reinforce personal connections with the college.

3. Continue marketing communication efforts to seek growth in enrollment. **Key Strategy:** Maximize use of advertising, social media and other marketing vehicles to cost effectively reach potential students on their own turf.

4. Support public relations and marketing communication decisions and initiatives with data-driven evidence of success. **Key Strategy:** Incorporate on-going research and use of web and social media analytics to develop data that support public relations and marketing communication efforts.

Primary and Target Audiences

Communication is most effective when messages are tailored to the audience the college wants to reach and in the medium that is most appropriate. Determining these targeted audiences, what motivates them and the message that is needed to create desired behavior (i.e. registering for classes) is especially critical when a college has limited resources.

General audiences to be reached through this plan are:

1. Current IVC students
2. Secondary school students
3. Elementary and middle school students and their parents
4. Parents and family decision makers
5. Leaders in education
6. Foundation supporters
7. Registered voters
8. IVC faculty
9. Classified staff
10. IVC administrators
11. Community leaders/opinion makers
12. County and city elected representatives
13. State and national elected representatives
14. School boards members
15. Business community
16. Ag community
17. Media
18. Board of Trustees
19. Bond Oversight Committee
20. Campus advisory committees

Specific 2018-21 PR Initiatives

Overall

1. Work through the shared governance process to obtain approval and acceptance of a full-time Public Relations and Marketing Department on campus by 2021.

2. Develop PR plans for new programs such as the Strong Workforce initiative, dual enrollment and noncredit courses.

Marketing Communication

1. Improve use of data to identify targeted audiences and develop specific outreach programs to reach those audiences.
2. Incorporate more video in outreach efforts and establish new social media platforms such as YouTube and Snapchat while enhancing current platforms.
3. Tell the story of Imperial Valley College through the words, actions and examples of successful IVC students and graduates.
4. Continue marketing efforts to seek continued budgeted growth in enrollment.
5. Build upon IVC's successful 2017 fair booth art contest to develop outreach to K-sixth grade students and their parents about the merits of higher education.
6. Identify and reach special audiences in the noncredit education categories as courses are developed.
7. Coordinate IVC involvement in new regional marketing efforts for the Strong Workforce Initiative

Branding

1. Develop consistent appearance of all college publications.
2. Review and update, if necessary, the IVC logo and mascot and develop major branding messages targeted to specific communities served by IVC.

Community Relations

1. Establish solid personal connection with the communities IVC serves through a visioning process in the Fall of 2017.
2. Continue IVC leadership in major community organizations such as all Valley chambers of commerce, Workforce Development Board, Imperial Valley Economic Development Commission, Brawley Economic Development Commission and others.
3. Encourage the presence of the Imperial Valley community onto the campus through consistent events, such as hosting chamber of commerce and service club events.

Government/Interagency Relations

1. Develop a proactive program to educate local elected leaders about initiatives at Imperial Valley College.
2. Continue governmental relations work on a regional level through SDICCCA to educate our legislators regarding the needs of Imperial Valley College students.
3. Foster a regional approach to marketing IVC partnerships with SDSU, University of Arizona, Northern Arizona University, Columbia College and others.
4. Continue involvement in county crisis communication planning and participate in appropriate communication exercises and other training.