

Strategies for Change: MOVING FORWARD WITH THE COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING STUDY GROUP FINAL REPORT

**COMMITTEE
MEMBERS:**

Hunter Carrick
Member

Ann Dodd
Coach

Stephanie Doores
Member

J. Marcos Fernandez
Sponsor

Terry Etherton
Member

Tracy Hoover
Member

Kathy Pletcher
Staff Support

Dan Stearns
Member

Steve Williams
Member

Mary Wirth
Team Leader



SUBMITTED TO J. MARCOS FERNANDEZ

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PENNSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences

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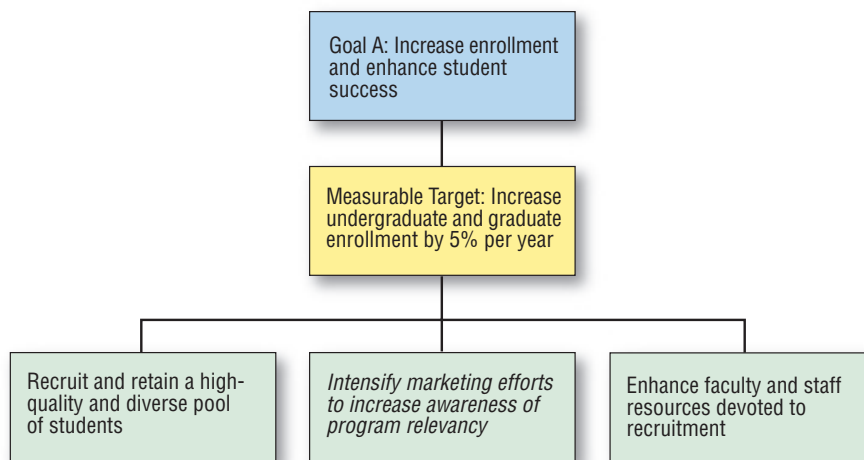
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Introduction

The College of Agricultural Sciences Strategic Plan for 2005–2008 recognizes that “of prime importance to the success of our college is the need to increase enrollment” and focuses one of the four goals included in the plan toward that end.

In June 2005, several study groups were created by the college to address the short-term implementation priorities of the plan as established by a college self-assessment. To address the priority “to increase student enrollment” the Communications and Marketing Study Group was created and charged to:

Work with the Department of University Marketing and Advertising to update and improve college marketing materials, specifically recruitment publications and Web site, to enhance the image of the college to target audiences.



The deans had consulted with the Department of University Marketing and Advertising prior to the creation of the Communications and Marketing Study Group and requested an assessment of college marketing materials. The recommendations from University Marketing and Advertising (see Appendix A) following that assessment were the foundation of the study group’s charge.

Specifically, the study group was asked to:

- Review current college marketing materials and the Department of University Marketing and Advertising recommendations and develop standards, processes, and procedures to enhance, streamline, and increase consistency of college marketing efforts.
- Submit promotional budget recommendations and funding sources to implement improvements.
- Examine relevant data to identify program clusters and/or majors on which to concentrate initial marketing efforts.
- Coordinate the implementation of new Web site and college image based on recommendations from the Department of University Marketing and Advertising.

Due to the unique nature of the study group’s charge, the outputs from the study group include not only the written recommendations included in this report but products in the form of professional photos, college publications, and portions of the college Web site. The study group will continue to work with University Marketing and Advertising to complete those products as noted in this report.

Executive Summary

This report details recommendations to provide an effective and efficient process to enhance and finance the communications, marketing, and advertising efforts of the College of Agricultural Sciences; to facilitate the production of marketing materials; and to ensure utilization of a consistent design and approach across the college based on the current college marketing campaign.

In addition to the product outputs of the study group, which include professional photos, college publications, and updates on the college Web site, the study group makes the following recommendations summarized below and described in detail in the supporting text:

- Establish a standing college Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee that will serve in an advisory role for communications and marketing efforts in the college.
- Hire a communications and marketing specialist to develop, implement, and coordinate communications and marketing efforts for the college; to work with units on unit communications/recruitment plans, best practices, and training; and to facilitate the college's Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee.
- Request college units submit a biennial communications/recruitment plan to the communications and marketing specialist to be used to develop a college communications/marketing/recruitment plan and budget; to prioritize centralized marketing funding to units; to increase efficiency by assisting in standardizing layouts, optimizing production schedules, and cataloging available resources; and to share marketing/recruitment successes across units toward the development of best practices and training.
- Create templates for a variety of college recruiting and marketing products and Web site pages to ensure utilization of a consistent design and approach across the college based on the current college marketing campaign.
- Set aside a portion of the college's marketing budget for distribution to the units as a match (at a rate to be determined) for funding of marketing materials.
- Using defined criteria, identify program clusters and/or units to concentrate current marketing efforts and to determine the amount of college match from centralized marketing funds.
- Require review by the college communications and marketing specialist, and approval by the dean for undergraduate education, of requests for marketing materials outside the design approach of the current marketing campaign.
- Evaluate, expand, and facilitate marketing delivery methods, particularly current and prospective paid advertising efforts.
- Develop performance measurements to track the effectiveness of marketing expenditures to evaluate return on investment to better manage future investment.
- Create clearly defined object codes and standardize use across the units to document marketing expenditures.
- After standardizing object codes, perform an audit of college marketing expenditures on which to base future investment.

- Implement the following marketing budget expenditures:

| | |
|---|--|
| Web site redesign proposal | \$125,000 to \$250,0000 (<i>pending vendor approval</i>) |
| College communications specialist salary | \$50,000/year |
| Centralized marketing budget for unit match | \$60,000/year |
| Advertising/media buys | \$50,000 |

- Provide financial incentive to those academic units that increase their enrollment.
- Review programs with extremely low enrollment to determine sustainability of the program and recommend appropriate action.

Study Group Process and Progress

Due to the complex nature of the projects the study group has been charged to complete, the study group has worked closely with numerous University and college offices (see Appendix B). University Marketing and Advertising has worked with the group as a consultant throughout the process; the Information and Communication Technologies unit (ICT) has worked closely with the committee on production and Web site issues; a technical subcommittee was established to review technical aspects of the college Web site redesign; Undergraduate Education has provided information about current college recruitment practices; and University Publications has worked on college-level publications and image development. In addition, a chosen vendor will redesign portions of the college Web site, and the deans ultimately will approve any study group recommendations.

In addition to the recommendations included in this report, the study group's accomplishments and progress are listed below with anticipated completion dates.

Study Group Activity/Project Completion Date

| | |
|--|---------------|
| • Consultation with University Marketing and Advertising | Ongoing |
| • Review of marketing research/literature on target audience | Completed |
| • Professional photo shoot (recruitment) to begin building photo library | Completed |
| • Consultation with Office for Undergraduate Ed on current situation and needs | Ongoing |
| • Creation of current list of ICT marketing publications and costs | Completed |
| • Brainstorming session on college image/challenges | Completed |
| • Drafting and distribution of RFP to redesign portions of college Web site | Completed |
| • Creation of technical subcommittee to review vendor Web site proposals | Completed |
| • Attend Web site vendor presentations | January 2006 |
| • Recommendation to deans on vendor for Web site redesign | January 2006 |
| • Study group final report submitted | January 2006 |
| • Publishing of college <i>Viewbook</i> in consultation with University Publications | February 2006 |
| • Redesign portions of college Web in consultation with chosen vendor | Summer 2006 |

The study group has communicated its progress to the college through:

- Charter and meeting minutes posted on college Web site (<http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/StrategicPlanning/Implementation/EnvironmentalCurriculumStudyGroup.html>).
- Biweekly meetings with group sponsor, Marcos Fernandez.
- Update at college faculty meeting on October 24, 2005.
- Update at program coordinators meeting on November 15, 2005.
- Presentation at college unit leaders meeting on November 21, 2005.

The study group will work with the deans in rolling out the final campaign once completed.

Development, Review, and Production Process of College Marketing Materials Recommendations

Goal

To provide an effective and efficient process to enhance and finance the communications, marketing, and advertising efforts of the College of Agricultural Sciences; to facilitate the production of marketing materials at all levels; and to ensure utilization of a consistent design and approach across the college based on the current college marketing campaign.

Administrative Structure *(See Appendix C)*

This proposal is contingent upon the adoption of the Communications and Marketing Study Group's recommendation to create a college Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee and the filling of a college communications and marketing specialist position. If the communications and marketing specialist position is not filled, the items included in the duties of the communications and marketing specialist need to be implemented through an alternative arrangement as they are recommendations critical to the success of this effort.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING SPECIALIST

The college communications and marketing specialist will work to develop, implement, and coordinate college marketing and communications efforts to promote the college to various target audiences.

Duties of the college communications and marketing specialist will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Serve as communications and marketing coordinator for college and as the college liaison with University Marketing and Advertising and other consultants as appropriate.
- Oversee the development and implementation of a college communications and marketing plan and production of college marketing materials.
- Work with college units on developing unit communications/recruitment plans (develop templates), best practices, and training.
- Work with University Marketing and Advertising to oversee marketing research/surveys to determine and improve effectiveness of promotional methods, materials, and delivery systems.
- Oversee the alignment of college communications and production services with the strategic marketing direction of the college.
- Evaluate, expand, and facilitate delivery methods, particularly current and prospective paid advertising efforts.
- Establish regular channels of communications with University, academic departments, deans, faculty, and administrative offices to inform them of communications and marketing strategies and progress.
- Work with ICT to facilitate direct adherence to University policies and editorial and graphics standards.

- Serve as facilitator for the college Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee.
- Oversee the college marketing budget.

COLLEGE COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND ADVERTISING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The college will establish a standing college Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee that will serve in an advisory role for communications and marketing efforts in the college. The committee will have representation from all of the units that represent target audiences (Undergraduate Education, Graduate Education, Extension, Research, and College Relations) as well as ICT and the dean for undergraduate education. The college communications and marketing specialist will serve as the facilitator for the committee.

Marketing Campaign and Communications Plans

The college communications and marketing specialist will work with the college and marketing consultants in the creation of an ongoing marketing campaign and communications plan to promote the college to various target audiences. This campaign will include images, messages, copy, Web strategies, and products. The Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee, the communications and marketing specialist, and the college leadership team will work to roll out new campaigns and seek support throughout the college. The communications and marketing specialist and ICT will provide ongoing leadership, expertise, and training to the units to ensure understanding of the campaign throughout the production process.

To assist in the efficient implementation of college marketing campaigns, working with the college communications and marketing specialist, all units will be asked to develop a biennial communications/recruitment plan to be submitted to the communications and marketing specialist that, at minimum, includes the following:

- Unit enrollment status and goals (to assist in creating college priorities for that year)
- Unit enrollment limitations
- Employment opportunities in majors
- Unique opportunities in the unit (new buildings, new majors, etc.)
- Enrollment development strategies
- An inventory of existing marketing publications
- Estimates of publication/material needs and uses for the next two years (ICT will assist with proposals outlining materials, budget, production timeline, tracking and evaluation methods, and creative approach.)
- Strategic/creative marketing proposals
- Timeline

These unit plans will be used to develop a college communications/recruitment plan and budget; to prioritize centralized marketing funding to units; to increase efficiency by assisting in standardizing layouts, optimizing production schedules, and cataloging available resources; and to share marketing/recruitment successes across units toward the development of best practices and training.

Academic units will be asked to designate a person to serve as a point of contact for marketing efforts for the unit. Routine communications with the unit designees and the graduate and

undergraduate program coordinators with regard to recruitment materials will be a priority to help ensure application of the campaign and to develop mechanisms for data collection and evaluation.

ICT will work closely with the communications and marketing specialist to provide critical information and data related to development of a new or modified campaign.

Production Process and Centralized Marketing Budget Allocations

With the implementation of the college marketing campaign, templates for a variety of recruiting and marketing products will be developed by ICT, and academic units will be able to customize selection of material consistent with their needs and will be able to modify content appropriate with their messages. Working with the communications and marketing specialist, ICT will be responsible for the crafting of new images and copy that meet the needs of the academic program and are consistent with the goals of the campaign. ICT will ensure compliance with University Policy AD 61 on University communications through advertising, publications, and media relations.

ICT will work with requesting units in developing a written proposal outlining recommendations for the types of material to be produced to meet the goals of the program. This proposal will reflect print, exhibit, video, specialty items, Web presence, and other appropriate products.

Prioritizing Areas for Investment in Current Campaign

A portion of the college's marketing budget will be available for distribution to the units as a match (at a rate to be determined) to unit funding for marketing materials to facilitate the following:

- Implementation of marketing campaigns
- Consistency of marketing pieces across the college
- Most effective use of college marketing dollars
- Funds delegated for marketing are used for that purpose
- Tracking of costs and effectiveness of marketing efforts to guide future investments
- Strategic and creative ideas and partnerships among units

The communications and marketing specialist, working with the Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee, will examine unit plans, relevant data, and noted criteria to identify program clusters and/or units on which to concentrate current marketing efforts and to determine the amount of college match from centralized marketing funds. The group recommends an average of six program areas be funded each year from the centralized budget. Criteria to be considered include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Unit enrollment gaps (current versus desired)
- Unit enrollment limitations
- Employment opportunities in majors
- Areas of excellence
- Unique opportunities in the unit (new buildings, new majors, etc.)
- Enrollment development/marketing strategies (merit based)
- Current inventory of marketing materials
- Estimates of publication/material needs

- Level of customization required
- Retention data as a measurement of quality of recruiting

The decision-making process for distribution of centralized marketing funds involves the following:

1. Submission of unit communications/recruitment plan detailing marketing material needs, proposals, and timeline submitted to college communications and marketing specialist (see “Marketing Campaign and Communications Plans” above).
2. Unit representatives will review their unit’s communications/recruitment plans with communications and marketing specialist and college Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee.
3. Communications and marketing specialist, working with college Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee, will prioritize investment areas for centralized funding each year. The communications and marketing specialist and ICT will develop a production timeline.
4. Communications and marketing specialist, working with college Communications, Marketing, and Advertising Advisory Committee, will draft college communications/recruitment plan that will prioritize unit projects and designate central funding matching levels.

Units choosing to have materials produced outside of the college will be reimbursed at the agreed-upon rate only if the materials comply with the college marketing campaign content (reviewed by communications and marketing specialist and/or ICT) and quality standards (developed by ICT).

Although the study group felt they lacked comprehensive information to make initial targeted budget recommendations, the group recommends the following areas be considered for initial funding: Food Science (FD SC major), Ag and Extension Education (AEE and AG SC majors), School of Forest Resources (W F S, W P, and FORSC majors), Ag Economics and Rural Sociology (AG BM major only at this time), Horticulture (HORT and LSCPE), Ag and Biological Engineering (A B E and A S M), and Crop and Soil Sciences (only ESOIL and AGECCO at this time).

EXCEPTIONS

ICT will only design and produce marketing materials consistent with the college marketing campaign. Programs requesting material outside the campaign will not have access to ICT resources or central funding and will require review by the college communications and marketing specialist and approval by the dean for undergraduate education.

ACCOUNTING

The college will develop and distribute detailed object codes to standardize and clearly account for all marketing expenses. ICT will be responsible for the application and accounting of central resources made available for marketing products they produce. Funding from central resources will be reimbursed at appropriate rate after marketing pieces have been produced.

Tracking and Evaluation

Working with University Marketing and Advertising, the communications and marketing specialist and ICT will develop meaningful measurements to track effectiveness of marketing expenditures to evaluate return on investment to guide future investment.

College Marketing Budget Recommendations

The Communications and Marketing Study Group attempted to assemble past and current college marketing expenditures as a starting point for future budget recommendations. This effort was unsuccessful due to the decentralized funding of marketing efforts in the college; the lack of clear, comprehensive, and standardized object codes; and the absence of a clear definition of what marketing comprises. Therefore, the following budget proposal includes suggestions for improving the current accounting system and is based on start-up costs of the current marketing campaign and recommendations of the study group.

Accounting Recommendations

In order to clearly define and track what will be captured under the label of marketing, the study groups recommends the college review and revise object codes used to document marketing expenditures throughout the college.

- Create clearly defined codes and standardize use across the units. The college financial officer should consult with Samuel Auker, financial officer for the President’s office, regarding object codes to use in an audit of marketing expenditures.
- After revised object codes are implemented, perform an audit of college marketing expenditures to base future investment.
- Develop and implement meaningful measurements to track effectiveness of marketing expenditures to evaluate return on investment to guide future investment.

Budget Recommendations

The following budget recommendations do not include expenditures budgeted for in the current college budget (e.g., *Viewbook*/careers publication, etc.):

| | |
|---|---|
| Web site redesign proposal | \$125,000 to \$250,000 (<i>pending vendor approval</i>) |
| College communications and marketing specialist | \$50,000/year |
| Centralized marketing budget for unit match | \$60,000/year |
| Advertising/media buys | \$50,000 |

Although the vendor cost of the Web site redesign is a fixed cost in the current fiscal year, a portion of that expenditure should be considered permanent for continuous upgrades to the college Web site, ongoing maintenance of college marketing efforts, professional consultation, and outsourcing as needed (e.g., photography, further Web site redesign).

The study group recommends the college work with University Marketing and Advertising to purchase strategic media buys around the state for student recruitment and closely evaluate the effectiveness of such investments to guide future investment.

The college must develop and implement a plan that provides a financial incentive to those academic units that increase their enrollment. In addition, those programs that have a large undergraduate enrollment should receive some additional financial support from the dean’s office.

Likewise, the college should review programs with extremely low enrollment to determine sustainability of the program and, if appropriate, increase investment in those majors with close scrutiny of success or eliminate such programs to cut losses.

Recommendations for Next Steps

Recognizing that the projects and recommendations of this study group represent only first steps toward enhancing the college's marketing efforts, the study group recommends the following areas be considered for next steps.

Needs Assessment

- Hold focus group to define why students chose Penn State and our college.
- Continue redesign of entire college Web site.
- Include on the college Web site a career “interest indicator.”
- Invest in optimizing search engine hits on the college Web site.
- Consider Podcasting as delivery method for college recruitment messages.
- Build photo library for use in marketing materials.
- Develop marketing materials for target audiences beyond prospective students.
- Evaluate **all** college communications pieces as part of college communications plan.
- Improve database systems to better keep track student contact info.

Recruitment Opportunities

- Develop strategies to more aggressively and strategically recruit students from DUS.
- Address the tuition issue to compete with endowments offered at other universities.
- Evaluate and create opportunities for interactions to take place, recognizing that site visits and contact with faculty rank highly in the decision-making process of prospective students.
- Examine the LEAP study that Jim Mortensen and Tracy Hoover are working on—could there be a proposal to look into what employers are looking for in our graduates?
- Consider offering more college general education courses for students to learn about the college.
- Increase academic units' participation in and creative programming for “Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day” (use Women in Science and Engineering model).
- Examine opportunities of working with the Homeschoolers Association.
- Develop strategies to target the approximately 11,000 ag students in Pennsylvania, 7,500 FFA students, and 174 ag programs in 501 school districts.
- Develop strategies to target the approximately 30,000 horse/animal project 4-H students.
- Working closely with 4-H leaders and county-based educators, distribute college agriculture career publications in each 4-H packet distributed (95,683 PA 4-H student members in 2003–04).
- Follow up on Tracy Hoover's grad student's research on enrollment trends in 1862 institutions.

Appendix A: College of Agricultural Sciences Review of Existing Marketing Collateral

MAY 2, 2005

The Department of University Marketing and Advertising in the Office of University Relations reviewed college and department brochures and flyers, as well as the college Web site. The following recommendations made by Cindy Hall in May 2005 apply to all materials that promote the college or individual majors and are targeted to high school students and undergraduate recruitment.

Administrative Concerns

- Streamline the review process for marketing materials. Recognize that faculty and/or department heads may not be the best sources for guidance on photos, graphic design, or copy. It's not easy to step into the mind of a 17-year-old. Most of us aren't able to do so.
- Promotional budgets should be centralized. Baseline promotional needs should be established for all majors. Additional funding can be supplied to majors by FTE or by college recruitment goals. Core college materials should be funded from this budget. *Note:* While most schools are increasing their promotional budgets, the College of Agricultural Sciences appears to have cut its budget by close to half (for the period between 2000–01 and 2003–04). Review funding decisions and realign with strategic goals.
- All marketing collateral should use the Penn State name and images of the University prominently. The Penn State brand name is your most valuable asset. Capitalize on it. Use recognizable Penn State images to piggyback on the teen campaign.

GENERAL COLLEGE IMAGE/BRANDING

- View the college's recruitment materials as the core of your recruitment campaign, and department and major materials as an extension.
- Do not use brochures and promotional materials that have a dated appearance. The damage to the image of the college is significant. Two years is an appropriate shelf life for your marketing materials. It is less expensive to discard dated brochures than to repair the college's image.
- Across the college and in the core recruitment materials, your story should focus on careers—the companies students can expect to work at and, specifically, what the jobs will be. This is critical for your college. Be specific.
- Invest more funds in the majors brochure. Use visuals to help explain the career opportunities in each major (see photography section below).
- Eliminate the college poster with reply cards. Retarget the funds to the majors brochure.
- Consider making a major financial investment in redesigning the college's Web site. The Web site should contribute to the image of the college as a hot place to study and/or do research. Majors can be best explained by videos with peer-to-peer influencers. This may cost close to \$100,000, but given the heavy reliance on Web sites by teens, it represents a smart investment. The site can be maintained by ICT.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

- Undergraduate recruitment collateral for the college and departments should have a consistent look in terms of graphic design. When prospective students receive college materials as well as materials about several majors, they should have a degree of consistency to them.
- In many cases, the typefaces used on your brochures have a dated look. Fussy typefaces tend to give promotional materials a desk-topped look. Attempts to be cute with type fall flat with high school students.
- No department should desktop publish their own flyers or brochures.
- Consider hiring a graphic design firm or using University Publications to create a look for the college and extend it across all promotional materials. ICT can implement the design and ensure that it is not compromised.

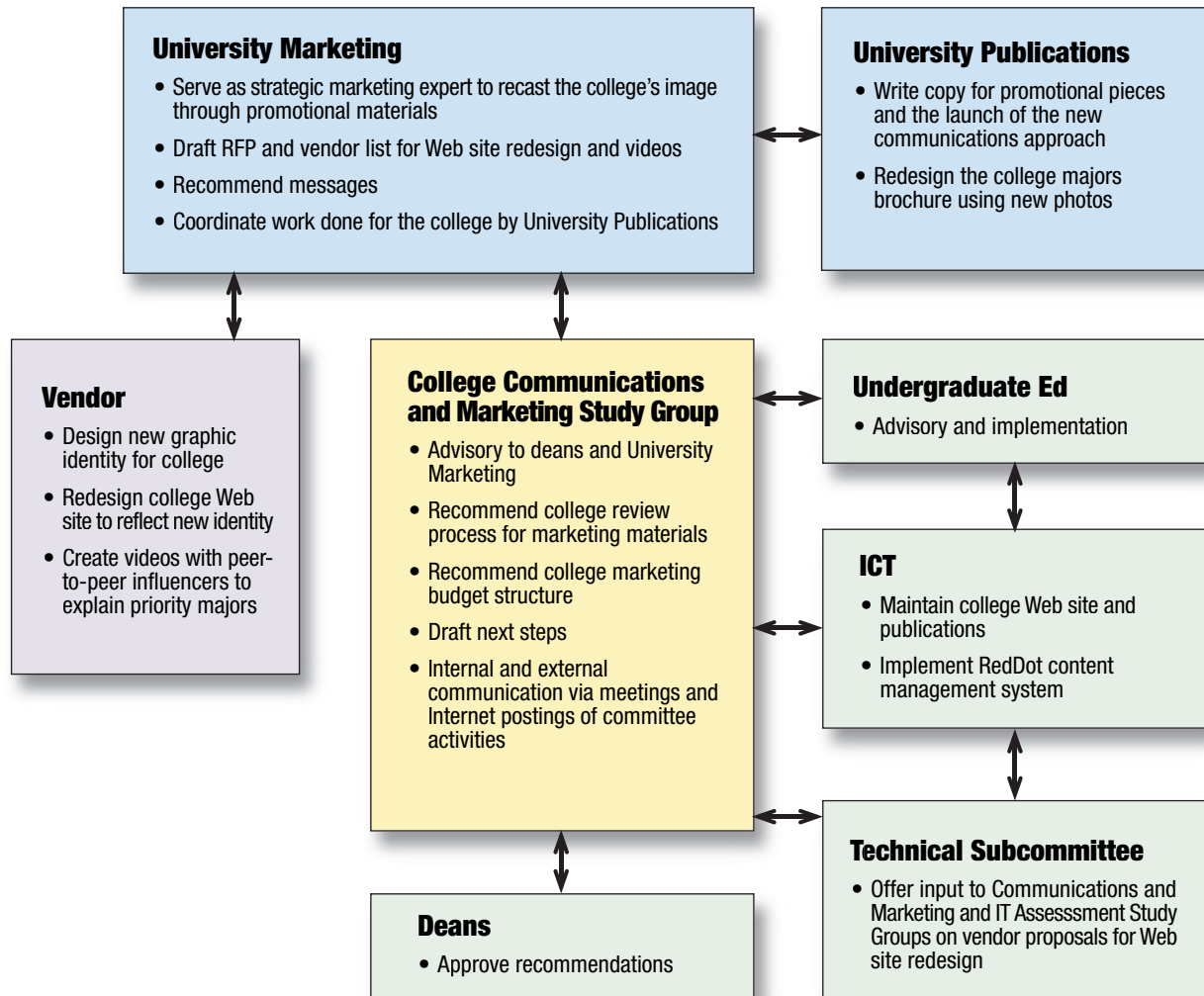
COPYWRITING

- Hire a promotional (advertising) copywriter to better reach the target audience and communicate more effectively about the majors and positive job opportunities.

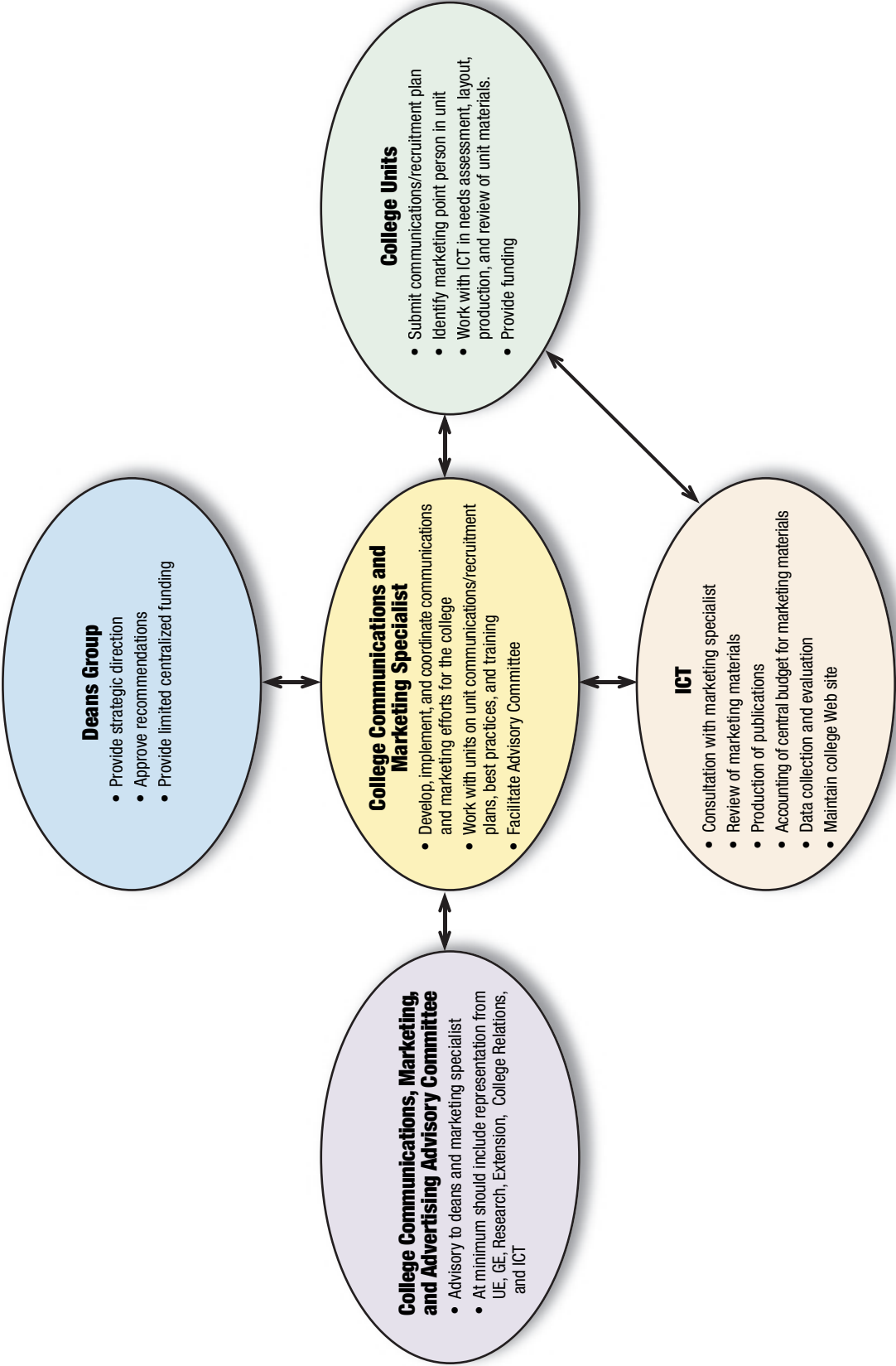
PHOTOGRAPHY

- The photography appearing in the reviewed brochures is dated. Clothing styles and hairstyles are not current.
- Select photogenic student models. Students can be from the college as well as from the Penn State teen campaign cast. Professionally cast all student models.
- Dress student models for photo sessions with an eye toward color and current styles.
- Student models should address the camera (make eye contact with the reader/viewer).
- Avoid showing equipment in photos. The equipment is meaningless to your audience.
- Photographs should show students having fun. A mix of photos specific to Penn State and College of Agricultural Sciences is ideal.
- Do not use photographs with students that further the stereotypical images of agricultural sciences majors.
- Use student models and alums in well-known work environments (see turfgrass management brochure with photo of alum at Baltimore Orioles stadium). Easily recognizable corporate names like Godiva help to tell your future job outlook story.
- If a photograph does not enhance the image of your college, do not use it. Be tough when it comes to the selection of college images.
- Hire a professional photographer with experience in creating compelling environments to tell your story. The photographer we have in mind just completed work for the 2005–06 teen campaign. The Department of University Marketing and Advertising can oversee the project for the college. An initial investment of \$15,000 would be advisable.

Appendix B Study Group Organizational Chart



Appendix C: College of Agricultural Sciences Communications and Marketing Flow Chart



This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce.

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