



## TRIPLE-A PR

*Hood College RFP*



*April 2016*

We pledge that we have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this assignment.

Anthony, Alex, Alex

## Executive Summary

As an academic institution, Hood College requires a consistent number of students to attend the school in order to stay successful. However, changes to the Hood College campus and school system have created potential threats to student enrollment and retention. In order to keep admission rates steady, Hood College needs to adopt a new strategic public relations campaign that continues to express the values and benefits of the college. As a firm, Triple-A PR has devised a plausible plan that can assist the school in increasing student admittance and awareness over the next several academic years.

Based on prior research conducted by both Hood College and workers for Triple-A PR, students at the school most commonly heard about the institution through either family or friends. One particular survey even discovered that 66.67% of current Hood College students first found out about the school specifically from their family or friends. Therefore, by keeping in line with the shared values of community and family amongst the faculty, staff, students, and parents of students at Hood College, Triple-A PR has devised a coordinated public relations plan, conveying several aspects of the school to the intended public. As a result of the combined data research, Triple-A PR has decided to focus the efforts of this strategic public relations campaign on an audience of parents of second-semester high school juniors located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

The firm decided upon this specific public because of the values of family and community that the school prides itself on. Hood College is fortunate because of its close proximity to the Washington, D.C. area, which creates an intriguing opportunity. As the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. receives millions of people yearly from the local area and travellers. Therefore, the general plan for the campaign is to specifically target parents of second-semester high school juniors in the Washington, D.C. region because these students are at an age where they are looking for potential schools. Starting in April, 2017, the plan will focus on media strategies specific to the capital region that directly send messages to our target public. Additionally, since the campaign is designed for implementation within a large metropolitan sector, Hood College will receive the benefit of having secondary publics learn about the school and its values.

In the end, Triple-A PR strongly believes that the campaign will help Hood College in both maintaining and increasing academic enrollment and awareness of the school nationally. The intended objective for the plan outlined within this form is to increase the academic enrollment of Hood College by 10% over the next two academic school years.

## Team Biography

### Alexa Johnson - *Public Relations Director*

From humble beginnings at Frederick Community College, Alexa Johnson transferred to Harvard where she received doctorates in Public Relations and Business, earning an additional doctorate in Beekeeping at the University of Georgia. Alexa oversees all aspects of campaign development and execution, supervising the day-to-day activities conducted by the firm while planning future functions, managing staff, overseeing events, assessing needs, and approving the budget.

### Alex Smith - *Communications Specialist*

As Triple-A's top and only Communications Specialist, Alex Smith is an integral part of creating and delivering information while maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its affiliates. Having been in the industry for 23 years, you can be assured Alex will coordinate media, market events, and meetings.

### Anthony King - *Community Relations Specialist*

With 10 years in the industry, Community Relations Specialist Anthony King works tirelessly to get your messages to the intended audiences of your organization. Graduating Summa Cum Laude in his class at Harvard University with a Masters in Public Relations from the University of Southern California, Anthony has gained a positive reputation among the leaders of the communications community. As the Community Relations Specialist for Triple-A PR, Anthony goes inside the communities with audiences that organizations are trying to reach, discovering channels which will help meet the proposed goals. It is his job to ensure that the publics of the organization's campaign become receptors of the message. With contacts in various media outlets across the United States, Anthony knows who to contact within your community to make sure your messages have the widest impact possible.

## Strategic Planning Matrix

### 1. Background

Hood College is an independent liberal arts college known for its outstanding faculty, research opportunities and experiential learning. Located in historic Frederick, Maryland (the third-largest city in the state), Hood College is an hour from Washington, D.C., an hour from Baltimore and 30 minutes from the I-270 technology corridor.

As a private college that has been in existence for over 100 years, Hood College is known for its small student-professor ratio, rich history, and beloved traditions. It has an extensive alumnae network and numerous beneficial trusts that provide Hood College students with scholarships and connections.

### 2. Situational Analysis

As an academic institution, Hood College relies on student admission numbers in order to stay relevant and successful. For the college, success hinges upon the ability of the institution to fill admission quotas yearly, enabling the the school to receive benefits. Based on prior research conducted, although many are happy and content with their decision to attend Hood College, the school needs to maintain and develop targeted marketing campaigns to keep admission rates steady.

The college faces many challenges that could hinder its success. For example, changes in the residence hall situations, as well as problems with consistency in the dining and food options on campus may prove as hindering factors impeding the college's progress. Furthermore, issues with limited parking spaces on campus could deter those who commute from choosing to attend Hood College. Also, as a small liberal arts school, Hood College naturally is in a disadvantageous position in terms of the narrower range of available activities on campus compared to larger institutions. In the end, these factors may provide some difficulties for the school in both admitting and retaining students.

### 3. Core Problem/Opportunity

The core problem Hood College currently faces concerns the admissions numbers for the school. Fewer admissions could result in less available funds for the college and even its closing if not stabilized.

With its close proximity to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, Hood College possesses a unique opportunity to bring a variety of students to the college and, in doing so, expand overall awareness of the institution.

#### 4. *Goal and Objectives*

The **primary goal** for the public relations campaign is to increase the number of admissions to Hood College, particularly with students from the Washington, D.C. area.

The **secondary goal** for the public relations campaign is to build the college's reputation, as well as overall awareness of the college, on both a national and local stage.

##### **Objectives:**

- Increase the undergraduate attendance of Hood College by 10% within the next two academic years.
- Increase the number of people within the target audience who know of Hood College within the next two academic years.

#### 5. *Big Idea, Key Publics, Messages, Strategies and Tactics*

**Big Idea:** Overall, the big idea for this campaign is to not only increase Hood College's awareness and recognition both locally and nationally, but to boost the number of students that choose to attend the college from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region.

- **Big Idea Strategy:** Target key publics in the Washington, D.C. region about the benefits of a Hood College education.
- **Big Idea Message:** Hood College is affordable, personal and safe.
- **Visual Representation:** Compare and contrast numbers of admittance for future classes

**Key Publics:** The key public for this campaign includes parents of second semester high school students located in the Washington, D.C. region. Secondary publics include anyone else currently residing or visiting the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

**Primary Message One:** Hood College is an affordable option.

**Strategy One:** Raise awareness of Hood College's classroom size.

##### **Tactic:**

- Create a display sign with the message "Don't you want your kid to be more than a number?" featuring the Hood College logo and specified website address to be advertised on numerous platform displays within the Washington, D.C. Metro system.

The D.C Metro system includes buses and subway trains that traverse Washington, D.C. and surrounding areas in Maryland and Virginia. Thousands of commuters utilize these networks daily to travel between work and home. As of such, signs and advertisements within the system can be viewed hundreds of times per day and are not as easily avoidable as electronic-based ads on the radio or internet. Many of those traveling on the metro are within our target market. Upon seeing a Hood College advertisement, the viewer could become compelled to learn more or share information about the college with their child. The “more than a number” message touts Hood College’s small, personal nature and disparages other colleges via an emotional appeal, suggesting that other colleges do not care about their students as much as Hood College does.

**Primary Message Two:** Hood College’s small size is sought after.

**Strategy Two:** Promote the affordability and value of a Hood College education through radio advertising.

**Tactic:**

- Develop and record 30 second radio advertisements to be played daily on WIHT 99.5 FM radio station throughout the campaign. The advertisement will highlight a recent top-10 ranking for affordability among colleges in Maryland, showcasing the slogan, “Impressive Education. Affordable Rates.” Each advertisement will share a website address unique to the campaign that interested publics can search for more information.

WIHT 99.5 FM is a pop hits station with one of the largest audiences in the D.C. area. Its popularity is a leading reason why Hood College should utilize it for radio advertisements. With so many listeners, Hood College’s message could reach the target market of D.C. area parents and potential students.

**Primary Message Three:** Hood College is one of the safest options.

**Strategy Three:** Highlight Hood College’s high safety standards and ratings.

**Tactic:**

- Routinely post on Facebook using geographically-targeted advertising in the Washington, D.C. area. Key messages in each post will include the statement, “Only 45 minutes away from D.C., Frederick city ranks no. 1 among safe communities in the U.S.” Every post will have an embedded link unique to the

campaign that publics can utilize to receive more information about Hood College.

Facebook is widely used by those over age 35, which includes our target market of parents. Unique links will allow us to track our demographics more closely, allowing for a greater understanding of our audience and whether or not we are reaching those we target. This site will, in turn, allow us to revise our campaign to be more accurate and achieve greater reach.

#### *6. Calendar and Budget*

See attached forms for specific details of both the calendar and budget for the RFP.

The campaign will take place over the course of 13 months beginning in April, 2017. During this time of year, high school juniors begin looking at, visiting, and applying to various colleges. Running the campaign for this length of time follows students and parents throughout the entirety of the application process, giving them time to learn about the school before they apply to it, continuing to push the school's good qualities until the student makes a commitment upon acceptance.

The budget of this campaign is approximately \$800,000. This amount is divided between advertisements on the D.C. Metro, radio ads, and paid Facebook advertising. The radio advertising is the most expensive aspect of the campaign. The average cost of a 30-second radio ad is \$396 with ads airing daily. Overall, the cost for the radio ads will be approximately \$627,000 over the life of the campaign. However, these ads will have great reach within our targeted area, making them a worthwhile expenditure.

#### *7. Evaluation Criteria and Tools*

**Objective One:** Increase the undergraduate attendance of Hood College by 10% within the next two academic years.

- Examine the number of admitted students in future classes with a particular focus on students from the Washington, D.C. area
- Review student admittance surveys on how they heard about Hood College

**Objective Two:** Increase the number of people within the target audience who know of Hood College within the next two academic years.

- View the number of website hits throughout the campaign for the unique website URL

- Locate Metro system statistics for the number of people using the transport system during the campaign
- Explore Nielsen ratings for the radio station that broadcasted the advertisement
- Utilize Facebook viewership statistics available from their website