

## **COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION SOLUTION TEAM:**

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*Our team worked to create messaging to students and innovative solutions regarding Canyons Completes.*

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1) **Wayfinding and Campus Signage** – Created a physical and tangible representation of Guided Pathways to serve as foundational support to messaging. Elimination of early confusion sends the subconscious message that attending COC is doable and that our college is prepared to guide students along their pathway.
  - Collaborating with COC Design student Ian Joslin, the team presents a clear and consistent visual system that is concise and strategic, to remedy the difficulties that arise when navigating the Valencia campus.
- 2) **Timely and Simple Messaging** – Utilizing proven successful strategies, the team proposes the use of a dedicated message concept that encompasses the spirit of Guided Pathways: *Dream. Believe. Achieve.*
  - Message delivery is scheduled on an established timeline based on two dedicated time periods, between semesters and during the semester, each with unique communication strategies.
  - Message Requirements:
    - Keep messaging simple
    - One call to action per message
    - Instills that COC is prepared to help all students
    - Gives attention to campus diversity
    - Encourages pathway decision
    - Fosters a sense of belonging
    - Maintains student engagement
    - Motivates toward pathway completion
    - Highlights existing COC successes
  - COC Spotlight & Student stories - messages of varying substance and intent (motivation, humor, and information) sent at predetermined intervals throughout each semester. For example:
    - “Dream” / Clarify the Path – Message sent before the term begins
    - “Believe” / Enter the Path – Message sent at week 7-8
    - “Achieve” / Stay on the Path – Message sent at week 13-14
- 3) **On-Campus Communication Strategy** – In an effort to unite faculty, staff and students, the team suggests that COC hire a dedicated Marketing Communications Specialist to work with a dedicated Communications Staff.
  - Solely responsible for all student facing communication.
  - Tasked with tracking open/click rates to determine message effectiveness
  - Fully utilize Email, Text, Social Media and Web Chat as message delivery vehicles.
  - Assignment of departmental responsibilities while maintaining continuity in messaging to create an all-inclusive campus atmosphere.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

1. Establish communications team responsible for unifying and coordinating all student communication surrounding Guided Pathways.
2. Work with Facilities to review/implement wayfinding signage and campus map.
3. Consider hiring communications specialist dedicated to student-facing communication.

## **Introduction**

Successful messaging to students concerning meta-majors and Canyons Completes requires the support and involvement by the entire College of the Canyons community. With student success at the forefront, our solutions team sought to create communications and promotions in collaboration with students, modeled after other successful colleges, that inspires all of COC to continued excellence.

Our research included in-depth discussion and ongoing dialog with Sierra College regarding their successful guided pathways communication program. Additionally, our recommendations reflect the information offered throughout the LEAP sessions, which proved invaluable as we assessed our campus situation to arrive at our conclusion.

Our proposed messaging uses simple vehicles that catches the student's attention, keeping them engaged and motivated toward pathway completion. At its core, COC's messaging and communication must foster a sense of belonging and instill that this college is prepared for our diverse student population. Student contribution to concept creation is essential, and as such, you will find our primary recommendations, intended to achieve immediate and noticeable improvement, a direct result of student collaboration. We also highlight existing fruitful programs, (clubs, on campus jobs, the HUB, Career Center,) which tether students to COC, creating and solidifying a sense of school pride. Finally, following a dedicated timeline synchronized with campus happenings is vital.

We hope the suggestions put forth here will inspire all of COC to embrace the guided pathways model and stay true to the principle of providing all students with a set of clear course-taking patterns that promote better enrollment decisions and prepares them for future success.

## **Recommendation #1: Wayfinding & Campus Signage**

In 2018, College of the Canyons (COC) ranked #1 in Los Angeles County in the percentage of students who transfer to a 4-year university. COC also saw a 76% increase in graduates as a result of allowing students to bypass remedial classes and changing math requirements for non-science majors. In many ways, COC also stands out by leading the way in new programs that support student success and continued innovation. The college's focus on ensuring the successful launch of Guided Pathways – Canyons Completes is a testament to COC's commitment to supporting student success.

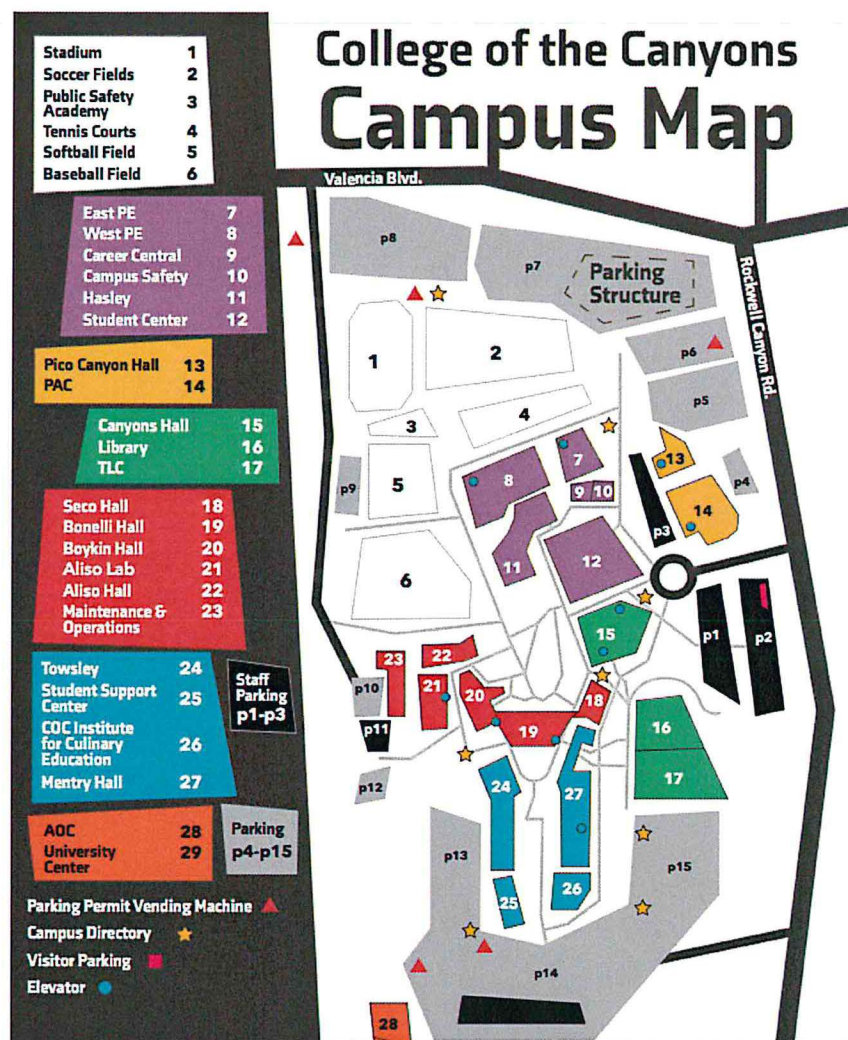
The Communications and Promotions team was tasked with the creation of messaging to students about meta-majors and Canyons Completes. In discussions about the topic, the team determined that the creation of a physical and tangible representation of Guided Pathways could serve as foundational support to the more abstract concept of messaging.

The Campus Wayfinding Map is the team's answer to just one part of the college's communications and promotions efforts to introduce Canyons Completes to the campus community. Currently, COC's campus map poses numerous issues that could lead to confusion for first time college students, campus visitors, and even new faculty and staff. The map lists building abbreviations without specific building names, and when combined with existing campus signage on walkways and on buildings, the map becomes even more confusing.



Furthermore, much of COC's infrastructure relies on memorization of building locations, which makes it difficult for first timers to navigate around the campus, find appropriate parking lots, permit machines, and classroom locations.

The Communication and Promotions team took these issues into consideration when determining a redesign of the campus map. **With the help and creativity of one of COC's Graphic and Multimedia Design students, Ian Joslin spearheading the campus map redesign, the team is now able to present an approach to student success that embodies physical guided pathways.**



According to the Guided Pathways framework, the “integration of student support services makes it easier for students to get the help they need during every step of their community college experience.” With the proposed Campus Wayfinding Map and Signage project, the Communications and Promotions team aims to communicate to the students and community at large that COC is ready to meet their needs and support their path to success.

### **Recommendation #2: Timely & Simple Messaging**

While this proposal is not meant to serve as an overarching communication plan for Guided Pathways and Canyons Completes, the solution team has proposed several areas to support the development and implementation of such a plan. Communication strategies for students should include themed customized messages with delivery based on a dedicated timeline synchronized with campus happenings. **Each message should have a single call to action.**

The solution team consulted with colleagues at Sierra College. The marketing team at Sierra College, specifically Cassandra Donnelly, have developed a robust messaging strategy surrounding their student-facing meta-major and guided pathways communication. The primary conclusion from this consultation is: **Keep it simple.** We recommend adopting communication strategies around a simple message with concise messaging. **Three simple concepts have been designed to do just this and encompass the spirit of Guided Pathways: Dream. Believe. Achieve.**

One of our 2019 LEAP On to the Path presenters, Dr. Pamela Cox-Otto was particularly inspiring in regards to developing our communication philosophy. Dr. Cox-Otto described the need to think of our communication timeline in two very important concepts: **periods between semesters/terms and the messaging strategy during the term/semester.** Both periods have unique and important communication strategies for the student. We recommend referencing the presentation provided by Dr. Cox-Otto.

Campus marketing efforts should enhance the students' experience on campus, not change them. An impactful student success campaign must include inviting and integrative tools which engage students from the start. As COC gears up for the fall semester, it must be our goal to ensure we are meeting the diverse needs and expectations of our students. Through a variety of Communication strategies, we can meet students where they are and help them thrive throughout their entire college journey.

#### **Objectives for guided pathways messaging for students:**

- Keep messaging simple
- One call to action per message
- Instills that COC is prepared to help all students
- Communication should give attention to campus diversity
- Encourage pathway decision
- Foster a sense of belonging
- Maintain student engagement
- Motivate toward pathway completion
- Highlight existing COC successes

#### **Carefully crafted email and student messaging throughout each term:**

As discussed, the messaging provided to our students throughout the term is very important. Below is a short list of emails recommended for continuation (as provided by the IE2 Communications workgroup) or adding to a new student-facing communication schedule.



- Welcome email each term
- Follow-up Welcome Week 2 email each term
- Monthly COC Spotlight emails, approximately 3-4 each term
- “Applied, but not enrolled” emails prior to each term
- “Notice of drop by instructor” email each term
- Petition to graduate and Career Center support each term
- 15/30/45 Unit Check up with Counseling each term
- Scholarship and FASFA deadline email each term
- Transfer student deadline email each term

***One Semester Sample Email and Student Messaging Timeline***

Timeline	Communication & Promotion
Before Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COC Spotlight Email: <b>“Dream”</b> / Clarify the Path – marketing message welcoming students</li> <li>• Acceptance package sent “snail” mail with COC “swag”</li> <li>• Announce add/drop/withdrawal deadlines</li> </ul>
Weeks 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome – Week 1 &amp; Welcome – Week 2</li> <li>• Applied, but not enrolled emails prior add/drop</li> </ul>
Weeks 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4th week Progress ‘Check Up’ with Counseling (Under/Over 15, 30 &amp; 45 units)</li> <li>• “College Hacks” from the TLC</li> <li>• Connect with clubs and other from Student Services</li> </ul>
Weeks 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Story: “How I found a little TLC”</li> <li>• Get Resume support from the Career Center</li> </ul>
Weeks 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COC Spotlight Email: <b>“Believe”</b> / Enter the Path</li> <li>• “Managing stress” from the Health Center</li> <li>• Mid-Term Survival Guide (light, fun and helpful)</li> </ul>
Weeks 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spring Break special message</li> <li>• Student Story: “Ask an Alumni—most challenging point in college”</li> <li>• FASFA/Scholarship deadline for the next year</li> <li>• Transfer deadline and encourage email</li> </ul>
Weeks 11-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career support reminder</li> </ul>
Weeks 13-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COC Spotlight Email: <b>“Achieve”</b> / Stay on the Path</li> <li>• Student Story: “Stories on graduation and how education changed your life.”</li> </ul>
Weeks 15-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COC Spotlight Email:</li> <li>• It’s a wrap! Have a great break- week following finals</li> <li>• GPA congrats – one week following term</li> </ul>
After Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send graduates COC Alumni SWAG and letter via snail mail</li> </ul>

### **Recommendation #3: On-Campus Communication**

#### **Develop encouraging “stay on the path” messaging**

Special messaging should be built into the semester timeline to meet students with the challenges they are currently facing. Student testimonials and stories should also be developed through video, photos and quotes shared across platform messaged according to the term communication timeline

#### **Dedicated Communication Staff**

Based on the consultation with colleagues at Sierra College, the most obvious strategy that emerged was a marketing communication specialist that was solely responsible for all student-facing communication. To be clear, this individual did not personally write or managing all student communication, but tone, frequency and messaging was filtered through this individual. Hiring and/or assigning such an individual may be required. This is the person that must own the process and make messaging to students specific and consistent.

Based on this research at Sierra College our Solution Team recognized the importance of developing attractive email communication through platforms such as [Emma \(click here\)](#) or [MailChimp \(click here\)](#) and tracking Open Rates / Click Rates. Through platforms such as these, we can successfully target those students that do not open emails and design emails that are more effective in generating a call to action.

#### **Additional proven communication strategies for specific populations:**

- “Real” Mail - New students should receive an acceptance letter and campus swag to boost student pride and to encourage students to Dream about their potential and “Enter the Path.”
- Text Message Communication and Web Chat – Platforms such as [GetThru \(click here\)](#) or [AdmitHub \(click here\)](#) could be used to have automated and/or human conversations through text with students on a large scaled.
- Daily short text messages may also be employed to offer varying substance and content for students (motivation, humor, information). This kind of messaging will be crucial to encourage students to “Stay on the Path.”
- Social media Communication—we recommend continuing the effective and thoughtful social media communication performed by the district. This messaging must be audience specific with concise, positive messaging.

#### **Objectives for departmental and on-campus communication:**

- Enhance campus events, from Onboarding and beyond
- Drive course enrollment and success throughout the year
- Deploy engaging, personalized communications
- Break down silos and bring together the campus community



**Outreach Office responsibilities include:**

- Pre-admissions information and assistance to all prospective students
- Ensuring access to and knowledge of campus resources
- Promoting academic, career and student services to all prospective students and the community
- Coordinating on-campus and community outreach events
- Representing the college at off-campus sites
- Integrating the matriculation, public relations, student services, and career technical education to create a comprehensive student center program. Services include: guiding students through the enrollment process, assistance with the admissions application for New and Returning students, assistance with Self-Placement and Registration, student onboarding process, general campus information, assistance setting up MAP, information about Student Services

**Counseling Responsibilities: Including Counselors from General & Specialized Areas**

- Meet with students individually in private counseling appointments for educational counseling, career counseling, and personal counseling; develop comprehensive Student Educational Plan

**Academic Advisors Responsibilities:**

- Meet with new students and provide information on COC policies, procedures, programs, services, degree, majors, and certificates, IGETC, CSUGE, and major preparation as listed on the college catalog, assist.org, and articulation agreements. Provide One Semester Educational Plan.

**On-Campus Promotional Strategies for Student Communication:**

- “Welcome Day” Event (August 9th) Offer Workshops which will spread across campus and will provide students the ability to tour the campus while also connecting to different departments, faculty, and support services.
- “Pop In – To Drop In” (10 min) Drop In meetings with a Counselor first week of semester.
- Provide “on the hour” tours and “Back to School” Checklist for students to assist them in first time navigation of campus resources
- Utilize, Student Success Teams to offer “Get to know your professors and counselor” Workshops.
- “Meet, Greet, & Treats” - Time, with our Mentors/Career Coaches/Peer Leaders
- Provide College Survival Kits with essentials such as notebooks, pens, USB, and “fun stuff” (Get ASG to Counseling to HUB involved” So no matter where a student lands, there is a special Kit for them!

- Host “Giveaway” items for food, movies, book stores.
- Partnership with Counselors, Peer Advisors, & Student Development: Reach out to students using Games, Social Media Activities and

### **Next Steps**

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### **Conclusion**

For the purpose of promoting successful student/staff relationships and services at COC, it is important we follow an integrated marketing communication approach, meaning we strive for consistency across all communication platforms. In addition to traditional media and public relations efforts we also create campaigns that show the value of COC highlighting our exceptional staff and students. Our campaigns must reach a broad audience through radio, video, web, billboards and social media. We must also offer support through internal communication by promoting department and campus events, collaborate to create unique brands, and provide direction to help create a stronger web presence for our departments.