

**RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND THE COLLEGE STUDENT:
A GLANCE AT CAMPUS PERFORMING ARTS CENTERS' AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the possibilities of relationship marketing through the lens of campus performing arts centers. Utilizing “College Arts Participation Project” – a 2007 survey conducted by Drexel University Arts Administration graduate students with nearly 900 participants from nine universities and colleges in the Philadelphia region – a college student profile was created. Combining individual interviews with campus performing arts centers’ administrators with scholarly writings about relationship marketing and audience development, a better understanding of the workings of these subsidiary non-profit organizations and the potential benefits of relationship marketing emerges.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship of institutions of higher education and their subsidiary non-profit performing arts centers, focusing primarily on their audience development of college students. It is currently difficult to explore the practices of organizations of this kind with the small amount of well-supported literature available, making this study even more valuable to the community of universities, colleges and campus performing arts centers. It is valuable to this community because of the responsibility university organizations have toward students; the better students are understood, the better they will be served by university organizations. Combined with an extensive review of marketing resources and a city-wide survey of college students, conversations with administrative staff of college performing art centers offer insight to various marketing practices, thus leading to general advice for college performing arts centers in regards to cultivating a long-lasting relationship with the college student demographic.

LITERATURE AND BACKGROUND

Little quantitative and serious qualitative research has been conducted on the administration of such organizations. Instead, the majority of writings focus primarily on the output of these organizations, such as newspaper articles about performances and events. As Ty Furman, author and researcher of the non-profit arts sector, states; “little research [exists] on university/arts partnerships beyond narratives of campus organizations or departments working with community organizations on short term arts

projects to either beautify the neighborhood or educate and entertain children.”¹ The same is true for institutions of higher education and their subsidiary performing arts organizations. The literature that does focus on universities and arts organizations does not speak to the challenges, needs and successes of the administration. Even less literature is available regarding the audience development of college students.

These subsidiary arts organizations can be defined as separate non-profit entities birthed from university/college administration to fulfill a mission outside the sole purpose of the parent university, or organizations “embedded within the larger economic and corporate structure of the university as a whole.”² Most often it appears these non-profit organizations have developed out of university programs or departments, as illustrated in Furman’s article: “Models exist in which the institutions share resources, for example, a building, as is the case for Princeton University and The McCarter Theatre Company and Syracuse University and Syracuse State. In both cases, professional not-for-profit companies grew out of university programs.”³ However it is important to recognize that although these embedded organizations may have executive directors and governing or advisory boards, they are not all separately incorporated. Without a national study of a statistically substantial number of university performing arts organizations, it is impossible to determine the percentage of separately incorporated organizations.

This gap in the current literature is vast and includes information about key practices such as audience development and mission-focused decisions. The current literature reveals the need for a more in-depth look at the audiences of subsidiary arts

¹ Furman, Ty A. (2008), ‘A Qualitative Examination of a University/Theatre Partnership Based on Kanter's Partnership Phases’ (University of Pennsylvania).

² Martin, Deborah Gail (1998), ‘Texas Tech University Theatre Season Subscription Campaign: A Marketing Analysis and Plan’ (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University).

³ Furman, Ty A. (2008)

organizations and the responsibilities of the institutions to meet the needs of these audiences, especially that of the college students attending the parent university/college. Research of college students and subsidiary arts organizations can fill this hole in the literature and help university organizations make decisions that better serve their mission and the college students to whom they are responsible.

One major difference between this type of organization and other non-profit arts organizations is the nature of its immediate community and the relationship between them. Sustainability comes from strong, long-lasting relationships with constituencies that support the institutions such as the community, donors and audience members. For university performing arts centers, maintaining sustainable relationships with these constituencies is multi-faceted, especially with college students. On the one hand, there is a built in support system in being a subset of a university that allows for an easy introduction to the arts organization. On the other, a serious courtship must be invested in by the arts organization to ensure students remain supportive of the arts organization after graduation.

Most university performing arts centers include a loyalty to serving college students. However, as college communities change frequently with the enrollment and graduation of students, the mission to serve college students (whether to promote university arts programs, serve as an academic venue or cultural experience, as the missions vary) appears to fall to the wayside of what may be viewed as a more easily sustained relationship with faculty, staff and external community members, as the turnover among these demographics is much less severe. A healthy balance must exist in

order for these subsidiary organizations to serve their primary audience, college students, while remaining loyal to other constituencies.

This study began in an effort to better understand the function of daughter arts organizations and their parent universities. Research began online with the use of various general and scholarly search engines by entering into searches the phrase “higher education and subsidiary arts organizations.” Utilizing the resources available through Drexel University libraries, such as ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis and other library databases and catalogues, a search was conducted for articles relating to non-profit arts and universities/colleges. Regarding educational organizations and arts organizations combined, this research came up short; literature about parent/daughter relationships between these institutions was almost non-existent.

Sifting through articles from journals, newsletters and newspapers such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* produced no articles directly addressing the challenges, successes, relationships and work of subsidiary arts organizations. Instead, narrative and anecdotal writings from local newspapers that report on the programming of a nearby college or university were found. However, some sources addressing specific issues for institutions of higher education’s subsidiary arts organizations such as marketing and audience development were found when researching among dissertations and theses. These academic writings offer insight into the organizational structure and inter-institutional relationships. However, these papers are not without error in their methodologies and conclusions as most were constrained by funds, time and the level of expertise of the writer – an issue not to be forgotten when reading this literature review.

One of the few papers to define the varying systems in place for arts organizations on an academic campus was written in 1972 and is that of Mr. Robert Eugene Glotzbach, then Doctor of Education candidate.⁴ While it must be out of date, this dissertation is one of few available papers that focus on the organizational structure of the performing arts organization in higher education therefore it is valuable to this thesis. Glotzbach's definitions refer to the structure of arts education programs in institutions of higher education such as music departments, but he also ventures to successfully identify one possible configuration of presenting and producing organizations, such as a performing arts center, as well. He defines 'Competitive Autonomy' performing arts bodies "as self-governing single programs in independent institutes."⁵ This type of organization is contractually affiliated with a university or a college. Another definition of Glotzbach's is 'Entity,' which is slightly different as it still is a single-program administrative unit; however it is the responsibility of the chief academic officer of the university or college. This type of organization is a division or department of a college.⁶ Although his paper discusses educational programs in colleges and universities and does not offer insight into audience development, it does offer one possible organizational approach to this type of institution.

In Duncan M. Webb's book, Running Theaters: Best Practices for Leaders and Managers, another definition for university arts organizations surfaces. The "campus-based performing arts facility" he describes is "a mid-sized to large hall located on the campus of a ... college where there is public access – some combination of audience

⁴ Glotzbach, Robert Eugene (1972), 'The Administration of the Performing Arts in Higher Education: The Relation of Organizational Structure to Program Goals' (Dissertation, University of Florida).

⁵ Glotzbach, Robert Eugene (1972) Page 113.

⁶ Glotzbach, Robert Eugene (1972) Page 113.

and/or community-based arts organizations that use the facility.”⁷ His definition focuses on the space itself and the purposes it holds for the campus and outside communities alike. He continues by identifying the various advantages and disadvantages the manager faces when running a theater of this nature. The basic challenge is that of “bringing people from the community onto the foreign territory of a college campus.”⁸

David J. McGraw submitted a major paper entitled “Administrative Practices in Academic Theatre” to the faculty of Goucher College in 2005. He conducted a study comprised of sixty-seven academic theaters, utilizing a comprehensive survey and selective interviews in an effort to dissect current trends and structural issues for these organizations. Among his findings, McGraw found that “while many universities possess some form of general endowment, only eleven theatre programs reported access to an endowment that could be used for productions.” In regards to fundraising, “only 39% of the surveyed departments apply for grants outside of their university, and of that relatively small pool, only 82% recommend the practice. Obstacles to grant writing fall into three major categories: time commitment, limited opportunities, and conflicts with university development offices.” According to McGraw, the “most disturbing grant writing complaint, however, is the trend among university development offices to restrict how individual departments apply for grants.” Many universities discourage individual departments from “seeking outside funding so as not to create possible conflict[s] with

⁷ Webb, Duncan M. (2004), *Running Theaters : Best Practices for Leaders and Managers* (New York, N.Y.: Allworth Press). Page 198.

⁸ Webb, Duncan M. (2004) Page 198.

university efforts.”⁹ His paper continues by breaking down other funding and administrative issues for academic theatres.

What is most interesting among his findings is the audience development focus (or lack thereof). In response to the question “Who is academic theatre’s audience?”, McGraw comments:

The university’s students have always been a core constituency as many programs are based on the belief that they are training not just future theatre artists but also future theatre audiences. Yet students have not always been the largest audience segment.¹⁰

McGraw’s statement regarding the size of the student portion of the total audience supports the findings of the interviews conducted with campus performing arts centers which will be dissected further in the section of this thesis entitled, “Campus Performing Arts Centers Impressions.” Furthermore, although it appears very little market research exists on behalf of individual organizations, “of the forty-two programs that provided box office data, only one did not offer a ticket price discount to students.”¹¹ This statistic shows us that assumptions about college students are leading decisions rather than audience research, because programs such as student discounts are offered without audience research to find what students are willing to spend.

In her dissertation “The Role of Location in the Marketing Strategy of Performing Arts Organizations”, Christine A. Lai describes the importance of audience development among members of the community from a slightly different perspective – that of a profitable entity making decisions based on the geographical locations of its institutions. Her research and opinions offer an interesting approach to the audience development of

⁹ McGraw, David (2005), ‘Administrative Practices in Academic Theatre’ (Major Paper, Goucher College). Page 29.

¹⁰ McGraw, David (2005) Page 44.

¹¹ McGraw, David (2005) Page 45.

campus performing arts centers, as the geography of these centers is chosen for them. Whether the location is on campus, off campus, within walking distance or otherwise, makes a great difference to decisions made regarding audience development. Lai begins by addressing the shift from product development to audience development that non-profit performing arts organizations have experienced over the past few years. Audience development includes target marketing “to increase the diversity of patron demographics both ethnically and by age, and relationship marketing and audience retention.”¹² Sue Runyard and Ylva French define audience development as “simply marketing and programming under another name. ... Audience development is the term currently in use to describe how [a] broad audience is achieved.”¹³ *Building Bridges*, a publication of The Museum and Galleries Commission, describes audience development as “breaking down the barriers which hinder access to [institutions] and ‘building bridges’ with different groups to ensure their specific needs are met. It is a process by which an [institution] seeks to create access to, and encourage greater use of, its ... services by an identified group of people.”¹⁴

With these various guiding definitions of audience development, it is understood that audience development is not marketing with the goal of bringing people in, but building people in as part of the organization. There are long term goals involved in audience development as it is a relationship based approach to building an audience rather than a seat filler approach which is short term and not as strongly sustainable.

¹² Lai, Christine A. (2006)

¹³ French, Sue Runyard and Ylva (1999), *The Marketing and Public Relations Handbook for Museums, Galleries and Heritage Attractions* (Professional Museum and Heritage Series; London: The Stationary Office). Pages 114-5.

¹⁴ Jocelyn Dodd, Richard Sandell and Alison Coles (1998), ‘Building Bridges: Guidance for Museums and Galleries on Developing New Audiences’, ed. Museums and Galleries Commission (UK) (London).

For all types of non-profit arts organizations, audience development is vital to success in organizations' missions. Organizations risk becoming self-serving without a reflective and substantial portion of the public taking part in its offerings. Although the focus of this thesis is the audience development of college students, it is important to recognize that relationships with the external community of the university should be built for many reasons, including additional financial strength and audience stability.

Institutions of higher education symbolize selection and acceptance; this does not necessarily communicate welcome to members of the residential community or region. Breaking down "traditional barriers between colleges and communities" is a challenge for institutions of higher education, let alone their non-profit arts organizations.¹⁵

Perhaps this challenge is an opportunity to use performing arts for breaking down these barriers explains William Reeder, Executive Director of The Center for the Arts at George Mason University and Dean and Professor of Arts Management, College of Visual and Performing Arts. His experience has taught him that creating an invaluable asset in the arts that is presented and produced and fulfilling the mission to serve students helps in gaining these external relationships that are so helpful to the organization.¹⁶

Continuing with the thought of service to the community and service to the students of a university, Virginia Commonwealth believes, as it is assumed many universities do, that "universities are becoming indispensable partners in almost every major activity in which society is engaged." It has been argued by "some commentators ... whether universities have too many constituencies, some of which divert attention

¹⁵ Webb, Duncan M. (2004) Page 206.

¹⁶ Webb, Duncan M. (2004) Page 207.

from our core missions.”¹⁷ With this opinion in mind, it is important to recognize the parallel missions of the university and its subsidiary performing arts center. Again, it is the focus of this thesis to explore the relationships between students and campus arts centers; however it is important to understand the reason many campus performing arts centers may look to serve a wider constituency and what that wider constituency means for the mission of the organization.

Elaborating on the challenge of stretching mission statements to include what is available from outside sources (funding and audience stability for examples), Peter Block makes distinctions regarding service and self-interest in his book *Stewardship*. When describing “The Stewardship Contract”, Block begins by stating:

The first requirement of stewardship is to honor the mandates of the larger institution without either caretaking or demanding consistency and control from those we have power over, namely those we serve. Our fear in following this path is our fear of anarchy. ... we are entrusted with making the core mission visible and known to our people, and to holding it sacred.¹⁸

He continues by explaining the choices organizations make when determining goals.

Those that wish to be number one often fall into the category of self-centeredness. Those that wish to offer a commitment or make a guarantee to their clients are those who fall into the category of stewards and offer uniqueness, which is “the reason people will pay us to continue our work and is our hedge against hard times.”¹⁹ In other words, choosing mission, product and service to the primary constituent is honorable and therefore the best decision-making tool considering sustainability and success. This is true because

¹⁷ Trani, Eugene P. (2008)

¹⁸ Block, Peter (1993). *Stewardship; Choosing Service Over Self-Interest* (San Francisco, CA.: Berrett-Koehler Publishers). Page 181.

¹⁹ Block, Peter (1993), Page 181.

both funders and the community at large will be more trusting of an organization's work and more likely to support the organization if it follows its mission.

Deborah Gail Martin, Ph.D. wrote her dissertation based on a case study of Texas Tech University's theatre subscription campaign, including its marketing analysis and plan. This paper illustrates the application of varying marketing techniques in an effort to better build audience relationships and participation with the organization. She begins her paper by identifying one of the major issues that restrain arts organizations from better serving more patrons and a more diverse patron base. "Many arts organizations currently find themselves in a crisis situation of a dwindling patron base as a result of the organization not having enough information about the patrons' wants and attendance behavior. Without this information, the arts are unable to promote their product, and communicate effectively and efficiently to their audiences."²⁰

Through her experiences with Texas Tech University, Martin describes the necessary action steps towards building market research and planning. A survey of most of the subscribers was collected, and focus groups provided information about the target audience's preferences and demographics. From this research, the organization revealed "the need for formal training of promotion personnel and for an improved computer box office system. The research suggested that the [organization] be more aggressive in its marketing pursuits."²¹ This research was then used to develop a marketing plan – including a thorough marketing mix of promotion, placement, pricing and product – that would utilize the allocated resources from the university.

²⁰ Martin, Deborah Gail (1998) Page vi.

²¹ Martin, Deborah Gail (1998) Page vii.

The first step taken by Texas Tech University in this study was identifying the target audience as their subscribers. As in any marketing plan, the next step was identifying and learning about the needs, wants and competitors of/for the target audience. This was followed by the development, implementation and evaluation of the marketing plan. For the purposes of this paper, it is accepted that the primary target audiences of most university subsidiary arts organizations include students, faculty, staff, families and residents of the region to which the university belongs (thus the target audience is selected by means of affiliation and geography in relation to the organization). Unfortunately, Martin's dissertation does not directly discuss the development of students as audience members, but it is a valuable part of this review as it offers insight into the steps taken when working to develop an audience and the different kinds of struggles a campus organization may face in doing so.

Recent studies about university presenters include Wolf Brown's "Major University Presenters Value & Impact Study" and the British Council's "University Presenters Marketing Report." The former was a "collaborative research effort commissioned in 2005 by a consortium of 14 major university performing arts presenters (MUP). The study was self-initiated and completely self-funded by the consortium."²² Goals of this study include achieving "a deeper understanding of the intrinsic impacts that result from participating in live performing arts programs... new ways of illustrating the impact... [and] develop new attitudinal segmentation models for performing arts ticket buyers..."²³ The report for this study was released in January of 2007. It informed arts presenters of the various audience member stages of readiness to receive. It also

²² "Major University Presenters Value & Impact" Resource Guide Page 1.

²³ MUP. Resource Guide Page 2.

reported on the expectation of the audiences for specific kinds of performances. “Over 6,000 ticket buyers on 14 campuses completed a lengthy online survey about their cultural interests, preferences and core values.”²⁴ Applicable to this study, we learned that only 7% of the audiences for the participating presenters were between the ages 18 and 24. Eleven percent of the respondents were students, eighteen percent were faculty or staff and an impressive twenty-five percent were alumnae/i of the university.²⁵ This last statistic is impressive because it provides proof that although college students may only be physically connected to their school – such as campus performing arts centers – for about four years, they are connected in other ways for much longer.

The British Council’s “University Presenters Marketing Report” was commissioned “to assist UK artists and artist-managers gain a greater understanding of the US performing arts sector, with a particular emphasis on the US university and college presenting sector.”²⁶ The report was released in May of 2003. Offering UK performing companies an overview of United States’ arts funding, policy and other facts, this report does not speak to the audience development of college students. However it does define major university presenters succinctly.

Some of the most important performing arts centers in the field are located at these major state universities, which may seem like anomalies in the middle of relatively rural areas. These centers offer an interesting and stimulating variety in their programs and play a significant role in campus life. Universities vary in their scope of support for campus presenters, but usually supply some space, staff, utilities and support services. Presenters may be “housed” in various offices on campus, including the president’s or chancellor’s office, or within the office of the provost of academic

²⁴ MUP Resource Guide Page 3.

²⁵ MUP Page 30.

²⁶ British Council

affairs, public affairs, or student affairs. Many performing arts programs also receive funding directly from student fees.²⁷

This report also highlights the lack of a formal association for university arts presenters.

In the last few years, an informal network of presenters has organized to form a consortium of major university presenters to discuss issues, benchmark their operations, and share best practices. Its membership includes the executive directors of the largest and most active college and university centers in the country. Meeting several times a year at different universities, it is beginning to accumulate data from members to assemble group-wide statistics and information. That information is not presently available to nonmembers.²⁸

The literature available lacks resources regarding the development of the student body as a target audience and target participators. There is, however, little literature available regarding efforts made to develop audiences from the neighborhood of host universities as is the case for Reeder of George Mason University and Trani of Virginia Commonwealth University. However, it is necessary for institutions when building audiences outside of the target constituency to keep mission at the forefront in decision making. For campus performing arts centers, this means serving college students first as dictated by mission. The mission statement of Santa Clara's Center of Performing Arts is an example of a campus performing arts center that strives to serve college students as a first priority, "The CPA's mission is to foster opportunities on the Santa Clara University campus to teach students, engage audiences, and promote understanding through the performing arts."²⁹ The example of Texas Tech University shows the value in market research of target audiences. The structural conflicts of political management found at most

²⁷ British Council Page 15

²⁸ British Council Page 15

²⁹ Center of Performing Arts at Santa Clara University (2009), 'Organizational Background for Grant Proposal' (California).

institutions of higher education and the value of the arts patron for the embedded arts organization are the defining features for this type of arts organization. Although there is recent research about university performing arts organizations, it does not speak to the needs of college students. Research has yet to be conducted that exposes the needs of the primary target audiences of these organizations (the students) which will, in turn, offer clues as to the value of these organizations on college campuses in the opinion of college students.

It is important to have an account of how various subsidiary arts organizations reach their target audiences and develop relationships with students. This account is necessary because it provides current campus arts administrators the opportunity to learn from one another to eliminate systems that do not work and strengthen those that do, to better serve college students. It is the goal of this paper to offer a combination of sources and information from current literature, past research projects and an independent project that together delve into the possibilities of audience development of college students for campus performing arts centers. As spelled out in Standing Room Only, a textbook often assigned in Audience Development courses, understanding the target audience is “at the core of effective marketing.”³⁰ Therefore, it is important to understand the college student – specifically undergraduate – demographic in order to make decisions about developing a sustainable relationship with this target audience. For it is in building sustainable relationships with the primary constituency of an organization, that an organization can fulfill its goal and build sustainability.

³⁰ Kotler, Philip, and Joanne Scheff (1997), *Standing Room Only : Strategies for Marketing the Performing Arts* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press). Page 67.

DEFINITIONS

1. Audience development: “the cultivation and growth of long-term relationships, firmly rooted in a philosophical foundation that recognizes and embraces the distinctions of race, age, sexual orientation, physical disability, geography and class. Audience development is also the process of engaging, educating and motivating diverse communities to participate in a creative, entertaining experience as an important *partner* in the design and execution of the arts.”³¹
2. CAPP: College Arts Participation Project - Drexel University Arts Administration graduate student administered survey of 858 Philadelphia college students in the fall of 2007.
3. Relationship marketing, as defined in Relationship Marketing:
 - Emphasizes a relationship, rather than a transactional, approach to marketing;
 - Understands the economics of customer retention and thus ensures the right amount of money and other resources are appropriately allocated between the two tasks of retaining and attracting customers;
 - Highlights the critical role of internal marketing in achieving external marketing success;
 - Extends the principles of relationship marketing to a range of diverse market domains, not just customer markets;
 - Recognizes that quality, customer service and marketing need to be much more closely integrated;
 - Illustrates how the traditional marketing mix concept of the 4Ps does not adequately capture all the key elements which must be addressed in building and sustaining relationships with markets;
 - Ensures that marketing is considered in a cross-functional context.³²

³¹ Walker-Kuhne, Donna (2005) Page 10.

³² Christopher, Martin, et al. (2002), *Relationship Marketing: Creating Shareholder Value* (Revised edition; Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann). Page 4.

4. Social networking: electronic venues where people connect and share information and ideas in a relationship based, social exchange. Facebook and MySpace are examples of on-line social networking.
5. Target audience: “the part of the qualified available market that the organization attempts to attract and serve.”³³

³³ Kotler, Philip, and Joanne Scheff (1997) Page 148.

PROCEDURE

This thesis is based on data gathered primarily from three places. The first is a 2007 study administered by Drexel University's Art Administration graduate program. Nearly nine hundred college students from nine universities participated in "College Arts Participation Project," a survey that gathered data regarding arts experiences, expectations and impressions. The second portion of the study is a series of informal conversations with campus performing arts centers' administrators via e-mail and telephone, focusing primarily on audience development strategies and mission driven services for college students. Thirdly, scholarly books and articles are used to augment the findings.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limiting the scope of the study was time and geography. Time constraints on the "College Arts Participation Project" did not allow for more than 1,000 responses (a statistically significant number) to be collected from college students. Another limitation of CAPP is the imbalance between undergraduate and graduate respondents – only 7.5% of respondents were not undergraduate students. For the purposes of this thesis, undergraduate students are the primary focus. Furthermore, the individual interviews with college administrators were limited as many contacts at colleges and universities were significantly unavailable due to professional and personal time constraints. In addition, the quantity and quality of data and input collected from college and university staff persons were less substantial due to travel/fiscal limitations of the interviews; it was not

possible for the sole interviewer to travel to all participating universities. Finally, the very nature of the organizations at hand was a limiting factor in the study. As embedded performing arts centers of colleges and universities, their fiscal data and profile information was not publicly accessible in all cases (for example, these daughter organizations do not fill out 990 IRS forms and therefore do not have a profile on such on-line sources as guidestar.org). There is no service organization that specifically supports campus performing arts centers either. Association of Performing Arts Presenters, a likely service organization for this type of arts organization, does not have special listings or programs for college/university organizations. Without a service organization or special listing, general information about campus performing arts centers is not centrally located.

COLLEGE STUDENT PROFILE

To better understand the possible audience development successes and failures among colleges and universities, it is important to understand the target audience – undergraduate college students. As part of an audience development class, Drexel University Arts Administration graduate students, along with the guidance and assistance of their professor Ximena Varela, participated in a multi-year study of college students titled “College Arts Participation Project” or CAPP.^{34 35} After preceding cohorts of 2005 and 2006 paved the way for success in administering the project, the fall 2007 cohort developed, administered and collected survey data from 858 college students. This is the most accurate and recent data available focused solely on Philadelphia college students’ participation in the arts. Nine colleges and universities throughout the Philadelphia area were chosen for their diverse student body size, budget and general attributes. They include Bryn Mawr College, Drexel University, Haverford College, LaSalle University, Philadelphia University, St. Joseph’s University, Temple University, University of Pennsylvania, and University of the Arts.

Although ages of participants range from teenagers to those in their fifties, the vast majority are seventeen (17) through twenty-one (21) years of age, the most common age being eighteen (18) with 28.6% of the total amount of participants. In addition, the female population outnumbers the male population by roughly eighteen percent (Female, 58.5% and Male, 40.9%).

³⁴ Varela, Ximena; Drexel University AADM Graduate Students. College Arts Participation Project (CAPP). Audience Development Class, Antoinette Westfall College, Drexel University. Fall 2007.

³⁵ This chapter is adapted from a group project submitted to Professor Varela’s class in Fall 2007. Group members included Rachel Brown, Melissa Crofford, Elizabeth McDonnell, and Evan Post.

In regard to religion, the Catholic group is largest, not closely followed by any other faith or denomination. There is also a noted lack of racial diversity: 70.3% of the participants report as Caucasian/white, followed by the Asian population with 8.0% of tested participants. Seven-hundred and fifty-four (754) or 87.9% of the tested college students report themselves as U.S. citizens. Because the participants are students of nine universities/colleges throughout Philadelphia, home zip codes vary greatly. The most highly tested area is U.S. 19104, with twenty percent (20.0%).

Although a great amount of students surveyed report being unemployed (47.3%), 40.0% of the population is employed part-time. In addition, 92.1% of the student participants state full-time status in college. Although many of the students do not specify their major, roughly five-hundred and fifty (550) do, with top majors of Biological sciences (just under fifty (50) students) and English (with thirty-one (31) students). 35.0% of these responses came from freshmen. 23.9% of these responses came from sophomores, 16.0% from juniors, and 17.6% from seniors. The remaining 7.5% of the respondents classified themselves as graduate students or “other” such as law students.

Eighty percent of students surveyed tend to use personal vehicles and public transportation for attending arts and cultural events, a combined total of four-hundred and ninety (490) students. This piece of data is a clue to organizations with poor parking and limited access to public transportation that college students might be less likely to visit due to these shortcomings. Campus organizations specifically should apply this data in analyzing the travel experience students encounter when attending a performance on campus. For instance, if campus residence halls are not within walking distance of the

performing arts center, making a shuttle available may persuade students to make the decision to attend.

When asked “Which of the intervals below best represents your annual income (total income from salary, stipends, parental assistance, loans, etc. before expenses)?” nearly fifty percent (46.6%) admit to being unsure of their total annual income, 31.1% submit the answer “\$14,999 or less.” Students were then asked to estimate how much they spend each month on leisure activities. Respondents fall mainly in the \$1 to \$149 range, but the category with most responses is \$1 to \$29 at 16.4%, with one-hundred and forty-one (141) participants. Closely following at 15.9% with one-hundred and thirty-six (136) participants, is the \$100 to \$149 expense range. An element of this situation that is not clarified by the research is the potential fiscal support of parents which may be the source of student disposable income. It appears that college students, although many are not positive of their income, spend disposable income regularly. Understanding this counter-intuitive financial management is essential for an arts organization. Without keeping college students from spending money at their institutions, arts organizations must be sure to provide college students with financial breaks as it is a common assumption that college students do not have much money and as proven through the CAPP data, college students themselves believe they do not have much money.

Of the total respondents, 81.1% or six-hundred and ninety-six (696) students get their information about arts and culture from friends. This is a significant portion of the surveyed students. With this knowledge, campus performing arts centers can better approach marketing strategies and audience development of college students. Knowing where students get their information makes it easier to send information successfully to

them. Over half of the tested population also receives information from flyers and Facebook. About forty percent (40.7%) of the students surveyed report attending arts and culture events on their campus “at least once a month.” The rest attend less frequently. What is interesting about this information is that it proves the oldest way is sometimes the most effective way. Word of mouth is a more effective means of communicating an event or organization than multitudes of other options. Second to word of mouth is flyers and Facebook; the first of these is less expensive and invasive compared to most promotional tools such as radio advertisements, and the second is merely an extension of word of mouth.

Students report their interest in going to a museum or concert as less than their interest in engaging in other leisure activities, such as restaurant or bar attendance. 72.2% (614) attend a movie theater more than five times a year and 86.8% (738) attend a restaurant more than five times a year, compared to only 18.0% (153) students that frequent museums as often and the 5.9% (50) that attend dance recitals five or more times a year. Nearly three-quarters of the tested population visit movie theaters more than five times a year compared to barely one-fifth that attends museums as frequently; what needs to be further investigated is the reason for this. It is possible that it is the perception of cost, their friends’ interests, and related details that effect a college student's decision to attend a performance. CAPP delves into these perceptions and the following findings are helpful to campus performing arts centers.

When purchasing their tickets, students most likely use Ticketmaster (40.5%), the box office (31.1%), and organization websites (28.8%). Convenience, therefore, is important to the average college student. It should be important to campus performing

arts centers that many avenues for purchasing/reserving tickets are made available so that students feel at ease when making plans to attend a performance.

Half of the respondents rarely travel out of town specifically for arts and cultural events. In addition, 89.5% of the participants prefer attending events with friends, 48.2% with parents/family, and 37.4% with a date. It is statistically significant that such a large percentage of respondents prefer to attend in groups of friends. Perhaps making available various friend pricing benefits or “bring a friend” promotions would encourage more students to attend campus performing arts centers. Furthermore, enhancing communication strategies to include messages about friends and family visiting together may encourage non-attendees to join attendees.

Pricing is a concern for some arts and culture institutions, but not for all. When asked how much they are willing to pay for cultural events, 32.0% of the students answer “\$0” for opera tickets, for example, and 26.8% answering the same for classical music concerts. This statistic tells us that students are unwilling to spend any money on attending these performances which means there needs to be an incentive in addition to low costs for spiking their interest in attending opera and classical music performances. For instance, if a campus performing arts center recognized few students were attending classical music performances regardless of the student ticket promotion in place, the center might develop a campaign that focuses on an aspect of the performance that might be interesting to students such as passion, the beauty of the performers, or another exciting element that might be found in the performance. 22.6% of the population is willing to pay beyond \$50 for a musical. This data further depicts the level of expectation and willingness college students experience towards price. Many

organizations might find they are charging less than college audiences are willing to pay, while others, opera companies especially, are charging multiples of the price students are willing to pay. Although prices cannot be adjusted entirely according to this segment, price promotions would be beneficial to organizations and college audiences if effectively communicated. But it must be remembered that a price promotion alone will not bring students to some performances such as opera and that other strategies must be employed.

Surprisingly, most students admit to not knowing whether or not arts organizations in Philadelphia offer student discounts. 53.3% answered “I don’t know” for musicals, 61.9% for opera. Compared to all of the other disciplines and types of organizations, museums have succeeded: 42.5% of the tested population answered “yes, some” museums offer student discounts – the highest percentage for an answer other than “I don’t know” across the board. 77.1% attest that the student discount is the type of ticket they are most likely to purchase. What is interesting about this data is the contradiction it suggests – college students are not sure if arts organizations offer student discounts, yet most agree that student discount tickets are the type they are most likely to purchase. Their interest in student discounts illustrates general consumer psychology – everyone loves the idea that they’re getting a deal.³⁶ If an institution experiences low attendance by college students, implementation of a student discount may be helpful – most Philadelphia organizations have taken this step. However, student discounts are only helpful if students are aware that they exist. Otherwise, they are not helpful in raising college student attendance.

³⁶ Brody, Jean (2009), Personal Communication – Thesis Advisory Meeting, May 1, 2009.

Furthermore, 67.2% of respondents were taken to museums as a child, 63.4% were enrolled in art or music lessons and 60.0% – the majority – were encouraged in their interest in the arts. 57.6% answered “no” when asked if they currently define themselves as an artist. Therefore, college students have experience in attending arts and cultural events and roughly 40.0% consider themselves artists. Again, if the communication strategy for a performing arts center were developed to tap into these experiences, success could be had in developing college student audiences.

As for potential motivators, if discount tickets are available, 64.0% are likely to attend. If good reviews are written, 55.9% are more likely. If a friend recommends or if friends are interested in going, roughly 65.0% are likely to attend. Consistent with their interest in discounts, 57.5% will definitely decide against attending an arts event if the tickets are expensive. This percentage is nearly equal to the participants who argue that not having time will definitely keep them from attending: 57.3% answer “Would definitely keep me from going” when time is an issue. Arts organizations are able to communicate more efficiently with and better meet the needs of college students by understanding these motivators and discouragers by applying the information at hand to current marketing tools. Consistent with college student response to whom they prefer attending arts events with, friends appear to have a great deal of influence on college students. With this knowledge, arts organizations are equipped to make decisions on promotions, special offers, programming and other aspects of management; for example, two for one student tickets or referral discounts as special promotions.

When students decide to attend arts events, it is normally during the evening: 67.5% answer “evening” when asked “From Monday to Thursday, do you prefer to

attend arts events during...”; 77.0% answer “evening” when asked “On Fridays, do you prefer to attend arts events during...”; and 47.3% reply “evening” when asked “On Saturday and Sunday, do you prefer to attend arts events during...” (It should be recognized that for Saturday and Sunday, 38.7% answer “afternoon” as well). Friday and Saturday appear to be the most preferred days of the week to attend events, as 624 or 72.7% of those surveyed respond “Friday” or “Saturday” as their most preferred when asked “Given your responses to the previous three questions, if you decide to attend an arts event, what is your preferred time of the week to do so?” Campus performing arts centers can apply this information to when they offer student promotions or events. For example, ticket vouchers for the next production can be distributed during a performance highly attended by college students.

53.7% (454) affirmatively answer that they participated in artistic activities in high school. Finally, the population is evenly split between those who would volunteer for an arts organization in exchange for tickets, and those who would not – an invaluable piece of information to a campus performing arts organization. Engaging college students through volunteerism can be the link between understanding college students as accomplished through this survey and meeting the needs of college students. College students inviting friends, posting flyers, and making announcements in social and academic settings are just a few examples of how volunteers may serve as this link.

According to CAPP, accessibility of programs for students and affordability are two vital elements of a campus performing arts center that will encourage college students to willingly and happily participate or attend. In the case of the campus performing arts center, it is safe to assume these two qualities are present. In terms of

programming and audience development, how does a subsidiary arts organization promote these qualities and provide top-level service effectively while building sustainable relationships within the college community?

CAMPUS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER IMPRESSIONS

In an effort to better understand the inner workings of campus performing arts centers, interviews were conducted with administrators from varying schools. Nearly twenty centers were contacted; only five were willing to participate and responded with enough information to be included in this thesis. These schools include public and private, community/two-year and four-year schools on both coasts and in the mid-west regions. They are the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts of the University of Pennsylvania, Center of Performing Arts of Santa Clara University of California, Wharton Center for Performing Arts of Michigan State University, Performing Arts Center of Victor Valley Community College of California, and Stockton Performing Arts Center of Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. Interviews were conducted via e-mail and telephone throughout the winter and spring of 2009.

Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts of the University of Pennsylvania

The Annenberg Center's mission is to highlight "the value of the performing arts by presenting world renowned and emerging artists and companies who express adventuresome perspectives on contemporary issues, timeless ideas, and diverse cultures. By offering contextualization programs, featuring Penn faculty as well as experts from the artistic and business communities, the Annenberg Center promotes critical thinking among its audiences, creating uniquely rewarding arts experiences."³⁷

The Annenberg Center is daughter to the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), located in Philadelphia, PA. Sixteen schools and colleges make up UPenn's student body

³⁷University of Pennsylvania (2009), 'About' [accessed December 2008 - April 2009 2009].

of about 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Furthermore, the university has a work force of about 16,000 staff members and the university health system and hospital has about the same. As for faculty members, UPenn has a total of 4,049 with nearly 3,000 more in academic support staff. That's over 40,000 people just on campus!

The contact person for Annenberg was Nicole Allen Cook, Marketing Director. She explained that "college students are very important to us and to our mission." Furthermore, serving and supporting student needs means "fulfilling our responsibility to the university."³⁸ When asked the percentage of audience members who are college students, Cook referred to research conducted in 2006-07 (the most accurate/recent data available according to Cook); of all tickets sold, about 15% were purchased by college students. In Ms. Cook's opinion, this is a "pretty high" percentage. She added that although students do not make up the largest part of Annenberg's audience, they are a consistent part. During Annenberg's season, there is Penn Presents, Annenberg's own series which it curates, produces and markets. Fewer students attend these productions than compared to performances given by student groups.

Cook described student involvement in the administration that utilizes a work study program. The box office and ushers staff, for example, is primarily staffed by work study students. Furthermore, every department has at least one work study student – for example, the finance office utilizes students who even work with billing, and two work studies work in marketing to assist with administration and with distribution and so forth. Specifically speaking of marketing, students assist in what Ms. Cook refers to as a "grassroots effort." They distribute flyers in the city; at this point, they do not offer ideas about marketing other than sharing what locations work best for distributing flyers.

³⁸ Cook, Nicole Allen (2009), Personal Communication - Telephone Interview, April 10, 2009.

Unfortunately, it appears these flyers that are distributed throughout the city are not intended to bring in college students, but a more general target of Philadelphia residents.

As for special pricing, Cook described success over the past couple of years with a program called “Ben’s Tickets” or “Ben’s Tix.” A board member designed this program to build interest among the student body and sell more tickets to students. The involvement of the board member in this scenario tells us that involving students in the organization was a major concern of not only the administration but the governing body. Essentially, an exclusive sale for students takes place online for three days during the fall and spring semesters. The sale is not only for balcony tickets, which many student discounts are limited to, but for all seats in the house. The sale can be applied to every performance of the season. The goal is to remind students that purchasing tickets for Annenberg productions should be part of the semester routine of buying books, sporting tickets and so forth. In addition to this program, Annenberg has regular student discounted tickets ranging in price from \$10 to \$15. Cook considers both Ben’s Tix and the regular student discount tickets successful, but did not offer statistical data to show an increase in student attendance.

When asked the percentage of the annual budget that is allotted for student programs and audience development of students, Ms. Cook admitted that the less than one percent is “not too low,” which is the current amount allocated. She went on to describe her reasoning for this statement: a lot of student engagement is dependent on relationships, which means getting students to market to one another. Consequently, this means low costs. From her experiences, Ms. Cook stated the “number one reason people

come is word of mouth and coming to performances together”³⁹ (the CAPP data supports her statement). Furthermore, Cook justifies the small amount of money budgeted for the engagement of students on other low cost marketing tools such as online resources (UCnet⁴⁰ e-mails 70,000 people in the university database at a very cost effective rate).

In her opinion, Ms. Cook described the reasonable student discount pricing as meeting the first logistic of college students – this being one way Annenberg best meets the needs of the student body. Furthermore, allowing student groups to perform at Annenberg for a lower rate than other companies is another way students are served. As for programming, not many programming decisions have been made based on the students. However, with the knowledge that jazz productions are a big interest of students, jazz programs are especially marketed to students.

Right now, a goal for the Annenberg Center is building an audience development program for college students. One major way Annenberg plans to reach this goal is hiring a student full-time over the summer as a marketing intern. The intern will develop a plan to be implemented in the fall after the student is no longer an intern at the Annenberg. Part of that plan will be to engage other students – perhaps creating a network of ambassadors who will help spread the word about Annenberg. At this point, Cook is not sure what will come of the internship, but perhaps a special activity or experience that the rest of the audience does not receive is in store. This internship will bring a voice to the administration as to what is attractive to this group at a low cost.

³⁹ Cook, Nicole Allen (2009)

⁴⁰ “The University City Network is the complete guide to merchants, services and fun in University City Philadelphia and the surrounding area” – a marketing resource for organizations and a discount/information resource for consumers. UCnet.com

⁴¹ University City is a section in West Philadelphia that is home to major university campuses such as the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University.

With this in mind, Cook reminds her fellow marketers that it is important to be willing to set up systems to evaluate the success of new projects. She did offer evaluation information about past and current audience development strategies employed at Annenberg such as Ben's Tix.

Center of Performing Arts at Santa Clara University

The contact person for Center of Performing Arts (CPA) at Santa Clara University, California was Ms. Suzanne Butler, assistant to the Executive Director. When first contacted regarding this study, the Executive Director was pleased to help, but had only been in the position for four weeks at the time and therefore suggested Ms. Butler as the contact person.

The Center of Performing Arts (CPA) at Santa Clara University was created in 1997 to facilitate artistic exchange between artists in the fields of dance, music, and theatre. The CPA's mission is to foster opportunities on the Santa Clara University campus to *teach students, engage audiences, and promote understanding through the performing arts*. Currently, the CPA encompasses programming from the Department of Theatre and Dance, the Department of Music, and the newly formed Justice and the Arts Initiative, as well as professional programming.⁴²

From Butler's statement, it appears that CPA's programming is mostly related to academic programs with professional programming as a secondary source in fulfilling its mission. Santa Clara University is a Jesuit-Catholic institution located in Silicon Valley region of California with roughly 8,200 undergraduate and graduate students.⁴³ Santa

⁴²Center of Performing Arts at Santa Clara University (2009), 'Organizational Background for Grant Proposal' (California).

⁴³Santa Clara University (2009), 'Http://Www.Scu.Edu/' [accessed January - April 2009].

Clara describes CPA as an integral part of campus life and learning, making “student learning its central focus by promoting faculty and student works.”⁴⁴

When asked the percentage of students in the audience for each performance, Ms. Butler described CPA’s programming as “wide-reaching” and therefore including performances that are sometimes “more or less popular with the students than others. [However, student] ticket sales overall account for about 50%” of the annual ticket sales.⁴⁵ Although college students make up a rather large portion of the audience at CPA, none are involved in the administration. There are no internships, advisory committees or other comparable volunteer opportunities currently available or utilized by Santa Clara students. However, Butler’s recognition of the importance of further student involvement is evident in her statement: “We currently do not have students involved in the administration. There have been many talks about starting a student performing arts board. Our director is new, and I know this is something he is very interested in pursuing.”⁴⁶

Butler continues by describing CPA programming: most of the Center’s events are open to the public. An example of a program produced solely for the student body is a play entitled “Thread a Moving Needle” which is traditionally programmed in the beginning of each school year. It was written and directed by a faculty member specifically for incoming freshman; it “explores rape and harassment issues on college campuses.”⁴⁷ In addition to this and similar productions solely intended for the student body are student organizations that were “born out of the CPA” and/or utilize the space.

⁴⁴ Center of Performing Arts at Santa Clara University (2009).

⁴⁵ Butler, Suzanne (2009), Personal Communication - E-mail Interviews, March 1 through April 1, 2009.

⁴⁶ Butler, Suzanne (2009)

⁴⁷ Butler, Suzanne (2009)

An example of this is a student-run improvisational group that performs on campus, but is not overseen by the Center's administration. Another example of special offerings for students is pricing; student tickets are \$5 as opposed to the regular ticket price ranging up to \$14.

When asked about the annual budget line for student programs, CPA was unable to give concrete numbers. "Because we are the umbrella organization for the Department of Music and the Department of Theatre & Dance, most of the programs [in] our season are student-based: part of a class, directed by students, acted by students, recitals, etc. Most of our budget goes to student programs in this regard."⁴⁸ This statement leads to the conclusion that CPA is primarily an academic theater as suggested earlier.

As for the funds spent on audience development of college students, again a number was not available. Ms. Butler admitted, "We have not done as much audience development as we'd like to do. This is also a project in the works under our new Director."⁴⁹ The Center's marketing plan(s) for college students do include print ads, online ads, student newspaper ads, postings on campus, word of mouth and inter-department programming.

When asked "what ways can your organization improve its effectiveness with the student body?" Butler responded by differentiating between events that are "academic" and "entertainment" in nature.

I think this question is two-fold. First of all, we have to offer performances that students will want to attend. We are more conscientious in our efforts of marketing to student audiences as opposed to community audiences, and will continue to improve in this direction. The other portion of this is tying performances to education. At the university, sometimes performances have more

⁴⁸ Butler, Suzanne (2009)

⁴⁹ Butler, Suzanne (2009)

to do with educational processes than entertainment. We need to be aware of those events that are "academic" in nature to those that are "entertainment." Both are important, but how to attract student interest is different. We are continuing our efforts to tie important educational aspects to classes, student organizations, and to the learning process at large.⁵⁰

Finally, when asked "What advice would you share with the next generation of arts administrators of campus performing art centers?" Butler pointed towards student involvement in the creative process and listening to what the college students are interested in.

It is important to expose students to a plethora of art as part of their overall study and understanding, but it's also important to listen to what the students are telling you! Some of the best productions I have seen are completely student run and organized. When students get into a creative process, and find others who are interested in their...production, those are usually the performances that have the largest impact on the student body at large. This is when the creative process is at its best, and when the opportunity for something new and exciting can appear. Listen carefully and assist as much as possible.⁵¹

Wharton Center for Performing Arts of Michigan State University

The Wharton Center for Performing Arts of Michigan State University (MSU) is located in East Lansing, Michigan. "The mission of Wharton Center is to enrich the lives of Michigan residents and strengthen the value of the arts in everyday life by serving as a leading resource for renowned arts entertainment and education programs."⁵² With faculty and staff of over 11,000 persons and a student body numbering 46,648 and "more than 200 programs of study offered by 17 degree-granting colleges," MSU is more than a

⁵⁰ Butler, Suzanne (2009)

⁵¹ Butler, Suzanne (2009)

⁵²Wharton Center for Performing Arts (2009), 'Whartoncenter.Org' (Wharton Center) [accessed February - April 2009 2009].

large campus; it is nearly a small city just as UPenn and other universities studied in this thesis. The Wharton Center contact person was Kent Love, Director of Communication. Mr. Love describes the Center as “technically part of the university, [however it] receive[s] very little operating funds from MSU and view[s] itself as a self-supporting non-profit presenter.”⁵³

Mr. Love shared that although the student body of MSU was expansive, “on average ... students make up about 5 to 8 percent of our overall audience.”⁵⁴ Perhaps this low percentage of college students relates to the mission of the Center which names Michigan residents as the primary audience – a very broad constituency. He goes on to say that for performances “with a younger skewing demographic,” a higher percentage of the audience is made up of students. However small the percentage of student audience members, there is a great presence of MSU students involved in the administration of Wharton. Love states, “We have numerous student interns – three in communications/marketing, one in education, two backstage. We also coordinate a student marketing team with about 20 active participants each semester. The majority of the personnel in our Box Office and usher staff is students.”⁵⁵ Given this high level of student involvement in the Center’s administration, it’s curious there is not a higher percentage of students attending performances. Mr. Love didn’t offer any comment regarding this complexity.

As for special events or programming, Wharton works closely with the student presenting organizations, “especially the Residence Hall Association (RHA) which received funding through the university to subsidize costs and tickets.” As for special

⁵³ Love, Kent A. (2009), Personal Communication - E-mail Interview, April 1, 2009.

⁵⁴ Love, Kent A. (2009)

⁵⁵ Love, Kent A. (2009)

pricing, Mr. Love explains that for most Broadway performances, student tickets are offered at \$25 (regularly priced as high as \$132.50) and \$15 for non-Broadway performances. Furthermore, MSU students receive free admission to the Center's "World View Lecture Series" which is funded in large part through the Office of the President.⁵⁶

When asked about audience development costs and techniques specifically for students, Mr. Love responded by stating that "very little paid marketing" is utilized. Instead, low cost marketing is employed; "most of our efforts are through street marketing (distributing flyers and posters) ... [and the use of] Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, etc. with very little associated costs."⁵⁷ As for e-blasts, the university prohibits Wharton from communicating to the entire student body by e-mail. Instead, Wharton "attend[s] numerous student functions to capture emails through a Register to Win mechanism. We exhibit at Academic Orientation Program (attendance is required by all transfer students and incoming freshmen), "A Taste of Wharton Center" which entails exhibiting in dorm cafeterias throughout the fall semester (17 times), "A Dinner and A Show" which is coordinated with Housing and Food Services, etc."⁵⁸

When asked, "In your opinion, how does your center best meet the needs of the student body?" Love responded, "We offer space for student events at a substantially reduced academic rate, we offer an aggressive student pricing program ... and we mentor students interested in creative careers."⁵⁹ However, Mr. Love does see room for improvement – "We need to get permission from the university leadership to have regular

⁵⁶ Love, Kent A. (2009)

⁵⁷ Love, Kent A. (2009)

⁵⁸ Love, Kent A. (2009)

⁵⁹ Love, Kent A. (2009)

email contact with the entire student body to keep Wharton Center, its performances, and student pricing program top of mind.”⁶⁰

Love concluded his interview by sharing advice intended for other campus performing arts centers administrators. “Indoctrinate students to the arts from the very beginning of their academic experience. Our youth are being exposed to the arts less and less, which will have a direct correlation to their likelihood to be arts consumers.”⁶¹ His advice speaks to the responsibility of arts organizations in academic settings such as a campus performing arts center but also highlights the importance of building sustainable relationships with the younger generations. In Love’s opinion, they are building arts audiences for Wharton, Michigan and wherever students of Michigan State may move after graduation.

Performing Arts Center of Victor Valley Community College

Located in Novato, California, Victor Valley Community College is a two year college that offers degrees and certificates in justice, health, anthropology, business and fine arts, among many other areas of study. Its student body is composed of adults from many walks of life and many age ranges. The Performing Arts Center is connected to the fine arts and communications/speech programs. Eric Pearson, the Coordinator of the Center, was interviewed as part of this study.

Twenty percent or less of the audiences for each performance are students.

When asked if students were involved in the administration and how, Mr. Pearson simply

⁶⁰ Love, Kent A. (2009)

⁶¹ Love, Kent A. (2009)

answered, “no.”⁶² Furthermore, Pearson described that there are no special programs for students, but that “ASB [Associated Student Body] card holders get one free ticket for all college sponsored programs. The Local Community Concert Association offers Student Rush tickets for \$5.00 (\$35.00 door price) five minutes prior to curtain.”⁶³

As for audience development, Mr. Pearson stated that “less than 1%” of the Center’s annual budget is spent on student programs and audience development of students combined. As the coordinator, Pearson did not have much insight to the marketing of the Center; however he did offer his impressions of the Center’s work in audience development of students. “No techniques other than the ASB [Associated Student Body] discount that I am aware of.”⁶⁴

In Mr. Pearson’s opinion, the Center supports the students of Victor Valley Community College best through free use of the space if available. Pearson suggests that there is great room for improvement for the Center and for other campus performing arts centers; he states “press the administration to have an arts administrative body. We do not have a marketing position, dedicated house manager position, or arts administrator. My position as Coordinator is also as a Theatre Technician and I am actively involved in the technical support of all productions.”⁶⁵ It appears the Center does not have the capacity for sustainable growth or relationship development within its community and among the college’s students. From Pearson’s statement, it seems the Center has not been enabled by the College to build its capacity. However, it is important to recognize the high percentage of student attendance (20%) especially when compared to that of Wharton

⁶² Pearson, Eric (2009), Personal Communication - E-Mail Interview, March 24, 2009.

⁶³ Pearson, Eric (2009)

⁶⁴ Pearson, Eric (2009)

⁶⁵ Pearson, Eric (2009)

who does seem to be actively working on building their student audience which currently only makes up 5 to 8 percent of the total audience. Perhaps it is time for the Center to conduct research to find out who it is they are reaching and why, considering this high percentage of student attendance and what Pearson considers low administrative capacity (which might provide obstacles in this process).

Stockton Performing Arts Center (PAC) of Richard Stockton College

With “7,307 full- and part-time undergraduate and graduate students,” Stockton serves students with eight schools specializing in health, education, social sciences and so forth.⁶⁶ Located in Pomona, New Jersey, the Stockton Performing Arts Center (PAC) is one of many cultural offerings the College shares with the community. Suze DiPietro, the Marketing Director of PAC, offered her impressions of audience development success and failures.

On average, twenty-two percent of audience members per performance are college students.⁶⁷ Combining this strong presence in the audience with a strong presence in volunteer staff and administration (about twenty-five students participate as volunteers, interns and in other administration positions), the Center has a great handle on student communications.⁶⁸ This stems from a substantial fiscal commitment to students. Ms. DiPietro shares that about ten percent of the Center’s annual budget is spent on student programs and audience development of students. This includes about five shows per season that are geared solely for the student body. It also includes a student discount

⁶⁶ Richard Stockton College of NJ, The (2009), ‘Stockton.Edu’ [accessed February - April 2009 2009].

⁶⁷ DiPietro, Suze (2009), Personal Communication - E-Mail Interview, March 23, 2009.

⁶⁸ DiPietro, Suze (2009)

for all tickets; \$7 is the student price compared to regularly priced tickets which can be as high as \$45 depending on the production.^{69 70} This ten percent is a considerable amount compared to other centers studied for this thesis (for examples, Annenberg Center and Performing Arts Center of Victor Valley Community College allocate less than 1% of their budgets). It cannot be the only piece of information used to make an argument as to whether or not PAC serves college students better than other university centers, but it does give an idea of the dedication PAC has to the college students of Stockton.

PAC utilizes the following marketing/audience development techniques in an effort to reach college students: e-mail blasts, social networking sites such as Facebook and Myspace, campus television, tent cards in dining halls and common areas, street teaming, and “dorm storming” (focused communication in the residence halls utilizing flyers and word of mouth).⁷¹ When asked which ways PAC could improve its service to and development of students as an audience, DiPietro responded, “It’s an ongoing process.”⁷² Unfortunately, DiPietro did not elaborate on this comment with specific plans. This is an example of the limitations of this study which, in DiPietro’s case, was exercised via e-mail.

With high college student attendance (22% of total audience members are students), PAC reaps the benefits it sows. Based on this interview alone, conclusions cannot be made as to whether or not success with college students is had because of the

⁶⁹ DiPietro, Suze (2009)

⁷⁰ (PAC), Stockton Performing Arts Center (2009), ‘PAC @ [Http://Intraweb.Stockton.Edu/Pac/Indexmain.Asp](http://Intraweb.Stockton.Edu/Pac/Indexmain.Asp)’ (Richard Stockton College) [accessed February - April 2009 2009].

⁷¹ DiPietro, Suze (2009)

⁷² DiPietro, Suze (2009)

various marketing tools. However, the fact that PAC is focusing time and funds on this target audience illustrates an area of their successfulness.

THE POTENTIAL OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

As determined by CAPP, the majority of college students are interested in participating in the arts in one way or another. Why is it then that the participating campus performing arts centers experience a generally low engagement of college students as audience members? Generally, it appears these centers are utilizing communication methods preferred by college students such as social networking, flyers and word of mouth. Annenberg's Ben's Tix program, Wharton's social approach to creating evenings of fellowship for friends and family are examples of these centers meeting the preferences of college students. Perhaps it is not the marketing tools, but the overall approach that leaves these campus performing arts centers with weak, difficult to sustain relationships with college students. After all, it must be remembered that these college students are not only passing through but will forever be connected to their alma mater – they are a potential, long-lasting, returning consumer base (and potential donor pool). An approach to audience development that suits the goal of sustainability is relationship marketing, of which “maximizing the lifetime value of a customer is a fundamental goal.”⁷³

According to Marketing in the 21st Century, relationship marketing stems from earlier research in areas such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. The comparison between customer relationships and marriage is made as “we are working to create bonds that will last forever; the only difference is that we want to create these bonds with multiple consumers.” This is applicable to college students even though *forever* may seem impossible as college students are often only physically connected to

⁷³ Christopher, Martin, et al. (2002) Page 5.

their college for an average of four years. There is the assumption that after graduation, college students break ties with their Alma matter and affiliated organizations.

Sustainable bonds are valuable for every constituency, no exceptions. This assumption should be questioned as proven by the British Council's "University Presenters Marketing Report," which states 25% of the Major University Presenters (MUP) audience is university alumnae/i.⁷⁴ The author goes on to describe this comparison:

Relationship selling is like marriage. To make it work, you must work at it. It is not easy and, at times, the costs to you will outweigh the profits that you are receiving in return. Much as in marriage, awareness, credibility, trust, and chemistry govern the relationship. The importance of each must be emphasized continuously. You must be prepared to deliver on every promise. If you do not deliver, you must be prepared for a fight or struggle. If you have enough negativity, be prepared for a divorce.⁷⁵

The text describes relationship marketing as the opposite of the traditional 20th century marketing approach of transaction selling, which is "synonymous with terms like the 'Hard Sell' or 'Manipulative Selling.'"⁷⁶

Audience retention or sustainability is key in the relationship marketing approach. It involves building reciprocal loyalty between consumer and organization. "We know that it costs, on average, anywhere from six to ten times more to get a new customer than to keep an old customer," says Linda M. Orr, author of "What Does 'Relationship Marketing' Really Mean?" According to Orr, this means that "customer loyalty is worth more than ten times a single purchase."⁷⁷ Therefore in all interactions with the target

⁷⁴ MUP Page 30.

⁷⁵ Keillor, Bruce David (2007), *Marketing in the 21st Century*, vol. 3 (4 vols.; Praeger Perspectives; Westport, Conn.: Praeger). Page 6.

⁷⁶ Keillor, Bruce David (2007) Vol. 3 | Page 7

⁷⁷ Keillor, Bruce David (2007) Vol. 3 | Page 3.

audience, it is important to remember that building upon reciprocal loyalty is of the utmost importance.

Relationship marketing goes a step beyond the often utilized 4P approach to marketing.⁷⁸ “Relationship marketing is a total strategy that involves all the marketing mix variables to create and keep loyal customers.”⁷⁹ Of course strategy is not determined by choosing to engage in the process of relationship marketing; utilizing the 4Ps (product, price, place, promotion) as guidelines for marketing decisions may be appropriate and helpful to organizations. As Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne describe in their book Relationship Marketing, “factors affecting the choice of relationship strategy might include an uncertain and volatile marketing environment, the degree of commoditization and hence price sensitivity of the market and the size of transaction costs.”⁸⁰ It is vital to understand the target audience and how they prefer to receive their information – in acknowledging and following through using what communication methods work best for them, an organization will enhance the relationship further.

Because of CAPP and the impressions of those campus administrators interviewed, we know that college students prefer and find credible word of mouth, social networking and flyers over other methods of communication. An example of how relationship marketing can work for university presenting organizations builds upon this piece of data from CAPP. With the knowledge that college students prefer to learn about arts events through friends, a campus performing arts center can build a program for

⁷⁸ 4P refers to the traditional marketing mix (“one of the key concepts in modern marketing theory”). The four-factor classifications of these tools are product, price, place, promotion. According to Standing Room Only, a fifth “P” has been added: people. This addition to the traditional marketing mix also supports the importance of relationship driven audience development. Kotler, Philip, and Joanne Scheff. Pages 42-3.

⁷⁹ Keillor, Bruce David (2007) Vol. 3 | Page 5

⁸⁰ Christopher, Martin, et al. (2002) Page 199.

student organizations, such as fraternal organizations, building a relationship with the group first and then the individual. This scenario can work in reverse as well – a relationship may first be created with an individual and from that relationship, more students may be inclined to participate, as the individual invites student group members and friends. The second volume of Marketing in the 21st Century describes this understanding of the target audience as intimacy:

An active and nurtured customer relationship is key to creating a customer-centric experience. Creating and maintaining this customer-intimate relationship requires a consistent, accessible, and timely flow of data about this customer's preferences, behavior, perceived needs, beliefs, and attitudes that need to be ... maintained.⁸¹

For campus performing arts centers that wish to improve their relationship with college students, utilizing the CAPP data to guide decision-making is principal. It must be used as a tool to better understand each university student community better. Relationship marketing means understanding the individual and the group. Understanding what it is the group and the individual want and need and providing it for them and communicating it to them effectively is the responsibility of the campus performing arts center.

In the case of the Annenberg Center, as Ms. Cook stated, plans are in place to hire a summer intern to assist in designing a marketing strategy and general approach to serving UPenn students. This action illustrates Annenberg's commitment to the university and to its students. It is with the help of a college student that insight into the needs and wants of students will be explored as a means of improving the relationship between Annenberg and UPenn students. Perhaps the marketing team of Annenberg did not intentionally decide to embark upon relationship marketing as Cook did not say

⁸¹ Keillor, Bruce David (2007) Vol. 2 | Page 204.

specifically; however by their actions, it appears that they are on the road to success in relationship marketing. It will be exciting to see what programs and materials are born of this collaboration between college intern and campus performing arts center. One year after the intern's tenure, what programs will still be in place and will they be successful? At this point in time, the internship has yet to begin and therefore, there is no answer, but the gesture of hiring a student is one step towards relationship marketing.

In the case of the Wharton Center of Michigan State University, every possible avenue to get the message out about the Center is taken. As Love shared in his interview, students are approached in the residence halls, dining halls, on-line and through friends from the beginning of their collegiate career. Getting them when they get on campus and building upon that introduction every subsequent semester is a pro-active and positive approach to relationship marketing.

Relationship marketing is an approach to audience development that can positively affect the success of campus performing arts centers in reaching students and building relationships with them.

SUMMARY

In this thesis, current literature about institutions of higher learning and campus performing arts centers has been discussed, the results of the 2007 College Arts Participation Project have been realized and the impressions of campus centers' administrators have been shared. Finally, relationship marketing has been defined and its possibilities have been explored in the context of campus performing arts centers and college students. As stated in *Marketing in the 21st Century*, "The facts are really quite simple. No matter how you look at it, even if it seems like complete common sense or a big, burdensome hassle, relationship marketing is critical to the success of any [organization] operating in the 21st century."⁸²

In the beginning of the study, it was discovered that not much formal literature was written regarding institutions of higher education and their subsidiary non-profit arts organizations. Instead, anecdotal articles about the output of such organizations were available in great numbers. The few scholarly papers that explored these organizations were generally academic papers written as part of higher education degrees. We did learn from the literature that better understanding college student participation in the arts was vital and unfulfilled. Better understanding is vital because it is necessary to comprehend the target audience in order to fulfill their needs.

With the guidance of Professor Ximena Varela, the 2007 Drexel University Arts Administration cohort administered College Arts Participation Project (CAPP). This survey sought to fill the void in the current literature by exploring the habits, wants and needs of college students of Philadelphia, PA. Nearly nine hundred students from nine different universities and colleges shared their ideas about arts and cultural organizations

⁸² Keillor, Bruce David (2007) Vol. 3 | Page 9.

and their personal experiences with the arts. In regards to marketing, we learned that these students preferred word of mouth, social networking and flyers to other methods of communication. We also learned that the majority of college students are unaware of the numerous programs/special pricing geared exclusively for them. Another important piece of information that we learned from the CAPP data is the social preferences of college students – they want to attend arts events with groups of friends or with family.

The second major portion of this study was an intimate look at five campus performing arts centers. Utilizing personal interviews, the internet, printed marketing materials and other resources such as annual reports and grant proposals, snapshots of the marketing strategies used to reach college students were captured. Based upon personal interviews, the impressions of the administrative staff of these five institutions were recorded and analyzed. From these arts administrators, we learned the potential tools that can be utilized to build relationships with college students, such as marketing plans developed by students as in the case of Annenberg's intern and grassroots efforts in multiple arenas as in the case of Wharton. The experiences of these administrators supported the CAPP finding that college students prefer to attend arts events with friends and family and receive and trust information about arts events from friends and family.

Finally, combining the CAPP data and the impressions gained from the interviews with scholarly writings about relationship marketing offered insight into the value of building relationships as a means of sustainability in the consumer base. Specifically, it has been suggested in this thesis that campus performing arts centers offer social outlets as part of their programming to meet the desire of college students to attend arts events with friends and family. Communicating these events and the message that they are

meant for students and friends should involve social networking, flyers and word of mouth as these are the methods preferred by college students. By meeting the needs of college students and building a relationship with them, a campus performing arts center has the opportunity to grow that relationship even after graduation as we learned alumae/i make a great portion of campus presenters' audiences (as found in the Major University Presenters study).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

“You have to focus on keeping customers happy, and the only way to do that is by building and maintaining a relationship with each one.”⁸³ A case has been made for the implementation of relationship marketing among college non-profit arts organizations, specifically performing arts centers. Understanding the target audience is vital and evaluating current procedures and those of like organizations will help in determining which methods work and which do not in communicating and building relationships with college students.

This study, however, only chips at the surface of understanding both college students and the subsidiary performing arts centers of universities and colleges. Research needs to be done that explores the college student nationally. Furthermore, a more extensive study of institutions of higher education and their subsidiary non-profit arts organizations is necessary. A national survey of these organizations augmented by focus groups and interviews would offer a better-rounded and more complete understanding of the relationship between institutions of higher education and their subsidiary non-profit arts organizations and the involvement of the college student.

⁸³ Keillor, Bruce David (2007) Vol. 3 | Page 4.

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