

## Metropolitan State College of Denver

### Where Success Begins with Branding



- Communications Audit/Research
- Positioning/Brand Development
- Graphic Standards Development
- Marketing Support
- Message Training

#### **The Challenge:**

The Metropolitan State College of Denver had established the goal of becoming one of the nation's preeminent urban baccalaureate degree colleges. With the second largest undergraduate student population in the state, award-winning faculty and programs and a wide range of relevant degree programs to choose from, Metro State had all of the ingredients to achieve preeminence both state-wide and nationally.

Despite these attributes, as the only 'open enrollment' college in the state, Metro State had image of offering a lower quality academic experience and of being more akin to a 'four year community college' where students went 'when they couldn't get in anywhere else'. As a result, many of Metro's strongest attributes were often overlooked and undervalued both by Metro students, faculty and administrators as well as outside audiences.

In an effort to achieve their goal of preeminence, Metro State needed to develop a strategic brand platform and set of key messages that would not only reflect Metro State's unique strengths, history, offerings and quality academic experience, but one that would successfully position the school to re-inspire existing staff, students and faculty, and more importantly, attract highly motivated students who were motivated to succeed in both school and life.

## **The Solution:**

### **Phase One: Research and Analysis**

Metro State’s brand development began with a comprehensive communications and brand audit to better assess the perceptions of the school among key internal and external audiences, identify key assets and strengths and to review the effectiveness of current communication vehicles. The assessment consisted of:

- **Multiple Planning sessions** with Metro State’s Office of Communications, a 30-person Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) taskforce, the President of the college and other leadership team members.
- **Eleven focus groups** (101 participants total), representing traditional (age 18 – 21) and non-traditional students (age 21 and older), faculty/administrators from various schools within the college, student groups, athletics, prospective students, admission staff, alumni.
- One-on-one internal and external in-depth interviews with key internal program directors, department chairs, Board of Trustee representatives, Foundation representatives as well as key community stakeholders in business, non-profit and other interest groups.
- **Legislative debriefing** to understand the perceptions of Metro on Capital Hill
- **A full assessment** of all current communication vehicles, mechanisms and graphic standards to evaluate effectiveness, utility and relevance.

### **Internal Consensus Building Was Key**

Throughout the process, our goal was to integrate communications, collaboration and insights on the developing brand strategy across multiple school units and audiences to make sure all key parties were involved with the final brand strategy development.

With our research in hand, we conducted a series of internal presentations to discuss key findings with a wide range of key influencer audiences, and to ensure broad buy-in from those who are integral to the brand delivery and brand communication.

These internal meetings were designed to help us refine our insights and lay the foundation for the development of various brand positioning options, taglines and concepts

In addition, all of this was preparation for an administrative presentation to the College’s Board of Directors.

### **Phase Two: Brand Strategy and Key Message Development**

The communication and brand assessment extracted many new ‘emotional’ insights about Metro State that eventually served as the core foundation for the rebranding effort. Some of those key insights include:

- Metro State’s history as an open enrollment school positioned the school as **more accessible, inclusive and committed** to the value of education for all.
- Metro State **students were perceived as working harder for their degree** than other students, often times being first-generational students, returning older students or working several jobs and managing family responsibilities – all while trying to earn their baccalaureate degree. They believed they ‘appreciated’ their education more and that in the end, they truly ‘earned’ their own degree.
- Metro State’s urban location and proximity to the hub of Denver positioned it as **offering more ‘real world’ and diverse experiences** and perspectives than other schools.
- Metro State’s diverse student and faculty base positioned it as being **more well-rounded and more inclusive** than other schools.
- Metro State’s great programs, award-winning faculty, smaller classes and accomplished alumni base offered **more value for the dollar**, while meeting the new education needs of today’s younger and older students. Metro’s flexible, diverse and accessible approach to education enables students of all ages to have education on their terms and on their time.

These key ‘emotional’ insights about Metro, in combination with the school’s tangible value-offerings, such as great programs, award-winning faculty, more choice, smaller classes and accomplished alumni, led us to reposition the school as offering students a more **‘Relevant, Enriching and Individualized Education’**.

### **Launching Metro State’s New Brand**

- A new formal positioning strategy, key messages and vivid descriptors were created for Metro State, with the new tagline: **Metropolitan State College of Denver. Where Success Begins With You.**
- We assisted in the development of **a formal graphic standards identity revision** to better leverage the school’s logo across a wide-range of audiences and communications vehicles.
- We conducted an **official school-wide ‘brand launch’ and formal message training** for over 250 Metro State personnel and student attendees.
- We **facilitated a marketing strategic planning session** to assist the College in developing a formal marketing communications brand to promote the brand internally and externally.

**Please visit: [www.mscd.edu](http://www.mscd.edu) to witness the brand in action.**