

Atlantic Cape Community College

Branding Communication Plan

STEP 1: Research: Capital campaign and branding research summary

To determine whether Atlantic Cape Community College was ready to begin a capital campaign, a first in the history of the school, the Atlantic Cape Community College Foundation in 2007 commissioned Graham-Pelton Consulting Inc. of Summit, N.J., to review the issue and make a recommendation.

In the firm's July 2007 *Feasibility and Planning Study Report*, the consultants wrote, "A significant number of study participants believe that Atlantic Cape Community College must strengthen its public profile in both Atlantic and Cape May counties if a (capital) campaign is to be successful. While the College enjoys a solid reputation among "people in the know," the breadth and depth of its mission is not always clear to a broader audience" (p. 78).

With the report as an impetus, the Foundation and the College joined forces to engage a firm that specialized in community college branding research as the first step to raise the profile of the College. In May 2008, they hired CLARUS Corporation of Alliance, Neb., a leading community college research firm, to conduct a series of branding research studies and develop a brand platform for the College.

Beginning in Fall 2008 and concluding in Spring 2009, CLARUS conducted focus panels with approximately 300 persons in the College's key stakeholder groups, followed by telephone surveys of high school students and adult learners, and online surveys of faculty and staff. At the end of the process, CLARUS researchers again held focus panels and on-campus workshops to test the validity of the messages derived from their findings and refine them. The College-wide Brand Advisory Committee heard the findings and also provided feedback. CLARUS issued its final report in April 2009.

CLARUS findings adopted by the College's president and Senior Staff:

Brand Positioning Statement:

Atlantic Cape Community College plays an essential role in the development and growth of Atlantic and Cape May counties by providing education and training, based on anticipating and responding to community needs.

Key Marketing Messages:

- *Atlantic Cape Community College creates opportunity for individuals and organizations through access to education and training.*
- *Atlantic Cape Community College provides many tangible benefits to Atlantic and Cape May Counties.*
- *Atlantic Cape Community College features superior academic, technical and training programs.*
- *The faculty and staff at Atlantic Cape Community College foster a learner-centered atmosphere through their expertise and dedication.*
- *Atlantic Cape Community College graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.*
- *Atlantic Cape Community College reflects the wants and needs of students and the community in its physical and learning environment.*

New Tagline:

“Opportunity Starts Here” and, alternately, when addressing students or prospective students, “Your Opportunity Starts Here.”

Revised College Logo/Colors:

Research conducted by CLARUS included questions on the public's recognition of the College's “wave” logo and blue and aqua color palette. The research uncovered audience awareness and “brand equity,” or value, in the wave logo and color scheme. This logo and color scheme was adopted by the Board of Trustees upon the creation in 1999 of Atlantic Cape Community College, a joint venture college funded by Atlantic and Cape May counties. Previously the College was called Atlantic Community College.

Subsequent to the research study, the President and Senior Staff determined that to support the expansion of the Atlantic Cape Athletics Program and foster connections with alumni, the College would return to the official red and blue logo colors adopted when the College opened in 1966. This change was designed to allow the College to build on its strong traditions as it continues to grow to meet student and community needs well into the future.

Official College colors to be used on all official correspondence, publications and other representations of Atlantic Cape Community College will be: Medium Red (PMS 193) and Navy Blue (PMS 294).

Establish Identity Guidelines

The researchers recommended the College reassert Atlantic Cape as the dominant brand image over the sub-brands for its schools and divisions, (e.g., the Academy of Culinary Arts, Casino Career Institute, Health Professions Institute) and establish clear identity guidelines for parent and sub-brands. They recommended designing new sub-brand logos for programs and schools within the College and creating a new Identity Standards Guide.

The College and Foundation hired creative consultants Martino Flynn of Rochester, N.Y., to develop the sub-brand logo formats and make initial recommendations on identify standards.

Adopt New Name on Second Reference

For ease of recognition and to differentiate the College from other community colleges in the region with similar abbreviated names, CLARUS recommended the College adopt “Atlantic Cape” as the official second name or reference for the College. (Previously the College was called ACCC on second reference which was difficult to say, leading speakers to refer to the College as ACC, its name until 1999.)

Showcase Alumni in Image Advertising

Atlantic Cape alumni success stories should be featured in advertising and publications to demonstrate the opportunity that the College creates in its community. Creative consultants Martino Flynn worked with College Relations staff to create a series of ads and a template for additional print and outdoor advertising.

Branding as a Priority

CLARUS recommended the College make internal branding and communication a priority and develop a plan to introduce the brand platform to internal audiences. All internal audiences will be routinely updated so that all are fully informed on the external roll-out activities planned to start in Fall semester 2010.

Outcome of Report:

Armed with the research and the desire to implement a branding campaign prior to the public phase of the Capital Campaign, the College earmarked \$98,000 in FY'10 to change its logo color palette, sub-brand logos and tagline in signs, brochures, letterhead, and other representations of Atlantic Cape, and \$100,000 for FY'11 to underwrite a yearlong branding campaign, slated to begin with the Fall 2010 semester.

STEP 2: Planning:

Goal: For Atlantic Cape Community College to be recognized as a vital organization that creates opportunity for businesses and individuals in Atlantic and Cape May counties and is worthy of public and philanthropic support.

Objective 1.0: Increase awareness and enhance the image of the college among key stakeholders and potential donors within three years.

Strategy 1.1: Position the college as an organization that creates opportunity for individuals and organizations through access to superior education and training and provides tangible benefits to Atlantic and Cape May counties.

Tactic 1.1.1: Develop and implement an external image advertising campaign that will showcase alumni success stories, communicate key marketing messages and feature new tagline, "Opportunity Starts Here."

Tactic 1.1.2: Prepare and implement a public relations program to support the messages of the image advertising campaign.

Tactic 1.1.3: Publicize the new brand platform and advertising campaign through a series of internal and external events, including a reception/news conference for alumni and the media; and branding open houses for faculty, staff and students at each of the college's three campuses.

Tactic 1.1.4: Publish a twice-yearly magazine, *Career Focus*, to highlight the ways in which Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for the citizens and organizations in its two-county area. Mail to prospective students; guidance counselors; libraries. Provide to major gifts officer and college recruiters.

Objective 2.0: Increase recognition of college logo, new college colors and abbreviated college name by internal and external audiences and achieve their proper use by college staff and students within one year.

Strategy 2.1: Educate the college community on the new college colors, logo uses and abbreviated name and encourage them to adhere to brand guidelines.

Tactic 2.1.1: Create an Identity Standards Guide and share it with the college community through the website, employee newsletter and in face-to-face meetings led by college relations staff.

Tactic 2.1.2: Use the color changeover date (Aug. 30, 2010) as an opportunity to educate employees and students about the new college colors through direct participation and contests.

Strategy 2.2: Inform key external stakeholder groups of the new college logo colors and abbreviated name.

Tactic 2.2.1: Disseminate news releases in Atlantic and Cape May counties publicizing the change in college logo colors and name.

Tactic 2.2.2: Include a standard sentence at the end of college news releases, alerting the media of our new abbreviated name.

Works Cited

Atlantic Cape Community College Brand Platform: Brand Platform. CLARUS Corporation. February 2009

Feasibility and Planning Study Report. Graham-Pelton Consulting, Inc. July 2007

STEP 3: Action:

Brand Communication Activities—Internal Audiences

Audience	Message(s)	Channel(s)
Students	<p>Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape faculty and staff foster a learner-centered atmosphere through their expertise and dedication. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>Student newspaper; small group sessions; social media; website; on-campus banners; outdoor advertising; online, radio and TV ads; college’s signboard; publications; news media.</p>
Employees	<p>Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals and organizations through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape faculty and staff foster a learner-centered atmosphere through their expertise and dedication.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>College newsletter; global e-mail; social media; website; special events/contest; outdoor advertising; on-campus banners; online, print, radio and TV ads; college signboard; small group sessions; news media.</p>
Trustees	<p>Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals and organizations through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape provides many tangible benefits to Atlantic and Cape May counties. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>President’s address; special events; college newsletter; global e-mail; outdoor advertising; online, print, radio and TV ads; social media; website; news media.</p>
Foundation Board	<p>Atlantic Cape provides many tangible benefits to Atlantic and Cape May counties.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world. Atlantic Cape reflects the wants and needs of students and the community in its physical and learning environment.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>President’s address; special events; college newsletter; global e-mail; outdoor advertising; print, radio and TV ads; social media; website, news media.</p>

Brand Communication Activities—External Audiences

Audience	Message(s)	Channel(s)
Prospective Students— Recent HS Grads	<p>Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape faculty and staff foster a learner-centered atmosphere through their expertise and dedication. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>Outdoor advertising; social media; website; on-campus banners; online, radio and TV ads; college’s highway signboard; news media coverage; direct mail; on-campus banners; recruitment literature; special events.</p>
Prospective Students— Adult Learners	<p>Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape faculty and staff foster a learner-centered atmosphere through their expertise and dedication. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>Outdoor advertising; social media; website; on-campus banners; online, print, radio and TV ads; college’s highway signboard; news media coverage; direct mail; on-campus banners; recruitment literature; special events.</p>
Potential Donors	<p>Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals and organizations through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape provides many tangible benefits to Atlantic and Cape May counties. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>President’s remarks; face-to-face meetings with fundraisers; outdoor advertising; print, radio and TV ads; social media; website; news media coverage; special events; website.</p>

<p>Elected Officials</p>	<p>Atlantic Cape provides many tangible benefits to Atlantic and Cape May counties. Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals and organizations through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>Face-to-face meetings with college president and officials; outdoor advertising; online, print, radio and TV ads; social media; website; news media coverage; special events.</p>
<p>Alumni</p>	<p>Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals and organizations through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>Alumni newsletter; special events; print, online, radio and TV ads; news media coverage; outdoor advertising; website.</p>
<p>HS Guidance Officers</p>	<p>Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape faculty and staff foster a learner-centered atmosphere through their expertise and dedication. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>Outdoor advertising; website; print, online, radio and TV ads; news media coverage; direct mail; recruitment literature; special events.</p>

<p>News Media</p>	<p>Atlantic Cape provides many tangible benefits to Atlantic and Cape May counties. Atlantic Cape creates opportunity for individuals and organizations through access to superior academic, technical and training programs. Atlantic Cape graduates are successful contributors to the leading industries in the region and around the world.</p> <p>Atlantic Cape has adopted new logo colors, tagline and abbreviated name.</p>	<p>News releases; media advisories; photo opportunities; pitch letters; special events; print, radio, TV and online advertising; website; outdoor advertising.</p>
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Step 4: Evaluation:

- Longitudinal study three years after introduction of branding campaign that replicates work done by CLARUS to determine if attitudes have changed as a result of branding campaign.
- Internal studies by Institutional Research on brand awareness by faculty, staff and students.
- Capital Campaign fundraising results; corporate, foundation, individual giving.
- Enrollment figures.
- Number of new donors.
- Local public dollars, capital and operating.
- Review campaign plan and timeline to determine if plan was implemented in timeframe outlined.

Outcomes (as of 4/30/11):

- Increased philanthropic activity (\$1.25 million raised or pledged toward Capital & Scholarship Campaign).
- Extensive print and electronic media coverage of the branding campaign, including a supportive editorial from the region's major daily newspaper, *The Press of Atlantic City*.
- Strong employee participation in open houses, contests, and compliance with new identity standards.
- A heightened college profile in the community through increased media presence and news coverage of: new air traffic control degree program, solar photovoltaic project, Academy of Culinary Arts, geographic information systems program, student athlete and alumni success; building projects, and major gift donations.
- Ongoing messaging through news releases and college publications that underscores the college's role in providing "opportunity" to citizens and organizations in our service district.
- Launch in October of \$100,000 image advertising campaign, including new tagline and profiles of successful alumni.
- Creation of a Web-based Identity Standards Guide outlining and supplying official college colors, typefaces, logos, names and templates.