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JAA Brandy Task Force Report

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JAA Branding Task Force Report

Summary of Market Research Known to the Task Force

A. In January of 2001, the following one-page summary of "reports of research results conducted by AJCU members" was distributed at a JAA Board meeting, suggesting that "the Jesuit brand is not as great a factor in student recruitment as was previously thought."

Gonzaga University phone interviews of 760 prospective undergraduates:

"Respondents express interest in attending a Catholic-affiliated university more for reasons of perceived academic quality and personal growth than because of shared religious or moral beliefs."

"Gonzaga's religious affiliation *by itself* is rarely a key factor in a student's college choice: only one in five prospects (even among those rated "likely to apply") felt that a Catholic or Jesuit affiliation makes one college more appealing than another." Regis University survey of Denver-area general public:

In response to the question: **Would knowing that a university is a Jesuit school make you more or less likely to attend or recommend it to others?...**

- 20 percent said, More likely
- 57 percent said, Neutral
- 23 percent said, Less likely

3. Rockhurst study of prospective students and potential employers in the Kansas City area:

- The academic image of Jesuit, however, is overshadowed by the values dimension, a two-edged sword. To the extent that "values" are linked to ethics, the issue can complement academic quality. If, however, "values" are interpreted more in a religious/spiritual context, they imply narrowness and rigidity mostly of a social nature. This dichotomy is no doubt artificial and false. Nevertheless, it is present in the minds of students, especially non-Catholics.
- The Jesuit factor appears to be less well understood among employers...Jesuit and Catholic are not perceived as particularly desirable elements in higher education, but Rockhurst students are regarded very favorably in academic quality terms.

B. Additional Research:

With the help of STAMATS, Loyola University New Orleans did some market

research in the Fall and Winter of 2000. This research was fairly extensive, with over 2000 individuals surveyed via focus groups, web-based and telephone interviews. They included faculty, staff, administrators, students, prospective students, alumni, donors, media, and community leaders.

In analyzing the research, the university's integrated marketing team made several key observations, including:

- While generally well received, Loyola is inconsistently perceived by audiences, both internal and external
- While Loyola may have a basic branding problem, this is also an opportunity
- It is important that the university seek to develop a more consistent brand image first regionally and then region by region until we are more consistently known nationally.
- Another key observation was that there seemed to be a lack of understanding of the value of a Jesuit education or problems in articulating these values by the various constituents. Loyola is addressing this through new marketing messages.

Among the areas selected to work on was the following:

"clarifying the benefits of our rich history and 450 years of Jesuit heritage" and the plan that was developed identified three "vivid descriptors" or "points of pride" that will be used to create a stronger brand for Loyola. One of these was: "rich Jesuit tradition." (a clarification of the value of a Jesuit education/Jesuit principles).

2. Santa Clara University, with the help of an outside consultant, conducted some alumni focus groups in August of 2001. This research indicated that:

- Most alumni are supportive of the Jesuit affiliation
- Some recent grads see the affiliation as less important, while older grads see the Jesuit affiliation more as part of the core, foundation of SCU
- "Jesuit" suggests a commitment to learning and intellectual rigor, while "Catholic" has stronger religious overtones.
- Donors are more likely to remember/resonate with "Jesuit" identity of the university than non-donors

- SCU's Jesuit/Catholic identity was a factor in choosing to attend (but not the only factor and, for most, not the dominant factor)

St. Joseph's University learned that, among prospective students, the word "Jesuit" isn't nearly as important as how we highlight those institutional characteristics (in recruitment materials and beyond) which, in fact, make us Jesuit.

Suggested Readings

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