



The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute University of South Florida

“The Best is Yet to Come”

Strategic Public Relations Campaign

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Table of Contents

- **Executive Summary**
- **Situation Analysis**
- **Research Report**
- **S.W.O.T. Analysis**
- **Strategic Plan**
- **Tactics**
- **Financial Report**
- **Evaluation**
- **Appendices**

- *-Appendix A: Telephone Survey Instrument*

- Appendix A-1: Telephone Survey

- *-Appendix B: Donor Questionnaires*

- Appendix B-1: Donor Questionnaire

- Appendix B-2: Donor Questionnaire

- *-Appendix C: Focus Group Materials*

- Appendix C-1: Focus Group Discussion Guide

- Appendix C-2: Focus Group Demographic

- Appendix C-3: Letter to Participants

- Appendix C-4: Notice to Participants

- Appendix C-5: Reminder to Participants

- Appendix C-6: Focus Group Transcript

- *-Appendix D: In-Depth Interview Materials*

- Appendix D-1: In-Depth Interview Schedule: Joseph McAuliffe

- Appendix D-2: In-Depth Interview Schedule: Ron Hurst

- Appendix D-3: In-Depth Interview Transcript: Joseph McAuliffe

- Appendix D-4: In-Depth Interview Transcript: Ron Hurst



Executive Summary

The following report outlines a strategic communications plan created for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of South Florida. This plan seeks to provide OLLI-USF with the necessary tools to increase minority enrollment and improve development efforts, while creating awareness of the organization and its mission.

The foundation of the OLLI-USF “The Best is Yet to Come” campaign is research. The purpose of this study was to gauge the awareness, attitudes and behaviors of senior residents in Hillsborough County and to determine problems and possible solutions to cultural diversity and development issues.

Implemented in September 2007, the study consisted of qualitative and quantitative measures, which began with field research at OLLI-USF’s Open House. A survey of local seniors was conducted over a two week period. This was originally meant to be a telephone survey. However, due to time constraints and low response rates, our survey method was changed to a convenience survey. The survey consisted of interval, ratio and nominal measurements. The most significant findings from this survey include:

- Seniors are not familiar at all (n=73, m=1.49) with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.
- Time was the most important factor (n=72, m=4.04) in seniors’ decisions to join an adult learning program.
- Course offerings were the most valuable (n=73, m=4.07) in seniors’ decisions to join an adult learning program.

In-depth interviews were conducted with two influential individuals within OLLI-USF, Program Coordinator Joseph McAuliffe and Development Chair Ron Hurst. These interviews offered insight into important development and diversity issues facing OLLI-USF.

The first person interviewed was OLLI-USF Program Coordinator Joseph McAuliffe. This interview touched on issues regarding cultural diversity, development and the importance of adult learning programs. Significant findings from this interview include:

- OLLI-USF basically has no development plan right now and a development committee has recently been established to create a strategic program to be implemented.
- Diversity is important to OLLI-USF and Joseph attributes the lack of diversity to the fact that the senior population has an overwhelming percentage of Caucasians that are more educated.

Ron Hurst, the chairman of the OLLI-USF's development committee was interviewed regarding development efforts, specifically in regard to soliciting donors and improving development strategies. Significant findings from this interview include:

- Hurst's opinion that the marketing efforts, or lack thereof, to both members and potential donors to be OLLI-USF's greatest weakness.
- Hurst's claims that many potential donors exist, but are unreachable because OLLI-USF cannot interfere with the university's efforts to raise money.

A focus group of OLLI-USF's culturally diverse members was conducted to obtain opinions and recommendations concerning the organization's diversity issues. The seven participants were hand-selected by the program director to represent a variety of culturally diverse backgrounds. Significant findings from the focus group include:

- When referring to the age group of the majority of membership at OLLI-USF, the focus group participants agreed unanimously on using the term senior citizen.
- Many of the participants did not see a problem with the lack of diversity at OLLI-USF. Many said they simply arrive and teach or arrive and learn, regardless what type of person is there.
- By adding a more culturally diverse group of instructors, minority membership might increase.

Both business and individual donor questionnaires were conducted to gather information about the donation process including how they were approached, their reason for donating and the solicitation material provided. Of the attempted 10 donors from a list provided by OLLI-USF, 5 were completed. The significant findings from these questionnaires include:

- Business donors cited helping an educational organization, company advertising, and exposure as benefits of contributing to OLLI-USF.
- Business donors indicated that OLLI-USF's affiliation with USF favorably effects their decision to donate.
- Respondents identified a simple and quite informal process when donating to OLLI-USF. All of the respondents were approached in person about donating, mainly by Hurst, and felt they were adequately informed about the use of their donation.

Based on this research, the team formulated the following communications objectives:

- To increase awareness among Tampa seniors about OLLI-USF's mission from a mean of 1.49 to 3.0 by March 2009.
- To enhance development efforts through the creation of marketing materials.
- To increase financial contributions to OLLI-USF from approximately \$10,000 annually to \$15,000 annually by March 2009.
- To maintain OLLI-USF's 20 existing community partnerships and forge five new ones by March 2009.

A diverse range of tactics were developed as part of a strategic public relations campaign to assist OLLI-USF in achieving these objectives. The following items will create awareness of OLLI-USF and the benefits of lifelong learning among Tampa seniors, as well as increase enrollment of minority members: a public service announcement, informational pamphlet, the Senior Expo event, promotional items, a media directory and an example of a media pitch.

Additional tactics were created to strengthen OLLI-USF's donor relations with both current and potential donors. These include a development brochure, the Friends of OLLI Program and interactive sponsorships.