

# **Marketing Plan Kickoff**

**01/05/2015 11AM LFG Auditorium**

Thank you, Norma

- WDM
  - Wayne Johnson, owner
  - Susan Delano, client relations
  - Stephen Crawford, art director
- Norma Woods Kennedy
- Elizabeth Gilmer
- All who participated in the many listening groups
- All who have attended today

The current higher education climate in the US demands that all institutions of higher education take time to observe and understand the changing world for which we are preparing our students; listen to the needs of parents, students and employers; change dramatically in response to what we hear; and then tell our story clearly and consistently to students, parents, donors, and legislators. Those institutions

taking the time to do this will survive and thrive. Those who fail to understand the wave of coming change will simply go away.

WDM has helped us stop for a moment, and to listen and observe. We have also asked WDM to find a way to enable us to tell the compelling East Georgia State College story in a clear and vivid manner.

When institutions of higher education stop, as we have done, to listen and observe, it is frankly not hard to hear or see what is taking place.

- Across the US, institutions of higher education are struggling to meet enrollment targets
- Consolidations and mergers of colleges and universities, especially in Georgia, are on the rise
- Students and their families are searching for institutions of higher education which are affordable, and which do not leave students burdened with a large share of the \$1.2 trillion student loan burden in this county

- Students and their families are demanding colleges and universities which understand that students are facing a world which is dramatically different than the world of even 10 years ago – students must graduate prepared with writing, critical thinking, reading and math skills but must also leave prepared for a diverse and internationalized workplace characterized by
  - Drones, robots and artificial intelligence
  - Driverless cars
  - Workplaces unbound by office walls and fixed computing stations

We are going to be one of the institutions which understands those forces of change and survives and thrives in this environment. I want all of you to understand how important I believe it to be that we utilize the message WDM has crafted for us to help us tell our story in a clear, vivid and striking manner.

What is that story? I believe this compelling East Georgia story is that of an institution closely connected to the community that created the college;

and devoted to providing access to higher education in a region that is rural, historically driven by agriculture and timber, and characterized by low expectations about college attendance and completion. East Georgia's faculty and staff are devoted to giving these deserving students a great place to start. It is a welcoming and safe environment close to the homes of many of our students. It is an institution that has focused on academic excellence – providing students a clear pathway for transfer to a comprehensive university.

Another key aspect of this compelling story is that East Georgia is the most affordable USG institution of higher education in the state; and is going to remain so.

Here is the point, however, at which the story line needs to be clarified in a few respects.

In the past, many EGSSC students have simply not recognized the enormous value of earning an associate degree along their path to earning a bachelors degree. They have commonly transferred

before earning that degree. Our story needs to clearly communicate why that associates degree is important to their future academic and economic success and success in life.

Also, we are all immensely proud of our new targeted bachelors degree program. Yet, few outside our close family know that the college now provides two bachelors programs targeted on the needs of our region. We need to clearly communicate this pathway to students interested in those targeted areas.

Further, even those in our own local community often think of us as a place open Monday to Thursday from 8 to 5. Yet, we have morphed from a Monday to Thursday commuter college into a 24/7 residential college with four highly competitive intercollegiate sports teams. Few outside the area immediately surrounding the college are aware of the safe, high quality, affordable residential option now available to our students. We need to tell that story as well.

I believe WDM has listened to us the message and materials they have crafted will be a major factor in our continued efforts to meet the needs of this region for access to higher education. Please join me in welcoming the folks from WDM Marketing.