

PR Campaign for the Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts

Background

The Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts was founded in 1967. Its primary publics are prospective drama students, St. Louis community theatre audience members and current students/faculty. Their primary competitors in terms of other programs are Roosevelt University, DePaul University, Carnegie Mellon, North Carolina School of the Arts, University of Evansville, New York University and more. Their primary competitors in terms of growing an audience base are other St. Louis theatre production companies such as Stages, The Muny, Stray Dog Theatre, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and more. The Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts is a professional, immersive drama experience highlighting not only acting, musical theatre and directing but also theatre studies, stage management, design and technical production. Alumni of the Conservatory of Theatre Arts have gone on to be nominated/awarded Tony Awards, Emmy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Screen Actors Guild Awards and more for varying roles in production. Also, the faculty of the program all have previous career experience in theatre arts and continue to be working professionals. The Conservatory produces seven productions per year and one dance ensemble show. The programs promotional efforts are limited to a page on Webster University's website as well as a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths -strong alumni network of working professionals -partnerships with professional theatre companies	Opportunities -partnering with other undergraduate programs (specifically within the School of Communications) -partnering with local businesses/other St. Louis theatre production companies
Weaknesses -no advertising budget or staff -declining and aging audience	Threats -students aren't as involved with the campus besides the conservatory limiting potential networking/collaboration -competition with other local theatre programs and companies

Problem Statement

The Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts is a program facing a trend in gradual decline in attracting audiences by 6.14% from the previous season for its productions and creating a nationally-recognized brand.

PR Campaign for the Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts: Part 2

Communications Goal

Create a dynamic nationally recognized brand for the Conservatory to develop increased awareness of its quality productions to attract theatre patrons and consequently maintain/expand student enrollment.

The Conservatory's brand and promotional efforts do not differentiate it from other local theatre companies competing for the attention and dollars of the theatre going community. Developing a nationally recognized brand will attract more audience members and help maintain consistent student enrollment eventually leading to the programs expansion.

Communications Strategy

Increase audience awareness through partnerships with local restaurants, other local theatre communities and expand reach of promotional efforts by utilizing the School of Communications at Webster University.

Communications Objectives

Increase this seasons audience attendance by 400 additional tickets sold this season to get the annual box office attendance total back to over 5,000 patrons.

Increasing audience attendance boosts income to support the program and exposure amongst the St. Louis theatre-going community resulting in greater awareness of the Conservatory brand. Getting audience numbers back up to previous standards would be a simple but impactful start to this objective.

Reach out to the School of Communications about creating an advertising/marketing internship for the Conservatory to potentially double the staff.

Creating an advertising/marketing internship would expand the current staff of the Conservatory marketing team, provide other Webster students with professional experience and establish a dialogue with the School of Communications which could lead to other expansion opportunities. Creating a plan for this now could potentially lead to implementation for the following school year.

Primary Public

St. Louis theatre patron community – These individuals are the primary public because they are who will increase revenue and a general reputation for the Conservatory.

Secondary Public

Webster University School of Communications Faculty and Students – It's important to forge relationships with these individuals because they could not only be potential audience members, but partners in promotional efforts.

Messages

St. Louis theatre patron community

-Primary Message: Talent plus value equals entertainment excellence.

-Secondary Message: Webster University Conservatory theatre is an elevated evening experience.

-Justification: This message conveys that the value of the shows are high quality for a reasonable price. Bringing up the idea of an evening experience differentiates the audience experience from other theatre companies.

Webster University School of Communications faculty and students

-Primary Message: Expanded opportunities for students.

-Secondary Message: Communications students care about their careers and providing career and educational opportunities will help all parties involved.

Justification: These messages communicate that the Conservatory is interested in providing opportunities for all students. Joining forces would expand Conservatory awareness and collaboration opportunities.

PR Campaign for the Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts: Part 3

Increase this seasons audience attendance by 400 additional tickets sold this season to get the annual box office attendance total back to over 5,000 patrons.

-Reach out to local restaurants/bars with a proposal to offer combination packages featuring dinner with a Webster University theatre production or the theatre production followed by drinks and/or desert. Specific venues to reach out to include Cyrano's, Balkan Treat Box, Frisco Barroom and Serendipity. This tactic would transform going to see a Webster production into a value-added evening experience. Additionally, these packages may attract new customers familiar with the restaurants/bars to attend the theatre productions.

-In order to attract theatre-goers from other geographic areas, look into partnering with other St. Louis theatre companies and musical theatre university programs to create a theatre "flight" (or sampler) package. Suggested groups to approach would be Stray Dog Theatre, New Line Theatre Company, Lindenwood University, Mustardseed Theatre, Saint Louis University and Kirkwood Theatre Guild. This idea would encourage attendance not only for Webster University productions, but other companies' productions as well. Offering multiple locations and types of productions builds relationships with potential audiences members and creates entertainment variety.

-Approach local high school theatre groups and dance studios with specialized group rates for tickets to Webster University theatre productions. This tactic will attract younger students studying or participating in theatre or dance to experience the quality of programs at Webster University which not only increases audience attendance, but could attract potential prospective students to the Conservatory.

Reach out to the School of Communications about creating an advertising/marketing internship for the Conservatory to potentially double the staff.

-Prepare a presentation for the Dean of Communications at Webster University and the Dean of fine arts discussing implementation of a marketing internship program to assist the

Conservatory. This presentation would explain the needs of the Conservatory program regarding marketing/communications assistance, number of hours required for the intern and a payment plan. Approaching the Dean with a specific plan will increase the likelihood that this would be approved.

-Set up a meeting with the Dean/communications faculty and the Dean of fine arts to share the presentation. Inviting not only the Dean but other communications faculty will potentially draw more interest in the internship for different programs. This will also open the floor for feedback on the presentation.

-Reach out to the Career Planning and Development Center to request approval and assistance in offering this internship. The help of this department will also be instrumental in creating awareness amongst the students about the availability of this internship.

January 2020	<p>-Prepare the presentation of the internship program plan for the School of Communications.</p> <p>-Reach out to local Webster Groves restaurants (specifically Cyrano's, Frisco Barroom, Balkan Treat Box and Serendipity) with the proposal for the combination package.</p>
February 2020	<p>-Reach out to the School of Communications about setting up a meeting with the Dean of and other faculty to present the internship presentation.</p> <p>-Reach out to the Dean of fine arts to attend the presentation as well.</p> <p>-Reach out to local high school theatre programs and dance studios (specifically Nerinx Hall, Kirkwood High School, Webster Groves High School, CBC, Lucille Rap Dance and Charmette Dance Academy) with coupons or specialized group rates for tickets to Webster University theatre productions.</p>
March 2020	<p>-Meet with the School of Communications Dean/Faculty to present the internship presentation.</p> <p>- Reach out the other St. Louis theatre companies and university programs (specifically Stray Dog Theatre, New Line Theatre Company, Mustardseed Theatre, Lindenwood University, Saint Louis University and Kirkwood Theatre Guild) with the proposal for the theatre flight package.</p>
April 2020	<p>-Reach out to the Career Planning and Development Center about setting up a meeting to present the internship presentation</p>

	with the potential approval from the School of Communications to possibly implement the internship program.
May 2020	-Meet with the Career Planning and Development Center to present the internship presentation with the potential approval from the School of Communications.

PR Campaign for the Webster University Conservatory of Theatre Arts: Part 4

Preparation Phase

- Increase this seasons audience attendance by 400 additional tickets sold this season to get the annual box office attendance total back to over 5,000 patrons.
 - Given that last year’s total box office season’s attendance was 4,603, at the end of this year’s season, tickets sales will indicate the success of this tactic.
 - Evaluate the number of combination and flight packages sold.
- Reach out to the School of Communications about creating an advertising/marketing internship for the Conservatory to potentially double the staff.
 - Evaluate by the success of the first presentation to the Dean of communications, Dean of fine arts and the communications staff.
 - Evaluate by the success of the presentation to the Career Planning and Development Center and by their response of either accepting or denying it/offering assistance.
- The beginning benchmark is the 4,603 tickets sold last year’s season.

Implementation Phase

- At the end of each month’s scheduled campaign activities, evaluate number of tickets sold and number of flight/combination packages sold as well as progress on the approval for the internship.
- The ending benchmark will be derived from the total number of tickets sold this season as well as if the internship is approved.

Impact Phase

- Success will be determined by:
 - Total number of tickets sold this season has increased over last year’s total with the target of at least 400.
 - Total number of flight/combination packages sold with the target of at least 200 sold and if this was a successful campaign tactic.
 - Total number of group rates redeemed by local high school theatre groups and dance studios with a target of at least 200 redeemed.
 - Potential implementation of the internship for summer 2020 or fall semester 2020.
- Results will be reported by:
 - Line Graph showcasing comparison of sales figures.
 - Physical numbers of sales figures.
 - List of new audience member demographics for future marketing use.

