OVERVIEW
What is marketing? It is important that we have a clear definition of marketing, so that realistic expectations and goals can be set. The definition of marketing is “the management process through which goods and services move from concept to the customer.” This process is composed of 4P’s. The 4P’s include the product, price, place, and promotion. In higher education there is said to be a fifth P, people.

All five P’s play a role in the decision making process. Often marketing is summed up as only one of the four P’s, promotion. The fifth P, people was added because of the complex formula of factors that weigh in on a student’s decision-making process when deciding on an institution.

Marketing also differs from the term selling. According to Harvard Business School’s professor Theodore C. Levitt, “selling concerns itself with the tricks and techniques of getting people to exchange their cash for your product. It is not concerned with the values that the exchange is about. And it does not, as marketing invariably does, view the entire business process as consisting of a tightly integrated effort to discover, create, arouse, and satisfy customer need.”

Let’s identify the 5P’s that compose the marketing mix and ultimately have a role in the decision-making of a potential student to choose Northland.

Product
Northland’s product is education. Products do not need to be tangible items and include services.

Our product includes credit and non-credit classes, transfer and career/technical education programs, degrees and certificates; pre-college offerings including adult basic education, developmental classes, English language learning, and other services to the community.

The product mix includes:
- **Appearance**: How Northland is perceived? (Advertising, logos, pictures)
- **Functionality**: How does the college work? (Support services, transferability, accessibility)
- **Perceived Quality**: What is the perceived quality of Northland’s education?
- **Warranty**: What is our brand promise?
- **Support Services**: What services come with our education?
Price

Price is a pretty straightforward term, however, we need to clarify how it affects the decision-making process. Price can be identified at the gross, net, and reservation levels. Gross price is the “sticker” price that students use to compare us to peer institutions. Net price is the amount after all fees, scholarships, and financial aid transactions occur. Reservation price is the psychological value that a family will not pay for our education.

The price mix includes:

- **Perceived Value**: What is the psychological value of our institution?
- **Competition**: How is our cost compared to other area institutions?
- **Career Potential**: What is the salary potential versus education costs?
- **Leveraging Strategies**: What options are available for financial aid and scholarships?
- **True Cost of Education**: What are the living/transportation costs?

Place

Place is composed of both the physical location of the education as well as the availability of the education. Place is mainly composed of the physical campus locations. A more meaningful question to answer is how easy is it for a student to visit, enroll, and attend Northland?

The place mix includes:

- **Physical Locations**: Where are the campuses/sites located?
- **Delivery**: Are they online, in-person, or hybrid?
- **Scheduling**: Are classes offered at the times of student demand?

Promotion

Promotion is the word that is often interchanged with marketing. The promotion mix is made up of marketing objectives, marketing audit, marketing strategies, and assessment. The marketing objective is attempted to achieve in support of a strategic business plan. Public relations efforts also need to be included with traditional promotion mix. Is third sentence correct?

The promotion mix includes:

- **Marketing Objectives**: Does the marketing objective support the strategic plan?
- **Marketing Audit**: Do we have the human/financial resources to support objective?
- **Marketing Strategies**: Who is the target market and how to achieve objective?
- **Assessment**: How is success/failure measured for each objective?

People

The reason that people have been added to 4P’s of marketing is because of the critical role people play in the decision-making process. It takes the right people in the right positions. It also takes the right people supporting and advocating for the other P’s in the marketing mix. Do we have the support needed to influence the complete marketing mix?
Year-in-review

Over the past school year, great strides have been made in improving and unifying our college logo, image and marketing strategy. As a result, our website has seen an increase in “hits” by over 160 percent. In the Grand Forks and Thief River Falls area alone, we realized an increase in over 640,000 hits.

In addition to these successes, “ThinkNorthland.com” web page is being created. This page is focused on meeting the needs of the prospective student and their families. The page will be single-minded in recruiting a student to sign-up and become an active prospect for the enrollment team.

In 2010, the marketing and communications department had to reduce its staff by eliminating the Director of Public Relations position. “Northland Now” was created allowing faculty and staff to have direct access to posting events and announcements on our website. This is a significant opportunity for the college community to continue to communicate with the public and media outlets.

A variety of projects were completed including new viewbooks, catalogs, banners, table cloths, a employee directory, athletics website, television commercials, radio commercials, college logo, and image/style guide.

Marketing Priorities

Administration has handed down the following financial priorities for marketing efforts:

1. Program marketing through the use of Clustering
2. College-wide marketing with an emphasis on Liberal Arts
3. Public Relation efforts

Programs on sustainability will be given priority for project requests. Costs for any sustainability requests will be billed to the academic program.

Target Audience

It is common in advertising to categorize your customer by age, gender or demographics, to improve your communication and desired goals. Northland defines our students in the following categories:

- Traditional Student
- Non-Traditional Student

Messaging

Positioning Statement: (Internal statement meant to inform messaging, tone and positioning. This is not a statement that would show up in any form of external marketing.)

For those who have a desire to advance their life through education and want to gain a fast track toward a meaningful profession or a four-year university, Northland is a gateway that provides personalized, career specific education and training. Unlike other area institutions we focus on helping our graduates immediately begin earning a professional living. We accomplish this through our established influence with regional business leaders and organizations.
Campaign Tagline
Take Your Life North.

Strategy
Due to continued financial constraints, and loss of Federal stimulus funds, Northland’s 2011-12 marketing budget has been significantly reduced by over 50%. In 2009, the full-time position of Director of Public Relations was cut. In 2011, a full-time website programmer was cut. These severe reductions will have the following negative impact:
- The reduction will be highly visible in the Grand Forks and Thief River Falls markets.
- The Devils Lake market will be dropped and the Fargo & Minneapolis markets will be added.
- Advertising efforts outside identified markets will be greatly reduced or eliminated.
- Surrounding area-advertising exposure will rely on enrollment efforts and exposure to larger market media.
- Key public relation efforts will continue where possible.

Online statistics reported that there are four main markets that produce the greatest response regarding current website visits. Consistently, these top four markets are:

1. Grand Forks Area
2. Thief River Falls Area
3. Fargo Area
4. Minneapolis Area

Traditionally the Fargo and Minneapolis markets have not been targeted due to advertising costs and enrollment staff constraints. Online advertising will become the primary media vehicle because of the ability to target specifically and generate clean data for future reference.

The four markets will be classified as either primary or secondary. The two primary markets will include the Grand Forks and the Thief River Falls areas. The two secondary markets are the Fargo and Minneapolis areas

Primary Markets: Grand Forks & Thief River Falls
1. Marketing focus will be on college-wide and cluster specific messaging.
2. Public relations efforts, including events, media alerts, and press releases.
3. Target audience will be both traditional (17-23 years old) and non-traditional (24-49 years old) students.

Secondary Markets: Fargo & Minneapolis
1. Marketing focus will be on cluster specific advertising.
2. When news or events are noteworthy and broader than regional context, media alerts and press releases may be sent.
3. Target audience will be focused primarily on traditional students (17-23 years old) due to the likelihood of mobility.
Placement

Northland previously emphasized traditional media vehicles such as television, radio, billboards and newspaper ads in the marketing placement budget. In the past couple of years, and most significantly last year, we have shifted the priority to online marketing. This is due to the potential to reach targeted audiences with clear measurable data on success.

For the next year (2011-12) our placement strategy is as follows.

Primary Markets:

- Online: Program specific web ads will run targeting both traditional and non-traditional populations. Online banners and web ads will run on the GF Herald and TRF Times website targeting non-traditional students and public relations efforts.
- Television: Monday Night Football commercials will run all season targeting non-traditional students. These ads will also benefit traditional trade students.
- Billboards & Signage: A billboard will be purchased in Grand Forks targeting building trades students. A mall kiosk will be leased to target traditional students and their families. Both of these efforts will help satisfy visibility and public relation efforts.
- Print: Newspaper ads will be purchased for key annual publications (ex. Key to Success) targeting both traditional and non-traditional audiences. Ads will be purchased for public relations in key regional publications such as visitor guides. Print ads will also be purchased to highlight significant upcoming events and enrollment dates. Featured student stories will be released to regional publications.
- Radio: Radio campaigns will target both target audiences by running short intense campaigns highlighting semester start dates.
- Media Preference for primary markets include: Midcontinent, GF Herald, TRF Times, Northern Watch, KTRF, KKAQ, KKDQ, Pioneer 90.1, XL93, Cat Country, Newman Signs, Reach Local

Secondary Markets:

- Online: Program specific web ads will run targeting traditional students. Specific email or text blasts may be done if budget allows.
- Billboards & Signage: A billboard will be purchased on Hwy 59 as you head north out of Detroit Lakes towards Thief River Falls targeting transportation students.
- Print: Newspaper ads will be purchased for key annual publications targeting traditional students.
- Media Preferences for secondary markets include: Fargo Forum, Minneapolis Star Tribune, Facebook, Newman Signs

Opportunities & Threats:

Opportunities:

- Support enrollment staff as they implement their annual work plan and recruitment schedule.
- Test new markets through online advertising identified by enrollment and academic programs.
- Expand social media presence and integrate recruiters as social media administrators.
- Develop featured stories highlighting successful current students, alumni, and faculty.
- Explore video options for thinknorthland.com and social media sites.
- Increase marketing effectiveness by developing SEM plan including marketing, recruitment, retention, and academic components.

**Threats:**

- Severe reductions in budget will be visible as competitors become more aggressive.
- Lack of marketing personnel will limit the number of projects completed per year.
- Limited campus support will hinder implementation of marketing plan.
- Inability to integrate marketing, enrollment, retention, and academic plans will reduce effectiveness of all.
- Balancing of external marketing efforts with internal work requests.
- Academic programs not following college style guide will reduce impact of college-wide branding for marketing and recruiting.

**Marketing Goals:**

- Increase web traffic by 15 percent to thinknorthland.com
- Increase Northland Facebook fans by 20 percent
- Generate 100 unique prospect leads through online web forms
- Develop four featured stories a month for Northland homepage
- Integrate marketing plan into Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

**Media Schedule:**

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**Media Preferences**

Television: MNF Midcontinent GF and TRF markets

Print: GF Herald, TRF Times, Northern Watch, Fargo Forum

# Marketing & Communications Budget

**FY 2012**

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