

Sonoma State University Field Stations & Nature Preserves



Strategic Branding MBA BUS 563 Dr. Kyuho Lee March 5, 2013

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#1 FSNP Snapshot & Brand Review

Our mission is to support academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences by providing education and research experience in place-based learning, community engagement, diversity and sustainability.

Dr. Claudia Luke, Director SSU FSNP

The Sonoma State University Field Stations and Nature Preserves (FSNP) is comprised of four main components: lands, facilities, databases, and programs. The 40-acre Los Guillicos Preserve in the Valley of the Moon, the 400-acre Fairfield Osborn Preserve on the top of Sonoma Mountain, and the 3670-acre Galbreath Wildlands Preserve in the Coast Range of southern Mendocino County make up the vast majority of the FSNP's lands. Both Osborn and Galbreath have onsite facilities enabling users of the preserves to access informational and research databases, as well as programs designed and run by the FSNP's full time staff members.

SSU FSNP is a member of the National Organization of Biological Field Stations¹, and is designed to provide research and educational sites where students, from K-12 to undergraduate and graduate, faculty, researchers, organizations and community members can learn and interact with the environments of Northern California, both through programs guided or designed by the staff, or through their own devices. SSU Environmental Science undergraduate interns are trained by graduate students to lead tours through the grasslands, to teach K-12 students about, and given the real world technical proficiency necessary to be move into jobs and internships in their field. The FSNP has undertaken community Partnerships like the WATERS Collaborative, a joint effort with the Sonoma County Water Agency, "[to] engage students and faculty in finding solutions to watershed management."²

There are some common misconceptions about the FSNP. These areas are not pristine wildernesses untouched by man; they have been affected over hundreds of years by the economy, culture, and environment of Northern California. As Dr. Luke explains, "they are not an island of land;" they are part of the surrounding lands. They are also not recreational areas; they are for research and education, outdoor classrooms and laboratories.

Dr. Luke's vision for the FSNP is to make it integral to Sonoma State University, a true jewel in the crown for the university, while growing its regional significance as a place of learning and research through projects such as the WATERS Collaborative³. In order to begin to take steps along this road, several issues and misconceptions must be addressed, and a plan to grow brand awareness must be outlined and implemented.

First among the issues the FSNP faces is its lack of funding and staff size. The FSNP is funded for 1.5 FTS, meaning Dr. Luke must continually raise funds to pay for half the salary necessary to keep her second staff member employed. Even with interns and graduate student help, the two person staff means that access for K-12 classes is so impacted that a lottery system has been put in place, and that any real growth in program requests will be very difficult to manage. It also means that past branding efforts have been limited to fliers on campus, articles in local/university newspapers, a link through the SSU website, and the occasional appearance at campus events. This critical issue needs to be included as part of any brand campaign, as the reality of staffing will constrict any growth.

¹ www.obfs.org

² *Collaborating to Create Tomorrow's Watershed*, North Bay Business Journal, Paid Advertising Supplement, May 14, 2012.

³ www.sonoma.edu/preserves/waters

Misconceptions tend to fall into two categories, those about the nature of the FSNP themselves, and those regarding how they relate to the observer. According to the survey we conducted, and Dr. Luke herself, the most pervasive issue is that students and community members are just not aware of its existence or have no idea that the individual Preserves are part of SSU FSNP. At SSU, common complaints among those who are aware of the Preserves often fall under a general lack of knowledge of how to use the FSNP and how it relates to their educational needs: It's closed to access; I don't know the process but I hear it's complicated; only SSU can use it; it's not relevant to my education; it's not relevant to my students; it's for biologists only; what training? What programs? How do I get there?

For the branding campaign to meet Dr. Luke's vision, it must debunk common misconceptions, answer common questions, and grow interest while at the same time helping to address the funding hurdles FSNP faces. Target audiences should be potential users (students, teachers, researchers, likeminded organizations, community members and other schools) as well as potential revenue sources (donors, clients, and partners) and the SSU Administration itself. It must also tighten the relationship between SSU and FSNP, strengthening the ties and reinforcing the FSNP as an important part of the university.

#2 Competitive Review

Not requested by Dr. Lee.

#3 Target Market Analysis

Because consumers have different knowledge bases and perceptions of the SSU FSNP brand, a customized, segmented approach is far superior to a "one-size-fits-all" marketing mix. By first understanding that not all consumers will benefit from FSNP offerings in the same manner, we can work to understand consumers on a more granular level. Drilling down and grouping those with similar wants and needs is a key step in ensuring that brand messages reach the appropriate audiences. Recognizing that varying facets of the brand appeal to these different consumer segments - and with the ultimate goal of inspiring action - we have identified both primary and secondary market segments to which we will tailor our communications in hopes of establishing several levels of mutually beneficial relationships.

Primary Target Markets

The first of our two primary target segments is a group we have deemed '*prospective SSU students*'. This segment consists of males and females, generally aged 17-19. They possess high-school diplomas and hail from diverse backgrounds and income levels. A majority of these people reside within the state of California (though a small percentage may relocate from out-of-state). These students are eager to explore, test their wings, and try new things. They will be the next generation of FSNP student users, and have great potential to spur significant demand, driving increased synergy with university curriculum through their collective need for fresh, exciting learning. They will, as individuals, make their respective 'purchase decisions' to enroll at SSU. Our goal for this target market is to ensure that access to FSNP place-based learning becomes a driving factor in that decision. Marketing a brand at a university presents a unique opportunity. Because of the nature of the ever-progressing student body, no one group of students remains enrolled indefinitely. Thus, rather than seeking to alter the status quo for current students (as such changes can be met with resistance), by focusing on prospective students, we can deliver marketing messages that will help members of this group formulate their

initial impressions and expectations of both SSU and FSNP. Without minimal preconceptions to overcome, the goal of driving cultural shift at the university toward a curriculum more closely integrated with the FSNP can be achieved more organically - by setting an initial expectation with incoming students.

Another primary target market is the '*partnering research*' group. These are external entities, such as for-profit businesses, non-profits, research collectives, etc. This market will benefit from the research capabilities and resources offered by the FSNP to achieve private organizational research objectives. Purchase decisions for this group will generally be the responsibility of multiple individuals, oftentimes belabored with strict budget constraints and distinct project goals. However, revenue generated by this group will be a critical source of FSNP funding, and by generating industry word of mouth, the relationships generated with this segment will prove instrumental in the future success of the FSNP.

Secondary Target Markets

We have also decided upon two secondary target markets with which we feel can still generate value, but upon which we will allocate fewer marketing resources. The first of which consists of 'current SSU students'. Enrolled students at Sonoma State University constitute a large percentage of users and current staff of the FSNP. Having first-hand experience, they can be brand champions and provide valuable word-of-mouth as to the features and benefits of the FSNP brand. This group is, on average, made up of 36.65% males, and 63.35% females. A large proportion (66.05%) of the student body is of white ethnicity, with 12.6% Hispanic, 3.71% Asian, 1.87% black, and 16.20% unknown/other, while an overwhelming majority (97.99%) are California residents. 1.56% of the student population are residents of other states, and only 0.72% residents of countries outside the U.S.⁴ This group, while active within the SSU community, and to a degree, a driver of change within the university, is less likely to embrace a drastic paradigm shift. However, with some students already active users or contributors to the FSNP, it is certainly worth directing some degree of brand messaging to this group. These individuals are likely to have the 'purchase decision' made for them by a professor or department curriculum, however, positive experiences can be a catalyst for actively urging the university administration for change.

The other secondary target market that we have selected is the 'university administration'. Comprised of SSU faculty and administration personnel, this group comes from a fairly wide variety of professional backgrounds, ethnicities, and income levels. They all, however, have a commonality, in that they are – to varying degrees – decision makers at the university. Ultimately, the long-term growth of the FSNP program at SSU hinges on buy-in from this target segment, at some level. While we can drive cultural change with the increased use from our primary target segments, the approval of 'university administration' can make or break the program. It is imperative that we make an effort to communicate the benefits of FSNP to these decision makers.

#4 SWOT Analysis

The SSU FSNP has a great list of assets to work with. The program's preserves offer a large amount of natural resources to work with, including Copeland Creek that runs directly through the SSU campus. Sufficiently staffed with volunteers and graduate students, the FSNP

⁴ "Demographics, Fall Semesters 2002 – 2011" Sonoma State University Academic Affairs. Web. February 12, 2013 - http://www.sonoma.edu/aa/ir/enrollment/enr94_05.html

has access to over 9,000 students and staff at SSU as well as the surrounding Sonoma County population of nearly 500,000 residents⁵.

SSU students and staff are largely unaware of the FSNP and what it has to offer. This is likely due to a few issues, starting with the program's confusing name. Dr. Luke stated that the terms "Field Stations" and "Nature Preserves" are, and can be, used interchangeably and have the same meaning. This makes the program's name repetitive, saying the same thing in the name twice. In addition, it's too lengthy, especially when paired with SSU -- "Sonoma State University Field Stations And Nature Preserves" is tough to say and remember. Another issue with the program is the difficulty in gaining access to the preserves. The locations are typically very far from campus, and visiting a preserve requires "registration" through a process that is perceived to be difficult and confusing.

Looking at the external environment, Sonoma County is a travel destination and is very active in ecological preservation. There's growing concern among the public about environmental issues, and there's an overwhelming demand for K-12 field trips.

SSU staff and students have trouble connecting the FSNP to their areas of study/instruction. A double-edged sword is Sonoma County Regional Parks. The county department could potentially serve as a great partner in expanding the awareness of the program. However, at the same time, the department could give the public an inaccurate point of parity, thinking that FSNP is for recreational use. Finally, funding is always an issue, as there are only enough funds for 1.5 full time staff.

Internal

Strengths

- 1.) Great product
 - Diverse land & facilities
 - Large quantity of quality experiments and data
- 2.) Sufficient level of volunteers & graduate students
- 3.) Copeland Creek runs right through SSU
- 4.) 8,000+ SSU students, 500+ faculty, 500+ staff

Weaknesses

- 1.) Students/staff unaware of FSNP existence
- 2.) Confusing/repetitive name
- 3.) Vast majority of land is far away from SSU campus
- 4.) Only 1.5 FTS
- 5.) Perceived difficulty in "registration" to use facilities

External

Opportunities

- 1.) Highly active community with strong Regional Parks presence
- 2.) Sonoma County is a big travel destination
- 3.) High demand for K-12 tours
- 4.) Increased concern among public about ecology

⁵ United States Census Bureau. "State & County QuickFacts". Accessed 2/22/13
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06097.html>

Threats

- 1.) CSU endowment/funding is always challenging
- 2.) Public perception of what a “Nature Preserve” is
- 3.) Strong Regional Parks presence
- 4.) SSU community doesn’t relate to FSNP

#5 Marketing Goals

The current marketing goals of SSU FSNP is to increase the visibility and awareness of FSNP within SSU and the community. This includes making current and potential future students aware of the FSNP and the various programs offered, as well as raising the profile of SSU FSNP to be a significant draw in attracting students to attend SSU. In addition, the SSU FSNP will need to increase its visibility within the administration, as well as with campus faculty to maximize existing resources, and draw additional resources to the SSU FSNP in the future. Another important stakeholder to consider are local organizations who could be potential strategic partners with SSU FSNP, as well as attracting additional researchers to the site, along with funding that could result from projects.

Another marketing goal of the FSNP is to debunk misconceptions many students and those in the local community have about the SSU FSNP. Common misconceptions are abundant with many of the programs offered, especially related to costs and how to access FSNP sites. The task of informing and educating the campus community about the SSU FSNP also crossover with the first goal, which is to generate and grow interest in the SSU FSNP through out all sectors of the SSU campus environment.

#6 Promotional Program Situation Analysis

The current promotional program for the FSNP consists primarily of the program website, the occasional flyer posted around the SSU campus, and a promotional FSNP presence at various events both around campus and in the community. The popular Insecta-Palooza event featured at the annual FSNP Open House has been deprecated, amongst fears that the event promoted the non-existent entomology department at the university instead of the FSNP itself.

Strengths

Strengths of the promotional program include the ongoing development of a brand new website with more SSU-oriented branding. This contributes to the ultimate goal of closer integration with the University rather than the current perception of the FSNP as an independent entity. Furthermore, the program’s affiliation with the Organization of Biological Field Stations (OBFS) provides credibility among a wider-reaching audience than SSU FSNP can achieve on their own.

Weaknesses

The promotional program is subject to several weaknesses. The branding and website changes, while critical to the ultimate goal of full integration with the university, make an already weak brand even less identifiable in the interim. The budget and labor constraints on the promotional program make intensive branding changes and messaging campaigns even more difficult to execute. Finally, the Insecta-Palooza event, while a successful event, sent confusing messages about the brand identity of the FSNP. Visitors, even at an FSNP Open House, assumed that the event was related to an entomology department that SSU does not have.

However, deprecating such a popular function – with a captive audience – eliminates one of the few well-known FSNP events/activities within the community.

Opportunities

The void left by eliminating the Insecta-Palooza event, however, creates an opportunity for a similar event, but refocused to champion the FSNP brand. While the insect-themed event was popular, it did not clearly present the FSNP brand. University hosted or sponsored events can be an invaluable resource to increase brand depth. Another opportunity may be to coordinate or attend functions, which could help utilize industry connections (for example, prior customers) to help generate leads for new research partnerships and/or funding.

Threats

The biggest threat to the current promotional program is simply the lack of consumer awareness. Per our preliminary surveys, a majority of students currently enrolled in SSU – a likely group to have prior awareness of the SSU FSNP – are completely unaware of its existence (or unable to recall the brand). In addition, the intense competition for attention in the current internet and social media-centric landscape provides an additional hurdle to overcome. FSNP brand messages must not only reach the correct target segments but compete for attention among any number of other messages, videos, etc.

#7 Review of Existing & Past Programs

Past marketing programs for SSU FSNP have been relegated to flyers, brochures, articles in the student newspaper and anyone who stumbles upon the website. The SSU FSNP would also have a booth at campus events, such as early admissions day, to try and promote the opportunities available through the FSNP. However a low budget, coupled with the fact that many of the events that the SSU FSNP were present at were not directed by the FSNP team themselves, makes consistent messaging difficult.

One difficulty the SSU FSNP has experienced is poor branding that leaves many in the community and campus unaware that the FSNP is even in existence or affiliated with SSU. The FSNP has been successful with their guided tours to K-12 students, so much so that there is currently a lottery system in place to handle the requests made from local school districts.

Strengths

- a) High demand from K-12 schools for tours and field trips.
- b) High demand from SSU students for available internships/job opportunities

Weaknesses

- a) Lack of awareness for many students, faculty, and community members
- b) Weak brand connection to SSU
- c) Unclear procedures for use of facilities and lands
- d) Lack of funding for additional marketing or staff positions.

Overall Assessment

The current marketing plan for SSU FSNP does not have a specific goal or target audience. Even with a limited budget, marketing strategies should be more focused and consistent in the type of messaging being provided. More focused outreach needs to be implemented to target both future students, as well as potential strategic partners within the community. By attracting greater attention to the SSU FSNP, the organization will have more demand from potential students and community partners, which will in turn result in greater support from school administration.

#8 Integrated Marketing Communications Objectives and Strategies

To understand where we needed to go, we conducted a student survey to find out the level of awareness, knowledge, liking and preference of students toward the SSU FSNP. The results of this survey, conducted among MBA students, found that the majority of students had little to no knowledge of the FSNP program. 78% of students said they had none or very low awareness of the program, and rather worryingly, 100% of MBA students who completed their undergraduate degree at SSU all said they were “Not Familiar At All” with the program (this group made up 23% of all MBA students surveyed). One point of information that would be helpful is to conduct a survey of the SSU staff and faculty to find their level of awareness of the program.

It was immediately clear that the program has a problem with awareness among the student body; the target market is mostly unaware of the program. Therefore, objectives and strategies are designed to improve awareness among the target markets. Considering the size of the campus and the limited budget allocated for the program, the goals have a period of 1 year, with the exception of Goal #4.

Marketing Objectives

Objective 1: Increase awareness of SSU FSNP

- *Goal #1:* 2 in 10 current SSU students become have “familiar” or higher knowledge of SSU NP by the end of the Spring 2014 semester.

Objective 2: Increase awareness of SSU FSNP’s user benefits to all target markets.

- *Goal #2:* 2 in 10 current SSU students understand what they can do with SSU FSNP by the end of Spring 2014 semester.

- *Goal #3:* 4 in 10 current SSU faculty and administrators understand how they can utilize SSU NP in their class/department’s curriculum by the end of Spring 2014 semester.

- *Goal #4:* 1 in 10 donors and researchers are familiar with SSU FSNP by the end of Spring 2015 semester.

Objective 3: Increase awareness and interest of SSU FSNP with prospective students.

- *Goal #5:* 1 in 10 prospective SSU students use SSU FSNP as a reason to attend SSU.

Marketing Strategies

Strategy 1: Increase direct communication with all target markets. Forms of direct communication include:

- Social media
- Email marketing
- Student and campus publications

Strategy 2: Change basic branding features and positioning including:

- Rename the program
- Redesign the program’s logo
- Create a clear and specific slogan

Strategy 3: Partner the SSU FSNP program with SSU schools and community programs

- Sonoma County has a strong Regional Parks department and may be willing/able to have some kind of partnership

- Work with the different schools at SSU to include SSU FSNP into their curriculums

Strategy 4: Work with SSU administrators to develop measurable metrics and methods of tracking awareness of SSU FSNP among students and faculty

- Tap into existing student feedback programs, such as email surveys that are already used by SSU.

Measurement

To measure the progress of these goals, research will need to be conducted to estimate the overall awareness of students and faculty with the FSNP. Using a survey or piggybacking on top of a planned SSU survey would likely most effectively accomplish this.

#9 Positioning and Campaign Theme

Positioning Strategy

The positioning of the FSNP will be a critical component, as our primary target markets have little to no existing knowledge or preconceptions of the brand, save what they can glean from the (confusing) name. Due to the overwhelming lack of consumer knowledge, it will be vital to communicate not only features and benefits, but also to develop and successfully convey a competitive frame of reference.⁶ Per Program Director Dr. Luke, a common misconception among potential consumers is that the SSU FSNP is analogous to a regional or state park, and thus, must be for recreational use. As this is not the product category in which FSNP truly competes, it is essential to ensure the brand's positioning is clear.

Because the FSNP appears to have an almost natural association with regional and state parks, it will be necessary to stress some key points-of-difference, such that target segments truly understand what the brand is offering. These points-of-difference include Desirability Criteria, Deliverability Criteria, and Differentiation Criteria.

Desirability: Consumer expectations in the community are shifting more and more towards sustainability and environmental responsibility. The FSNP's active work toward sustainable grassland management, watershed management and water quality (via the WATERS Collaborative), etc. deliver a compelling points-of-difference for green-minded consumers as compared to 'for-recreation' regional and state parks.

Deliverability: By urging satisfied partner organizations to actively promote the FSNP program, and by compiling a list of successful projects, the FSNP can generate a level of cachet within the community. By establishing a quality reputation, the feasibility and communicability of key benefits can be more effectively imparted to target consumers.

Differentiation: Because the FSNP is associated with the research hub that is SSU, other outdoor 'recreation' areas, such as Regional Parks, are unlikely to be able to compete with the core competencies of the FSNP even if they were to initiate similar programs.

While points-of-difference are vital in establishing the FSNP's unique positioning in the face of rampant consumer misconceptions, it is also important to establish a fundamental point-of-parity: that despite the physical locations of the FSNP field sites, the organization shares the intellectual resources of the university. This is not a 'bush-league' operation, it is a bona-fide SSU operation, and a wholly viable partner for conducting elite-level research projects.

Positioning Statement

Rather than trying to craft a brand new positioning statement, we found that the director of the FSNP, Dr. Luke, had created a perfect statement. In fact, it resides on the main page of the rebuild FSNP website:

⁶ Keller, Kevin Lane, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. Pg. 57-58, 2013, Pearson.

SSU's Preserves are at the center of sustainability initiatives at Sonoma State University. Each of our three Preserves is a unique blend of environment, culture and economy that create opportunities for teaching, research, and community engagement in the liberal arts and sciences.

It is not enough to simply assemble a few words into a positioning statement – just to have one – and never think about them again. “The positioning statement is a subset of a value proposition that optimizes it for marketing communications purposes. It identifies the target audience, the product and its category, a specific benefit, and is differentiable from the nearest competitive alternative...[It] becomes the messaging cornerstone of an integrated marketing campaign.”⁷ Dr. Luke’s words concisely embody the essence of the FSNP. The key is to ensure that these key elements remain the core focus across all marketing communications.

Campaign Theme/Slogan

Place Based Learning

Again, when deciding on a campaign theme and slogan, we thought back to Dr. Luke’s vision for the program, and the passion she had to share this resource with both students and research partners. This slogan will quickly and distinctly communicate what makes the FSNP unique, while clearly demonstrating how the program differentiates itself from recreational areas such as Regional Parks. Furthermore, it encompasses the ultimate program goal of increased integration with the university curriculum. We feel that a strong slogan will help both brand recognition and help quickly and decisively dispel some of the common misconceptions associated with the FSNP.

#10 Creative Recommendations

Name Change

The current name of the program, Field Station and Nature Preserves, suffers from some basic branding issues. First, it is purely descriptive; it’s not a title. The name should encapsulate the offerings rather than just list them. Despite that issue, the longer name opens up the second problem; it is ambiguous to much of the audience. Dr. Luke, in her project presentation, allowed that both field station and nature preserves have loose definitions that will evoke different and similar meanings in the minds of different readers. Anecdotal research showed that many students didn’t know what a field station was, and for those that did, having it in the title seemed to reinforce the negative image that the FSNP didn’t relate to their area of study. Finally, the current name is very long, especially when combined with Sonoma State University. It cannot reasonably be used without shortening it to an acronym in many cases, and doesn’t lend itself to a logo at all. Unfortunately, FSNP doesn’t yet mean anything in viewers’ minds; it has no association with the program at all. In addition, it’s not reinforced through the logo, so as is, the FSNP acronym has no hope in catching on; the full name Field Station and Nature Preserves is the only current branding that maintains some traction.

⁷ J. Michael Gospe, Jr. *What is a “positioning statement”?* The Marketing High Ground. March 4, 2011. Web. February 16, 2013

The name should be shortened to “Nature Preserves”. Readers still visualize a place for study and investigation, rather than recreation, but also are less likely to associate the Preserves with being only for majors unrelated with their own as when it included Field Station in the title. This shorter name lends itself to inclusion in the logo, in print, and to easily tying together with Sonoma State University as a prefix, all key characteristics as we look to change the brand image.

Logo Change



The objective of the logo change is to deepen the tie between Sonoma State and the Nature Preserves and to create an instantly recognizable brand. Currently, the FSNP has a logo utilizing a different color scheme, font, and aesthetic sensibility than SSU. The FSNP has come to realize this is a potential problem, and in the new version of the website it only appears in the bottom left hand corner of the page, with a standardized SSU header at the top, however, in all outside marketing literature, the four-color logo is used.

Another issue with this logo is that the name of the program is not built into the image; it must be added with an adjacent copy or address block. The logo does not have the immediate name recognition necessary to stand alone, so this can present issues; copy can become separated, leaving the logo on its own, the name in copy can be altered via error or editorial change. This actually happens at the bottom of the upcoming website site, where a different version of the name is used than in the header.



While the current logo does not maintain much position in viewers’ minds, it’s still important to retain parts of the old logo when designing the new one⁸. The logo redesign combines the key element of the current logo with the traditional SSU block. This creates an immediate tie to the university, while still saying’ “there’s something special here.” The new name, Nature Preserves features prominently below the Sonoma State University copy, slightly larger, but in the same font and kerning; it will all be read as one block, but the Nature Preserves name will stand out in the observers’ mind. Building the name into the logo avoids any potential for disassociation between the new logo and the program, no matter where it’s placed, a key consideration when trying to build a brand.

#11 Overall Marketing Objectives for Advertising Campaign **Prospective SSU Students Campaign**

This target audience is the most important for the growth and tighter integration of the Field Stations & Nature Preserves into Sonoma State University, and is therefore the focus of our initial campaign. Everything springs from here, for three main reasons:

Students mean revenue. If the FSNP can show a causal link to the reason students choose SSU, it immediately gains credibility and status with the administration; generating revenue makes the program worth spending time effort and money on.

⁸ Rebranding Your Logo – Why and What works. One Extra Pixel. Accessed on 3/3/2013.
<http://www.onextrapixel.com/2011/09/26/rebranding-your-logo-why-and-what-works/>

Students mean growth. As incoming students know of the program entering the school, they are much more likely to expect it be included in their studies, no matter the discipline. As more students from more disciplines participate, the FSNP can show the school administration more success.

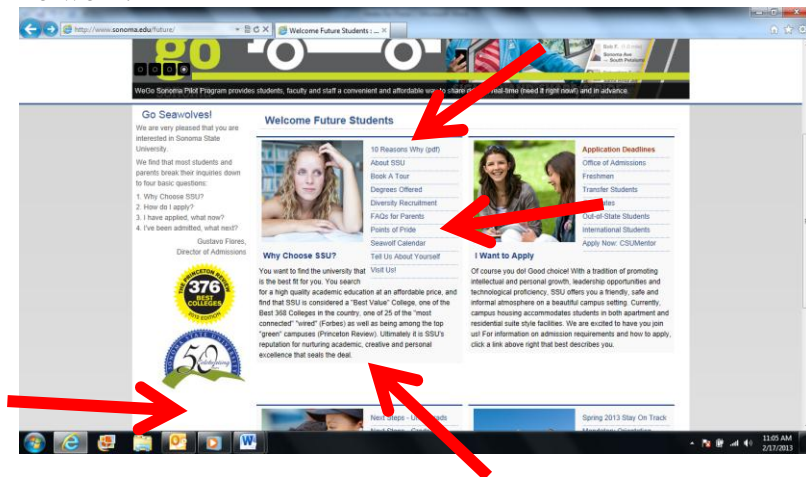
Students mean the future. For those students where the FSNP was an important factor in coming to SSU, involvement in the program will start early in their academic careers. Full-four year involvement means more interns, more department participation, and tighter ties between SSU and the FSNP.

Objectives

1. To increase prospective SSU student awareness of the FSNP
2. To increase incoming/current student awareness
3. To link the FSNP to decisions to attend SSU

Strategy

The Sonoma State University Website – SSU has a section of the website devoted to selling prospective students on the reasons to choose itself over the competition. There is no mention anywhere in this section, or through any of the links, of the existence of the FSNP. Getting this fixed is the absolute first area to target – it's quick, it's cost effective, and it is seen by almost every incoming student. There are five changes that can be implemented with little or no work.



1. Why choose SSU copy blurb - expand the list of reasons in the paragraph to include the FSNP.
2. Points of Pride link – this leads to a list of hotlinks to all the departments at SSU; add one to the FSNP.
3. School of Science and Technology link – within Point of Pride is a link to the School of Science and Technology, which has a long paragraph list of strengths, but not a mention of the FSNP.
4. 10 Reasons Why PDF – the PDF lists some specific strengths, but some broad categories. It will be a sales job, but getting the FSNP built into this would be technically very straightforward.

5. Logo – on the left of the Website are the Princeton Review and SSU logos, adding the FSNP logo will be technically simple.

Brochure – The FSNP brochure needs to be updated to reflect the new logo and name, and to tie more closely to the look and feel of other SSU printed material, strengthening the tie between the two. See details in section #12.

Student Outreach Office – The student outreach office is located in Salazar Hall. It is responsible for helping prospective students learn about SSU until the point they are accepted. The updated FSNP brochure needs to be available in this office. In addition, the script used in the guided tours should be modified to mention the FSNP as one of the important resources they won't actually see on the tour.

Outbound Mailings – The FSNP logo and a descriptive copy block should be added to any future print runs of direct mail pieces. It does not feature at all at the moment.

Surveys – A question related to the FSNP needs to be built into surveys SSU conducts at events like the Mandatory Orientation.

#12 Direct Marketing Recommendations

Target Market

For purposes of the direct marketing materials, there will be two target markets. The four current target markets share similarities that allow them to be combined to save resources while maximizing the effectiveness of the message. SSU students & SSU staff/faculty will be combined into one market, while external users and donors will be combined into the second.

Updated Print Brochure

As the sole piece of marketing material that can be handed out and used for multiple purposes, the SSU FSNP brochure needs to be replaced. The print brochure is useful in all forms of direct marketing to all target markets. There should be a print brochure for each main target market, allowing the message to be customized for each.

The objectives of the two print brochures will be to increase the awareness of the FSNP as well as increasing the breadth and depth of the brand.

Print Brochure for SSU Students & Staff/Faculty

The print brochure targeted to people directly involved with SSU should not go into details about each of the nature preserves. The copy of the brochure needs to be focused on what SSU students & staff/faculty can do with the FSNP and bullet points should replace large blocks of text. The front page should include the updated logo and slogan (see section #10) and include a few bullet points about how SSU FSNP is related to the overall SSU community. In addition, the lead image of a rock needs to be replaced with something that shows people interacting with each other in the environment, such as the one on the inside left panel of the existing brochure.

Print Brochure for External Users & Donors

The second brochure should be focused toward people who will be using the land or looking to fund the program. Keeping the same design recommendations as the previously mentioned brochure, this brochure's message should demonstrate to readers how they can

participate in place based learning, either by bringing their students to a preserve or by funding/completing research at a preserve.

Budget

Vistaprint.com allows the purchase of 1,500 brochures for \$345. It's likely that SSU has an agreement with a vendor or internal source that will print 1500 brochures for less.

SSU Event and Organizational Partnerships

There are many opportunities to partner with events and student organizations on campus. SSU Athletics offers a nearly unlimited supply of events that the FSNP could partner with in an effort to promote the program. Every year SSU sports teams mostly play the same teams, especially within the same conference. Creating an annual event that ties to a specific conference rival is an effective way of increasing depth of the brand among SSU students & staff/faculty. For example, a baseball home series with rival Chico State partnered with SSU FSNP will expose the brand to many students, families, visitors and staff who normally do not directly interact with FSNP. The advantage of this type of partnership is that an annual event allows consistent and repetitive enforcement of the brand as well as being very cheap to produce. Again, the objectives would be to increase awareness of SSU FSNP as well as increasing the depth of the brand.

In addition, it may be worth contacting Sonoma County Regional Parks to see if a partnership with them is worth pursuing. Their mission statement specifically mentions that they are seeking "opportunities for partnerships with other community organizations."⁹ A joint venture of some sorts between the two departments will provide the benefits of shared resources.

Finally, SSU has a highly active Greek student body. These student organizations frequently host fund-raisers, volunteer their time and participate in many SSU activities. With 17 Greek organizations making up 15% of the undergraduate population¹⁰, there's a great potential for sharing resources. It will be worth seeking a partnership with one of these programs once specific goals have been established.

#13 Internet/Interactive Recommendations

Our internet/interactive recommendations are focused on making the FSNP a central attraction to both incoming students, as well as the community at-large. A major portion of this strategy is developing a the new FSNP website that is more tied in to the overall branding of Sonoma State to make it clear to all market segments that FSNP is an important and unique attraction that is unavailable at other campuses throughout the CSU system.

The target market for the website will primarily be potential students, as well as outside organizations and researchers. It will be important to make the website easily accessible to potential and new students when they are on the SSU website, as well as being sent marketing and informational communications. This will be especially important for students who are considering majors in disciplines like environmental studies, biology, and other fields that have the most exposure to the FSNP. It will also be important to make the website accessible to research groups and community organizations as an effective way to communicate the various benefits and uses for the FSNP.

⁹ Sonoma County Regional Parks Mission Statement. Accessed 2/26/2013. <http://www.sonoma-county.org/parks/foundation/fndn.htm>

¹⁰ SSU News Center. Greek community rapidly expanding as ssu becomes a more traditional college campus. Accessed 2/20/2013. http://www.sonoma.edu/pubs/newsrelease/archives/2010/03/greek_community.html

Another objective is to make sure the website shows potential stakeholders the benefits available to them for using the FSNP. For potential students, the website should explain opportunities available at the FSNP, as well as useful, hands-on experience that can only be gained through place based learning, not in a classroom, and how this can benefit students in their future academic and career goals. There are also similar objectives for outside organizations and researchers, which could highlight past projects that have utilized the FSNP and how this has benefitted each organization or research project.

Another interactive plan to implement would be to have student ambassadors explain the benefits of the FSNP to their peers, this could occur at student orientations, or open campus days and would show new, or potential students the benefits of the FSNP first-hand by explaining how having a position, or conducting research to the FSNP helped students obtain a job, publish a research article or study.

The budget for making these recommendations would be very low as the updated website for the FSNP is already being constructed and the costs for the website would be covered through the university. Additionally, having student ambassadors come to various events would also be of no costs to the FSNP.

Finally, social media should be utilized to further extend interaction with those interested in the FSNP. The last few years have seen a significant shift away from text-based content toward social media driven by visual content¹¹. Currently there is a Facebook page with over 250 “Likes.” While the page is being actively used, topics posted on the page are generic and do not *directly* relate to the FSNP. A good mixture of both is needed to maintain an active user base. Highly relevant FSNP stories then can be “Shared” by the official Sonoma State University Facebook page, which has over 11,000 “Likes.” Social media is designed to work as a two-way communication channel with the target market¹². Working with the people who run SSU’s Facebook page will greatly help this effort.

#14 Public Relations Recommendations

The target audience for Public Relations is potential donors in the local philanthropic and business communities, as well as potential research partners, whether governmental or educational. We will prepare a series of press releases relating to activities at the FSNP that will be released throughout the year. These releases will target the school newspapers for all colleges and universities in California, selected technical/magnet High Schools, business and technology journals and news outlets.

Example subjects can include:

1. Rebranding of the FSNP and restatement of the mission
2. Acceptance of new research projects
3. Announcement of existing/ongoing research projects
4. Announcement of partnerships like the WATERS Collaborative
5. Announcement of Internship/Graduate student opportunities
6. Announcement of research exchanges
7. Searches for partners for specific projects
8. Announcement of new data/library availability

¹¹ Digital. Interbrand. Accessed on 2/25/13. http://www.interbrand.com/Libraries/Articles/IQ_2013_1stQ_v01-130207.sflb.ashx

¹² New York Times. More Tips from Social Media Pros. Accessed 2/27/13. <http://boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/07/more-tips-from-social-media-pros/>

The objective of the PR campaign is to increase awareness of the programs at the FSNP, and to create the feeling of momentum with the brand. The PR campaign can affect student interest, research partner interest, and donor interest, as well as demonstrating the program's value to the SSU administration.

[This area was intentionally left blank.]

#15 Campaign Flowchart

Group	Description of Action - Section #	March		April		May	Summer 2013	Fall 2013		Spring 2014	
		1st - 16th	17th - 31st	1st - 13th	14th - 30th	1st - 18th	May - July	Aug. - Sept.	Oct. - Dec.	Jan. - Feb.	March - May
Immediate Actions	Rename SSU FSNP - #8										
	Redesign SSU FSNP Logo - #8										
	Update Both Print Brochures - #12										
	Social Media Changes - #8 & #9										
	Press Releases for SSU Publications - #8										
	Feedback Through Existing Student-Feedback methods - #8										
	Complete Website Updates - #8										
Medium Actions											
	Email Marketing - #8										
	Continue Press Releases for SSU Publications - #8										
	Strengthen Relationship With SSU Schools - #8										
	Sonoma County Regional Parks Partnership Potential - #8										
	Develop Measurable Metrics - #8										
	Update Student Outreach Office Info - #11										
	Partner With SSU Student Organizations - #12										
	Sponsor SSU Sporting Event(s) - #12										
Long-Term Actions											
	Continue Email Marketing - #8										
	Continue Press Releases for SSU Publications - #8										
	Continue to Strengthen Relationship With SSU Schools - #8										

#16 Measurement and Evaluation

Measurement and evaluation of our branding and marketing plans will be tracked in multiple ways. The first way we will measure our performance will be to conduct annual surveys on incoming Sonoma State students and ask why they chose to attend Sonoma State. The FSNP will be one of the possible selections and we will track how many students thought the FSNP was a critical factor in them attending Sonoma State. The data will then be measured from year to year to see if more students are attending the university because of the FSNP than in year's past, as well as to analyze trends in the data, such as if a large percentage of environmental studies majors selected the FSNP as their reason for attending.

We will also measure our efforts through the number and size of projects being conducted in the FSNP by outside organizations and researchers. If there is a steady increase on the amount of research being conducted at the FSNP, or a significant increase in the amount of projects being done with the outside groups, then we will know that our branding campaign has been successful.

Some other ways that we will seek to measure our efforts will be by tracking the traffic to the FSNP's updated website, once it is up and running. Since many potential stakeholders will first browse the FSNP website to learn more, we can see if our strategies have resulted in a greater interest in the FSNP.

We can also measure our efforts through the level of support that is received from other groups on campus, such as the administration and professors. If we see that the FSNP is an integral part of university-wide marketing, as well as receiving greater interest and funding from the university than we know that the administration views the FSNP as a valued asset for the university. Also, if more professors in different fields are using the FSNP in their classes and basing sections and classes around place based learning that happens in the FSNP, then we will be able to see brand growth and increased recognition for the FSNP.

#17 Budget Summary

Marketing Expense	Source	Quantity	Cost
Updated Brochures	vistaprint.com	1500	\$340.00*
Logo Banner for Events	vistaprint.com	2	\$60.00*
Miscellaneous	-	-	\$100.00
TOTAL			\$500.00

*May be able to negotiate University discount.

#18 Conclusion

In order to reach Dr. Luke's vision as an integral part of Sonoma State University and a regionally significant organization, the Field Station and Nature Preserves needs rebranding. This rebranding has to debunk common misconceptions and questions while growing interest and helping address current financial hurdles to growth. To achieve this, we suggest reaching out to students, current, and more importantly, prospective ones, and research partners, and the university administration. Finally, because of the limited budget, our branding campaign needs to work predominately with existing resources and within existing channels. We are suggesting the

following:

- A new name
- A new logo
- A new slogan
- Updates to the FSNP website
- New placement and copy on the SSU website
- A new brochure
- Placement into existing student outreach programs
- A series of press releases in a building PR campaign
- A partner outreach effort
- New collateral for public events
- A measurement system to evaluate and re-target efforts

We are confident that our program will help propel the Field Stations and Nature Preserves forward to meet the potential contained within its mandate; a “purchase decision” for students deciding whether to attend Sonoma State as well as a key regional partner for the county and state.

Individual Contributions

All four participants completed all parts of this strategic branding initiative equally.

MBA Student Survey

1.) How familiar are you with Sonoma Field Stations & Nature Preserves? (circle one)

1 = Not familiar at all

5 = Very familiar

1	2	3	4	5
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2.) How interested are you in actively participating in preservation of the natural resources SSU maintains in Northern California? (circle one)

1 = Not interested

5 = Very interested

1	2	3	4	5
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3.) Did you complete your undergraduate degree at SSU? (circle one)

Yes

No

Survey Results

	LOW	LOW	MID	HIGH	HIGH	Total
Question	1	2	3	4	5	
1. How Familiar?	11	3	2	2		18
2. How Interested?	3	7	1	4	3	18
	Yes	No				
3. SSU Grad?	4	14				

Key Findings

All SSU Grads answered LOW on the familiarity scale

7 Respondents answered HIGH on the interest scale. Of these, 2 answered HGH on familiarity, 1 answered MID, and 4 answered LOW

Of the people most likely to want to use the facility, most had the least familiarity with the preserve
The 2 with HIGH familiarity were in Environmental Programs

Break down for MBA students who completed undergrad at SSU						
	LOW	LOW	MID	HIGH	HIGH	Total
Question	1	2	3	4	5	
1. How Familiar?	4					4
2. How Interested?		2	0	1	1	4
	Data					
	Q1	Q2	SSU Grad?			
	1	1	4	Y		
	2	1	5	y		
	3	1	2	y		
	4	1	2	y		
	5	4	5	n		
	6	4	5	n		
	7	3	4	n		
	8	3	2	n		
	9	2	4	n		
	10	2	4	n		
	11	2	2	n		
	12	1	1	n		
	13	1	2	n		
	14	1	2	n		
	15	1	2	n		
	16	1	3	n		
	7	1	1	n		
	18	1	1	n		