

NEASC STANDARD TEN PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Introduction

This section describes the manner in which Franklin Pierce University employs a variety of print and electronic media to communicate with current and prospective students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff and the general public. It details the process by which the offices of the President, Enrollment Management, Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, the Registrar, and Institutional Advancement oversee, present, and publish accurate, consistent, and timely information. And, it demonstrates the University's commitment to a more formal, transparent, accessible system of communication that ensures that the institution's many publics are able to make informed decisions about the University and its programs.

Description

The main sources for information on the College at Rindge and College of Graduate and Professional Studies (CGPS) are found on the University website, and in the catalogue, Student Handbook, and Student Code of Conduct. This collection provides the foundation for information about the University and its programs and services. A variety of other communication vehicles support and supplement this foundation, allowing users access via printed and electronic materials. Among these are the University's admissions materials, department brochures, information sheets, bi-annual magazine, quarterly reports on University accomplishments, and routine email bulletins.

(Exhibits 4.21, 10.1, 10.2, 10.3)

The Franklin Pierce University website is increasingly the primary means through which the institution informs the public about itself. The present website has specific sections that target key audiences such as current and prospective students, their parents, alumni, donors, faculty and staff. These links are prominently displayed on the home page, as are hyper-links that direct the viewer to essential information on admission, undergraduate and graduate programs, student life, employment and financial aid. In addition, the public website provides such services as "My FP" and regular news releases to keep the general public informed about business and issues that might be of interest.

The website also has password controlled "quick links" access to the university's intranet pages for current students, faculty, and staff. In addition to the links available on the public page, the intranet homepage, e-Raven, offers access to academic and event calendars, departmental pages, directories, student employment, and the like. Finally, the front page of the site displays prominently a "Contact Us" link that allows interested parties to contact the Webmaster with topics or concerns of interest; the Webmaster forwards such communications within two working days to the appropriate party.

The official University catalogue is a detailed, precise, and clear document that is revised annually and is available in print and electronically. The catalogue is provided to all incoming students as a description of the University's academic contract with its students, and is made

available on request to all other interested parties. Additionally, six years of past catalogues are archived and easily accessible on the University public and intranet sites.

The catalogue is the primary site for disclosing degree and program requirements, general education requirements, procedures and policies related to admissions, transfer of credit, student fees, charges and refund policies, rules and regulations for academic conduct, information related to attendance and withdrawals, current course offerings, off-campus programs, and academic polices and procedures, including expectations for academic recognition. The catalogue also provides a current listing of the Board of Trustees, administration, academic staff, undergraduate, and graduate faculty, and information on the various branch campuses, as well as accurate and explicit statements about current accreditation and approval of the University.

The CGPS catalogue was published as a separate document until 2007-2008. The consolidated catalogue represents an intentional statement on the part of the University both that the growth and number of its master's and doctoral programs has created a need for a more unified and available source of information on admissions, policies, and curriculum and that, despite this growth and diversity, the University seeks to communicate to its public that it remains a unified institution with a single mission and focus.

The University's Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct are available in print, on the web, and in electronic formats to all students. These documents address the rules and regulations, expectations for responsible conduct, the judicial process, extra-curricular programming, and available support services. (Exhibits 6.4, 6.5)

Franklin Pierce also publishes a number of audience-specific publications. Admissions information is published in the full range of Enrollment Management documents, including the Viewbook, Application forms, and other student and family guides.

Regularly produced publications such as Radius (Magazine), RavenFlash (daily campus news email communication), and RavenReport (quarterly report of University accomplishments), provide frequent, up-to-date information for the full range of University audiences. (Exhibits 10.4, 10.5) This range of publications ensures that specific supplementary information can be targeted when and where appropriate.

A wide variety of departmental publications, announcing and detailing programs and services, are also produced. Layout and design support are available from the Office of Marketing and Communication. The issuing department is responsible for the design and accuracy of each publication. The schedule of updating publications is also determined by the issuing department.

The Alumni Relations department has taken significant steps in the areas of planning and data collection since 2006. (Exhibits 10.6, 10.7) The Office of Career Planning & Placement works closely with Alumni Relations in the development and updating of the alumni database. These data are processed and maintained, using the Black Baud software package. Each graduate is contacted at least twice a year in an attempt to keep the database as accurate as possible.

Appraisal

Franklin Pierce is making a concerted effort to reconstitute its communication practices so that it can keep pace with its dynamic growth. The University's overall process of public disclosure functions well, but it is increasingly not sufficient to the needs of contemporary audience expectations. A more systematic framework will need to be developed for review of all print and electronic publications.

The transition to University status required that the institution include redevelopment of its website as part of the over-arching transition strategy. The University retained Radwell Associates to develop the new website. The site was unveiled in April and represents a powerful re-imagining of how Franklin Pierce presents itself and provides a more effective platform for the University to describe and display its identity. The task therefore, is to take full advantage of this new platform and to use its resources to provide the various University constituencies with the facts they need and the information they desire to make informed decisions about Franklin Pierce and the education it offers. The information on the website when this study began was, though thorough and in-depth, not easily accessible. The older web design and structure was rather cumbersome and complex. Access to specific webpages often required extensive steps to navigate through layers of pages, and some information was not properly geared toward intended audiences.

The "My FPC" portal was originally added to the prior "College" site in an effort to address some of the accessibility and navigation difficulties. The more recent "My FP" web portal continues to make it easy for prospective students to personalize and configure access to the interior webpages of their choice. However, "My FP" portal does not ensure that users are accessing information that will allow them to make the most informed decisions. Students can actively configure "My FP" to exclude important segments of the over-arching web site. Still, in most cases, content information appears to be sufficient to allow students the ability to acquire the information they need to know.

The new "at a glance" web pages provide information about the size and characteristics of the student body, the campus setting and other services. Teacher and physical therapy licensing passage rates are readily accessible. A description of the geographic distribution of students by state and country is available, but no description of gender, ethnic or racial distributions exists in the catalogue or the Viewbook, and very little information is available on the website.

The existing information on the academic departmental pages is not consistent in its presentation. There are great variations in the breadth and depth of information at the program level. This variation is found in both undergraduate and graduate programs. Each department is responsible for its own design and accuracy. The schedule of updating webpages is also determined by these departments.

Contact information appears in the footers of most webpages. Contact information appears on all admissions materials and appears to be sufficient to the needs of intended audiences. Moreover, the University responds effectively to requests for information. Most of these requests are handled by individuals in the various offices indicated within the contact information. Calls that come into the University switchboard are referred to the appropriate offices. And although those

offices do not all have written policies for dealing with information requests, most respond to requests within one business day.

The University catalogue provides an in-depth representation of the obligations and responsibilities of both students and the institution. There are no apparent discrepancies in publications and communications that were reviewed. The Admissions department is effective in its catalogue communications, but admission requirements could be more clearly stated on the website. (Exhibits 10.8, 10.9, 10.10) The lists of Board of Trustees members, administration and faculty provided in the catalogue are clear, accurate and updated regularly. The University does not provide a notice either in the catalogue, its print materials, or on the website as to the availability of audited financial statements or their summaries. This deficiency will need to be addressed in the coming year.

The various academic and functional areas will need to be more consistent in displaying their missions, objectives, policies, and procedures. This may have been less consequential when Franklin Pierce was a small college, but the transition to university status demands more formal clarity in these areas. Many areas of the University continue to rely on unwritten “small college” procedures. The effectiveness of this model depends heavily on the initiative of the various departments and offices to convey an accurate picture of what the University stands for, whom it serves, and why its work is important.

Most publications are reviewed from a public relations standpoint by the Office of Marketing and Communications. They are checked as to whether they are up-to-date as to font, colors, and the like. The Standard Ten self-study committee interviewed selected academic Division Chairs to determine how often each division’s departments assessed the accuracy of their websites and catalogue copy. Division Chairs indicated that they regularly review the accuracy and quality of the content of their catalogue sections, though several noted that they did not take the same care with departmental web content.

The University needs to be more consistent in publishing information on student learning outcomes, program completion rates, the cost of attendance, and profiles of graduates from the various undergraduate and graduate programs. Graduation and retention rates are regularly published and shared with stakeholders, but this information is often not readily accessible in easy-to-find locations in print or on the web. Wider knowledge of these key variables would make it easier for academic departments to be more thorough and consistent in describing the placement and success of their graduates.

Projection

The University is committed to a more formal, transparent, accessible system of communication that ensures the institution’s many publics are able to make informed decisions about the University and its programs. The first phase of this renewed commitment to provide clear and relevant information will be the development of a simplified dashboard, readily accessible from the home page of the public website that will display essential information in multiple formats. The Vice President for Student Administrative Services will convene a taskforce this fall specifically charged to choose an appropriate dashboard and to develop recommendations for

customizing that dashboard. The Taskforce will define the appropriate data sets to be used for display and also identify the process and timeline for the collection of this data. Recommendations will be made to the Senior Staff by February 2009.

The Deans of the Colleges will complete the process of updating the Faculty Handbooks for the College at Rindge and the CGPS. These handbooks will be published prominently on the Provost's Page of the web and print copies will be distributed to the respective faculties no later than the spring of 2009.

The University Computing Advisory Committee will work with the undergraduate Division Chairs and graduate Academic Coordinators to complete an audit of all departmental webpages in an effort to develop recommendations for a more formal standardization of these departmental webpages. These recommendations should focus on establishing minimum requirements and thresholds for the design and content of departmental webpages. Elements to be considered would include program description, mission, objectives, course descriptions, anticipated student outcomes, licensing passage rates, faculty credentials and biographies, and associated policies and procedures. The audit process will begin in October 2008, and the recommendations will be due to the Provost by Spring 2009. The final recommendations will be implemented both on the web and in all appropriate print media.

The Vice President of Student Administrative Services will convene an ad hoc committee to work with the coordinators of all administrative departments to complete an audit of all administrative departmental web pages in an effort to develop recommendations for a more formal standardization of these departmental web pages. These recommendations should focus on establishing minimum requirements and thresholds for the design and content of departmental web pages. Elements to be considered would include department description, mission, objectives, anticipated department outcomes, administrator credentials and biographies, and associated policies and procedures. The committee will be convened in February 2009, and the recommendations will be due by March 2010. The final recommendations will be implemented both on the web and in all appropriate print media.