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Integrated Communications Plan for the SMU Spanish Club

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Strategic Communication Plan for the SMU Spanish Club

Engaged Learning Final Report, December 2013

BACKGROUND

The Spanish Club is an organization on SMU's campus that helps Spanish-speaking students to socialize outside of an academic setting. In doing so, these students apply what they learn in the classroom to real conversations in order to perfect their conversational skills. The Spanish Club engages in community service activities in the Dallas community as well as abroad, and hopes to impact both the local community and other parts of the world.

The club began meeting informally during the 2012 fall semester, and began formal meetings in January 2013. Dr. Angela "Angie" Moron-Nozaleda, the advisor, encourages students to join and stay in the club by getting to know them and helping them learn the culture of the language. The Spanish Club is important to the university because the United States will experience an exponential increase in the number of Hispanic-Americans in the next several years. Texas, even more so, will experience a major influx of Hispanics because of its proximity to the Mexican border, so it is imperative that new employees in any workplace be able to converse casually in Spanish.

The fact that Texas will be predominantly Hispanic in only a few years highlights the reason that the Spanish club is an important piece of the university's culture. Through my work with the Spanish Club in the last few months, I have helped to direct the club in their strategic communication and marketing efforts. I was unable to achieve every goal that I originally

proposed due to the fact that the club received temporary charter status in August, so we were limited in our efforts.

EFFORTS

During this semester, I had many goals for the Spanish Club, including to create a website, to solidify social media, have stories published in the newspaper, and to get name recognition for the club. Because of the temporary charter status, I was limited by the university in what the club has been able to do. I was able to achieve several key goals, and had to adapt to the circumstances and change the club's vision a few times.

The Spanish Club was able to solidify their social media tactics, and since I started working with them in January, the Facebook "likes" have tripled. The club had a large increase in Facebook "likes" after SMU's Night at the Club. The club officers passed out flyers and had over 100 new students sign up to receive more information about joining the Spanish Club. During Night at the Club, I had students "like" the Spanish Club on Facebook so they could stay updated on our events throughout the semester.

In addition, several stories were published about the Spanish Club in the Daily Campus, promoting events and efforts on and off campus. I submitted stories to the Dallas Morning News and to Al Dia about our organization, but was unable to successfully have stories published in those papers. The Spanish Club has some major events coming up in the spring semester, and the club is hoping to have coverage of those in the local papers.

During the fall semester, the Spanish Club planned and executed three successful events. The first event was held in conjunction with the Ballroom Dancing Club, and was called “Flamenco Night.” The club had flamenco instructors teach a dance class, and provided refreshments for the students who attended. At that event, over 150 students attended, giving the club some great exposure. The event was promoted on the flyer from Night at the Club, as well as on social media and through email blasts.

The next event was a poker night, and all of the poker terms were written in Spanish. Around 45 students showed up, and several of them had never spoken Spanish before. It worked out great, because the Spanish Club ended up getting exposure with students who had never spoken Spanish, and who had never heard of the Spanish Club before. The poker night was held in the Hughes-Trigg student center, so students who were just walking by were attracted to the event and they wanted to play poker and enjoy our refreshments.

The last event of the semester was a movie night themed around Dia de los Muertos, where the movie “El Orfanato” was screened. Because the event was completely in Spanish, the club was limited in how many students could show up and understand what was happening during the movie. Regardless, 36 students showed up to see the movie. The Spanish Club was happy with the turnout, and they noticed that several of the students were very interested in joining the club and working to help to develop events. Since the club has temporary charter status with the university, they do not have the funds available to have full-time members. Once the Spanish Club has official university status, they will be able to fully fund more members and have more events.

One thing I was not able to accomplish this semester was the official club website, because they only have a temporary charter status. Once the Spanish Club is an official organization, content can be drafted for a website through SMU.

EVALUATION

Throughout this process, I had a few different evaluation techniques. One of the easiest things to monitor was the amount of “likes” the Spanish Club had on Facebook. When I began, there were 46 people who “liked” the page on Facebook. By the end of November, the Spanish Club had 141 people who “liked” the page, so the club’s exposure on Facebook more than tripled since the page went up in January. The Spanish Club was able to achieve this by posting unique, interesting content on the page and by having students “like” the page during Night at the Club. Also, during this semester the club has gotten more exposure at the university because of their partnerships with different organizations and their unique events.

In addition, I conducted a study at the end of the spring semester where I walked around and asked 200 students whether they had heard of the Spanish Club or not. In April 2013, 32 students out of 200 knew about the Spanish Club. In October, I conducted this study again, and I was surprised to find that 96 students out of 200 had heard of the Spanish Club. We had an increase of awareness from 16% to 48% in only five months. It was a major accomplishment, because we went from having no club in January to having nearly half of the students at the university know who the Spanish Club was.

CONCLUSION

For the SMU Spanish Club, the last few months have been an amazing journey. The Club has experienced ups, downs and in between. We started with absolutely no name recognition on campus, and through our strategic communication and marketing efforts, we have garnered quite a bit of recognition in a short time. Through my work, a solid communications plan has been implemented, and can be followed after I graduate.

In the last few months, we have worked as a tremendous team in order to accomplish our goals. Without the cooperation of everyone on our officer team, we would not have had the vision to achieve our goals. Throughout this project, we have learned how to work as a synchronized team in order to get the word out for our organization and develop a strong presence on campus.