Focus Group Results

January 2012

University of Michigan-Flint

Objective

- Focus group high school students in our target recruitment and marketing areas regarding UM-Flint marketing and communication with continued expansion of reaching out to new recruitment areas.

- The secondary focus was to meet with current UM-Flint students for their perception and ideas on UM-Flint marketing and campus environment. The idea was to determine what adjustments, if any, to make to current creative concepts.

Focus Groups

- High Schools and Groups
  - Educational Opportunity Initiative: Choosing to Succeed (2 sessions)
  - Genesee Early College (2 sessions)
    - High Schools represented: Southwestern, Central, Bentley, Carman-Ainsworth, Lake Fenton, International Academy, Kearsley, Davison, Flushing, Northern, Northwestern, Beecher, Hamady, Grand Blanc
  - Davison High School
  - Fenton High School
  - Lake Fenton High School
  - Hartland High School
  - UM-Flint Posse Group
  - Utica (2 sessions)
  - Mt. Morris High School
  - Genesee High School

Focus Groups

- High School Participants*: 297
  - Freshmen: 27
  - Sophomores: 43
  - Juniors: 73
  - Seniors: 63
  - College students: 15 (5 sophomores, 7 juniors, 3 seniors)

  *Do not have counts for all groups

Methodology

- Review current undergraduate viewbook
- Review UM-Flint website homepage
  - Web navigation
  - Top three things you search for on university websites
- Perception of UM-Flint
- Perception of Flint and if it influences your decision to enroll at UM-Flint
- How would you like colleges to communicate with you?
- Campus visits and promotional items

Introduction

What is your perception of UM-Flint?

- Campus looks nice
- Scary because it's in Flint
- Seems like home, an extension of my house
- Good school
- Mini UM
- Easier to get into
- Competitive
- Bootleg version of Ann Arbor
- Thought I wouldn't have a real college experience

Introduction

Do you want to go to UM-Flint?

- I want to come here
- It's awesome
- Best place in downtown
- Safe
- Beautiful sites
- Like the small size, diversity, and skywalks
- Close to home
- One of my choices
- If you have financial assistance

Introduction

Why is it not on your list?

- Want to get away from Flint
- Don't have program I'm interested in
- No medical or veterinary school
- No sports team
- Not sure if I can get accepted
- Other schools (Mott, SVSU, Oakland, Baker) have cheaper tuition
- Lack of sports scholarships

2010-2011 Viewbook

2010-2011 Viewbook

What's your first impression? What do you think of this design?

- Friendly and informative
- Like the photos and organization
- Like the mix of black and white and color
- Very cool and eye-catching
- Like the texture and design
- Looks clean—changes my perception of Flint
- Love the panoramic picture—should have been on the cover
- The photos make me want to read more

2010-2011 Viewbook

If this showed up in your mailbox, would you open it?

- Knowing it's close to home makes me open it
- It should have the school on the front, not people, so you can see what the school looks like from the beginning
- The cover doesn't pop enough
- No, I already made up my mind where I'm going
- Yes, because it's UM
- Being a senior, I look at everything
- Yes, to flip through and look at interesting pictures
- I think the brochure really pops, but I didn't like that all the pictures are of science majors

2010-2011 Viewbook

Can you think of something that came in the mail that you definitely opened? What did you think of the content?

- I got something cool from the University of Chicago
- I received a green box and sticker project—I'm now considering that university
- I got a book in the mail that had texture to it. The words on the cover popped up, but content didn't say much about the school

2010-2011 Viewbook

Black and White Photos
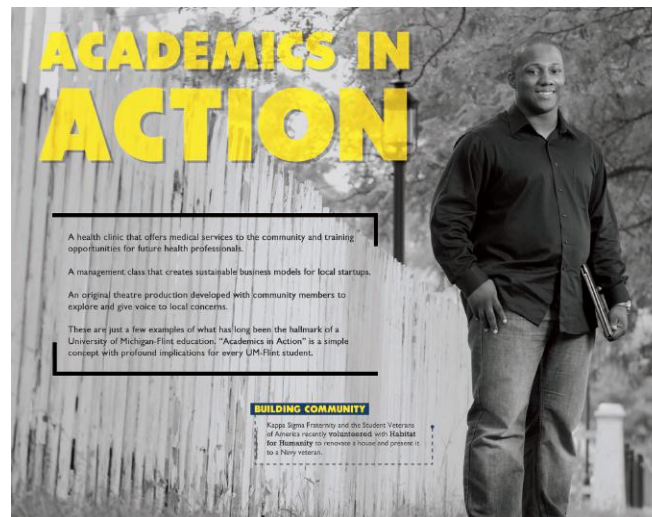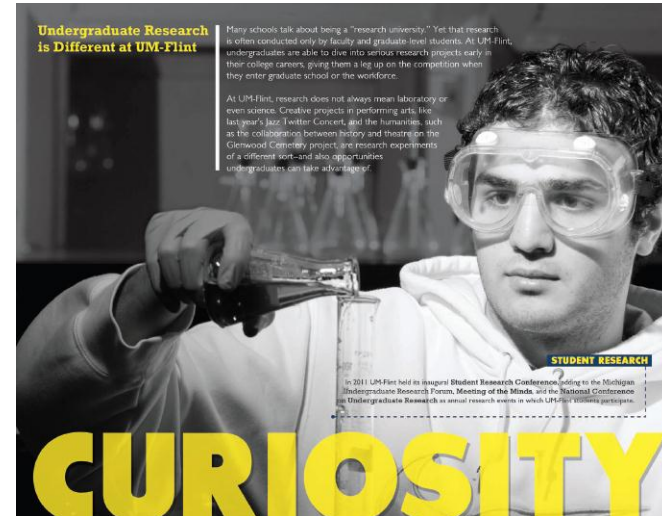
2010-2011 Viewbook

Do you think the black and white photos work?

- Don't like it on the cover—doesn't look exciting
- The text stands out more on black and white
- Black and white looks staged, dull, scary
- The colored words and layouts put emphasis on the content
- Works well with the school colors
- Black and white makes a statement—powerful
- Photos would be better in color
- Yes, mixed with the use of color

2010-2011 Viewbook

What do you feel is missing?

- Full list of clubs and info on club sports
- Need to highlight cool things in downtown
- Requirements
- Need more obvious tuition information
- Need academic programs to stand out more
- Too science based—show the theatre and facilities
- Show big projects students are working on—art and engineering work
- Need more campus shots
- Scholarship information

2010-2011 Viewbook

Does anyone fill out cards to ask for more information?

- Why waste my time to send it in when I can look it up online?
- Sometimes/maybe
- Yes

2010-2011 Viewbook

Testimonials

Dimple Sharma
Sociology Student from Kenya

Living in the dorms allowed me to meet people from different societies and develop a more global point of view. The International Center's Global Ambassador Program allowed me to learn about different countries and meet students from different parts of the world. I learned how to become more independent as well as more involved with a broader community. College is not only about education, it is also about building a society of mindful individuals. Be a leader and initiate the change you wish to see.

In Their Own Words

Tim Johnson • *Honors Environmental Science & Resource Planning*
Earning a degree from a university in an urban setting allows for additional studies and research that otherwise may not be possible. In my field, when studying urban planning or environmental site assessment, locations nearby can be viewed and discussed.

Marcus Batson • *Social Work*
Having the desire to work in and with the city of Flint, I have been able to participate in my field before I've even graduated. This is how I verify that what I am learning in class actually works: it's firsthand knowledge for me!

Lauren Hyslop • *Education*
Outreach and civic engagement programs have enriched my education while helping me discover my passions. Those experiences have helped me give back to the Flint community in very meaningful ways.

Marty Kaufman, Ph.D.
Professor of Environmental Science & Resource Planning
We recently started our department's new program in Energy and Sustainable Systems, and the first course attracted over 60 students. Environmental sustainability is critical for all cities but central to the revitalization of an old "rust belt" city like Flint. With its manufacturing capacity and skilled labor force, Flint can become a leader in these efforts and serve as a national model.

Maureen Thum, Ph.D.
Honors Scholar Program Director

Maureen Thum is the academic equivalent of a Big Ten football coach. Her drive, passion, and uncommon talent for bringing out the very best in the very best students is truly legendary. "Good enough" is never good enough for Thum. She knows being a top scholar is as much about tenacity as it is talent. For over 30 years, her track record for helping transform high school know-it-alls into world-ready do-it-alls is unmatched. Upon graduation, her students are able to flex their self-discipline and achievement like a muscle.

2010-2011 Viewbook

What do you think of the testimonials? Would you read them?

- I would read the ones that have my same interest
- I like to know what people think
- I didn't notice them
- If the rest of the brochure is interesting, I'll probably go through and read them
- I like when they put the likes and dislikes of a school because it seems more real
- You already know they're not going to say anything bad
- I'd have to really want to come here to read it
- Need less words—more bulleted text
- Testimonials make it personal

2010-2011 Viewbook

What is the #1 thing that gets you to fill out an application when you get a piece like this?

- Especially places that have a fee for applying, I have to really want to go there and it has to be an option for me
- If it's bad quality, I won't go there
- Academic programs, requirements, scholarships, and student life

2010-2011 Viewbook

Do you prefer a printed or online application?

- Number prefer printed: 119
- Number prefer online: 18

Why do you prefer one application over the other?

- Don't trust online applications
- Better pen and paper flow
- Online aren't always up to date or accurate
- Don't like computers
- Think it's easier to make mistakes filling out online
- Paper applications feel more official

2010-2011 Viewbook

Have you ever received a marketing piece that influenced your decision to apply?

- Eastern has a really good brochure because it shows all of the different majors and people interacting
- Aquinas because the book opens cool (triangle)
- The design and quality influence me
- Art Design School in Chicago had a cool piece

Information Sources

How do you get your information about universities?
- Online
- High school Career Cruising
- High school counselor
- Word of mouth
- Direct mail
- Email
- Phone calls—it feels personal
- Television
- High school visits by admissions representatives
- Ads on Facebook
- Google
- University websites
- Parents

Information Sources

When you go to a university website, what are the things that impress you?

- Sports, student life
- Easy navigation (user-friendly)
- Tuition, scholarship info
- Campus life, housing
- Easy application process
- Being able to find the things I'm looking for
- Good photos

Information Sources

Have you been to the UM-Flint website?

- I don't remember it
- No
- Yes (16 students)
- My mom goes there, so I am familiar with it

Information Sources

What do you want to hear from a university? Mistakes? Language?

- I don't like when they try to be like us
- Don't text me
- I want to hear facts that make me want to visit
- I want to hear both the good and bad
- Don't sound like it's easy to get accepted
- Showing you can be creative and professional at the same time
- Relaxed language—no long, boring words
- Using words like epic feel like they're a parent that tries to be cool with the kids
- Tell us what we're going to get out of it. Whatever major you're going into, what jobs can come out of it
- How successful the kids have been that came out of the college—how fast they got a job or how much money they have

Information Sources

What does "Opening Eyes" mean to you?
- New experiences
- Makes me nervous—you're coming into the real world
- Being open-minded
- Can see what options I have
- Corny
- Too cliché
- Awkward
- Learning
- Waking up

OPENING **EYES**

www.umflint.edu

Information Sources

What does "Opening Doors" mean to you?

- You're going to have a better education
- UM-Flint will get your foot in the door for jobs
- Making connections with other people
- This sounds the best to stand alone
- Opportunities

OPENING **DOORS**

www.umflint.edu

M FLINT

Information Sources

What does "Opening Minds" mean to you?

- Learning new things, being more open
- Could work on its own
- Lots of possibilities
- New experiences
- Broader perspective
- Makes you take notice
- They all draw your attention
- I like that they're simple
- Cool saying, but so many schools say something similar that it's easy to ignore

Information Sources

What does "Academics in Action" mean to you?

- Hands-on learning
- Using what you learn and applying it to your life
- Education to a career
- Co-ops, job shadows, internships
- Learning is more than a classroom—it's doing things
- Putting knowledge to use
- Being active in your field
- It's cool, it fits, it's understandable

Campus Visits

How many have done a campus visit this year?

- 85 have done a campus visit

What made you decide to go on the visit?

- School trip
- You should visit before you commit
- Major contender for final choice
- I want to sit in on a class with the college of my choice
- It's a school I was really considering

Campus Visits

How many still plan to go on a visit?

- 16 still plan on going on a campus visit

How important is the campus visit to your decision?

- Very important
- Huge decision maker

Campus Visits

Have you been on a campus visit and had it change your mind?

- I thought the school would be a lot more professional than it was. When I got there all the walls were painted different colors and it felt like an elementary school. I didn't like that at all.

- I went to Olivette. They said it was a small town with nothing to do. When you get there, everyone seems really close and it seems like there is a lot to do there. That's what I'm looking for.

- Yes, because I didn't like it. The environment wasn't friendly.

Campus Visits

Once you have applied to a university, how often do you want to hear from them?

Once a week: 2

Every other week: 11

Once a month: 16

Not until I have enrolled for classes: 0

Comments regarding university contact

- Put on the application what you want to be notified about. We choose how we want to be contacted.
- I hate when colleges keep emailing me and I haven't shown interest.

Perception of UM-Flint

How many of you view UM-Flint in a more positive light after this discussion?

- It seems like a nice school
- I need to read a little more
- Kind of makes me want to go visit and see what downtown is like
- It sounds kind of cool

Comments on Social Networks

What social networks do you use?
- Facebook: 70
- Twitter: 12

Why would you like a university on Facebook?
- Use a real voice
- Hear from students
- It gives me information on stuff I want to get into

Do you click on Facebook ads?
- When I'm on Facebook, I want to go on there to talk to my friends. I don't click on the ads. They annoy me sometimes.
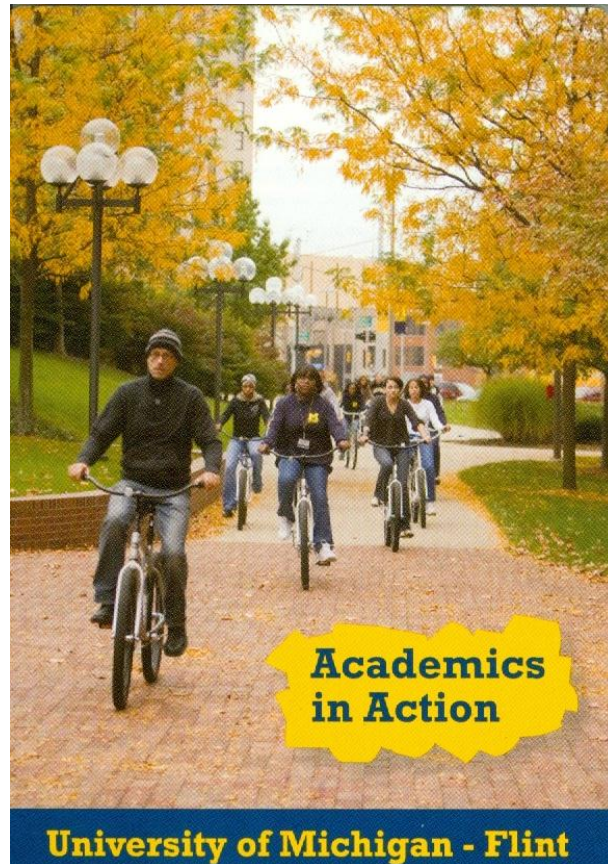- Might click on a Facebook ad depending on what it says

Comments on UM-Flint Website

- I really like the website
- Too template-y—standard
- Looks very functional and easy to navigate
- Make future students feel more important by making them more prominent
- Bare
- Pictures don't really give a lot of information. What are they trying to tell me?
- Sliders are too cool
- Bare
- Like the toolbar and slideshow
- Difficult to find requirements

Comments on Mall Ad

- Like the color
- Are you serious? That's a great stat! That would make somebody proud to go here.
- Interesting fact
- With a fact like that, design doesn't matter. That speaks for itself.
- You focus on the 100%
- Too plain—add something else

FACT:

100%
of **UM-Flint**
Honors Scholars
who have applied
to medical school
have been accepted.

M
FLINT

umflint.edu

Z-Card

Comments on the Z-Card

- This is really cool
- I would read this because of the packaging
- Include coupons to downtown businesses
- I like the way it opens
- It's so much more convenient
- People will keep it because it's small
- Would rather receive the z-card over the viewbook
- Not enough information, but would spark our interest
- Want a z-card first then will request more information if I want it
- I like the map

Promotional Items

Students would like to receive:

- T-shirt with acceptance letter and info packet of next steps
- Lounge clothes
- Lanyards
- Pens
- Sketch book (something useful)
- Gift cards
- Coupons
- Scholarships
- Water bottles

Analysis

- Need more consistency in gathering results that includes asking the same questions and coding feedback - limiting the number of focus group administrators might help.

- A revamp of questions would help gather more detailed information. We have asked the same questions for the last three focus group projects.

- The next focus group approach could include a session with potential transfer/non-traditional students.

- The one session with current students proved to be very informative and we would like to explore more sessions with current students.

- Ninth and tenth grade students may need a different questioning format from upper-level high school students. We were unable to gather adequate information.

Analysis cont.

- Better communication is needed with the hosting representative to make sure that all participating students understand the importance of their feedback. We had a few high school classrooms that were not ready for us or were given the choice to not participate.

- Conducting the sessions within high school classrooms seemed to work well. We were able to better connect with students and able to answer questions from students regarding UM-Flint.

- There is still much work to be done regarding the perception of UM-Flint due to its location in downtown Flint. Many area high school students expressed concern regarding the safety of the area based on local and national news reports.

Analysis cont.

- Genesee County students seemed to have a more negative perception of Flint than their peers in surrounding counties.

- Creating a more interactive focus group experience should be explored. We need to have a thorough review of the university website with potential students.

- Overall, we connected with over 300 potential students and did gather enough tangible information to assist with the next Undergraduate Admissions Viewbook. Furthermore, there was such an overwhelming response to lanyards as a promotional item, that we place an order and will start distributing.