

A Comprehensive Branding Initiative

The College of Lake County



Branding

The College of Lake County: What is a good brand?

Image enhancement. The primary focus of the branding project is to renew and enhance College of Lake County's public image, and the related task of creating greater positive awareness of the college. In addition to changing the perceptions of the potential students and the general public, the college wishes the branding project to also result in current students feeling a greater sense of pride in their choice of College of Lake County.

Clarification of relationship of sub-entities to the college brand.

The college has three campuses and several "sub-business" entities. A goal of the branding project is to convey that each of these entities is part of the greater college, while also allowing some individuation of identity to reflect the specific character or purpose of the entity.

Overview

Organizations change their trademark all the time.

Two thousand organizations changed their trademarks last year. Many were changed to consolidate its brand after an acquisition or merger, or to simplify a visually ambiguous image that no longer represented its attributes, scope or purpose. Some trademarks were changed because leadership wanted to signify a new or different direction for the organization.

Changing elements of an organization's identity can be an unsettling experience for both internal and external audiences. An individual's personal identity is irrevocably connected to what they do for a living and the organization and colleagues they work with. Appearing to change or challenge those relationships can, if not channelled, create an unsettling environment that would be at the least counted productive.

A branding/identification process designed to determine and embrace core elements of an organization's character, articulated by those it represents, will go along way toward minimizing any anxiety. When this kind of change stimulates cooperation and collaboration from those it touches, success is inevitable.

College of Lake County's reason for a trademark change falls into the most common category: to call attention to that fact the past perceptions are no longer accurate, if they ever were. A new trademark will challenge out-dated assumptions, creating an opportunity to re-present College of Lake County, telling an accurate, even inspirational story to its next generation of students, colleagues and contemporaries.

Perceptions

The College of Lake County: Shaping its Reputation

Post hoc, ergo propter hoc. *One thing follows the other, therefore it was caused by the other, but not always.*

There are two general perceptions shaping the reputation of the College of Lake County. While on the surface, they are simultaneously true and false. The need to acknowledge and reconcile these perceptions is paramount if they are to change.

College of Lake County is the school of last resort.
College of Lake County costs less than other schools.

The unspoken, but understood, assumption with these perceptions is that because the college will accept students that others have rejected it is in some way less academically rigorous. It is further assumed that because the cost per credit is less than other institutions, in some ways the quality of the education is less.

Individuals will continue to carry these perceptions until they sit in on a class, enroll in a course of study or take-in an event on campus. They may also be persuaded to reconsider their perceptions if individuals and/or institutions they respect change their's.

While we can't expect to change perceptions quickly we can initiate a course of action designed to begin the process. We can turn the perceptions around by providing a new ways to look at the same perceptions, ways that challenge preconceived notions, with interpretations that reflect a more accurate and positive understanding.

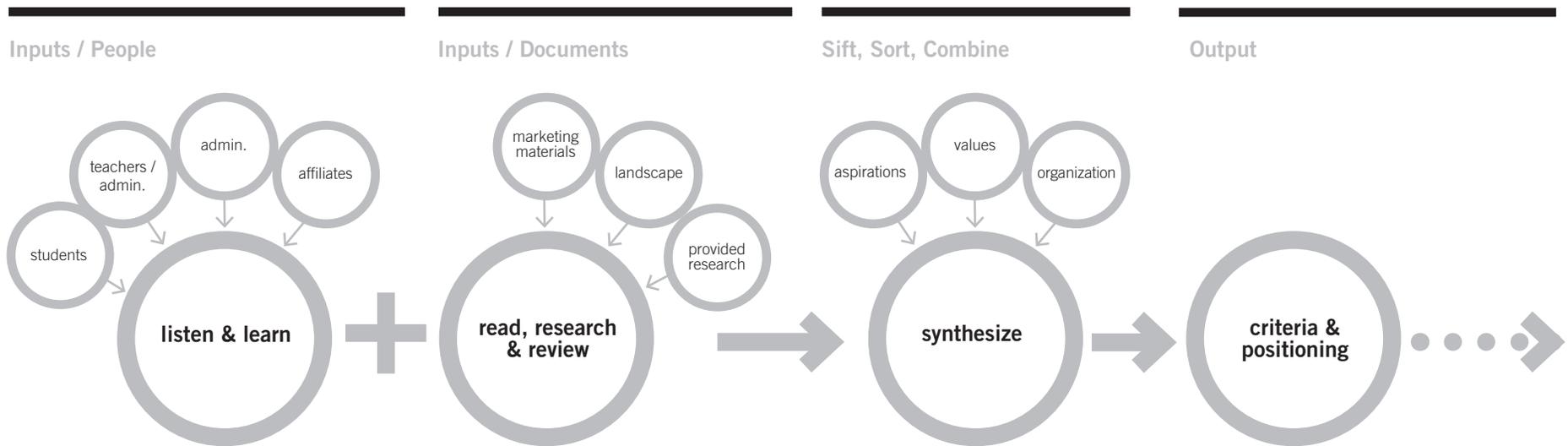
College of Lake County **Begin to build your future.**
College of Lake County **What is your dream worth?**

With the proper preparation and planning the new positioning for CLC should coincide with the introduction of the new trademark and the other elements of the branding initiative. Our collective communication objective will be to start slow and pickup speed. We are not creating something new, rather we will be acknowledging the tenets of a culture that have been in place for some time, only to be recognized now.

Process

Translating perceptions and passions into process and products.

The Process and *Process Diagram* below were designed to address the unique circumstances of the College of Lake County branding initiative. The following pages will further explain what was done at each stage of the process, why it was done and what are the conclusions and recommendations drawn from this process.



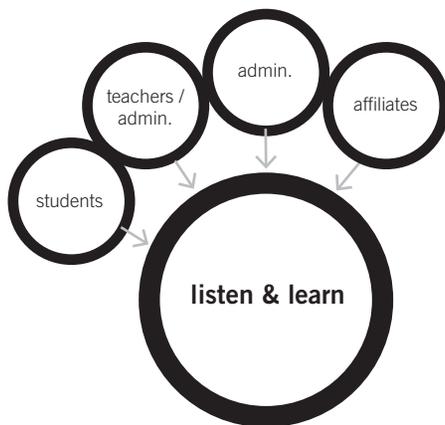
Process

Inputs / People: Listening to those that “brung ya.”

We listened.

- We held interviews, most one-on-one, with over 30 teachers, students, officers, department heads, support staff, advisors and administrators as well as several with affiliate relationships with the colleges and its communities.
- We asked a great many direct questions. Our objective was two-fold; to stimulate and identify the words and phrase used to describe the college and its relationship with various student and community groups while simultaneously encouraging the support and active participation of those same individuals for the introduction and application phases of the branding program.
- We studied the content and structure of the CLC website, current publications and marketing communication materials as well as assessed CLC’s most recent research documents.

Inputs / People



Interviews

What we heard from those who know.

COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY

Forgiving / of immature mistakes
Welcoming
Protective / the school of students
Less scary / “college”
Challenging but manageable
Sky’s the limit
One class or a degree / any kind of student
Starting point
Restart / after not succeeding
Doesn’t over promise
Tough as any four year school
Mostly small classes

TEACHERS / ADVISORS

Know their subjects / knowledgeable
Giving / of their time
Patient / giving
Caring / how students are doing
Working professionals / teachers with other jobs
Experienced teachers
Proactive teaching
Always with kindness / not fear

No matter what / you are prepared for what’s next
Hands on teaching / engaged teachers
Support, mentors, tutors
Tough and Fair

STUDENTS

Part of a group and separate / relating to other students
Multicultural / race, religions, heritage
Leave with confidence
For some, the first time they felt like real students
Not the last chance but the best chance
Last best chance
Diversity in every way / including classes and degrees
Value for effort / more education for the money
Students make the school and the school makes the students
Personal pride is a bi-product

ALUMNI

Loyalty / says good things about CLC
Pride / defensively
Alumni speak highly
Alumni stay in area afterwards / finishing
Still a note of surprise / when speaking positively

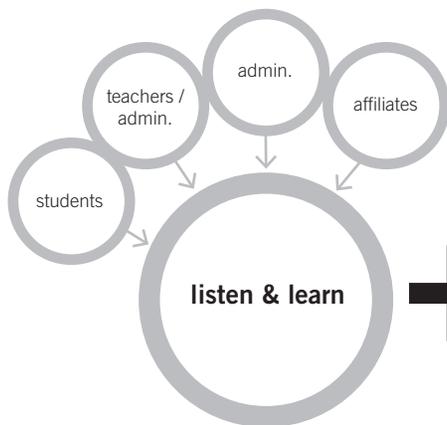
Process

Inputs / Documents: Checking out the lay of the land

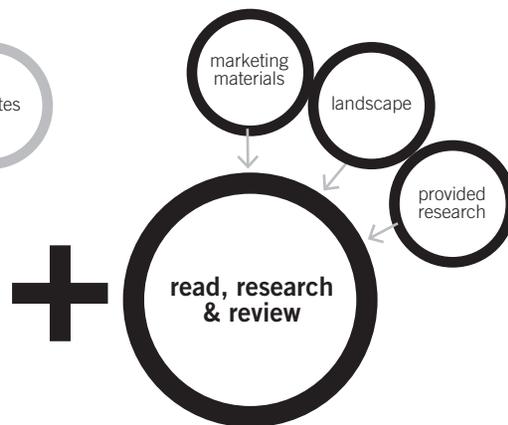
We read.

- We studied the content and structure of the CLC's website, current publications and marketing communication materials.
- We reviewed and assessed CLC's most recent research documents for direct and indirect positioning scenarios relating to any possible unintended consequences.
- We identified those community colleges and smaller area/regional colleges that some may see as competitors to CLC and review their messaging and positioning statements.
- We feel, while the data produced from the research was significant, the conclusions drawn from it didn't permit an aspirational aspect.

Inputs / People



Inputs / Documents



Marketing Materials

Piece by piece, every day, by linking every point of contact.

At this time we have reviewed and evaluated close to a hundred pieces of collateral material, publications and communication documents.



Landscape: Colleagues and Competitors

Keep your friends close



ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY



WESTERN
ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY



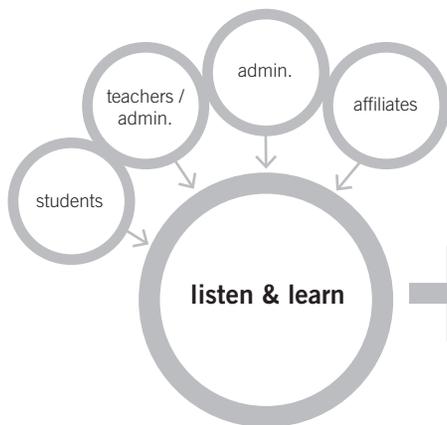
Process

Sift, Sort, Combine: Make a list, check it twice.

We synthesized.

- We have come to appreciate the many complex and interdependent relationship between the College, its campuses, its direct and indirect associations with other educational and community based organizations.
- We have identified a set of values and traits that represent the character and personality of the College and those institution and individuals that share its future.
- We appreciation the importance of embracing an aspirational attitude but at this time we have more work to do.
- We synthesized what we heard, read and saw into dominant message categories.

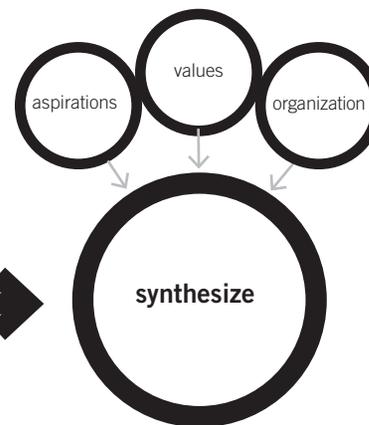
Inputs / People



Inputs / Documents



Sift, Sort, Combine

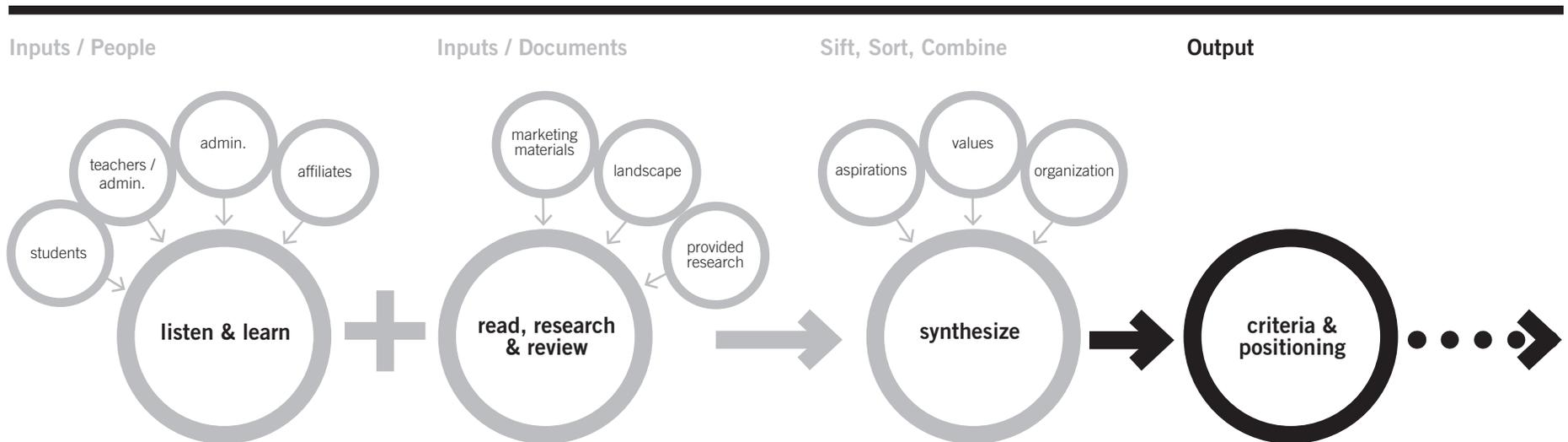


Process

Output: Information becomes intelligence.

We positioned.

- Our task at this point in our process is to articulate the communication criteria we will use to evaluate any proposed elements for the positioning of the College of Lake County
- We will soon prepare the criteria document for approval before we begin to develop the visual elements of the brand.
- While the specific language of the criteria is ongoing we have identified three principle categories we will use to measure the effectiveness of our recommendation.
- Is the concept and imagery aspirational? Are the over all elements of the brand's design flexible enough to acknowledge the College's many diverse relationships, while maintaining a consistent visual presents across all media?



Criteria

The language we use to measure performance

Our goal is to establish a series of communication objectives by which to measure proposed images, ideas and language.

Professional / Disciplined / Prepared
Serious / Focused / Committed
Meaningful / Worthy / of Value

Diverse / Multifaceted / Interdisciplinary
Challenging / Stimulating / Intriguing
Aspirational / Prideful / Confident

Messages

The promises we keep

College of Lake County

A superior learning environment, nurtured by dedicated, compassionate educators committed to teaching those who want to grow.

A competitive curriculum, as comprehensive as it is diverse, designed for a degree or to answer a question.

A place to build a future, ready when you're ready to begin or to begin again.

Vision

A place to build dream on.

College of Lake County
is a superior learning environment
with a competitive curriculum,
designed for those who are ready
to build their future.

Conclusions

Recommendations and next steps
