

2020 Annual Program Review

Program Name: Public Information Office

Program Review Author: Grace Smith, Public Information Officer

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: In one or two paragraphs, provide a description of the primary goals of your program or service area. Attach an appendix to describe your program or service area in more detail, if needed.

Note: **If no changes have occurred, feel free to copy and paste from your last review.** If it exists, feel free to copy the brief description of your program from the college catalog: <http://www.smc.edu/CollegeCatalog/Pages/default.aspx>

The Santa Monica College Public Information Office (PIO) coordinates the College’s media relations efforts and serves as the key facilitator of internal and external communications. It seeks to convey strategically to as many “constituents” as possible (students/prospective students; the community and key stakeholders including City Councils of Santa Monica and Malibu, SMMUSD, Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, and more; SMC employees; and the general public) through a variety of news distribution channels (print, radio, TV, social media) the SMC mission to provide the highest quality and most accessible education there is in transfer, job training or lifelong learning. The Public Information Office has the responsibility—together with the Marketing Office—of keeping the SMC brand top-of-mind, ensuring that our value of quality and affordability and our brand “number one in transfers” remains strong and rises above other competitors.

As the institutional voice, the PIO supports the mission of the College by espousing it, as stated above. The PIO office has transformed its functions from a “clearinghouse” to a “creator of news” – positioning SMC as a leader and innovator through news and feature stories in local, national and international media. This has been fueled by an objective of not being “reactive” (waiting for news to happen) but being “proactive” (making news).

II. PROGRESS SINCE LAST REVIEW (LAST YEAR’S OBJECTIVES)

Identify the original objectives from your last review, as well as any objectives that emerged during the year (if applicable). For each objective, determine status and explanation for status.

Objective	Status (Check one)	Status Explanation
Maintain open/view rates for SMC in Focus, increase click-throughs	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed	The newsletter’s 78,000 + audience includes the full spectrum of the College’s constituents—community members, support groups, nonprofit boards, the internal community or “District”, civic partners such as City Council and the SMMUSD board, and many more—and most importantly, the newsletter enjoys a robust open rate, well above education industry standards. Stats vary from audience to audience. The newsletter won a national Bronze Paragon award from NCMPR (the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations, whose members are from 650 two-year colleges across the U.S.). This was resounding affirmation of both content and presentation of SMC in Focus, and is SMC in Focus’s third such national award since 2017. (The SMC in Focus HTML newsletter is designed to be a “one-stop” piece like the “New York Times Evening Briefing”—so that a user can get the complete story by viewing the

		<p>blurbs and images in it, instead of clicking through to the site to read the whole story— although the latter is still desired. This design makes the number and percentage of “opens” a good measure of effectiveness. SMC in Focus’s audience is split into many subgroups – to measure the effectiveness of open rates, the PIO has chosen the audiences most representative of the college’s constituents and with a large audience apiece: SMC Foundation Donors, and SMC Employees.</p> <p>NOTE: Education newsletter industry standards benchmarks are 23%-26% for open rates (per a study at Washington University).</p> <p>Over the past year, open rates for these two audiences were 24% or above (with one exception) for the donor audience and 50% or above for the internal SMC audience.</p>
<p>Migrate content from old news archives to current Sharepoint platform; incorporate SMC social media handles in new press release format</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed</p>	<p>Completed #1 (migrating content). Social media handles are not included in current press releases format except for “high-value” news items. The current online newsroom has social media share buttons for Facebook & Twitter for every press release that’s posted there.</p>
<p>Migrate to cloud-based system for distributing news releases to gather metrics</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed</p>	<p>The PIO migrated to a cloud-based system for getting access to media contacts but currently continues to distribute via the internal Outlook system. Metrics are gathered via Google Alerts.</p>
<p>Continue expansion of media outreach</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed</p>	<p>More than 100 news releases were distributed by the Public Information Officer (PIO) to local, regional, national and international media outlets as well as specialty publications. News and feature stories relating to SMC students/alumni and faculty, instructional programs, events, and major institutional accomplishments were reproduced or featured in one or more of the following: Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Magazine, Inside Higher Ed, LAist, LA Opinión, Chronicle of Higher Education, KTLA, NBC, Education Dive, Yahoo Finance, Santa Monica Daily Press, Santa Monica Mirror, Santa Monica Lookout, Santa Monica Observer, Canyon News, The Argonaut, Santa Monica Patch, Telemundo, Community College Daily, Los Angeles Daily News, The Rafu Shimpo, and the Malibu Times, among many others. For a near-comprehensive list of SMC press coverage, see smc.edu/in-the-news</p> <p>The PIO successfully represented SMC’s position on complex issues and/or prepared/shaped responses for SMC administrators and employees to appear on or be interviewed by regional/national TV stations and media outlets</p>

		<p>including the following (this is not a comprehensive list):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Santa Monica College’s Role in the Community & COVID-19 Response (feat. Dr. Kathryn E. Jeffery, Superintendent/President) in the Santa Monica Chamber Guide 2020 – Education Update: July 2020 -COVID-19, Drive-Thru Pop-up Pantry, Message to Students in The Corsair (feat. Dr. Kathryn E. Jeffery, Superintendent/President): April 2020 -Basic Needs/Food Insecurity and Homelessness Among College Students (feat. Dr. Kathryn E. Jeffery, Superintendent/President) in the Jewish Journal: March 2020o -Everytable Launch at Center for Media & Design (a collaboration with their PR agency), Spring 2020: Santa Monica Daily Press, Telemundo, NBC, Eater LA, and many more -AltCar Expo on KTLA (feat. SMC Student Services Building, Sustainability Manager Ferris Kavar and Renewable Energies Professor Stuart Cooley): October 2019 -Chalking controversy involving SMCPD (October 2019) -SMC’s reaction to anti-Semitism in the Jewish Journal: May 14, 2020 -Local Foundations supporting non-FAFSA students in CalMatters: May 2020
Click or tap here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input type="checkbox"/> Completed	Click or tap here to enter text.

III. ACHIEVEMENTS

(Optional) List any notable achievements your program accomplished in the last year.

- **Travelled to New Delhi, India to participate in college outreach activities (requested by International Education department; approved by Superintendent/President); assist in establishing a pipeline for more F-1 students from India to counteract the softening in non-resident student applications**
 - The PIO collected 433 prospective student leads, visited 11 high schools in New Delhi, Gurgaon and Ghaziabad in North India and presented on Santa Monica College as an option for higher studies to hundreds of students
 - The PIO engaged in meetings with Indian university administrators, at EducationUSA New Delhi (run by the U.S. Department of State), and more; the PIO also interviewed the college’s agent in New Delhi to

determine issues with recruitment and make recommendations for creating a better pipeline for future SMC recruitment in that country

- Upon her return the PIO wrote a comprehensive report to present all her findings to SMC's International Education Center and Senior Staff (see attached report: "**Opportunities & Challenges for Recruiting F-1 Students in India**")

- The PIO has written a comprehensive crisis communications plan for Santa Monica College, created a team (see above), provided this document and up-to-date media lists on an online Teams group that also includes senior staff. This document will be updated annually. Basic media training was provided to the core communications group by PIO in March 2020.
- In 2019-2020, the PIO has extended her relationship and collaboration with award-winning student media outlet: she presented at Corsair retreats in fall 2019 and spring 2020, assisted the editor-in-chief in identifying subjects for their first-ever Pandemic Podcast, and ensure that they receive timely, accurate info affecting SMC students.

- The PIO has actively pitched and coordinated stories regarding SMC's food security projects, and collaborates with the SMC Foundation to assist in providing content for fundraising efforts (over \$1.3 million has been raised to date for the Meal Project). The following info is from the SMC Foundation's Development Director Cheryl Ward:

- We included the links to the NBC story, the Santa Monica Daily Press Story at the bottom of all 8 of our email donation appeals for the MEAL PROJECT, reaching 10,000 each time.
- I can tell you we felt the media coverage was valuable to include in all email appeals, the fundraiser donation pages of our Peer-to-Peer fundraising site, and the home page of the Foundation website.
- Here are the locations of our links to media coverage:

1) Peer to Peer fundraising website. KPCC coverage was included in the template fundraisers were provided to build their page from: <https://www.classy.org/fundraiser/2497017>

2) SMC Foundation's home prominently features NBC4LA coverage: <https://santamonicacollegefoundation.org/index.php>

3) SMC Cares webpage on the SMC Foundation website featuring a list of the media coverage: https://santamonicacollegefoundation.org/SMC_CARES.php

This page was linked in grant applications and emails to individual donors.

AWARDS

The PIO won 2 statewide awards and 2 national awards in 2019-2020

National Awards (from the National Council for Marketing & Public Relations):

1. **Gold Paragon, Communication Success Story:** "Woolsey Fire Photo Project"
2. **Bronze Paragon for SMC in Focus**

State-Wide Awards (from the Community College Public Relations Organization)

3. **Silver, Pro Award, Communication Success Story:** "Food Security at Santa Monica College"
4. **Bronze, Pro Award, News Release:** "SMC's Hesham Jarmakani Wins Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Scholarship"

IV. CURRENT PLANNING AND RESOURCE NEEDS

Part 1: Narrative

Broadly discuss issues or needs impacting program effectiveness for which institutional support or resources will be needed for the next academic/fiscal year.

Same as part 2.

Part 2: List of Resources Needed

Itemize the specific resources you will need to improve the effectiveness of your program, including resources and support you will need to accomplish your objectives for next year.

While this information will be reviewed and considered in institutional planning, the information does not supplant the need to request support or resources through established channels and processes.

Resource Category	Resource Description/Item	Rationale for Resource Need (Including Link to Objective)
<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>Public Information Specialist / Assistant</p>	<p>(Unchanged from past program review)</p> <p>It is virtually unheard of for an organization the size of Santa Monica College to have a one-person Public Information Office. To recap: Public Information Officer Grace Smith does PR content production, oversees internal and external communications (this encompasses serving as the SMC President’s chief communicator), marketing communications, and media relations. A Public Information Assistant position was requested in February 2016; understandably, with the District’s budgetary constraints, this position has not been approved. The current operating general fund budget is allocated mostly towards content production—which would make up roughly 50% of a full-time staffer’s job responsibilities. Issues impacting efficiency and effectiveness includes this lack of support, which translates to very little time the PIO is able to dedicate to actual strategic communications planning and therefore a lack of cohesive, carefully researched campaign-based and –driven communications and a lack in expansion of organic media coverage.</p> <p>(New) In a competitive and complex world, the college will need to revisit what an expanded PR team might be able to accomplish in positioning the SMC brand.</p>

Facilities (info inputted here will be given to DPAC Facilitates Comm.)	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Equipment, Technology, Supplies (tech inputted here will be given to Technology Planning Committee)	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Professional Development	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

V. CHALLENGES RELATED TO SPRING 2020 COVID-19 CRISIS AND RESPONSE:

List significant challenges your program faced in Spring 2020 due to COVID-19. Please also Include your responses and solutions to this crisis.

COVID-19 – especially in the early weeks and months of the crisis – laid bare the challenges of having a one-person PIO team. Without another person to delegate to, the PIO’s functions were occupied almost exclusively with internal crisis communications, and there was not much scope for external communications/media outreach/story-scouting.

There was no “solution” as such – except for finding ways to manage my time. Below are my accomplishments as relates to COVID-19 response.

COVID-19 (March 2020 – to date):

- The PIO serves a critical role on the Emergency Operations Team, working closely with the Incident Commander(s), Chief of Police Johnnie Adams and Director of Health & Well-being Dr. Susan Fila and other key personnel to keep the college community informed about the impact of COVID-19 on college operations, classes, and services and also on the latest public health impacts/updates. Interface with local and regional communications partners including area community colleges, City of Santa Monica, and SMMUSD.
- Formed a COVID-19 Student-Specific Communications Subgroup in the early days of the crisis; included faculty & counseling voices to inform college’s communication to students
- Produced/wrote/edited scripts for three official SMC COVID-19 videos featuring Superintendent/President Dr. Kathryn E. Jeffery; Director of Health & Wellbeing Dr. Susan Fila ; and Board Chair Dr. Nancy Greenstein
- Wrote and disseminated press releases to inform media and public of changes in college services and classes, campus closure to public, etc.
- The PIO has written and disseminated over 30 institutional memos for Dr. Kathryn E. Jeffery during the COVID-19 crisis and college’s transition to an online environment (these memos are ongoing on a bi-weekly basis).

VI. THE NEXT SECTION IS FOR CTE PROGRAMS ONLY

PARTNERSHIPS:

Part 1: Industry advisory meeting dates and attendance for 2019-2020.

Date of Meeting	# of SMC Attendees	# of Non-SMC Attendees
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Part 2: Employer partnerships/collaborations for 2019-2020. Identify the most salient partnerships or collaborations.

Employer Name	Type of partnership or Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory attendance • Internship site • Donations • Job placement • Other 	Optional: Additional information about partnership or collaboration
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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CONGRATULATIONS – that’s it! Please save your document with your program’s name and forward it to your area Vice President for review.

The following section will be completed by your program’s area VP

Vice Presidents:

First, please let us know who you are by checking your name:

- Christopher Bonvenuto, Vice President, Business and Administration
- Don Girard, Senior Director, Government Relations & Institutional Communications
- Sherri Lee-Lewis, Vice President, Human Resources
- Jennifer Merlic, Vice President, Academic Affairs
- Teresita Rodriguez, Vice President, Enrollment Development
- Michael Tuitasi, Vice President, Student Affairs

Next, please check this box to indicate that you have reviewed the program’s annual report Provide any feedback and comments for the program here:

Click or tap here to enter text; the box will expand when you enter text.

Finally, please **save the document** and email it to both Stephanie Amerian (amerian_stephanie@smc.edu) and Erica LeBlanc (leblanc_eric@smc.edu). If you have any questions, please contact us!

Thank you for your input!