Identity Audit Research Phase Update
What is “brand” or identity?

The sum total of the **experiences** people have with your organization, product or service, and what they **believe** about its **value** and **relevance** to their lives.

- Julie Peterson, Peterson Rudgers Group
The most valuable intangible asset any organization owns—our ability to distinguish ourselves from the other flavors out there.
National Trends in Identity Audits

42% of surveyed higher education institutions conducted identity audits in 2016.

(Source: “State of Higher Ed Branding: A Survey of Marketing Leaders, Deborah Maue & Tom Hayes, Ph.D)
Started with a Research Phase...

Research Objective:

• Benchmark for current perceptions of TU vs. peers & competitors
• Provide an informed approach to strategic brand development (identity distinction) and future decision-making.

Methodology:

• Phone interviews, email survey, workshops, focus groups

Audiences (approximately 2000 responses):

• Faculty, Staff, Students, Prospective Students, Donors, Alumni, Board Members, & General Population (Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York media markets).
When looking at TU, our stakeholders also consider these institutions:

• University of Maryland, College Park
• University of Maryland, Baltimore County
• Salisbury University
• University of Delaware
• Penn State University Park
• Stevenson University
• James Madison University
• George Mason University
Research Highlights

The research revealed internal and external optimism as well as high levels of public awareness.

Diversity is a decision driver for TU’s prospective students and TU delivers on this need.

It revealed great consensus around associations with qualities like “value, warmth, inclusivity, and growing in the right direction.”

Right now, Towson is not considered very unique or distinctive. In fact, this is one of the biggest challenges of the brand: it’s considered by the general population to be more average and unknown.
We’re on their radar. The General Population knows about TU, and thus we’re off to a good start.

Awareness

Respondents that were somewhat or very familiar with TU and other institutions
Associations

Top 3 in ALL groups:
‘Value,’ ‘Growing in the right direction’
and ‘Nurturing and supportive’

Bottom 2 in ALL groups:
‘Top-choice institution’ and ‘Academics’

ALL Groups: Faculty & Staff; Students; Parents; Alumni; Prospective Students; General Population
Respondents that viewed Towson University as somewhat or far superior to the schools in the competitive set.

Internally, TU needs to develop a “culture of excellence” and value our own work.

Competitive Set: UMCP, UMBC, Salisbury, Delaware, Penn State, Stevenson, JMU, GMU
Distinction

Where should we *begin to look* for TU’s distinctive characteristics?

People: Warm, Inclusive, Talented.
Programs: High-Quality, Experiential
Place: Proximity to Metro Areas, Quality of Life
Major Research Takeaways

✓ Identify TU’s distinctive qualities

✓ Embrace & recognize our work

✓ Empower the campus to be ambassadors in consistently conveying the Towson University experience (Cross-Campus Committee)

✓ Creatively express the contemporary TU experience.
Next Step: Develop Brand Platform: Michigan example

PRESTIGE FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

A public powerhouse grounded in academic excellence and integrity that is leading meaningful change.

CREATIVE PLATFORM

BRAND POSITIONING

VALUE PROPOSITION

BRAND CHARACTER

BRAND PILLARS

ACADEMIC PRESTIGE
- World elite faculty and students
- 250 degree programs in 19 schools and colleges
- Nationally leading research portfolio

PUBLIC ETHOS
- Priority on diversity and social equity
- Investment for the common good, not only individual attainment
- Passion for local and global impact

HERITAGE, TRADITION & CULTURE
- Thriving, global community of 500K alumni
- Over 30 Division I national championships in 10 sports
- Highly collaborative and interdisciplinary environment

KEY MESSAGES

KEY DIFFERENTIATORS

Academic Excellence • Global • Strong School Spirit
Priority Placed on Diversity and Social Equity • Strong Alumni Network

TOWSON UNIVERSITY
## What’s Next for the Identity Audit?

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