



Georgetown University
PR and Communications

Capstone
Fall 2020

COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS

A comprehensive communications plan to
engage students during long-term crisis

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December 14, 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This year presented several unforeseen challenges for institutions of higher education like College of the Canyons (COC). The COVID-19 pandemic pushed communities to the edge as colleges quickly closed their campuses, moved their classes online and physically disconnected from their students. Beyond the logistical and organizational struggles of operating during a worldwide emergency, the pandemic also highlighted the difficulties colleges like COC have to connect with students when they are removed from their school communities. For COC, the pandemic highlighted the college's need to develop a comprehensive communications plan that effectively reaches Generation Z students and keeps them connected to campus information during an extended crisis.

To increase engagement with Generation Z students, COC must position itself as a partner with college organizations and student leaders. The relationship will allow COC to develop a student-driven plan that not only aligns with the college's mission, but also with this key public's desire to take a proactive role in their community. COC must also develop a plan that communicates with Generation Z students on digital and social platforms they actively use. The effort will create a transparent dialogue with students and will ensure that they can easily find information to engage with the college.

This strategic communication plan will encourage Generation Z students to remain connected to COC in order to keep themselves and their community safe during an extended crisis. The plan will reach this key public by developing a student leadership

program, creating an online conversation about COC and establishing a non-emergency message alert program. The various strategies and tactics will be unified through a new initiative called “Canyons Cares,” which encourages students to make a lasting impact on COC. The initiative is based on students’ motivating self-interests to positively influence their school community, especially during times of uncertainty. To that end, the Canyons Cares initiative gives Generation Z students a chance to take ownership of the college’s response to a long-term crisis and take a role in keeping their classmates out of harm’s way. It also provides an opportunity for the college to develop consistency across its digital and social channels with messaging that will be woven throughout the plan’s implementation.

This strategic communications plan will also be unique from strategies and tactics pursued by COC’s regional and national competitors. Although these institutions are also following crisis response plans during the pandemic, the colleges do not appear to be creating a long-term response that can be replicated for years to come. Because COC is taking a preemptive step, the college will be better prepared for future long-term crises and will understand how to reach Generation Z students and communicate with them in a transparent and authentic way.

This strategic communications plan will cost \$4,990 to complete. Because COC is in the midst of a long-term crisis, the plan should be executed over the course of eight months from January to August 2021. The overall plan, though, is designed to be a phased approach from pre-crisis to post-crisis. The phases will allow the plan to be re-implemented at the start of a future long-term crisis.

BACKGROUND

External Environment:

The world is experiencing an unprecedented health, human, economic and social crisis from COVID-19 (United Nations, 2020). Beyond impacting people's health, the pandemic caused the national unemployment rate to grow to 8.4% in August, which is 4.7 percentage points higher than in 2019 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). In California, the unemployment rate is higher than the national average at 11.4% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Although the fallout from COVID-19 is affecting all segments of the population, it is having a significant impact on young people. An international study found that the pandemic undermined the career prospects of Generation Z as their working hours fell by a quarter and as one in six stopped working altogether (International Labour Organization, 2020). Many are uncertain what their futures may look like and are looking for direction from organizations, classmates, friends or family members.

Industry:

For many in younger generations, the uncertainty of the future has coincided with distrust in the higher education system as individuals are unsure if institutions like community colleges can keep them safe while preparing them for their futures. The \$65.8 billion industry is made up of more than 600 community colleges that employ about 608,000 people and educate more than 6 million students (Le, 2020). Despite the size of the industry, community colleges do not have a uniform plan in place to respond to a long-term crisis such as a global pandemic. Many colleges are creating plans as they go and as a result, causing varying degrees of communications and engagement with students in different geographic areas.

Even before the pandemic began, distance learning—or online courses—became increasingly popular especially among adult learners and first-generation college students (Statista, 2020). The transition toward online education accelerated in the past year, as community colleges were required to make their classes virtual in response to local and state health orders. The shift, though, created difficulties for students who fell behind because they did not have access to the technology or support necessary to complete their degrees from home (Fishman & Hiler, 2020). Many students also did not receive communication to inform them of the federal- or university-based resources available to them during a time of transition.

Difficulties accessing resources or communicating with community colleges could explain why enrollment fell 9.5% nationwide with the biggest decline among first-year students (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020). Typically the industry

Community college enrollment fell 9.5% nationwide, with the biggest decline among first-year students (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020).

runs “countercyclical to economic performance” with students enrolling in college during economic downturns; however, that trend has yet to take shape (Le, 2020). Experts speculate that the drop in enrollment is because many students do not have reliable Internet, have additional responsibilities at home or are overwhelmed by the uncertainty of the pandemic and how long it will last (Schnell, 2020). Many students also feel unsupported by their colleges and disconnected from their campus communities, resulting in a lack of motivation toward schoolwork and higher education pursuits.

Client:



College of the Canyons, one of the 114 institutions in the California Community College System, is also experiencing a decline in enrollment due to long-term impacts from the pandemic. Although the college operates two campuses in Canyon Country and Valencia, and offers online, continuing education, dual enrollment

and career technical education courses, students have opted to put their education on hold (College of the Canyons, 2020). The college, which operates within the Santa Clarita Community College District and is overseen by a five-member Board of Trustees, serves about 32,000 students per year, with 32% attending full-time and 68% part-time (College Scorecard, n.d.). This fall that number fell by about 5% (College of the Canyons, 2020).

Even though COC is facing challenges, the college is still working to offer all of its classes and programs to students in a virtual format. In September, the college announced that nearly 2,000 classes would remain virtual in spring due to the pandemic (Signal Staff, 2020). About 110 classes that require hands-on learning, such as nursing and welding, will continue to meet on campus (Signal Staff, 2020). This means that nearly all students will continue classes online for the foreseeable future, as students and staff connect through virtual and digital means. The college's early choice to continue classes online follows COC's mission to be a leading two-year college that is recognized locally, statewide and nationally. It also adheres to the college's mission to be an innovative institution that provides accessible education and prepares students to enter the workforce or transfer to four-year universities (College of the Canyons, 2020).

Product/Service/Issue:

The college offers nearly 170 associate degrees and certificate programs to undergrads, high school students and local professionals. The various education programs are designed to be accessible to all through on-campus and online learning. At this time, COC primarily offers students classes through remote learning due to COVID-19.

COC has two ways it typically responds to crisis situations on campus. There is a short-term response for immediate emergencies such as lockdowns and fires and a long-term response for a crisis such as a pandemic and social unrest. In both instances the college follows a 144-page Emergency Operations Plan that is overseen by a Campus Safety and

Incident Command team of college staff and administrators (Emergency Operations Plan, 2019). The college activated its Emergency Operations in April to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The five-stage plan describes how the campus community and public information office will respond to reduce the spread of the virus (Supplemental Emergency Operations Plan, 2020). As of December, the college is in level four of its response, which resulted in the closure of campus and the move to distance learning.

Promotions:

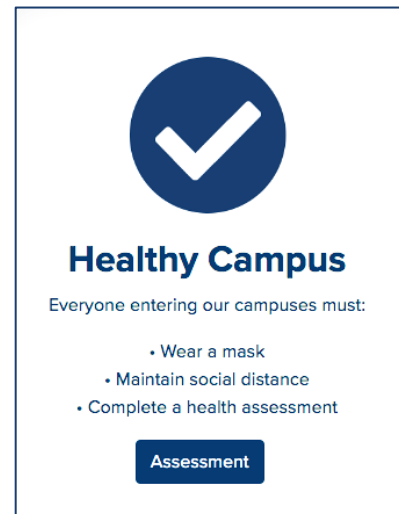
Students receive most information about the college from COC's Public Information Office that coordinates all traditional, digital and social media communications on- and off-campus. Campus-wide information is often shared with students through their COC emails, while class information is shared through the My Canvas content management system or the Canvas classroom platform. Students are also connected to campus through the college's mobile app, Canyons M, which the college released in 2019. The app integrates with students' emails and provides them with direct access to COC news and events, social media, student services and online resources. The college also operates a campus-wide text alert program, but the messages are reserved for immediate emergencies such as a lockdown drill.



COC operates five branded social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn. The college's greatest reach is on LinkedIn with 27,000 followers and Facebook with 17,000 followers; however, the two platforms are those that are least used by Generation Z students. The two platforms also are where the college posts the most content. LinkedIn is primarily used as a job board with little to no engagement on each post. Facebook, on the other hand, features weekly posts that include photos or digital fliers with informational text, links to articles or invitations to events. Since few students are actively on the platform, each post receives around 10 likes and one to two shares, with few receiving more than one comment. Engagement is also low on Twitter—another site overlooked by students—where COC shares photos and short messages with its nearly 5,000 followers each week. The college receives more engagement on Instagram, a platform it publishes to monthly with photos of campus, students or event fliers. Most posts receive around 100 likes with several comments from Generation Z students. Engagement on YouTube is more sporadic as videos have anywhere from 90 to 3,000 views; however, it

appears as though students are more drawn to videos about COC athletics and informational videos about classes. It is important to note that a majority of the content shared to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram includes the same text and photos; however, there is often more engagement with these posts on Instagram than on any other platform.

In addition to its traditional communications, the college is also in the midst of its emergency operations response plan to provide ongoing information to the community through the COC website, student and employee emails and district-wide notification system (Supplemental Emergency Operations Plan, 2020). COC is working to educate the college community on social distancing and safety with a “Healthy Campus” campaign that informs students that they must wear a mask, social distance and complete a daily health assessment. Students are informed of these procedures through the college website, Canvas, email and social media. On the college website, for example, a drop down bar was added in red to note the pandemic emergency and was later changed to blue for an extended crisis with the long-term campus closures.



The Healthy Campus campaign COC is promoting on its website.

Competition:

COC's most significant regional competitors are Los Angeles Mission College and Antelope Valley College. The two neighboring community colleges offer similar programs and classes, and serve similar demographics to COC. Los Angeles Mission College also has a public information office that maintains the college's website and oversees its branded Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Mission College's social media pages are often updated throughout the day, with similar posts shared across all platforms. The college's greatest reach is on YouTube with more than 4,000 subscribers. On its website the college is also advertising annual virtual programs, such as "Discover My Major Day," as well as links to its online student services and IT help desk. Mission College has also begun a "Stay Safe Campaign" with virtual posters that encourage students to social distance, wear masks, wash their hands and track their symptoms. These posters appear across the college's social channels.

Antelope Valley College's public information office also oversees its college website and social channels, which includes Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Flickr. The college's greatest reach is on Facebook with over 12,000 followers. However, all of the college's social sites are regularly updated with news, information, events and photos. Antelope Valley College has implemented an "AVC Do Your Part" campaign to encourage students and staff to take responsibility and do what they can to keep themselves and their communities safe. The web-based student guide informs students of their personal safety

protocols, tells them what they can and cannot do on campus and connects them with online campus resources. The college is also continuing virtual events and forums such as weekly Mindfulness Meditations.

Table 1: Social Media Competitive Analysis

Facebook	Followers	Avg. Posts Per Month	Engagements	Engagements Per Post
College of the Canyons	17,080	6	58	10
Antelope Valley College	12,944	52	706	9
Los Angeles Mission College	3,519	13	107	7
Twitter	Followers	Avg. Posts Per Month	Mentions	Frequency of Mentions
College of the Canyons	4,914	18	368	44%
Antelope Valley College	1,566	50	0	0%
Los Angeles Mission College	82	14	0	0%
Instagram	Followers	Avg. Posts Per Month	Avg. Likes	Engagement Rate Per Post
College of the Canyons	3,612	2	60	3.5%
Antelope Valley College	1,738	45	10	0.6%
Los Angeles Mission College	1,944	13	26	1.4%

Note: Analysis of social media content from Aug. 1 to Dec. 13, 2020 using Sprout Social and Iconosquare analysis software.

Outside of local community colleges, national universities also compete with COC on a smaller scale for students. These institutions often have access to more financial resources that allow them to engage more broadly with students, especially during times of crisis. The University of Missouri, for example, hired six student Instagram influencers to share content about the coronavirus to raise awareness of the university's safety protocols and online resources (Marcus, 2020). The content, which was written by the university, reached about 25,000 students and created 63,000 impressions (Marcus, 2020). Other schools, like Temple University and University of Maryland, are also considering implementing similar partnerships.

Market Share:

COC is part of the California Community College System, which is the largest in the nation with 14.9% of the nation's community college students (Le, 2020). COC is also in the top quarter of colleges by size in the state of California (Community College Review, 2020).

Like other community colleges in California, COC is spending nearly as much as it takes in with unrestricted revenues totaling \$133.3 million and unrestricted expenses totaling \$113.2 million (Board of Trustees, 2020). Compared to its competitors, COC was able to save money during the fiscal year while others spent beyond their means. Antelope Valley College, for example, is operating at a deficit with revenues totaling \$74 million and expenses totaling \$82.7 million; however, the college's reserves allowed it to end the year in the black. Los Angeles Mission College, on the other hand, is spending exactly as much as it takes in at \$35 million.

Resources:

Influential voices for COC include its extensive alumni network as well as its student representatives in the Associated Student Government and in its Peer Leader program (College of the Canyons, 2020). Both student groups work to improve life on campus by collaborating with staff and helping students navigate campus programs. There is also a strong network of students among the college's eight alliances, which connect students with faculty and give members opportunities to discuss issues in a safe space.

Beyond student connections, COC also has a robust employee and faculty network to rely on with about 1,660 full-time and part-time employees (College of the Canyons, 2020). This includes a strong team in the college's Public Information Office, which manages COC's digital, social and traditional outreach.

Market Research:

More than half of students at COC are members of Generation Z—those ages 18 to 24—and are drawn to the college for its class offerings, faculty and campus programs. Students from outside the area consistently drive past COC's competitors in order to attend the college and enroll in the program of their choice. They often choose to enroll in a community college like COC due to flexible class schedule and access to teachers (Boesel, 2019). Many students, though, note that it is difficult to connect to the physical campus while they are commuting to school or maintaining responsibilities outside of their classes. And the pandemic only intensified these feelings as nearly all students are asked to continue classes remotely. During this time, students are worried about the fallout from COVID-19 and are changing their academic plans to alleviate some of those concerns (California Student Aid Commission, 2020). They are consistently looking to friends, social media and online communications to find out how to access classroom support and on-campus resources. Community colleges like COC are now tasked with uncovering unique ways to engage with their student populations and reconnect them to the campus community.

KEY PUBLIC: GENERATION Z COLLEGE STUDENTS



Demographic Data:

Generation Z students—those born after 1996—make up about 52% of the college’s overall population each semester, which translates to about 10,000 of the college’s approximately 20,000 full-time and part-time students (College of the Canyons, 2020). This population of students is between the ages of 18 and 24. Individuals in this key public primarily live in the Santa Clarita Valley; however, about 40% of

students also travel to the college’s two campuses from the Antelope Valley and the San Fernando Valley. Nearly half of the student population identifies as Hispanic while 31% identify as white, 10% as Asian and 5% as Black (DataUSA, 2020). In this population about 31% speak a language other than English at home with Spanish being the most common (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Overall, COC students are evenly distributed between genders with 44% identifying as female and 55% as male (Student Success Scorecard, 2019). Three-quarters of students continue working while attending school and about half of those that have jobs work more than 20 hours a week (College of the Canyons, 2020). About two-thirds of the Generation Z population in Santa Clarita is employed and about 10,300 are enrolled in college or grad school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Psychographic Data:

This group of students believes in individual expression and places a high value of pragmatism (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Many are pursuing careers as lawyers, teachers or managers (DataUSA, 2020). This key public is also passionate about social change and making a difference in the world (Canyon News, 2019). Primary research of this group indicated that this group believes they are moderately engaged on social media, despite being digital natives and accessing some social media sites more than five times a day.

Motivating Self-Interest:

Instead of taking a more reactive approach, Generation Z students are proactive about connecting with others and building relationships for the greater good (Canyon News, 2019). For example, during the nationwide Black Lives Matter protests a group of

Generation Z students led a movement in Santa Clarita to spread a message of justice, peace and change (Miller, 2020). The organizers expressed their desire to listen to opposing views and reach diverse audiences (Miller, 2020). This correlates directly to the key public's interactions with COC, as Generation Z students prefer to receive information that connects them to campus and encourages them to take part in building a larger community. Students are motivated by their desire to enact small changes that contribute to the greater good, whether that be for the campus environment or for the world around them. Beyond their intrinsic values, Generation Z students are also motivated to engage with COC's communications in order to stay up-to-date on campus news and to succeed in their classes.

Relationship to the Issue:

When it comes to communications from COC, students tend to turn to the college's emails, newsletter, social media and fliers for information. Since the pandemic began, more and more students have turned to digital outlets to find information about the college and remain connected to campus. Generation Z students are also receiving information from teachers and from peers through word-of-mouth communications or through messages on platforms like Canvas. During a long-term crisis, like a pandemic, students prefer to receive as much information as possible to understand the college's decision-making process and to grasp their roles in the college's response. Generation Z students prefer transparency and like to receive as much communications as possible from the college during a long-term crisis.

About 34% of Generation Z students said they read most or all of COC's communications.

Influencer/Intervener:

Generation Z students are digital natives who often trust what they see online through trusted sources and from friends and family. Friends and classmates also influence this group.

Viable Communications Channels to Reach Them:

Email, text messages and certain social media sites such as Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat are the best ways to reach Generation Z students, according to primary research. Students indicated that these platforms are the ones they checked the most often—more than five times each day—to find news and information. Students, though, want all of their communications to be accessible online. As one research participant said, "it's easier, faster and convenient for me to receive news and info through my phone or gadgets." The sentiment is similar to others shared by other Generation Z students who also prefer to receive communications through emails and text messages.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Generation Z students make up the largest percentage of full-time and part-time students at College of the Canyons. To create a relevant strategic communications plan directed at this key public, it was imperative to hear directly from this group of students to better understand their communications preferences. As a whole, the goal of the primary research, which included a survey and in-depth interviews, was to learn how engaged Generation Z students are with COC's existing communications and to understand what the college could do to increase engagement online or in-person, especially during times of prolonged crisis or risk, such as a pandemic, social unrest or state of emergency.

To glean this information, the primary research included the following research questions:

1. What factors affect Generation Z students' buy-in to COC's university-wide efforts on campus?
2. How effective is COC at creating engagement with Generation Z students in-person and online?
3. What factors cause Generation Z students to seek out information from COC?
4. How do COC's communications influence how Generation Z students respond to crises on- and off-campus?

Collectively these research questions lead to the following hypothesis: If students read and engage with COC's communications, they will be more informed and prepared for crisis situation on campus. Based on Generation Z students' responses, as explained below, this hypothesis was found to be true.

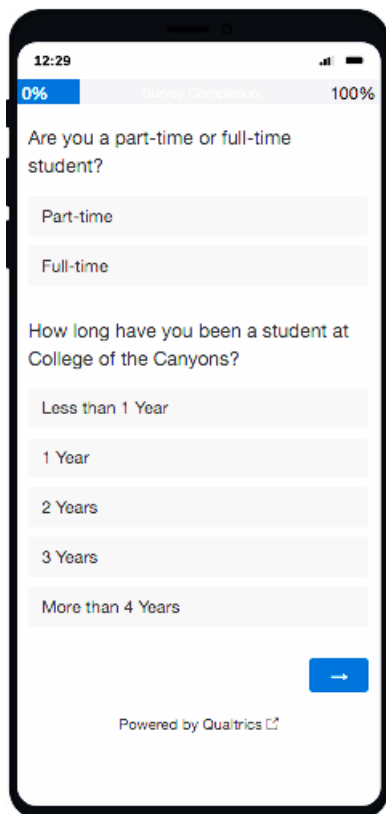
Research Methodology:

Because the four research questions included two quantitative, "what," questions and two qualitative, "how," questions, the primary research required a mixed method of research tools. A combination of a survey and in-depth interviews were selected to ensure comprehensive results that measured responses in both numbers and sentiments. A 12-question survey, which included one consent question and one screener question for Generation Z students, was developed using Qualtrics. Ten separate questions were also prepared for Zoom interviews with students.

Each research method required different response levels in order to ensure statistically significant results for the overall population, which consisted of approximately 10,000 Generation Z students. The survey, for example, required a sample size of 90 to 100 responses in order to ensure statistical significance, or to ensure the results were reliable. The target sample size also created a 10% margin of error, meaning that there could be 10% of variability in results. For this research method, the survey resulted in 136 responses with an 8% margin of error as of Dec. 1. The response level was much simpler for the in-

depth interviews. For this qualitative method, the goal was to conduct 12 in-depth interviews in order to determine trends within the key public.

Soliciting Responses:



An example of the Qualtrics survey as it appeared on a mobile device.

The survey was administered online and accessible through students' smartphones, tablets and computers through a direct link or a QR code (a detailed list of the questions posed to students can be found in Appendix C). A link to the survey, along with a brief message about the purpose of the research, was posted in five Facebook groups that focused on either College of the Canyons students or on Santa Clarita Valley residents. Small subsets of students who are currently attending classes on campus were also contacted in person during their morning and evening classes. Students contacted in-person were asked to scan a QR code that linked to the survey using their smartphone cameras; they were told to take the online survey at their leisure. However, the most effective way to solicit survey responses was by directly emails campus organizations and professors. This was also notable as these individuals had the greatest influence on students' actions. In all, seven clubs, five student alliances and nine department chairs were contacted and asked to distribute the survey directly to students through their COC email or through their online webpages. These individuals were asked to share the survey by directly

emailing students or posting a link to the survey on their campus Canvas pages, which are used for online class announcements. A personalized message was also shared with teachers and campus leaders that described the purpose of the research and what the survey results would be used for. Students were also advised that their participation was voluntary and that the survey could be completed through any computer or device. Overall, these solicitation efforts resulted in 136 responses with an 8% margin of error as of Dec. 1.

The in-depth interviews were administered via Zoom or via email. Similarly to the survey solicitation, students were contacted directly via emails to campus organizations, student leadership and classroom instructors. In each email, students or administrations were informed of the purpose of the research and how the results would be used to develop a strategic communications plan for COC. However, students were not as willing to participate in the in-depth interviews as the online surveys. In all, four students who are part of COC's Associated Student Government (ASG), an organization that represents all students on campus, participated in the interviews. Although the responses provided thoughtful insight into the ways the college communicates with students, the number of

responses fell short of the desired sample size of 12 Generation Z students. Efforts were made to follow-up with students who participated in the online survey and with professors who shared the survey with their classes; however, no additional students came forward to take part in the in-depth interview. Therefore, the results from the four in-depth interviews will not be included in the primary research analysis, as the total number of interviews did not reach statistical significance. The shortfall also caused the research plan to pivot to its “Plan B” with a single research tool, the survey, with all quantitative questions. Because of this, the two qualitative research questions were reframed to read:

1. How effective is COC at creating engagement with Generation Z students in-person and online? → Where is COC effective at creating engagement with Generation Z students in person and online?
2. How do COC’s communications influence how Generation Z students respond to crises on- and off-campus? → When do COC’s communications influence how Generation Z students respond to crises on- and off-campus?

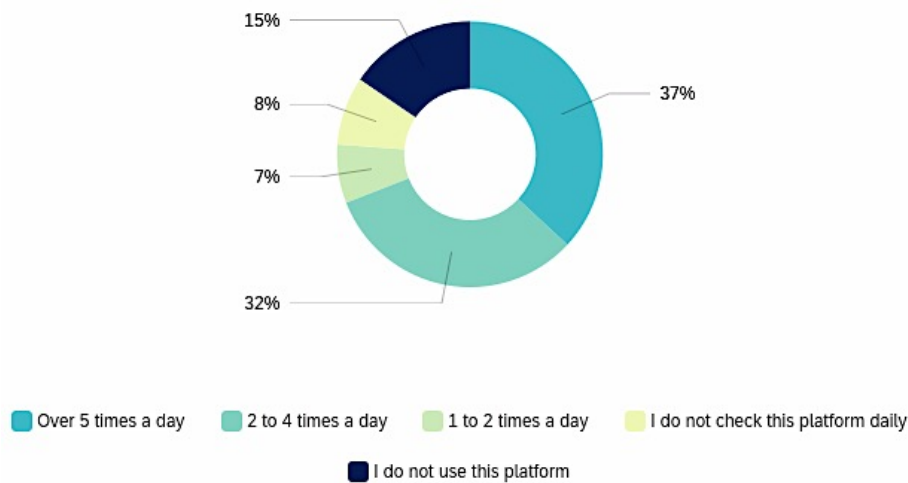
The shortfall of the qualitative research method highlighted the limitations of the overall research plan and results. The mixed-method approach was more time-consuming than using a single primary research tool. Several students were also unwilling to speak at length about their experiences or were unwilling to agree to another Zoom call during distance learning, as many are already on their computers for several hours each day. For the surveys, the results were limited by the fact that several respondents did not answer every single question listed. The results may also not represent all students on campus as certain department chairs and organizations agreed to distribute the survey through email or through the Canvas platform, while others opted not to respond to requests for assistance.

Research Analysis:

The survey was analyzed using ordinal and nominal measurements in Excel and in Qualtrics’ online reports. Following the consent form and screener question for Generation Z students, respondents were asked if they were part-time or full-time students. More than three-quarters of respondents to this survey identified as full-time Generation Z students with nearly all, 93%, attending school at COC for less than three years.

When it came to social media, Generation Z students said that they are, on average, moderately engaged online. The most popular platforms for this group included Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram and YouTube with more than 35% of respondents stating that they check all of the platforms more than five times each day. Twitter, on the other hand, was more likely to be checked daily by users of the platform; however, about 36% said they do not use the platform at all. Interestingly, LinkedIn and Reddit were virtually unused among Generation Z students as about 79% said they did not use LinkedIn and 73% said they did

Table 2: How often Generation Z students check Instagram



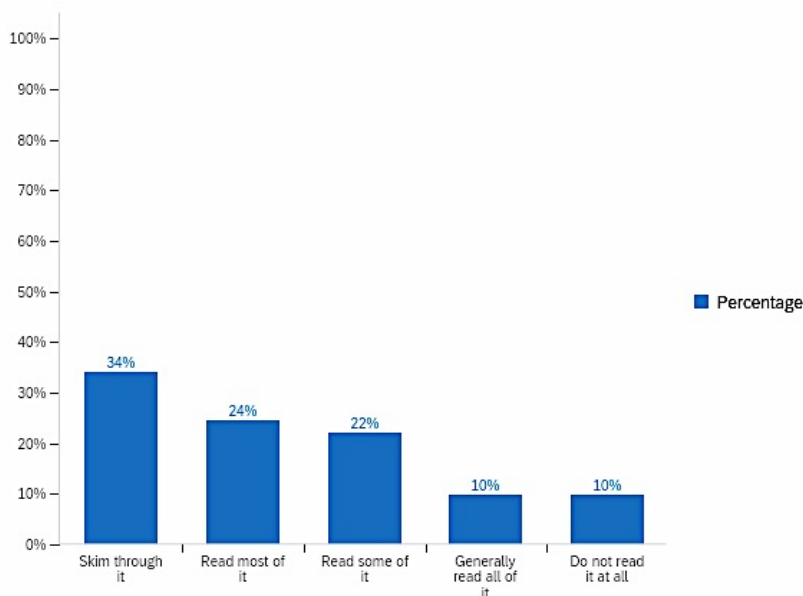
not use Reddit. Facebook was also unpopular as 51% of students said they did not use the platform and another 26% stating they do not check the social media site daily.

Social media is still the preferred way for students to receive local and national news. One-third noted that social media was

where they found their news. The next most popular choices included national broadcast news like CNN and Fox and local broadcast news like ABC7 and NBC5. When it came to news about COC, though, students overwhelmingly preferred to receive information through COC-branded communications such as email—the most popular—the college’s website and text messages. COC’s email and website were viewed as a place to find a plethora of information about the college. Following COC-branded communications, respondents said that word-of-mouth information from friends and family was the next most popular way to receive news about the college.

Although students prefer to receive information about COC directly from the college, students are split on whether they actually read all of the communications COC sends out. More than half of Generation Z students, about 56%, said they “skim through” or only “read some” of the communications COC sends out. About a quarter said they read most of the communications COC shares while only about 10% said they read all of it.

Table 3: How much of COC’s communications Generation Z students read



Overall, students were evenly split on how they would like to receive information about the college. When asked an open-ended question on “how they prefer to receive news and information about COC,” students overwhelmingly wrote in either emails or text messages. Students’ responses were split based on their own preferences toward each offering. One participant said email was preferred because “I check my different inboxes throughout the day and it is the first app I open when I wake up.” Other respondents said they preferred emails because the subject line gave them an opportunity to consider if the message was of interest to them or not. A participant who preferred text messages said they liked the ease of the communication, which was “less of a process to get into” than email. Additional participants said they preferred text messages for important information from the college. Students may prefer to receive information in new ways, as there was an expressed interest in hearing campus news through text alerts or messages.

When asked if a campus emergency would impact how much information students seek out from COC, participants said they were split on whether or not they would look to the college for additional communications. It is important to note, though, that a majority of those who said they would not seek out additional information from the college said they already felt that they receive sufficient communications from COC during a crisis. One participant, for example, said that COC has “a very good way of assuring their students on the actions that will take place and what exactly is occurring.” Those who expressed a desire to seek out more information from the college said they would do so in order to keep themselves and their classmates safe. Others said additional information would help them prepare for a crisis before, during and after a major event.

Students were evenly split between preferring text messages or emails from COC.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Where we are now:

As one of the largest community colleges in the state, College of the Canyons has a breadth of resources at its disposal to connect and engage with students. Students have said the college relies heavily on email to share information and news when it comes to long-term crisis and risk management, such as the ongoing pandemic, protests and social unrest. These messages are met with mixed results as some students opt to read all of the communications they receive from the college, while others have said they delete messages automatically. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, students have looked elsewhere to find news and information and COC has tried to meet these demands by increasing its social media postings on COC-branded accounts such as Instagram and YouTube. Students expressed support for the new means of communication, but also

offered that they feel more transparency is necessary to understand the administration's decision-making and their role in the college's response to the pandemic and similar events in the future. Many also expressed a desire to hear information from their peers that reinforces what the communications they receive from COC. The college is exploring new ways to engage with students and keep them safe when they return to campus, as demonstrated in its updated emergency operations plan. As this is an unprecedented time, the actions today will likely be a guide for the future if and when COC undergoes a similar long-term crisis in the years to come.

What could get in the way of success:

The pandemic illuminated COC's need to increase engagement among its student population so the key public is aware of how to respond to long-term crisis situations. Student buy-in and ownership will be essential to a student-centered plan. Without it, the college's efforts may be seen as inauthentic and COC may be unable to reach Generation Z students who want to take a proactive role in creating a collaborative campus community. By not placing students at the center, COC could lose its connection to a key public and to a generation that could promote the campus' efforts for years to come. In addition, a lack of transparent communication could lead to uncertainty among the student population and, ultimately, a loss of confidence in COC. Instead of focusing on a short-term solution to the pandemic, COC should look ahead to long-term implications of the health crisis and utilize this time to reassess its communications and effectively engage with students.

CORE OPPORTUNITY

Amid times of long-term uncertainty and crisis, College of the Canyons must communicate with Generation Z students to keep the campus community well informed and out of harm's way. Failure to do so could result in COC losing the longstanding relationship and trust it has built with its student body.

GOAL

Enhance College of the Canyon's ability to engage with Generation Z students and keep them connected to campus information during an extended crisis.

OBJECTIVES

1. Form partnerships with 20 Generation Z campus leaders by Aug. 27, 2021.
2. Increase open rates for campus-wide emails by 30% by June 3, 2021.
3. Grow Canyons M app downloads and sign-ins by 25% by Aug. 27, 2021.

BRAND POSITIONING



During a traditional school year, Generation Z students believe College of the Canyons is effective at communicating with students. However those opinions shifted in the past 10 months as COC adapted to the pandemic and moved classes online. Instead of relying on in-person communications such as fliers or teacher-to-peer dialogues, the college has turned to digital and social means to engage and communicate with Generation Z students. In

recent months, these forms of communication have become even more vital to the student experience as they shape the classroom environment and influence students' overall confidence and trust in COC. Despite the importance of these forms of communication, many students expressed confusion with the information they received and others wished there was a more streamlined way to find essential information about the campus community. Because of this, Generation Z students found there was a lack of consistency and direction in the college's social and digital communications during a long-term crisis.

COC has the opportunity to re-engage this key public by developing a digital and social communications effort that meets students on platforms they consistently use. The effort will ensure that there is a renewed, transparent dialogue between the college and the student body. It also will allow students to easily find information and engage directly with COC. The college should also position itself as a partner with Generation Z students and campus leadership in order to create a stronger campus community through a new initiative called Canyons Cares. The initiative will motivate students to contribute to the college's communications during a long-term crisis response in order to make a lasting impact on their community. Beyond giving students an opportunity to be involved in the Canyons Cares initiative, the program will also assure students that their voices are being heard and that their ideas have a role to play in COC's long-term crisis response during COVID-19 and beyond. It will also create a consistent feedback loop of relevant, accurate information from the college, campus leadership and younger students.

FRAMING

COC can capitalize on this opportunity and reach its desired brand position through effective framing, which shapes the meaning of messages. Framing, as a whole, influences how audiences interpret a message by striking a chord with their values and motivating them to change their beliefs or attitudes. The approach can help organizations like COC create more persuasive messages that are relevant and applicable to Generation Z students. It also can help Generation Z students interpret the information from the college in a new way that appeals to their own self-interests during a time of long-term crisis. At this time, for example, students would be interested in message frames that encourage them to take a proactive role in shaping their community and remaining connected to campus during a long-term crisis like COVID-19.

Because of this, COC should use an action frame that demonstrates the role Generation Z students can take to help their classmates and keep the campus safe. The college should inform students of what they can do in a long-term crisis situation to protect themselves and others, by sharing example images or videos of students following the campus guidelines. The frame will not be fear-based, but will exemplify positive outcomes students will experience by following COC's recommendations. Students will be motivated to act and follow COC's messaging because it will make them feel that they are central to the college's response to any crisis situation on campus.



Another frame COC should implement is the choices frame that shows alternative decisions in positive or negative terms. The frame is useful for the college because it is designed for situations involving uncertainty, like a long-term crisis on or off campus. COC should teach students about the potential positive and negative ways students could react to the crisis at hand. For example, during COVID-19 students are required to wear masks on campus, but many could wear their masks incorrectly by not covering their nose or mouth. COC could implement the choices in a fun way by showing photos of the COC Cougar wearing masks incorrectly and then correctly, along with information about the importance of mask wearing, to demonstrate the choices students can make. The humor and photos that are used will bias students toward making a certain choice—wearing their mask correctly—on campus. Similar illustrations and descriptions can be used for other long-term crises in the future.

MESSAGES



The purpose of this messaging is to encourage Generation Z students to become involved with the college's long-term crisis response in order to remain informed and stay connected to campus. The primary messages will state what students should do and will appeal to their self-interests, while the secondary messages will share evidence to support the primary messages.

Primary Message 1 (Action Frame): Students are essential to COC's response to a crisis situation on campus. You can make a difference in the lives of your classmates by following COC's guidelines and encouraging others to do the same.

- **Secondary Message:** Students tend to trust what they hear from their peers. In a survey conducted this fall, Generation Z students said that, after COC-branded communications, they believe what they hear from their friends and classmates and seek out information from those individuals.
- **Secondary Message:** For years the college has implemented the "See Something, Say Something" campaign that encourages students to speak out to stop potential crises on campus (Emergency Response Quick Reference Guide, n.d.).

Primary Message 2 (Choices Frame): Student should step in and work together to keep the COC community safe.

- **Secondary Message:** Students often make the choice to get involved and help their community. At the start of the pandemic, nursing students led an effort to bring essential supplies like masks and face shields to local hospitals (Breaking News, 2020).
- **Secondary Message:** Several students have opted to take part in the college's call to action to address racial inequality and tackle institutional reform on campus this year. Students are participating in conversations online through college-wide forums and webinars (College of the Canyons, 2020).

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

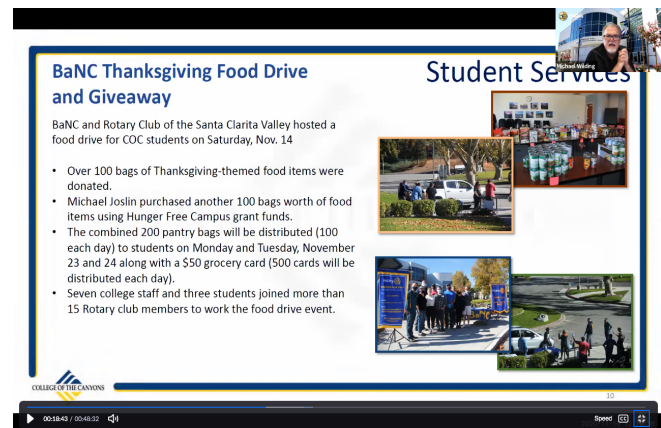
Objective 1: Form partnerships with 20 Generation Z campus leaders by Aug. 27, 2021.

Strategy 1: Establish a “Canyon Cares” outreach/leadership program that places Generation Z students at the center of the college’s communications related to long-term crises.

- **Tactic 1a:** Develop a sign-up sheet for students to apply for the campus outreach program.
 - o Share the sign-up sheet through email and on social media to encourage students to apply for the program.
 - o Gather sign-ups, screen applicants and conduct interviews if necessary for the roles.
 - o Select individuals who are members of Generation Z that have a desire to positively impact the campus community through community outreach and communications.
- **Tactic 1b:** Leverage existing partnerships to encourage campus leaders to apply for the outreach program.
 - o Connect with student leaders involved in the college’s Peer Leader program by asking their mentors or bosses if they could add the outreach program to their job duties.
 - o Speak directly with leadership in campus organization such as the Associated Student Government and the LatinX Alliance and ask if any members would be willing to sign-up for the program.
- **Tactic 1c:** Host trainings for the chosen leaders about COC’s policies related to campus-wide communications and about their roles as campus liaisons during a long-term crisis.
 - o Ask the COC Public Information Office to lead the trainings and provide students with access to resources such as a policy handbook that will be necessary for their roles.
 - o Provide campus leaders with a list of potential questions from students so they can prepare and understand the college’s various resources such as grants and mental health services, among others.
 - o Establish a list of protocols for the outreach leaders to follow while they are working alongside the college’s communications team.
- **Tactic 1d:** Promote the established Canyon Cares leadership program on COC-branded social media accounts and through COC emails.
 - o Film an introductory video of the chosen student leaders and post the finished product to YouTube.
 - o Create and send an introductory email to COC students that explains the purpose of the program, how it will benefit students and how the COC

community can engage with Canyons Cares leaders. Include a link to the introductory video.

- Share an abridged version of the email on COC-branded social media sites, specifically Instagram and Twitter with the hashtag #CanyonsCares.
- **Tactic 1e:** Publicize information about the student leaders' upcoming outreach events including Instagram Lives and webinars.
 - Share details about the outreach events through a campus-wide email.
 - Post information about the upcoming events on COC-branded social media sites with the hashtag #CanyonsCares.
 - Ask student leaders to tell their friends and classmates about the event and to encourage them to attend.
- **Tactic 1f:** Broadcast biannual Instagram Lives where student leaders discuss how they will respond to a long-term campus crisis.
 - Ask two outreach leaders to facilitate the discussion and choose a topic to focus on such as campus crisis policies or virtual student resources, among others.
 - Encourage student leaders to take questions from viewers and answer questions honestly about their experiences.
- **Tactic 1g:** Facilitate annual webinars about college preparedness when it comes to long-term crisis situations on campus.
 - Choose a central topic that will be the focus of the webinar, such as community resources.
 - Host a workshop to prepare student leaders for the webinar and to draft talking points for the discussion. Select one leader to act as the group facilitator.
 - Encourage students to use the COVID-19 pandemic as a backdrop for discussions of how a crisis can change overtime. The pandemic can also be used as a means for students to share their own experiences.
 - Allow for questions during and after the discussion.
 - Record the webinar and share the finished link in full on COC's YouTube channel with the hashtag #CanyonsCares.



Still of a campus-wide webinar organized by COC.

Objective 2: Increase open rates for campus-wide emails by 30% by June 3, 2021.

Strategy 2: Initiate an online conversation about the Canyons Cares effort that includes Generation Z students and recognizes their opinions or questions.

- **Tactic 2a:** Develop a Canyons Cares email newsletter that features student voices about the long-term crisis and how they are adapting or reacting to it.
 - o Determine how often (weekly, bimonthly, monthly) the newsletter will be distributed based on the status of the crisis.
- **Tactic 2b:** Invite students to contribute to the e-newsletter by answering a question of the month posed by COC or by submitting their own question related to the long-term crisis.
 - o Create an online form on the COC website for students answer the question or submit their own. Require students to include their name to be featured on the e-newsletter and on social media.
 - o Promote a question of the month, as well as a link to the submission form, on all COC-branded social media accounts.
- **Tactic 2c:** Contact student organizations that would be willing to share the submission form with their members.
 - o Ask student organizations to post the question of the month on their own social pages and encourage a discussion about the topic at hand.
- **Tactic 2d:** Write the e-newsletter with input from one to two students and distribute to all COC student email addresses.
 - o Provide relevant information and links to additional resources based on each student's response or question.
- **Tactic 2e:** Share a shortened version of the e-newsletter on COC's Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.
 - o Create posts that feature a quote from a selected student or a question a selected student submitted.
 - o Encourage students to look at their COC emails to learn more or to find the answer to the question.

Objective 3: Grow Canyons M app downloads and sign-ins by 25% by Aug. 27, 2021.

Strategy 3: Develop a non-emergency message alert program to share news and information directly with students.

- **Tactic 3a:** Leverage the college's existing mobile app, Canyons M, to create a news alert system/push notification option for important campus information.
 - o Work with COC's Information Technology (IT) team to develop the feature and integrate it into the app's software.
- **Tactic 3b:** Write operating guidelines for a message alert system that defines who can send messages, when messages can be sent, what they must include, how long they can be and how frequent they can be sent.

- Share the rules with campus leadership to ensure the guidelines adhere to COC's policies.
- Write example push feature text that details how messaging should be phrased.
- Start each message with the phrase "Canyons Cares" so students understand that the alert is about COC's long-term crisis response.
- **Tactic 3c:** Test an informational alert that could be shared with students both in the Canyons M app and through the app's push notification feature.
 - Inform students that the message is a test to determine the effectiveness of the messaging software.
 - Invite students to opt-in or opt-out of the push alerts in the test message in order to give them ownership of the kind of communications they receive from COC.
- **Tactic 3d:** Promote the app's new feature on COC-branded social media accounts and through COC emails to encourage sign-ups.
 - Draft messaging that appeals to each social platform, such as an example of the push notification on Instagram or a video of the feature on YouTube.
 - Encourage students to download the Canyons M app and sign up for alerts on each promotional post.



The Canyons M app is available on iOS and Android phones.

CALENDAR

The calendar is designed as a mock to represent the current long-term crisis College of the Canyons is experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The calendar is designed as a four-phased approach with each phase representing a different phase of the crisis over an eighth month period. Phase one represents the pre-crisis to prepare for a potential situation on campus, phase two represents the initial stage of a crisis to gather resources together for a response, phase three represents the college's move into a long-term crisis to support an extended response, and phase four represents the final phase to return the campus to normal operations. The months and length of each phase, though, can be adjusted and are subject to change due to the news cycle and due to external factors.

	Phase 1								Phase 2								Phase 3								Phase 4							
	Jan. (Month 1)				Feb. (Month 2)				Mar. (Month 3)				Apr. (Month 4)				May (Month 5)				Jun. (Month 6)				Jul. (Month 7)				Aug. (Month 8)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Strategy 1: Establish a Canyons Cares outreach/leadership program that places Generation Z at the center of communications																																
Develop sign-up sheet for program																																
Leverage existing partnerships																																
Identify 20 campus leaders																																
Host trainings for chosen leaders																																
Promote the creation of the CC leaders																																
Publicize information about upcoming events																																

	Phase 1								Phase 2								Phase 3								Phase 4							
	Jan. (Month 1)				Feb. (Month 2)				Mar. (Month 3)				Apr. (Month 4)				May (Month 5)				Jun. (Month 6)				Jul. (Month 7)				Aug. (Month 8)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4				
Broadcast Instagram Lives for students																																
Facilitate webinars about preparedness																																
Strategy 2: Initiate an online conversation about the Canyons Cares effort that recognizes students' opinions or questions																																
Develop a Canyons Cares email newsletter																																
Invite students to contribute to newsletter																																
Contact student organizations																																
Write e-newsletter with input from students																																
Share shortened e-newsletter on social																																
Strategy 3: Develop a non-emergency message alert program to share news and information directly with students																																
Create non-emergency alerts for mobile app																																
Write rules for message delivery																																
Test informational alert																																
Promote app's features on social media																																

	Phase 1								Phase 2								Phase 3								Phase 4							
	Jan. (Month 1)				Feb. (Month 2)				Mar. (Month 3)				Apr. (Month 4)				May (Month 5)				Jun. (Month 6)				Jul. (Month 7)				Aug. (Month 8)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<i>Evaluation Methods</i>																																
Social media monitoring of potential leaders																																
Partner with Generation Z student leaders																																
Analyze mentions of #CanyonsCares																																
Pre-test of email open rates																																
Analyze engagement with campus emails																																
Post-test of email open rates																																
Pre-analysis of Canyons M app users																																
Analysis of Canyons M app engagement																																
Post-analysis of Canyons M app users																																

BUDGET

Tactics marked as internal, such as student trainings, are noted with a checkmark and are not included in the strategy subtotal costs, as COC's existing staff in the Public Information Office will manage them.

		Internal	External	Qty.	Cost Per Item	Projected Cost
Strategy 1: Establish a Canyons Cares leadership program that places Generation Z at the center of communications						
Tactics	Labor (interviews, planning, sign-up sheet, etc.)	√		8 hours		
	Promotion (social media, email, no paid posts)	√		14 hours		
	Student trainings (virtual)	√		8 hours		
	Introduction video (filming, editing)		√	1 video	\$800	\$800
	Streaming software (cameras, microphones)		√	20 items	\$35 each	\$700
Strategy Subtotal						\$1,500
Strategy 2: Initiate an online conversation about the Canyons Cares effort that recognizes students' opinions or questions						
Tactics	Labor (e-newsletter development, distribution)	√		40 hours		
	Graphic design for e-newsletter	√		12 hours		
	Promotion (social media, paid posts)		√	11 posts	\$65 per post	\$715
Strategy Subtotal						\$715
Strategy 3: Develop a non-emergency message alert program to share news and information directly with students						
Tactics	Labor (app development, message rules)	√		80 hours		
	Mobile app development consulting		√	4 hours	\$500 per hour	\$2,000
	Promotion (social media, paid posts)		√	7 posts	\$65 per post	\$455
Strategy Subtotal						\$2,455
Evaluation Methods						
Tactics	Zoho Social media monitoring		√	8 months	\$25 per month	\$200
	Email open rates (in-house in Office 365)	√		8 months		
	Datadog app and cloud monitoring		√	8 months	\$15 per moth	\$120
Strategy Subtotal						\$320
Total Cost to Implement Plan						\$4,990

EVALUATION

The goals and objectives in this communications plan will be achieved with the strategies and tactics outlined above. To ensure this plan is successful, the following evaluation methods will be utilized

Objective 1: Form partnerships with 20 Generation Z campus leaders by Aug. 27, 2021.

The success of this objective is directly tied to Strategy 1 and the effective creation and implementation of the Canyons Cares outreach/leadership program. Before announcing the program, COC will use a social media monitoring tool like Zoho Social to understand the college's most engaged and notable followers. The insights will be useful when selecting the 20 student leaders who have established presences online through their own channels or through their affiliated organizations. It will also be important to monitor the program's sign-up sheet once it is posted on social media and shared via email. If too few students sign up, then COC can opt to share information about the program again or to reach out to identified student leaders directly. On Aug. 27, COC will count the number of students committed to its Canyons Cares leadership program. If 20 students are involved then the objective is met.

Throughout the student partnerships, it will also be important for COC to evaluate the breadth and depth of the relationships students are cultivating with the student body. To do so, COC will conduct monthly online conversation monitoring and analysis to gather data on mentions of Canyons Cares leaders and the #CanyonsCares hashtag. Both keywords will be collected and analyzed through a monitoring tool like Zoho Social, which measures mentions and sentiments across social media, blogs and the web. Because the Canyons Cares leadership program is a new initiative, the first month of measurement will be used as a benchmark to compare all future months to. The monthly monitoring will allow COC to evaluate the online conversation around the Canyons Cares leadership program and the potential impact of the program's webinars and Instagram Lives. It also will give the program time to adjust its outreach and offerings based on relevant data and community feedback.

Objective 2: Increase open rates for campus-wide emails by 30% by June 3, 2021.

Before the plan's launch, COC will record the current open rate for all campus-wide emails through the college's existing email platform, Office 365 Education MyAnalytics service. The current open rate will be used as a benchmark number to compare future open rates to. Based on primary and secondary research, the open rate for COC's campus-wide emails is likely at about 20%. The open rate for campus emails will be monitored monthly throughout the campaign through the Office 365 platform to determine any increases or decreases. The variances between months may provide insight into the best times to send emails and into the most engaging content for COC students. With these insights, COC will make adjustments based on what was and was not working to reach students. On June 3, before the college's final day of

classes, COC will compare the current open rate to the benchmarks to determine if the 30% increase was met. Of note, the 30% increase would mean the campus-wide email open rates rose from about 20% to 26%.

Objective 3: Grow Canyons M app downloads and sign-ins by 25% by Aug. 27, 2021.

Prior to the start of the campaign, COC will use an app monitoring tool such as Datadog to determine the number of downloads and active users—also known as sign-ins—on the Canyons M app. The data will be used as a benchmark to compare all future analysis to. Following the implementation of the non-emergency message alert program COC will monitor the app's downloads and sign-ins to evaluate any increases or decreases in engagement on the app. If there are no additional downloads or users, COC will use the same app monitoring tool to read recent reviews and determine if there are any issues with the app's software. The feedback will also be used by COC to make adjustments to the content it sends, the time of day it shares messages and the frequency of messages. On the other hand, if downloads and sign-ins on the Canyons M app increase by 25% by Aug. 27—the beginning of the fall semester—then the objective is met.

COC will also use a monitoring tool like Datadog to measure the effectiveness of its initial push notification that gives users a choice to opt-in or opt-out of notifications. The data will be analyzed to calculate the percentage of active users who opted in or out of the notifications. This percentage will help COC better understand the notification preferences of its students when it comes to mobile applications. It also will be useful to monitor the click-to-conversion rates on COC's social media posts to evaluate if students are inspired to download the Canyons M app after reading COC's messaging.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – The Big Idea

The big idea is an overarching strategy and message that will be incorporated into the entire communications plan. Beyond connecting with Generation Z students, the big idea will create a unifying message to increase engagement throughout the plan's implementation and encourage student buy-in to its overall message. Relying on research into the college's key public, the big idea will leverage Generation Z students' desire to remain connected to campus and make a lasting impact on their school community. It also will encourage students to take a proactive role in the college's long-term crisis response and remain involved in COC's communications.

- ***Big Idea Strategy:*** Motivate Generation Z students to get involved in their campus community by emphasizing volunteer opportunities to keep fellow students safe and optimistic during times of long-term crisis.
- ***Big Idea Message:*** During times of uncertainty, your ideas and actions make a positive impact on COC's campus community.
- ***Visual Representation:*** Create a Canyons Cares logo, using COC's campus colors, which can be placed on all related digital, social and traditional communications with students.
- ***Slogan/Tagline:*** Canyons Cares

Appendix B – Creative Materials

Campaign Branding/Logo: The Big Idea calls for a Canyons Cares logo that can be reprinted, shared and posted on the college’s social media posts and email newsletters during a long-term crisis. The logo will be developed using software such as Adobe Illustrator so it can be overlaid onto photos and printed in small digital files and large college posts, if needed. The logo will follow similar materials created by the college for its athletics and special events and will feature the College of the Canyons Yellow (Pantone 116) and College of the Canyons Blue (Pantone 541). The logo is also proposed to include COC’s mountain imagery that is included in the college’s official materials, making the logo easily recognizable to students.



Notification: Strategy 3 calls for the development of a non-emergency message alert program to share news directly with students during a long-term crisis. By leveraging the college’s existing mobile app, COC can give students the option to opt in or opt out of the service. Each message related to this service should begin with Canyons Cares so students know it is related to the college’s crisis response and that it features essential information from COC. And example alert is included below.




Canyons Cares

Expanded mental health resources are now available to students 24/7. For more information click [here](#).


E-Newsletter:

Strategy 2 asks the college to create an online conversation around the Canyons Cares effort by writing and sharing a regular email newsletter with students. The e-newsletter should be visually engaging and stand out from other messages students receive. By adding more design elements to the email, the e-newsletter will stand out from traditional communications and will help students associate the email with the college's long-term crisis response and with the Canyons Cares effort. The e-newsletter should also be drafted in COC's colors to ensure consistency and to adhere to the college's communications guidelines. As noted in the associated tactics, the e-newsletter must be student-driven and feature student voices.





Canyons Cares

A weekly digest of essential content.



Question of the Week: What online resources have helped you succeed in your classes this fall?

"I'm grateful that The Learning Center is still offering online tutoring while we work from home. I'm a visual learner and adapting to this new way of taking classes has been difficult. But, the one-on-one support has really helped me understand new concepts and prepare for finals." — *Sophomore John Doe*



The Learning Center

Did you know COC's Learning Center offers one-on-one support in nearly every class on campus? Receive help in everything from statistics to sociology.

[Learn more >](#)

Make an Appointment

Tutoring is available Monday through Saturday in nearly every subject offered at COC. All services are offered to students at no charge.

[Sign up >](#)

COC Announcements

Athletics not competing this fall


Due to ongoing health and safety concerns, COC teams will not participate in the upcoming California Community College Athletic Association (CCCCAA) Spring 1 season.

[Read more >](#)

Registration open for winter semester

The session, which runs from Jan. 4 to Feb. 6, gives students a chance to complete classes in a condensed time frame. More than 300 sections will be offered this term.

[Read more >](#)



College of the Canyons
26455 Rockwell Canyon Rd.
Santa Clarita, CA 91355

[View in browser](#)

Appendix C – Primary Research Questions

The primary research included both a survey that was conducted via Qualtrics and in-depth interviews conducted via Zoom. The survey and the in-depth interview option were both open for six weeks from Oct. 19 from to Dec. 1. The mixed method research approach attempted to answer four research questions:

1. What factors affect Generation Z students' buy-in to COC's university-wide efforts on campus?
2. How effective is COC at creating engagement with Generation Z students in-person and online?
3. What factors cause Generation Z students to seek out information from COC?
4. How do COC's communications influence how Generation Z students respond to crises on- and off-campus?

Collectively these research questions lead to the following hypothesis: If students read and engage with COC's communications, they will be more informed and prepared for crisis situation on campus.

The questions asked in the survey were:

1. *Opening Page/Electronic Consent Form:* Clicking the "agree" button below indicates that you have read the above information and you voluntarily agree to participate. If you do not wish to participate in the survey, please decline by selecting the "disagree" button.
 - a. Agree
 - b. Disagree
2. *Screener Question:* Are you a member of Generation Z (classified as those ages 18 to 24)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. *Single answer multiple choice:* Are you a part-time or a full-time student?
 - a. Part-time
 - b. Full-time
4. *Single answer multiple choice:* How long have you been a student at College of the Canyons?
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1 year
 - c. 2 years
 - d. 3 years
 - e. More than 4 years
5. *Interval question:* On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not engaged at all and 5 being extremely engaged, how engaged are you on social networks?
 - a. 1-5 scale: Not engaged at all, Slightly engaged, Moderately engaged, Very engaged, Extremely engaged

6. *Matrix table:* How often to you check the following social networks:
 - a. Rows: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat TikTok, Reddit
 - b. Columns: Over 5 times a day, 2 to 4 times a day, 1 to 2 times a day, I do not check this platform daily, I do not use this platform
7. *Multi-answer multiple choice:* Where do you go to find local and national news? Select all that apply.
 - a. National broadcast news (NBC, CNN, Fox, etc.)
 - b. Local broadcast news (ABC 7, Fox 11, etc.)
 - c. Santa Clarita outlets (SCTV, The Signal, KHTS)
 - d. National print outlets (New York Times, USA Today, etc.)
 - e. Social media
 - f. Other, please specify:
8. *Multi-answer multiple choice:* Where do you get news and information about College of the Canyons? Please select all that apply.
 - a. COC website
 - b. Local news outlets
 - c. Email
 - d. Official COC social media channels
 - e. Social media not affiliated with COC
 - f. Word-of-mouth i.e. friends, classmates and family
 - g. Other, please specify:
9. *Rank order:* From highest to lowest, please rank the factors that impact your desire to seek out information from COC.
 - a. Ranking Options: Campus events, Course selection, COC emergency, Student services (counseling, employment, etc.), Financial aid, Extra-curricular activities, Enrollment
10. *Single answer multiple choice:* How much of COC's communications (newsletters, emails, social media, flyers, etc.) do you read?
 - a. Generally read all of it
 - b. Read most of it
 - c. Read some of it
 - d. Skim through it
 - e. Do not read it at all
11. *Open-ended question:* How do you prefer to receive news and information about COC? Why?
12. *Open-ended question:* Would an on-campus emergency situation impact how much information you seek out from COC? Why or why not?

The questions asked in the in-depth interviews were:

1. The interview will begin with the interviewer describing why the individual has been chosen and what the results will be used for, noting confidentiality. The interviewee will consent to being recorded and to taking part in the interview process.
2. Warm-up question: How did you choose College of the Canyons?
3. In general, what do you think about COC's communications with students?
4. How has news or information from COC altered your behavior in the past?
 - a. Examples: attend an event, reach out to faculty, respond to an emergency
5. Now I want to transition to a different topic. The last big emergency on campus was COC's response to coronavirus as the college closed campuses and moved classes online. Where did you receive news and information about the college's response to COVID?
6. Is there any other way you would have liked to receive this information?
7. What sources did you turn to in order to find information about the situation on campus?
8. Do you feel that you will be well informed during a crisis situation on campus in the future? Why or why not?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add that I did not ask you about?

Appendix D – References

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