2014 WVU Rebranding Research Phase One Findings F

Widmeyer

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Understanding West Virginia University’s Brand from the Inside

Findings from On-Campus Stakeholder and Area Thought Leaders Interviews and an Online Survey among WVU’s Internal Audiences of Faculty, Staff, Students and Prospects

August 2014
Research Plan and Methodology
Phase One Research Plan

The first phase of our broad research plan included the following components:

**Competitive Assessment**: We compared WVU to other schools in the competitive set to look at how audiences might perceive those institutions and see how clearly and consistently they communicated a unique brand image through multiple audience touch points. Institutions included Texas A&M, Virginia Tech, Oklahoma State, Penn State, Michigan State, Ohio State, North Carolina State, the University of Kentucky, Syracuse, and the University of Maryland.

**On-Campus Meetings and Thought Leader Interviews**: We conducted on-campus interviews with key WVU stakeholders, as well as interviews among seven key thought leaders, in order to explore the opinions, perceptions, and beliefs among these elite audiences.

**Internal Constituency Survey**: We incorporated the feedback from the qualitative work to construct a survey, which was fielded among three main groups (621 faculty/staff, 1,209 current students, and 460 prospective students). The survey was designed to determine, among other things, the resonance and appeal of current brand attributes, messaging strategies, and visual identity currently offered by WVU.
Survey Research Methodology

• Using lists provided by West Virginia University, Widmeyer Communications designed and administered an online survey among internal constituent groups, reaching:
  • 621 Faculty/Staff
  • 1,209 Current Students
  • 460 Prospects
  • 66 Admitted/Declined (not included in topline data due to relatively small number of interviews)

• The survey was conducted in July, 2014.

• The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 4.0% for the Prospects, +/- 3.3% for the Faculty/Staff, and +/- 2.9% for the Current Students. Of course, the margin of error increases for subgroups within these samples.
In-Depth Interview Methodology

On-Campus Key Stakeholder Interviews (15)
• In-depth individual interviews with key stakeholders
• Participants included representatives from University Relations, Student Affairs, various Deans and Provosts, among others
• Sources identified and referred by WVU
• Approximately 45 minutes in-person on campus; conducted May 21st – May 22nd

External Thought Leader Interviews (7)
• In-depth individual interviews with key stakeholders
• Participants included representatives from the Board of Governors, Alumni Association and WV legislature
• Sources identified and referred by WVU
• Approximately 45 minutes by phone; conducted July 14th – August 5th
Key Findings and Recommendations
**Reasons to Choose a School:** Most of the schools in the competitive set try to present both the rational and emotional reasons for choosing the school – with varying levels of emphasis.

- Some place more emphasis on the rational:
  - Texas A&M – *Large*
  - Pennsylvania State University – *Influential*
  - North Carolina State University – *Research*
  - University of Kentucky – *Achieve*

- Some place more emphasis on the emotional:
  - Oklahoma State University – *Home*
  - Michigan State University – *Belong*
  - West Virginia University – *Discover*

- Some are not well-focused on either rational or emotional aspects:
  - Virginia Tech – *Future*
  - Syracuse University – *Urban*
  - University of Maryland - *Community*
Use of Color:  Color, especially vibrant colors used in surprising combinations that appeal to the target audience age group, is an important tool for attracting interest, highlighting major points, and creating user-friendly website navigation features.

Messaging Opportunities: Some schools do not take advantage of messaging opportunities (e.g., photos of students, tag lines, etc.), instead using traditional, generic visual components when presenting course catalogs, admissions forms, and other official documentation on their websites.

Digital Communication: The transition from print-only materials to web-based visuals has not been easy for some schools. For example, photos of print brochures are not successful web tools. In addition, course catalog presentation on a website can be challenging due to the density of the material.

  – For example, Oklahoma State University and Syracuse University use photographs of print brochures in their viewbooks, which are extremely difficult to read and even show the shadow of the gutter between pages.
**Navigation:** Website navigation should assist potential students in following at least two important paths:

1. Finding the descriptions and information that will attract them to the school, clearly articulating the school’s culture, values and student opportunities.

2. Making it easy for prospective students to find and understand the application process and admissions standards.

   - The easiest websites to navigate include those for Texas A&M and North Carolina State University. On the other hand, Michigan State University’s site is one of the most tedious, requiring prospective students to click through too many pages to get to application/information pages.

   - Navigating West Virginia University’s website is good in some areas, like getting to facts on the admissions page, but finding subjective information about what the admissions committees want in students and details about the emotional reasons for applying there are much more difficult.
From External Thought Leaders: Changes Required on the Path “From Excellence to Eminence”

**Culture Change**

“It’s going to be tearing down walls of bureaucracy. We have more bureaucracy than any college I’ve ever seen. There is a lot of process here and it’s not good. My second thing is we have to begin taking risks. While caution on certain things is great, we have just been too cautious and too slow to be proactive.”

“The toughest thing that I think Gordon is going to have to deal with is just culture. People get set in their ways. If I’m a tenured faculty person, why am I worried about national reputation? I go to work, teach my classes, do a little research maybe. And that is just not good enough anymore.”

**Strategic Communications**

“I don’t know why we couldn’t have a national reputation that is wrapped around a very tight and focused message. Being a regional university is totally sufficient, if our charter is going to be that of a four-year educational institution to take students from high school and prepare them for the work. I think we can be more than that, but the competition is tough.”

“We have the CEO of Cisco, the chairman of Hewlett-Packard, the founder of Oracle, the CEO of Northrop-Grumman, and dozens more. If you can, rally those to promote the university. Instead of asking them for money, next time say, ‘I’d like to ask you for influence.’ Ten hours of advertising or promotions or be on a commercial or make a speech for WVU.”

**Next Generation of Leaders**

“We’re not uncovering stars fast enough, by stars I mean people who give money, people who have done well, people that mentor. I think that while our group is good now, we need to replace ourselves by bringing somebody along that has money, influence, and time. This generation of WVU supporters, the inner family, need to think about who is next.”

“I’m really pleased with President Gee’s presence here. And I think, if anyone can do it, he can. He’s so full of energy. But the reality is he is not going to be around forever, so we need to be making changes with an eye on the long-term.”
From External Thought Leaders: Keep Student Focus, While Rising In Global Prominence

Continue Improving

• “From the days I was a student until now the student experience has gotten a zillion times better. There is attention paid to students. There is value placed upon them. The university is looking into better housing and things they can do to recruit students that is not just the textbook experience.”

• “We are going to end up with parents saying, ‘you know what? If I’m going to pay this much, I want it to be the best education. WVU is in danger of being thought of as a party school. I thought of it as a very special place to go - someplace that I can actually graduate in engineering and mathematics and be in a fraternity at the same time.”

• “We want to be known as a college with an open door. Not so open that we don’t maintain some quality about us. But we want to be known as a college with an open door to all students in the world…. You get treated very well. You’re accepted quickly. The people are nice and you get a high-quality education to boot.”

With Broader Engagement

• “I want WVU to be the type of university that is referred to as an authoritative source on, really, any issue that’s being discussed out there in our country. Whether it be on economics, on science, on engineering, on literature, in any area of discipline that universities engage in, I would love to hear WVU as being on the forefront.”

• “I really don’t know what we think our special academic programs or special research programs are in the university today but let’s take energy, which most people talk about easily. Let’s say we developed specialized research. The faculty has well equipped labs and research programs in coal and natural gas research in some of the new discovery methods. That would translate.”

• “I think WVU needs to be very active, on not just a national stage, but the world stage. Because I think we are a state that is not culturally diverse at all. Not racially or ethnically diverse. Because they are in a position to do so, I’d like to see WVU inject some cultural diversity into West Virginia.”
## Data-based Problems and Solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements Recommended</th>
<th>Interview and Survey Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable tuition + high quality education = <strong>value</strong>, which is especially compelling in this economic context.</td>
<td>The top-tier attributes for attending a college all focused on either economic concerns or the quality of the education offered. Messages promoting WVU as a “Best Buy” college were similarly effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage the natural benefits and gifts of West Virginia and WVU that make it a “point of pride in the state.”</td>
<td>Internal audiences are favorable to the state, though they didn’t know a great deal about it before attending WVU. Overwhelmingly, they feel WVU is a point of pride for West Virginia and represents the best it has to offer. Highlighting this backdrop will be beneficial to prospects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not overlook the appeal of the WVU and Morgantown community.</td>
<td>Though this is a high-second-tier attribute to cost, academic quality, and value, on-campus stakeholders frequently discussed how well WVU succeeds in this regard. Many of the internal audiences are considering the campus environment, school pride, and close-knit and friendly communities as major components as to why someone might attend an institution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Data-based Problems and Solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements Recommended</th>
<th>Interview and Survey Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Messaging should highlight both economic benefits of the school (during and after attendance), as well as some of the larger experiential benefits.</td>
<td>As noted, the top-testing message discussed the fact that WVU is a top 100 Best Buy college as ranked by Forbes, but messages discussing WVU being ranked in U.S. News and World Report and having the 14th most affordable out-of-state tuition were also toward the top. Additionally, discussing Division 1 Athletics, life in Morgantown, and the pride the campus has in its community were successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Flying WV has universal appeal, but the Mountaineer could be used more selectively, or modified to be more inclusive.</td>
<td>Internal and external stakeholders, as well as faculty, prospects, and students, all professed widespread enthusiasm for the flying WV. There was noticeable pause on the Mountaineer, with lower marks in the survey and concern that it was exclusive to all those except white American men, outdated, or played into negative stereotypes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push back against the party school image.</td>
<td>Though it is not pervasive, the notion that WVU is a “party school” was the most negative stereotype that consistently surfaced. In Phase 2, we should see if this image extends outside internal perceptions and look at the best ways to counter this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coming into the college-selection process, internal audiences did not have a developed view of the state of West Virginia.
There is a knowledge deficit about the state as students and prospects begin to learn about WVU. Four out of ten prospects and more than one-third of students say they knew not too much or nothing at all about the state of West Virginia prior to learning specifically about the University.

Prior to learning specifically about West Virginia University, how much would you say you knew about the state of West Virginia?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Great deal</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not too much</th>
<th>Nothing at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty/Staff</strong></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prospects</strong></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71% Great Deal/Some
28% Not too much/Nothing

64% Great Deal/Some
36% Not too much/Nothing

60% Great Deal/Some
40% Not too much/Nothing
The knowledge deficit about West Virginia becomes more prominent as one moves out of state and further away from the region.

Prior to learning specifically about West Virginia University, how much would you say you knew about the state of West Virginia?

### Among Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% Knew Great Deal about WV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-State</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Among Prospects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% Knew Great Deal about WV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-State</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lack of knowledge appears to be a bigger obstacle to WVU’s image than perceptions of the state. At least seven-out-of-ten in each audience has a favorable opinion of the state of West Virginia.

And what was your opinion of the state of West Virginia prior to learning specifically about WVU?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>+45</td>
<td>+47</td>
<td>+61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

**Very favorable**

- Prospects: 33%
- Students: 36%
- Faculty/Staff: 38%

**Somewhat favorable**

- Prospects: 18%
- Students: 21%
- Faculty/Staff: 12%

**Somewhat unfavorable**

- Prospects: 3%
- Students: 4%
- Faculty/Staff: 3%

**Very unfavorable**

- Prospects: 3%
- Students: 4%
- Faculty/Staff: 3%
Positive attitudes toward the state are driven by in-state students and prospects. Majorities among both have very favorable opinions of the state.

Among Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% Very Favorable to WV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-State</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among Prospects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% Very Favorable to WV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-State</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On-campus stakeholders also tend to see the move to the Big 12 as a net benefit, even though the move has its own unique challenges.

• “I think it provides some fertile ground for us, while the east population centers still need to be our focus, when you look at the Pittsburughs, the Philadelphias, the Washington, DCs, the New York—that still needs to be our focus. But it really provides an opportunity for us to take our message into areas that really we haven’t had before.”

• “Do think we will get some draw from Texas and Oklahoma and Iowa. There will be people that will be fascinated by it and will say that they want to get out of the area and they do want to stay with a Big 12 school. The good thing is that we are on some of their radar screens.”

• “I gave a tour to someone this morning from Indiana, and he was like, “So, how’s the Big 12 doing for you guys?” He probably didn’t even know about WVU before we went into that conference. I feel like it’s been good for us, in that sense.”

• “We haven’t figured that one out yet as well. We see more inquiries and admissions from the Oklahoma and Texas region.”

• “We are dealing with more institutions that are like us in the Big 12 conference in that, more of those institutions are located in rural environments. Most of those institutions are land grant institutions and most of those institutions are flagship institutions in their states so consequently they are more like us so we can learn from them.”

• “WVU grads alums travel well for away games. It’s not easy to get to Baylor. You really can’t drive to Kansas, Iowa State, and stuff. The alums are frustrated.”
External thought leaders give positive feedback regarding WVU’s move to the Big 12. They gravitate toward the increased visibility and collaboration with other Big 12 schools.

These participants see multiple benefits

- “I think, from an opportunity standpoint, it makes the university more visible. And I think that in the past year the school has become much more visible, and much more competitive, because it’s been in the Big 12.”

- “I think it’s terrific because just being able to deal with diverse schools is really good, and the Big 12 is not just about athletics. Its member schools deal a lot in academics, and they get all the general council together. They lend a lot of content to their member organizations, other than athletics.”

- Been terrific with respect to our faculty engagement. It’s interesting to talk to faculty now who have gone out to Texas and Oklahoma and Iowa and Kansas and literally had collaboration on what they do and how they do it and, in turn, we have collaborated back. There wasn’t a lot of interaction or collaboration through the other conference. I think that is a big plus for the Big12.”

Travel time, competitive teams are concerns (not losing East Coast visibility)

- “I’m operating under the assumption, and satisfied with, that going to the Big 12 was the best alternative. From what I’ve read, it appears we are doing well financially by having made that decision. Are there drawbacks? Of course. I don’t like the fact that we don’t have any natural rivals. I don’t like the fact that travel is so far to away games.”

- “In the short term, it feels like there are some rough times ahead. Winning in a weak conference put WVU on the map…. Big12 is a great conference for us to be in. I think it’s a good thing for us to do. Now we’ve got to step up our game.”
Factors in the College Decision-Making Process

As they evaluate factors, the audiences look for the important intersections of cost, quality and value.
High quality programs that are affordable are the most important factors in the college decision-making process. School pride and on-campus housing are of particular importance to prospective students.

Please indicate for each one whether it is very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all for choosing a college or university. *(Graph 1 of 3)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>% Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides high quality education at an affordable price</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong program in the field I'm most interested in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job placement success for its graduates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong academic reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a lot of school pride</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality on-campus housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranked by very important to prospects
Having a close-knit and friendly community is a second-tier factor. School activities and an active student body are of particular importance to prospects.

Please indicate for each one whether it is very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all for choosing a college or university. *(Graph 2 of 3)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>% Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has a close-knit and friendly community</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active student body</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has rigorous academics</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School's social activities</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More student-faculty interaction outside of the classroom</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-campus graduate programs</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranked by very important to prospects
Perhaps illustrating the salience of a close-knit community to this audience, being near a large city is not an important consideration to faculty, students and prospects.

Please indicate for each one whether it is very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all for choosing a college or university. *(Graph 3 of 3)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>% Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses taught by faculty, not grad students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers online course for credit</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong alumni network which can keep me tied to the school after I graduate</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being in a scenic part of country with outdoor activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful athletic program</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racially and ethnically diverse student body</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being near a large city</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be more important to tie the alumni network to job placement than keeping connected with WVU.
The intersection of cost, quality and value are the most important factors across audiences.

Summary of Most Important Factors: (% very important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides high quality education at an affordable cost: 86%</td>
<td>Provides high quality education at an affordable cost: 84%</td>
<td>Provides high quality education at an affordable cost: 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has strong program in the field of study I’m most interested in: 83%</td>
<td>Has strong program in the field of study I’m most interested in: 82%</td>
<td>Has strong program in the field of study I’m most interested in: 87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job placement success for its graduates: 79%</td>
<td>The cost of the school: 77%</td>
<td>The cost of the school: 78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost of the school: 74%</td>
<td>Job placement success for its graduates: 74%</td>
<td>Has strong academic reputation: 77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has strong academic reputation: 67%</td>
<td>Has strong academic reputation: 68%</td>
<td>Job placement success for its graduates: 76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cost is an important factor regardless of household income. Urban prospects put a particular emphasis on cost.

Importance of cost of the school

Students
- Under $60K HHI: 81%
- $60-$100K HHI: 75%
- HHI $100K/Above: 78%

Prospects
- Urban: 83%
- Suburban: 67%
- Rural: 71%
- Under $60K HHI: 75%
- $60-$100K HHI: 76%
- HHI $100K/Above: 76%
While being in an urban environment is not a factor to our audiences, we saw this emerge elsewhere. The audit revealed Syracuse’s website brand essence is “celebrating urban culture.”

Brand Essence: “Celebrating Urban Culture”

- No tagline on homepage.
- Vertically extended page requires scrolling through 3 screens to view all of homepage.
- User is motivated to use top left navigational links, but there is not visual motivation to study the remainder of the homepage.
- Scrolling photos do not include links or captions.
- Visual theme, orange, white, and gray colors, are consistent throughout the website.
WVU is first viewed as the pride point for the state that is in a beautiful, scenic location. Audiences often negatively associate WVU as a party school.
Community and family are commonly-used descriptors of WVU. Campus aesthetics are volunteered more by students and prospects than faculty/staff.

Top WVU Associations by Audience

**Faculty/Staff**
- Community/Home/Family: 10%
- Growing/Continuing to grow/Potential: 7%
- Good/Nice/Great: 6%
- Adventurous/Wild/Exciting: 5%
- Pride/Proud/Loyalty: 5%
- Flagship/State university: 5%
- Corrupt/Money hungry: 5%

**Students**
- Amazing/Awesome/Wonderful: 13%
- Community/Home family: 12%
- Adventurous/Wild/Exciting: 10%
- Good/Nice/Great: 8%
- Beautiful/Beautiful campus: 7%
- Pride/Proud/Loyalty: 6%

**Prospects**
- Beautiful/Beautiful campus: 16%
- Amazing/Awesome/Wonderful: 10%
- Adventurous/Wild/Exciting: 10%
- Good/Nice/Great: 7%
While their initial perceptions of the state may be stunted, that does not negatively cloud their views toward the state. As the word cloud illustrates, all audiences are very likely to use “home” or “beautiful” to describe WVU.

Please describe West Virginia University in a single word or phrase? [Open-ended question]
External thought leaders note that access is central to WVU’S mission and character.

As a land-grant institution

• “I can’t imagine that there would be another university that impacts its state any more than WVU impacts the State of West Virginia. Land grant institutions, with the extension service, are a huge player in the state. Obviously, WVU sports is a huge provider of entertainment.”

• “West Virginia has a very distinct, maybe unique mission. It’s a land grant institution and one of its missions is to educate the people of West Virginia. West Virginia is primarily a rural state. I think the university has done a really good job at recruiting students of all backgrounds. When I graduated one of the girls in my class was a Rhodes Scholar. She came from a very small town in West Virginia. The university did a great job of recruiting her to the school. She was very smart. She could have gone anywhere. They made it a point to recruit her to WVU.”

As the offering to students and families

• “What distinguishes WVU? A really terrific student can go to WVU, get their baccalaureate degree, leave there with little debt and then really be able to deploy their resources on graduate degrees at other venues, if they choose to do that…. For an excellent student in West Virginia, I think the Promise Scholarship offered by the State of West Virginia makes it very, very attractive.”

• “I think many people, when I went there, went there because it was a low-cost, very good education. Now, we know it happens to be a very, very good education. It prepares us very well for the ideal and realistic work lives. And you know, if you’ve been there, you love the place.”
Oklahoma State leverages the notion of being home for many students as it materials are framed through “Your home away from home” narrative.

Brand Essence:
“Your home away from home”
- Tagline: America’s Brightest Orange.
- Slowly scrolling photos:
  - Thank You (Story on veteran turned student)
  - Fireworks Safety (Learn to use fireworks safely)
  - Filling the Skills Gap (Focus on Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology)
  - Summer Pool Safety (Basic safety tips)
- Visual theme, orange, gray black, and white colors, consistent throughout most of the website.

“Home away from home” theme carried across admissions materials.
In addition to Oklahoma State, Texas A&M also frame their online communication through a family lens.

**Brand Essence:**

“One really, really big family”

- No specific tagline on homepage.
- Scrolling photos with links for associated articles:
  - **Healthy – South Texas** (Texas A&M Institute for Public Health Improvement launches “Healthy Texas” initiative)
  - **Transforming Indonesia** (Norman Bourlag Institute for International Agriculture at Texas A&M is combatting hunger and poverty in Indonesia)
  - **Spreading Democracy** (Texas A&M University President supports aiding Iraqi people)
  - **Still Thirsty** (John Nielsen-Gammon, professor of atmospheric sciences at Texas A&M and State Climatologist, discusses drought conditions in Texas)
- Visual theme, white and brown colors, are consistent throughout most of the website pages.
Along the same lines, we identified Michigan State’s website’s brand conveying the sense of belonging.

Brand Essence: “When you’re a Spartan you belong”

- No tagline on homepage.
- Scrolling photos with links for stories:
  - Meet Jolisa Brooks: Junior, Detroit, Michigan – Inside Out: An in-depth look at the MSU student experience
  - Plan Bee: Helping secure the nation’s supply
  - Custom-Made for Success

- Visual theme, green and white colors, consistent throughout the website.
A storyline starts to emerge when looking at the open-ended responses that describe WVU in a word or phrase.

Have a Positive/Optimistic Outlook...
“Opportunity”
“Successful”
“Generate and share knowledge; reach out to improve lives in the community”
“Transformative”
“Legendary”
“Amazing and so misunderstood”

...Of Reaching Great (Untapped) Potential...
“Growing”
“Under appreciated”
“Accomplished in some areas, developing in others”
“A potential jewel set in a city with no egress or ingress.”
“Unrealized potential.”
“Un-capitalized potential.”
“Lots of unrecognized, untapped, and lost potential”

...And a Campus Backdrop that is...
“Home sweet home.”
“Comfortable”
“Friendly”
“Inspiring”
“Scenic”
“Outdoorsy”
“Beautiful”
“Fantastic university environment”
Affordability is volunteered by one-quarter of faculty as the best reason to attend WVU. Students (14%) and prospects (13%) are most likely to share its location and being close to home as the best reason to attend/choose WVU.

Top Reasons to Choose/Attend WVU by Audience

**Faculty/Staff**
- Affordable/Reasonable cost: 25%
- Good education: 15%
- Good value for the money: 10%
- Location/Close to home: 10%
- Quality education/Top academic programs: 9%
- Diverse majors: 6%

**Students**
- Location/Close to home: 14%
- Affordable/Reasonable cost: 14%
- Opportunities/Great programs: 9%
- Friendly/Welcoming atmosphere: 8%

**Prospects**
- Location/Close to home: 13%
- Diversity of majors/Variety: 12%
- Good education: 8%
- Offers major I want: 7%
- Friendly/Welcoming atmosphere: 7%
A quality education at a good value are the most commonly mentioned responses when the audiences volunteer the best reason to attend WVU.

Among Faculty/Staff/Students

In your opinion, what is the single best reason for choosing to attend for West Virginia University?
Prospects are more likely than students or faculty and staff to say the programs offered is the best reason to attend WVU.

Among Prospects

In your opinion, what is the single best reason for considering West Virginia University?
WVU is among four schools in the audit with a homepage brand that taps into the idea of exploring each student’s variety of options.

Brand Essence: “The sky’s the limit”

- No tagline on homepage (“Find Your Focus” is highlighted on the Viewbook cover and in the school’s video commercial).
- While meant to showcase technical achievement, the meaning of the large homepage graphic is somewhat obscure – requires reading the fine print.
- Photo links on the homepage highlight the following:
  - Achievements of the WVU robotics team (pictured)
  - Adventures of the WVU Soar participants in the Rocky Mountains and desert Southwest
  - WVU President Gordon Lee’s tour of 55 West Virginia counties
  - WVU’s historic architecture and an invitation to visit campus
  - A vignette of WVU graduate Kendal Montgomery’s career in Santiago, Chile, including a brief video

While a different tagline, WVU’s “Find Your Focus” admission materials also hone in on the individual opportunity frame.

The blue and gold colors are consistent throughout the website, but visuals of a blue sky are more graphically apparent.
Virginia Tech’s homepage brand essence taps into exploration of students’ futures through their variety of options.

**Brand Essence:**
“Create your future”

- The main tagline is “Invent the Future,” but more personalized versions appear throughout the materials, such as “Embrace your future” and “Invent your future.”

- Scrolling areas of emphasis (“spotlights”) include freshman orientation, “Impact” on the community, student “Achievement,” and “innovation.”

- Vertically extended homepage includes 4 major areas:
  - Areas of spotlight
  - News & Events
  - Life at Virginia Tech
  - Learn at Virginia Tech (academics)
The idea of student empowerment through a multifaceted approach is evident in Ohio State University as it asks students “What does Ohio State mean to you?”

Brand Essence:  
“Ohio State is multifaceted”
  • Not really a tagline, the homepage offers the rhetorical question, “What does Ohio State mean to you?” in the banner.
  • Marquee photos emphasize the new President, community outreach, and freshman orientation.
  • Despite the inclusion of two videos (engineering innovation and a “Buckeye Moment” about forming lasting relationships with fellow students), the homepage is on the dull side.
Similarly, University of Kentucky’s “If you can see it, you can achieve it” gives students a sense of what they can explore.

**Brand Essence:**

“If you can see it, you can achieve it”

- The tagline, “See Blue,” is a nice idea that plays off the school colors, but it is not prominently displayed.
- In an effort to create interest through motion, the marquee photos on the homepage not only scroll, but also zoom out. The effect is reminiscent of a home slide show via computer.
- The main themes are:
  - Student achievement
  - Cutting edge discovery
  - Lexington
  - Student opportunities
  - Service/outreach
  - State-of-the-art facilities
As the verbatim responses from the survey reveal, many discussed how the quality of the education is buttressed by the friendly, supportive environment that feels like home.

**Cost/Value**

“Good education for the cost.”
“Low cost of high value education.”
“Value -- both financial and experiential.”
quality education at a reasonable price

**Atmosphere**

“Morgantown is a smaller city with a friendly supportive community. I feel at home here more than in larger cities.”
“WVU has a global family. But, we all started or finished in the same hometown (Mo’town) and know the struggles, as well as the heaven, that this state and University is a part of -- academically, socially, and athletically.”

“West Virginia University is place where you can get the education you want while being supported by peers, professors, and the University as a whole.”
“Like any other University, it should be primarily academics, but when compared to other academic institutions, I think it is the promise that students will have a holistic, wonderful academic experience while being here, and that we will take care of them like family.”
“Good combination of large-school quality-research and small-school individual attention”
“Quality of selected programs in a small town atmosphere”
“The combination of both a great college life and uncompromised academics”

It has the feel of a small college with the options of a large one
To the extent that some say students might not choose to attend WVU, its reputation as a “party school” tops the list.

Top Reasons to **Not** Choose/Attend WVU by Audience

**Faculty/Staff**
- Party school reputation: 14%
- Big/Too large/Overcrowded: 12%
- Transportation/Traffic/Lack of parking: 10%
- Location/Mountains/Isolation/Winter: 8%

**Students**
- Party school reputation: 21%
- Location/Mountains/Isolation/Winter: 12%
- Big/Too large/Overcrowded: 10%
- Transportation/Traffic/Lack of parking: 8%

**Prospects**
- Party school reputation: 22%
- Big/Too large/Overcrowded: 13%
- Distance/Too far from home/Out of state: 13%
- Location/Mountains/Isolation/Winter: 10%
WVU’s reputation, overall and as a party school, are volunteered as a the biggest reasons not to attend WVU.

Among Prospects

Among Faculty/Staff/Students
A look into the open ended responses show how the audiences often used emotive language when discussing reasons not to attend WVU. The issues are often described together.

Size:
“Very large- student gets lost in the crowd.”
“Weak undergrads get lost in the enormity of the University.”
“We enroll students to fill spaces, and we don't care if they graduate. Graduation rate after 6 years is very low (last time I looked I think it was 56%)”
“Too large with insufficient support systems in place (getting processed for many things, advising, etc.)”
“The size of such a large school can be overwhelming for certain types of students.”
“Risk of being lost in a very large student population with a strong history of party culture.”

Party School Reputation:
“Drinking everywhere, all the time.”
“Party school atmosphere -- too much revolves around drinking.”
“Binge drinking rage-aholic students. Too much drunken fighting and some FAR too severe.”
“Some employers may not view a degree from WVU as respectable because of the party school reputation.”

Lacks National Recognition:
“How about our ranking? 142 in the country? 439 in the world? Or rather, how about or reputation as the number one party school?”
“Academic reputation along with party image”
“Focus on Party, not on academics.”
On-campus stakeholders agree; the party school reputation, the size and cost of the school, and the challenges around Morgantown’s location are among the reasons why someone might not attend WVU.

Party School

- “It doesn’t help the reputation that this is a party school. We’ve ranked I think number one in Playboy somewhere already. That’s not a good thing.”
- “The picture of WVU as a party school. Well, burning couches, party school. I don’t know how you can address it.”

Costs and Size

- “Changing demographics, high school population is a big deal and rising costs of tuition. We are to the point where we may be pricing ourselves out of the market with our out-of-state tuition costs.”
- “We have to figure out our own tuition structure how we can more financially strategize our tuition right now if a student takes 12 credits they pay full-time tuition. If they take 15 or 19, it is the same tuition.”
- “We are, like all institutions our size, a big bureaucracy. And by our very nature it’s hard to be efficient and to move quickly, and there are certain things that will be very, very difficult ever to change in current American higher education.”

Location

- “I would add that West Virginia is still not well known. I’m not saying the university; I’m saying the State of West Virginia. We still struggle with “Virginia?” “No, West Virginia?””
- “One of our biggest issues is location. I say this all the time.”
- “Morgantown is not easy to get to. For people to get here, they’ve got to fly into Pittsburgh then they’ve got to drive down.”
External thought leaders recognize that while there is still a “party school” image, the institution’s overall image is evolving.

Many see gains in reputation

- “I do think that the image changed under the previous administration. It is changing, and will continue to change. That doesn’t negate the headwinds that it has. I think the university, and certainly the new president and the people that he has around him, are doing a lot to broadcast a more positive image of the university. I hear them talking about students from new areas and the caliber of students that they are magnetizing into the university. I think it’s getting positive. I don’t think they’re where they need to be, or want to be, yet.”

- “With a forensics program. With a new school of public health. It shows that we are progressing into the century. These ranked programs and colleges, the rankings are important. When that kid gets out of the school of business, he’s able to write the 67th best school of business out of a zillion. So numbers are becoming our friend because we are working to get new programs and improve the ones we have.”

Countering “party school” is ongoing

- “I think it’s ever evolving. The administration of WVU has to battle the whole party school image every time that list comes out. I know starting back three or four administrations ago, they were trying to make a point of highlighting the academic side.”

- “There is always going to be a big game or celebration where a couch is burned or something that will give us a negative image. But I think for the most part, we have a pretty positive image with all our programs, athletics and academics.”
WVU’s identity starts with being the pride point for the state. Other top associations focus on its aesthetics and include scenic and beautiful campus. As we see in the barriers to attend, there is an association to WVU being a party school.

Please indicate how closely you associate each word of phrase with West Virginia University. Use a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 means you associate it very closely with WVU and 0 means you don’t associate it at all. *(Graph 1 of 3)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of Pride for the State</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Point of pride for the state</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful campus</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division 1 athletics</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A party school</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranked by rated 10 by prospects
The audit revealed that the University of Maryland currently leverages the sense of state pride through its “MPOWERING THE STATE” campaign.

Brand Essence: “Empowering Maryland”

- The unexplained tagline, “MPOWERING THE STATE,” is found at the bottom of the homepage.

- It appears that an old website template was used, with a very basic design that is virtually all small-font text other than scrolling marquee photos that emphasize sports, summer education, wine, recycling, and living with cancer.

- The real estate is divided into blocks devoted to “In the news,” “Discover Maryland A-Z,” and links to a variety of online communities and feeds.
The “Penn State Lives Here” branding also draws upon its influence on the state and across walks of life.

Brand Essence:
“Penn State has a large circle of influence”

- Driven by a large visual presence, the homepage includes the tagline, “PENN STATE LIVES HERE,” on photos that take visitors to in-depth articles on various aspects of Penn State’s sphere of influence.

- At the time of review, the homepage was focused on Fourth of July celebrations, the Immersive Construction Lab, nonprofit work, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)....all tied to the theme, “Penn State Lives Here.”
Faculty has greater pause associating WVU with career preparation than students and prospects.

Please indicate how closely you associate each word of phrase with West Virginia University. Use a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 means you associate it very closely with WVU and 0 means you don’t associate it at all. (Graph 2 of 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>% Rated 10 – Very Closely Associate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving forward</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A big state university with a small college feel</td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections for life</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranked by rated 10 by prospects
Internal audiences are less likely to closely associate WVU as a leader in research, providing a personalized education and being academically rigorous.

Please indicate how closely you associate each word of phrase with West Virginia University. Use a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 means you associate it very closely with WVU and 0 means you don’t associate it at all. (Graph 3 of 3)

The audiences place high importance on quality so it will be important to communicate academic quality as audiences are less likely to associate WVU with academic rigor.

Ranked by rated 10 by prospects
Interestingly, prospects associate WVU with fun, but unlike students and faculty, do not closely associate it as a party school.

**Summary of WVU Associations:** (% very closely associate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Point of pride for the state: 53%</td>
<td>Point of pride for the state: 50%</td>
<td>Point of pride for the state: 49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun: 48%</td>
<td>Party school: 40%</td>
<td>Party school: 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful campus: 47%</td>
<td>Scenic: 33%</td>
<td>Scenic: 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division 1 athletics: 42%</td>
<td>Beautiful campus: 33%</td>
<td>Division 1 athletics: 22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at West Virginia University’s brand identity another way, on-campus stakeholders compared it to stores like Target, IKEA, and Sears, by which they meant it was a notch up in variety, quality and affordability, though not necessarily high-end.

If West Virginia University were a consumer brand, something you could find in a mall, what would it be?

• “Right now I’d say we’re a Target. We’re a notch higher than Wal-Mart. We’re a notch higher than K-Mart, make two, but we’re not a Neiman Marcus which is a private institution. We’ll never get there.”

• “It’s probably more like an IKEA. You can have a good time and look around and find good things at a value price, but if I had my druthers we would be more like a Pottery Barn or that kind of thing, where you can buy all the things you need to have, get a high-end, experience, and still be classy.”

• “I don’t think we are Wal-Mart, but we are Sears. I would like us to be more of a high-end store, and you can pick whatever you think fits in there.”

• “We’d be Target. I don’t want to say Walmart, but because Walmart is available to so many people. Because our cost of education is lower and the way West Virginians are—people come to the law school and it’s a different community than if you go Harvard’s law school. People will say that we’re real people here. But I don’t want to be Walmart. I’d rather be Target.”

• “We need to become Aeropostale. Cool, sophisticated. My daughters just go nuts for Aeropostale. That’s what we need. We need high school students to say, “It is cool to go to WVU.” Cool and quality.”
While being a leader in research is less of an association with WVU, the audit shows North Carolina State’s website brand essence centers on their research.

**Brand Essence:**

“We do research”

- No tagline on homepage.
- Vertically extended page requires scrolling through 3 screens to view all of homepage.
- Numerous links and large navigation options present the user with well-organized links.
- Scrolling photos with links for stories:
  - CAREER READY: NC State graduates have the experience and skills employers seek
  - RETURN OF THE NATIVE: With help from NC State researchers, Pinehurst #2 returns to its roots for two U.S. Opens
  - A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION: NC State junior Tyson Huffman is helping Rwandans manufacture an affordable, effective sanitary pad
  - A MAKER’S PLACE: NC State students show how they make and do at Maker Faire
- Visual theme, red, white, and gray colors (with occasional black used for highlighting) are consistent throughout the website.
State pride is not a polarizing attribute for in-state and out-of-state prospects and students. Majorities (or near majorities) of closely associate WVU with pride for the state.

Closely Associate WVU with Point of Pride for the State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-State</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Rated 10
On-campus stakeholders point to a variety of reasons why WVU is a point of pride for the state, including the programs offered, the economic necessity of the institution, the competitiveness, and the school’s natural beauty.

What are points of pride for this University that no other institution can claim?

• “We’re a linchpin economically. We’re a linchpin in terms of the whole idea of moving forward. And so the whole idea of who we are will catapult us. That’s a strength. As WVU goes, so will the rest of the state.”

• “They are impressed with the academics. Not only do we have the program they want, but it’s also a good program. It offers all the opportunities they want to not only engage while they are an undergrad, but also to maybe continue as a masters or Ph.D. student or as a student at one of the professional schools.”

• “I love that we have buildings that have been here since the founding, and buildings named after some of the most prominent people who went here. I feel like that’s something we have that’s really cool, because our campus is beautiful with all of those really old buildings. And when I was touring grad schools recently, I was going to some of these really prestigious schools, really well known, and I was just like, “I was so spoiled here. My campus is beautiful.” And I feel like that’s something that’s important.”

• “I always tell people that one of the things I find interesting is we take students from a variety of backgrounds, and many of them are first-generation college students, and maybe at the onset they don’t look as talented as some of the people that go to the ivy league, or whatever. But what I find is that we do a tremendous job in terms of taking those students to the point that when they leave WVU, they can compete with, and in many cases, can beat out students from those institutions for jobs.”

• “That we graduate people with degrees in the cultures, like the arts. I had no idea. I was blown away.”

• “Our engineering school is really on a cusp. They’re doing some very innovative kinds of things in energy”

• “The Law School.”
Reflecting the audience’s preferences, messaging is most convincing when it exists in an academic context, an economic context, or, ideally, both.
Consistent with the valuing of quality, affordable education, students, prospects, and faculty find the messages highlighting the Forbes “best buy” ranking and the U.S. News & World Report rankings to be the most convincing. As we see elsewhere, there is a draw to WVU being a pride point for the state.

For each, please indicate whether it is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing or not convincing statement at all about whether or not to attend WVU/about WVU (wording for faculty).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forbes ranked WVU in their Top 100 best buy colleges; an honor that highlights universities who students’ post-graduation salary is a good return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WVU athletics provide a sense of pride for the state, encouraging a sense of school spirit and community on the campus, and the athletes are a reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU is ranked in Top 100 universities in the U.S. News &amp; World Report’s Best Colleges of 2013 rankings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU students also enjoy life as residents of Morgantown, a vibrant college town that has won national acclaim as one of the nation’s most livable small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU encourages students and faculty/staff to show their “Mountaineer Pride” in all of their actions on campus, in the community, and across the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU has the nation’s 14th most affordable tuition for out-of-state students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU offers programs that allows for you to take control and prepare your future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU offers academic and personal support in order to help students adjust with their workload and acclimate to the stresses of being in college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU offers more opportunities and academic programming than other schools in the state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each, please indicate whether it is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing or not convincing statement at all about whether or not to attend WVU/about WVU (wording for faculty).
On-campus stakeholders tended to highlight the importance of the relatively low cost compared to the high quality of education at WVU as well.

• “I don’t think we’ve done a very good job of promoting the quality of the education that students can get here, and the value they get, because it’s a tremendous value. For a relatively small investment, you get an education that is world class.”

• “Rather than telling people that it’s less expensive here we should be talking about it’s a great education, and oh, by the way, we can match the finances anywhere else that you go.”

• “I think our educational value is very high. There’s a lot of value added to kids who study here, either because they meet the criteria to graduate.”

• “The value. At that time, it was an incredible value, in terms of out-of-state or international tuition. As we all know, that cost has increased. I don’t know that we’re cheap any more. I think we’re still a good value.”
The on-campus stakeholders also allude to the importance of community, echoing some of the top tier messages.

• “Friendliness. This is a friendly place if you ask most of the students, international or American. They will tell you Morgantown is friendly. Not only fellow students and teachers, but the community. It’s got a nice feel to it.”

• “We are large, but we are small. We have a community that is the same size as the student body, so it’s a university town. But we’re close to big cities, so that goes back to proximity and location, but I do think we are the best of both worlds. We can be small when we want to be small. We can be big. But you’re not going to be a number.”

• “When you walk around this place and talk to people, you get an almost smaller-college feel. It’s very personalized. I run into the same people repeatedly, and I work with the same people over and over. So, it becomes very personalized. Then, when we break students down into the college environment, they have a nice, intimate home. I think we can genuinely claim that it is a big institution that actually takes care of our students. It is a friendly environment.”
The internal audiences make distinctions. While providing a sense of pride for the state is among the top-tier messages, having an influence on the state and being connected are second-tier messages.

For each, please indicate whether it is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing or not convincing statement at all about whether or not to attend WVU/about WVU (wording for faculty).

**WVU offers students numerous opportunities to learn by traveling across the world as part of certain degree curricula.**

- **Faculty/Staff**: 21%
- **Students**: 40%
- **Prospects**: 40%

**WVU Career Services offer assistance in discovering a field of study best fit for you and creating a career plan to reach your career goals.**

- **Faculty/Staff**: 13%
- **Students**: 34%
- **Prospects**: 34%

**WVU is an influence on the state of West Virginia.**

- **Faculty/Staff**: 45%
- **Students**: 50%
- **Prospects**: 50%

**WVU maintains one of the top-ranked medical research programs in the nation.**

- **Faculty/Staff**: 28%
- **Students**: 43%
- **Prospects**: 43%

**WVU is connected to the people of West Virginia.**

- **Faculty/Staff**: 28%
- **Students**: 39%
- **Prospects**: 39%

**WVU has the opportunity and the responsibility to affect change in the state of West Virginia and in the lives of its people.**

- **Faculty/Staff**: 43%
- **Students**: 44%
- **Prospects**: 44%

**WVU has a connected alumni network across the globe that can keep you in touch with the University and help you get a job after you graduate.**

- **Faculty/Staff**: 18%
- **Students**: 37%
- **Prospects**: 37%

Ranked by very convincing to prospects.
All three audiences were less likely to find the message about WVU’s presence in Charleston to be convincing.

For each, please indicate whether it is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing or not convincing statement at all about whether or not to attend WVU/about WVU (wording for faculty).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>% Very convincing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WVU ranks nationally for prestigious scholarships. Its ASPIRE Office helps enrich students’ college</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU provides a family atmosphere with professors providing a personal interest in their students’</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU Is a nationally recognized leader in ground-breaking research.</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU is a very large institution with many campuses to navigate.</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU’s campus maintains strong diversity across the campus. WVU supports this diversity with numerous</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU is interested in the story of each of its students at the University and every student has an</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU’s land-grant mission sets it apart from other schools in the state.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU has a strong presence in Charleston and among our state leaders.</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranked by very convincing to prospects
Interestingly, prospects associate WVU with fun, but unlike students and faculty, do not closely associate it as a party school.

**Summary of WVU Messages:** (% very convincing)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forbes ranked WVU in their Top 100 best buy colleges; an honor that highlights universities who students’ post-graduation salary is a good return on their investment: 67%</td>
<td>Forbes ranked WVU in their Top 100 best buy colleges; an honor that highlights universities who students’ post-graduation salary is a good return on their investment: 53%</td>
<td>WVU is an influence on the state of West Virginia: 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU athletics provide a sense of pride for the state, encouraging a sense of school spirit and community on the campus, and the athletes are a reflection of WVU’s values: 65%</td>
<td>WVU has the nation’s 14th most affordable tuition for out-of-state students: 50%</td>
<td>WVU offers more opportunities and academic programming than other schools in the state: 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(64% of out of state prospects find very convincing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU is ranked in the Top 100 universities in the U.S. News &amp; World Report’s Best Colleges of 2013 rankings: 63%</td>
<td>WVU is an influence on the state of West Virginia: 50%</td>
<td>WVU has the opportunity and the responsibility to affect change in the state of West Virginia and in the lives of its people: 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVU students also enjoy life as residents of Morgantown, a vibrant college town that has won national acclaim as one of the nation’s most livable small cities: 63%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across all the messages tested, prospects consistently gave higher ratings while faculty/staff were consistently lower.
The external thought leaders indicate that these top messages could be permeating the audience better.

Participants describe WVU outreach as “good,” “okay,” “not much,” “it depends”

- **Reach** - “We have a large number of alumni who now live outside of the state and outside of the country. I think the university working with them to help them boost our reputation is very important, which I think President Gee is going to do.”

- **Coordination** - “It’s difficult. I don’t want to be getting a million emails from the alumni association, the MAC, my school, my husband’s school. Once you start getting inundated, you stop paying attention to the emails that are really important. I don’t know how much coordination there is between the various schools and entities. That’s something that I think could be looked at.”

- **Cultivation** – “They need more cultivation events before they ask people for money. Sometimes the only time your alumni ever hear from you is when they want money. Communication has improved, but I think they need to do more cultivation, keeping people aware of what’s going on.”

- **Capacity** – “Their research department for keeping track of things is young. They would be very well-served to get a very high-priced research manager. They think they have to put that money in these development officers and fundraisers, but if you don’t have the data, then you can’t send them off.”

- **External Promotion** – “I think it wouldn’t hurt for them to get some of those examples out in the broader markets, as opposed to just the local West Virginia/Pennsylvania/Maryland markets. I think, bringing more people into the institution. Inviting them in to see what’s going on at the university.”

- **Sustained Outreach** – “I suppose they’re doing okay. I guess I think they could do a little more public relations work to enhance their image…. I think they do it effectively during the football season.” Could they be better? Yes.”
West Virginia University’s Visual Identity

The Flying WV is unanimously loved and is a clear boon to WVU. The Mountaineer logo is more mixed, with some negative feedback.
The audiences overwhelmingly volunteer the Mountaineer as the one person, place or thing that best reflects the WVU experience. There are mentions of Woodburn Hall to a lesser degree.

If you had to choose one person, place or thing that best reflected the WVU experience, what would you choose?
The “Flying WV” logo garners very positive reviews on each of the three criteria tested. Internal audiences are particularly very favorable to the logo and feel it is very recognizable across the country.

"The flying WV not because of it, but because of how know it is in the state and how people in the state - not just alum - identify with it and see it as "their" university.” – *Answer to identify person/place or thing that reflects WVU experience*

![Favorable Results](image)

**Favorable**

- **Very favorable**
  - Faculty/Staff: 78%
  - Students: 83%
  - Prospects: 85%

- **Total favorable**
  - Faculty/Staff: 95%
  - Students: 96%
  - Prospects: 97%

**Representative of WVU Experience**

- **Yes, strongly**
  - Faculty/Staff: 57%
  - Students: 61%
  - Prospects: 62%

- **Total yes**
  - Faculty/Staff: 84%
  - Students: 86%
  - Prospects: 86%

**Recognizable Across the Country**

- **Very recognizable**
  - Faculty/Staff: 79%
  - Students: 87%
  - Prospects: 89%

- **Total recognizable**
  - Faculty/Staff: 95%
  - Students: 98%
  - Prospects: 98%
External thought leaders reported that the “Flying WV” logo was both iconic and valuable to WVU’s branding.

- “The flying WVU logo is like what? 11th most popular logo in the United States? Kind of hard to improve on it. And, my God, it’s used everyplace. You see it every place in this country.”

- “The logo, the WV logo, I think it’s terrific. I love to see it on cars as I’m driving around either New York, or Maryland, or wherever I happen to be at the time.”

- “There’s no question that the logo is probably one of the most recognizable. I have had the good fortune over the years to travel even out of the country and invariably, if I have a West Virginia shirt people will stop and say, ‘Oh, you’re from West Virginia, I just love them.’ I was travelling in Europe many years ago and by chance met the president of Israel. I was blown away, I was in this park, talking to this head of state, and he’s aware of West Virginia.”

- “I am one who has always believed if it works, don’t change it. If it’s successful, don’t change it. If it provides what you want at all times, then keep it because the change may not be as beneficial as what you’re used to.

- “The flying West Virginia is the one that stands out and is pretty universally recognized. That stands out to me. I see blue and gold, and I’m always looking out to see if that’s for WVU or University of Michigan. I don’t really think you can touch the flying West Virginia, make changes to it.”

Future considerations

- Not “too stylized”
- Not used consistently
- Missing tagline or slogan
Feedback from the on-campus stakeholders makes it unanimous: the “WV” logo should keep on flying.

• “I like the flying WV. I think it’s nice. I will tell you it’s on every car in the Walmart parking lot. I do not say this in a disparaging manner. I can promise you that 2/3 of the people in Walmart did not go or do not go to WVU.”

• “I like our flying WV. It’s easy to see and it’s not like any other brand or logos that I’ve seen as I’ve traveled the country.”

• “People like that, I think people recognize that everywhere. I was wearing that in Paris two years ago and people recognized it. There was a guy who came up to me. He said he grew up in Fairmount. He loved WVU but he never went to school here.”

• “The WV—flying WV—is, in a sense, modern. It’s kind of modern art, maybe not as modern as today’s art, but it’s a midcentury or later sort of symbol.”

• “Absolutely excellent. As you know, it’s a great trademark, and it’s immediately recognizable. People, whether they went to—because the great thing about it, if you look at the flying WV, it’s not a flying WVU. And so we basically are trademarking the state everywhere we go, and I think that’s a great, great positive thing.”

• “I love the Flying WV, personally. I know there are people who want to change it, but we should not do that. I recognize you have to spruce things up periodically, but the only thing I think that has hurt us is that we used to be in the top 10 in terms of logos.”
While decent overall, the “Mountaineer” logo receives a noticeable drop on all three measures. This is particularly true with very favorable ratings as there is a -28 to -35-point drop from the “Flying WV” logo.

**Favorable**

- **Faculty**: 50% Very favorable, 79% Total favorable
- **Students**: 55% Very favorable, 84% Total favorable
- **Prospects**: 50% Very favorable, 87% Total favorable

**Representative of WVU Experience**

- **Faculty**: 37% Yes, strongly, 69% Total yes
- **Students**: 42% Yes, strongly, 74% Total yes
- **Prospects**: 38% Yes, strongly, 75% Total yes

**Recognizable Across the Country**

- **Faculty**: 34% Very recognizable, 66% Total recognizable
- **Students**: 36% Very recognizable, 68% Total recognizable
- **Prospects**: 31% Very recognizable, 65% Total recognizable

*Darker shades=intensity*
Among those who feel not an accurate representation of WVU

Why do you feel this logo is not an accurate representation of the WVU experience?

What's with the gun and what does that have to do with higher education?

Dump the musket.

It is backward looking. What does a man with a rifle say about learning and leadership in 2014?

Not in favor of the stigmatism associated with the "Hillbilly" aspect of the Mountaineer. It depicts a man with a gun!!! What more must I say?

It represents the past, not the future. I don't like guns.

WVU is a modern, research-intensive institution. This logo reinforces stereotypes about West Virginians that detract from WVU's stature outside of the state.

White male with gun; looks like a hunter. WVU is more than that. I know our mascot is the mountaineer but I have always disliked the statue and the use of its image as a "logo".

In many ways the Mountaineer strongly associates the "climbing higher" character of students, faculty and staff at WVU, I just don't always like the gun being depicted in the image. I am a proud alum and about to earn a second degree here which I am also equally proud of, but sometimes, I worry about the image of the gun being associated with the U.

I don't think the gun is a necessary image to display.

I hate the image of a "hunter and a gatherer". I am a proud Mountaineer and I don't carry a gun, sport a coonskin cap, or wear buckskin. The Mountaineer symbolizes every negative stereotype of the state! It's embarrassing.
There is a noticeable -21 point drop in very favorable attitudes toward the Mountaineer logo among in-state and out-of-state students.

Logo Favorability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logo Favorability</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>% Very Favorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-State</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are fewer differences in attitudes toward the Flying WV among in-state and out-of-state prospects and students.
Feedback about the “Mountaineer” is mixed among thought leaders as well.

• “The Mountaineer is probably of benefit locally, and it may not be of benefit nationally. I haven’t thought a lot about this before. But I suspect that the Mountaineer kind of brings the university backwards, to a university in the state of West Virginia, as opposed to a nation’s university. And I think they might want to think about that. As much as I cherish the Mountaineer that I have my desk, it might be time to retire the guy.”

• “I could see why it would irritate people. I hate guns, can I tell you that. I am all about gun control, but the musket doesn’t bother me. I think of the Mountaineer as being confined to sports and sporting events, not used so much on the academic side.”

• “The mascot and the symbol is very strong. The Mountaineers. How would you like to have the Mountaineer as your mascot and your logo as opposed to the Kansas Jayhawks? It’s a noisy bird. Or how would you like to have Cyclones? Iowa? Named after a thunderstorm?”

• “Both my husband and I are WVU graduates. My parents are both WVU graduates. I grew up hearing about West Virginia, going to sporting events and that kind of thing. Our kids are funny, too. We live in the Southwest. But when my 7 year-old was at camp this year, she really wanted to be in the ‘Mountaineer’ group. She really wanted to be a Mountaineer, because she has that connection with WVU and West Virginia.”

Future considerations

• “Mountaineer” story may be more appealing than the image itself

• Role of mascot vs. brand identity
Even those on-campus stakeholders who like the Mountaineer logo tend to argue for its more limited use, or at least providing alternate images of non-white-male Mountaineers.

• “I think we need to bring the Mountaineer into the 21st century. And I’m not so sure that we should only have one Mountaineer—that we get so focused on the Mountaineer, that we miss the fact. So why, in any given year, do we not have multiple Mountaineers? So why would we not have a female Mountaineer? A Mountaineer of color? An international Mountaineer? You see what I mean? That’s taking a symbol of us, and it’s broadening it.”

• “We’re Mountaineer Nation, so why don’t we show ourselves to the nation as being a nation, rather than an individual?”

• “I don’t know about the Mountaineer. I can’t think of West Virginia Mountaineers what it would become if it weren’t. It is a mountain state. It’s a gorgeous state, but mountaineer connotes a hick.”

• “The Mountaineer, I hear more and more how it—not scares people—but probably not the best representation, particularly when he’s shown with his musket. Using that as a logo on lots of things probably is good that we don’t use it a whole lot. I think it would be a tough sell for this university and this state to say we aren’t going to be the Mountaineers, but we are going to be the fighting walruses or something like that.”

• “Here the mountaineer is on everything. I’d be okay if the mountaineer wasn’t on everything. It could still be a mascot.”

• I have seen people question what it is. Why in the world does he have a gun? What does the gun have to do with the university? You really get a lot of that too. And unfortunately, in markets that are really important to us, like China, I don’t think they get their mind around that. And it may reinforce some of those stereotypes about everybody having a gun when the guy representing your university has a gun.”
Next Steps

Implement Phase 2 of Branding Research

• In-person and online focus groups among external audiences, including prospects, parents, alumni and the engaged public in the suggested locations of WV, OH, TX, and in along the I-95 corridor

• National online survey among 1,000 adults, including an additional 200 surveys in West Virginia and 600 surveys in Mid-Atlantic states

• Final analysis and recommendations
Areas to Explore

Areas to explore in Phase 2 of the Research include:

• How much and what do our out-of-state audiences know about WVU and the state of West Virginia? What are their perceptions about both?
• How does the concept of “home” – that is, Morgantown having a hometown, friendly feel – play to those outside the region, and how can we ensure our messaging communicates those values of home without excluding out-of-state prospects
• What are parents’ priorities, and how do they differ, especially vis-à-vis cost vs. experience vs. academics vs. community vs. job placement for their children?
• How do we communicate the variety of programs offered while maintaining a distinct brand identity?
• How much does the issue of cost and value resonate to others who may be in different markets, and are there better ways to communicate this as a benefit?
• Do the Flying WV and Mountaineer branding bring up similar or different opinions more broadly, and what are the best ways to selectively use this iconography? What are their opinions of branding of schools in the competitive set?
• What are the best ways to push back against the “party school” image, to the extent that it exists?
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Understanding West Virginia University’s Brand from the Inside

Findings from On-Campus Stakeholder and Area Thought Leaders Interviews and an Online Survey among WVU’s Internal Audiences of Faculty, Staff, Students and Prospects

August 2014