
Getting Connected: College Access Marketing's Next Frontier

Introduction

As a college education increasingly becomes a requirement for prosperity in American society, efforts to improve college attendance and success rates are of great public importance. Given the well-documented public and private benefits of higher education, there is arguably no cause of greater social concern (Perna, 2003; Baum, & Payea, 2005). Therefore, it is essential that “social marketing” efforts be effectively directed at promoting such positive behavior. College access marketing is not a new concept, but greater attention and resources have been given to such strategies in the past decade. Efforts are currently underway at the local, state, and national level – initiated by state education agencies, non-profit organizations, and higher education associations – to promote aspiration and academic preparation, better inform the public about the availability and affordability of a college education, and assist with the application process. A number of states have found that marketing campaigns on print, broadcast, and – most recently – web media can be highly effective in increasing college readiness, access, and success.

But times are changing –in terms of marketing practices, media environments, and consumer demands. With limited financial resources for such a vital and large-scale endeavor, it is essential for college access marketing to get connected and adapt to the changing times. New media and new marketing have the potential to more effectively reach target populations in a manner that is consistent with generational communication trends. Such has been demonstrated in commercial marketing and other “social marketing” domains. But college access marketing

has been slow to adapt to the changing media environment and marketing trends, largely out of fear of uncertainty and a lack of relevant research. In this paper, I will 1) examine how marketing has changed in recent years; 2) consider what “social marketing” is and how it has evolved to incorporate new media and new marketing practices; 3) provide an introduction to college access marketing as a type of “social marketing”; and 4) outline an agenda for helping college access marketing connect with the next generation of college students – the “Connected Generation” – through contemporary marketing practices.

Marketing in the 21st Century

It appears that marketing is coming of age. Billboards, radio and television stations, and print publications are quickly losing their grip on the market for brand recognition, customer penetration, and product information delivery. A “pull economy” – based on “open, flexible production platforms” as opposed to top-down response to anticipated consumer demand – is transforming American society (Bollier, 2006, 4). Bollier (2006) contends that such change is being facilitated by the technological revolution. “Instead of dominant companies using top-down market structures to push and shape consumer demand, the new technologies are enabling the creation of bottom-up, self-organized communities based on fluid and shifting societal preferences” (Bollier, 2006, 36). Additionally, consumer views of traditional media and marketing practices have soured and a growing anti-advertising sentiment is sweeping the nation (Tauder, 2005). As a result, terms from epidemiology, political science, and religion have been reconceived and integrated into the industry jargon and a new field of marketing has been born.

For a long time, there was much debate in the marketing community about new marketing techniques and trepidation about implanting untested alternatives (Jaffe, 2006).

However, by 2007, the share of media budgets allocated to web-based advertising is expected to climb to 17 percent (Jaffe, 2005). Newspapers claimed 36 percent of total advertising dollars in 1995, but it is predicted that their share will fall to 25 percent by 2010 (Adler, 2007). However, it is important to remember that new media and new marketing are not exactly synonymous; Internet advertising that is limited to banner ad placements is just an example of old wine in new wineskins. New marketing – on the other hand – is more egalitarian, more democratic, more sophisticated, and more user-friendly. One of the best-selling books on the topic explains new marketing strategies in the following terms:

Marketing has traditionally been more like a manufacturing operation, producing advertisements, Web sites, brochures, campaigns and press releases. Reframed as a service, however, marketing gains even more value through the process of listening, advising, explaining and teaching.” (Kelly, 2007, 155)

Others in the communication field explain the dichotomy as the difference between push and pull platforms. “Pull platforms tend to be able to mobilize and deploy social energies more effectively than bureaucratic, standardized push platforms (Bollier, 2006, 9).

However, a broad definition for these new practices is still disputed. The lack of consensus on terminology for new marketing approaches contributes to great confusion, especially in tangential domains. The Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) (2007) identifies many of the leading industry practices in this new arena. Some of these include:

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
<u>Buzz Marketing</u>	Using high-profile entertainment or news to get people to talk about your brand; Intense form of word of mouth marketing; Information moves in a matrix pattern rather than a linear one
<u>Viral Marketing</u>	Creating entertaining or informative messages to be passed along, often by email
<u>Community Marketing</u>	Forming or supporting niche communities that are likely to share interests about the brand
<u>Grassroots Marketing</u>	Organizing and motivating volunteers to engage in personal or local outreach
<u>Evangelist Marketing</u>	Cultivating evangelists, advocates, or volunteers who are encouraged to spread the word
<u>Product Seeding</u>	Placing the right product into the right hands at the right time, providing information or samples
<u>Brand Blogging</u>	Creating blogs and participating in the blogosphere
<u>Referral Programs</u>	Creating tools that enable satisfied customers to refer their friends
<u>Guerilla Marketing</u>	Unorthodox marketing strategies; Negative connotation

The term “social network marketing” is often used today to describe many of the new techniques used by organizations to market their products. The “social” component of such practices is the reliance on human pathways of communication and interaction to promote awareness in a product, positive feelings toward a product, and ultimately, increase sales of a product and profitability of a firm. Much of this new marketing activity is focused on creating meaning for the consumer. Professor George Siemens suggests that “knowing something is great. Knowing what it means move us to a level where we can act – to support, change, redirect challenge” (Kelly, 2007, 27). This form of marketing has been made possible largely because of the advent of technology and the proliferation of adapted forms of interpersonal relations. Examples of new marketing techniques include blogs, social networking sites, wikis, podcasts, text messaging, and shared media sites. “In short, the Internet has emerged both as a *medium* that has greatly expanded access to multiple sources of information and as *platform* that has enabled individuals to become producers as well as consumers of online contents (Adler, 2007,

4). These technologies are growing rapidly; by 2010, some reports suggest that the podcast audience could reach 70 million users (Tower, 2006). MySpace already attracts over 60 million visitors each month (Williams, 2007). These approaches are very promising. “Anything that marketers can do to cede control to their consumer, to acknowledge the power shift, and to recognize the irrevocable changes have taken place is a step in the right direction (Jaffe, 2005, p. 203). Additionally, “word of mouth” has been found to be the most influential media form in consumer decision-making (McConnell & Huba, 2007; Adler, 2007).

A major concern has been that the new media environment presents too much consumer choice, to the point of being paralyzing. Schwartz (2004) finds that individuals disengage when presented with an overabundance of options. While the Internet might at first appear to be a disjointed media environment, the rise of super-sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube suggest that “much of the chaotically-and independently-placed elements of the Web are being voluntarily placed under the control of a single institutional communicator...” (Napoli, 2007, 10). Additionally, Napoli (2007) contends that audience behavior patterns from traditional media, such as “clustering” – in which 20 percent of content claims 80 percent of viewers – are manifesting themselves in the new media environment.

It is interesting to note that the increased use of social networks for marketing is taking place during a time of decreased social cohesion and reduced social capital. Numerous indicators point to the high level of social disconnectedness plaguing contemporary society (Smith-Lovin et al., 2006). However, much of the evidence to support such claims is based upon measurements of more traditional notions of human connection. The new marketing environment is capitalizing on the potential of technology-induced social networks.

There are many success stories about organizations using these new marketing strategies, or merging more traditional techniques with these new practices, to boost sales, invigorate corporate image, and promote greater brand loyalty. But navigating the fine line between succeeding in this new marketing environment and causing irreparable damage to customer trust is complicated and requires careful planning and consideration. Trout (2006) contends that marketing that relies on buzz and word of mouth can be a double-edged sword. There is no way to stop such processes, even if they are promoting negative impressions of a product. Well-crafted strategies are no protection against social processes in the new marketing environment. Often times, it is easier to create negative buzz than positive buzz. Hespos (2000) identifies best practices and strategies for a successful campaign in the new marketing environment: 1) The "virus" must present clear value to the customer; 2) It must be easy to send to a friend; and 3) It should be easy to track.

“Social Marketing”: Coming of Age

It is important to examine trends in commercial marketing because “social marketing” often takes many cues from the field (Peattie & Peattie, 2003). The traditional definition of “social marketing” is the use of marketing techniques to promote positive social behaviors, usually through changing group norms. The founders of the theoretical base for social marketing define it as “the explicit use of marketing skills to help translate present social action efforts into more effectively designed and communicated programs that elicit desired audience response (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). In many cases, “the task of social marketing is to move people from intention to action” (Fox & Kotler, 1980). The origins of the practice date back to the 1970s (Fox & Kotler, 1980). The roots of social marketing lie in social advertising, a purely information approach to behavior change (Fox & Kotler, 1980). Social advertising morphed into

social communication as greater support networks were integrated into campaigns (Fox & Kotler 1980). But social marketing came into being through the inclusion of market research, product development, the use of incentives, and facilitation (Fox & Kotler, 1980). According to Andreasen (1995), “social marketing” is used to promote one-time actions (i.e. have a vasectomy), repeated but finite actions (i.e. participate in a drug withdrawal program), permanent lifestyle changes (i.e. stop smoking), and situational actions (i.e. don’t drink and drive).

“Social marketing” has been used to encourage beneficial parenting practices, discourage smoking, and promote abstinence, educate young people about the importance of remaining in school, and a wide array of other issues of public concern. There have been numerous examples of successful “social marketing” campaigns. However, the “Got Milk?” marketing campaign is an example of “social marketing” that was quite expensive and found to be largely ineffective (Smith, 2006). It is possible that this is because it relied on more traditional forms of marketing. Additionally, experts point out that evaluation of “social marketing” campaigns is extremely difficult because measures of success are often unclear or elusive and it is difficult to demonstrate causation (Fox & Kotler, 1980). The efficacy of “social marketing” initiatives are also influenced by the level of entrenchment of the undesirable behavior pattern and the degree of invasiveness of the recommended change.

In recent years, there has been a growing debate about the appropriate relationship between commercial and “social marketing,” with some contending that “social marketing” must develop its own theory and vocabulary to refocus efforts on the needs of the targeted audiences (Peattie & Peattie, 2003). According to Bloom & Novelli (1981), “the two marketing games have much in common and require similar training, but each has its own set of rules, constraints, and

required skills... 'social marketing' is the more difficult game to master... success in the 'social marketing' arena requires greater ingenuity and imagination" (qtd. in Peattie, 2003 at 381).

"Social marketing" has slowly begun to utilize the technologies of the new media environment to promote causes and ignite social change. The reasons for the switch include the efficacy and penetration of such techniques. Time shifting allows audiences to control when they view content and expands the visibility of advertisements (Tauder, 2005). But equally or more important to the shift is the changing media landscape, which has become less receptive to traditional marketing methods. "Social marketing" – which has often relied upon free media or reduced fees through public interest requirements of broadcasters and other media outlets – is no longer able to rely upon government regulation to motivate symbiotic relationships with media entities. Additionally, social marketers – like their commercial counterparts – have seen how the saturation of information from cable and the introduction of digital media sources has eroded targeted message delivery. Recent studies have shown that consumer retention of information from traditional marketing is on the decline (Jaffe, 2005). And Spitfire (2005) points out that "it's also prohibitively expensive for nonprofit organizations to run enough ads to be effective on most television stations."

Early results from "social marketing" campaigns employing new marketing practices are promising. Civic marketing – focused on promoting political participation and not merely choosing a particular candidate – has been an area of robust analysis and research. Tolbert & McNeal (2003) conclude that the Internet has the power to mobilize the electorate and promote citizenship. Additionally, the recent rise of student activism in California on immigration issues is attributed to new forms of "social marketing" (Melber, 2006). Recent developments – such as the creation of a politics-specific channels on popular social networking sites – suggest that social

marketers working in the area of civic engagement are particularly tuned in to the “Connected Generation” (Williams, 2007). MySpace founder Tom Anderson contends that “MySpace has a method of reaching people who are historically not interested in voting...and a MySpace profile could excite their interest in ways they are used to. In the same way they learn about their friends, they could learn about a candidate” (Williams, 2007).

Many important lessons learned from “social marketing” using more traditional techniques are still applicable to “social marketing” in the new marketing environment. It is crucial for marketers to focus on positive messages: “can do” not “don’t do.” Additionally, it is critical that marketers make their brand synonymous with cool. The TRUTH Campaign was successful because it framed the issue in such a way that young people were being asked to take action rather than inaction – rebel against the conniving tobacco companies and refuse to give into their malicious demands (Spitfire, 2005).

It is also essential to target messages in such a way that they appeal directly to the students. The reality is such that consumers are no longer captive audiences in front of a TV set, and social marketers must employ new methods. Students want to be given responsibility over their own actions and often resent excessive control by others. The VERB – a campaign which focused on increasing the physical activity of young people which integrated elements of traditional media marketing with new media marketing such as social network marketing– is a prime example of the successful merging of old and new marketing techniques for the social good (Smith, 2006). The campaign added the distribution of large yellow balls to young people to coincide with an aggressive television marketing campaign advocating increased adolescent physical activity. It first focused on select geographic regions, but eventually marketing permeated across the country. The campaign used an interactive website to provide a home base

for users outside of primary marketing area and foster social networks between participants to promote greater behavioral change.

Another successful model is the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, which utilized traditional and new media to “surround its target audience...” (King, 2004, 72). Its online component – Freevibe.com – has taken a multifaceted approach – encouraging teens to become aware of their behavior, contemplate behavior change, share behavior interventions, and sustain behavior change (King, 2004). Each of these steps are facilitated by interactive activities – such as games, e-mail cards, quizzes, videos, and diaries (King, 2004). King (2004) believes that the decreases in marijuana use from 2001-2003 can be attributed to the popularity and efficacy of the Freevibe.com site.

New marketing practices – based on word-of-mouth – require individuals to become invested in the campaign and co-produce the message. “Social marketing” is increasingly taking the view of “*communities as interveners*,” which states that “for many important social changes, communities need to be mobilized and take ‘ownership’ of a challenge for anything lasting to take place” (Andreasen, 2006, 134). “Co-creation” is essential (McConnell & Huba, 2007, 150). Messages spread via MySpace and Facebook – which rely upon young people to take action to get the word out through networks of human contacts – are examples of “social network marketing.” These “social network marketing” utilities provide targeted access to youth markets; as of early 2006, MySpace had more than 54 million registered users (Johnson, 2006). According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 55% of online teens regular visit social networking websites (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Once a product is deemed “cool,” the new marketing environment behaves in such a way that the customers start working for the producer.

Facebook is particularly powerful because it links members through common identification with a particular educational institution (Johnson, 2006).

There are many things to consider about new marketing techniques. Firstly, they are largely reliant on technology (especially computer access). For a “social network marketing” campaign to be effective, the target audience must have access to the marketing channels. If low-income students do not have access to requisite technologies, they will not have the opportunity connect. Marketing based on social networks will not work under such conditions. However, 87 percent of white teens, 89 percent of Hispanic teens, and 77 percent of African-American teens report using the Internet (Spifire, 2005). When it comes to mobile technologies, a recent survey found that 80 percent of 18-29 year olds own cell phones, 65 percent of which text message on a regular basis (Lasica, 2007). Interestingly, online Non-white youth and young people from households earning less than \$50,000 are the most active participants on social networking sites (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Michael Lomax, President of the United Negro College Fund, acknowledges the proliferation of mobile technologies in the African American and Latino communities, but remains skeptical as to whether such developments are “having a positive economic and social effect on serving underserved populations” (Lasica, 2007, 43).

Disparities in student access to the Internet – based on wealth – do remain. While 90 percent of students have access to computer facilities in school, students in households earning above \$75,000 are more than three times as likely to have Internet access at home than students in households earning less than \$15,000 (Venegas, 2007). Fewer than 7 percent of low-income students have high speed Internet connection on a home computer (Venegas, 2007). Additionally, given the importance of information trafficking through human networks in this new marketing environment, it is important to consider the differential levels of population

density and the unique characteristics of social capital across geographic and demographic boundaries. Different communities have different value systems and community-building processes. Those targeting rural populations need to be especially cautious of using Internet-based approaches and utilize more human-focused approaches (Spitfire, 2005).

Maintaining ethical standards is important to “social marketing” because it would appear hypocritical to employ marketing techniques that are deemed unethical to promote social good. The means must be in the spirit of the ends; the goals of a campaign must be linked with the process. Unlike commercial marketers, social marketers must be sensitive to the morality of their marketing approaches (Peattie & Peattie, 2003). Some view “social marketing” as manipulative, distorting facts, giving power to a select group to influence public opinion, and “urging them to give up or cut back on comfortable habits” (Fox & Kotler, 1980, 30). Ethical analysis is particularly important when considering guerilla or viral campaigns – when messages can be spread without the consent of consumers.

College Access Marketing: A Primer

College access marketing is a particular type of “social marketing.” Efforts to increase college attendance rates through advertisements and other forms of communication are not a new phenomenon; The Ad Council aired “Go to College” messages well before the 1970s (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). But these campaigns were little more than social advertisements, devoid of a support structure to facilitate personal agency. According to the Pathways to College Network, college access marketing – as we currently know it – has only been around for about a decade or so. Before 2005, only three states were involved in “social marketing” efforts to promote college attendance (MacDonald, 2005). But today, such efforts are currently underway at the local, state, and national level, primarily initiated by state education agencies, non-profit organizations,

and higher education associations. The behavioral change goals of current campaigns are described as the 5 A's: aspiration, academic preparation, availability, affordability, and application (Kanoy & Watts, 2005).

What makes current college access marketing efforts vastly different from previous incarnations is the level of integration. Earlier attempts were social advertisements, leaving viewer response to “natural social processes,” whereas current efforts arrange “for a stepdown communication process” (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, 6). Contemporary college access marketing does not solely rely upon the presentation to reach target audiences. Two additional components – collaboration and destination – are integral aspects of current efforts. And both have been aided by the advent of new media. Collaboration – involving all constituencies influencing the college pipeline – is crucial because there are so many moving parts involved in the college-going process. It truly takes a village to educate a child to the point of college readiness and assist them through the application process. Promoting collaboration between the relevant governmental, non-profit, and for-profit organizations has been aided by the proliferation of Internet technology across sectors, empowering organizations to provide more effective and integrated service delivery (Hall, 2007). Destination – providing a convenient, user-friendly, and comprehensive site to assist prospective college students – helps ensure that the college access message is not limited to the 30 or 60 marketing second sound bite. They provide “accessible outlets which permit the translation of motivations into actions” (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, 9). Websites have revolutionized traditional notions of college access destination.

In the Internet age, the television or radio spot can be a launching pad, directing young people towards an authoritative source of information. While the advent of the Internet has made such destinations far more readily available, all sites are not created equal. Many states currently

have sites that are not functional, in the sense that they do not allow the individual to receive information and act on such information at the same time and from the same location. The most effective web-based destination – a portal – is a significantly more expensive and complex endeavor. Additionally, web-based destinations are an imperfect panacea. Community-based information and support centers remain a vital component of many ongoing college access campaigns.

There are numerous college access marketing success stories. The integrated marketing efforts of the College Foundation of North Carolina – which included collaboration through an “education cabinet” and the development of a sophisticated web portal – helped boost the college-enrollment rate for high school graduates from 57% to 68% in less than a decade (AP, 2006). Kentucky’s “Go Higher KY” campaign – which had different phases with different target groups along with a grassroots component – helped increase the college-enrollment rate for high school graduates from 55% to 62% in less than 5 years (AP, 2006). Experimental analyses have added support for the efficacy of college access marketing; the Pathways to College Network found that students were significantly more confident about the ability to pay for college, less confused about the admissions process, and felt less anxiety after college access marketing sessions (Maurer, 2006). However, it is important to note that such campaigns are not cheap; North Carolina and Kentucky spend well over a million dollars on their integrated college access marketing efforts. And funding is subject to the whims of government appropriation; in 2003, the Kentucky legislature did not renew funding for the campaign and leaders were forced to look to other funding sources (MacDonald, 2005).

In addition to these established campaigns, there has been a recent explosion of activity. In 2004, the National Governors Association provided nearly \$20 million to 10 states looking to

implement college access marketing campaigns (MacDonald, 2005). In 2007, the American Council on Education and the Lumina Foundation launched KnowHow2Go, a national print, broadcast, and online campaign to prepare more low-income and first-generation students for continued education and increase their college attendance rates. They expect to receive upwards of \$30 million in donated advertising (Corrigan & Hartle, 2007). Maine kicked off their “Kick Start” campaign with a Super Bowl advertisement and Massachusetts has purchased more than \$250,000 in paid media to support their “Think Again” campaign effort. There has also been increased state collaboration on college access marketing initiatives through the Go Alliance – a partnership of states who jointly develop or share marketing materials.

College Access Marketing: The Next Generation

College access marketing – like most “social marketing” – has been slow to incorporate new marketing techniques into their campaigns. While college access marketing has utilized new media forms – especially web-based destinations and to a lesser extent Internet advertisements – there has been little done in the way of large-scale new marketing. While it would be shortsighted to forgo the good (traditional college access marketing) in search of the great (next generation college access marketing), the characteristics of the target group for college access marketing campaigns suggests that such inactivity could prove disastrous.

The students of today are members of the “Connected Generation” – characterized by their desire for experience, transparency, reinvention, connection, and expression (Johnson, 2006). According to Tower (2006), “Students have high expectations of communicating via technology” (2). The National Research Center for College and University Admissions reports that more than 60 percent of this year’s graduating class prefer student and faculty blogs over other information sources (Alexander, 2007). 82 percent of students indicated that they would

consider reading or responding to an instant message from a college representative (NCCCUA, Tower, & Noel-Levitz, 2006a). The Pew Internet & American Life Project found that 57 percent of online teens have used the Internet to access information about postsecondary education (Hitlin & Rainie, 2005). Interestingly, Hispanic students indicated greater interest in attending college-related online chat events and downloading video podcasts than White peers (NRCCUA, Tower, & Noel-Levitz, 2006b). Additionally, the study found that parents are also utilizing new media to navigate the college-going process. But the majority of this activity has been focused on the cutting edge practices of institutions, not college access marketers.

On the institutional level, blogs, interactive chats, and sophisticated web-based technologies have become a popular form of communication. Institutions have discovered that new marketing approaches – such as personalized web recruiting, interactive web sites, and chat sessions – can contribute to growth in applications, improved quality of applicants, and a reduction in admissions and recruitment-related expenses (Foser, 2003).

Individuals and organizations involved with college access marketing are missing a blessing in disguise. What has worked for higher education institutions will likely work for higher education social marketers. New marketing approaches have the opportunity to provide high-impact, low-cost message delivery mechanisms, finely tailored in terms of message and target audience. The success of social marketing campaigns mixing traditional marketing (through media outlets) with new marketing (viral and buzz marketing) is an indication of the potential of such approaches in the college access marketing domain.

There are some signs of activity on this front when it comes to college access marketing. KnowHow2Go makes it explicit in their user guide that states should encourage viral marketing by distributing e-mail messages with campaign information and PSAs through e-mail.

Additionally, they have started to advertise on Facebook, have developed a send-along feature on their website, and have promoted strong community-based support (Corrigan & Hartle, 2007). The “Go Ahead, Get Ahead” effort in New Hampshire hopes to utilize street teams and peer-to-peer networks. This is especially promising because studies of youth voting behavior suggest that person-to-person contact is a highly effective means of promoting socially beneficial behavior (Green & Garber, 2001).

The “Kick Start” campaign in Maine is distributing T-Shirts with the campaign mascot and message – as well as launching teen-oriented game show with contestants competing for scholarship prizes – in an effort to create buzz about college attendance. Additionally, a sophisticated and interactive website serves as a functional destination for Maine students. User-created groups that support college access efforts or promote positive messages have popped up on the Facebook and other social utility sites. Such supplementation – “the effort to follow up mass communication campaigns with programs of face-to-face contacts” – has been revolutionized by new forms of person-to-person contact (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, 6). But the scope of new marketing efforts remains on a small scale with current campaigns.

The reasons for such limited implementation are complex. Given the concerns and uncertainties about new marketing strategies – in terms of efficacy and function– it may be a matter of risk aversion. With groups involved in college access work scrapped for resources, risky and untested propositions might prove too daunting. Going with the safer, more traditional approaches – which have proven quite effective in several cases – is the preferred option. However, questions about limited access by underrepresented groups to new media should not be a roadblock to change. Given that new media literacy is critical to college success, interested parties should dedicate time, money, and effort to shrinking the divide. But another factor that

needs to be considered is the lack of investigation and exploration in this area. It could be college access marketing campaigns are not utilizing new marketing strategies simply because modes of doing so remain unexplored. There has been no concerted effort to investigate their potential design.

So what would college access marketing campaigns that incorporate new marketing techniques look like in practice? Given the efforts of for-profit marketing campaigns and other “social marketing” campaigns utilizing new marketing techniques, here are a few possibilities:

<u>New Marketing Idea/Example</u>	<u>Description</u>
Social Utility Groups: The Bright Futures Facebook Group (Hillaker, 2006)	Students created a group for students at University of Florida who turned down offers from more prestigious institutions because of the financial incentives of the “Bright Futures” Scholarship Program. Thousands of students voluntarily joined the group and included it in their profile. A message board allowed for communication within the group. Marketing need-based and merit-based scholarship programs through such a vehicle seems like a distinct possibility for college access marketing.
Interactive Promotions: National CPA Student Recruitment (Spitfire, 2005, 31).	Part of a \$25 million direct-marketing campaign that included an interactive website with personality tests, polls, and games. Additionally, they launched a “Build a Record Label” promotion that allowed teens to develop business skills and a “Catch Me If You Can” game that promoted forensic accounting. It reached over 8 million high school students in a 2-month period. College access marketing might team up with specific professional organizations or institutions to promote their cause in a similar manner.
Virtual Environments: The Coke Music Web Site (Spitfire, 2005, 33)	Coca-Cola built interactive community based on love of music, including a virtual recording studio, a music mixer, musing sharing, surveys and quizzes, t-shirt design, films, and interactive games. They linked with AOL Music through an under-the-cap offer for a free song download. Word-of-mouth through chat, e-mail, and instant messaging contributed to unprecedented traffic. Ongoing updates and special promotions have led to sustained interest. A similar promotion would be possible for college access marketing; possibly having students design a JoeCollege persona or other virtual reality
Merchandising: The Florida “Truth” Campaign (Spitfire, 2005, 29)	Convened summit of 500 young people and determined that merchandising was important component of campaign. “Truth” merchandise was distributed from “truth track” at events around the state. Popular, branded teen merchandise ensures that messages will be sustained and will be seen by the target population. Maine has taken a similar approach with their “Kick Start” t-shirts. More states should consider embedding fashionable, humorous, or trendy clothing into campaigns.

<p>Blogging: talk.collegeconfidential.com (Alexander, 2007).</p>	<p>The lack of honest, straightforward information available to young people led an Indiana father to start a blog with tips forums about admissions, financial aid, standardized testing, and campus life. The site allows for continuous and anonymous discussion. In addition to websites, college access marketing campaigns could set up blogs that tackle issues related to scholarship programs, admissions requirements, and student experiences.</p>
<p>Novelty Messaging: Snakes On A Plane; Elf Yourself</p>	<p>The “Snakes on a Plane” marketing campaign consisted of an interactive, personalized telephone and e-mail service that allowed users to visit the fan sight and send customized messages – in the voice of Samuel L. Jackson – to friends and family. The “Elf Yourself” website was a popular site during Christmas that allowed users to send greeting cards with uploaded pictures of friends or family on the body of a dancing elf. Such tactics could be applied to college access marketing; possibly a famous athlete or performer could be cast for automated messages encouraging positive college-going behaviors.</p>
<p>Gaming Environments: Information embedded in youth leisure software</p>	<p>Described by Jaffe (2005) as the “convergent utopia” because it is popular, time consuming, provides for active engagement, is utilized by a targeted audience, and has been found to be quite effective (p. 140). Include information about college attendance in video game software or make a college-going theme part of a video or computer game.</p>
<p>Cross-Promotions: U.S. Military Recruitment of Teens (Spitfire, 2005, 35)</p>	<p>Launched a website, youth-targeted magazine distributed to teachers and students in schools, an IMAX film, and wrote a prominent role for an Army instructor into a new ESPN reality show. Additionally, they sponsored NASCAR races, bull-riding events, the Arena Football League, and car shows. It is essential for college access marketing to take a multi-faceted approach that looks for more seamless marketing opportunities.</p>

Future Thoughts

These are just starting suggestions for how college access marketing should move forward. However, it is important for college access marketing to keep up to date with cutting edge practices and be proactive moving forward. After all, “a new generation of teens typically arrives armed with new expectation and a disdain for the cultural tastes of their old siblings” (McConnell & Huba, 2007, 96). Additionally, college access marketing must divide campaigns into more distinct and discrete behavioral change agendas. According to Balch (1974), students must have the belief that the recommended action can be accomplished – both through “internal

efficacy” and “external efficacy” (qtd. in Andreasen, 1995 at 161). Current campaigns are too complex; the KnowHow2Go Campaign asks students to search for knowledgeable adults and mentors, enroll in a college preparatory curriculum, explore institutional options, and search for financial resources. “Social marketing” campaigns are most effective when they are focused on concrete, specific, and actionable positive behavior changes. New media and new marketing will never reach their full potential unless college access marketers pare down their campaign messages. There are also many questions that still remain when it comes to integrating new marketing strategies in college access marketing campaigns. A better understanding of social networking within this population, differential impact of efforts across socioeconomic, geographic, and racial and ethnic groups, and the logistics of such efforts need to be explored in a systematic and large-scale study.

But now is the time for college access marketing to come of age and get connected with the students of the present and the future. A “perfect storm is brewing” – characterized by competitive societal forces, changes to the media environment and financial exigencies in “an ever-increasing digital world governed by the ability to create countless synergies and dynamics owing to the amalgamation of data, information, and communication” (Jaffe, 2005, 34). Commercial marketing has embraced new marketing practices and other forms of “social marketing” are light years ahead of college access marketing in this area. And the results to date in these other domains are noteworthy. While there exist more questions than answers at this time, integrating new marketing techniques into college access marketing campaigns looks like a promising undertaking. Increased support for investigative activities that will help pave the way for college access marketing’s next frontier is essential.

For non-profit organizations and governmental entities involved in college access marketing initiatives, there are several things to consider in moving forward with current campaigns or designing new ones. 1) Rather than viewing traditional media and classic marketing as the foundation of campaigns, it is important to view new media and new marketing as the focal point. Traditional media and marketing should support cutting-edge efforts. 2) College access marketing should not be seen as a unitary cause; the elements of college access must be delineated in order for marketing efforts – in both old and new media environments – to be most effective. Breaking the college-going process into 4 pieces is a start, but in truth there are 15-20 steps that must be taken in order for a young person to attain a higher education degree. 3) College access marketing initiatives are only as successful as the support behind them. Collaboration is the critical foundation of any college access marketing campaign. Focusing on the destination and presentation elements of a college access marketing campaign with undue focus on building representative, cross-sector support will lead to unrealized goals. 4) College access marketers need to be actively involved in dialogue with commercial marketing “thought leaders” and other members of the “social marketing” community. While there are unique elements to “social marketing” that might require reconsideration of commercial practices, there is more that unites social marketers with commercial marketers than divides them. Planning, design, and implementation of college access marketing campaigns cannot be done outside of a larger marketing framework. 5) It is not all about money. In the new media environment, new marketing has the potential to place a premium on creativity, and not merely capital. College access marketing cannot buy success; it must be earned through innovative thinking and cutting-edge practice.

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