

Journalism students plot Grand plan

by Katie Holliday - Thursday, October 21, 2010

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/6579/journalism-students-plot-grand-plan/>

Go Grand

As part of a class project, two groups of journalism students at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh were given a real-life client — The Grand Opera House. Their task? Figure out how to attract college students to the restored Victorian theater, which has been an arts and entertainment hub in downtown Oshkosh since the late 19th century.

The first group, taught by Sara Steffes Hansen, took the Research and Strategic Communication class in fall 2009. In this class, they conducted research on who exactly is coming to The Grand. Through focus groups and online surveys, the students learned that The Grand's primary audience skewed to a crowd either younger or older than the college-age group.

Students in the second group took Strategic Campaigns in Advertising, which was taught by journalism adjunct instructor Dana Baumgart in spring 2010. These students took the first group's findings and used them to generate advertising and marketing methods that would draw an audience like themselves — college students.

In the end, they produced a marketing plan for The Grand Opera House that included the use of social media like Facebook and Twitter and a new slogan for The Grand Opera House: "Go Grand."

Market Research

The journey from research to final presentation to clients was long but worthwhile, students say.

Prior to this assignment, senior Dan Mast realized he had little knowledge about the 180-year-old building.

"I thought it was actually at a different location," he says. (For the record, The Grand is at 100 High Ave. in downtown Oshkosh, Wisconsin.)

To learn more about their client, the students in the research and communication class used methods employed by professional advertising companies. Through SurveyMonkey, a website that allows users to create personalized surveys, the students received input from respondents of all ages about The Grand Opera House. In addition, the students also conducted a focus group of college students that gave them some insight into what their peers think of The Grand and its patrons.

"We mainly focused on college students who hadn't been to the Grand or had only been [there] a few

times,” said senior Hilary Simon, who was in both classes.

With the help of the young marketers, The Grand Opera House hopes that more of the UW Oshkosh community will explore what the theater had to offer.

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