

Brand Strategy Plan



FIELD STATIONS & NATURE PRESERVES

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Sonoma State University's Field Stations and Nature Preserves (FSNP) are currently comprised of 3 properties: Fairfield Osborn, Los Guilicos, and Galbreath which are lands held in trust under the management of Sonoma State for purposes of education, preservation, and research. The preserves are neither open to the general public for recreational use nor available for development on a large scale such as for agricultural purposes.

- Fairfield Osborn is currently the most utilized property as it is closest to the campus and has land developments such as a parking lot and buildings for meeting in a classroom environment. It is most well known in the local community as a location for elementary school field trips through their programs with the School of Education involving students who are studying to teachers. It is also the home of the source of Copeland Creek, one of the only fishless streams in California, a rare crustacean which is only known to exist in 5 other locations in the world, and it's very high occurrence of Sudden Oak Death has brought biologists from other universities to conduct ongoing research projects on location.
- Los Guilicos is the smallest preserve of just 40 acres in the Valley of the Moon. Currently there are only two barns on the preserve one of which is used by the Wildlife Rescue of Sonoma County for the rehabilitation of injured raptors.
- Galbreath is the largest at nearly 4,000 acres of unspoiled land but more than an hour and a half from campus. There is currently a campsite facility located there and there are plans under development to build a building on the property.

Strengths:

All properties offer free access to local nature to anyone with educational or research intentions

Several different kinds of habitats are available; some have multiple examples at one location

Unique biological and geological phenomenon not otherwise found in this area

Staffed by very open minded educators who are passionate about interdisciplinary learning

Weaknesses:

Lack of awareness of preserves' existence

Perception that preserves are only for the benefit of the Biology department

Murky definition of how this asset can benefit the SSU community

Limited staffing leaves current management at full workload capacity

Current Brand Image

The FSNP seems to be largely unknown by the SSU population or if known, it is perceived as belonging to the School of Science and Technology for their sole benefit and use. People are unsure of its function and purpose in general. A logo competition was held within the past 2 years in an attempt to re-brand and/or draw attention to the Preserves but this seems to have been unsuccessful. A quote from the SSU site states: "The University also owns and operates the 411-acre Fairfield Osborn Preserve nearby and the 3,200 acre Galbreath Wildland Preserve in Mendocino County. Both offer major opportunities for research in the natural sciences rare for students." While very true, this statement again solidifies the perspective that these areas are for the sole benefit of science students.

Positioning

The FSNP is unique in this area in that it is not open to the recreational use by the community so research, educational projects, and the ecology of the locations are protected from hikers, bikers, dogs, etc. While there are several local state and county run parks for nature seekers, these are inappropriate places to perform research along with most private property whose owners typically seek to capitalize on their property with agricultural or land development endeavors. While there are a few locations on campus for students to seek out nature, it is still a highly populated and developed urban location, so unmarred research is unlikely.

Competitive Review

Competitors: It is our perception that while the natural tendency would be to compare the FSNP to other nature preserves or nature resources available, we view the competitors of FSNP to be other assets of the SSU community both for attention and funding. Therefore, the FSNP is competing with those types of facilities and highly visible projects for the opportunity to be a part of students' educational experiences at SSU.

- Green Music Center- This is currently the new, exciting, and unique attention-grabber on campus with several departments looking for opportunities to teach classes in those facilities not only for music courses, but several other disciplines as well. It also is receiving a lot of press, is in the forefront of people's minds, and is often highlighted on the front page of the SSU website.
- SSU Native Plant Garden and other outdoor spaces on campus - With SSU being touted as a beautiful campus, there are opportunities for some outdoor learning such as the native plant garden and other micro environments near the campus lakes.

- Environmental Technology Center - while admittedly perhaps more for students looking to focus on sustainability and development while not damaging nature. This center could also pull attention and funding away from the FSNP by awarding projects that could have been performed by or in conjunction with the Preserves as it bills itself as an educational and research site and since it is on-campus, it has easier access for students and professors. However, unlike the Preserve, access might actually be more difficult since they have to coordinate between other classes, programs, and are limited by space and the availability of their small staff that has to be on site when the facility is in use.
- Traditional lecture halls and classrooms on campus- These are the easy, known, and accepted locations for learning. They are climate controlled year round so students and professors are already very comfortable about using these centrally located spaces to teach or learn, often viewing them as the only space to do so depending on their opinions and prior past experiences.

Overall, the Preserves still has many unique attributes that its competitors do not have and it is our belief that once we bring its existence into the forefront of the minds of the customers and illustrates it many benefits, that we can encourage its use as a fundamental educational asset of the SSU community.

Target Market Analysis

User profile:

- SSU professors - Highly educated professionals often experiencing the majority of their own educations inside a traditional classroom and used to making their own decisions

regarding teaching methods and locations. Some disciplines are seemingly “indoor only” so the idea of going out into nature to teach might be a stretch of their comfort zone or imagination, especially if there is no motivating factor to do so. As such, we would expect the most resistance from tenured professors in non-life science disciplines but acknowledge that beyond simply informing the faculty of FSNP, that taking the next step of utilizing the Preserves could be a large one. We would expect associate professors seeking tenure, life and earth science professors, or more innately open minded individuals will be the easiest to convince.

- SSU administration - Individuals who are not necessarily connected to teaching, this group includes deans of schools, the Communications department, social networking marketers, etc. who have the ability to get the word out about the FSNP, sing its praises and uses, and make it more visible to the community on a broad scale. This group can be viewed as our “partners” in marketing in that if we can get their buy in, they might be able to affect a bigger push than we could ourselves.
- SSU students - while most definitely the most benefitted user of the FSNP, they do not have any purchasing power and very little say or sway as to whether they become users of the Preserves so their input is limited to whether the Preserves are a tipping factor in their decision to attend SSU only.
- Other academic researchers - This group of users know of the Preserve already or at least know how to go about finding it when they have a research project in mind. We feel since we can’t market to them directly given that they are a large group from a large area, we will refrain from trying to target them specifically and trust that they will find the

FSNP on their own via the Internet so therefore must only make minimal efforts to increase online visibility.

Since they are seemingly autonomous at SSU, the user most likely to make the purchasing decision would be professors when designing their syllabi and creating student projects. We also hold that SSU administrators are “purchasers” in that we need their buy in as well so that they will promote FSNP via their own channels such as Internet, media, websites, and emails to professors. If administrators are aware of the benefits of this important asset, then their knowledge has the power to trickle down to a larger audience.

Decision criteria for professors could be student enrichment via unique and inspiring hands on learning experiences. There is a potential increase in positive student feedback on end of semester class surveys and general word of mouth excitement for their courses by students. By showing they are superior educators, increased likelihood of tenure and more respect through the SSU community overall.

Decision criteria for administrators is to be constantly be looking for ways of improving SSU both in reputation but in drawing new students to the campus, increasing donations from philanthropists who might also be alumni, increased local community interest and goodwill, respect in the academic community, and increased student retention and graduation rates.

4. SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All properties offer free access to local nature to anyone with educational or research intentions• Several different kinds of habitats are available, some have multiple examples on one location• Unique biological and geological phenomenon not otherwise found in this area• Staffed by very open-minded educators who are passionate about interdisciplinary learning• Will remain an SSU asset in perpetuity• Funding available from State	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lacking awareness of preserves' existence• Perception that preserves are only for the benefit of the Biology department• Murky definition of how this asset can benefit the SSU community• Distance from campus• Limited staffing leaves current management at full workload capacity• Requires reservations in advance
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase student graduation and retention rates• Word of mouth community or alumni based philanthropy• Projects can be performed by students rather than paid contractors to save resources• Build relationships with fellow professors to come up with mutually beneficial programs• Increased use could lead to more funding• Increased awareness could lead to more governmental programs such as SCWA	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued assumption that Preserves are for Biology department use only• Apathy to message• Closed mindedness or lack of creativity on part of professors on how FSNP can be used in their teaching• Out of sight, out of mind• So many other things to focus on in mid-semester, next fall semester is 6 months away

Marketing Goals

1. To increase overall awareness of the FSNP as a SSU asset for use by any School for their programs.
2. To increase the understanding of its use as a platform for inspirational, hands on learning experiences which in turn will increase donations, community goodwill, academic reputation, and graduation and retention rates overall.
3. To brand SSU's FSNP as "Our outdoor classrooms" as a unique learning space available to professors for a more comprehensive and practical life application of the theory they teach in their courses.
4. To increase inquiries into using the programs and facilities the Preserves have to offer.

Promotional Program Situation Analysis

The FSNP promotional programs have been very broad and wide reaching but seemingly ineffective in increasing awareness especially of its purpose. It is a unique asset of SSU so in the past brochures, websites, and other media has been very specific and wordy in its description of the Preserves yet still doesn't seem to get the basic intent across to the reader. The last promotion was a FSNP logo contest launched to help come up with a design to be used as the new program logo. The winning logo was a silhouette of a tree with grass, mountains, the moon and a blue sky and while very aesthetically pleasing, it strays from the very well branded SSU logo that is known by everyone on campus and in the community at large so the connection between the Preserves and SSU is muddled. Since it is overseen by the School of Science and Technology and is a research site and nature preserve, the people who are aware of FSNP see it

as solely belonging to the science departments as they are unaware of how it pertains to their curriculum. There have been brochures made and booths setup at campus events, the director states she has gone to dean’s meetings, written articles in the SSU periodicals, etc. all without the response she is looking for.

It is our belief that casting a wide net in this case has been ineffective because it does not specifically tell the customer why they need this product. Just knowing of the Preserves existence isn’t enough and they have an extremely entrenched competitor in the Traditional Classroom so a change in purchaser (the professors) behavior is required which will not be accomplished by an occasional newsletter or booth. Direct and frequent marketing to the professors themselves is required to illustrate the benefit to them for changing their behavior and including FSNP into their curriculum.

7. Review of Existing Programs

<p><u>FSNP Logo Contest</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition to come up with FSNP logo, winner awarded \$250 	<p><u>On-Campus Events</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information booth at Seawolf Day and other various functions • Director attends Dean’s meetings to promote FSNP
<p><u>Media</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSNP director interviewed by local news station • Quarterly newsletter • Annual fundraising mailer • Article publications in SSU paper • Printed brochures 	<p><u>Website</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New webpage under construction, look and feel is more aligned with other SSU department websites • Old website’s look and feel was very different than the SSU brand

<p><u>Social Media</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSNP Facebook page – 273 Fans (as of February 2013) 	<p><u>Ongoing Promotions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly tours held Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays • FSNP staff applied magnets with current logo on their cars to create awareness
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Again, the strengths of these past programs are the attempt to cast a wide net in entering the consciousness of the community as a whole. The weakness however is that it does not identify the main consumer with purchasing power which we believe to be the professors so it would seem a more focused campaign perhaps in addition to the continued activities above would have result in more return for the effort put forth. We also feel while the logo that resulted from the logo competition is aesthetically pleasing, it strays from the already strongly branded SSU logo which has years of established presence in the community and a large budget behind it.

IMC Objectives and Strategies

The IMC objectives will be to produce a marketing and advertising campaign that will position the FSNP as an extension of the SSU campus. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students will have a clear understanding about what the FSNP are and how they can be leveraged for place-based learning. Our campaign will be focused on positioning the Preserves as a SSU asset that should be used by several different Schools at SSU because it will enrich the learning experience of the SSU student body (Place based learning: www.ecoliteracy.org). The FSNP will be seen as “SSU’s outdoor classroom” and will receive increased funding to allow for expansion of the staff and educational programming.

Campaign Objectives:

Increase awareness of FSNP brand among SSU Administrators

Increase inquiries from professors in FSNP for future place-based learning projects

Increased funding for more projects and staff as a result of both of the above (long term)

Campaign Strategies

Showcase new FSNP logo that is aligned with current strong SSU logo

Email blasts to all SSU Administrators/Faculty/Staff/Students describing the FSNP and promoting issues such as place based learning and research on its effects on graduation and retention rates, published research done at FSNP, etc.

Work with SSU Communications (Marketing Dept.) and Social Media director to publish Facebook posts on other SSU Facebook pages for main campus, other schools, etc.

Update main SSU website with link to new FSNP website along with link in the Top Ten Reasons to Attend SSU page

Find placed based learning articles to post to SSU LinkedIn with promotions for FSNP

Present past projects done by students at meetings or other gatherings of professors or faculty

Identify new faculty that might not be aware of FSNP or other faculty on a tenure track who would be open to alternative teaching locations for direct marketing

Continue to find opportunities to set up information booth on campus

Positioning and Campaign Theme

Positioning Strategy:

The FSNP will be marketed as a valuable SSU asset that enriches learning experience by enabling place-based learning for multiple disciplines

Positioning Statement:

The FSNP are extensions of the SSU campus and should be used like any other location on campus in the pursuit of education

Campaign Slogan:

“Sonoma State Field Stations and Nature Preserves: SSU’s outdoor classroom”

Creative Recommendation

Target Audience: SSU Administrators and Faculty

Advertising Objectives:

To increase awareness of the FSNP locations and attributes

To persuade the target audience that the FSNP will enrich SSU students’ learning experience by providing a location for place-based learning

To inform the target audience about past and current projects

Advertising Strategy:

By encouraging reflection of their own educational experiences backed up by research and statistics, administrators and professors will see the benefit to learning outside of a classroom

and FSNP will be seen as an extension of the SSU campus where place-based learning can take place.

Use of FSNP will result in a richer learning experience for students because they will be able to apply theory into hands on projects vs. theory in lectures

The surrounding communities of SSU main campus and FSNP will be able to see SSU students and faculty in action

Students will be more prepared to enter the workforce as a result of having incorporated hands-on projects at FSNP

Professors will be seen by administrators and their peers as innovative and creative in their education methods and students will sing their praises which will help in their achieving tenure and pay raises

Overall Marketing Objectives for Advertising Campaign

Target Audience: SSU Administrators and Faculty

Objectives:

To increase awareness for SSU Administrators, Faculty, and department directors

To increase volume of inquiries about FSNP by SSU faculty

To increase usage of FSNP in professor's educational plans

Strategy:

Continue using newsletters, website updates, etc. to disseminate information about current projects at FSNP

Showcase all past and current projects that took place at FSNP during student showcase events

Media Plan:

1. Create new FSNP Logo incorporating current, well established SSU logo
2. Create a branded brochure that includes the benefits of place-based learning and a condensed summary of all projects completed or in progress at FSNP, include pictures and any accolades received.
3. Update existing media (website, etc.) to include FSNP slogan
4. Create a “What’s happening at FSNP” one pager that can be updated monthly

Rationale:

Target audience must be able to recognize the FSNP as a SSU asset and be well informed about how this land has been used in the past and could possibly be used in the future. Rebranding the FSNP with a logo that clearly shows the FSNP as a department within SSU will eliminate any misconceptions about FSNP being an external/community belonging. Collateral and advertising should articulate clearly what the FSNP is and their inherit restrictions based on easement or terms of the donation.

Budget: \$200 for brochures

Direct Marketing Recommendations

Target Audience: SSU Administrators, Faculty, and Students

Objectives:

To increase awareness of FSNP as an SSU asset, especially to new professors

To increase interest in FSNP among target audience

Strategy:

Using in person meetings and/or email blasts with targeted information regarding place based, interdisciplinary, and project based learning we will help professors understand what FSNP has to offer them and why they should use it in their curriculum.

Media Plan:

1. Create a mailing list to include SSU Administrators, faculty, and department directors
2. Acquire list of new professors for one on one contact
3. Send monthly emails to professors or more frequently around syllabi construction time a month or so before a new semester begins
4. Call/visit stakeholders at each school at SSU to discuss potential FSNP use opportunities

Rationale:

Consistent, timely DM communications to our target audience will increase interest and curiosity in FSNP. We will establish a look and feel that will be recognized by target audience and will clarify any ambiguity that exists about the FSNP.

Budget:

Current staff and/or students will do work, we don't estimate any costs

Internet/Interactive Recommendations

Target audience: SSU Administrators, Faculty, and Students

Objectives:

Provide constant information about current and upcoming events

Raise awareness of presence and remind them of opportunities available

To increase interest in FSNP among target audience by allowing them to share their experience in words and photos and also get other professors names out in the community as an innovator who crosses disciplinary boundaries

Strategy:

Facebook pages (FSNP and other SSU Facebook pages)

Twitter

LinkedIn professor groups

Instagram

Rationale:

Consistent, timely communications to our target audience will increase interest and awareness of FSNP. We will establish a look and feel that will be recognized by target audience and will clarify any ambiguity that exists about the FSNP. Being actively involved via social media sites will allow visitors to feel a direct connection to the FSNP along with being able to count “likes”, etc.

Budget:

No cost, as all chosen online choices are available at no cost for us.

Public Relations Recommendations

Target audience: SSU Administrators, Faculty, and Students

Objectives:

Provide constant information about upcoming events

Raise awareness of preserve

Increase school-wide interest in visiting the preserve

Strategy:

Advertise in SSU's newspaper "Sonoma State Star"

Booth at Seawolf Day on-campus (April 13, 2013)

Various other events and meetings as they present themselves

Rationale:

Constant exposure to the university community will increase awareness and interest in FSNP helping to instill in people's minds that it is an asset that everyone has access to rather than just the Biology department. Effective frequency marketing research has shown that multiple exposures are needed before making a purchase decision (Tellis 1997).

Budget:

New banner with logo and slogan for booth events otherwise free as all chosen public relation portals are available for use at no cost

15. Campaign Flowchart

Date	Events	Major elements	Activities
March 5, 2013	BUS 563 Class presentations	Four groups present branding proposals	Solidify decision on which branding proposal to implement
March 6, 2013	BUS 563 Class begins implementing branding proposal	Elements based on chosen proposal	\$500 designated to implementation
March 18, 2013	Finalize logo	Ensure logo is consistent on paperwork, website, Facebook, etc.	Review wherever logo is placed
March 25, 2013	Construct first email blast	Introduce new logo and why FSNP should be used in their upcoming semester	Acquire mailing lists Construct email template Research appropriate links re: educational research
April 3, 2013	Send out email blast	Keep readers abreast to news in the FSNP	Email
April 3, 2013	Update Facebook and website. FSNP Facebook update weekly, other SSU Facebook pages update monthly	Keep readers abreast to news in the FSNP	Facebook
April 9, 2013	Article in SSU's the "Star"	Keep readers awareness of FSNP	Article
April 13, 2013	Booth at Seawolf Day on-campus	Raise awareness and create interest in FSNP	Hand out brochures/flyers to inform future SSU students & their parents
April 15, 2013	Identify speaking and presentation opportunities for former students	Real life examples of FSNP purpose	varied

Measurement and Evaluation

Measurement:

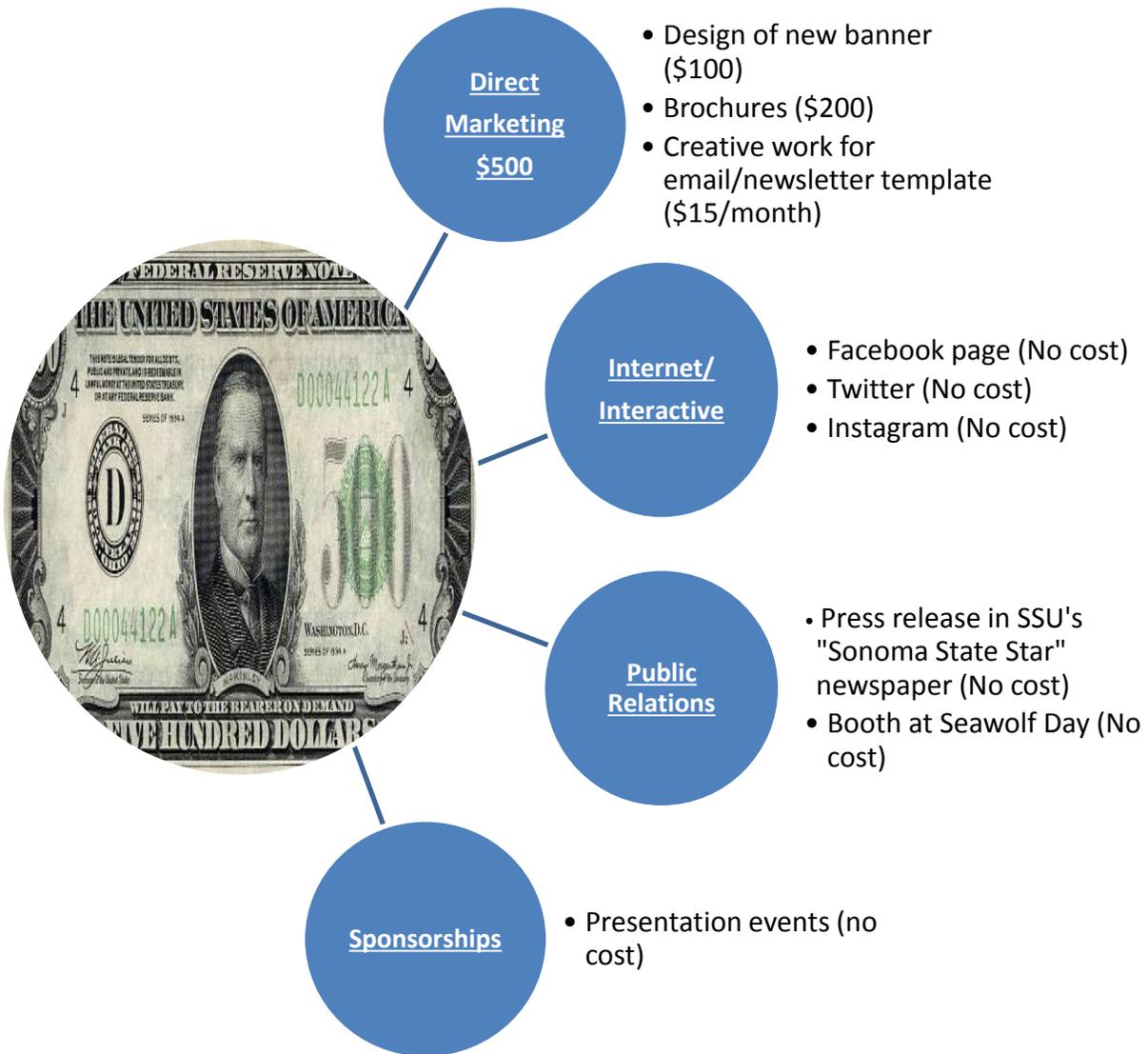
The first most noticeable measurement of success would be the increased inquiries as to the use of FSNP in professors' curriculum via more students and professors making reservations to visit the three sites in order to attend classes, study the area, and just simply utilize the land according to its sole purpose as an outdoor classroom. Another measure of the successes of the new branding strategy, the FSNP will notice an increase of the number of "Likes" on Facebook, increased number of Tweets, and photos on Instagram. By maintaining an online presence, visitors will be able to have a constant reminder of the preserves and will reach out for another visit when the situation arises. The staff of the FSNP will be able to continually measure the success of the branding strategy from the continued increase of interest throughout the campaign as well as at the end. The most simplistic measure would be at booth events to ask, "Have you heard about our outdoor classrooms?" as an instant gauge of general awareness.

Evaluation:

In order to gauge the overall successful nature of the new branding strategy, the FSNP will be able to track the responses of the students and staff. The increase in reservation requests will serve as a means to calculate the effectiveness of the branding for the preserves. The number of increase repeat returns from professors and students will serve as a gauge for how successful and well-branded the preserves will be however it is understood that this will take longer than just this semester to fully assess and maintenance of these efforts is required.

Budget Summary

Given budget: \$500



Conclusion

In sum, our strategic branding plan for the FSNP is to continue to perpetuate the mission statement of the preserves:

"To support academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences by providing education and research experience in place-based learning, community engagement, diversity, and sustainability." (<http://www.sonoma.edu/preserves-new/>)

To do so we will realign the preserves as an asset to the university's community as "SSU's outdoor classrooms" while focusing our information on our target customer with the most purchasing power: the professors. The success of the branding project lies heavily on the consistency and partnership of the preserves and SSU. With the implementation of the consistent image of the logo as well as the constant communication about the preserves, via direct marketing, email blasts, newspaper articles, social media, and other various methods, the preserve can be seen as an integral part of Sonoma State University's extended campus and increase the educational experiences of the students.

Recommendations for the future, for continued success would be for the preserves to be consistent and keep a strong presence on-campus primarily with the professors at Sonoma State. They can continue to have their presence known by making seeking out the new, incoming professors along with those on a tenure track and focusing their email blasts around the time of curriculum decisions, remaining in the newspaper on-campus, by making the community aware of on-going projects and research at the preserves, and encouraging all professors to teach in the outdoor classroom.

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