

# Refreshing the WSSU brand

WSSU kicks off rebranding initiative with input from students, faculty and alumni

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

Although the name will remain the same, and tuition will not be reduced to \$500 a semester thanks to the disposal of Senate Bill 873, major changes are on the horizon at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU).

During a full board of trustees meeting held inside the Donald Reaves Student Activity Center last Friday, director of public and media relations Jamie Hunt said the university has begun an initiative to refresh the WSSU brand.

The current brand, which includes the school's logo, color pallet, various font choices, and other marketing tools for the university, launched in 2000 and saw minor updates in 2005. As she stood before the board of trustees, Hunt said, "Unfortunately, we don't have a consistent brand messaging guide for our campus."

"We are at a point where the university can't afford to not have a strong brand," she said.

Hunt mentioned the most recent brand guidance from 2005 is not marketing focused but is instead driven by academics. She said from a marketing and public relations perspective, the current brand does not serve the needs of the university. She noted with increased competition from other universities, and stu-

dents becoming more savvy about marketing and public relations, now is the time for WSSU to take that into account when adopting brands.

Hunt, who was appointed director of public relations and media last August, said a strong brand will create a better working relationship between the university and students and help build a stronger connection with the community as well.

"A strong brand will allow us to have more effective relationships with a lot of different groups, such as lawmakers, alumni, constituents in the state of North Carolina and beyond," Hunt said.

"The unfortunate thing is that you have a brand

whether or not you decide what that brand is or not. The public is aware and formulates its own brand so it's crucial that we respond to this and develop our own brand."

To kick off the rebranding process, the media relations department analyzed survey data from students, members of the faculty and staff, as well as alumni in order to create a plan to follow during the rebranding process.

According to Hunt, a number of informal and formal focus groups were also held to receive feedback from "Ram Nation," and other stakeholders in the university.

"We took all of that information, analyzed it and made some recommen-

dations and decisions on how to move forward," she said.

The survey data showed the perception of the academic programs at WSSU are a lot higher than peer institutions both nationally and at the local level. Students enjoy the open access to faculty, and appreciate the individualized academic support. Student life also received high marks on the survey. Many students said what they enjoyed most about WSSU was the family-like atmosphere.

Although the rebranding process is still in the early stages, with help from data received from the surveys and open discussions, a "brand promise" has been adopted. The goal of the brand promise is to let students know what to expect when they get an

education from WSSU.

The promise reads, "We will provide high quality education, delivered by student-centered faculty in a caring and supportive atmosphere. Our students will receive a life-changing college experience that builds essential skills, develops character, and prepares them for lifetime of success."

"It's important to note that this brand promise is not just a statement, but a concept that we will keep in mind as we create communication," Hunt said.

In coming months, WSSU will be holding an open house where people can come to learn about how the public and media relations department works. A number of open forums will be held as well to introduce the community to the new brand.



# Taking time to lend a hand

BY TEVIN STINSON  
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Members of the Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD) took time out from their regular duties to help sort items in the food pantry at the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina.

While working at the food bank, on Reed Street, offi-

cers and others who work with the WSPD sorted items from recent food drives and food that has been salvaged from local grocery stores in the area.

As he sorted through boxes of non-perishable food items, Chief Barry Rountree wore a smile that could light up a room. During an open meeting with the community held

earlier this month, Rountree discussed the importance of working with community leaders and community organizations to help create a safer environment for residents.

"We are working to ensure that police and residents have a working relationship," he said. "We have to work together. That is the only way this will work"

The mission of Second Harvest Food Bank (SHFB) is to provide food to help meet urgent nutritional needs and work to put an end to hunger through education, outreach and advocacy. Last year alone, SHFB provided more than 26.5 million pounds of food, the equivalent of more than 22 million meals.



Photo by Tevin Stinson

Pamela Peoples-Joyner, Winston-Salem Police Department community relations specialist, and an intern from Appalachian State University, Chris Cheon, inspect salvaged food from local grocery stores at the Second Harvest Food Bank on Monday, June 13. The mission of the Second Harvest Food Bank, located on Reed Street, is to provide food to help meet urgent nutritional needs.

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