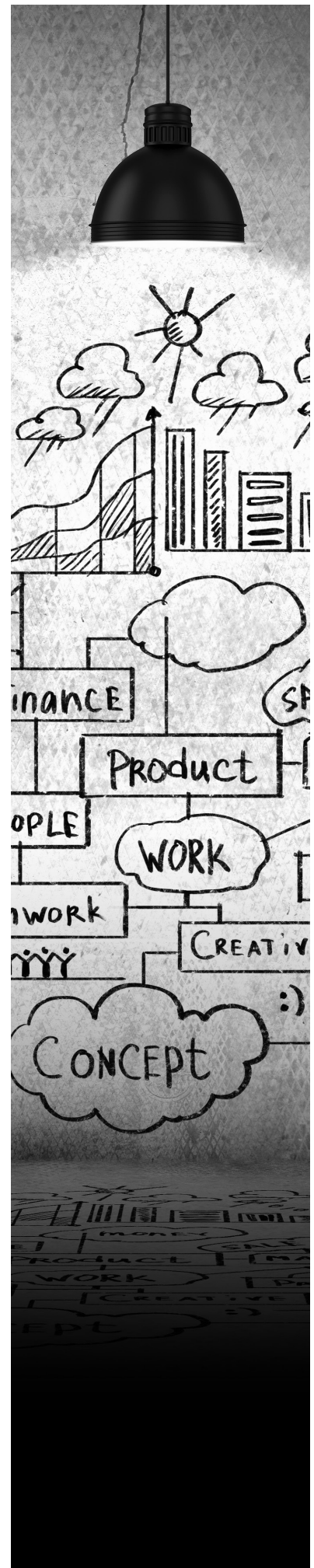


# Program Marketing and Recruitment

A QUICK START GUIDE FOR FACULTY

**Riverland**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



## You may ask:

What is the purpose of this guide?

Isn't recruiting and marketing someone else's job?

Why don't we advertise more in the newspaper? On television? On the radio? On billboards?

Recruiting students is a joint effort among all members of Riverland's faculty and staff. As an instructor, and expert in your field, you have a wide sphere of influence and can generate a significant amount of interest in your program and classes.

Although traditional media sources can help with branding and awareness, they don't "close the sale" the way they once did. *New Media* has taken hold of our consumers and it is driving our economy.

New Media defined: New Media most commonly refers to content available on-demand through the Internet, accessible on any digital device, usually containing interactive user feedback and creative participation. Common examples of New Media include websites such as online newspapers, blogs, or wikis, and other digital media including video games and social media.

The marketing industry is one that has seen phenomenal changes over the last decade and continues to develop constantly. Go back only ten years and most marketing was offline. We had email, but the implementation of social media marketing, digital media marketing, internet search and site optimization, etc. were non-existent. Many people didn't have access to the internet, while today most carry an online connected device with them at all times.

With hundreds of new marketing options and limited staff and budget, we are all presented with new challenges in reaching potential students. Consider some of these New Media challenges:

- Almost 40 percent of our students are enrolled in online courses.
- More than 1,000,000 unique people visit our website every year.
- People can access most of Riverland's services and take nearly 350 programs and complete several degrees from any place in the world without ever setting foot on campus.
- Every program page of the Riverland website is searchable worldwide.
- Every news story that airs on local media is searchable worldwide.
- Of those visiting our site, 34.5 percent are accessing information via mobile devices and/or tablets each year.
- Texting has replaced email and phone calls as preferred communication methods.
- Smartphones have replaced our phones, GPS devices, cameras, radios, MP3 players, televisions, calculators, answering machines and portable gaming systems.
- Fewer people have landline phones in their houses, but can now screen all calls anytime, anyplace.
- Online courses make a college based in Phoenix, Arizona a major competitor across the globe (along with thousands of other colleges and universities).
- Riverland averages about six online inquiries across all programs every single day.
- Facebook launched in 2004 (Riverland has a page and many programs have Alumni pages)
- YouTube started in 2005 (Riverland has a channel)
- Twitter started in 2006 (Riverland has two primary Twitter accounts)

All this is unparalleled to anything we have ever seen before and only imagined a decade ago. Plus, new opportunities in New Media emerge every day.

Here's why we need your help. As faculty you are the face of your program. You are the human touch in the midst of all this technology. We can continue to spread the word across the world and bring people to the door, but you are the reason they decide to enroll and stay with Riverland. You know why your program is best in class and are the perfect person to help convince others. We can repeat your story, but you are the real deal.

With all of you joining our efforts and giving some of your time to help us sell your programs, Riverland will continue to grow.

## **Recruiting/Marketing Suggestions:**

- Follow up on Prospects
- Program Web Page
- Program Open House
- High School Visits / High School Class Presentations
- High School Class Program Visits
- Career Fair/College Fair/Campus Event Participation
- Connect with Workforce/Employment Centers
- Social Media (Facebook, Blogs)
- Student Email (Direct/"The Weekly")
- Austin Campus Street Sign Marquee
- Riverland Website Banners
- Intercampus Digital Displays
- Program Brochure
- Internal and External Fliers/Posters/Handouts
- Direct Mail Campaign
- Advertising (Physical Publication/Digital Media)
- Program Photography
- Commercials (Television/Radio)
- Production of a Program Video
- News Release/Media Event
- Program Specific Marketing

## **STEP ONE**

### **Meet With Admissions Staff and the Communications Department**

Unsure about where to start? Read this guide thoroughly and schedule a meeting with Admissions (Nel & Taylor) and the Communications Department (James, BJ, Sandy).

It will also be helpful if you develop a list of three to six key selling points for your program. What makes your program "best in class"? Examples could include: special accreditations, awards and recognition, state of-the-art lab, shop, equipment, and/or technology, excellent placement rates, student testimonials, and alumni success stories. Knowing your key selling points will help with program promotion and can be used as subject matter when communicating with prospects. Bring your key selling points with you to the meeting.

Come prepared for the meeting; bring all data, materials, examples, and ideas that you have. Speak with your colleagues, other Riverland employees, and MnSCU faculty to see what best practices they utilize when marketing their programs.

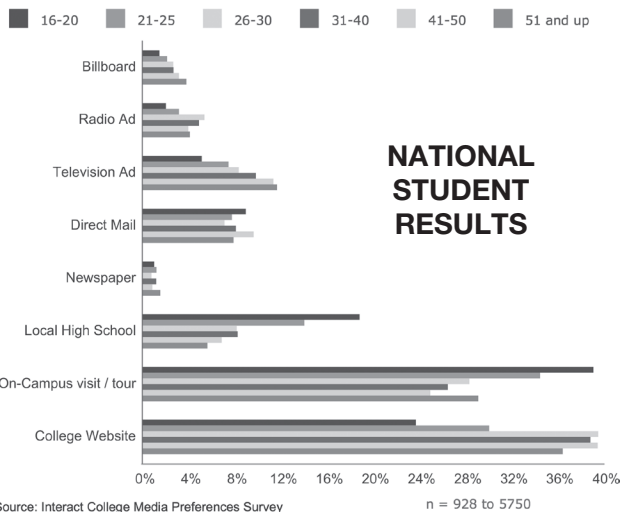
## **STEP TWO**

### **Commit & Execute**

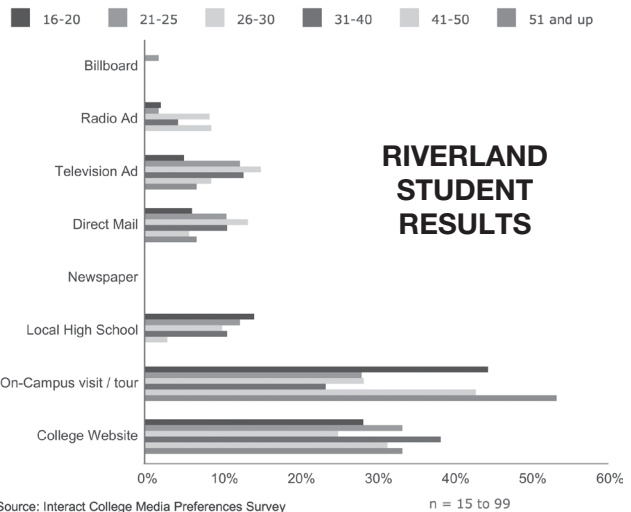
Follow through with the marketing ideas discussed and implemented. Ask for help when needed and utilize your resources to help achieve the recruitment and marketing goals you've set for yourself. If something doesn't generate the response you had hoped for, evaluate it and see if it's worth trying again. Some ideas may take time to produce good results (like an open house or college visit event). Once isn't often enough - let it build momentum and if it doesn't show growth - let it go!

# MARKETING/RECRUITING SUGGESTIONS & TIPS

## Highest Impact Recruitment



## Highest Impact Recruitment



### Follow up on Your Prospects / Cost: Free

Follow up on all student prospects including those generated from the online inquiry form. These are students who are interested in your program and have taken the time to fill out a form. Studies show that if an interested person is not contacted within 24 hours they will move on. It is imperative that you follow up as soon as possible.

### Program Web Page / Cost: Free

Our website is the primary marketing tool for Riverland Community College. Research indicates that most potential students look at riverland.edu first when seeking information about programs. The single most important thing you can do to recruit new students is to make sure your program Web page is updated with accurate information. To increase interest add accomplishments, photos, accreditations, transfer partnerships, job outlook/data, facts, faculty information, and other relevant information. Our Automotive Technology program is an example of a program with a thorough program page.

### Program Open House / Cost: Minimal

Interact Communications, a higher education consulting firm that has worked with Riverland, has research that indicates students are almost twice as likely to attend a college they have personally visited. One of the most effective forms of college recruitment is an on-campus college/program visit or tour. Capitalize on this opportunity by developing your own, ongoing open house event. Programs with successful ongoing open houses: Radiography and Nursing (scheduled monthly throughout the year). The Welding, Carpentry, and BPA contests also bring students to campus.

### High School Visits or Presentation / Cost: Minimal

Another proven method for program recruitment is visiting with high schools. Some questions to consider: are there classes in area high schools with a subject/subjects related to your program? Are there geographic areas around us that don't have a community college offering your program? A classroom visit or presentation can teach much about your program/field and can generate interest. You'll also benefit from communication and networking opportunities between your peers at the high school level. Teachers and counselors who associate with you and understand your passion for education may be more apt to recommend your program to students exploring post-high school opportunities. Program with a successful high school visit/presentation program: Criminal Justice. Contact Nel or Taylor to help set up your high school visit/presentation. They will help guide you through the

process and provide information and materials assistance.

### **High School Class Campus Program Visit / Cost: Minimal**

Just like high school visits/presentations, it could be beneficial to have high school students visit your program here on campus. Visiting students will be able to see Riverland first-hand, explore facilities, labs and equipment, and be able to ask detailed questions about your program. As an instructor, you'll benefit from partnerships with high school faculty (they may come to see you as a resource) and meeting your future, potential students face-to-face. Consider having potential students shadow current students for a few hours. Bus service funds may also be available. Programs with successful high school class program visits: Nursing, Radiography, Collision Repair. Contact Nel Zellar for further information about high school class program visits.

### **Career Fair/College Fair/Campus Event Participation / Cost: Minimal**

Make the most of college fairs, career fairs, and campus events. Participate! Personal contact with instructors has a huge impact on prospective students.

#### **Discover the River (formerly Big Day on Campus)**

Discover the River is an established campus visit event aimed at high school juniors and seniors. It takes place on all three campuses. It's focus is converting prospects to applicants. Please make sure you, one of your faculty members, or a current student is available to meet with prospects. You'll have 30 minutes to spend with attendees interested in your area; *please* make sure you keep them for the entire 30 minutes. Explain to them the basics of your program: the length of your program, special admission requirements (if applicable), days/hours students are required to be in class, required tools/kits, uniform requirements, placement after graduation, etc. Give them a tour of your shop or area, if applicable. Is there a short demonstration/activity you could do for/with them? Past evaluations consistently rank meeting with faculty in their area of interest as the most beneficial part of the day. Conversely, there are always negative comments on evaluations when faculty is unavailable to meet with students interested in their area. Contact Nel Zellar for further information about Discover the River events.

#### **Career Day**

Career Day is an annual event held near the end of October that is attended by approximately 1,000 area high school juniors to explore careers and colleges. Although it is not designed specifically as a Riverland recruiting event, keep in mind that students who visit campus are much more likely to apply. This is a fabulous way to promote your program area. We are always looking for faculty in various career areas to present on their field. Please contact Nel Zellar for further information about Career Day

#### **Other Career/College Fairs and Campus Events**

There are many other great career/college fairs and campus events taking place throughout the year. These fairs and events are a fantastic opportunity to meet and educate potential students about your program. Programs with successful events: Welding Competition, Carpentry Competition, Robotics Competition

### **Connecting With Workforce/Employment Centers / Cost: Minimal**

Did you know that approximately 68% of the Riverland student body is 25 or older? Many of these students are unemployed or underemployed and are looking for short-term training leading to a good job. Connecting with our local Work Forced Centers (located on the campuses in Austin, Albert Lea and Owatonna) can be an excellent way to connect with these potential students. Work force partners often times provide tuition funding for unemployed students. Talk to Nel or Taylor about how you can connect with Work Force Centers and their partners.

### **Social Media / Cost: Free**

Consider posting some brief, informative, interesting information about your program to Facebook or other social media sites you use. Riverland does maintain a Facebook page that will accept your posts, when appropriate.



A faculty maintained and advertised blog may also be helpful in generating interest in your program. Some social media avenues might be a perfect fit for your program (having public Flickr galleries for your photography classes, etc.) Be sure to review the social media policies present in the Communications Style Guide. Contact Sandy or BJ for more information.

#### **Student Email / Cost: Free**

Currently, using the StudentAll email list is discouraged for program promotion, however, there is a weekly email sent to current students via Jessica Bernand. Please connect with her about getting your message included. It might also be beneficial for you to create an ongoing email informational/newsletter for your current students and alumni. Engaged and informed students are likely to spread word of your program. This is a good spot for program information sessions or open houses.

#### **Austin Campus Street Sign Marquee / Cost: Free**

The Austin sign marquee may be able to display a brief message about your program. Availability depends on the monthly schedule of calendar information and timing constraints. The marquee scheduling is done once per month so please plan ahead. Please contact Sandy Roe for information.

#### **Riverland Website Banners / Cost: Free**

Riverland's homepage markets the college as a whole and promotes "larger" messages (Classes Begin..., Program clusters, etc.) but can feature low enrollment and in-need programs. Space is extremely limited (based on average page viewing length) and all requests may not be possible. A special graphic or message on your program web page or Brightspace (D2L) may also be beneficial. Please contact BJ Witts for more information.

#### **Intercampus Digital Displays / Cost: Free**

Currently, Riverland promotes low enrollment and new programs on the digital displays, however, there may be room for additional messages. Space is limited so all requests may not be possible. Please contact BJ Witts for more information.

#### **Program Brochure / Cost: Minimal to Moderate**

Has your program brochure been updated recently? If not, please contact BJ Witts. Program brochures are presented at college fairs, events, and campus area displays and should be within your reach at all times for potential students. Make a habit of keeping a supply with you for distribution.

#### **Internal and External Fliers/Posters/Handouts / Cost: Minimal**

The Communications department can assist with fliers, posters, handouts, and other printed marketing material. Be prepared to have a distribution plan in place. Beyond the campuses, consider posting your information at other approved locations: workforce centers, employment offices, program-relevant businesses, public display areas, etc. Please see BJ Witts for more information.

#### **Direct Mail Campaign / Cost: Moderate – High**

In some cases, a direct mail campaign may be an option. Please inquire with Admissions and the Communications Department. If you need to purchase a mailing list(s), costs go up substantially.

#### **Advertising (Physical Publication/Digital Media) / Cost: Moderate – High**

Newspaper readership has declined dramatically in recent years (especially among readers age15-34), however, special publications, magazines, or other printed publications may be an option for program promotion. Think about the types of things potential students interested in your program might view or read. Is there a digital publication or site they may frequent? Are there key words they might search? Digital advertising may also be an option. Please contact BJ Witts for more information.

### **Program Photography / Cost: Free – Minimal**

Having a multitude of photographs of your program can only help in promotion. The Communications department uses photographs in most of their printed and digital work. Having high-quality photographs of your program increases the chance for public exposure. Photographs are used on general advertising, online, in local and national publications, social media, and much more. Encourage your students to take and use program photos on their social media sites (classroom accomplishments, projects, volunteer days, program club or organization events, etc.). Riverland does not have an official photographer, but there are some resources that may be utilized for photographs. Contact Taylor or BJ if interested in program photography.

### **Commercials (Radio/Television) / Cost: High**

Please inquire with the Communications Department about radio and television commercial opportunities.

### **Program Video / Cost: Minimal – High**

Production of a program video could generate more interest in your program. Typically, program videos have been used on program web pages and as content on Riverland's YouTube channel. Program videos are usually produced as part of a college-wide effort, but you may want to develop your own to showcase your program, facilities, students, etc. Ask current students, program alumni, or program club members to assist in creating a video or series of videos. Short, entertaining, and informative videos may also be an option (see the Vine.co website). Contact your dean and see Lori Jensen about possible funding sources.

### **Press Release/Media Event / Cost: Varies**

Typically, press releases/media events are only viable for events of some importance or broad interest. The Media Release process and Press Release forms are available at [www.riverland.edu/mediarelations](http://www.riverland.edu/mediarelations). Please read the Media Release process information and call James Douglass to discuss.

### **Program Specific Marketing / Cost: Varies**

Your program may have the need for special marketing not present in this guide. Think about how potential students might come across information about your program and how they interact with your field. Exposure is key; the more people that know about your program, faculty, and their successes, the more interest you'll generate.

## **IMPORTANT TIPS TO CONSIDER**

- Cast a wide net. Enrollment is a "volume business". Think of the process of converting prospects to applicants as a funnel. When you begin with a large number of prospects, ideally around 1/3 to 1/2 of those will apply and about 1/2 of the applicants will go on to register. When there are special admissions requirements, it may be an even lower conversion rate. The more qualified prospects that go into the top of the funnel the more you will have register (or the more qualified applicants you will have to choose from when you select your class).
- Keep Admissions in the loop. They need to know when there have been changes to your program, when your program has received accreditation, special recognition, etc. Remember, they are the first Riverland staff most prospects speak with. The info they give is only as good as the info you give them.
- Keep business cards on you at all times; you'll never know when you might run into an interested person.
- If you want to recruit high school graduates, develop relationships with your high school counterparts.
- Encourage each prospective student to fill out an information card. Send your completed cards to Taylor in Admissions. She will enter the information into ISRS so that names are added to your prospect list and we can enter them into the communication flow. Need Student Information Cards? Please contact Taylor.

- Make good use of the prospect and applicant lists being sent to you by Taylor. Call and/or email the prospects and invite them to a campus visit or event. Talk to Taylor to arrange a general campus tour for the student. Your return will be better if you can get them to come to campus.
- Call the applicants on your list. Make sure they understand the requirements. Invite them to campus to visit you. Help them to become the prepared prospects you are looking for.
- Utilize any free advertising and promotion - especially those related to your trade or industry.
- Think about sending a letter to students who were not chosen for another program with challenging admissions requirements such as Radiography and Nursing. Ask the dean of that program for a list of addresses. For example, a person not selected for Nursing might be interested in the Medical Assistant or Health Unit Coordinator program.
- Think about the recent graduates to a certificate or related program. Would students who got the Receptionist certificate be interested in an Accounting certificate? Would students who earned the Web Design certificate be interested in the Computer Technology AAS? Would Cosmetology graduates be interested in Massage Therapy? Would Welding be interested in IMMR or Wind Turbine?
- Who are the people who most influence prospective students? Do high school counselors and teachers know about your program? Do the WorkForce Center counselors know about your program? Stop in, call, or email them and tell them about it. Establish these valuable relationships/connections.
- Don't underestimate word of mouth. Do you know of any successful alumni? Tell the Communications Department or Alumni Office so they can get a testimonial and profile them. Ask your current students if they know anyone interested in the program that they might want to bring along to class to see what its all about. Encourage them to ask their family and friends if they know anyone interested.
- Market at related businesses and organizations.
- Send letters to managers of businesses where your graduates may go to work. They may know someone working in an entry-level position in the field interested in education to move up or improve their skills. Include a flier for them to post at their place of business in a break room or other common area for employees. Many businesses provide tuition reimbursement to employees.
- Put together your own program recruiting folders to be distributed to prospective students during individual visits, at high school visits, and at special recruiting events. (Taylor will provide folders stuffed with basic Riverland information; you simply need to add program specific information and your business cards).
- K-12 Initiatives: Volunteer to help with the various K-12 initiatives that bring prospective students to campus, such as the 4th grade "Get Ready" visits and the Austin and Albert Lea 8th grade visits. Many of these students will go on to college – plant the seed.
- Campus tours are often scheduled for large and small groups through Admissions. At times, the groups request hands-on activities in career tech areas. Plan a hands-on activity now that you can roll out for these tours.
- Be accessible. Let Admissions know how best to connect students with you. Let us know if you prefer students email, call your cell, or contact you via another method. A quick and warm response to student inquiries can go a long way toward building a good relationship that can lead to enrollment. Keep a good record of your contacts. Students feel valued when you remember them.
- Let Nel/Communications know about events hosted by your program. Talk to Nel a few weeks before your scheduled event to get materials appropriate for your event such as folders with your program sheets and admissions and financial aid information, pens, info cards, and t-shirts. Admissions is happy to help with the event, for example, by providing tours of the campus or by presenting on admissions and financial



aid. Let James and Communications/Marketing know of the event several weeks in advance. They can ask to have your event listed in local media Calendar of Events and possibly even do a Press Release on the event. Media may then show up to cover the event. This is all free press!

- Make sure you put your open house or event on the Riverland website calendar of events. Marketing references the calendar for purposes of promoting events.
- Please make sure that all attendees to your events fill out an Information Card. Send the cards to Taylor so that we can continue to follow-up/communicate with them.