

DeManté Baldwin

Fundamentals of Public Relations

Fall 2013

Kate Betts

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Laker Traditions is the newest of many departments within the Office of Student Life (OSL) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU). Their mission is to build community and affinity with identifiable events associated with GVSU. Laker Traditions primary office is located on the Allendale campus of GVSU, but extends out to all five campus divisions with no restraint. Laker Traditions provides students of Grand Valley with information about events that occur throughout GSVU that would help students better acquaint with what it means to be a Laker.

Laker Traditions holds the Kickoff Party, Spring Fling, Battle of the Valleys, Sibs N Kids Weekend, Family Weekend, Laker Remembrance, Presidents Ball, Homecoming and the Intercultural Festival around Grand Valley that occur every year. With these events every year, returning students already own knowledge of what these events are and where they are located. New students and transfer students, however; have no knowledge due to the relative freshness of the Department.

There are a number of inhibitors keeping Laker Traditions from reaching their goal. One inhibitor is the amount of holders to the knowledge that Laker Traditions is now a department at GVSU. Another inhibitor would be time. Seeing as Laker Traditions is a new department, it is inevitable that some students have no knowledge of the department. Although Laker Traditions is a new department, that is their opportunity. As a new department Laker Traditions has the most potential to capture the attention of many GVSU students, especially since none have any in depth knowledge of Laker Traditions.

The goal of this campaign is to discover what previous events and actions helped students build affinity with Grand Valley State University by reaching out to those students, faculty, and alumni for help. The measurable goal of this campaign is to double the awareness of Laker

Traditions by reviewing successful events and tips from students, faculty and alumni that feel connected with GVSU.

This is an important project because many students want to be more than just a number during their time in college. Connection to a university will give that university a personified being that most, if not all of the students, faculty, and alumni uphold. Lastly, this project will be greatly beneficial in the continuous improvement of GVSU as the university grows.

### **Secondary Research**

Research is important to any campaign project. It provides facts and data to the reader that will allow the reader to find the clearest path to success. Research is immensely important to this campaign. It will provide data on different ways of success carried out by other facilities and colleges that may have programs and organizations similar to Grand Valley State University (GVSU). The research in this campaign will provide information with the knowledge of tactics, strengths and challenges gathered from several different sources around the web and GVSU.

### *Methodology*

The secondary research gathered for this campaign was pulled from several websites using the Google Chrome internet browser and the Google homepage. Several keywords such as *successful university student events* and *traditions* were a few of the words used to find successful traditions held by other universities to discover what could be implemented by Laker Traditions to be as successful. Websites such as [walterwendeler.com](http://walterwendeler.com) to clearly define a tradition, [uiowa.edu](http://uiowa.edu) to review tactics of other university campaign plans and several other websites in an attempt to figure out what made the students of other universities feel so comfortable. Research was also done on GVSU's website to gather all information possible about the demographics and psychographics of the specific target audience for this campaign.

### *Audience Analysis*

The primary audiences of this campaign are the undergraduate students and the international students of Grand Valley State University. The students are the traders of information around a campus quickly becoming engulfed in technology and are the most likely to send word out about anything that they find enjoyable. A demographic scanning shows that there are currently 24,447 total students enrolled in Grand Valley State University. Out of the total number of students, 21,235 are undergraduate students and 378 are international students.

A more in-depth demographic profile shows that 1.5% of the total student population are foreign exchange students. 86% of the total student population are undergraduate students. 58% percent of the total undergraduate population is female and 42% is male. With a variety of ages, lifestyles and personalities, contacting each individual can be tricky. However, in an age of technology emails can be sent out, computerized calls can be placed and mass text messages can be sent out to large groups of people.

### *Situation Analysis*

Laker Traditions has successfully joined the Grand Valley student life team with successful events already in action. Events such as Grand Valley Homecoming, Presidents Ball, Family Weekend, and Sibs N Kids are just a few to name. The continuous success of these events is greatly important to this campaign. These events will provide information on what tactics have already worked for GVSU. Laker Traditions, being considerably young, is also successful in utilizing social media in an attempt to inform students of their presence and events. There are several strengths that Laker Traditions possess but, like anything new, there are weaknesses.

Laker Traditions has several weaknesses. Publicity, Audience and Time are a few. Being relatively new, Laker Traditions does not have they publicity desired. The lack of publicity also

stems from, currently, the lack of audience. Many students have no idea of the existence of Laker Traditions. Few have knowledge that it exist, but lack knowledge of the actual organization. The lack of audience and publicity comes with time. Laker Traditions has approximately only one month of existence. Although Laker Traditions has several successful events already in place, those events were in place before the organization became an official part of the Office of Student Life. Being new to the OSL does create great opportunities for Laker Traditions.

Time may present a problem for Laker Traditions in terms of publicity; however, it also creates great opportunity. Laker Traditions, being young, has more opportunity for change. Laker Traditions has more opportunity for student involvement through successful student event planning, similar to Kutztown University. On the Kutztown University Office of Student Involvement webpage, tips are given on how to successfully plan an event. According to the Kutztown website “each event should have specific goals...” (Kutztown University, n/a). The lack of time Laker Traditions has behind the organization gives them the opportunity to test out new ideas and options. A few tips given by Barry University Career Services on successful planning are 1. “Send your alumni back to campus” and 2. “Follow Up, Follow Up, Follow Up” (Barry University, 2010-2013). Laker Traditions has the opportunity to find alumni, recent and older, to relay back to new and current students information about different traditions held at Grand Valley State University. They also have the opportunity to introduce new ideas to current students and receive immediate feedback.

The purpose of the research for this paper is to provide information of tactics, strengths and challenges gathered from several different sources around the web. This research shows the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of Laker Traditions. It shows that the weaknesses and challenges Laker Traditions faces are all relative to each other. It also shows the opportunities

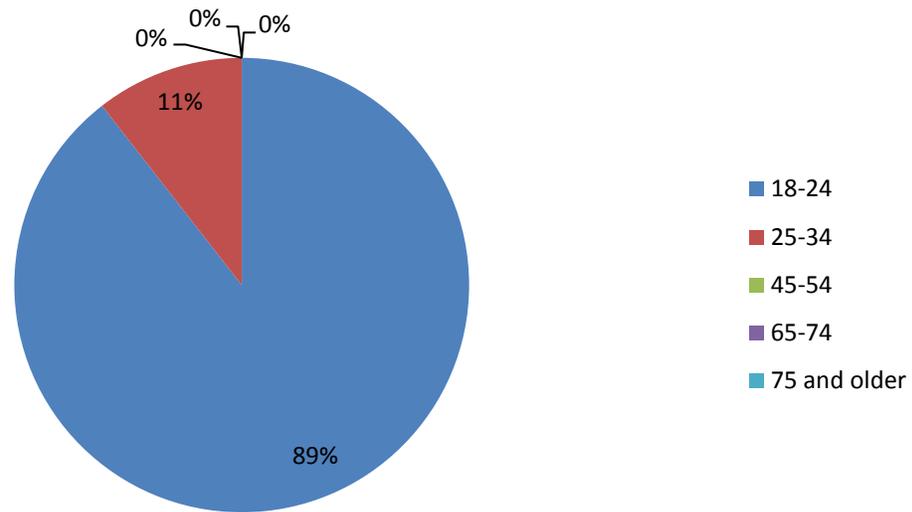
provided to Laker Traditions from these challenges. The research in this paper provides detailed information of Laker Traditions' target audience and also provides ideas and tips for success.

## **Primary Research**

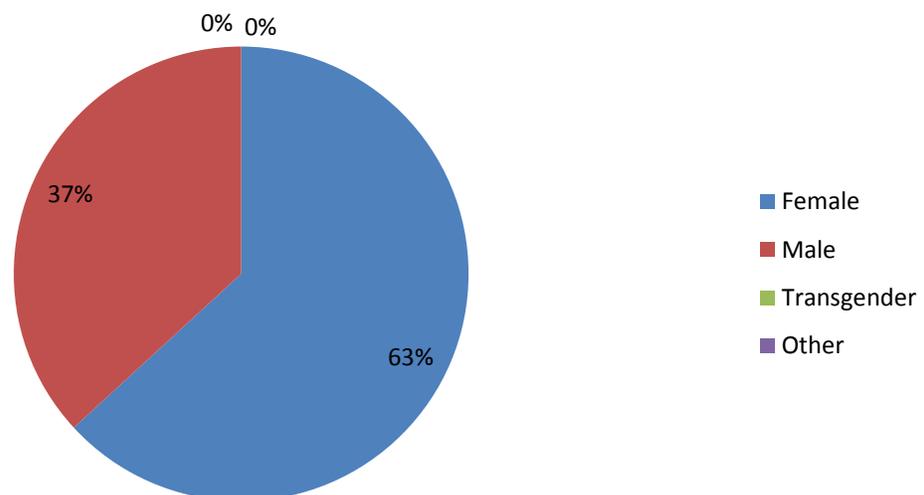
### *Methodology*

Primary Research gathered for this campaign was conducted over the course of two weeks. During this time, a focus group was conducted to gather more information on Laker Traditions and what could be done to better inform students of the existence of Laker Traditions. The focus group was conducted on Tuesday, October 8, 2013 at 9:00pm in Laker Superior Hall room 136 on Grand Valley State University's Allendale campus. The focus group was moderated by Nathan Ramos and co-moderated by Kelsey Juergens. There were a total of six people present during the focus group. Data from the focus group was written down by DeManté Baldwin and Kelsey Juergens and later typed. The info gathered from the focus group was then processed individually, and used to formulate a survey aimed at approximately 30 students.

The survey for this campaign was created using Survey Monkey ([surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com)), an online survey free survey website. The survey was created Sunday, October 20, 2013 at midnight and sent out to approximately 113 students via blackboard. Of the 113 approximate students who were sent the links to the survey, 19 of those students completed the survey.

**Figure 1**

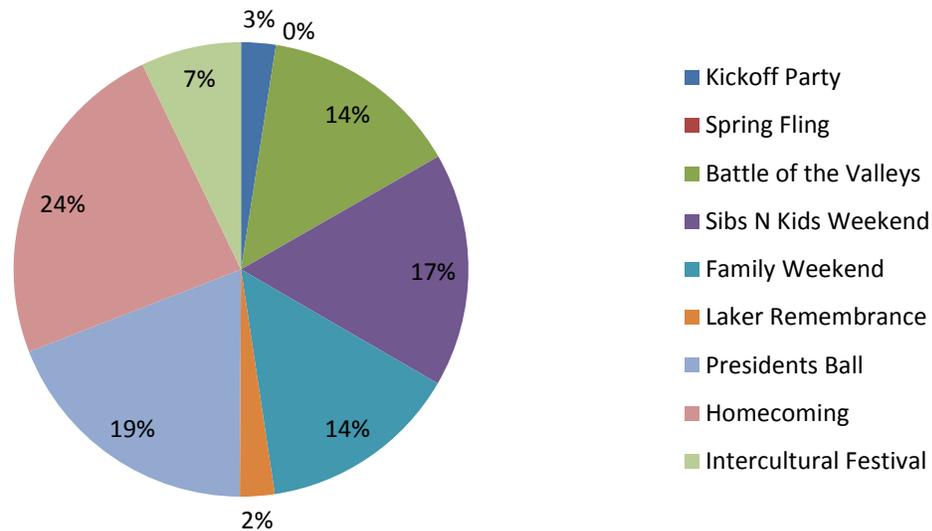
Students were asked to give their age ranges and were given several options such as 18-24, 25-34, 45-54, 65-74 and 75 and older. 89.47% of the students that took the survey were between the ages 18-24. 10.53% were between the ages 25-34 years of age.

**Figure 2**

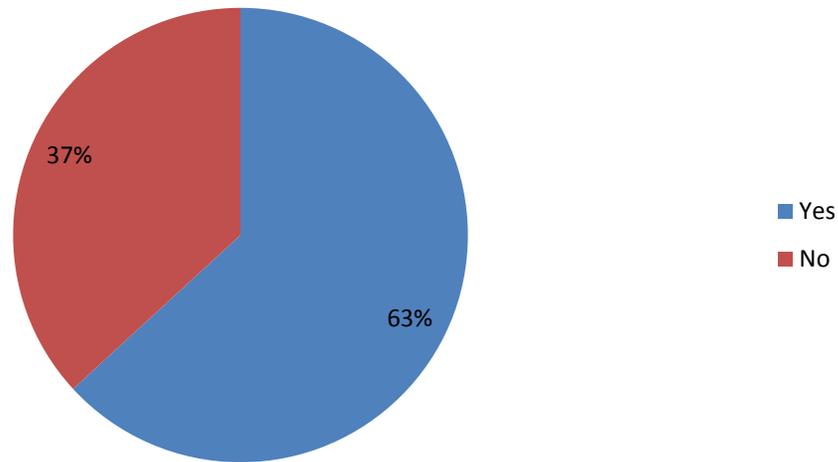
The next question asked was gender. The options female, male, transgender and other were given.

63.16% of the surveyors were female and 36.84% were male. No surveyor identified as transgender or other.

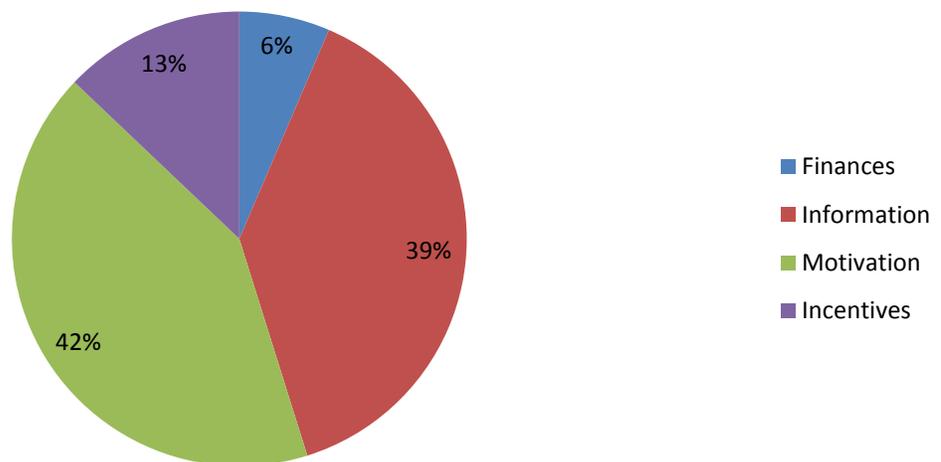
**Figure 3**



Surveyors were then asked whether they had ever heard of Laker Traditions. 47.37% responded that they had heard of Laker Traditions, 21.05% said that they had never, and 31.58% stated that they had somewhat heard of Laker Traditions. The question following asked whether the surveyors had knowledge of nine events hosted by Laker Traditions and which events had been attended. The nine events were the Kickoff Party, Spring Fling, Battle of the Valleys, Sibs and Kids Weekend, Family Weekend, Laker Remembrance, Presidents Ball, Homecoming and the Intercultural Festival. 13 out of the 19 respondents answered this question. Of the 13 respondents who knew of and attend the events were: 7.69% for the Kickoff Party, 46.15% for the Battle of the Valleys, 53.85% for Sibs and Kids Weekend, 46.15% for Family Weekend, 7.69 for Laker Remembrance, 61.54% for the Presidents Ball, 76.92% for Homecoming and 23.08% for the Intercultural Festival. With the Spring Fling yet to be in existence, none of the respondents knew of, or attended the Spring Fling.

**Figure 4**

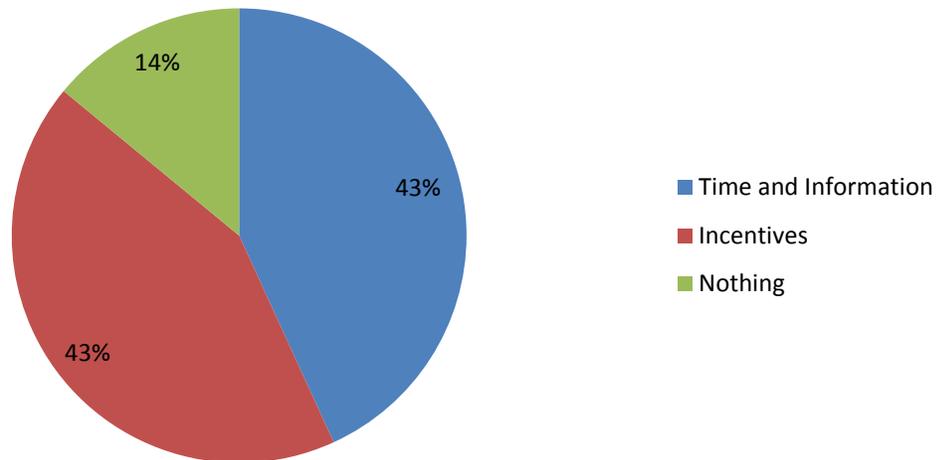
Surveyors were then asked if they would attend more Laker Traditions events if more knowledge for the events was available. 63.16% of the 19 participants answered yes and 36.84% answered no.

**Figure 5**

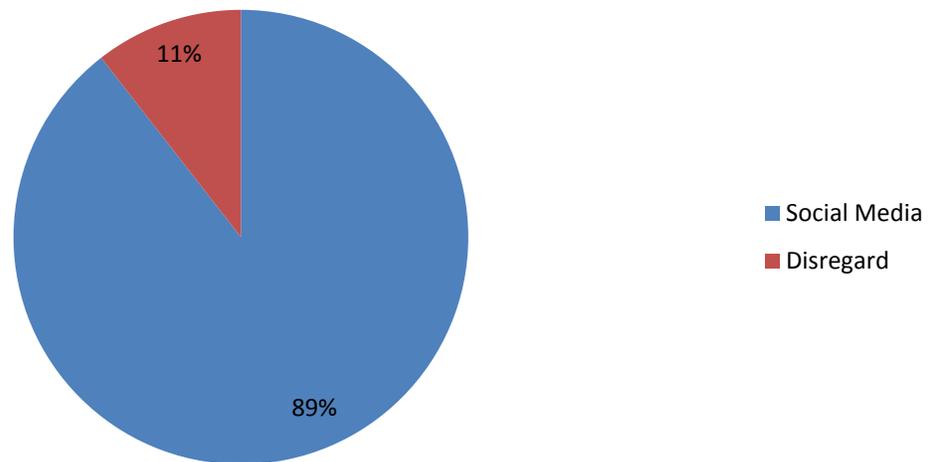
Surveyors were then asked what would prevent them from attending Laker Traditions events. 18 out of 19 respondents answered this question. Of the 18 that answered, 11.11% named finances

as a factor preventing them from attending the events. 66.67% named the Lack of Information as a factor preventing their attendance. 72.22% stated that no interests in the events prevent them from attending and 22.22% stated that the lack of incentives prevented them from attending.

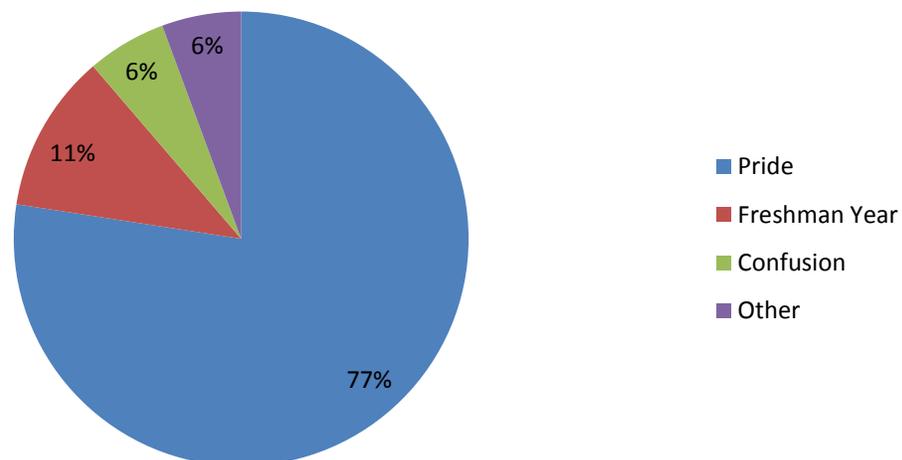
**Figure 6**



Surveyors were then asked what would make them want to get involved. 31.58% responded more time and information would encourage them to attend more events. Another 31.58% answered more incentives. 10.53% stated that nothing would encourage them to participate more.

**Figure 7**

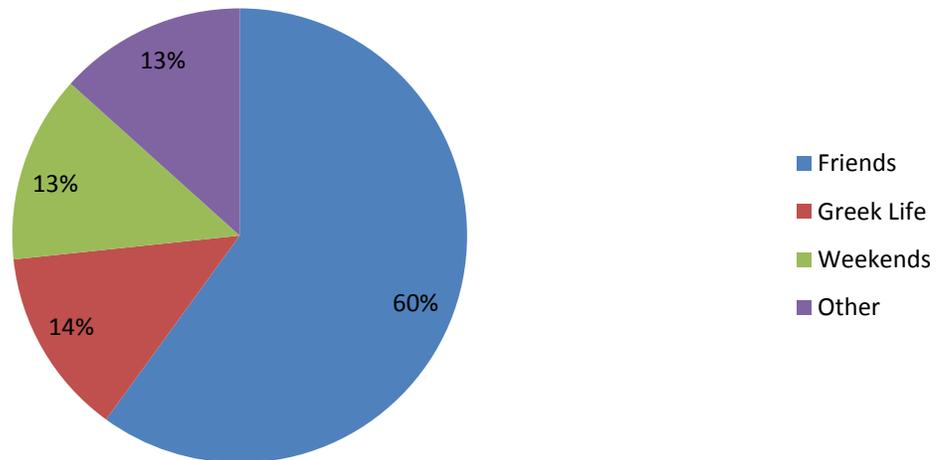
When asked how Laker Traditions could get more information out to the public, 89.47% recommended more use of social media, fliers and information tables. 10.53% responded with disregard to the question overall.

**Figure 8**

Surveyors were then asked to give a short response about the Grand Valley State University slogan, Laker for a Lifetime, and what it meant to them. 72.22% of the respondents stated that

the slogan meant having Grand Valley State Pride after graduation. 10.53% listed that it reminded them of their freshman year at GVSU. 5.26% stated that the slogan confused them and the other 5.26% answered that it was a bad catch phrase and needs work.

**Figure 9**



The final question surveyors were asked to give a short answer about what they would remember from their time at GVSU. 47.37% answered that they would remember their friends. 10.53% stated Greek Life; another 10.53% stated the weekends. The final 10.53% percent stated that they would remember the pricing and lack of available parking at GVSU.

The purpose of this research was to gain a more detailed understanding of the wants and desires of Laker Traditions target audience around the Grand Valley State University campus. During the research it was discovered that many of the student around campus feel that there does not exist an adequate amount of informational mediums for student. It was also discovered that many of the survey participants would like for Laker Traditions to utilize more social media. Majority of the participants also feel some form of comfort with GVSU already and would like to expand that comfort anyway possible.

## Action Plan

### Overview

Included in this section are strategies and tactics used to carry out the goal of this campaign for Laker Traditions. There will also be an inclusion of the budget available to Laker Traditions and what budget may be required in order for this campaign to be effective. The goal of this campaign is to discover what previous events and actions helped students build affinity with Grand Valley State University (GVSU) by reaching out to those students, faculty and alumni for help. The target audiences for this campaign are the 21,235 undergraduate students and the 378 international male and female students, most of them already connected to various social media sites. (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc)

### Strategies

In order to increase the awareness of Laker Traditions, repetition of smaller successful past events is something that can be done. Based off the information gathered via survey, 89% of the population is between the ages of 18-24. This means that this percentage of the population is involved in some form of social media. One way to increase the awareness of Laker Traditions is to utilize the same forms of social media that the students utilize. With a great percentage of the population being relatively young, it is hard to maintain their attention without flashy lights and loud sounds. Hosting some sort of bi-weekly event would keep their attention, especially if it's the same general information. Another possibility would be to pass messages along via mouth to mouth. The strategy for this campaign is to utilize the same forms of media that students use, reach out to students on a regular basis through websites and press releases, and to directly contact students via SMS.

## Tactics

To utilize the social media that students use, surveys will have to be taken to discover what social media sites are most frequently visited. After the survey, Laker Traditions must appoint someone to create and maintain the social media pages on the websites. Pictures will have to be uploaded on a semi-regular basis to multiple social media websites, as well as regular information on current events either being hosted by Laker Traditions or events that they will be taking part in.

Although this can be done at any time through the academic year, the best times to implement this plan would be at the beginning of the year, during Homecoming week, after Christmas break and at the end of the academic year. At the beginning of the academic year, with classes being relatively lighter on workloads, students spend more time being involved with campus activities and social media. During Homecoming Week, school spirit is at an unrivaled high and students are utilizing social media to stay informed on any updates happening with the Homecoming concert, game and campus life. Coming into the second semester of the academic year is a fine time to contact students as well. Students are ready to come back to school and are eager to be involved in campus events that will be hosted after break. As for the end of the academic year, students are looking for relaxing events, via social media, to attend. Hosting a relaxer at the end of the year would notify students of Laker Traditions existence.

During a focus group, many of the participants stated that hearing students speaking about the events would help notify them of the events, especially when they are in a rush and cannot stop to read the posters. This particular tactic also has no cost value, but it does require a lot of time and planning. The best time to begin this tactic would be at the beginning of the academic year when students are extremely interested in affiliating themselves with several clubs and

organizations. Seeing as planning the write way to word the information for the students, as well as what information to relay to students can be a lengthy process, the best time to begin preparing for this would be one week before students being to move onto campus.

Sending out a press release to Grand Valley's Lanthorn and the Grand Rapids Press gives readers a chance to prepare for the upcoming changes from Laker Traditions. Sending out a press release also allows for more outside attraction to Grand Valley and Laker Traditions. The best time to send out a press release would be at the end of the academic year so that students, parents and readers know what to expect for the next academic year.

Texting has become a major part of modern society. Large corporations send out short message services (SMS) to their employees to keep them updated on current events within the corporation. Laker Traditions could do the same. Sending out an SMS weekly or monthly to students with information about Laker Tradition events would be beneficial as well as cost effective, depending on the student's phone carrier. Sending a mass text message to students who sign up for the information is not only fast, its economical and efficient. The information in the message may not be as detailed as an e-mail, but providing students with the option to respond would create the chance to present more information. Utilizing an SMS would not only utilize a greatly used medium, it would also make the student feel personally connected to Laker Traditions, which would cause a chain reaction of word of mouth between students.

### **Timeline Summary**

Many of the tactics stated require careful planning in order to acquire the results desired. Setting up a social media website does not take several hours, but getting a social media website to look appealing to viewers while displaying up to date information takes several months. Updating social media does not take more than 15 minutes daily and can usually be done from a

mobile device. Many other things can be managed or accessed via mobile device as well.

Creating a website does not take an immense amount of time, but it takes relatively longer than social media. Creating a fully functional website can take up to one month, but several key parts of the website can be available for viewing.

Street Teams will require the most time out of any other tactic. It will require a minimum of five months to prepare the volunteers with the most accurate information of Laker Traditions, decide on the best time of day to go out and specific locations. Street Teams will also require a form of branding to be able to stand out in large crowds of people. It will require a minimum of two months to order T-Shirts and have them ready for shipping and use.

### **Budget Summary**

Laker Traditions has many goals that will take time to complete. There are several tactics that will require a fee to utilize. Promotions on a social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter is approximately \$10.00 per advertisement. Facebook charges \$10.00 for every page like that is received, and the purchaser does not have to pay if no likes are received during the duration of the advertisement. Twitter charges for every page follow received from the promoted page. Very similar to Facebook, the purchaser does not have to pay unless a follower is acquired during the duration of the advertisement.

Setting up a SMS plan has prices variable to the phone carrier. Many phone plans have a monthly plan that covers expenses such as texting, long distance calling and web. Phone companies such as AT&T and Verizon have a prepaid plan that cost \$60 a month. This plan includes texting, calling and web. Mobile carrier Virgin Mobile has a \$30 monthly plan that also covers texting calling and web. T-Mobile and Metro PCS have monthly plans of \$50 that cover the features mentioned.

A press release does not require any price, but a street team does. Street teams are usually made up of volunteers and can be done without any expense, but for Laker Traditions to stand out, T-Shirts are a necessity. A minimum of five volunteers will be necessary, and each volunteer will need a T-Shirt. Free T-Shirts for people interested in Laker Traditions are also needed, and that has an expense. If a custom T-Shirt is ordered from Vista Print ([vistaprint.com](http://vistaprint.com)), each shirt would be priced at \$11. Depending on the time that shirts are ordered, a half price deal may be in place, making the shirts approximately \$5. Having approximately 100 shirts would cost \$500 in total. The shirts would be the most expensive of any other tactics, but also the most memorable. People will wear the shirt, and every time it is worn, will think about Laker Traditions.

### **Evaluation Plan**

Every campaign has a place where it either ends or halts for an extended period of time. During the time that the campaign is not active, improvement is sought out. For Laker Traditions evaluation plan, sending out surveys to participants is the best way to receive feedback on the campaign. Another way to evaluate the campaign is through volunteer/employee surveys and focus groups. Through evaluation, Laker Traditions can discover what, from this campaign, worked successfully and what did not. In the case that all of the tactics work, Laker Traditions can use the evaluations from this campaign to discover which tactic worked better, and what times worked best.

## Appendix I

Contact: Michelle Burke

Phone: 616-331-2345

E-mail: [lakertraditions@gvsu.edu](mailto:lakertraditions@gvsu.edu)

### **Laker Traditions to Release new Plan of Action**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 9, 2013

(Allendale, Michigan)- On Saturday, November 9, 2013, Laker Traditions gave word of a new plan of action to increase the student interaction and campus affinity at Grand Valley State University (GVSU). Laker Traditions intends to implement this plan during the GVSU Fall Academic Semester.

Laker Traditions has proudly hosted several events around GVSU's campus. The Kickoff Party, Homecoming, Presidents Ball, Sibs N Kids Weekend, Family Weekend, Battle of the Valleys, Intercultural Festival and Laker Remembrance has been highly popular among students in the past, but Laker Traditions has made it their goal to double the student interaction each year.

Laker Traditions

616-331-2345

1 Campus Drive 1110 Kirkhof Center Allendale, MI 49401

~###~

## Appendix II

**Sender:** Hey! Thanks for signing up to be a part of the extended Laker Traditions family! If you would more information about Laker Tradition events, text the name of the event to this number!

**Receiver:** Kickoff Party XxStudentxX

**Sender:** The Kickoff party happens at the beginning of the fall semester as welcome to all incoming freshman, but it's open to all students. Do you want to know about another event?

**Receiver:** Homecoming XxStudentxX

**Sender:** Homecoming is an event so big, it needs a whole week to celebrate. The biggest attraction of homecoming is the football game, but events such as Lipsync are also to increase student spirit and increase student involvement. Do you want to know about another event?

**Receiver:** Laker Remembrance XxStudentxX

**Sender:** Laker Remembrance is a memorial for all of the recently deceased GV Lakers. It is typically held outside of the clock tower. Students remember friends, family and faculty. Do you want to know about another event?

## Appendix III

STUDENT  
LIFE

## Grand Valley Student Life

College & University Empowering students to effectively engage with their communities through intentionally designed and inclusive programs, services and environments

\$1 donated per student = \$25,000 for S.P.O.R.T.S.

**SHRED RED**  
**BLEED BLUE**  
**BATTLE OF THE VALLEYS**



THIS WEEK ONLY!

Buy your BOTV swag at the Neil deGrasse Tyson event!

Share THIS post by 3:00pm on Wed. 11/13 for your chance to win a pair of tickets to Neil deGrasse Tyson!

#NDTatGV

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