

## UBC as a Summer Destination

This presentation will take conference attendees through the steps involved to establish their institution as a destination for summer educational programs and activities. I will share the experiences we gained coordinating the Destination UBC Summer Initiative at the University of British Columbia (UBC). I will describe the objectives of the project, review the planning process, and demonstrate how we took advantage of cross-campus promotional synergies to leverage a very limited marketing budget into one that captured the attention of the campus and community.

### I. Destination UBC: Summer 2000

In 1999/2000, UBC Continuing Studies brought together campus groups, attractions and programs to collaborate on the Summer 2000: Destination UBC initiative. The purpose of this project was to increase public awareness of UBC as a destination for the general public, encourage development of new courses to serve audiences during the summer months, and give various faculties and departments the opportunity to showcase programs jointly. A multi-faceted plan was implemented:

- Partners were encouraged to join the project from all across campus, including faculties, schools, academic departments, service units, associations and campus attractions.
- Programs were developed or adapted by Continuing Studies and campus partners to fit Summer 2000 goals. A number of new programs were designed to complement existing summer activities offered by other departments on campus.
- An extensive marketing campaign was put together, involving existing and entirely new marketing strategies. Credit and non-credit summer calendars, brochures, flyers, newspaper ads, web sites, and liaison with other departments to make full use of the Summer 2000 concept and logo were all designed to promote Summer 2000 in a cost-effective manner.

### II. Background and Objectives

UBC has many programs and attractions, which span a broad range of educational, cultural and recreational activities. However, it had long been recognized that UBC's potential for attracting the public to campus during the summer months had not been fully realized. In 1999, Continuing Studies began to explore potential strategies for increasing public awareness of UBC in the summer and bringing people from both the local community and further afield to attend various campus attractions, programs and events. The primary objectives of Summer 2000 were defined as follows:

- Extend an invitation to the community to take part in the educational, recreational and cultural events taking place on campus between May and August.
- Counteract the impression that activity is limited on campus during this time period.
- Highlight traditional summer offerings and showcase new programs and events developed especially for the event, including intensive programs, special lectures and a film festival.
- Encourage cross-participation in events: for example, adult learners could drop off their children at community sports camps and then participate in a lecture or visit the UBC Museum of Anthropology or browse through the UBC Bookstore. Similarly,

someone travelling from out of town to participate in an intensive program could stay at the UBC Conference Centre.

- Maximize promotional impact while minimizing incremental expense by embedding promotion within vehicles that are part of regular marketing plans of campus partners.

### **III. Organization**

The Summer 2000: Destination UBC initiative was coordinated by a Continuing Studies committee, working collaboratively with an extensive list of over 40 campus partners who were crucial to the success of the project, providing financial contributions, in-kind advertising, information, advice and support. Planning involved intensive effort from the Summer 2000 Planning Committee, which included the following steps:

- Numerous meetings of the Planning Committee to discuss the concept and implementation of Summer 2000 (including new programming).
- Phone and in-person meetings with potential campus partners.
- Development of a complete database of partners and events connected to Summer 2000.
- Gathering of information re: Summer 2000.
- Finalizing details between Continuing Studies and campus partners.
- Formation of a marketing plan to blend Summer 2000 promotion with existing UBC and Continuing Studies advertising for summer credit and non-credit courses offerings.
- Implementation of the marketing plan at key points over the summer.

### **IV. Program Initiatives**

Programming was either developed or adapted by Continuing Studies to fit Summer 2000 goals.

Many existing Continuing Studies summer programs fit easily into the project, and several other new Continuing Studies programs were introduced. Subject areas included:

- Career Advancement (Certificate Training)
- Community Involvement Programs
- English Language Institute: full-time summer programs for international students
- High-Tech Skills
- Intercultural Communication
- Language Programs and Services: intensive and immersion programs, travel immersion programs, and bursary programs for students and teachers
- Third Age Spring Lectures: seniors' programming
- Writing Centre: May/June and July sessions for students and others
- Women's Resources Centre: personal and career development

## V. Marketing Initiatives

An extensive marketing campaign was developed and conducted. Continuing Studies promoted Summer 2000: Destination UBC in a variety of ways:

- Summer Session 2000 Part-Time Degree Study Calendar, which included an 8-page Summer 2000: Destination UBC insert (25,000 copies distributed at the beginning of March).
- Summer 2000: Destination UBC web site ([www.cstudies.ubc.ca/summer2000](http://www.cstudies.ubc.ca/summer2000)), (online in mid-March and updated at key points throughout the summer). The site contains summer highlights and links to partner sites and will be developed further for Summer 2001.
- Summer 2000 Non-Credit Continuing Studies Course Calendar, featuring Summer 2000: Destination UBC information throughout and containing a special Summer 2000 calendar of events (60,000 copies distributed beginning of April, sent to established Continuing Studies mailing list plus local libraries, community centres and businesses).
- Summer 2000: Destination UBC postcard highlighting programs, events, attractions and the Summer 2000 web site (25,000 copies distributed at the end of March).
- Program-specific brochures for the various program areas.
- Newspaper ads—a series in the *Vancouver Courier* newspaper in July and August, sponsored by the UBC External Affairs Office, and individual advertising in the *Vancouver Courier*, *Vancouver Sun*, and *Richmond Review* newspapers.
- Press releases prepared by Continuing Studies and a write-up in the *UBC Reports* campus newspaper.
- Distribution of the Summer 2000 logo to other campus partners for cross-promotional purposes.

## V. Summer 2001

The second year of this ground-breaking initiative built on the plans laid in Summer 2000 and added the following:

- **An expanded advertising campaign**, with a full-colour postcard featuring wider distribution (60,000 copies) including major BC Ferries routes and a mailout to school teachers throughout the province in early May. Successful initiatives carried over from the previous year included information on the inside front cover of UBC's Summer Credit Calendar, as well as inclusion of campus partner information and the useful *Schedule at-a-Glance* in Continuing Studies' Summer Non-Credit Calendar.
- **Cooperation among campus partners:** joint promotion of Summer 2001 included campus tours leaving from the Bookstore, free beverages for visitors (donated to Destination UBC by Coke) for visitors to the campus and production of a sheet of value coupons to promote several of UBC's attractions, as well as the use of the Summer 2001 graphic element in campus partner brochures.

- **Corporate sponsorship from Telus**, a corporate university sponsor, including a presence on the MyBC web site ([www.mybc.com](http://www.mybc.com)).
- **New programming**, including workshops and week-long intensive programs.
- **Interest from other North American universities**: Summer 2001 was featured at conference presentations in Victoria, BC and New Orleans, USA, and the campaign won a University Continuing Education Association Honorable Mention Award in the Strategic Marketing Category for the concept and strategy of the initiative, as well as the execution of the promotional pieces associated with it.

## VII. Summer 2002

The next Summer Destination initiative promises to be exciting with the advent of UBC at Robson Square, the new downtown campus in Vancouver and an emphasis on cultural events through Festival Vancouver, an array of classical musical events taking place at the Point Grey campus.

Plans for Summer 2002 include a focus on regional promotion throughout British Columbia, Alberta and the United States, a search for alternative funding sources including advertising support from outside the university campus, and increased programming in the form of Summer Institutes both downtown and on the campus.

The initiative now faces the challenges of promoting programming, attractions and special events that complement each other, creating a vibrant atmosphere for all participants of Summer 2002. With stakeholders downtown as well as on the UBC campus, the rewards of organizing a successful Summer Destination initiative will be even greater.