



# OPEN HOUSE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

## I. FORMATIVE RESEARCH

### Analysis of Situation & Organization

Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology (TSCT) holds Open House events that are a primary tactic to raise awareness and generate interest among prospective students for the purpose of driving enrollment. Traditionally, the event draws more than 1,500 individuals to campus, including prospective students and their parents, grandparents, guardians or other influencers. Because the event is in-person, attendees are primarily from Lancaster and contiguous counties, although the College recruits from across PA. This plan is to promote the next two Open House events, focusing primarily on the August 15, 2023, event. It is also intended to be a blueprint for ongoing promotion of Open House events and not limited to just the upcoming event.

### List of Targeted Audiences & Demographics

#### 1. PRIMARY: Prospective Students

- **GENDER:** 89.5% male, 10.5% female
- **RACE/ETHNICITY:** 69.8% white, 25% minority enrollments (*13.8% Hispanic, 10.1% Black or African American, 3.6% Multi-Ethnic*) which is less than the state average of 39%
- **AGE:** 87.1% are traditional aged learners (*49.8% 18-19 yrs. old, 26.4% 20-21 yrs. old, 10.9% 22-24 yrs. old*) 12.9% are adult learners
- **FULL-TIME VS PART TIME:** 98% are full-time students
- **INCOME:** \$60,333 median household income, 51% of students can be considered low-income as indicated by their receipt of Federal Pell Grant Aid
- **RESIDENCE:** 100% of students reside in PA, with the majority from Lancaster and contiguous counties

#### 2. SECONDARY: Parents and Family Members of Prospective Students

#### 3. SECONDARY: Guardians or other Influencers of Prospective Students

## II. Goals & Objectives, Strategies & Tactics

***GOAL 1: Increase registrations and attendees for the August 15, 2023, Open House event, by 5% from previous years average attendance.***

**Supports Institutional Performance Measure: Identifier ESJ G1, Public Relations and Marketing Goal #1: Increase awareness of the College among prospective students, employers, public officials, other high education institutions, and possible sources of private support.**

**Measure:** Track registration and attendee numbers for this event compared to the previous years' average number of registrations and attendees.

**Responsibility:** Office of Admissions in conjunction with Marketing and Communications.

**Assumption:** TSCT already tracks registrations and event attendees.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Develop and launch paid integrated social media campaigns to promote upcoming Open House events to prospective students, generate attendance, add prospects to the lead pool.**

### **STRATEGIES & TACTICS:**

The following are recommended social media platforms to consider advertising on for the next three months.

1. **TikTok:** 18-24 year old males are the second largest demographic on the platform ([17.9%](#))
2. **Instagram:** 18-24 year old males are tied for the largest demographic on the platform ([16.4%](#))
3. **YouTube:** 18-24 year olds are the second largest demographic with more males than females in that group ([15%](#))
4. **Facebook:** 18-24 year old males are the second largest demographic on the platform ([12.6%](#))

**TIMELINE:** Build/approve campaigns by 6/15. Ad campaigns to run from 6/15-7/31 (or close of event registration).

### **GEOTARGETING:**

1. Primary: Lancaster and surrounding counties
2. Secondary: Remaining counties in PA. (*NOTE: In the case of budget limitations, consider expanding primary geotargeting and eliminate counties that are the farthest from Lancaster or capitalize where TSCT has the highest brand recognition.*)

### **BUDGET:**

1. Produce video ads for various social platforms: ~\$8K-\$12K\* (*NOTE: Promote all upcoming Open House dates*)
2. Ad spend for various social platforms: ~\$30-50K\* (*NOTE: Promote all upcoming Open House dates*)

*\*Budget Assumption: TSCT uses an outside agency/vendor for their video production needs and media buying.*

### **COMMUNICATIONS & MESSAGING:**

1. **Open House Event-Specific Messaging (pick and choose based on character counts):**
  - Event details: August 15, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Consider adding Oct. 14 date where appropriate).
  - Talk with faculty, current students, and alumni of your future program.
  - Info sessions with key support offices.

- Connect with the Admissions team and get your questions answered.
- Learn about job placement opportunities and career information.
- Our Open House is truly an open house - you get to create your own experience while here!

## 2. Overarching Institutional Messaging (pick and choose based on character counts):

- PA's #1 Technical College.
- 97% Overall Employer Satisfaction Score.
- The only two-year, technical college in PA recognized by the Aspen Institute.
- One of the top 120 two-year colleges in the country for six consecutive years.
- TSCT is a premier, residential, two-year, accredited technical college that prepares students for skilled employment.

## 3. Call To Action:

- **Primary:** Register for the Open House [insert link].
- **Secondary:** Can't make the Open house? Visit in person or virtually at a time that works best for you: <https://stevenscollege.edu/admissions-aid/visit/>

## OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENTS/ANALYTICS:

1. On the Open House event landing webpage, in addition to the event registration link, add an RFI form to gather prospect contact info for building a prospect database for ongoing outreach and marketing efforts. Track form completions.
2. Within each social platform, track impressions, clicks, click-through-rate, and cost-per-click.
3. Using Google Analytics (GA) and Google Tag Manager (GTM), to track conversions and traffic from social ads to the Open House event webpage and RFI completions, clicks to the registration webpage, and ultimately "APPLY" button clicks tied to the social ad traffic.

## **OBJECTIVE 2: Inform all traffic to the College's website about upcoming Open House events and encourage attendance.**

### STRATEGIES & TACTICS:

**Install a modal window** (webpage element that displays in front of and deactivates all other page content), **that would advertise the upcoming Open House events.** This will focus site traffic on the simple message of upcoming event dates and allow them to click to the Open House webpage or close out of the modal to continue to the site.

**TIMELINE:** Build and install modal by 6/7. Modal to activate from 6/7 - 8/15. Make sure modal activation overlaps with digital social ads during the months leading up to an event. Once a user has seen the modal, configure it so it won't return until the next Open House to the avoid nuisance factor.

**GEOTARGETING:** NA.

**BUDGET:** \$0 (a few hours of web developer time).

**COMMUNICATIONS & MESSAGING:** Same as Goal #1, Objective #1 above.

## OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENTS/ANALYTICS:

1. On the Open House event landing webpage, in addition to event registration link, add an RFI form to gather prospect contact info for building a prospect database for ongoing outreach and marketing efforts. Track form completions.

2. Setup GA and GTM tracking to know how many unique visitors click the modal link to the Open House webpage vs close out the modal to go to the site's homepage as well as tracking RFI completions.
3. Compare year over year data for when the Open House modal is active on the site.

***GOAL 2: Given the College's enrollment priority for prospects that are economically and socially disadvantaged, increase registrations and attendees of this demographic for the August 15, 2023, Open House event by 2% compared to the previous year's average attendance of this demographic.***

**Supports Institutional Performance Measure: Identifier ESG G1, Enrollment Management Goal #1: Continue its primary focus to provide a fully subsidized education to indigent orphans and other needy or otherwise deserving students. The College will strive to increase enrollment of these students, by 2% per year, until they account for 70% of the total enrollment.**

**Measure:** For those prospects that fall into this demographic, track registration and attendee numbers for this event compared to the previous years' average number of registrations and attendees.

**Responsibility:** Office of Admissions in conjunction with Marketing and Communications.

**Assumption:** TSCT already tracks or has the ability to track registrations and event attendees that fall into this demographic.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Strategically partner with key organizations that service populations that are economically and socially disadvantaged for relationship marketing in order to promote TSCT and Open House events.**

**STRATEGIES & TACTICS:**

The following are recommended organizations for relationship marketing efforts, given their interactions with the target demographic, in order to promote TSCT and Open House events. *NOTE: In the case of staffing limitations, prioritize list of organizations.*

- 1. Low-income school districts in Lancaster and contiguous counties:** Relationship marketing with guidance counselors, provide posters and flyers, admissions counselors to attend their college fairs.
- 2. High school vo-tech programs:** Relationship marketing with vo-tech program leaders. Provide posters and flyers to be posted and passed out in these program spaces.
- 3. VA and other veteran serving organizations:** Relationship marketing with case workers. Posters/flyers.
- 4. Libraries in low-income areas (computer/internet source for low-income individuals):** Relationship marketing with librarians, provide posters and flyers.

**TIMELINE:** Given the length of time required to foster relationships, begin efforts immediately and to continue ongoing.

**GEOTARGETING:** Pilot partnership program starting with Lancaster County, expand to surrounding counties, and if resources are available continue to grow the geographic targeting.

**BUDGET:** ~\$500 for printing of posters and flyers with messaging specific to this demographic. ~\$1K for travel expenses. Considerable staff time investment for travel and relationship building. Long term, consider creating a Director of Strategic Partnerships/Business Development position if this doesn't already exist.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS & MESSAGING:**

##### **1. Open House Event-Specific Messaging (pick and choose based on character counts):**

- Event details: August 15, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. (Consider adding Oct. 14 date where appropriate).
- Talk with faculty, current students, and alumni of your future program.
- Info sessions with key support offices.
- Connect with the Admissions team and get your questions answered.
- Learn about job placement opportunities and career information.
- Our Open House is truly an open house - you get to create your own experience while here!

##### **2. Overarching Institutional Messaging (pick and choose based on character counts):**

- Many students receive full grants based on financial need.
- TSCT offers students affordable access to higher education.
- In the past two years, 52 adults received tuition-free training.
- 36% cheaper than the average Pennsylvania tuition for 2-year colleges.
- Grant money available to remove barriers (tuition, tools, safety gear, transportation, food, childcare, work-safe clothing).
- Over 90% job placement rate (median five-year).
- PA's #1 Technical College.

##### **3. Call To Action:**

- **Primary:** Register for the Open House [insert link to a custom unindexed landing page]
- **Secondary:** Can't make the Open house? Visit in person or virtually at a time that works best for you: <https://stevenscollege.edu/admissions-aid/visit/>

#### **OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENTS/ANALYTICS:**

1. Use the "Admission Fee Waiver Form – Agency" to annually track number of prospective students coming from the various partner organizations targeted in this objective.
2. On the Open House Event landing webpage, in addition to event registration link, add an RFI form to gather prospect contact info for building a prospect database for ongoing outreach and marketing efforts. Track form completions.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Develop an advertising campaign targeted at economically and socially disadvantaged demographic, in order to promote TSCT and Open House events.**

#### **STRATEGIES & TACTICS:**

The following are recommended campaign target organizations given their interactions with the demographic of this objective, in order to promote TSCT and Open House events.

1. **Food banks and soup kitchens:** Provide posters and flyers promoting Open House events.
2. **Red Rose Transit Authority:** Ads in buses, bus stop poster ads, etc. through Vector Media.

**TIMELINE:** Meet with vendor and schedule ads by 6/1, go live with unindexed custom event landing page that QR codes direct to, and send artwork files to them by 6/7, ads to run for the 6-8 weeks prior to event registration closing.

**GEOTARGETING:** Pilot campaign starting with Lancaster County, expand to surrounding counties, and if resources are available continue to grow the geographic targeting.

**BUDGET:** ~\$500 for printing of posters/flyers. ~\$5-10K for Vector Media (*NOTE: Promote all upcoming Open House dates*)

**COMMUNICATIONS & MESSAGING:** Same as Goal #2, Objective #1 above.

**OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENTS/ANALYTICS:**

1. Create an application waiver fee code (For ex. "START23") that would be printed on the campaign materials so that all applications that come from prospects from the campaign could be tracked to determine effectiveness.

*Assumption: TSCT's application can be modified to accept an application waiver fee code that would allow the prospect to bypass the College's \$45 application fee.*

2. Print a QR code on all the campaign materials that would load an unindexed landing webpage with Open House event details and messaging specific to the target demographic as outlined above. Track number of QR code scans, as well as GPS locations of users to understand the locations of the print materials that are performing the best.
3. On the unindexed custom landing webpage, in addition to event registration link, add an RFI form to gather prospect contact info for building a prospect database for ongoing outreach and marketing efforts. Track form completions.

### III. EVALUATIVE RESEARCH

**Ongoing evaluation, implementation and planning processes will include:**

- Implement the plan immediately for the 8/15 event but continuing with the initiatives for the Open House in the fall, and into next CY's events as well.
- Collect and analyze evidence tied to measurements of the objectives.
- Adjust objectives and tactics in the plan based on that analysis as well as updated institutional performance measures for the College.
- Periodically review the plan with the key stakeholders/departments, and specifically the objectives and tactics that require collaboration with those various departments.
- Align resources with objectives and tactics as well as department results and annual assessments.
- Routinely meet with various department directors to assess new needs and opportunities that could align with the plan's goals and objectives.