



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Marketing strategy and implementation for Northern Vermont University

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Deadline for Proposals:	4 p.m. EST, March 20, 2019

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ABOUT NORTHERN VERMONT UNIVERSITY

Northern Vermont University is a two-campus institution of higher education that combines the best of our campuses' nationally recognized liberal arts and professional programs. At Northern Vermont University, our goal is to guide curious, motivated, and engaged students on their paths to success and their places in the world. NVU Online offers flexible, affordable, high-quality options for learners pursuing their bachelor's degree.

History of Unification—From Here on Out Everyone Will Feel our Impact

In September 2016, the Vermont State Colleges System Board of Trustees initiated the unification of Johnson State College and Lyndon State College as Northern Vermont University, effective July 1, 2018. The unification positions the campuses — and northern Vermont — to thrive during demographic and higher education changes and to expand opportunities for students through shared resources and collaborative innovation. Northern Vermont University is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE/NEASC).

Students now have more options for academic programs, research, and hands-on experiences, extracurricular activities, and the high-impact education that prepares them with career-ready skills for a changing world.

While NVU is one university, the campuses have their distinct identities, with separate mascots, athletic teams, and alumni associations.

In 2017, we engaged a branding firm to develop the brand for Northern Vermont University. We began marketing as NVU with this new brand in fall 2017 as we worked to bring in the fall 2018 class. In 2017 and 2018 we also built NorthernVermont.edu.

Northern Vermont University: Johnson Campus | Lyndon Campus | NVU Online | Center for Professional Studies

The NVU campuses are in the heart of northern Vermont, a rural region in a rugged landscape with endless opportunities for outdoor adventure. As part of our brand, NVU has claimed its place in the North entering the market with the brand slogan Do North. NVU's two campuses are 55 miles apart, a drive of about 1.25 hours over winding and often potholed roads.

NVU-Johnson offers a high-impact liberal arts education to provide students with an economic advantage in a global economy. You will learn how to find innovative solutions in a complex, diverse, and changing world. Johnson is Vermont's premier public liberal arts institution as designated by the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges.

NVU-Lyndon offers distinct professional programs based in a liberal arts core where every degree is infused with career-ready skills. From atmospheric sciences, mountain recreation management, electronic journalism arts to music business and exercise science and beyond, you will be prepared for career success in a competitive world.

Both campuses offer undergraduate and graduate programs. There is also an online division, NVU Online, that offers eight degree programs. NVU at NECC offers two bachelor's completion degrees at Northern Essex Community College in Lawrence and Haverhill, Massachusetts. A Center for Professional Studies offers labor workforce programs, certificates, and a variety of non-degree based learning.

Marketing and Advertising Strategy for Brand Raising and Programs

In late summer 2017, NVU launched its new name and brand. Over the course of the past 18 months, we've developed a website, deployed advertising in the digital, print, TV, radio, and cinema arenas, and developed out new Slate CRM and email communications.

Now we are ready to push into the next phase of our advertising and marketing, communications flow, and print collateral. We are looking for an agency that can take us to the next level. We are looking for an agency who can help us figure out not just what to advertise, but WHERE and HOW. What are the best avenues? How do they differ by undergraduate, graduate, certificate, and online populations? And how do they differ by campus and degree program? How much do we advertise just as Northern Vermont University? And how much do we advertise by degree program.

We are seeking proposals from qualified, full-service agencies who can offer us a comprehensive marketing strategy and implementation. The chosen firm will be charged with achieving these deliverables through an inclusive process that incorporates ideas and feedback from stakeholders at Northern Vermont University.

In-House Resources

The NVU Marketing and Communications team is talented, driven, dedicated—and small. We consist of a Director of Marketing and Communications, Associate Director of Communications, Marketing Design and Production Manager, Web and Digital Designer, Digital Content Coordinator, and a very part-time Coordinator of Media and Marketing. A Dean of Enrollment and Marketing oversees the Admissions and Marketing departments.

This team can design, code, write, and more. As we explore working with a firm to develop and implement marketing and advertising strategy, we will need to figure out where the new firm will create full-fledged pieces and where the firm will advise. When our team worked with our branding firm, we had great success in hiring the firm to create a few pieces and design templates from which we built a body of work in house.

Timeline

We will need to hit the ground running as soon as we can. Because we need to launch advertising for NVU Online and the Center for Professional Studies as quickly as possible, we would do a phased in approach to this work.

SCOPE OF WORK: ADVERTISING/MARKETING STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

With the creation of our new university and the transition from Johnson and Lyndon State Colleges, there is still a great deal of confusion in the marketplace—in Vermont and beyond—about who we are. Advertising throughout the state, concentrated more in the central through northern region, has taken place in print, radio, TV, digital, and movie theaters.

We are looking to step it up and develop a marketing strategy that 1.) Increases name recognition and clears up confusion for the university in Vermont, the Northeast, the mid-Atlantic and Pennsylvania, and in new markets we are targeting in Colorado and the Pacific Northwest. 2.) Develop a marketing/advertising strategy specific to enrollment in the programs listed below.

Name Recognition, Brand Confusion

The new Northern Vermont University brand is strong and bold. But with all upheaval going on with higher education and our recent merger, NVU faces confusion and insecurity in the marketplace, especially in Vermont. Where did Lyndon and Johnson go? This new university was created to save the schools, right? What is NVU?

We seek to set Northern Vermont University as a strong, well-known, innovative institution with all the offerings of a university and a place with a solid foundation and future.

Recruitment and Enrollment

A critical piece of any university recruitment strategy involves a comprehensive marketing plan to reach

demographics identified for specific university programs. We are looking for a marketing and advertising strategy and implementation for NVU and its programs, including:

- [Northern Vermont University](#) as a whole
- [Undergraduate](#) (two campuses, some degree-specific advertising)
 - [NVU at Northern Essex Community College](#)
- [Graduate](#) (campus-based, regional centers)
- [NVU Online](#)
- [Center for Professional Studies](#)

This is the largest and most-important piece in this project. We will expect the firm we retain to:

- Develop a strategy and schedule for marketing and advertising each of the programs listed above as well as to market some specific programs within each of the categories. We are looking for a one-stop shop to develop our strategy around digital, print, radio, TV, and even environmental possibilities such as billboards (outside Vermont), movie theaters, and more.
- Implement the strategy and advertising in cooperation with NVU Marketing and Communications.

Expanded Markets

As competition in the Northeast higher education landscape intensifies, Northern Vermont University is seeking new markets. A key component of this SOW is marketing strategy for these new markets, including but not limited to Colorado and the Pacific Northwest.

SCOPE OF WORK: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN/FLOW

Review existing communications flow, including email and text in context with print collateral flow. Make recommendations for new approaches in frequency, design, content. Work could include writing new content and designing email templates, or may be limited to recommendations in strategy, approach, and design changes.

SCOPE OF WORK: PRINT COLLATERAL REVIEW AND DIRECTION

We've built a large body of print collateral since we launched for the fall 2017 recruiting cycle. As begin the fall 2019 cycle, we are looking to review what is in place and make suggested changes. What are we doing right? What should change? Where are the gaps? Does design and content need to change. This is a smaller piece of the overall scope of the project, but it is a critical piece, especially as we look at the whole of our work to recruit. The current materials will be reviewed for all programs outlined under SCOPE OF WORK: ADVERTISING/MARKETING STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION.

SCOPE OF WORK: GRADUATE PROGRAMS

We are making a concerted effort to develop out our recruitment strategy for [graduate programs](#). They exist on both campuses. This fall we will launch an online program in leadership that is meant for middle level managers rather than the traditional leadership programs for executive leaders. NVU will offer seven graduate programs when this new degree launches in fall 2019. One unique program in the mix is an [in-person, weekend-format degree in mental health counseling](#) offered in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Wisconsin, and Alaska. NVU acquired this program from SNHU in fall 2018. As we look to grow our graduate program enrollment, we are looking to the firm we engage to develop a marketing and advertising strategy for each of the programs. In addition, we are looking for a review of and recommendations for the print collateral and communications flow. Possible work could also include creation of email content.

SCOPE OF WORK: NVU ONLINE

[NVU Online](#) launched in 2016. Currently there are seven fully online programs and one 90% online early childhood education program for Vermonters and those in surrounding states who work in Vermont. Advertising has largely been digital. The NVU Online programs attract both new students just entering college as well as students who have completed some college work.

This work will largely focus on building out a digital recruiting strategy and a campaign as well as reviewing the existing communications flow. The NVU Online program is so new that we have not fully built out our enrollment and marketing strategies in a comprehensive and cohesive way. We are looking for recommendations for new approaches in frequency, design, and content. Work could include writing new content and designing email templates, or may be limited to recommendations in strategy, approach, and design changes.

SCOPE OF WORK: CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

The [Center for Professional Studies](#) offers a variety of in-person and online courses ranging from QuickBooks to Excel to rock climbing and outdoor leadership skills to hospitality. Programs have included certificates. This June 1, CPS will launch a project management program with several different offerings and optional certification. CPS has never been fully branded and we are looking to do some sub-branding for this program. The bulk of the work for CPS will involve work to build an audience for the project management offering launching June 1. This work will include a marketing strategy, developing an email communications flow, and advertising. We are also looking for social media strategy for this program. There is a USDA grant for the CPS work.

EXCLUSIONS

NVU currently works with Capture employing their Capture Behavior Engagement for some digital marketing, inquiry generation, application generation, yield maximization, and Geo-IP Targeting, mostly for undergraduate programs. We expect this relationship to continue. We also have contracts for lead generation with Cappex and Naviance/Hobsons.

BIDDER REQUIREMENTS

Bidders must have at least five years experience in marketing and advertising execution. Experience in higher education preferred. We are open to thinking out of the box, a proven track record in marketing strategy and execution, and a portfolio of marketing work created for higher education.

Bidders must be licensed in their state(s) of operation and comply with all federal, state, and local laws, including the Equal Opportunity Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, civil rights legislation, and OSHA regulations.

Bidders must disclose any relevant conflicts of interest and/or pending lawsuits, as well as the name of any officer, director, or agent who is also an employee of any institution in the Vermont State College System.

Bidders must be prepared to describe their experience with and process for soliciting feedback from faculty, students, and administrators at various stages of development.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Please format proposals to standard 8.5" x 11" paper size and adhere to the following format:

SECTION 1: Company Information

Name, address, phone, email, fax, and website URL

Federal ID number

Contact person for the purpose of your proposal

Date of incorporation/how long in business

State where licensed

Number of employees

SECTION 2: Company Narrative

Provide a 1- to 4-page narrative describing your experience developing, executing, and managing projects of this size and scope as well as your experience with advertising campaigns and strategy, developing printed publications and communications flows for higher education, your philosophy/approach to marketing strategy and implementation, and how that philosophy/approach relates to the project outlined in this RFP.

SECTION 3: Personnel

Provide a list of key personnel who will work on this project along with an overview of their professional background/experience and the role they would play in this project.

SECTION 4: Scope of Work, Timeline, and Pricing

Describe the scope of work as you see it and how you will approach the project. Provide an estimated time schedule and costs associated with all phases and deliverable.

Note any additional parameters affecting the cost of this project, including travel, optional services, and contingencies.

Provide a list of options and costs for carrying out the project as outlined above, as well as for maintenance and support beyond the parameters of this project. As we develop the statement of work with the vendor, we will determine which pieces are within budget based.

SECTION 5: References and Work Samples

Provide three to five references (including at least two higher education clients) with case studies and links to URLs for projects involving a similar scope of work as outlined in this RFP.

CONTRACT TERMS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

It is anticipated that the initial term of any agreement resulting from this RFP will be for 18-months. Advertising spend may be set aside and there shall be no separate or additional charges, fees, handling or other incidental costs following contract award. The prices quoted in your proposal response shall be firm for at least the first 12 months of any resulting contract.

At the end of the contract, the Vermont State Colleges System will maintain the rights to all project assets,

including artwork, verbiage, and coding.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria using a “cost per quality point” rubric. Each bidder’s proposed cost will be divided by the number of points earned in our evaluation, and the bidder with the lowest cost per quality point will be awarded the contract.

- General quality, adequacy, and clarity of response.
- Demonstrated ability to successfully complete the requirements identified in the scope of work.
- Qualifications and experience of the bidding company and the staff who will work on this project.
- Quality and applicability of sample campaigns.
- Cost of services.
- Project completion schedule and strategy.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submit proposals via email, in PDF or Word format only, to: Sylvia.Plumb@NorthernVermont.edu. The deadline for receipt is 4 p.m. March 20, 2019.

Proposals will be reviewed by the Director of Marketing and Communications and the Dean of Enrollment and Marketing and a small committee. This committee will be the sole judge of the contract that best meets the colleges’ needs, interests, and budget.

The committee reserves the right to reject all proposals, to waive any informalities and technicalities, to solicit and re-advertise for new proposals, or to abandon the project in its entirety.

Please direct questions to:

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