Focus is on marketing and recruitment
Rivier College launches new website

(From: *Rivier Today*, Fall 2005)

It's colorful, attractive, well-organized and more importantly, user friendly. A newly designed Rivier College website was launched at the end of August, according to Director of College Relations Karen Cooper,* who initiated and managed the yearlong project in-house.

"Our overall goals were to make the site more marketing-oriented, interactive, and user-friendly. We were excited to unveil this new site because we felt we accomplished those goals," says Cooper, who recalls a major redesign in 2000, when College Relations worked with an outside agency to redesign the site.

"It's difficult for an off-campus agency to understand our priorities and needs. As labor intensive as this effort was, by doing the project in-house, we were able to design the look and develop content for the site from top to bottom and, in the process, save the College close to $80,000," says Cooper, referencing one outside quote for the job.

The project was a collaboration between the Offices of College Relations and Information Technology. In addition to managing the project, Cooper developed the central navigation and web site content, creating pages using the College's content management system.

Also central to the project were Graphic Designer Lisa Theall and Webmaster Dan DiCecca. Theall served as the principal designer and was responsible for developing close to 600 graphic files in Adobe® Photoshop® for use on the web; while DiCecca utilized the conceptual design and files provided by Theall to build more than 1,300 web pages using technologies including ASP, ASP.net, and SQL Server. Donna Kinn, college relations administrative assistant, updated countless webpages and formatted new ones, including a biography page for every full time faculty member.

For Theall, who joined the College Relations department in 2004, the project provided an opportunity to integrate the new web site design with the print publications she has developed in the last year. "Designing a new site at the same time as redesigning our print publications allowed us to create an updated and consistent marketing campaign that will appeal to a variety of audiences," says Theall.

The Rivier homepage features profiles of students, faculty, and alumni, as well as current news and events.

The undergraduate admissions website was designed to appeal to the prospective student audience.

The project was particularly gratifying for DiCecca who has seen the need for a comprehensive website overhaul since he started as the College's webmaster in 2001. "This project is an example of the union of art and technology. The design skills from College Relations coupled with the technological expertise from Information Technology resulted in an effective web site, both in terms of form and function," says DiCecca.

"The cooperation between College Relations and the IT staff on this project has been fantastic," says Bill Schleifer, executive director of information technology. "This project clearly demonstrates that a collaborative effort can produce outstanding results." According to Schleifer, the redesign represents a dramatic leap forward not only in the aesthetics and content of the site, but in overall functionality as well. "I think all users, but especially our students, will find it much easier to quickly locate the information they need."

Throughout the process, Cooper says she and others dedicated to the project kept the needs of prospective students, both traditional and non-traditional, in mind. "We wanted to make it easier for all of our audiences—high school students, adult learners, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, and others—to quickly find the information they need."

Cooper says high school students in particular need to find something on the site to pique their interest, so they are motivated to visit the campus in person. Increasingly, adult learners are relying on the web to quickly find program information and to choose a college from within a highly competitive marketplace. With this in mind, the homepage has been designed to include changing elements and more news and events so that visitors of all ages will have reason to come back to the site frequently.

A new interactive campus map features photos and descriptions of campus facilities and learning resources.

Highlights of the new site include:

- A more visible central navigation bar, providing easy access to academic, student life, athletics, alumni, and other sections of the site.

- An interactive campus map, built by Raka Creative, featuring a new full-color architectural rendering of the campus, highlighting the College's diverse facilities and learning resources.

- Academic department pages with a consistent format and a list of programs and biographies of full-time faculty members.

- Enhanced pages for the Division of Academic Outreach featuring accelerated business and corporate training programs.

- A website for *Designing the Future: The Campaign for Rivier College*

- Athletics pages with team profiles, schedules, and coaches' biographies.

Visit Rivier online: www.rivier.edu

"This is the first time the College website has been totally redesigned from a marketing perspective. Our website is a major recruiting tool and that's how we approached the project," says Cooper.

An entirely new undergraduate admissions website, numbering close to 40 pages, was outsourced to Raka Creative, a Portsmouth-based web design firm. Rivier graphic design alumnus, Daniel Marino, a principal and partner in the firm, managed the project and showed an "intuitive knowledge of the institution," says Cooper.

Working from design elements and content supplied by College Relations, the firm successfully created an admissions site geared primarily to 17-to-19-year olds. New features include an online form where visitors can request more information and sign up for admissions events, profiles of current students, publication downloads, and more. Our website is a major recruiting tool and that's how we approached the project," says Cooper.

An entirely new undergraduate admissions website, numbering close to 40 pages, was outsourced to Raka Creative, a Portsmouth-based web design firm. Rivier graphic design alumnus, Daniel Marino, a

principal and partner in the firm, managed the project and showed an "intuitive knowledge of the institution," says Cooper.

Working from design elements and content supplied by College Relations, the firm successfully created an admissions site geared primarily to 17-to-19-year olds. New features include an online form where visitors can request more information and sign up for admissions events, profiles of current students, publication downloads, and more.

Looking ahead, Cooper says plans are in the works to bring the College magazine online during the coming academic year. The department also began filming a short video this fall, a 3-4 minute feature showcasing the College, that would be accessible from the homepage. "It's another way to reach our audience and put a face on Rivier College."

_____

* As Rivier's Director of College Relations, **KAREN COOPER** oversees the College's marketing and advertising, public relations, publications, communications, and the website. She earned her Master's of Business Administration with a concentration in marketing from Rivier in 2003, and this fall she will be teaching graphic design in the College's Professional Communications program. Some of her accomplishments at Rivier include the design of the current College logo; the development of the College magazine, *Rivier Today*, of which she is the editor; and the launch of the new College website in 2005. She also serves as Associate Editor of the Online Academic Journal.