

**Summary: Workshop USA by Dr. Kumble R. Subbaswamy**  
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Institutional marketing has been taking place in the U. S. higher education landscape for a long time and generally been considered a positive phenomenon. In a highly diverse area of different types of institutions, university marketing helps to more clearly define the individual institutional role and function in a community, encourages a healthy competition between individual institutions and helps to maintain a general standard of quality. However, the USA-workshop showed that university marketing may also be viewed critically, especially if seen through the lens of a university academic.

- General academic trends in the U.S.

For several years, the budgets of U.S. universities, in particular public institutions, have suffered from shrinking state contributions. In times of financial crisis, they receive even less public funding, and at the same time are faced with dwindling endowments. To make up for the financial losses, universities increasingly depend on the income generated by their tuition-paying undergraduate students who help finance the graduate and postgraduate education at the university – among them a significant number of international students.

Since until 2014 the number of high school students in the U.S. will decline and not as many international students may be coming to the U.S. to study as previously, universities fear that soon less paying “clients” will help finance their programs. In order to save their programs and services, U.S. universities are, therefore, pressed more than ever to keep their student numbers up, to compete for new students both nationally and internationally. To this purpose, U.S. universities must market their institutions and find ways to create an institutional corporate identity.

- Corporate Identity vs. Academic Independence

Dr. Subbaswamy raised the question if university marketing is not anti-thetical to the academic environment; whether academic and marketing philosophies do not basically conflict with each other.

- (a) He described the scepticism of his university faculty in view of the newly designed positions for vice-presidents of marketing and other “education CEOs”, and the establishment of university public relations departments – turning academia into a business environment.
- (b) Scholars were also concerned about the costliness of the marketing campaigns and the strain they put on the university budget to eventually create the University of Kentucky brand “*See Blue*”. . Will funds eventually go into everything marketable? “Will the tail wag the dog”? After all, flashy university marketing campaigns to recruit new undergraduate students do not generate new research money.
- (c) For scholars, the attractiveness and standing of an institution should be based on scholarly expertise, quality teaching and research, but not depend on colourful marketing strategies targeted at undergraduate students via TV spots and Web 2.0.

- Brand Development

U.S. universities have different ways of branding their institutions.

- (a) Some universities use only their names and crests – as do Harvard University, Yale University etc.
- (b) Often, different logos are being used within one and the same institution: So, the business schools, engineering colleges and sports teams would have their own seals and logos.

- (c) State universities will affiliate themselves with their community and region:  
“California State University – Working for California”, “The University of Texas at Austin – What starts here changes the World”.

However, for a university corporate identity to be accepted and supported throughout the university community, internal persuasion is the key. Scholars and administrative staff as well as the students must be convinced of the desired institutional goals to support the university’s marketing strategy and its underlying message. At the University of Kentucky, the realization that it had long been necessary to improve the graduation rate among undergraduate students served to convince academic and non-academic staff that more attention should be given to undergraduate students and that it was necessary to make special efforts to reach out to this clientel.

- Measuring Success

The marketing strategies of the University of Kentucky shall eventually result in

- (a) getting the university’s name on more students’ “wish list”
- (b) increasing the number of students not only admitted but actually enrolling at the university
- (c) increasing the number of more qualified students, thereby
- (d) increasing the graduation rate.

- International Outlook

According to Dr. Subbaswamy, American universities have long used institutional marketing for university competition within the U.S. Looking beyond the U.S. and to market internationally has become more important as U.S. aid programs and U.S. government-funded programs for international undergraduate students were phased out after 9/11. Such programs brought international students to the U.S. almost automatically and helped finance U.S. universities. Considering, that

- (a) the U.S. is no longer the Number One destination for international students and that
- (b) 62% of international students world wide pay tuition at their host universities from their own sources

U.S. universities will have no choice but to market their institutions more strongly internationally to reach out to larger target groups than they did before.