ABC Accreditation Portfolio
Statement of Objectives

Nancy Biamonte
Athabasca University

Open 2008 – 2010

Open magazine is Athabasca University's premier print communication vehicle for both external and internal audiences that builds positive positioning for the university. Open-AU is the online supplement to the magazine.

BACKGROUND

First established in 1970, Athabasca University (AU) is one of four comprehensive academic and research institutions in the province of Alberta. What sets AU apart from other universities is that, as an open university, AU works to remove barriers to success in undergraduate and graduate education. Enrolment opportunities are flexible to accommodate learners' geographic location, educational background, age, gender, culture, income, disability or career and family obligations. As a distance and online post-secondary educational institution, AU offers the flexibility to learn anytime, anywhere while providing a high-quality, interactive and supportive learning environment.

As reported in the 2010 Annual Report, AU offers:

- 838 undergraduate and graduate courses
- Nine graduate degrees and 15 related graduate diplomas and certificates
- 25 undergraduate certificate and diploma programs

Student enrolment for 2009-10 was 38,190 with 7,701 full-load equivalents. Total number of students enrolled in graduate degree programs was 3,738 and total student undergraduate was 6,250. The remaining enrolment figures reflect unclassified students (undeclared majors or course direction) and/or visiting students from partnering institutions (almost 40%). Seven out of 10 applicants are at least 25 years old, including 43% who are 30 years or older. 68% are female, have a family and work full-time.

AU has four educational administrative centres spread throughout Alberta. Its main campus is located in the town of Athabasca with three satellite campuses located in Edmonton, St. Albert and Calgary. Employees work on the four university campus locations and in alternative home-based offices. Staffing numbers between 2008-2010 rose from 1,382 to 1,447 with almost half of this number being dedicated to the academic professional sector.

For the year 2010 the total operating budget of AU was just over $121,000,000. This number is the total of Federal, Provincial and other government grants, student tuition/fees, sales of services and products, investment income, donations and research grants, and capital contributions. Percentage of revenue from Alberta Advanced Education in 2008-09 was 35%.

When the department of communication and creative services was originally set up in 2006, it was structured as a separate unit from the marketing unit within the Advancement department. In 2008 a restructuring took place and the two units amalgamated into one called marketing and
communication, of which I am the director. As director of marketing and communication I manage the full-service communication unit with two full-time communication officers, three web developers, a multi-media producer (videographer), a graphic designer and an admin assistant. On the marketing side is a marketing manager, marketing assistant and four recruitment officers who have related duties associated with communication but are marketing focused.

My responsibilities as director of marketing and communication at AU include managing the overall identity and brand of the university, developing university-wide communication and marketing strategies through print and multi-media vehicles to grow and enhance AU's presence regionally, nationally and internationally.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY

When I joined AU in 2007, one of the first things I did was to research all the institutional communication vehicles that had been and were currently being produced. There were many small, niche publications that focused on research, or alumni/student profiles, but no single publication that illustrated how AU offers quality post-secondary online education within a flexible and innovative learning environment. And none of the publications had plans that outlined goals or objectives. I felt a solution was needed in order to pull together in a cohesive publication all the elements that make AU the post secondary educational success that it is. I developed a proposal for a comprehensive publication in the form of an annual magazine with a national distribution that would work to raise awareness of AU to targeted audiences.

Awareness is closely tied with student enrolment management, which is in turn, directly tied with government funding for the university. Enrolment targets are set each year as part of annual planning and are reported to the government in the institutional annual report. Government funding budgets are substantially based on AU meeting the internally set enrolment targets. Awareness is an indicator that influences student enrolment success. Studies, such as the various surveys conducted by Academica Group, a north American post secondary educational marketing firm, are designed to gather actionable data from prospect and applicant groups, environmental scans, marketing and recruitment audits which all indicate that a rise in institutional awareness often reflects a rise in prospective students which ultimately support increased registrations.

In 2006 a Marketing Awareness Positioning Study was conducted and awareness of AU was measured by surveying targeted groups and individuals.

AU Awareness Survey: 2006 (Academica Group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very little</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>14%</td>
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</table>

A SWOT analysis was also completed in 2006 that examined strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges that Open would work to address. A breakdown of the key findings is below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A generally high association of AU with online and distance learning</td>
<td>• Misunderstanding of the category of online and distance education by students and business</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Flexibility of start times</td>
<td>• Perception that e-courses are easier than traditional face-to-face, thereby devaluing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Removing barriers -time, location, recognition of past educational experience</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• The largest online MBA program in the country – the first eMBA in the world
• Very high satisfaction rates from AU students
• Very high (up to 90 per cent) willingness to recommend AU to friends and family
• Thousands of potential cheerleaders in the untapped alumni side of AU
• A comprehensive university with “credible research”
• Strong list of transfer institutional partners meaning AU can play the role of alternative deliverer of courses for other institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to spread the news about the quality and credibility, and thereby dominating online and distance education in Canada – this is realized by investing in brand development and positioning and strategic advertising and communication opportunities</td>
<td>AU's differentiation in the market place is becoming less pronounced (i.e. distance online will be commonplace – what is unique is “open university”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead with research - use faculty researchers to help build credibility in marketing and communication</td>
<td>There is skepticism about post-graduate studies online, and at the same time many students want more choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near-limitless opportunities for growth – especially when economy slows</td>
<td>The category reputation around online and distance education is ”being negatively affected by strong-arm, pervasive advertising approaches of some in the field (particularly the University of Phoenix),” according to AU's Marketing and Positioning Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for growth in Ontario – Toronto and tier-two Ontario markets like London, Kingston, etc.</td>
<td>Research suggests that consumers think online education should cost significantly less than traditional face-to-face; cost of out of province tuition is becoming more of an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Ontario college students who want to upgrade to a degree and are unable to do so in the Ontario market</td>
<td>Competition in Ontario is coming from primarily Atlantic provinces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU research reveals that at a time when people are overwhelmed by brochures and advertising, potential students are willing to receive Athabasca’s materials</td>
<td>AU is seen as less credible by Ontario institutions because it was seen as being more generous to Ontario colleges than COU guidelines permitted, reinforcing an impression of low standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of alumni to help promote the institution and programs</td>
<td>Prior Learning Assessment Review (PLAR) is seen as a problem with other universities – not the way to gain credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop relationships with HR professionals to “legitimize” AU degrees</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

‘ au degree
• Perception of distance education degrees as having “less value”
• AU brand associated with adjectives like “easy” and “correspondence,” not “excellence” and “credibility”
• While programs like eMBA have solid reputations, there is an overall confusion about Athabasca’s other offerings
• Perception by internal stakeholders that feeder institutions only send students who failed out of their institution
• Little to no recognition that AU conducts comprehensive research
• Very little understanding of AU by administrators or students in partnering institutions
• Very little understanding of AU by the business community, most importantly the human resource professionals

The perception of distance education degrees as having “less value” is not the way to gain credibility. AU is seen as less credible by Ontario institutions because it was seen as being more generous to Ontario colleges than COU guidelines permitted, reinforcing an impression of low standards. Prior Learning Assessment Review (PLAR) is seen as a problem with other universities – not the way to gain credibility.
I presented the concept of Open magazine to AU’s executive and governing council as a tool to raise awareness. It would be a professional quality magazine fully representing AU’s mission of breaking down barriers to education, highlighting our research and academic quality, as well as featuring students and alumni, news and events. Student and alumni testimonial-style articles to illustrate the impact AU has in transforming lives; faculty and research articles to illustrate the impact AU has in the academic community that supports AU’s reputation through excellence and innovative teaching models. Because our demographic is spread nationally, Open would be distributed through newspaper inserts in targeted regions based on where AU’s target markets primarily live.

The goals and objectives of Open were aligned with the goals and objectives of AU’s strategic university plan, specifically to raise the profile of AU as Canada’s Open University, provincially, nationally and internationally, which in turn, also support the goals and objectives of the national marketing strategy:

1. Build positive positioning for AU and distance education across Canada by profiling and featuring AU’s students, alumni, faculty, research projects, news and events in one cohesive professional quality publication with a national distribution.

2. Build a relationship and dialogue with prospective students by producing a professional quality publication featuring current students and faculty and highlighting key advantages of AU in order to connect and appeal to our target market.

Total magazines printed 610,000 (2010-11) based on a targeted demographic distribution plan:

- 595,675 for strategic and general distribution
- 14,325 direct mail to alumni

Target audience:

1. Females 25-34, particularly individuals employed full-time (69%)  
   *AU applicants are older than traditional university applicants. Seven out of 10 applicants to AU are at least 25 years of age, including 43% who are 30 years or older. 68% are female, have a family, a full-time job and are counting on the flexibility of online education to broaden their educational outlook and possibly advance their career.*  
   E.g. Angela Batsford – New learning possibilities - Oct. 18, 2010  

2. Visiting students (The University of Calgary is the top source for visiting students)  
   *Students who attend other institutions but take AU courses to transfer to their home institution. These students make up 40% of the AU student population and take only one or two courses from AU.*  
   E.g. Kathryn Anderson – Confidence through learning – May 12, 2010  

Additional information about AU students:

- more than 90% of applicants had prior post-secondary experience
- average age of undergrads is 29/average grad 37
- 42% undergraduate students are from Alberta, 32% are from Ontario, the remaining 26% reside throughout Canada,
- the majority of graduate students are from Ontario, followed by Alberta, then the rest of Canada although the Alberta student population is growing
- highest undergraduate registrations are in Bachelor of Arts, followed by the Bachelor of Administration and Management. Undergraduate nursing is also a high enrolment area
- highest graduate registrations are in MBA and Master of Arts in Integrated Studies programs followed by Nursing
- the Calgary region has the highest number of Alberta students
Where and whenever possible, we selected Forward Sortation Areas (FSAs) and/or distribution routes that demonstrated a high concentration of females 25-34 and/or visiting students. Once these zones were determined, the final tally was cross-referenced with the provincial AU student allocation percentages to index the totals to ensure the primary market is being appropriately targeted.

Geographic target results for 2010 were:

- Alberta 36.2%
- Ontario 35.2%
- British Columbia 20.6%
- Saskatchewan 5.3%

**DEVELOPING THE SOLUTION/PLAN**

The goal of *Open* magazine is to build positive positioning and awareness for AU and to portray AU as a desirable online university to attend, which meant developing a distribution strategy that placed *Open* in the hands of individuals who have the strongest desire to attend AU or influence prospective students. The challenge was that AU is an open, distance and online learning institution. We are without borders. Students and prospective students are spread across Canada, and globally. Since we shared the goals with AU's national marketing campaign of increasing awareness of AU and increasing enrolments, we meshed with their target audience and geographic objectives. Not only would *Open* then reach the most appropriate audience, but it would also deliver the magazine to the same group of individuals being targeted with the paid media efforts, thus increasing overall awareness and reinforcing AU's Strategic University Plan (SUP) goal 4.1 to increase student enrolment through awareness and messaging using insights from institutional and marketing research.

1. Build positive positioning for AU and online/distance education across Canada by profiling and featuring AU's students, alumni, faculty, research projects, news and events in one cohesive professional quality publication with a national distribution
   - Develop a single communication tool that is relevant, compelling and memorable for AU's target audience by producing a professional quality publication; research and interview key projects and people that will appeal to our target markets and build awareness and interest
   - Increase awareness results in the AU Marketing Awareness Study (next study publication scheduled Oct. 2012)
   - Track the number of prospective students from the AU recruitment microsite to the AU application form to reflect an increase in awareness and enrolment numbers
   - Reflected in:
     - testimonial feedback on Open-AU online (www.open-au.com)
     - increases in Twitter and Facebook followers and Open-AU online RSS subscribers
     - positive feedback about *Open* by phone or email

2. Build a relationship and dialogue with prospective students by featuring current students and faculty and highlighting key advantages of AU featured in a professional quality publication that connects and appeals to our target market
   - Increase awareness results in the AU Marketing Awareness Study (next study publication scheduled Oct. 2012)
   - Monitor engagement on the recruitment microsite (hits on Open links from microsite, advisor requests, requests for information) to set benchmarks for future targets
   - Reflected in:
     - testimonial feedback on Open-AU online (www.open-au.com)
Now that we had the goals, objectives, distribution and numbers in place, we needed to establish the necessary budget. The proposed (and granted) budget for Open was $200,000 based on research and estimates requested from various printers and a distribution plan developed by our media buyers. By doing this, we were able to find significant savings and efficiencies. The media buyer secured special bulk rates for newspaper insertion and shipping costs that found further savings. As well, we were better able to align the geographic and demographic targets with that of the national marketing campaign.

610,000 printed total / 584,113 newspaper distribution / 14,325 alumni direct mail / 11,562 general distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print Cost</td>
<td>$136,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution/Insertion costs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>$13,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GST (1/3 charge of total 9267.51</td>
<td>$3322.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational rate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract editor (includes GST)</td>
<td>$945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract illustrator</td>
<td>$1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni costs – addressed mail prep</td>
<td>$1135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on 14,325</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni cost – postage for direct</td>
<td>$9268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mail</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$202,698</strong></td>
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Approximately .33/each piece – 40 pages total (self-cover)
32 pg. text 4/C/bleeds on 50lb #3 (FSC matte) 8 pg. cover 4/C/bleeds on 70lb #3 (FSC matte)
Fold, saddle stitch, trim to finished size 8.25” x 10.75”

Note:
• 14,325 mailed directly from mail house to Alumni list. Alumni unit covered the mail cost for these. This number is included in 610,000 total.
• 11,562 remaining for general distribution throughout the year

SELLING THE SOLUTION/PLAN TO MANAGEMENT/CLIENT

As stated earlier, when I started with AU in 2007 there was no comprehensive communication vehicle such as Open. There were many separate publications being published. The problem with this situation was that they all had their own niche markets and audiences. However, there were no goals, objectives or measurements attached to any of the publications. There were no definitive reports available to indicate whether the publications were having any positive effect.

I presented the concept of Open to executive and governing council as a culmination of the many disparate publications that represented AU. It would illustrate AU’s reputation for quality education, research and innovation by writing about our students, alumni, faculty, and research projects. Student and alumni articles to illustrate the impact AU has in transforming lives; faculty and research articles to illustrate the impact AU has in the academic community that supports AU’s reputation through excellence and innovative teaching models. All this information would be presented in a
glossy high quality magazine with national distribution through newspaper inserts in targeted regions based on where AU target markets were identified. The Open proposal was supported by a plan that outlined the goals, objectives and measurements that would show what Open magazine intended to do, how it would do it, who it would/should reach, and how its success would be measured.

The goals and objectives of Open aligned with the goals and objectives of AU's strategic university plan, specifically to raise the profile of AU as Canada’s Open University, provincially, nationally and internationally, which in turn, are also reflected in the goals and objectives of the national marketing strategy.

The budget that was presented as part of the proposal supported a targeted nation-wide distribution plan bi-annually. Because AU has year-round registration, timing isn’t quite the same concern as it is with traditional semester-based universities. With research from AU's media-buying agency and our own web metrics information, it was determined that June and October circulation cycle would most effectively hit our target prospective student markets at peak times. Because of resource issues and provincial budget cuts in 2008-10, we were only able to produce an annual October edition. We are currently reviewing the budget and plan to include the June edition for 2012 circulation.

It was important to clearly convey to executive that the goals, objectives and outcomes of the magazine seamlessly aligned with, and supported the recruitment and marketing goals, objectives and outcomes, which also reinforced the AU Strategic University Goal 4.1: Raise the profile of Athabasca University as Canada’s Open University, provincially, nationally and internationally. Awareness is directly tied to student enrolment management, which is in turn, connected to government funding for the university. Enrolment targets are internally set each year and are submitted to the government in the institutional annual report. Government funding budgets are based on AU meeting the enrolment targets we set for ourselves. Awareness is an indicator that influences student enrolment measures. Studies, such as the various surveys conducted by Academica Group, are designed to gather actionable data which indicates that a rise in institutional awareness often reflects a rise in prospective students who are aware of AU and ripe for recruitment, which ultimately support increased registrations.

Once all the data was analyzed, the concept of Open was illustrated and the project was explained through a clearly outlined plan, AU executive and governing board fully put their support behind Open magazine, along with Open-AU online, as AU’s premiere showcase communication vehicle. Being what many consider to be a “virtual” university, it was considered important to incorporate and maintain a strong print presence in partnership with a coordinated online presence.

**IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTION/PLAN**

My role with Open magazine is officially as creative director, and as such, I am the lead developer for the plan, concepts, article selection and overall look and feel of the magazine, but with the support and collaboration of the Open project team. The team is made up of both internal and contracted resources. Internal positions are: the graphic designer who develops the layout and coordinates the printing; a photographer who is assigned photo shoots as we determine who and what we will be featuring in the magazine; communication officers to research and write the articles, but we also hire contract writers when necessary. In addition to the writer contracts, we contract the editorial work and any illustration or custom graphic design work.

Time and scheduling is a key function that I carefully managed in order to meet tight deadlines that are always associated with these types of collaborative projects. Throughout the year, we work closely with a network of internal department champions who keep us up-to-date with what is happening in their areas, whether it is a significant student or alumni achievement or an
international research project. As a team, we all work together throughout the year to identify and discuss possible Open magazine features and profiles.

In order to hit our peak prospective student interest cycles, meeting the October print deadline can be a challenge in that most of the work takes place during the summer. Generally, faculty leaves for summer break from June and returns in September. We work to get as much information before summer swings into full impact mode. However, faculty staff is often willing to make themselves available for interviews and to verify facts and/or approve articles during summer break. And there is a small window of time in early September to verify any facts that need re-checking or quotes that need approval.

Print and distribution deadlines are first confirmed with our contract printer. We then work backwards from these dates, as they are not flexible. For October distribution, these dates run throughout early September. In our first editorial meeting in May of each year, feature articles, cover story, faculty and student profiles are all decided. We then determine the article assignments and discuss if contract writers are required. If they are, I have a list of writers to contact for writing assistance. I compile the photo requests and submit them to the staff photographer. If there are required photos not in AU’s database, photo shoots are set up. Each month between May and September we meet to discuss potential problems or challenges, whether it’s tracking down a student for an interview or meeting a deadline. September layout and proofing deadlines are set and followed carefully in order to meet the print deadlines.

Below is the timeline for the 2010 Open edition:

- Editorial meeting and article assignments/mid-May
- Writers/editor confirmed and contracts negotiated/signed by June 1
- RFP and award to printer by June 26
- Articles submitted by writers to editor by August 10
- Articles submitted by editor to Creative Director by August 24
- First proof layout completed and approved by Sept. 8
- Second proof completed and approved by Sept. 11
- Final proof completed and approved by Sept 16
- To printer Sept. 21 week
- Printer proofs Sept 28 week
- Partial deliveries starting Oct. 5
- Distribution by October 17-24

Diligence and a good project collaboration tool is the key to ensuring that everyone is on task, on time and on budget. We utilize an online project management system that works very well for this project. Because it’s online, it is available at all times no matter where you are in the world. Milestones and to-do lists are assigned and everyone is automatically alerted by email when their deadlines are coming due. Files can be uploaded directly online for review, comment and editing. Both internal and external stakeholders can be set up to have access to the system, which saves time and frustration, especially when having to electronically send large files. Communication is ongoing and collaborative so everyone has the same snapshot of the project and can see what stage it is at. And it’s easy to use. As articles are completed, they are uploaded to a common folder for editing. Once editing is complete, I am notified that they are ready for layout and proofing. Once proofing is complete and final copy is approved, the printer is notified to download the printer-ready files. It’s a seamless and organized process that alleviates some of the stress often associated with these types of collaborative projects. We’ve utilized this online system for all three editions of Open and it has worked very well. The same system is utilized for Open-AU online throughout the year.

**EVALUATING THE SOLUTION/PLAN**
As stated earlier, the goals and objectives for Open are based on increasing student enrolment through awareness and messaging using insights from staff, faculty, research, projects, alumni, students and supporters. Key goals, objectives and measurements of Open are as follows (as aligned with the AU-SUP Goal 4.1: Raise the profile of Athabasca University as Canada’s Open University, provincially, nationally and internationally).

**Goal 1:**
Build positive positioning for AU and online/distance education across Canada by profiling and featuring AU’s students, alumni, faculty, research projects, news and events in one cohesive professional quality publication with a national distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a single communication tool that is relevant, compelling and memorable for AU’s target audience by producing a professional quality publication; research and interview key projects and people that will appeal to our target markets and build awareness and interest</td>
<td>• 2009-10 targeted for a 25% increase in visits to Open-AU online. Actual achieved was 38% so we decided that by 2012 we would target for an additional 25% for Open-AU online and look to increase Open’s Twitter followers by 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase awareness results in the AU Marketing Awareness Study (next study publication scheduled Oct. 2012)</td>
<td>• 2006 reputation rating was 3.6 out of 5 (on a scale of 1-5; five being highest). We targeted to increase this rating to 3.9 by 2009. Actual rating achieved was 3.7. We’re still aiming for 3.9 for 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Track the number of prospective students from the AU recruitment microsite to the AU application form to reflect an increase in enrolment numbers</td>
<td>• Testimonial feedback on Open-AU online (<a href="http://www.open-au.com">www.open-au.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflected in:</td>
<td>• Targeted for eight comments/testimonials in 2009 – actual achieved nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o testimonial feedback on Open-AU online (<a href="http://www.open-au.com">www.open-au.com</a>)</td>
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**Goal 2:**
Build a relationship and dialogue with prospective students by featuring current students and faculty and highlighting key advantages of AU featured in a professional quality publication that connects and appeals to our target market

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitor engagement on the recruitment microsite (hits on Open links from</td>
<td>• increases in Twitter and Facebook</td>
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</table>

Nancy Biamonte – ABC Portfolio #1 – Open magazine
microsite, advisor requests, requests for information) in order to set benchmarks and set future targets.

followers and Open-AU online RSS subscribers. Twitter and Facebook followers targeted for 2009 at 250 – actual achieved 300. RSS subscribers targeted for 100 subscribers for 2009 – actual achieved 193

• positive feedback about Open by phone or email
• By the end of March 2012, increase the rate of direct engagement with an advisor from 0.05% to 5% (advising metrics have only been compiled starting in 2010 so we are in the early stages of compiling data on this target.
• By the end of March 2012, set a benchmark for engagement with the chat feature (in development) on the recruitment microsite (chat feature will be implemented in 2011).

In 2010, AU saw a 1.5% higher enrolment rate over the same time period the previous year. Although there are many factors that contribute to increased enrolments, such as the national marketing campaign and recruitment initiatives, Open’s goal to raise awareness is one indicator that awareness is moving in a positive direction.

Marketing Awareness Study comparison 2006:2009 (Academica Group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness Level</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very little</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
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After each edition of Open magazine is completed, a review meeting is scheduled for November. We discuss what worked, what didn't, what we could change for next year, new ideas for the next edition and suggestions for general improvements. We review the goals and objectives from the plan to ensure we aren’t wavering off track or losing the focus of what Open is intended for.

We also look at any feedback we receive once the magazine has been circulated to the public. One of the problems with the previous AU publications was that there was no feedback process in place. In every edition of Open magazine we have several feedback mechanisms in place from direct phone numbers and email addresses, to online comment submissions through the website and Twitter.

In the first week after the inaugural edition of Open in 2008 was distributed, we received nine emails and three phone calls with feedback and comments. Below is an example of feedback we received from one of our alumni, the president of a large international mining company in the U.S.A. who also sits on AU’s governing council:
“I’ve been associated with AU for over 12 years now in one way or another. More than anything we have done recently, this [Open] captures the energy and excitement and renewed sense of purpose that is AU. The look and feel is fresh and updated, first rate all the way. Not that I needed another reason to proud of my University, but it’s nice to have one. You guys represent the best of both. Seriously, the best I have ever seen, and I have seen a lot. Not just in the realm of academia, but in business, government, law, associations, and media, and from every continent on the planet.

First, you share the passion for excellence and commitment to our transformational mission. And then, you magically convey that in the messaging materials you develop for us. The Open Magazine is the latest and best example of this. I would not thought it possible to capture the renewed spirit of AU on paper, but you did it perfectly.

I have used your AU materials to show people in my company what excellence looks like. Just this week, I sat in on a team meeting in our HR group where they were having great difficulties developing new recruiting materials, and asked me if I had any ideas. I went back to my briefcase, got the copy of Open and tossed it to them, “here - do this.”

Each Open edition invites readers to visit Open-AU online at www.open-au.com to submit their own stories, join us on Twitter and Facebook, download the Open-AU app from iTunes or contact us directly with any feedback or story ideas for future editions. We use the metrics pulled from these various vehicles as indicators of the effectiveness of the magazine to promote awareness about AU. What we’ve noticed consistently over the past two years is that there are spikes in total visits to the Open-AU website in late October and November (post Open magazine distribution). Between October 2010 and January 2011 we tracked a 38% increase in traffic to Open-AU online. At this point, these online metric trends are in the early stages as key performance indicators, however they set a benchmark against which we can set future goals and measure our impact. To strengthen our call to action in the 2011-12 edition we will be including a contest for readers to send us their educational stories and they will be entered to win an iPad. This will give us the opportunity to build a database of Open contacts as well as foster a relationship with our readers.

We also monitor the Open-AU Twitter account for increased followers as well as what lists follow us. To date Open-AU has 387 followers and 31 listed followers – some of which are significant players in the university/media community, such as @CanadaUnivNews/media and @InnovationCA/media, which indicates that Open has attracted attention at high levels. To compare these stats with other comparable university Twitter accounts (which we follow) we are showing encouraging figures – keep in mind that AU is an online university which can make comparing to other traditional universities problematic. One example that does work is Thompson Rivers University Open Learning which has 166 followers and has been in existence about the same amount of time.

Open magazine’s project objectives are evaluated, assessed and measured against several benchmark surveys and studies, including:

- 2008 UCAS (University & College Applicant Study) – next study scheduled for Nov. 2011
- Canadian University Survey Consortium Survey - last report completed 2008
- AU Enrolment reports - completed monthly
- AU Student Satisfaction reports - completed annually
- AU General Student and Registration Profile 2005-06 and 2009-10
- AU Top Net Course Counts Study 2009-10
- AU Visiting Student Reports 2004-05 to 2009-10
- Testimonial webpage of Open-AU online (www.open-au.com)
- Twitter and Facebook followers and Open-AU online RSS subscriber numbers
- General public feedback about Open by phone or email
OTHER INFORMATION

To view Open magazine online and additional relevant resources, see below:

2008-09 Open magazine
http://issuu.com/athabascauniv/docs/open_fall-winter_2008?mode=embed&documentId=081113171803-3e0bba13b6c9411fb142785b1ca8d04b&layout=grey

2009-10 Open magazine

2010-11 Open magazine

Open-AU online (www.open-au.com)
Open AU is the online companion to Open Magazine, featuring stories about our students, alumni, faculty, research, awards and events. Keeping lifelong learners, students and alumni up-to-date on AU activities, news and events, both near and far.

AU Publications webpage
http://www2.athabascau.ca/aboutau/media/publications.php

AU Strategic Documents
http://www2.athabascau.ca/aboutau/strategic.php