

## Goal 4, Strategy 3A: Conduct and analyze marketing study

A market research project from fall 2013 through spring 2014 helped us assess how our stakeholders perceive us and what opportunities exist in terms of how we present the University to them in the future.

The study blended insight gained from online surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and telephone surveys with multiple internal and external audiences.

The project indicated that Cal State Fullerton has no systemic problems in the market, and indeed, the market generally responds to us very well.

The opportunity moving forward is to exercise more discipline in expressing ourselves. We now know from two recent studies (2008, 2014) that perceptions about our University are diffuse. While many associated attributes can be considered as positive, some aren't particularly compelling or they vary too widely from group to group. If we bring too many messages to the market, we miss an opportunity to create a bolder, more successful future.

In addition to learning the raw perceptions of our stakeholders, we sought to identify an opening in the market for Cal State Fullerton—that is, an answer to this question: “What piece of the higher-education landscape can we authentically own where we can most effectively fulfill our mission and where we can best hope to connect with and inspire our stakeholders?”

The answer to that question lives in what is commonly referred to as an aspirational positioning statement—an instructional, internal document that supports our mission and our strategic plan by crystalizing the meaning we propose to bring to the marketplace.

In final form, the statement and its embedded themes will be a beacon for editorial, design, media-outreach, and other communications decision-making. It can also help inform broader operational/programmatic responses by the University.

In preparation for drafting the statement, the signature element of a response plan to the study (referred to as a “marketing plan” in Strategy 3B), the aspirational positioning statement would be informed by:

- attributes that exist or are achievable that would motivate stakeholders to strengthen their relationship with CSUF, including
  - educational/student-support offerings that help create a distinctive identity in the market
  - broader understanding of our role in economic/workforce development and intellectual/cultural life in the region, which also help create distinction in the market
  - the vision of being a CSU standout, recognized as investment-worthy and first-choice;
- priorities established by the strategic plan; and
- the opportunity to gain clarity around issues related to geographic relevancy.