

# GradMag

VOL 4 • ISSUE #1 • 2025

THE HIGHER ED MARKETING MAGAZINE

COLLEGE  
STUDENT  
MEDIA  
HABITS

STUDENT  
PROFILES  
MADE EASY

THE YEAR'S  
TOP  
PODCASTS

MARKETING  
LESSONS FROM  
ONLINE  
DATING



# Intro

# Dear Reader,



**Welcome** to our latest edition—a celebration of connection, innovation, and transformation in the world of community college marketing. At GradComm, we're passionate about empowering colleges to share their stories, reach their audiences, and make a lasting impact. This issue highlights the trends, tools, and inspiring stories shaping higher education today.

From strategies for workforce development to navigating the digital era of student engagement, this magazine is designed to spark ideas and drive meaningful action. We're thrilled to share insights from Higher Ed Conversations, our award-winning podcast. Whether it's learning from higher education trailblazers or exploring work-life balance, the year's top episodes are filled with wisdom and practical tips to help you thrive.

You'll also find actionable resources, such as interview questions to craft compelling student profiles, data-driven research on media habits, and guidance on digital market-

ing tools like pixel codes. Each piece is crafted with one goal in mind: to help you connect with students and communities in authentic, impactful ways.

We're especially proud to spotlight the remarkable success of Long Beach City College's 75th-anniversary celebration and campus rebranding. Their story is a testament to the power of collaboration and strategic storytelling.

As you explore this issue, we hope you feel inspired to take bold steps in your marketing and storytelling efforts. After all, in this fast-paced, ever-changing world, the stories we tell and the connections we build are what truly make a difference.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Let's continue to innovate, inspire, and make an impact—together.

**Warm Regards,**

*Cheryl Broom*

**CEO, GRADCOMM**

## In This Issue

Letter from GradComm CEO, Cheryl Broom .....	02	Pixel Code 101 .....	08
The Year's Top Podcasts .....	03	Community College Storytelling .....	09
Student Profiles Made Easy .....	04	Case Study: Long Beach City College .....	10
Community College Student Media Habits .....	06		

Join 2000+ college marketers by subscribing to our e-newsletter!



Cover Photo Credit: Kelly Kwan, Cerritos College



# Top 3 Podcast Episodes of 2024

At GradComm, we're not only dedicated to helping community colleges connect with students, but we're also committed to helping higher education professionals like you grow and thrive. This year, our award-winning podcast, Higher Ed Conversations, sparked a wide variety of thoughtful discussions and actionable insights.

1

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COURSES

This episode featuring Linda Kurokawa, formerly with **MiraCosta College**, captivated listeners with its exploration of workforce development. Linda shared innovative strategies for building flexible, self-funded programs that align with industry needs. Her emphasis on marketing these programs through social media and word-of-mouth provided valuable lessons for colleges aiming to expand their reach in workforce education.



2

## A JOURNEY TO BALANCE PARENTHOOD AND CAREER SUCCESS

**South Orange County Community College District's** Letitia Clark's candid discussion about balancing professional ambitions and parenting struck a chord and inspired listeners with advice on embracing positive self-talk, seeking community support, and fostering a better work environment for parents. This episode resonated particularly with moms and dads in leadership roles seeking practical strategies to thrive in their careers and personal lives.



3

## CREATING A DIGITAL COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA ERA

Social media remains a cornerstone of student engagement, and this podcast with Megan Ellisor of **North Carolina State University** offered a masterclass on leveraging digital platforms. From gamified fundraising campaigns to building authentic connections online, Megan's strategies provided actionable insights for any institution looking to enhance its digital presence.



Join GradComm CEO, Cheryl Broom, for more Higher Ed Conversations as she interviews experts and discusses trends in marketing, advancement, and more!



Scan to find out more



# How to Make Your Student Profiles Easier to Write and Better to Read

1

**Question:**

Tell me about your life before coming to college.

**Storytelling Purpose:**

Gives you backstory and them a chance to warm up.

2

**Question:**

Before coming to college, what were some of the major obstacles standing in your way?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

Establishes what the student wants and needs and what is at stake. Without this, the reader won't care if the student succeeds or fails.

3

**Question:**

What was the key event or realization that made you decide to go for it?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

Highlights the hero's emotional turning point.

7

**Question:**

How has the college's staff or services helped you overcome these challenges?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

Yes, the students are the heroes, but the hero never succeeds without a trusted guide and mentor.

8

**Question:**

Do you have a favorite class, professor, or staff person? If so, who/what and why?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

A feel-good question to humanize your college and inch us towards a happy ending.

9

**Question:**

What are your future career and/or educational goals?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

Remember that for the student, finishing college is not where their story ends – it's where it starts.

Anyone who works in college marketing knows that there is nothing more inspiring than a good student success profile. Unfortunately, you also know the pain of rambling subjects and boring, uninspiring articles. In addition to telling an engaging story, the real purpose of a student success story (from a marketing standpoint) is to showcase the college's role in that success. This means crafting a story where the *student* is the hero, not your college. Here are the questions you should ask to do just that.

4

**Question:**

Why did you choose [your college name here]?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

A chance to provide practical value propositions in the words of the student.

5

**Question:**

Why did you choose your program, and what do you like most about it?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

Same as previous but more specific to the program. This is a perfect segway to an informational paragraph about the program itself.

6

**Question:**

What are some obstacles you faced, and how have you overcome them?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

Failure is key! Real people face real challenges.

10

**Question:**

How has your experience at [your college name] changed you?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

All stories are about change. Try to get a quote that articulates that clearly.

11

**Question:**

If you had to convince another student like you to go to college here, what would you say?

**Storytelling Purpose:**

Some final inspiration to drive home the point of the profile.

These questions set you up for success, ensuring you can craft stories that inspire both you and your readers. As long as you're being specific to the student's lived experience, you will have a story that is as unique as it is universal.

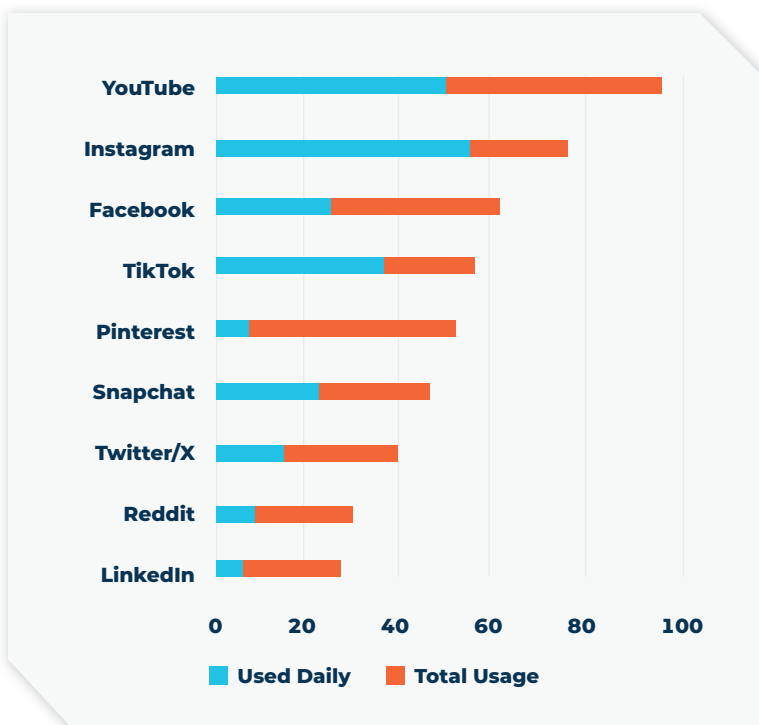
**Want more storytelling tips?**

Check out Episode #15 of the Higher Ed Conversations podcast, "The Keys to Great Storytelling."



# Media Habits of Community

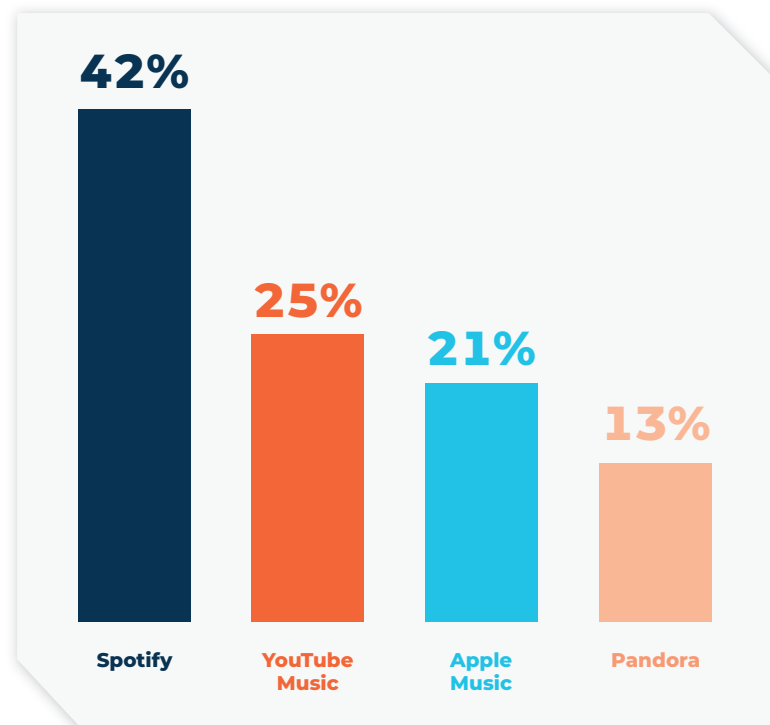
## Social Media



Daily social media usage

The preferred social media platforms are clear and consistent across colleges. It's worth noting that other research (not included here) shows TikTok usage is trending higher over time and surpassing legacy platforms such as Pinterest and Snapchat.

## Radio



Preferred streaming platforms.

This changes, however, when we segment audiences by age. Pandora listeners are far more likely to be older than Spotify listeners. Also, younger listeners are more likely to rely on Spotify exclusively while older listeners spread their listening love around.

While we believe the data reveals common trends, we also believe that community college campuses are incredibly nuanced and unique places. For this reason, we invite you to use this data not to create steadfast rules but to deepen your understanding of how to best target your students and allocate your precious marketing funds.

Of course, when you're ready for your own research, we'll be ready.

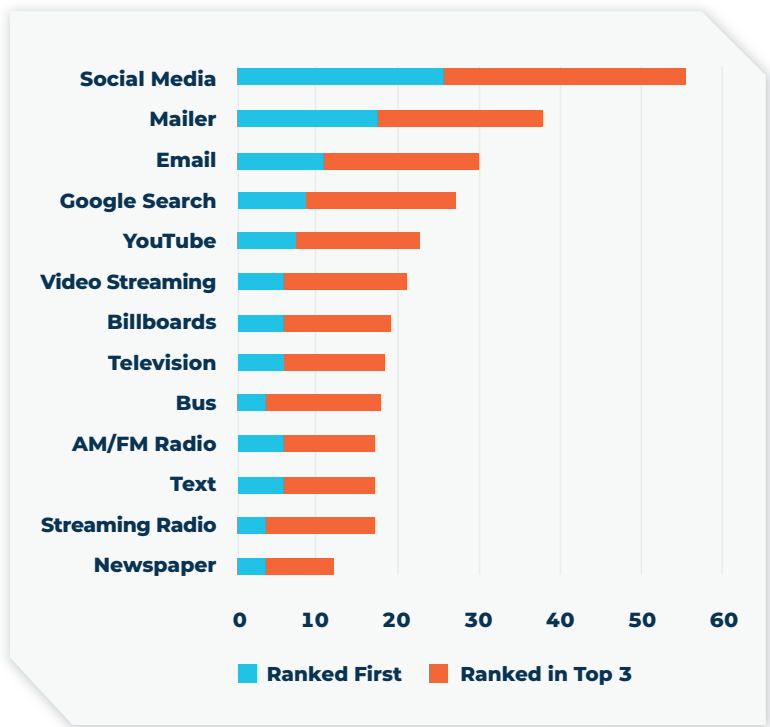
Over the last few years, GradComm has done extensive research into community college students' media habits, educational goals, key challenges, satisfaction levels, and more, offering us unique insights into various student demographics.

The following research highlights are based on accumulated data from five representative surveys of 9,518 community college students. Here are some key takeaways.

ts

# College Students

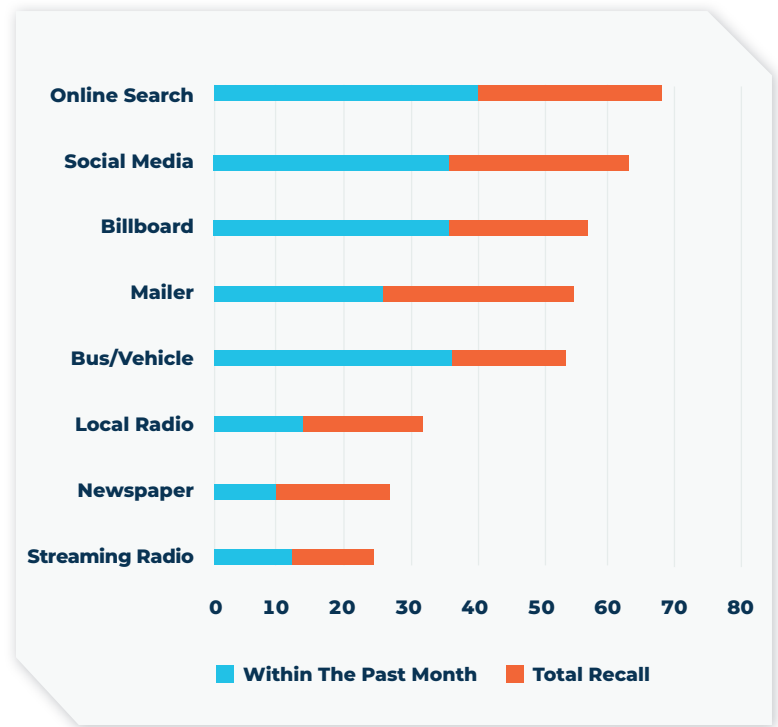
## Marketing Channels



Preferred marketing platforms

Students view social media as the most effective platform for promoting academic programs and services. Surprisingly, receiving class schedules and postcards by mail remain a desired way for students to receive information, particularly for students taking adult education classes.

## Marketing Recall



Tactics with the best recall

Overall, roughly half of community college students recall seeing and/or hearing their college advertising within the past 6-9 months. The good news? Students recall seeing ads on both digital and traditional media channels.



Want more data? Scan to read the full article.

# The Power of the Pixel:

## What is a Pixel Code and Why You Should Care?



Every month, GradComm CEO Cheryl Broom records a short video for social media that answers a question submitted by one of GradComm's clients. In 2024, our most popular video addressed a critical component of any good digital media campaign—the almighty pixel code!

A pixel code is a short piece of code embedded onto a website. This code functions like a smart assistant, tracking website visitor behavior, such as which pages visitors view and whether they complete specific actions like submitting a form, clicking “apply,” sending an email, or calling admissions.

Pixel codes are a game-changer for digital marketing, offering valuable insights into what grabs a website

visitor's attention—and what doesn't. They reveal which ads drive traffic and, more importantly, which inspire meaningful actions. With this data, marketers can fine-tune strategies to make every advertising dollar count.

However, a common concern often arises: Are pixel codes collecting personal information? The good news is, they're not. Pixel codes track general behavior on a website without linking it to individual identities, ensuring privacy while still delivering powerful insights. This means pixel codes are not only powerful but also privacy-conscious.

For colleges, pixel codes are game-changers. They help marketers ensure the right people see the right messages at the right time while keeping personal information secure. By leveraging

this tool, institutions can optimize their digital marketing efforts to maximize results.

If you're looking for ways to improve your community college's digital presence, pixel codes are a great way to make your marketing smarter, safer, and more effective than ever.

For more insights and strategies to enhance your community college marketing, visit [GradComm.com](https://gradcomm.com) or listen to Episode 59 of the Higher Ed Conversations podcast, released May 2025, and featuring Raj Sudra, Vice President of Media Engineering with LocalIQ.



Watch the full video!



# Principles of Great Community College Storytelling



*"Why Your Community College is Failing is a must-read for anyone interested in the future of higher education. With its winning combination of wit and insight, Broom has crafted a compelling critique that is sure to spark important conversations and drive positive change within the community college system."*

– Susan B.

amazon

In her eBook *Why Your Community College Marketing is Failing: Lessons from Online Dating*, Cheryl Broom emphasizes a crucial point made by Blue Mountain Community College President and Higher Ed Conversations podcast guest Mark Browning: "If nobody's telling your story, how do they know about you?" Whether you're having a casual conversation with a friend or showing a prospective student why your college is the perfect fit, storytelling is at the heart of building strong connections.

And you don't need to be a bestselling author to do it effectively. To help guide you, we've gathered some key storytelling tips from Dr. Andy Goodman, a former Hollywood writer and expert storytelling coach, who joined Cheryl on episode 15 of the Higher Education Conversations podcast. These principles will help you share your college's unique story in a way that resonates with your audience.



## 1. Draw on Your Existing Content for Inspiration

"Just look at your website—it's filled with cues," says Dr. Goodman, a former Hollywood writer and storytelling coach who joined Cheryl on episode 15 of the Higher Ed Conversations podcast. Campus events, faculty accomplishments, alumni notes—they're all great places to look for stories to tell. Use stories to showcase the attributes that make your college a special place.

## 2. Craft Narratives Around Brand Pillars

The core values, mission, and vision of your institution should "have stories to back them up—to say, 'This is what it looks like in real life,'" Dr. Goodman adds. Challenge your leadership to share stories about how the institution has made a significant impact on students and then connect those stories to your college's mission and vision statement.

## 3. Embrace Conflict

Without conflict, there is no story. If there are no moments of tension, unexpected events, or digressions from the expected path, the narrative falls flat. So, don't be afraid to include the obstacles that students must overcome to be successful. Late nights studying or losing the championship game are moments in a journey toward ultimate success.

**Why Your Community College Marketing is Failing: Lessons From Online Dating offers a fresh perspective on how community colleges can captivate and connect with prospective students in the digital era.**

Download your copy today!





case study

# How Long Beach City College Reinvented Its Campus and Celebrated Its Legacy

## The Challenge

Long Beach City College sought support for several initiatives aimed at raising awareness and engaging the community. These included celebrating its 75th anniversary, rebranding and renaming its Pacific Coast Campus (PCC) to highlight its ESL and trade programs, and launching a new Adult Education Center.

Additionally, the college aimed to redesign its adult education schedule to better align with the dynamic Accelerate brand and present its adult education offerings in a more accessible way.



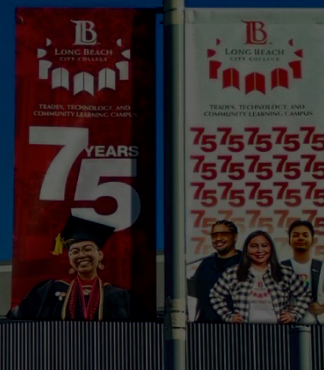
## The Solutions

GradComm provided Long Beach City College with creative solutions for major initiatives, including its 75th anniversary celebrations, an adult education schedule redesign, rebranding the Pacific Coast Campus, and the grand opening of the North Long Beach Adult Higher Education Center. Efforts included research, custom designs, community outreach, branded materials, multilingual resources, and strategic promotion to engage audiences and enhance accessibility.





Check out all the ways we can help you!



# Client Wins

- Record-Breaking 75th Anniversary Celebration**  
 The celebration exceeded expectations, driven by an integrated marketing strategy featuring direct mail and social media, which created excitement and boosted attendance.
- Increased Enrollment with Redesigned Class Schedule**  
 The redesigned adult education schedule simplified navigation, enabling more students to easily find and enroll in classes.
- Impactful Campus Rebranding**  
 The new name, “Trades, Tech, and Community Learning Campus,” honors LBCC’s history while showcasing its unique offerings and commitment to student success.
- Successful New Center Launch**  
 The North Long Beach Higher Education Center opened as a vibrant, welcoming space that serves the North Long Beach community AND includes a beautiful mural!



*"GradComm played an instrumental role in elevating Long Beach City College's brand and community engagement through their creative expertise and strategic approach. From our 75th anniversary celebrations to the rebranding of our Pacific Coast Campus and the launch of the new Higher Education Center, their work was thoughtful, data-informed, and impactful. Their ability to translate our vision into compelling marketing materials, dynamic digital content, and engaging community outreach set us up for incredible success. The results speak for themselves—record-breaking event attendance, increased enrollment, and a stronger connection with our community. We couldn't have asked for a better partner in bringing these initiatives to life."*

*– Carl Kemp, Executive Director, Public Affairs & Marketing for Long Beach City College*

# COMMUNITY COLLEGES ROCK

Crank up  
your marketing  
with campaigns  
and strategies  
that hit all the  
right notes.



Let's Make Some Noise!  
[GradComm.com](http://GradComm.com)

