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## CSU Chico Program RiSE: Analysis of the First Recruitment Cycle

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Funded by the US Department of Education, the focus of PRISMS is to promote rural improvement in the subjects of mathematics and science for secondary schools across the nation. RiSE, Residency in Secondary Education, one of two programs supported by PRISMS at California State University – Chico, is an accelerated 12 to 18-month graduate program that combines a Master of Arts in Education and a teaching credential. As the recruiter, my primary role is to utilize innovative and results-driven methods to attract a broad and diverse applicant pool.

Through my work experience, as well as my involvement in the MATH Research Action Cluster, I've had the opportunity to experiment with different marketing strategies and recruitment tools. Here I share the techniques I've found most useful in my practice, drawn from those detailed in the nine modules of the *Secondary Mathematics Teacher Recruitment Campaign Implementation Guide* (Ranta, 2015).

### **Chico's Recruitment Campaign**

Ideally, a successful recruitment campaign starts with a comprehensive approach that incorporates the concepts outlined in Modules 1-4. However, limited funding and an abbreviated timeline don't always allow for extensive planning and research prior to launching a campaign. Additionally, at the time I began my recruitment efforts, the grant already had its branding in place. In other words, as is often the case with project management, I had to hit the ground running and prioritize a quick launch. That being said, I concentrate on Modules 5-9, including Social Media, Public Relations, Paid Broadcast Media, Website Identity, and eventually Evaluation.

Module 5, which focuses on Social Media, asserts that the most popular platform is Facebook. With its widening popularity, social media has seen a rapid growth in audience diversity, making it an even more viable tool for recruitment and a good starting point for many organizations. Conveniently, it also happens to feature some of the strongest analytics available when the time comes for evaluation. Through the RiSE Facebook page, I receive a weekly report that provides tangible feedback measuring things like page visits, number of likes, and inquiries

resulting in engagement with my target audience – all very useful data when determining the extent to which a particular ad or campaign may be generating interest.

Of course, the ultimate benefit of Facebook and social media in general, is the networking factor. Module 6, which focuses on Public Relations, defines this interaction as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (Ranta, 2015, p. 72). While defining the groups of individuals or publics you wish to reach is certainly an important step, I realized the power of reaching the mass public, and I learned the importance of honing in on this audience as a strategy to help me determine my target applicant pool.

Facebook and many other social media networks provide free accounts, but paying for certain upgrades or additional or outsourced assistance can be a worthy investment. With careful discretion about available grant funds, we have established contracts with multiple media agencies that have helped to produce professional advertisements for our program, including movie theatre ads, television and radio spots, online banners, and Facebook “boosts” used to generate more content exposure. Module 7 covers each of these options and more, providing helpful tips on production and “Buying a Schedule,” while emphasizing the importance of timing. “The most brilliant schedule can be ruined by poor production values and vice versa, a great-looking campaign that no one sees is equally as ineffective” (Ranta, 2015, p. 108). In other words, make investments that count by taking a careful look at the production quality your budget will allow, and be equally critical when negotiating airtime.

While reaching the target audience is the ongoing challenge for any recruiter, I quickly learned just how critical it was to have an established infrastructure in place. Module 8: Website Identity details the basic construction and organization of a site. Within the context of my academic institution, there was already a well-established protocol in place, so most of the technical work had to be outsourced to our campus IT staff. With some teamwork on the content, it didn’t take long to launch the main webpage for the RiSE program, and the campus web developers were helpful in offering weekly updates on site traffic through Google Analytics.

But almost immediately after the details of the website fell into place, we had several ad campaigns up and running. The burden of a successful campaign is a lot of traffic, and it didn’t take long to realize that I needed another resource for following up on public inquiries and candidate leads. With more assistance from IT, we decided to utilize Google FlowChart, in order to map out a new “landing page,” or online destination to be used as an automated tool for directing the influx of interested candidates. Creating this infrastructure was not a simple process, but it had a big payoff.

With interactive buttons and links to Google forms, potential candidates could submit helpful information, and also access needed resources. Riseteachers.org became our easy and catchy URL, for quick reference in radio and TV ads. As a “destination” for general interest, it served to redirect those who are not a good match for the program to more appropriate resources, but in doing so, also helped dedicate more staff time to the most qualified candidates.

In other words, I was no longer working tirelessly running the phones and addressing emails to answer more general questions and redirect misguided inquiries. This multi-purposed informational system and screening tool allowed me to prioritize and focus my efforts on the most viable candidate leads. In following up on these leads, I was able to offer necessary support to individuals needing just a little extra boost to become qualified candidates ready to apply for and begin the program. This combination of infrastructure and outreach is what ultimately translated to success in recruitment.

### **Evaluating the Campaign**

But how could I determine what outreach worked and perhaps more importantly, what might be the best use of future resources? Module 9: Evaluation mentions the importance of measuring effects as a subset of results. It also provides a guideline to evaluate resource use and the effectiveness of a given recruitment strategy.

Google Analytics is a helpful free tool that can assist in calculating traffic data and help zone in on the target audience and what’s working in terms of future recruitment cycles. According to Google analytics, our landing page had approximately 7,000 page views and has reached a worldwide audience, which helped prove that our landing page was a success in reaching the public through paid media.

We conducted an 8-month digital marketing campaign with Action News Now (our local media agency), who not only aired a RiSE commercial for us, but also assisted with managing our paid ads through Facebook. This media campaign turned out to be a successful partnership based on our evaluation data through Facebook analytics. We reached over 171,000 people through this social media platform, and based on data submitted by program applicants, we can also confirm Facebook contributed to 10% of our applications. Our Facebook page also generated almost 7,000 clicks and nearly 500 likes, helping build our “brand” and creating future retention towards our program.

Upon conclusion of our first recruitment campaign cycle, I was able to analyze all the data collected and create charts for future campaign investments and decisions. I created a specific chart that represented the RiSE Program leads by recruitment source, with each source category broken down by percentages. The data is based on 334 leads from January 2015 to March 2016, and paid media generated about one third of our leads.

Since the start of recruitment for the RiSE Program in January of 2015, we have had three separate pools of applicants—for a total of 42 applicants. In reference to the previous chart, what this means is that out of those 334 individuals who expressed interest in the program, 42 (or about 13%) submitted applications. So while it helped to see which recruitment methods were effective in generating leads, I wanted to more closely evaluate this critical 13%.

To begin, we examined the percentage of RiSE applications per lead source. I first examined applications sourced from movie ads, finding they were non-existent. This expense did not produce a good return, which is why we will be discontinuing that campaign. Second, while television commercials generated a large amount of leads, the number of applicants from leads generated by our San Francisco Bay Area media campaign were insignificant, with a greater amount of applicants coming from leads generated by our local news agency.

I have found that evaluation is one of the most essential components in analyzing a successful campaign; it can help facilitate discussions, determine what lessons can be learned, and where to focus future efforts. That being said, as a result of our evaluation data, we intend to continue our campaign with our local media agency, Action News, and target more of our audience by expanding to the (more local) Sacramento area. We are working on production with a new media agency to discuss our future marketing campaign and partnership for our second recruitment cycle.

Having the right tools, including the *Implementation Guide* (Ranta, 2015) produced by the MATH Research Action Cluster, and infrastructure in place has not only helped make my recruitment tasks feel more manageable, but also provided a system for tracking my efforts. I look forward to determining the outcomes of future recruitment strategies and ad campaigns in relation to the grant's budget, and more importantly, discovering where improvements can be made as we continue our efforts to recruit future secondary mathematics teachers.

### For More Information

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### References

Ranta, J. (2015). *Secondary mathematics teacher recruitment campaign implementation guide*. Washington, DC. Association of Public Land Grant Universities. Retrieved from [bit.ly/MATHImplGuide](http://bit.ly/MATHImplGuide).