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Marie Branum

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Community Perceptions of Valparaiso University

Marie Branum

Departmental Affiliation: Communication
College of Arts and Sciences

Community relations is vital to an organization. Valparaiso University relies on the relationships within the community. For example, the university has a Town and Gown Committee representing the community and the university. This study surveys members of the Valparaiso community to assess the relationships and involvement of community members with the university. A survey was developed to measure attendance at various sporting events, art presentations, the chapel, the library, the union, and special presentations on campus. The questionnaire looked at how well the community was informed about events and asked to rate on a Likert Scale the image of Valparaiso University from a community perspective. The last question focused on the importance of Valparaiso University to the city of Valparaiso. This research indicated that reputation management is critical to public relations functions. Other research focused on community relations theory and the importance of relationship building. The results indicated the need for better communication between the community and the university. The respondents did not have a strong feeling of a relationship with the university. However, the respondents indicated a positive response toward the image of the university in terms of quality education and reputation.

Information about the Author:

Marie Branum is a senior public relations major and Spanish minor at Valparaiso University. Her past experiences as an intern at the Valparaiso University Office of Integrated Marketing and Communications inspired her to further research the relationships between the university and the Valparaiso community. She is graduating in May and hopes to pursue a career in public relations, ideally in university relations.

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Bonita Neff

Student Contact: marie.branum@valpo.edu