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A series of Metro college pocket guides — colorful, school-specific “mini-maps” showing Metro rail and bus routes, as well as handy lists of convenient restaurants, theatres, museums, libraries, night spots, shopping centers, and concert venues — are a core component of the overall marketing strategy.

To Metro or Not to Metro: That is the Question

- Metro conducts campaign to get college students to 'Go Metro' to classes

By Michael D. White
Staff Writer

You don't need to walk into your nearby warehouse superstore to see that there's no shortage of choice nowadays. Picking and choosing is part of everyday life, be it what to have for lunch or what's the best way to get to and from school.

“That was the biggest challenge we've faced,” says Omark Holmes, Metro senior marketing and communications officer. “People, particularly college students, have options as to how they're going to get around town, but we're creatively working to put Metro at the top of their list of commute choices.”

The campaign to get more college students to “think Metro” instead of climbing into their cars to get to class, kicked-off last fall and has two phases in its approach.

First, said Holmes, “We crafted a short list of criteria that each potential college had to meet before it could become a part of the program. That balanced on Metro's existing rail and bus services and whether they operate within a reasonable walking distance of their campus.” That criteria mandated that the college in question had to have consistent service based on the Metro 12-minute map — service so reliable and frequent that that students wouldn't need to refer to a bus or rail timetable.

This narrowed the initial focus of the campaign on seven universities and colleges located within Metro's service area — UCLA, Los Angeles City College, USC, Cal State-Los Angeles, Los Angeles Pierce College, Pasadena

City College, and Los Angeles Valley College.

According to Holmes, the menu of cooperating schools will expand over the next few months to include Cal Tech/JPL, CalState-Northridge, and Los Angeles Trade Tech.

A core component of the overall marketing strategy, said Holmes, was the development of a series of Metro college pocket guides – colorful, school-specific “mini-maps” showing Metro rail and bus routes, as well as handy lists of convenient restaurants, theatres, museums, libraries, night spots, shopping centers, and concert venues.

“We arranged with the different schools to have the pocket guides inserted into the orientation kits handed out to new students,” said Holmes. “It’s interesting to note that one of the first things new students want information about is how they can utilize local transit services to get around. We’ve visited each of the campuses with pull banners and information packets, piggybacking on Metro’s successful “problem-solution” campaign.”

Did the Metro pocket guide campaign score with the college crowd? Overwhelmingly, said Holmes. “During our campus visits, we were amazed at how well the ‘mini-maps’ were received. The admissions office at USC has actually started putting Metro pocket guides into the information kits that they send to students overseas interested in attending the school.”

The college program has become “turn key, so we’re working to update information and visit the campuses and keeping the students informed,” he said. “I’d like to do that every semester if possible; if not, at least once a year to reinforce riding Metro.”

The college pocket guide series was recently named the recipient of a prestigious international design award by HOW Magazine. The Metro college campaign is one of a series of segmented route promotions, which includes seniors, employment centers, shopping and nightlife. The next campaign will zero-in on utilizing the web to reach teenagers.

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