Greg Murray
Internship Report
Robert Huesca
25 April, 2010

The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center Marketing Internship

My internship for the Spring semester of 2010 was at The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center located at 1300 Guadalupe St., San Antonio, 78207 (210 271-3151). My supervisor was Marketing Director Lorraine Pulido (210 410-6699; Lorrainepr@guadalupeculturalarts.org)

Founded in 1980, the GCAC is now the largest community-based, multi-disciplinary organization in the United States. The mission of the GCAC is not only to educate the community about Latino culture but also to enrich it by providing a platform for the arts and customs of Chicano culture to be practiced and appreciated. The programming is divided into three main categories: theater-based, gallery-based, and classes.

Theater-based programs consist of any event that takes place in the Guadalupe Theater. Ordinarily this includes events like dance performances, one-act plays, and musical concerts but some events with little or no performance aspect are also included in this category so long as they take place in the Guadalupe Theater. Every GCAC event, whether it is a play, dance, concert, or other type of program that takes place in the theater directly involves Latino culture. Bread and Roses, a family-oriented, monthly event includes a performance such as traditional Mexican dance and a workshop like cascarón or piñata making.

Gallery-based programs are almost exclusively visual art exhibits that take place in the Guadalupe Gallery. These events are much less frequent than those of the theater. Typically there are 2 events at the Gallery every 6-8 weeks, one to open the exhibit and introduce it to the public
and then one closing event. The art displayed at the exhibits always incorporates Chicano themes. The current exhibit on display at the Gallery is called Mas Rudas and includes pieces that revolve around the theme of stray dogs on the predominantly Hispanic Westside of San Antonio as well as the issue of machismo in Chicano culture.

The Guadalupe classes are usually for San Antonio’s youth and include all artistic disciplines from both performance art and visual art. The involvement of San Antonio’s youth is a key part of accomplishing GCAC’s mission. Youth must be included if Chicano culture is going to live on and thrive. Furthermore, the GCAC does not simply include the youth with the classes it offers but also makes an effort to construct events so that they appeal to people of all ages.

Part of the responsibility of the Marketing Department at the GCAC is to find ways to market these events in a manner that appeals to people of all ages. A large part of appealing to a wide range of ages depends on the event’s content, which is not necessarily the Marketing Departments duty, as well as the different locations where flyers are passed out. In addition, the various mediums utilized are important in reaching different demographics such as social media which typically sees younger participants.

One of my recurring responsibilities as Marketing Coordinator was to write marketing plans for specific events. These marketing plans included the primary and secondary target audience, strategies, tactics, and mediums utilized. The marketing plan for the alternative Hispanic rock concert Westside Soundscape for example incorporated traditional as well guerilla marketing tactics and focused on 16-27 year olds as the primary target audience (see figure 1.1). Although it is technically not the Marketing Department’s job to contribute to the content of the event itself, there are occasional exceptions where a marketing plan can include event plan
suggestions (see figure 1.2). As is apparent from the two different marketing plans, each event must be evaluated individually and marketed to the target audience accordingly.

Marketing plans are however a small portion of my responsibilities as a marketing intern. Because we are a small organization with only 15 staff, I often times find myself doing whatever needs to be done in that moment regardless of what department it may be for. My responsibilities include writing a survey/questionnaire for each event, handing the surveys out, inputting the survey data into our database, synthesizing and graphing the data, creative input during staff and production meetings, updating web calendars, contacting bands’ managers, distributing collateral to nearby residences and businesses, canvassing surrounding areas and discussing events with the inhabitants, analyzing competitors’ marketing strategies and reporting them, analyzing competitors’ website design and reporting them.

In addition, I have combined my senior capstone project for my Communications major with my internship by performing extensive audience research on a specific demographic via focus groups and survey analysis and constructing a comprehensive marketing plan aimed at that target audience.

A major strength of the internship experience at the GCAC stems from its small size. Because there are only 15 employees, the atmosphere is like a large family. In addition, each person is required to go beyond their job description to make events successful. This means that interns are entrusted with more substantial responsibilities than simply making copies and doing other mindless drudgery, although when there is a monotonous job to be done you can be sure the intern will be doing it.

Another strength is that the GCAC is a Latino culture center to the core. Many of the GCAC staff are Latino artists, dancers or performers themselves and choose to be a part of the
GCAC for love of both their heritage and their craft rather than for money (of which there isn’t a whole lot to be made anyway). Interning for the GCAC and being an integral part in making events like CineFestival, Alma de Mujer, Lupe’s Art Blend, and Bread and Roses happen has been wonderfully educational in many ways. I can honestly say I feel like I am part of the Latino culture and probably know more about it than most Hispanics (even though I am Caucasian) having studied it and been involved with it in such a dynamic way.

I will go so far as to say that working with the GCAC in the San Antonio community has been a more intense experience with Latino culture than my time living and working in Bolivia. I attribute this hyper-Latino experience to the fact that San Antonio, and more specifically San Antonio’s Westside, is a culture in mild crisis. As Hispanic as San Antonio is it is still not ubiquitous and must fight to maintain its cultural identity amidst a tumultuous and overbearing “melting pot” of American culture. Bolivian culture, on the other hand, is not threatened by any other imposing cultures and, consequently, there is not such a sense of urgency in preserving it.

A downside to the internship, in my experience, also stems from the organizations’ small size. Often times you will be called to put in many more hours than you anticipated especially during the weeks before and during major events. Lastly, because the GCAC is non-profit they cannot afford to reimburse you for the hundreds of dollars in gas that you will inevitably spend distributing flyers and picking up/dropping off materials.

I would recommend interning at the GCAC to anyone who has interest in learning hands-on approaches to guerilla marketing and becoming intimately aware of the reality of low-budget marketing in all of its lack of glory. You must be prepared to put in more hours than you planned on. Also, it helps if you have an interest in Chicano culture as well as the arts but to be honest is
not an absolute necessity as long as you do have a strong interest and possible career aspirations in marketing.