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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF
MARKET AND AUDIENCE RESEARCH**

Conducted for:

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

August 2020

Introduction

- Goal of the research is to support strategic marketing planning, by providing market-based information on which to plan future directions for the School.
- Research plan included:
 - Discovery session with School leadership
 - Focus groups with faculty
 - In-depth interviews with internal stakeholders (alumni, faculty, staff)
 - In-depth interviews with external influencers (opinion leaders, donors, legislators, government officials, employers, association executives)
 - Quantitative surveys of current Bloustein students, faculty, staff, and alumni
 - Quantitative survey of national sample of prospective students, plus sample of international student prospects
- Work began in Fall 2019 and completed in Summer 2020 (during COVID-19 pandemic).

Key Findings

- The 30th anniversary of the School, and the re-emergence of a “new normal” coming out of the pandemic, provide the opportunity for Bloustein to build its reputation in ways that matter to prospective students, faculty and staff, funders, employers of its graduates, and the people and entities who rely on its expertise. The people who are affiliated with Bloustein are “do-gooders;” they want to – and have the tools to -- improve lives and communities. They want to feel proud of their School, and to see it commit – in an even stronger, more intentional way – to diversity, equity and

inclusion within the School itself, and in its educational mission to change the world.

- Bloustein’s conceptual mission/vision (*to create just, socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and healthy national and international communities*) resonates well both internally and externally. It captures what the School is now, the goals of students, faculty, and staff, and what can be, given today’s realities, and it is sufficiently aspirational to bring constituencies together.
- There is a “push and pull” between the strength of Bloustein’s reputation within New Jersey and the opportunities available to leverage this reputation into one that is more nationally (and maybe internationally) focused. The question becomes one of focusing resources on its home state versus building a (perhaps, costly) reputation on the national and international stage, which will take time, marketing efforts, and financial support.
- One challenge often raised by those interviewed is that of trying to fit together all the “buckets” that comprise the Bloustein School – assuring that the “new” health administration program is aligned with public policy and planning, and communicating how they all work together within the framework of building for a healthy, just and sustainable society. Overall, there is interest in better demonstrating the connection between health administration and the other parts of the School, identifying opportunities to and interest in “bundling” the School’s programs to focus on what is of consequence to today’s society.
- There is significant support for building a strong, intentional, and outward-facing marketing effort for Bloustein. Faculty, staff and other internal stakeholders believe that Bloustein is an “*undiscovered gem*” within Rutgers, ready to be pushed forward with assets such as: research faculty; new Dean; stories of impacts on society; “triangulation” of public policy, health, and planning; research centers; graduates that are “*making decisions that shape our world*”; etc. Bloustein alumni represent one audience that has the potential to grow and become more engaged; at present, it is not sufficiently connected to the School to advocate at the desired level.
- People inside Bloustein (i.e., faculty and staff) are eager to know each other, the work they each doing, how they can contribute to the Dean’s vision for the School, collaborative opportunities, and to contribute to “breaking down of silos.” Internal newsletters and other opportunities to connect and share are vital to building a common sense of mission.
- Bloustein is now in a position to shine. Its emphasis on “the public” – policy, planning, community, health, etc. – puts it in a distinctive position to attract students who want to change the world, contribute significantly to a new reality. And, the School, as part of Rutgers, provides great value for the cost, critical to attracting

today's students. As noted earlier, positioning the School to be focused on its mission may provide the traction it needs in the market, suggesting it is less about its name and more about what it does and what it can contribute to society.

- Focusing on the Bloustein name is not critical in branding the School. Given today's new realities, perhaps the Bloustein School could be presented as the School of Public Policy, Planning and Health at Rutgers.
- In conclusion, let's look at Bloustein as **The School of Now...** a contemporary, thoughtful School with lasting impact, providing urgency in tackling today's challenges and issues.

Its strengths and brand positions incorporate:

- Contributes to solving issues that impact society
- Produces graduates prepared to tackle today's issues
- Studies topics and creation of programs that are contemporary
- Has leading faculty in their respective fields, with real world experience
- Produces research that is not just of interest (externally) but is engaging and applicable – it's not research for the sake of research
- Expertise (faculty, students, alumni) who are/should be the go-to resource on New Jersey, regional, national, and global issues
 - Now, more than ever, society is looking for expertise to guide them through the impact that this pandemic has had – and will continue to have – on our communities: workforce changes, urban living, health management and equity, public health mandates etc. These are all within the wheelhouse of the School's academic/theoretical and practical/real-world based programs.