

# Inver Hills Community College & Dakota County Technical College

## TRANSFORMING ONBOARDING, BOOSTING ENROLLMENT

Dakota County Technical College and Inver Hills Community College were established together in 1970 with a unified vision for the Twin Cities metro area. Nearly 50 years after their founding, it was time to bolster the Colleges' presence and elevate enrollment.

The "twins" enlisted Interact to investigate where onboarding practices were robust and where they needed a boost. Providing a communications audit, intake pipeline realignment, and much more, the team helped the Colleges reassess, react, and reach more learners than ever before.

web, and in person. Comparing the Colleges' intake system provided an eye-opening experience on how to improve. A final report delineated in-depth recommendations, creating a clear path to stronger onboarding processes.

Finally, intake messaging was overhauled to better align with students' needs. Using the new data, the team refreshed core messages for target markets, including traditional and returning students. Plus, a one-semester sample of onboarding messages from college services was transformed into a streamlined template for future communications.

## Communication Recalibration

### Overview

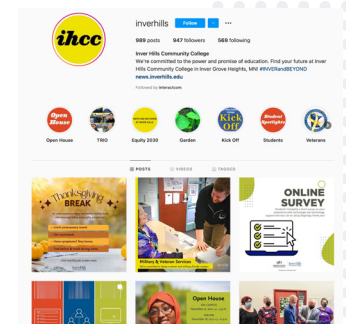
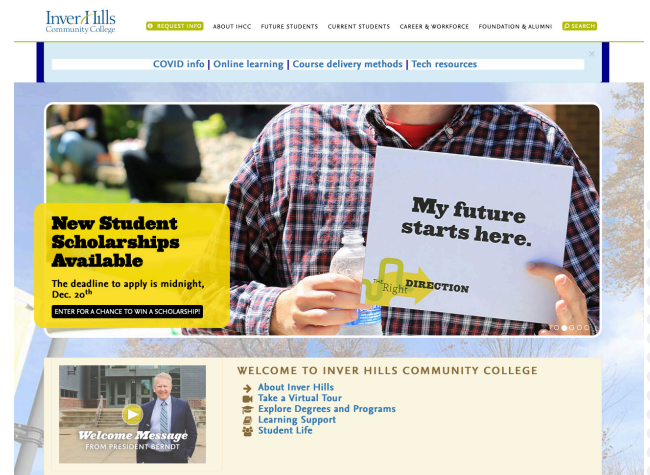
The team started with a comprehensive communication audit, then crafted a complete review and realignment of the Colleges' intake processes from applications to the first day of classes. Focus groups covered the gamut, from brand-new students to those who failed to appear, arming the Colleges with critical insights to upgrade outreach and retention.

Interact came to each College for full-day onsite visits, holding up a magnifying glass to college services and messaging. Through meetings with staff and recommendation reviews, service flows and communications were revamped and implemented.

### Roadmap to Reboot

All college intake communications, from emails to posters, were reviewed and assessed. Then, a clear roadmap was developed to engage students and foster solid connections.

Competitors' intake systems were also examined as Interact spoofed new student journeys by phone,



## Making Marketing Dollars Count: “Media Prefs” Media Preferences Survey

Students’ media attitudes were measured over an entire year with Interact’s Media Prefs surveys. The insights the Colleges gleaned made it easier and more cost-effective to reach students.

On top of a deep data dive for their own audiences, the Colleges also accessed the comprehensive Media Prefs national database for big-picture analytics. With the larger sample size came better reliability for staying on top of media usage trends, ensuring that their marketing dollars were spent in the right place.

# Savvy, Simple, and Streamlined

The team distilled in-depth research to create college-specific recruiting and retention plans and materials:

### Accessible Marketing

The Colleges were able to break down their messaging into digestible marketing “bites” while leveraging clean design to communicate information quickly and directly.

### Perfecting the Process

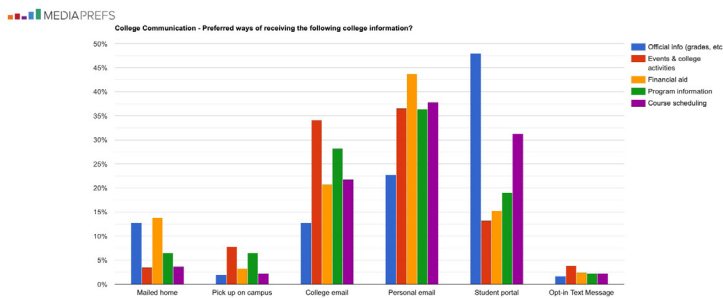
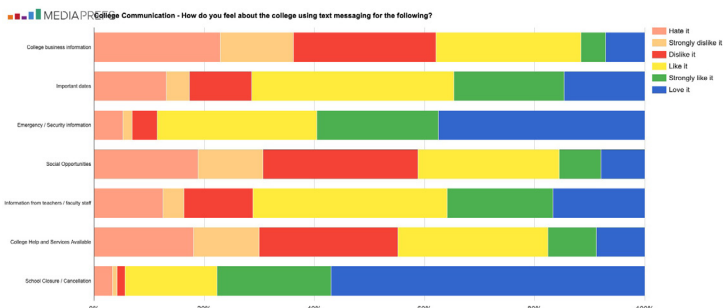
In particular, Dakota County Technical College found critical ways to simplify onboarding.

Previously, all students had to do an assessment before they could continue in the intake process. Instead, students started submitting their transcripts first, potentially exempting them from taking the placement test in the first place – and putting them on the fast-track to classes and completing.

### Clear Collateral

On the website, overloaded body copy was simplified and organized. A new footer with eye-catching icons guided learners to important information, creating a more user-friendly and centralized experience.

From intake emails to onboarding video templates, recruitment was reset to run more smoothly. For example, direct mail pieces with hyperlinks were transformed into simpler calls to action with smaller, easy-to-type URLs. Inviting language and well-organized information welcomed learners to higher opportunities made specifically for them.



## CELEBRATING SUCCESS

“Interact worked with the staff to devise college-specific recruiting and retention plans that emphasized multiple forms of communication with prospects and current students.

Dr. Otto has shared her insights into trends and nuances of marketing and communication... She’s a true professional, as are her colleagues at Interact.”

— **Tim Wynes,**  
President of Dakota County Technical College & Inver Hills Community College