

MEMORANDUM

TO: Judy McMillan, Chair, Marketing Task Force

FROM: Bob Kent *Bob*

DATE: June 11, 1986

SUBJECT: TNCC Visual Identity Program

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Coordinator of Admissions & Records  
Thomas Nelson Community College

I have given careful thought to your memorandum #85 and the TNCC Visual Identity Program proposal prepared by the Semantic/Visual Identity Development Committee (the Slogan and Logo Committee). The image that Thomas Nelson projects is very important to me personally and, I believe, is very important to the future marketing efforts of the entire college. I therefore have some strong feelings about this subject and offer some recommendations concerning the development of the logo, slogan and other promotional materials.

I agree wholeheartedly with the committee's view that we should stress the components of quality, diversity and concern in our promotions. The committee's insistence that "all our publications, advertisements and displays reflect this commitment to quality" is a point well taken. However, I feel that this will not be accomplished unless there is a designated person who will have the authority to reject materials that do not meet that person's interpretation of premium standards. Otherwise, such a statement is merely the committee's nebulous goal of quality, with the results left to the whim and inexperience of those who execute the publications. I suggest that such authority be granted to the publications director to accept/reject any external publication or promotional that does not meet the standards agreed upon by the committee, president or other persons serving in an advisory capacity.

The slogan and logo suggested in the committee's proposal are, in my opinion, old-fashioned and dull. These should be upbeat, simple ("less is more"), representative rather than literal, catchy, clever and modern. In other words, they should be something that a 19-year-old would be willing to buy and wear on a T-shirt. The slogan should say something that is uniquely Thomas Nelson (such as W&M's "The Alma Mater of a Nation"). The logo should be a distinctive symbol which can be used as small as 1/4" and still be crisp, or as large as a billboard. The circle of 13 flags is passe and much too complicated. (Note the City of Hampton's new "H" combined with a numeral "1", or Eastern Airlines' simple two lines forming a bird.) A logo and slogan can only give an impression of who you are ("modern," "progressive," etc.), and to expect them to carry the entire weight of our marketing plan is asking too much from them.

Having said this, I have a primary and a secondary recommendation. First, I believe that the development of a classy, appealing logo and slogan are so important, that we should spend whatever is necessary to have them professionally designed by experts. We are not experts in this field, nor is anyone associated with the college. We should hire an advertising agency to develop the concept and execute these important representations of TNCC. The committee

should work with the agency, but not give such specific guidelines that creative freedom to implement a better idea is thwarted. The logo and slogan are the most important components of our visual identity in the community, and if not designed properly, will undermine any advertising and marketing campaigns we undertake. Even if it means we must spend everything allocated in our budget for advertising this year, I feel we should do so.

If, regrettably, the committee does not choose to follow this course of action, I recommend the alternate plan as follows. Thomas Nelson already has several unique qualities about its heritage which I feel could be developed into an appropriate and marketable image. Thomas Nelson himself was a local patriot associated with the Revolutionary War, and the 13 flags flown in a circle at TNCC represent another historical reference. It has already been proposed that we accentuate this identifying landmark through the use of lighting at night to aid in visibility from I-64. Also, the Peninsula is an area in which a sense of history and patriotism runs high. For these reasons, why not capitalize on the "historical" identity we already enjoy because of the college's name, by use of a slogan and logo to complement it! It is easy to fall into a stodgy rut when featuring historical material, so I would recommend we avoid this by making note of our heritage while being careful to maintain and upbeat, forward-thinking attitude.

After much thought, I would like to recommend for consideration the slogan, "TNCC: a history of futures." I feel it is a simple, catchy play on words and makes reference to our past as well as our role in helping students build their careers. It also supports the committee's stated promotional goals of "quality, diversity and concern." To complement the slogan, I would use the idea of the flags; however, 13 flags are too many: one flag is much better and still takes advantage of the historical, patriotic idea. I think the letters "TNCC" combined with one flag in a unique, stylized form would be very attractive. I suggest depicting a single flag flying in the breeze, with the folds of the flag cleverly forming the letters "TNCC." If this is not graphically possible, then some other combination of the letters and the flag could be attempted.

Again, I think we need professional help from a qualified expert in designing logos. If we don't hire an agency for the entire project, we should, in the very least, hire such an expert to design our logo. I have done some research and have found that expertly designed logos cost between \$1,000 and \$5,000. I have also learned the name of the artist who designed the new Hampton logo and have been told that his rates are very reasonable (I suspect \$1,000 or less). I also have been given names of other artists who could produce the quality of work we are seeking.

As you can see, I have strong opinions about this subject and feel we should not take this matter lightly by using anyone except experienced professionals to design these two important marketing tools. Specifically, saving money on logo design seems to be "penny wise and pound foolish." I urge you and the Marketing Task Force to consider this proposal before making what I believe to be a mistake that we must live with for years. I believe our marketing success and our jobs may depend on it.