Future of Advertising

Fall 2020 Research Summary

Design Challenge

The Department of Advertising asked SCD to investigate the future of graduate education in advertising, to help lay the groundwork for actionable steps to improve and future-proof the Sandage graduate experience.

Process

After an initial phase of looking-in conversations with faculty and staff, the SCD team conducted qualitative research into industry trends and analogous learning experiences, including **16 interviews with industry professionals and graduate students** in the department. This report summarizes our synthesized learnings.
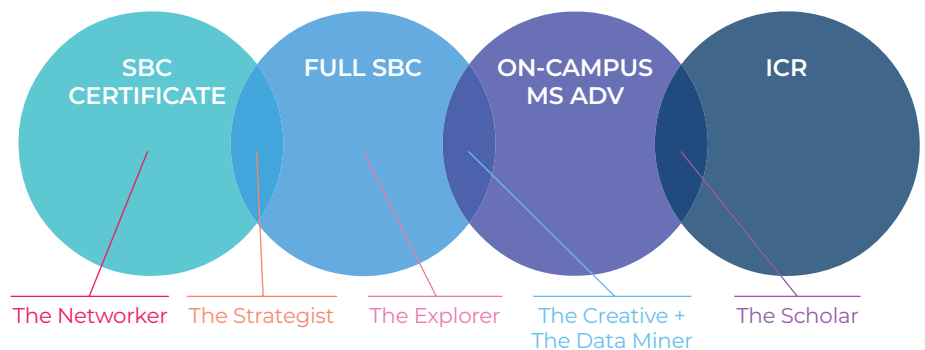
Industry Insights

We conducted qualitative research with six industry professionals, all of whom hold senior and leadership positions in the field.

We've identified four major themes emerging from those conversations:

1. Tech trends, cultural and legal shifts, and certificate trainings are reshaping the industry
2. In an ever-evolving industry, predicting the future is less valuable than preparing students to adapt to it
3. Many needed skills are unchanging: critical thinking, problem solving, project management, storytelling
4. The industry hires specialists, but they need broad creative/collaborative skills to work across teams

Mapping Student Journeys

After interviewing nine current and former students from both the on-campus and SBC programs, we developed six student personas to help us communicate the different motivations and needs of students who would be interested in pursuing graduate education in advertising, and mapped them out across the current programs offered by the department.

SBC CERTIFICATE — FULL SBC — ON-CAMPUS MS ADV — ICR

The Networker — The Strategist — The Explorer — The Creative + The Data Miner — The Scholar

The Networker
Wants to bolster their personal brand by obtaining a certificate or degree from UIUC. Most interested in expanding their professional network.

The Strategist
Interested in a certificate to explore specialization, but might enter a full 18-month program after "getting a taste." Intrinsically motivated to learn more.

The Explorer
Looking to jump-start a new career, wants to learn more about industry positions and gain credentials to break into the industry.

The Data Miner
Wants to learn media strategy while specializing in data analytics. Motivated to pursue advertising to combine their creative and analytical skills.

The Creative
Intrinsically motivated to learn and practice media creation tools and design; wants to work at an agency, and extrinsically motivated to build a portfolio of work.

The Scholar
Wants to perform scholarly research and prepare for a PhD program. Needs an academic mentor and information on funding.

Opportunity Areas for Design

Following our synthesized insights, we've highlighted some opportunity areas for design:

Leveraging UIUC
How might we leverage UIUC's unique assets to offer value propositions that differentiate from competitors?

Specialization
How might we design pathways to help students pursue distinct tracks?

Student collaboration
How might we design a more coherent and productive collaborative experience?

Professional development
How might we leverage or expand peer relationships and campus resources for mentorship + networking?

"Real world" clients
How might we create more learning experiences that connect them with "real world" clientele?