A Brand New Chapter for SJU

Starting this year, an old chant will roar again at Carnesecca Arena:

“SJU! SJU! SJU!”
It’s all part of St. John’s University’s new brand platform, which was officially launched this academic year and has already swept campus by storm. In addition to the long-awaited return of the “SJU” abbreviation, the brand features a bold, updated look and reintroduces blue into the University’s official color scheme.

“When I first came on board at St. John’s, we began planning for the ‘new era’ of the University,” said Hallie G. Sammartino, Ph.D., Vice President for Marketing and Communications, who oversaw the brand design and launch. “Alumni, more than anyone, know our history and tradition, so they were a critical group to consult and keep in mind as we developed the platform.”
Indeed, the new logo and crest harken back to St. John’s traditional visual identity and emphasizes five ‘chapters’ that are crucial to the St. John’s story: academic excellence without borders; the power of a global city and a world campus; faith, success and service; an alumni network that opens doors; and New York City’s team. This ‘story’ was determined after a yearlong study in collaboration with Simpson-Scarborough, a leader in higher education market research, which surveyed more than 3,000 participants.

Students have already embraced this exciting new identity, chanting “SJU” at every athletic event and wearing hoodies, t-shirts and sweatshirts displaying the updated crest and logo. Alumni, too, have been enthusiastic about the change.

“This new brand is like a rallying cry for my fellow graduates,” said Anthony Giardina ‘85C. “You wouldn’t believe how happy my friends are to have the ‘SJU’ back, along with the color scheme, the crest, the chants — this is how it’s always been at St. John’s, and we’re glad to have it back.”

As a student, Giardina had the unique distinction of serving as the St. John’s mascot when the Men’s Basketball team reached the NCAA Final Four, so he knows a thing or two about school spirit.

“What’s amazing to me, and what I take particular pride in, is that a St. John’s degree is worth more today than it was when I graduated,” he explained. “Moving forward, it’s important for SJU to publicize that fact, and continue to ask itself: how do we market the value of a St. John’s education?”

As Sammartino noted, the brand ‘chapters’ answer that very question, taking key attributes for which St. John’s is widely known today and using them as a springboard to pinpoint what will distinguish the institution tomorrow.

“These five ‘chapters’ give us a unified message, and one that we believe all members of the St. John’s community can take pride in,” she said. “To develop that message, we turned to alumni to help us identify points of distinctiveness: they absolutely love our commitment to Vincentian service, they want...
to see the University continue to enhance its academic stature and they share a strong passion for athletics. With this new brand, these attributes are now a part of our messaging platform.”

Over the summer, the University began rolling out its new graphic identity across communications and facilities, and administrators hope that by the summer of 2014, all signage across each campus will reflect the new logo. Additionally, a new University Web site will be launched in the near future, while an athletics rebrand is in the works for the 2014 academic year.

With the recent installation of Rev. Joseph L. Levesque, C.M. as University President, St. John’s is clearly starting a new chapter, one that builds on its previous 143 years of storied tradition. And, as Giardina points out, what makes this new brand so exciting is how it perfectly captures that rich history.

“As an institution, St. John’s is much bigger than any abbreviation or color scheme,” he explained. “In fact, you could call St. John’s anything you want, for all I care, and it doesn’t matter — at the end of the day, what we are is simple: a University that cares for others, that provides a world-class, global education and takes pride in its athletics. And the new brand reaffirms that.”

He added, “It’s a great reminder, quite simply, that we are St. John’s.”

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To view a video about the University’s new brand please visit www.stjohns.edu/fall13mag