

ologie

CUNY Baruch

# Brand Market Research and Strategy

Executive Summary

August 2022

# The Project

## Goals and Objectives

Baruch College is looking to articulate its brand positioning and to develop strategies that will **expand its reputation beyond New York City** as an institution with outstanding, affordable academic programs and a strong commitment to social mobility.

Building on a comprehensive research and discovery process that focuses on understanding the college's brand and its market position, we will **develop a brand strategy that will serve as the foundation for future communications**, aligned with institutional goals for reputation building, advancement, and enrollment.

### Specifically, our work will:

- Identify Baruch's differentiating elements and story.
- Articulate clearly and concisely what's distinctive about the college.
- Define a framework for building the main Baruch brand and sub-brands, addressing how they best relate to and support each other.
- Position the college as a top-choice opportunity among its peers and competitors.
- Recommend compelling messages to strategically targeted audiences.
- Establish a distinctive, sustainable platform that conveys points of distinction.
- Attract and retain students, donors, faculty, and staff.
- Increase awareness and strengthen the reputation of the college's offerings.

# Research Recap

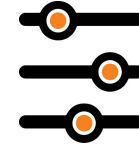
# Research Recap



**Kickoff Meeting**



**Planning, Research, and Documentation Review**



**Competitor Audit**



**Brand Audit**



**Qualitative Brand Research**



**Quantitative Brand Research**

# Discovery Recap

## Whom we talked to

We conducted virtual discussion groups and individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) with the stakeholder groups below.

- Alumni
- Centers and Institutes staff
- College Advancement staff
- Computing and Technology Center staff
- Current students
- Donors (9 IDIs with 11 people)
- Enrollment Management and Strategic Academic Initiatives staff
- Faculty
- Faculty Senate Executive Committee
- Government leaders (4 IDIs)
- Office of the Provost staff
- Marxe School of Public and International Affairs staff and administrators
- President S. David Wu
- President's Vision Council
- Presidential Advisory Council on DEI
- Provost Linda Essig
- Regional leaders (22 IDIs)
- Student Affairs staff
- Weissman School of Art and Sciences staff and administrators
- Zicklin School of Business staff and administrators

## What we discussed

Each conversation was tailored to the expertise and experiences of the participants, but in general, we discussed:

- Baruch's brand assets and differentiators
- Key points of pride at Baruch
- Shared personality traits, characteristics, and values at Baruch
- The people and community at Baruch
- The impact of Baruch faculty, students, and alumni
- The culture and experience at Baruch
- Baruch's location in New York City and the advantages it brings
- The relationship between Baruch and CUNY
- Drivers of Baruch donor engagement and giving
- Drivers of community leader engagement with Baruch
- Future vision for Baruch

## Objective and Methodology

To objectively measure brand awareness and perceptions of Baruch College, we conducted a comprehensive research study with key internal and external audiences that was designed to address the following objectives:

- Gauge aided and unaided awareness of and familiarity with Baruch.
- Explore how the target audiences perceive Baruch, particularly related to its brand position, and its emotional connections and drivers, and their willingness to act in relation to the college.
- Measure perceptions of the college as compared to a defined list of competitive peers.
- Identify gaps between internal and external perceptions.
- Understand prospective students' barriers to and facilitators of consideration and acceptance.
- Understand the appeal of messaging options and how they might differ between audiences.

An online survey was in the market from April 6 to April 27, 2022.

## Audiences

A total of 4,951 completes were acquired from key audience segments.

	Segment	Definition	Completes	Margin of Error*
INTERNAL	<b>Alumni and Donors</b>	All alumni and donors from Baruch database.	629	± 3.89%
	<b>Current Undergraduate Students</b>	Students currently enrolled in an undergraduate.	632	± 3.82%
	<b>Current Graduate, Executive, and Certificate Students</b>	Students currently enrolled in a graduate, executive, or certificate program.	387	± 4.73%
	<b>Faculty and Staff</b>	All full-time faculty and lecturers, all part-time faculty and adjuncts, and all staff.	378	± 4.74%
EXTERNAL	<b>Employers</b>	Engaged and unengaged employers from Baruch's database.	204	± 6.83%
	<b>Prospective Undergraduate Students</b>	Those with no bachelor's degree, with interest in obtaining one, located in NY, NJ, CT, VA, PA, FL, TX, and CA. Specific state DMA targets included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Florida: MIAMI-FT. LAUDERDALE, TAMPA-ST. PETERSBURG (SARASOTA), WEST PALM BEACH-FT. PIERCE</li> <li>Texas: AUSTIN, DALLAS-FORT WORTH, HOUSTON</li> <li>California: LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO-OAKLAND-SAN JOSE, SANTA BARBARA-SANTA MARIA-SAN LUIS OBISPO</li> </ul> This segment also includes prospective undergraduate students from Baruch's database.	546	± 3.39%
	<b>Prospective Graduate Students</b>	Those with at least a bachelor's degree, with interest in obtaining a graduate or executive degree or certificate, located in NY, NJ, CT, PA, FL, or CA. This segment also includes prospective graduate students from Baruch's database. School segments (below) were determined by self-reported interest in area of study.	2,175	± 1.98%
			Zicklin	1,418
		Weissman	333	± 5.33%
		Marxe	207	± 6.79%
		Other	217	±

\*The margin of error is the amount of error you can tolerate. Industry standard is ±5%. Acceptable range is ±4% to ±8%.



## Research Recap

Based on the qualitative and quantitative research, the messages that position Baruch College competitively in the marketplace highlight these three dynamics:



# Strategy Overview

## Key Components

The strategy is intended for *internal use*, to set the foundation for the Baruch College brand.

### What it **is**:

- A useful resource for anyone who communicates on the college's behalf
- Frameworks and tools created specifically for marketers and communicators
- A foundation for the ideas, stories, and messages that will resonate with priority audiences
- Motivational and enduring ideas to spark external-facing messages

### What it **isn't**:

- An outward expression of the brand (taglines or slogans)
- A collection of frameworks for external use

## Key Components

There are four components of a brand strategy that will enable us to communicate the Baruch College story clearly and compellingly, in order to achieve our goals.

- Audiences** → Who are we talking to and what do they need to know?
- Positioning** → What is the big idea?
- Messaging** → What messages should be prioritized?
- Personality** → How should communications look, feel, and sound?

Brand Strategy

# Audiences

## Audiences

By segmenting these stakeholders into groups based on *ultimate goal*, we can achieve more targeted messaging.

ULTIMATE  
GOAL

**Recruitment**

**Retention**

**Advancement**

GROUPS LIKE  
(but not limited to)

Undergraduate  
prospects

Current students

Alumni

Graduate prospects

Current faculty  
and staff

Donors

Prospective faculty  
and staff

Employers

Influential leaders

DRIVING

**INTEREST**

**AFFINITY**

**ENGAGEMENT**

Brand Strategy

# Positioning

## Positioning

WHO

**Baruch College is a vital nexus of ambition and opportunity,**

WHERE

**within the most enterprising city in the world**

WHAT

**empowering students to seize and accelerate opportunities**

HOW

**through our steadfast commitment to access, excellence, and outcomes,**

WHY

**enabling students to transform their futures, their fields, and their communities.**

ESSENCE

**Ambition Accelerator**



## WHY THIS WORKS

- It illustrates the importance of ***Baruch as a model*** of higher education.
- It highlights the ***unique combination*** of access, excellence, and outcomes — one isn't sacrificed for the others. This is something Baruch's competitors can't speak to.
- It elevates key ideas where ***what's authentic*** about Baruch aligns with ***what audiences care about most.***

Brand Strategy

# Messaging Framework

# Messaging Framework

Baruch College...

empowers students to seize and accelerate possibilities

**Core Value Proposition**

in order to...

enable them to set the trajectory of their fields and futures

## ACCESS

an engine of opportunity

instilling agency and optimism to build a better future

- Serving as a model for public higher education in the U.S.
- Affordable tuition complemented by scholarship and financial aid opportunities, with students who graduate with low debt
- Comprehensive academic support services and co-curricular programs to enhance soft skills
- Extra support to boost academic preparation

*Key ideas to highlight instead of the term "social mobility"*

## EXCELLENCE

a community of open discourse and perpetual learning

sharpening skills and fueling innovation

- Faculty experts engaged in innovative research, scholarly, and creative activities
- Contributing to and learning from a diverse community
- A set of quality peers who motivate and lift up one another

*Excellence includes academics and the community of learners*

## OUTCOMES

proximity to and close connections within the most enterprising city in the world

infusing cultural and human capital across fields and industries

- A powerhouse for new talent
- Well-positioned in a global city with immediate access to world class institutions across all industries
- A place that employers are eager to recruit from
- Career center resources including excellent student placement with top employers

*Directly connect location to outcomes (for individuals and for employers and influential leaders alike)*

**Secondary messages** communicate how you deliver on the core value proposition.

**Supporting points** are specific ways that you deliver on the secondary messages. (These can evolve over time.)

Brand Strategy

# Personality

BRAND STRATEGY  
**Personality**

*Our communication pieces will appeal to key audiences by feeling:*

**AUTHENTIC and  
STRAIGHTFORWARD**

Our audiences respond best to a tone that's approachable, practical, and real.

**SUPPORTIVE and  
CONFIDENT**

We know that our students have the skills they need to succeed — they just need to tap into them. Our communications should reflect a balance between support and empowerment.

**SAVVY and  
DYNAMIC**

Much like the city we reside in, our community is smart, focused, and impressive. Our materials should embody those qualities.

Brand Strategy

# What Comes Next

# What Comes Next

## BRINGING IT TO LIFE

### **Develop a creative platform.**

Once the strategy has solidified, translate the big ideas into a creative platform. This external expression should be broad enough for all of the college's audiences, and should bring the brand positioning to life.

Elements of the creative platform might include a color palette, verbal expression and headlines, photography, secondary graphics, and an overarching theme.

It is essential that the brand strategy is brought to life through a creative platform that is:

### **COMPELLING**

Does it move Baruch's audiences to take notice?

### **AUTHENTIC**

Does it exemplify what we've identified as the truest aspects of Baruch today (and in the future)?

### **DISTINCTIVE**

Does it convey the unique combination of offerings identified in the positioning statement?