

# Foxhole Advertising

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## Executive Summary

The UIUC MS Advertising Program has been languishing with a subpar application rate, despite being ranked among the top 5 programs in the US. The international students who've previously funneled into the school, have slowed down in recent years.

With an ample variety of messaging platforms the University can utilize, it's perplexing for students that there is so little marketing efforts from them.

Chinese students remain the bread and butter of the program, so they must remain as the target market. However, current UIUC Advertising students should not be neglected, as their ties to the University make them valuable candidates.



## Sources

- Q&A with Dr. Sar
- Q&A with Dr. Wirtz's class
- Interviews with 4 Master's students
- Interview with Professor Vargas
- Online survey
- [http://www.china.org.cn/china/2014-01/20/content\\_31242851\\_4.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2014-01/20/content_31242851_4.htm)
- <https://media.illinois.edu/degrees/advertising-bs-ms/degrees/ms-advertising>
- <http://grady.uga.edu/academics/adpr/>
- <https://comartsci.msu.edu/academics/academic-departments/advertising-public-relations/graduate/master-arts-advertising>
- <https://advertising.utexas.edu/graduate/master-advertising-program>
- <http://www.medill.northwestern.edu/imc/index.html>
- <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-and-Infographics/Fast-Facts>
- [https://ler.illinois.edu/?page\\_id=38](https://ler.illinois.edu/?page_id=38)
- <http://theblacksheeponline.com/illinois/bartender-week-jack-murphys-pub>
- <https://media.illinois.edu/degrees/advertising-bs-ms/degrees/ms-advertising/meet-students>

# Target Audience

**Primary:** International Students Travelling To America for their Master's Degree

## Demographics:

- Born and raised into a wealthy family in Asia
- Family is connected to their home government/oligarchy
- 22-24 years old
- Graduated from a four-year university in Asia
- Only child

## Psychographics:

- Highly motivated by success
- Highly motivated by family expectations
- Has a generally positive opinion about the United States
- Has a wide eclectic academic knowledge, though primarily interested in advertising
- Desires to return home with a competitive edge against people who studied in their home country
- Have no strong opinions about religion or politics
- Values punctuality
- Values hard work
- Has a strong emotional tie to their country
- Wants to meet new people in America but still retain friendships with people from their home



Secondary: Advertising Students from the University of Illinois

### Demographics:

- Come from middle class to upper middle class background
- Grew up in or around Chicago
- 22-24 years old

### Psychographics:

- Is academically curious
- Values hard work
- Feels a bond to Champaign and the friends they've made at UIUC
- Is interested in the academic side of advertising more so than the industry side
- Is considering a PhD in advertising
- Is cost-conscious

## Victoria Sobolev

Track: 18 Months Thesis

Born: Ukraine

Raised: Vernon Hills, IL

Undergraduate: Communications and Spanish at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana

“I didn’t get any messaging [about the program when I applied]. There is absolutely no contact with the program and the website was so vague.”

“If you want to get a PhD this a great program to go into because it basically builds you up into being a PhD and a professor, because it teaches you a lot about research. But it’s not really teaching you how to write a proper press release, or memo, or any of those things.”

“It’s really nice to be in a program that surrounds you with people who will challenge you and are on your level intellectually



- Joined the Masters Program in order to stay in school another year after graduating early
- Masters is paid for by a fellowship, which requires her thesis to be in some way related to Ukraine
- Wants more professional experience than what the theory-heavy program provides
- Thesis is on consumer attitudes for Proctor and Gamble’s laundry detergent in Ukraine
- Learned about the application process from Sela Sar personally when she was an undergrad
- Feels that the program builds trust and closeness with professors
- Feels that the students in the program aren’t very close, though she’s under the impression previous years had closer students
- Plans to go into the industry after she completes her Masters, but she may return for her PhD some day
- Thinks the cost of the program is a “pretty good deal”

## Kieshana Beeler

Track: Two Years Thesis

Born/Raised: Chicago

Undergraduate: Advertising at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana

“I just wanted to go [get my Master’s Degree] right after I graduated.”

“We (advertising students) are all here for the same reason -- so of course we all have different backgrounds, but essentially we’re here to earn our degree. We respect each other’s cultures.”

“It (the program) is essential for the industry if you want to go into research, but it’s not essential if you want to go into creative or something like that.”

- Plans to apply for an MBA Joint Degree in Marketing
- Thinks Advertising is a vital subject because it influences how people view the world
- Stayed at the University because she liked the faculty so much and because she knew the Master Program was ranked highly
- Considered Northwestern but didn’t like that it failed to offer an advertising program, only degrees in similar fields
- Has no memory of how she learned about the program
- Feels very close to other students in the program
- Enjoys research
- SPSS is one of the most important tools Master’s students learn because it becoming a requirement for research jobs
- Focuses research on consumer preferences for personalization and discount
- Wishes she knew the program was more academic than practical
- Thinks the connections she makes in school will greatly benefit her career
- Doesn’t think enough undergraduate advertising students are aware of the masters program





## Sabrina Fang

Track: 18 Month Project

Born/Raised: Taiwan

Undergraduate: Arabic Language and Television/Radio  
Programing at the National Chenghi University in Taiwan

“I didn’t really hear about it (the program). I just did research online and saw that it was a very prestigious school, so I applied for it.”

“My dad used to study in the States, so I wanted to see how the education -- I just wanted to study abroad.”

“In the Master’s Program you will learn a lot of theory, and the theory will help you to think a lot about what you’ve learned in the undergraduate education itself. You can incorporate all the knowledge and dissect it . . . It’s fun.”



- Heard about the program from online research while studying in Taiwan
- Wanted to see how America’s discussion-based approach to education would benefit her advertising knowledge
- Believes Taiwan’s education teaches students how to memorize, but it rarely asks students to critically think about the material
- Plans to work as a researcher after she finishes her Master’s degree
- Plans to return to home after she gets her degree
- Knows a large number of international students try to get visas to work in the US, but they are hampered by the difficult US visa process
- Believes students are as equally motivated by career opportunities as they are by the pursuit of knowledge
- Did not know anything about the courses before she applied



## Xuanjun “Jason” Gong

Track: Two Years

Born/Raised: China

Undergraduate: Advertising at Zhejiang Gongshang University

“As a Chinese student you can’t just take a train to America to see what the university looks like. The information you receive is very little, so the ranking is a very objective, very important information source.”

“For communication and media America offers the best education, better than other countries. I just like America, I just want to see how life is going in here. I like the country and I like the education, so I came here.”



“America is the strongest country in the world, and that attracted me a lot.”

“People have a term for people who graduate from America and come back to China: Haigui (translation: you come back from the sea). They (Chinese employers) think they are more competitive, and they think they will be more successful intuitively.”

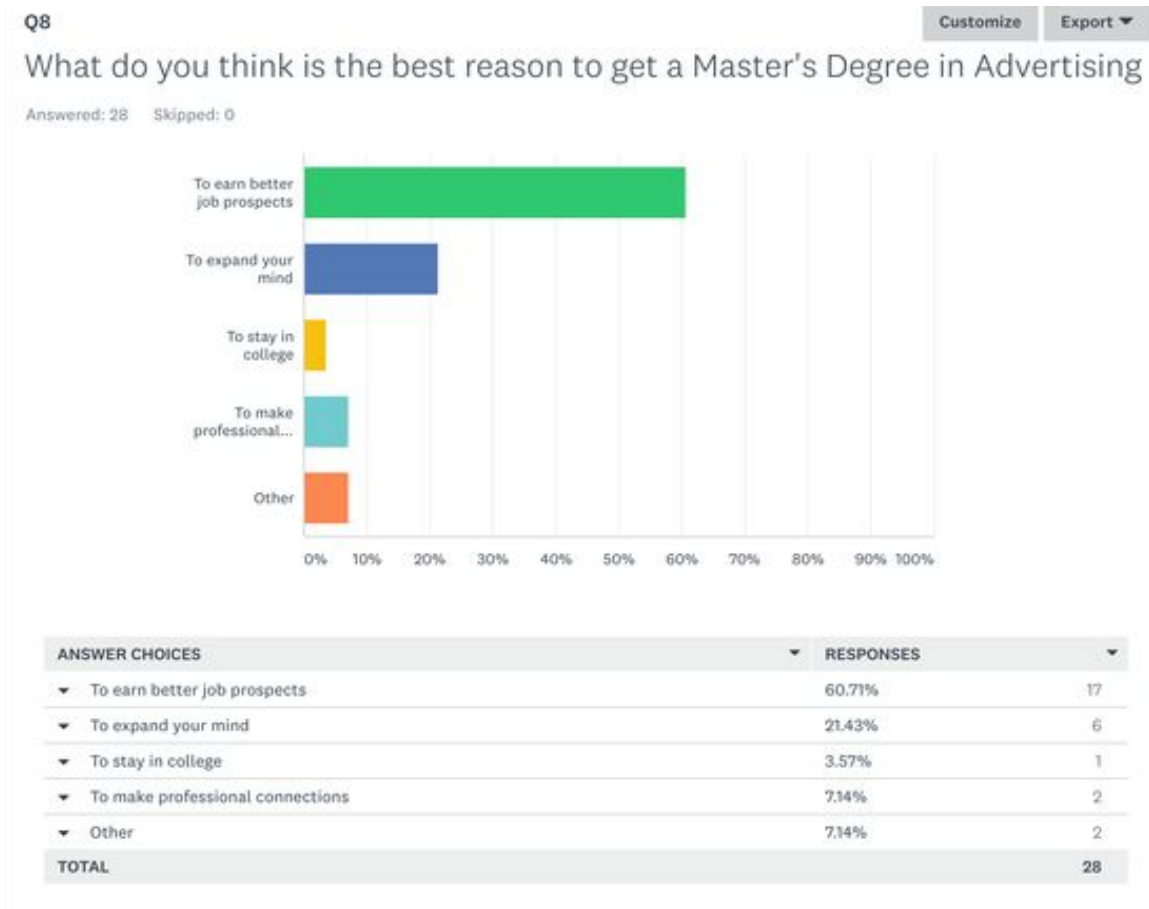
- Worked in the industry as a senior in college, but felt he didn’t yet know enough to succeed out in the field
- Wants to know more about data and consumer psychology
- Felt pressured to go to America because he felt it would make him more competitive when he returns to China
- Though he didn’t intend to earn a PhD when he came, he now considers it because the program “prepares you to get a doctorate”
- Didn’t know the program would be more academically focused than professional
- Only after entering the program did he decide to go into academia
- Attracted to the school’s high ranking
- Applied to Boston University, University of Florida, the University of Southern California and Michigan State University

- Feels the amount of reading is very demanding because English is his second language
- Believes there is an inflation of Chinese students studying abroad, which makes them less competitive
- Considered studying in England, but he chose America because it has better job prospects and because he was raised on American English
- Believes the children of people who study in the US are more likely to study in the US themselves
- Appreciates that America looks at students as more than just their Gaokao score
- Feels pressured to hang out with other Chinese students, though he would like to get out of his comfort zone

## Findings from Q & A with Dr. Wirtz's Class

- 1/9 have short-term plans including the pursuit of a Ph.D.
- 3/9 have long-term plans that may include a Ph.D.
- There was a feeling of frustration with the website & materials made available to prospective students. "It adds to the branding of being outdated."
- Current students didn't choose the university because of its diversity but do appreciate it.
- People decided to pursue a Masters degree late their Junior year/early Senior year.
- Cost did impact the decision to attend UIUC for the majority of students.
- Appreciation for the small class size & discussion-oriented classes.
- Believes that there is no need for a creative route. "I mean, there's portfolio school for that."
- The ability to strengthen their network/networking skills drove a lot of the domestic students towards this program.

## Primary Takeaway From Online Survey



We created an online survey to judge the perceptions people have about an MS degree in advertising. The survey was made with Survey Monkey and was sent out through Facebook.

Of the 28 people who answered the survey, 60.71% stated that the best reason to get a Master's Degree in Advertising was to earn better job prospects. This is consistent with our findings. Most advertising students, and students in general, see an MS as a stepping stone towards a career in an industry than as the first step for PhD ambitions.

# Patrick Vargas

Master's Teacher of Research Methods

"Ideally we're teaching them how analyze data and ask questions."

"For domestic students I'm not sure that a Master's degree is helpful in and of itself. I think work experience is more helpful for domestic students. For international . . . for them I think it's good to get experience working in English. They come from a very different background, so i think a Master's Degree is very helpful for them if they want to go into the job market."



"I don't think there's much sense at all if you've earned an undergraduate degree here to earn a master's degree here. I think it would be much better for everyone involved if you get another perspective."

"I am more academically interested than I am practically interested."

- Believes Master's students interested in PhD should be taught the skills necessary for a PhD, but those interested in the industry need a base knowledge of understanding data
- Believes student cohesion varies year by year
- Doesn't UIUC advertising undergrads should study for their Master's at UIUC because they can gain more from going across the country
- Our school's incredibly strong psychology and computer science departments compliment advertising really well
- The faculties close involvement with students offer really valuable support
- Ideal students are intelligent, hard working and curious
- Wants to bring more Master's students into the PhD program
- Believes the Master's degree helps students realize what other areas they would like to pursue

## Lily Zhang

When Lily Zhang was a young girl growing up in Beijing, her father told her about how his academic experience in the United States gave him a competitive edge against other people working in China. Now a high ranking bureaucrat in the Communist party, it is pretty clear that Mr. Zhang gained his money's worth when he traveled to the States. And though Lily's father often sold her on the promise of the US within the context of its monetary value, Lily's decision to enroll in the University of Illinois' Master's Program was primarily based on her fascination with the country. Raised to see the States as both a powerful voice and a dangerous presence on the world stage, Lily decided to she wanted to travel to the country long before she actually picked the University of Illinois. But as her undergraduate career in communications at Beijing University drew to close she began to look for US advertising programs with high rankings. She picked the University of Illinois.



Now Lily travels to three classes a day. The time she doesn't spend in class is often dedicated to reading and working on her thesis. Though she at first struggled with the English language, she has since become more proficient thanks mostly to her insatiable work ethic. Lily had never before experienced an educational environment that fostered class discussion and critical thinking skills. Happy to be free from the rote memorization of her previous education experience, Lily is even considering a PhD in the field.

In her free time, Lily likes to hang out with other Chinese speaking students. She has cultivated friendships with people from Illinois, but she still has a special bond with the people that share her language and understand her customs.

Some day Lily knows she will travel back to her homeland. She's excited by the prospect of gaining her family's approval with her hard work and American degree. Though she can be overwhelmed by the work and expectations of her degree, she knows she will ultimately prove her worth and make her family proud.

## Chris O'Donnell

Chris sometimes forgets he is a Master's student. The transition from undergrad to graduate advertising felt so fluid, so sudden, that he occasionally needs to look at his graduation photo to remember where he is and what he needs to do; and that's important, because he has a lot to do.

Everyday Chris gets up early to work out. As an undergrad, he could work out in the evenings and still get all his work done. But the sheer mass of advertising reading now makes that impossible. After a quick breakfast, he is off to class. He usually goes to three advertising classes a day, but twice a week he also enjoys an introduction to computer programming lecture. Though he's not used to this level of challenging logic work, his newfound dedication to professional development keeps him going. He's matured since undergrad; he knows that.

In order to make some walking around money, Chris works as a bartender at Murphy's. He enjoys the slow hours and opportunities to share his thoughts with his other grad student co-workers. He can feel his brain expanding, making new connections between advertising, psychology, pop culture, computer programming, etc. he never noticed before.

In his free time, when he has it, Chris sees a few friends who have stayed on as undergraduates. He still likes to stop by his old fraternity house, but he can feel himself growing out of that lifestyle. Most of the guys there look unfamiliar, and for reasons he can't explain he's aged many years these past few months.



# Overview of UIUC MS in Advertising

The UIUC Master's in Advertising program is a top ranking, research-heavy graduate program offered by the College of Media. The program is an extension of the advertising education that began at Illinois in 1946 with Charles H. Sandage. In keeping with the department's founder, the program focuses on the “‘why of advertising’- not just the ‘how’”. The program provides extensive research opportunities and the flexibility to pursue a specialized interest through electives.

## Challenges

- There is little brand awareness outside of ranking lists. This is in part due to no previous advertising.
- The website, previous to this year, hadn't been used often. As a result, there were broken links and glitches.
- Competitors offer different “paths” for Masters students to choose from.
- Driving students to want to study in Champaign/Urbana over larger cities like Austin.

## Brand Values

- The department has a deep respect for its history of being the first advertising education offered.
- The program is extremely diverse with a international and domestic students.
- The program teaches students to become top notch researchers who not only know the “how”, but also the “why”.

## Brand Assets

- The top-notch faculty- Industry leaders and top researchers are made available to all students in this program
- Extensive research opportunities
- Ability to specialize through electives



Features	Benefits
Program taught by top faculty members.	Students receive top-notch education from leaders in the field.
A bus ride away from Chicago.	Due to location, international travelers can fly into Chicago and take an inexpensive bus the rest of the way.
12 month, 18 month and 24 month programs offered.	Being a bus ride away from Chicago means being able to network and intern within a large market.
Program requires electives in or outside the College of Media	By including electives in the academic schedule, students are encouraged to specialize in an interest.
Research focused program	Students graduate as extremely qualified top researchers who can go into the industry or continue their education.
Program offers choice between a thesis or a research project	By allowing students to choose between a thesis or a research project, students have more authority over their graduate experience as well as the ability to do research they're interested in.
The program is evolving to include a partnership with Computer Sciences.	By taking classes relating to computer science, students will graduate with a new skill set and the ability to pursue a job dealing with data.
Class size is small and more discussion-like	The small classes allow for discussion rather than lecture and strong professor-student relationships.

## Direct Competitors

- University of Texas
- Michigan State
- University of Georgia
- University of Minnesota
- University of Wisconsin
- Virginia Commonwealth University

### Michigan State

Consistently ranked one of the top 3 programs in the nation. Offer two masters programs and a Ph.D. program. Their programs expand past advertising to include public relations and research. Michigan offers a larger program to ours, and at a similar price point. Their program focuses on, “strategic and theoretical principles of advertising, research training, leadership skills and more”.



### University of Texas at Austin



The first course in advertising at the public University of Texas at Austin (UTA) was offered in 1914. The Department of Advertising was established in 1974. Offer Masters of Arts degrees with or without a thesis. Their advertising program is as part of the college of communications and also offers a doctoral degree. Has a Center for Brand Research which provides extensive research opportunities and partnerships with “thought leaders”.

### University of Georgia

Offering a thesis and non-thesis program, The University of Georgia’s M.A. Degree concentration in Advertising is a top ranked program. Their Advertising programs are combined with Public Relations education, allowing



for students to gain further knowledge in both fields. The program focuses on graduating “creative problem solvers” and emphasizes new media and “persuasive communication” education.

## What do our main competitors have in common?

- Strong websites
- Most have more than one “path” offered
- Accept creatives into graduate programs
- Consistently high-ranking programs
- Have and promote top faculty

## Indirect Competitors

### Going into the Workforce

Students graduating and going into the workforce is by far our largest indirect competitor. Debt and the cost of school forces many people to go directly into the workforce. In addition, some people do not believe that a Masters will push them forward within the industry.

### Programs like Northwestern’s Masters Program in Integrated Marketing Communication

These programs include advertising but do not solely focus or concentrate on it.

### State Schools

- Illinois State - Masters in Journalism
- Southern Illinois at Carbondale - Masters in Journalism
  - This school’s master program in Journalism integrates marketing and advertising.

State schools are more financially appealing to our target audience, but they lack the prestige, rank, networking opportunities and focus in advertising.

*“There’s ISU...Northwestern - they have data analytics and other programs, but no one really had advertising.” - Current Graduate Advertising Student*

# Northwestern's Masters Program in Integrated Marketing Communication

Northwestern's IMC program focuses on the art and science of marketing communications. Part of the Medill college, this program partners with global companies to provide immersive opportunities for its students. The program focuses on marketing communications in the digital age and how to work collaboratively. They promote the "IMC 'way of thinking'" that emphasizes understanding consumers and balancing "quantitative and qualitative information to build brands".



This program does not focus on advertising but rather the whole experience of brand communication and marketing. This program is a great example of a successful multi-path graduate program. The program, offered full-time, part-time or online, does not directly compete for our target audience but serves as a great example of a strong program well advertised and branded.



# Insights

1. The age of the program doesn't matter to our target audience. Our target audience may actually assume that the school is outdated because of it.
2. Ranking is ultimately what drove people to apply for and attend our program.
3. International students are more motivated to go to America if their parents studied in America.
4. International students are attracted to American education because it focuses on critical thinking more than rote memorization.
5. International students are excited to experience American education, of course, but they are also excited to experience American life as a whole. International students may have a higher intention to study in Champaign if they can be informed about their surroundings (Chicago, forest preserves, attractions in Champaign, etc.)

