

# THOMAS RICHARD VOLLER-BERDAN

1423 Vermilion Road, Duluth, Minnesota, 55812

Phone: 320-493-8223 ■ Email: tvoller01@gmail.com ■ LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/tom-voller-berdan

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## SUMMARY

I'm an innovative and strategic thinker with a passion for big ideas and new initiatives, an appreciation for evidence-based decision making and assessment, an extensive track record of managing large projects, a talent for telling intriguing stories that help brands stand out, and experience leading teams and inspiring others.

## PORTFOLIO AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Visit [www.voller-berdan.com](http://www.voller-berdan.com) to view portfolio, writing samples and related materials.

## POSITIONS HELD

2023-Present	Founding Partner and Project Lead, Voyageur Donuts, LLC, Duluth, Minnesota Independent Marketing Consultant (part-time)
1999-2023	Executive Director of Admission/Marketing * College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University (CSB/SJU)
1996-1999	Associate Director of Admission, CSB/SJU (directed SJU Admission Office and staff)
1995-1996	Associate Director of Admission, Shattuck-St. Mary's School, Faribault, Minnesota
1994-1995	Assistant Director of Admission, CSB/SJU (directed CSB Admission Office and staff)
1990-1994	Admission Counselor, CSB/SJU

\* Position title changed over time to match my expanding role and as I transitioned out of the colleges.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Served as a leading member of an admission team that increased applications by nearly 15 percent in 10 years while increasing academic profile and more than doubling the percentage of American students of color, the percentage of students from outside Minnesota, and the percentage of international students.
- Continually explored and implemented new electronic media and print technologies, including customized printing, web portals, virtual tours, discussion boards, chat software, email campaign software, landing pages, overlays, digital advertising and IP targeting.
- Member of institutional teams charged with developing and ongoing implementation of the colleges' integrated brand—including researching brand recognition and reputation and the creation of a brand identity statement and institutional visual identity. Initiated an effort to develop colleges' points of distinction. Member of the colleges' Marketing Implementation Team, an interdepartmental team that integrated branding efforts across the colleges.
- Collaborated with multiple departments to develop an extensive and engaging sophomore-through-senior communication flow, including print and electronic communication streams. Surveys of admitted students consistently reported high approval for college communication and publications.
- Led efforts to expand the top end of the recruitment funnel and increase the number of qualified inquiries through the addition of targeted national markets, an expansion of student search, a 50 percent reduction in search costs, the development of key gatekeepers, and the prioritization of inquiries through the use of geodemographics, telequalifying and activity-based qualification.
- Formed collaborative partnerships for benchmarking, brainstorming and feedback: Undertook a tour of 10 national, liberal arts colleges meeting with admission and marketing professionals, created a discussion group of marketers from non-competing colleges, completed a short marketing residency at a college, and created an Admission Marketing Advisory Team, comprised of CSB/SJU alumni in marketing.

## **MARKETING & BRANDING**

- Instigated and led the development of the social media presence of the colleges, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat and TikTok.
- Planned, designed and implemented AdWords and social media advertising campaigns.
- Created and oversaw an annual communication plan.
- Conceptualized, designed and wrote text for integrated admission promotional efforts: including publications, letters, advertisements, and email. Samples are available at [www.voller-berdan.com](http://www.voller-berdan.com).
- Hired external photographers and designers, directed photoshoots, and engaged external vendors and printers.
- Wrote articles for institutional magazines.
- Member of an interdepartmental team that shaped the colleges' upcoming branding initiative.
- Led student prospecting work of the colleges—created annual student search plans that include name buy and initial search outreach strategy.
- Served as liaison to colleges' Office of Marketing and Communication (OMC)—attended weekly storyboarding meetings, met weekly with colleges' Chief Marketing Officer, and worked closely with OMC staff on print publications, website, social media, and digital marketing.
- Provided marketing consultation for educational institutions, non-profit organizations and small companies.
- Adept in Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Premiere, InGenuix (CMS), Slate (CRM), Google Ads, Facebook/Instagram Ads, Google Analytics, UnBounce (landing pages) and Prezi.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING, PROJECT MANAGEMENT & ASSESSMENT**

- Led development and implementation of annual Admission Marketing Plan.
- Served as an administrative member of the colleges' Marketing and Enrollment Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees—regularly presented admission marketing efforts to the group.
- Utilized qualitative focus groups, quantitative surveys, A/B testing, Google Analytics, email open and click-through rates, and other data sources to shape and evaluate institutional messaging, publications, website, and other recruitment outreach.
- Applied geo-demography, annual admitted student survey, and other research in strategic planning.
- Member of the Financial Aid Strategy Team that oversees institutions' discount and scholarship strategies.
- Created the annual Admission Department Plan, including coordinating team goals and objectives.
- Developed male recruitment plan; increased first-year male enrollment by 18 percent in two years. Created an on-campus admission program aimed at the recruitment of men. These Saturdays at CSB/SJU programs annually attract 300 prospective students.
- Led the development of new business. Developed business plan, financial projections document, marketing plan, and handbook. Worked closely with area small business development center, entrepreneurial fund, banks, contractors, suppliers and permitting agencies.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

- Led successful recruitment efforts in primary, secondary and tertiary markets. Developed comprehensive territory plans that initiated creative methods for recruiting prospective students. Dramatically increased enrollment from a critical national market.
- Experience working with diverse communities.
- Directed off-campus programs and led interactive presentations.
- Coordinated recruitment efforts for specific campus departments.
- Served as emcee at admission programs.
- Involved in the design and implementation of an alumni recruitment plan.

## LEADERSHIP

- Led Admission Marketing Team, an advisory team composed of staff members from admission and marketing.
- Member of Admission Department Core Management Team—directed all department operations.
- Founded *FastForward*, an outreach program to area Chicano/Latino youth. Received initial funding through a grant from the Target Foundation.
- Chaired interdepartmental Enrollment Transition Team—significantly improving the experience of newly enrolled students, including developing an Enrolled Student Portal.
- Elected to SJU Administrative Steering Committee; provided leadership for monthly administrative staff meetings.
- Chaired SJU Paul Lawson Professional Development Fund.
- Supervised admission counselors and other professional and support staff, including conducting monthly territory meetings, quarterly reviews, and annual performance appraisals.
- Participated in department hiring decisions and new counselor training.
- Directed daily operations of the Admission Office.
- Coordinated the admission committee and directed the admission decision process.

## PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AWARDS AND ACTIVITIES

- Regularly attended professional conferences, including the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC), Minnesota Association for College Admission Counseling (MACAC), American Marketing Association (AMA) Higher Education Symposium, Lawlor Summer Seminar, and Carnegie.
- Presented at AMA Conference: “A Low-risk Venture into Online Student Recruitment.”
- Member of NACAC and MACAC: Co-chaired the MACAC Admission Practices Committee. Served as a member of the MACAC National College Fair Committee. Designed publications for annual MACAC and Tri-State conferences. Led sessions on admission practices and college publication process at MACAC and Tri-State conferences. Participated in NACAC Leadership Development Institute.
- Received CSB/SJU WOW Award (an annual recognition of notable contributions and honors) and SJU Extraordinary Performance Award (nominated by my direct reports).
- Led two social marketing presentations for the Social Media Breakfast Twin Ports.
- Featured on the Niche Enrollment Insights and Higher Ed: Demand Gen podcasts.
- Founded annual fundraiser to support scholarships for low-income youth to attend YMCA Camp Menogyn.

## SKILLS

- Adobe Suite, CRM, WordPress, Google Analytics, Semrush, Microsoft Office, Google Suite, Google Ads, SEM, paid social.

## EDUCATION

- Master of Liberal Studies (2002)  
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Bachelor of Arts, Organizational Communication and Studio Art Majors (1989)  
Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota

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## PRAISE FROM DIVISION HEADS

### **Rick Smith**

Vice President

CSB/SJU, 1990-1996

“ The strategic, presentation and multichannel work that Tom has done is what really differentiates him from the competition. ”

### **Mary Milbert**

Vice President

Direct Supervisor

CSB/SJU, 1996-2006

“ Tom did it all and we had marketing materials that were the envy of competitors. Tom certainly had opportunities to work for professional marketing companies, but he passionately believed in our educational experience and was dedicated and driven to create innovative promotional materials that helped us stand out from our competitors. ”

### **Cal Mosley**

Vice President

Direct Supervisor

CSB/SJU, 2008-2018

“ I have spent some 50 years in higher education – about half of that at Harvard University – and have never worked with anyone more creative and dedicated than Tom. His service to his students, high school counselors, and alumni was simply extraordinary. Put simply, he has both a superb mind and an unmatched dedication to the profession. ”

### **Nathan Dehne**

Vice President

Direct Supervisor

CSB/SJU, 2018-2022

“ "Tom has a creative motor that does not stop. He is relentless in his pursuit of knowledge in the most effective and creative ways to market, communicate, and connect with prospective students and families. He studies the competition in a way that allows for a well-thought-out and strategic approach to plans and strategies. Tom will work tirelessly and collaboratively to ensure that goals and objectives are met and exceeded". ”

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## PRIMARY REFERENCES

Karen Backes Longtime coworker	320-492-0875 kbackes2617@gmail.com	Director of Recruitment and Outreach St. Cloud Technical and Community College Former Dean of Admission, CSB/SJU
Mary Ruble Johnson Longtime coworker	320-363-5350 mruble@csbsju.edu	Director of Admission/IS Admission Office CSB/SJU
Bridget Nordlund Former direct report	507-269-0785 bridget.nordlund@gmail.com	Senior Brand Manager, Elanco Former Associate Director of Admission/Marketing, CSB/SJU
Curt Walczak Mentor and advisor	218-348-2830 curt@northlandsbdc.org	Associate Director/Business Consultant Northland Small Business Development Center

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## SECONDARY REFERENCES

J. David Arnott Music promotion	320-493-1862 darnott@dssso.com	Manager of Orchestra Operations Duluth Symphony Orchestra Former Associate Professor, Chair Music Department, CSB/SJU
Mike Durbin Athletics promotion	320-363-5073 mdurbin@csbsju.edu	Head Coach Women's Basketball, CSB
Barbara Hein Previous coworker	320-309-4815 barbara.hein@minnstate.edu	Director of Marketing Marketing and Communications Minnesota State
Tom Kubinski Longtime collaborator	612-760-3700 tkubinski@shapco.com	Printing Consultant Shapco Printing
Derek Larson Academic promotion	320-282-5941 dlarson@csbsju.edu	Chair Environmental Studies, CSB/SJU
Paul Middlestaed Longtime collaborator	(320) 293-5566 photo@charter.net	Freelance Photographer
Claire Nold-Glaser Professional contact	425-373-1192 claire@collegeplanninghelp.com	College Planning Help Past-President: HECA Past-President: PNACAC