Rebranding Los Angeles: The New Project for M-School

In 2014 Matt Stefl joined LMU’s College of Business Administration as Clinical Professor and Director of the M-School program. Matt Stefl brings with him nearly 15 years of advertising industry experience, most recently acting as Executive Vice President, Director of Strategic Planning at LA-based Dailey & Associates. Prior to Dailey, he held various roles at agencies like RPA, RAPP and DDB and has touched nearly every aspect of the business from media planning to copywriting to digital marketing to strategic planning. Matt also brings with him a diverse resume of experience while working with some of our nation’s biggest companies and brands like Honda, Toyota, Turbo Tax, Nestle, IHOP, Dole, Bank of America, Wells Fargo and many more. The Makegood recently spoke with Matt about Loyola Marymount University’s M-School.

The Makegood: The Loyola Marymount University’s M-School is deepening its roots with the LA marketing community. What kinds of opportunities will students have to rebrand Los Angeles? How does the Google grant play into these opportunities?

This year students have been tasked to come up with a full 360 degree campaign that positions Los Angeles as the hub of creativity and innovation and to entice prospective businesses to set up shop here. The coolest part is that this initiative is already underway through the Mayor’s office and we are thrilled to be working with some of the people on his team. Similarly, (but for a different class) we are partnering with six LA-based non-profits where students will plan, execute and evaluate almost $200K in Google Adwords dollars on behalf of these organizations…thanks Google Grants!

The Makegood: How do you believe the M-School can be the answer to the talent drought plaguing many LA companies? Can you attest to LA’s commitment to innovation?

The idea behind M-School is pretty simple. Step 1: Find the best students and partner with the best agencies and companies. Step 2: Teach timeless fundamentals in conjunction with the latest and greatest in technology and media. Step 3: Provide plenty of opportunity for students to practice what they learn. We don’t apply just theory here, we also believe in training active doers, creators and inventors. Step 4: We walk the fine line of providing enough depth into what the industry sees as essential to succeed coupled with breadth across disciplines and skills so students can begin to align and develop their own passions. All of this helps us to provide a job-ready talent pool that addresses the fragmented agency world that we’ve come to know today.

The Makegood: What sort of partnership does the school have with agencies and brands? How will these give the students more opportunities in the future?

M-School was born from a partnership between Loyola Marymount University and thinkLA, which is led by co-Presidents Jerry McGee of the 4A’s, the leading association for advertising agencies, and Eric Johnson, founder and president of Ignited, a full service advertising agency. That spirit of partnership continues and is infused in practically everything we do. Ways that we
partner with the industry ranges from serving as a team mentor and session leader to providing custom internships to having us over at your place to explore (we love getting off campus). This year we are looking forward to partnering with some awesome companies (and more importantly, their awesome people) at spots like Deutsch LA, 180LA, Taco Bell, EA Sports, Universal McCann, the Fantasy Factory, Radical Media and more. There are several benefits to this model: students learn from whom we call the “industry rock stars” about what is really going on, they get to see firsthand what agency life is like, and perhaps most importantly, they begin to build relationships with companies, agencies and with the people that are doing the things our students would love to be doing in the future.

**The Makegood:** LMU is located just minutes from Silicon Beach, giving students the opportunity to learn from the best. How will this add to the school’s growth, as well as to the growth of the marketing community?

LMU and M-School couldn’t be more perfectly located. We’re in the epicenter of Silicon Beach, and I’m continually amazed how many creative and talented people are doing such amazing things just a stone’s throw from campus. Simply put, more companies and more innovation surrounding LMU means more opportunity for us to learn, partner and place our home-grown talent.

**The Makegood:** The program is fairly new, but has already multiplied in size. How do you plan to continue growing the program? How have the board members attributed to the growth and success of the program?

We’re all about quality over quantity. Right now, we’re starting small…only about 20 students in each cohort class. Granted, this year there were nearly 3X the number of applications for those slots. There are several avenues for growth that we are exploring such as graduate studies, executive education and international expansion…however one idea that we’re tossing around is why can’t M-School grow to a fully-functioning, multi-disciplinary agency? And besides, who else in LA would be better positioned to crack the code on youth marketing? The board has been, and will continue to be key in our success through their invaluable input and guidance on curriculum development.

**The Makegood:** Thank you, Matt