

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTROL IN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

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In most Principles of Management courses, students study the four basic management functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling. At many institutions, the control function is the one where enrollment managers need to make the most improvement.

The use of the term control in a management context refers to how managers measure performance, track progress towards objectives, and determine if corrective action is necessary. A well known management mantra is "What gets measured, gets done" or put another way, "What gets monitored, gets done." Enrollment managers need to take that mantra to heart in both admissions and financial aid.

The first step is deciding what gets measured, and then deciding what metrics to use to evaluate performance. In supervising the Admission Office, most enrollment managers have reports that track basic admissions numbers that correspond to each part of the admissions funnel: inquiries, applications, acceptances, and deposits. More detail, however, is desirable.

- It is important to track admission folder completion rates throughout the cycle. If folder completion rates are below desired objectives, it is beneficial to find out why folders are not

being completed and take corrective action so missing documents can be obtained and admissions decisions can be made. Recall that completion status not only enables prospective students to progress further through the enrollment funnel, but financial aid offers cannot be made until applicants have been accepted.

- Track visit rates for all admission applicants and inquiries. Prospective students visiting the campus are more likely to apply for admission. Effectively encouraging admission applicants to visit the campus will positively influence yield rates. Monthly, aggregate goals should be established and monitored and additional measures should be taken if the visit rates do not meet institutional objectives. Individual and group visits can be equally effective; successfully encouraging admission applicants to visit the campus is critical.
- Keep an eye on the number of admission applications ready for review when no decision has been made. This could be an indication of a generally inefficient process or a backlog in data entry.
- Track contact rates for all admission applicants. Ensure that systematic communication is taking place utilizing all forms of communication including telephone contacts, emails, face-to-face interviews, text messaging and IM.

In addition to measuring and monitoring how the Admission Office in general is doing, the performance of (see *Control* p.2)

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individual admissions counselors also needs to be tracked. This particular activity seems to be difficult for many enrollment managers. Tracking performance of specific people means holding individual counselors accountable. Often, team accountability is easier than that of individuals. Specific control, however, is necessary. Tracking individual performance will enable enrollment managers to recognize superior performance, encourage better performance when necessary, and identify training opportunities.

Admission counselor performance should be monitored using both activity and outcome metrics. This should be done on a weekly basis. Calculating telephone outreach and email rates would be considered activity metrics. Tracking the percentage of applicants whose folders are complete and the percentage of applicants who have visited the campus as a function of individual counselor would be considered outcome metrics.

Activity and outcomes in the Financial Aid Office must be monitored carefully as well. Activity in the Financial Aid Office might include sending paper or electronic reminders to encourage prospective and currently enrolled students to apply for financial aid. Tracking certain activities such as loan certifications, state grant certifications and completion of verification are also important activities that can be monitored.

Monitor outcomes such as financial aid application rates.

- The number of admission applicants who have applied for financial aid should be tracked on a weekly basis throughout the recruitment cycle.
- Monitor financial aid application rates for returning students. The number of currently enrolled students who have applied for financial aid should be tracked on a weekly basis throughout the recruitment cycle.
- Track to ensure that award letters are sent to new and returning students in a timely manner. The receipt of financial aid packages is critical to encourage deposits and support institutional goals regarding retention.
- In addition, financial aid folders for new and returning students need to be complete so aid can be drawn down. One common complaint from business officers is that it takes weeks or even months *after* classes start to draw down funds because financial aid paperwork is not

complete. Getting financial aid paperwork done, therefore, is important to cash flow which is important for such things as meeting payroll (including your own paycheck). Remember: Good Cash Flow = A Happy Business Officer.

- It is also important to track expenditure levels of both federal and state aid funds and for private institutions, institutional aid funds. Private institutions should establish a target average for institutional aid expenditures for both new and returning students and monitor those averages on a weekly basis. If the average starts to deviate significantly from the target, then corrective action such as a change in packaging policy needs to be implemented. Likewise, expenditure levels in campus-based aid programs (Federal Perkins, FSEOG and FWS) should be tracked and corrective action taken if expenditure levels get too high.

Weekly monitoring of all the reports is necessary to ensure that “the paper keeps moving through the funnel.” The supervisor monitoring the reports needs to analyze the numbers carefully and then, most importantly, take corrective action when necessary. The supervisor needs to meet individually with staff members to ask questions and ask for detailed explanations. Sometimes the staff member may be conscientious about getting tasks complete but may need additional training to be more effective.

The control function is the most difficult of the four management tasks, but given the quantitative nature of enrollment management, it is a very necessary function indeed. It is not enough to be aware of the numbers; enrollment managers need to be proactive in their reaction to what the numbers tell them.



INCREASING DELIVERABILITY WHILE DECREASING MARKETING AND PRODUCTION BUDGETS

April Clark
CAS

Industry experts suggest that 25% or more of articles mailed may be undeliverable. Usually these "undeliverables" are the result of incorrect or missing addresses, incomplete information or recipients who have moved. Optimizing address hygiene and cleansing mailing lists to increase the odds of successful delivery will serve to meet institutional recruitment objectives and save money.

Available technology can help you minimize deliverability problems as a result of misdirected, discarded and inaccurate mailings. Using the United States Postal Service and other data sources, CAS' list hygiene methodology, for example, can help you improve address accuracy and mail deliverability.

While a large and growing number of colleges and universities have reaped the rewards of automated solutions in most aspects of enrollment operations – from reduced costs to improved mail delivery – too many schools are still clinging to inefficient, costly old ways of mail processing. Nowhere is this truer than with undeliverable-as-addressed (UAA) mail, particularly in the area of out-

dated addresses. Consider that approximately 8.4% of the addresses on a typical mailing list may become outdated in just six months. We are a highly mobile society! Moreover, recipients who have moved represent the single largest contributor to the UAA mail problem. This is one of the reasons that the US Post Office requires National Change of Address processing to be done every six months in order to use the maximum postal discounts.

Mailers must also consider the direct economic impact of wasted production and postage on mail that is undeliverable. For example, assuming a 10% UAA rate, a 100,000 piece mailing will produce 10,000 pieces that may never reach their intended recipients, resulting in fewer enrollments and lost revenue. If the mail piece cost for production and postage is \$0.50, that's a loss of \$5,000 – multiplied many times over during the course of a year. The combination of wasted production costs and the inability to influence up to ten percent of the prospective student pool could be devastating.

The CASS certification process is the first step in cleansing a mailing list. An address that has been matched to Postal Service ZIP + 4 files has a much greater chance of being delivered than one that has not. Any addresses that cannot be assigned a ZIP + 4 are most likely UAA. They might still get delivered, but there is some basic problem that will interfere with the process. When sending UAA mail at Standard mail rates, the odds of them being delivered are significantly lower than properly ZIP + 4 encoded pieces – and, in fact, the greater likelihood is that they will simply be discarded by the Postal Service. When mailing a marketing piece, our advice is to simply consider omitting any UAA records first.

According to the Postal Service, missing apartment/suite or rural route box numbers is the most common undeliverable mail problem. USPS processing attempts to add missing apartment/suite numbers or rural route numbers to your address files prior to processing the database through the USPS National Change of Address (NCOA-Link), can make the match process more successful.

NCOA-Link uses apartment/suite or rural route numbers as strict criteria for a match to the USPS change-of-address file. If this information is missing, no change-of-address match can be made. Many records may still be undeliverable due to incomplete address information. For example, if the correct address is 100 Main Street and your records show this address as 100 M S, CASS certification software may not be able to ZIP + 4 code your record. Using proprietary Address Enhancement methodology, we compare name and ZIP Code in an incomplete address to (see *Increasing Deliverability p.4*)

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INCREASING DELIVERABILITY CONTINUED:

our proprietary Consumer File which attempts through programming logic to correct the address provided.

The DSF/DPV product uses a file of all the valid addresses in the U.S. to match against your database to identify any records that do not match with at least one of more than 60 footnotes - providing the reasons for non-matches or identifying whether the addresses are other types of delivery points such as mail drops, multifamily units, business addresses and seasonal addresses. This reduces the amount of mail being sent to "non valid addresses" and unqualified student prospects.

On average, nearly one-quarter of the records in a two year old list changed addresses. This is important information for schools recruiting adult, distance-learning or graduate students. If you mail to your database at first class discounted rate, the US Postal Service requires that some form of a Move Update process be performed. The most thorough, proactive method of updating a list with change-of-address information is NCOALink processing. NCOALink searches for names of individuals and family groups using addresses already run through the CASS process, identifying who has moved and

filed a change-of-address with the USPS within the last 18 or 48 months. Confirmed moves are provided with updated standardized addresses.

There is another category of bad addresses that without "cleansing" could end up in the Postal Service dumpster - those that have been changed by local governments, usually to make them "locatable" by 9-1-1 emergency response services. LACSLink processing provides address conversions for rural route-style addresses that have been converted to city-style addresses and existing city-style addresses that have been renamed or renumbered.

There are those that may appear on your mailing lists who may be deceased. Our Deceased Suppression identifies those records and enables you to remove them before mailing.

Finally, our cleansing merge purge methodology identifies duplicate records at an individual, household or company level and eliminates those duplicates, leaving you with an unduplicated file. With postal rates going up again in 2007, accurately eliminating duplicates is imperative to your bottom line.

Communication is so important in all aspects of enrollment management. Taking additional steps to make sure you increase the likelihood that prospective students receive your messages while eliminating wasted production costs makes sense.

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WHERE IS YOUR DISCOUNT RATE?

John W. Dysart
President
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We are arriving at that part of the cycle when expenditure of institutional aid trends have developed. You should, at this point in the cycle, have awarded at least half the number of admission applicants you intend to enroll and you should have awarded approximately 40% of your currently enrolled students. Current expenditure averages are likely to give an indication of where you will end up at the end of the cycle.

Hopefully, you are tracking average institutional aid expenditures for both new and (see *Discount Rate p.5*)

DISCOUNT RATE CONTINUED:

returning students. The average for your new students to date is likely to be running high. Generally, students with more generous scholarship offers tend to apply for financial aid earlier and the “best and brightest” keep early averages high. Recall that competition is steep for these students and they are the least likely to enroll. Do not panic if the current average is running higher than the target. Compare the current average to historical data at this time to determine if you have reason to be concerned.

The current average for returning students is not likely to change significantly over the remaining months of the cycle. Your current average should be a likely predictor for the final average level of expenditure for institutional aid.

Outside forces are likely to have influenced your institutional aid averages for the coming year.

Changes in the Federal Stafford Loan program should serve to help you stabilize or even reduce historic levels of expenditure. Maximum borrowing levels for the Federal Stafford Loan have increased significantly. Borrowing maximums for freshmen have increased from \$2,625 to \$3,500. Sophomores can now borrow up to \$4,500 this year compared to only \$3,500 last year. These changes should enable most schools to keep institutional aid averages constant or create possibilities for reductions.

The maximum Federal Pell Grant has increased for the coming year. The maximum award will increase from \$4,050 to \$4,310 this year. Increases in this grant can be used to offset a portion of your tuition increase or to meet a higher percentage of demonstrated need.

The recent introduction of the Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) will serve a similar purpose. Some students can receive \$750 a year under this program.

Another recent program is The National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grant (National SMART Grant). Students can be eligible for up to \$4,000 by meeting the requirements of this program.

Many states are also scheduled to increase the amount of their scholarships and grants. (Keep in mind that other states are keeping their scholarship and grant offers level or constant while some are even reducing the amount of their scholarships and grants).

Regardless of your current expenditure average, it is not too late to make adjustments to control or even reduce your current averages. Have a conversation with your Director of Financial Aid to discuss corrective action.

Changes in gaps, caps and target percentages for meeting need can still influence your final institutional aid numbers. Recent changes should have made things a little easier for most schools this year. If your current averages indicate corrective action, however, it is not too late to make changes now.

SPRING RETENTION CHECKLIST:

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The academic year is coming to a close and the time is right to think about retention. One of the important pieces in the complex retention puzzle is recognizing things that may be indicators of attrition. Now is the perfect time to take a look at some trends and consider corrective action.



Check with the Registrar’s Office and obtain the names of currently enrolled students who have requested that academic transcripts be sent to other institutions. This is a clear sign that a student is thinking about attending another school. Contact these students directly to determine if intervention is appropriate.



Get a list from the Financial Aid Office of currently enrolled students who have not reapplied for financial aid. The reapplication process is so much easier now that not reapplying may be an indication that students are considering transfer options.



Meet with your Athletic Director and identify student athletes who may be subject to losing their scholarships. Are there students who might be cut from the team? Are there athletes disappointed in playing time? Identifying such students prior to the end of the semester might present opportunities for positive intervention.



Work with your chief academic officer and faculty to identify students at (see *Retention Checklist* p.6)

RETENTION CHECKLIST CONTINUED:

academic risk. Hopefully, you have already established some type of early warning system. If you have not created such a system, do it now. If you have such a system, the time is right to touch base with those students experiencing academic difficulties.



Ask your Chief Finance Officer to run a list of students with outstanding balances. Do not wait until the end of the term to address these balances. Print a list in descending order with the highest outstanding balances listed first. A representative from the Business Office should review the list with a representative from the Financial Aid Office to see if there are ways to eliminate or significantly reduce the balances before the end of the semester. Possibilities to consider include payment plans, additional need-based aid, unsubsidized Federal Stafford loans, PLUS loans, alternative loans and even waivers. It is important to be proactive. Contact the students and the parents directly to work out as many of the balances as possible.



Meet with your Director of Financial Aid to see if there are any currently enrolled students who have yet to apply for financial aid. Tracking receipt of financial aid applications is important. It is not too late to apply for aid if students have not already done so.



Find out from your Director of Financial Aid if you have any students who have been awarded financial aid but disbursement is being held for any reason. There is still time to collect outstanding, required documents. At this point in the cycle, it is too late to rely on the students and parents alone to complete folders, master promissory notes or any other paperwork. The Financial Aid Office must work proactively to clear the paperwork before the end of the term.



Housing can be another clue to attrition. If you require a deposit for housing each year, make sure you contact any students currently residing on campus who have not submitted deposits for

next year. If you utilize some type of lottery system to determine housing assignments, identify any students who did not participate in the lottery this year. You may find that most of these students plan to return, but have decided to live off-campus. It is likely, however, that you will find a few students who have not paid deposits or have not participated in the lottery because they are seeking to transfer.



Participation in pre-registration and course selection for next year is another strong indicator for retention. It is wise to look for currently enrolled students who have not completed pre-registration or picked their courses for next year. In addition, if you have a "hold" process for registration, contact any students unable to register due to various "holds" and work with them to clear the holds before the end of the term.

Recognizing the warning signs is an important piece in the puzzle. Act now to improve your retention rate before the end of the semester.



*Look for
John W. Dysart's
presentations
at the following
conferences:*

*CICV
May 22-24, 2007
Staunton, Virginia*

*NASFAA
July 8-11, 2007
Washington, DC*

*NACUBO
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