

# ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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## ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY'S GROWTH SPURS A NEW ACADEMIC OFFERING, CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAM EXPANSION AND A NEW EDUCATIONAL TOWER

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The Dysart Group, Inc.

Colleges and universities often seek to attract and retain more students. Higher enrollments can generate more revenue, increase diversity, foster improved academic quality and change the campus dynamic. There is, however, so much more that growth can mean to an institution.

Enrollment has increased significantly at Roosevelt University in Chicago in recent years. The gains are fueling additional positive changes at the institution. More traditional-aged undergraduates and a higher percentage of resident students have resulted in a major change in student activities.

The University fielded athletic teams between 1948 and 1989. Over the years, student interest in athletics waned and the University dropped varsity athletics at the end of 1989.

Athletic competition begins again at Roosevelt University this Fall as the Lakers return. The University will participate in NAIA athletics and will have teams competing in men's and women's cross country, men's

and women's tennis, men's and women's basketball and baseball.

Current plans include expansion to five additional sports over the next two years and the University has even introduced a



new logo!

The physical plant is going to change dramatically. Ground was recently broken on the construction of a new education building at a cost of \$118 million.

- The new building will be located on South Wabash Avenue.
- At thirty-two stories and 469 feet high, it will become the second tallest higher education tower in the United States and the sixth tallest in the world.
- The new academic edifice will include classrooms and state-of-the-art biology and chemistry labs.
- The top seventeen floors of the glass and steel tower will provide upscale student housing for 600, with stunning views of the city and unobstructed views of Lake Michigan.
- Students will not even need to venture outside during the cold Chicago win-

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY'S GROWTH SPURS A NEW ACADEMIC OFFERING, CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAM EXPANSION AND A NEW EDUCATIONAL TOWER	1
CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTING A NEW CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER	2
ESTABLISHING FOURTH QUARTER ENROLLMENT PRIORITIES	4
RESPONDING TO CUTBACKS IN STATE GRANT PROGRAMS	4
CREATING HONORS PROGRAMS THAT ARE ATTRACTIVE TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS	5

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## GROWTH SPURS EXPANSION CONTINUED:



*Roosevelt's new tower will forever change the look of the Chicago skyline.*



ters, as the complex will be linked to the University's historic Adler & Sullivan Auditorium.

- The building includes a new student union along with meeting places for student clubs and organizations.
- The structure includes a dining hall and fitness facility.
- The Offices of Admission, Financial Aid and the Registrar will be housed in the new facility.

It is anticipated that construction will be completed in approximately two years.

Change includes expansion of the academic program as well. Roosevelt University hopes to enroll its first class in a new professional program in Pharmacy. The University will introduce a new academic offering for a Doctor of Pharmacy next year.

Enrollment growth can fuel exciting changes. At Roosevelt University, growth is proving to be no less than transformational.

## CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTING A NEW CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER

John W. Dysart  
President  
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Filling a new vacancy for chief enrollment officer can be a difficult task. Many college and university Presidents simply do not have significant experience in issues related to recruitment, retention and financial aid. Campus search committees are often comprised of individuals with limited knowledge regarding enrollment management. The following are some suggestions that can be useful in selecting the right candidate for your school:

### **Look for a track record of success.**

This seems so simple. It is so obvious. You would be surprised, however, in how often previous success is not a major requirement. Have the candidate describe the challenges and objectives faced at the previous institution. What were the outcomes? How were the goals achieved?

**It is often helpful to find candidates from similar**

## CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTING CONTINUED:

### **institution types.**

While enrollment officers from public institutions can certainly serve at private institutions and vice versa, it can be beneficial to avoid steep learning curves. The difference between a large community college and a small private institution are considerable. Moving from a private college or university to a for-profit can be difficult. Again, no candidate should be excluded based on experience at a different institution type, but the transition challenges should not be ignored.

### **Take demographics into account.**

Institutional location is important. A potential enrollment officer from a school located in a densely populated area may not necessarily be appropriate for a college located in a rural area. Recruitment success in Los Angeles, California does not necessarily set the stage for success in Edmond, Oklahoma.

### **Real experience in financial aid is a huge benefit.**

Financial aid is more important than ever for recruitment, retention and net revenue. As the economy sours and state grants stagnate and decline, a chief enrollment officer who really understands financial aid issues, packaging strategies and regulations can be an extraordinary asset. The truth is that most enrollment management leaders still come from the admission profession rather than financial aid. Experience "supervising" the financial

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aid division does not necessarily ensure adequate knowledge of financial aid.

### **Ask about discount rates.**

Discount rates can vary a great deal from one institution to another. Do not be afraid to ask about the discount rate at the candidate's previous college or university. An enrollment officer used to discounting tuition by 65% may have a hard time adjusting to a school that cannot afford a discount rate over 45%.

### **Compare budget and resources.**

Success at a previous institution is not enough. Sometimes there are huge differences in divisional budgets and available resources. Some schools, for example, spend millions of dollars every year on marketing and advertising. Many small colleges and universities do not have marketing budgets at all or the available funds are extremely limited. Being realistic about resources available at a previous school and being honest about the resources that will be available at your school

## CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTING CONTINUED:

can benefit potential candidates and your institution.

### **Do not be afraid to ask for help.**

There are a number of firms that specialize in assisting colleges and universities in making the right selection. If you do not have sufficient expertise on your campus to make an informed decision, get help.

## ESTABLISHING FOURTH QUARTER ENROLLMENT PRIORITIES

John W. Dysart  
President  
The Dysart Group, Inc.

There are only a couple months left before the start of another school year and much to be done.

1. How many of your admission applicants and returning students have yet to apply for financial aid? Given the state of the economy, it is time to take extra measures to ensure all of these students apply for aid and are awarded before the end of August. Think about telephone outreach campaigns and special mailings. Text messaging and social networks can also be effective.
2. How many of your admission applicants and returning students have been awarded financial aid but are still missing required documents? Again, additional steps can still be taken to ensure financial aid folders are complete before the start of classes. Recall that incomplete folders delay aid disbursements and can negatively impact cash flow.
3. This is probably the last chance to secure registrations for continuing students who have not completed course schedules for the next term. Proactively contacting these students will be more effective than relying on them to contact their academic advisors.
4. How about fourth quarter outreach to your most at-risk population of returning students? Rising sophomores are

the least likely to return. While everyone is busy this time of year, you might want to establish a priority to contact all of these students by telephone just to welcome them back in the month of July. If there are problems, you still have a little time to resolve issues so they will re-enroll.

5. Have your Business Office personnel identified all the students with outstanding balances and made serious attempts to contact these students over the summer? There is still time. You may want to involve representatives from the Financial Aid Office in case solutions can be found by increasing eligibility for additional loans and grants.
6. Have representatives from the Academic division made every effort to work with students struggling with academic progress issues? Sometimes students get into trouble and do not really understand that there may be opportunities for appeal.
7. Do you have active admission applicants whose admission folders are still incomplete? If you are still accepting students for Fall 2010, you may want to follow up with these students immediately so they still have a chance to be accepted and enroll.

Time is running out, but much can be accomplished in the last two months.

## RESPONDING TO CUTBACKS IN STATE GRANT PROGRAMS

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The poor economy is challenging for colleges and universities in many ways. This has been a particularly difficult year for financial aid as states eliminate or reduce state grants. Colleges and universities need to develop plans for dealing with reductions in state grants as this trend is likely to continue over the next several years.

Some states are reducing commitments to state grants by making application deadlines earlier. This has the political advantage of keeping award amounts level, while guaranteeing that overall expenditures will be reduced. Fortu-

## RESPONDING TO CUTBACKS CONTINUED:

nately for colleges and universities, much can be done to mitigate the impact of changes in deadlines. Financial Aid Offices can be charged with making sure that students do not miss the deadlines. It is easy to track currently enrolled students who have been eligible for state grants in the past. The key is to take extraordinary measures to make sure these students apply for financial aid in time to meet new deadlines. This involves much more than just sending a letter or making an announcement in the school newspaper. All available communication mechanisms should be utilized to communicate with students and their families to encourage early application. Institutions must take full responsibility for ensuring state grant deadlines are met. The implications for retention and cash flow are serious. *This is the only scenario where the institution has a significant level of control.*

Often, state grant reductions are achieved by cutting award amounts across the board. This creates a more difficult challenge for colleges and university leaders. There are several possible approaches:

- The institution can just ignore the state grant reductions in the packaging strategy and assume that students and their families will be able to cover the shortfall. Such an approach maximizes net revenue for the college or university. While this can be a reasonable approach if the reductions are small, it may not be if the cuts amount to \$500 or more. Shifting the reduction to the student and family may have negative implications for both recruitment and retention.
- Some schools elect to cover the entire shortfall with institutional aid funds. This is no doubt the best option for supporting recruitment and retention efforts. The problem is that many institutions simply cannot afford to absorb the extra expense.
- Other schools elect to replace a set portion of the shortfall. For example, institutional leaders may decide to cover 50% of the state grant reduction for all eligible students. While this option is definitely fair, it may not be the best choice for many schools.
- Colleges and universities sometimes set aside a pool of institutional funds and allow these funds to be awarded to students whose state grants were reduced at the

discretion of the Director of Financial Aid. In such a scenario, the Director allocates the limited funds on those students with the greatest financial need.

- Using an appeal process is another option. Under this strategy, institutional representatives do not replace cuts in state grants as new and returning students are packaged. Additional funding is only considered on a case-by-case basis upon appeal.

There are no right or wrong answers. The goal is to make the right choice for your particular institution. This is a decision that should not be made by the Financial Aid Office alone. At minimum, the Director of Financial Aid, the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Enrollment Officer, the Chief Retention Officer and the Director of Admission should be involved in the decision-making process. It is never too early to begin these important discussions. Cuts in state grants are likely to get even worse before they get better and do not be surprised if some states eliminate their higher education scholarship and grant programs altogether in the next few years.

## CREATING HONORS PROGRAMS THAT ARE ATTRACTIVE TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

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Honors Programs can be beneficial to institutions in a variety of ways. They can be useful in attracting high-ability students. They can be effective in increasing enrollment and can improve retention rates. Honors Programs can raise the academic discourse on campus and can even challenge faculty and staff in positive ways. Many colleges and universities have Honors Programs but few are structured in a manner that make them very attractive to prospective students.

There are several things that administrators should avoid when introducing or upgrading their Honors Programs:

- Do not set the standards too high for your particular institution. While a minimum ACT score of 27 might be fine for an institution that averages a score of 23, it may be unrealistic for a college with an ACT average of 19.



## CREATING HONORS PROGRAMS CONTINUED:

- Do not require interviews with candidates. Interviews can be intimidating and may dissuade qualified candidates. Reasonable decisions about eligibility for an Honors Program can be made by reviewing standardized test scores and high school grade point averages. If necessary, a review of a high school transcript is always an option.
- Do not require written recommendations. I have always believed that recommendations were dubious. Students are unlikely to submit recommendations from individuals that will not support their candidacy and poor recommendations are always dicey in this litigious society.
- Make offers of admission to your Program on a rolling basis if general admission offers are made on the same timetable. Making prospective candidates wait until the Spring semester makes no sense if you wish to use the Honors Program to enhance recruitment.
- It is not necessary to have separate applications for the Honors Programs. Qualified students can be identified during the general admission process and offered a chance to participate upon acceptance to the college or university.
- Separate essays should not be required. A review of the high school transcript and standardized test scores provides sufficient data on writing skills.

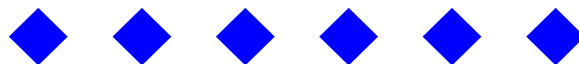
Attractive Honors Programs include attributes which are focused on privileges and activities that are desired by students:

- Include a research opportunity with a faculty member.
- Allow for special participation in select campus events such as opportunities to meet and eat with guest speakers on campus.
- Find a way to include even a short international travel experience. While such activities can be expensive, you might be able to identify a Board member or foundation willing to assist with the cost.
- Including specific mentoring opportunities with faculty is imperative. Consider compensating faculty for making time for mentoring. Compensation may even be

an option for the previously suggested research participation opportunity.

- A nominal scholarship is appropriate. Often administrators believe that extremely large awards or even full scholarships are necessary to attract students into Honors Programs. My experience has been quite the opposite. The attractiveness of an Honors Program is less about the money and more about the experience.
- Structure your program in a manner that builds resumes for participants. A co-curricular transcript upon graduation can be an attractive bonus.
- Include a chance for independent study in areas of interest to the student.
- Activities involving service are becoming more popular.
- Make sure that your Program includes direct assistance for students interested in pursuing graduate study. You may even wish to provide a chance for guaranteed acceptance into your graduate offerings if certain conditions are met.
- Expand the number of campus administrators involved in creating or up-grading the Honors Program. Key faculty should obviously be involved, but the opinion of others is just as important. Include the Chief Enrollment Officer to ensure the Program is competitive in the market. The Financial Aid Director can assist in creating a nominal and affordable scholarship component. Someone from the Development Office might assist in identifying sources of funding for desired initiatives. Assistance from the Career Planning Office can help build the resume component and offer ideas that would be attractive to prospective employers. An individual involved in Graduate Admissions can discuss what constitutes meaningful assistance for students interested in graduate degrees and can discuss ideas for guaranteed admission if your institution has graduate offerings.

So many Honors Programs are designed only by faculty members and they sometimes reflect the wants of the faculty rather than the needs of the students. If you have an Honors Program, it is a good time to re-evaluate it. If you do not have an Honors Program, it is a good time to design one.



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