

# ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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## A REMINDER REGARDING FUNDRAISING VERSUS ENROLLMENT REVENUE GENERATED FROM GROWTH

John W. Dysart  
President  
The Dysart Group, Inc.

College and university presidents are rightfully focused on finding new revenue sources during these challenging economic times. Many are pursuing traditional paths such as tuition increases, attempts to reduce discount rates, capital campaigns and other fundraising initiatives.

While enrollment increases seem a somewhat obvious option to increase revenue, presidents often hesitate to invest in this option.

This topic occurred to me as I recently held discussions with enrollment management leaders at a couple of client institutions. We were discussing each institution's success in significantly increasing enrollment and actually took a few minutes to calculate the net financial impact for the two schools. Both institutions have been pleased with their enrollment growth, but no one had ever actually calculated how the growth had translated into additional institutional revenue.

The numbers were surprising. We calculated only the additional revenue that could be tied directly to the enrollment growth. More new students turn into more returning

students. We subtracted the costs of institutional financial aid that was offered to the *growth* students. At one university in the Midwest, more than \$49 million in net revenue was generated in less than four years. At the southern college, enrollment growth amounted to an additional \$53 million in net revenue over a five-year period. In both cases, the funds generated through growth trounced the totals raised by the development offices over the same period.

College and university presidents should be aware of the financial implications when increasing enrollment. Additional funds can enable investments in the institutional product like additional faculty and staff, enhanced co-curricular offerings and improvements or additions to the physical plant.

## GREATER ATTENTION EQUALS GREATER RETENTION

Dr. Marylouise Fennell  
Partner  
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Dr. Scott Miller  
President  
Bethany College

Nearly 40 percent of students who entered baccalaureate degree programs this academic year will fail to complete their degrees within six years, if recent patterns continue. The implications of this trend are grave, both for our nation, which badly needs qualified workers ready to fill key jobs in emerging sectors, and for the non-retained students themselves. Current research underscores and enhances what we

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## GREATER ATTENTION EQUALS GREATER RETENTION CONTINUED:

have long known: *greater attention to student-centered issues equals greater retention.*

“What we almost always find when we are retained by institutions with slipping retention is that the little things that make all the difference to students have slipped through the cracks,” says Dr. Joe Pace, a nationally-known specialist in student retention and Chairman of the Board, PX2 Youth and Higher Education, who also serves as program director, facilitator and speaker for The Pacific Institute in Seattle, WA. Retention requires a laser-like institutional focus, he emphasizes, and just a small lapse in attention to student needs and expectations can result in a critical slippage in students.

“Often, when we explore the root causes, we learn that an institutional self-study or other internal event has caused the institutional leadership to ‘take its eyes off the ball’ with regard to student-centered initiatives just long enough to negatively affect retention,” Pace notes. “Seldom is the college or university even aware of the lapse until it shows up in enrollment statistics.”

The economic impact on the institution can be critical, he notes.

*Because replacing a student costs, on average, eight times what it costs to retain him or her*, it behooves an institution to focus on retention of current students with the same intensity which it seeks to enroll new learners.

Bolstering student connectivity with faculty, staff and administrators pays significant enrollment dividends; Pace’s research shows that students persist at measurably higher rates when they make a direct, positive connection with an individual in each of these categories. He calls them “model mentors,” employees who are both caring and knowledgeable about the organization’s mission. Engagement with faculty and fellow students is particularly important, he points out. Further, it doesn’t matter the level of the administrative contact. In fact, often custodians in residence halls or cafeteria workers with whom a student enjoys consistent, caring contact can make the difference in the student being retained or transferring to another institution. “Edupreneurs”—half educators, half entrepreneurs—as Pace calls them, are employees who are both student-centered and have positive expectations of students, making a big difference in a school’s retention rate.

“Teachers need an intelligent heart—knowledge about their subject and the heart to know how to reach students,” he emphasizes. “The same is true of other departments.”

“These individuals with what we call ‘intelligent hearts’ become translators for the institution,” Pace says. “We find that students at the highest risk of leaving are those who have not created these meaningful connections.”

Pace’s observations confirm our own experience that retention deserves the very highest levels of attention from vice presidents of enrollment and chief enrollment (admissions) officers, starting from the top down to faculty and staff. Presidents must embrace this model, setting the tone and priority for the entire institution.

*Dr. Scott D. Miller is President of the College and M.M. Cochran Professor of Leadership Studies at Bethany College in West Virginia. Now in his third college presidency, he has served as a CEO for 21 years.*

*Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, a former president of Carlow University in Pittsburgh, PA, is senior counsel for the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and principal of Hyatt Fennell, a Higher Education Search Firm.*

*They have collaborated on six books, including “Presidential Perspectives” (2008), “President to President: Views on Technology in Higher Education” (2009) and “Economic Prosperity in the Next Decade” (2010). Both serve as consultants to college presidents and boards.*

## MORE EXCITING NEWS AS DR. JENNIFER BRAATEN CONTINUES TO DRIVE GROWTH AND IMPROVE- MENTS AT FERRUM COLLEGE IN VIRGINIA

John W. Dysart  
President  
The Dysart Group, Inc.

The first woman President at Ferrum College, Dr. Jennifer Braaten, continues to literally transform the small institution located in southwest Virginia. Extraordinary enrollment growth during her presidency has enabled the College to

## MORE EXCITING NEWS AT FERRUM COLLEGE CONTINUED:

secure her vision by investing in program offerings, co-curricular opportunities for students and the physical plant. "While other private schools are trying to maintain enrollment, Ferrum is growing," said Bobby Thompson, the Senior Vice President for Administration. "We feel blessed that we have enjoyed several years of growth, which has resulted in growth in facilities and programs." During Dr. Braaten's tenure:

- Applications for admission have increased by more than 127%.
- New student enrollments are up 78%.
- The number of resident students has grown by 106%.
- Total undergraduate enrollment has increased by 57%.

As the growth continues, new initiatives are underway:

- The College has invested \$4 million in a new residence hall that will provide housing for another 117 students and include a conference center. The new building will utilize the latest technology for energy efficiency. This is the fourth new residence hall since 2004!
- Work is being completed on the new Hank Norton Athletic Center.
- Hart International Plaza is being constructed on campus as a gathering place for students. Ceremo-

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nies such as convocation and graduation will be held in this area.

- The College has identified funding for enhancements to the Blue Ridge Institute and Museum located adjacent to the campus.
- A new rock wall and ropes course will be available for students.
- Renovations are being made to the science labs and the swimming pool is being refurbished to coincide with the introduction of a women's swim team.
- Ground has already been broken for biomass boilers which will use natural resources such as switch grass to provide heat for the College.

It is reassuring to see that some schools are still able to grow and invest in initiatives that enhance the overall educational experience for students even in lean economic times.

## THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE ADMISSION COUNSELOR IN MODERN DAY ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

John W. Dysart  
President  
The Dysart Group, Inc.

The Dysart Group, Inc. recently hosted a forum at their headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina to discuss the emerging role of the admission counselor. The meeting was attended by enrollment management practitioners from five states.

So much has changed in the recruitment process in recent years. Demographics present very real challenges. Poor economic conditions and cutbacks in federal and state support for higher education financial aid have changed the playing field. The advent of social media and increased student reliance on the web to make informed decisions regarding college attendance are changing the way we communicate with prospective students.

While we did not agree on all of the answers regarding the role of admission counselors in this new environment, we did agree on several things to be considered in the near future:

- Is it time to reconsider the qualifications for admission counselors? Perhaps greater emphasis on skills utilizing social media, text messaging and the telephone are now as important or more important than face-to-face "people" skills.
- Is it time to change the job description for admission counselors? Specifically, is it time to de-emphasize high school visits and attendance at college fairs and focus the counselor more on in-house activities? Traditional office hours now may need to be reconsidered since social media communication, telephone communication and text messaging are more effective during the evening when prospective students are more likely to be home, or at least available via their cell phones.
- It might be time to change the evaluation of admission counselors to focus upon outcomes regarding yield versus the traditional role of gate-keeper and "counselor."
- It might be better to separate recruitment roles traditionally handled by the same people. While most colleges and universities will always need individuals to conduct

high school and college visits and college fairs and meet with prospective students and families during visits to campus, the role of providing systematic communication with prospective students and their families over the course of the admission cycle may be better accomplished by other individuals.

So much has changed in recruitment and things will never be the same. Perhaps it is time to change the responsibilities of the admission counselor to meet new market realities.

## SUCCESSION PLANNING ROADMAP CRITICAL TO YOUR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT EFFORT

Christine Gormican Hierl  
President  
Gormican Hierl Consulting

Author H. Stanley Judd had it right when he said "*A good plan is like a road map: it shows the final destination and usually the best way to get there.*" The problem is today, many view the roadmap as a dated tool, usurped by the soothing electronic voice of a GPS on the dash, telling trusting drivers where and when to turn.

Just as you need to know where you're going on the road, so goes the need to know your final destination when it comes to your succession planning efforts for your admissions teams. Without a plan in place and a full understanding of where you are going ahead of time, your offices will get lost in the detail.

Succession planning is a process of ensuring availability of competent personnel to take over a position when an incumbent leaves. It ensures that the business operations continue without disruption. This is especially critical in our admissions offices when our staffs often need months to learn our campuses' product, schedule, process and methodology.

Many enrollment professionals understand the importance of succession planning but fail to grasp the true essence of what succession planning is. It is more than identifying a successor and equipping him or her with the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies of the predecessor. Ra-

## SUCCESSION PLANNING ROADMAP CONTINUED:

ther, a good succession planning exercise requires understanding the critical challenges the admissions office has currently and will face in the short to medium term as well as the skill sets that the personnel require to lead the team through such challenges.

### Candidate Selection

When a turnover occurs, be it a director of admissions or an enrollment advisor, one common dilemma is whether to consider internal candidates or external candidates as successors. There are benefits and risks to both, but often the risks with external candidates are higher due to the uncertainty of the candidate. Unfortunately, because no succession plan exists, many admissions managers go for an external candidate by default, as they do not have a successor prepared to take the position. A better choice is to identify employees with high potential and actively plan their careers and development to build “bench strength.” For example, an admissions support person or admissions administrator could be a very productive enrollment advisor. They know the product, the environment, as well as the office and campus leadership. In the nearly 20 years of running admissions environments across platforms and colleges (graduate, undergraduate, online, on sight) I have had success with this process. This also works when appointing an assistant director or director of admissions from your enrollment advisor core.

Succession planning best practices requires both starting the succession planning process early to ensure internal candidates become ready when the transition time approaches and keeping the “pipeline full” of new candidates simultaneously.

### Methodology

The process of traditional succession planning typically comprises many methods such as rotations in different functional areas for hands-on experience or cross training. An effective way to adapt this to an admissions office is by mentoring. Many mentors however make the mistake of only passing on knowledge. Although transferring knowledge is critical, effective mentoring for succession planning requires focus on equipping the successor to achieve performance goals by building on recognized strengths and to improve their proficiency and compe-

tence. Another best practice that I have had success with is having key information located in one place. Before the electronic library repository was created, I built large manuals breaking down all of the core competencies necessary for each position: admissions support, enrollment advisor, assistant director of admissions, director of admissions and dean of admissions. It was an effective reference tool and utilized by all levels of staff.

Finally, a good succession planning program involves periodic evaluation of its effectiveness and adapting it to the changing needs of your offices and of your campus as a whole.

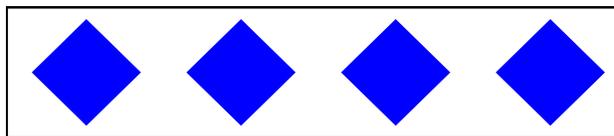
### Timing

One of the most crucial aspects of succession planning is timing. It is impossible to get the identified candidate ready at the exact time the incumbent leaves the admissions office. Delaying the start of succession planning or phasing in too slowly might mean that the candidate will not be ready in time and as a result be overlooked in favor of an external candidate. The goal is to ensure that the successor is ready to take over before the incumbent leaves.

Finally, keeping the succession planning process simple is critical. It can be made too complicated by elaborate forms and processes. When this happens, the process usually dominates the discussion rather than focusing on the talents, skills and knowledge of the candidates. It is also important to remember that each person learns and develops differently. A best practice I have encountered is to personalize the development through informal coaching, ongoing feedback and mentoring—at all levels.

During these challenging times, our admissions offices can't miss a beat and must be clear on where and when they will arrive. By implementing a succession plan, we will have a roadmap that will take our admissions departments in the right direction for the future.

*Christine Gormican Hierl is an accomplished sales management executive specializing in leadership development, team building, succession planning, management development and management in a multi-location and multi-brand environment. For more information, please visit her website at [www.gormicanhierl.com](http://www.gormicanhierl.com).*



## THOUGHTS AFTER 44 YEARS IN ENROLLMENT MANAGE- MENT

John W. Dysart  
President  
The Dysart Group, Inc.

*Mary Hendry, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Services at Roosevelt University in Chicago, retires this month after serving 44 years in the profession. She has held the titles of admission counselor, assistant director of admission, coordinator of continuing education admissions, director of admission, dean of admission and financial aid, vice president for enrollment management and vice president for enrollment and student services.*

### How did you get into the business of enrollment management?

I was involved as a college student at Saint Xavier in Chicago---clubs, organizations, tour guide, etc. So when I was a senior (1966-67) I was offered the job as Admission Counselor. In the spring I went on a couple of recruiting trips with the young woman I replaced. That summer I attended a two-week training session for new Admission Counselors at John Carroll University in Cleveland and then began my career on July 1, 1967. Forty-four years later I am planning to retire...and cannot believe all that time has passed...but what a great career I have had!



### Why have you stayed on this career track?

I have enjoyed a variety of different jobs and promotions so

I have never been bored, or stuck in a rut. When our children were little I was able to work 2 or 3 days a week and had responsibility for 17 local high schools. Then I worked with transfer students, adult undergraduates and later graduate students. I returned to full-time work when I was made Director of Admission in 1985. Thereafter, I was given responsibility for Financial Aid and later the Registrar's Office. I was made a vice president and served on the president's cabinet. After 29 years at my beloved alma mater I accepted a position at Roosevelt University. I was intrigued by the new opportunity and the challenges at a place that prided itself on its mission of social justice. And I really felt it was a place that needed me and where I could make a difference. A couple of years after I arrived I was asked to take responsibility for Student Affairs and combine it with Enrollment Management. It has been very rewarding to bring the two areas together, to break down the silos and create a team that is all about recruitment and retention. As much as it was a difficult decision to leave SXU, if I had not left, I would have missed out on knowing and working with a great group of people at this special place for the last 15 years.

### What has been the biggest change for the better in admissions since you started?

I immediately think of technology...as a young Admission Counselor I spent so much of my travel time lost in strange cities...would there had been a GPS then! There were no computers on desks, no cell phones, no emails, no faxes... the list goes on and on. In the Admission Office in 1967 there was a dear retired nun who kept track of our prospects and admits on 3x5 cards! We are so much more timely and efficient now than then.

### What has been the biggest change for the worse in admissions since you started?

Well, probably because of that same technology we can be tempted to depersonalize our relationships with students and parents. Personal touches are still important and make a difference...a phone call, a note, an invitation to visit campus are still very important. I once hired a young woman because of the wonderful personal attention she provided our oldest son during his college search. I'm a firm believer in the importance of using social media in recruitment efforts but it is not the only way to touch students.

### What do you enjoy most about leading an enrollment management division?

I have always worked with an exceptional group of individuals who have certainly taught me more than I have ever taught them. And most of the time we are having FUN

## THOUGHTS AFTER 44 YEARS CONTINUED:

while working...not frivolous fun...a very satisfying fun. The longer I work in higher education the more I appreciate how inter-related all of the functions in a college/university are...curricular and co-curricular...faculty, staff, students, parents, alums and friends of the university. Whether we work in the physical plant or in Institutional Advancement each of us can contribute to making a positive experience for our students.

### What aspect of the job do you enjoy least?

It is never easy to let someone go but I have learned that the person who is not performing well is probably better suited for another career and in the end is often relieved to be relieved of a job that they didn't love.

### Who has been the greatest influence on your career and why?

I have worked for some great men and women Presidents who have mentored me and challenged me to perform well. I have told all of them that my greatest gift is a knack for hiring good people---some of whom I have even hired twice! All of those staff members I have worked with over the years have influenced me. And, of course, terrific students are the reasons why we do this work in the first place. We sure learn from them.

### Would you still encourage young people to pursue careers in enrollment management and why?

I would tell anyone who would listen to me what a great job this is. I tell our staff often that what we do is noble. How many careers can you pursue in which you change lives for the better every day? In all my years in higher education I have never once had a student or parent tell me that it was a mistake to attend college—even for awhile.

### What are your plans for the future?

I look forward to doing all sorts of things I have not made time for while working...art lessons, long walks...most of all spending more time with my husband, children and grandchild. It will be heaven to call the shots on my own time. And, who knows, it might be nice to work a little bit instead of a lot! I might consider consulting, or a part-time career.

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