

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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THE DELUSION OF UNDERSTANDING, THE ILLUSION OF POWER: NUMBERS

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As an institutional leader you need numbers, right? You need numbers/figures to make enlightened decisions, and to develop effective policies. More broadly, you need data to inform strategic plans and tactics to achieve strategic goals. Your institution's strategic direction and goals should be guided by data. Though we may make broader reference to *evidenced-based* decision-making, there is always the quest for numbers, i.e., for reports, and a lot of them.

Well, we've heard the saying, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Figures can create the delusion of understanding and the illusion of power, i.e., that we're knowledgeable and we're in control. Figures – numbers – can become the end-all. You are not being scientific – analytical or objective – just because there is a number involved.

Moreover, in the board room, and in conference rooms across campus, figures may be used by some colleagues to appear knowledgeable and prepared – to impress. Fire enough figures, and colleagues may glaze over into confused submission to whatever sense the presenter makes of them, should the presenter dare to take that leap; figures are fodder for control. Information overload occurs even with the best of inten-

tions. On the other hand, presenting figures in smaller, more digestible, doses may spark debate at your institution – sometimes heated – over interpretation and, importantly, the course of action they imply. A number may be a statistical fact; interpretation is subjective.

Even more dangerous is credibility attributed to the heavy hitter who presents figures from a presumed plentiful stash of data and who has no close rivals to challenge him. Colleagues may grow blindly confident, accepting his opinions with the assumption that cogent data, analysis, and methodology always back him up. The guru has spoken – enough said.

What is the fallout of this state of affairs?

There might be speculation over, and arguments about, the cause of a lower than desired graduation rate, including those of specific student populations and whether the rates are inevitable.

Efficient and effective distribution of financial aid/discounts is elusive, with enrollment, retention and revenue goals and budgets hanging in the balance (reactive tactics counter inaccurate forecasts).

Your *Early Alert* system is not so early, kicking in when students are already in free-fall, instead of time of acceptance for admission, or matriculation, in order to act pre-emptively.

After assessment of learning outcomes, there may be deliberation over what data-based course of action will improve outcomes without changing what may already work.

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THIS NEWSLETTER IS PRINTED ON 100% RECYCLED PAPER.

THE DELUSION OF UNDERSTANDING CONTINUED:

In higher education, learning and graduation are institutional outcomes that are in the limelight, as is cost of education; these outcomes will likely stay on the radar with the current overarching regard for return on investment.

Symptoms of this state of affairs consist of: (a) disconnects between figures and course of action, also known as leaps of logic (or faith); (b) debates over cause and underlying dynamics; (c) arguments about effective courses of action to improve outcomes of interest; (d) stalemates to action; and, (e) requests for more and more figures in vain and misguided attempts to clarify previous figures, which keeps offices quite busy in “go fetch” mode.

Arguments/debates and differences of opinion are not, in themselves, bad. They are often based on people’s various observations. People could simply be observing various facets, or features, of the situation at hand that fall on their radar or simply resonate with them. In fact, it is said, “Science begins with observation.” Don’t stop there. Problems result in the absence of follow-through: Observe, hypothesize, and test your hypothesis. Ask, “How do I know this to be true?” Conduct empirical investigations, confirmatory and exploratory. Understanding and managing important outcomes of interest to you requires an organized and integrated system of data-based institutional research, assessment and reporting. Expertise in data management and data analysis to meet research, assessment and reporting needs is critical along, as is institution-wide coordination and participation.

So, how is it that figures/numbers give the delusion of understanding and the illusion of control? Well, every figure has a story. You need statistical analysis to enlighten you about dynamics, which includes insight into the interplay of multiple factors that impact the figure that is an outcome of interest to you. *Quantitative* information is the “bare bones” that gives form to the “flesh” of *qualitative* information. When you can predict, you can control, or at least manage, your outcomes. Remember the saying, “If you think you understand something, try to change it.” The next time you are presented with a number, to what extent has data enlightened you about how to improve it?

LEVERAGING ATHLETICS TO BUILD CAMPUS CULTURE AND ENROLLMENT

Dr. Scott Miller
President
Bethany College

Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM
Principal
Hyatt-Fennell

“Competition for students has never been so intense.” The words of a 15-year veteran college president, currently serving a residential liberal arts college in the Northeast, speak to the need for innovative marketing of campus programs to meet that challenge: “Every day I hear something new that I’ve never heard before in the continuing battle among institutions to meet the enrollment bottom line,” he points out.

Robust intercollegiate athletic programs and state-of-the-art fitness facilities are one essential strategy for recruiting and retaining student-athletes. In fact, the number of colleges where at least 33 percent of the students played a sport increased from 96 to 124 between 2006 and 2011, according to an Associated Press report. Students often report that along with cost, location and academic programs, the opportunity to play is paramount in their college choice.

In researching this column, we studied progress at five institutions categorized as residential liberal arts colleges that utilized new athletic facilities as a way to build enrollment and increase operating revenues, while fostering a greater sense of community and energy on campus. One institution is in the South, two are in the East, and two are located in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Each has a visionary president who strategically set goals designed to lead to a specific outcome. Most utilized the services of outside enrollment counsel (two utilized The Dysart Group) to develop an enrollment matrix that would control the discount rate and produce a significant return on investment. In addition, each institution re-evaluated the effectiveness of its chief enrollment officer and utilized the services of experienced search counsel to find the perfect fit to lead the institution’s admissions renaissance.

LEVERAGING ATHLETICS CONTINUED:

All five colleges we studied had completed makeovers to their athletic facilities. Common features included artificial turf, lights, all - weather tracks, and enhanced or expanded locker and weight facilities and training rooms. Two of the colleges utilized private bond offerings, financing the improvements over 20 years with payments drawn from growth revenues. Two utilized private donor and corporate sponsor support, and the final institution drew upon institutional reserves.

Finally, the revitalized facilities also enabled each college to attract a new brand of coach. "These coaches are essentially an extension of the enrollment office. Coaches are given a number of scholar-athletes for whom they are accountable. Most coaches approach their new challenge with a fire of success," stated one of the presidents.

Injecting new excitement in its athletic program, a college in the South initiated a football program. The 80 players on the roster and the Saturday-afternoon atmosphere arriving with the new sport created a healthy buzz on campus. The biggest boost to the marketing of campus life at this institution, academically and financially, was the addition of a marching band. College officials report that the band grew from 30 to 100 students in a five-year span; the Music Department had to increase faculty to meet the need for musicians.

Two Mid-Atlantic colleges which we studied wanted to utilize new recruiting territories to change their institutional culture and grow. Completion of facility upgrades enabled them to expand athletic program offerings to include larger varsity football squads, a junior- varsity team, lacrosse and field hockey. One added water polo. All re-

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sulted in new market territory and enrollment reach.

Such enhancements have positively impacted recruitment and retention of student-athletes at the recreational and club levels, as well. All of the surveyed institutions state that the artificial turf and lights permit night-time intramural contests of all varieties that draw crowds comparable to some inter-collegiate events.

"Back when we were in college, 'jock schools' were typically stereotyped as weak academically," one veteran administrator said. "Now, some of the best students are outstanding leaders, and thus, the ability to package small-college sports and academics is extremely attractive." The end result has been startling. Each institution saw a six- year increase of at least 26 percent, with one institution doubling its enrollment during that period.

These results can be a big win for presidents, chief enroll-

LEVERAGING ATHLETICS CONTINUED:

ment officers and their institutions' marketing programs: expanded athletic offerings, enhanced facilities and amenities, and even marching bands can create momentum and energy while boosting enrollment. Over time, they will pay for themselves with increased tuition revenue.

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 22 years. He is Chair of the Board of Directors of Academic Search, Inc.

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 nine books, including "President to President: Views on Technology in Higher Education (2008)" and "Presidential Perspectives: Strategies to Address the Rising Cost of Higher Education" (2012). They are regular columnists for "College Planning and Management" and "Enrollment Manager." Both serve as consultants to college presidents and boards.

ENROLLMENT GROWTH FOR A SMALL BIBLE COLLEGE IN COLORADO

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

There are exciting trends emerging at a small college in Colorado Springs. After a number of years of enrollment declines, a new growth spurt is occurring.

Nazarene Bible College has recently adopted a new recruitment and financial aid strategy. Working with The Dysart Group, Inc. positive outcomes are already being realized. In the seven months since new tactics have been utilized, the impact on recruitment has been significant.

- The application pool grew by 131%.
- The number of new students accepted for admission has

grown by 43% compared to last year.

- New student enrollments for Fall 2013 have increased by 32% during a period when many colleges are experiencing declines in new student enrollment.

Dr. Harold Graves, Jr., the President, has set the tone for the rest of the campus by actively participating in the recruitment process. He has been meeting with prospective students and even making telephone calls to admission applicants to encourage them to enroll.

Dr. Laurel Mattson and David Church are leading the admission effort and have introduced new tactics such as telephone outreach, targeted text messaging and direct mail communication.

Dr. Graves even initiated a campus *full court press* in the month of August aimed at not only recruiting more students, but registering more returning students and encouraging stop outs to re-enroll. The outcomes were impressive as the academic advisors successfully registered an additional 116 students who had previously been coded as "inactive".

Nazarene Bible College is poised to grow in the coming years as new recruitment tactics are introduced, greater emphasis is placed on retention and the President continues to push for a comprehensive approach to enrollment management.

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP ENABLES FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

The higher education landscape is rapidly changing. Despite the general acceptance of the concept of enrollment management as an effective vehicle for understanding admissions, financial aid and retention, few schools have successfully brought together the three departments in an effective manner.

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP CONTINUED:

Freed-Hardeman University has adopted a new organizational structure to ensure that the enrollment management plan is a truly collaborative effort. The University has created a leadership team that includes the Director of Admission, The Director of Financial Aid and the Chief Retention Officer and these individuals have worked together in making all of the decision regarding enrollment management.

Such collaboration allows for examining the impact of recruitment strategies and tactics on retention. Financial aid policies and procedures can be adapted to enable the school to meet recruitment and retention objectives. This structure is still unique in the industry. While many institutions include the three divisions under the leadership of a Vice President for Enrollment, it is unusual to have a structure with three equal partners.

Early outcomes for Fall 2013 are encouraging.

- Applications for admission are up by 9%.
- The number of students accepted for admission grew by 21%.
- The number of newly enrolled students increased by 11%.
- Retention for first-year students increased by 7% compared to last year.

It is likely that this truly collaborative approach to enrollment management leadership will pay dividends in the future.

MARS HILL UNIVERSITY CONTINUES TO BUCK NATIONAL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

Enrollment growth continues at Mars Hill University in North Carolina despite troubling demographic trends, economic uncertainty and new questions about the value of a college education.

The enrollment team of Dr. Craig Goforth, Assistant Vice President for Student Enrollment Services, Kristie Vance, Director of Admissions, Alan Young, Supervisor of Marketing and Admissions and Nicole Buckner, Director of Financial Aid have implemented significant changes over the last three years that have resulted in transformational growth. So many exciting things are happening.

- Traditional student enrollment has reached another high. Fall 2013 enrollment has increased by nearly 7% from the 30-record enrollment achieved last year. Since 2010 enrollment has soared by 28%!
- Total enrollment including adult and graduate students now stands at 1,459!
- The school has finally made the transition from a college to a university. The new status was announced in August.
- The University has increased geographic diversity as 36% of students are out of state and another 4% are international.
- Two brand new residence halls were opened this Fall and they will be filled immediately.

So many enhancements have been introduced under the guidance of the President, Dr. Dan Lunsford, especially over the last three years. Product improvements attract more students and enrolling more students creates the revenue necessary for investment back into offerings that directly benefit students.

COLLEGE OF SAINT MARY INCREASES THE NUMBER OF NEW STUDENTS

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

Greg Fritz set a couple of priorities when he took on the role as the new Vice President of Enrollment at College of Saint Mary. The institution is a 90 year old women's college located in Omaha, Nebraska.

Greg sought to increase enrollment while actively growing the base of students seeking more information about the College and improving communication with the applicants for admission.

COLLEGE OF SAINT MARY INCREASES CONTINUED:

- CSM expanded its market outreach to contact prospective students in a greater geographic area.
- Thousands of telephone calls were made to students to encourage them to learn more about the College.
- Admission counselors doubled efforts to establish relationships with admission applicants by telephone.
- Text messaging, direct mail and social media were incorporated into the communication plan.

The College was able to increase the number of new students this year as well as expand the size of the customer base and improve communication with admission applicants.

- CSM increased the number of inquiries this cycle by 33%.
- The number of first-year applicants accepted for admission grew by 13%.
- The number of transfer student applicants accepted for admission increased by 32%.

As the College celebrates its 90th year, growth should continue into its future.

WESLEY COLLEGE CONTINUES CAMPUS CONSTRUCTION AND EXPANSION AS NEW STUDENT ENROLLMENTS GROW

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

Improvements to the physical plant continue at Wesley College in Dover, Delaware. Dr. William Johnston has led efforts to enhance buildings and grounds during his tenure.

New green space and gathering areas for students have been created. The addition of new walkways and open plazas have made the campus more friendly for pedestrians.

Renovation has begun on the 36,000 square-foot J. Allen Frear Federal Building. This addition to campus will serve as an education center for the expanded Nursing program and health science area of study. The opening is scheduled for January 2014.

Plans are also underway for a new venue for all-campus events. The Center will be home for the basketball and volleyball teams as well as host a variety of intramural sports and student activities.



The new student enrollments numbers for Fall 2013 are also encouraging. The College experienced a six percent increase in applications for admission while the number of newly enrolled students climbed by five percent.

If you plan to attend either of the following conferences and wish to meet with John W. Dysart

The Council of Independent Colleges Presidents Institute
January 4-7, 2014
Marco Island, Florida

Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
International Forum on Christian Higher Education
February 11-14, 2014
Los Angeles, California

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