

# ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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## NEW CHANCELLOR, NEW VISION, NEW PLAN AND EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

John W. Dysart  
President  
THE DYSART GROUP

I had the honor of working with the team at Purdue University Fort Wayne this past cycle during a period of historic change:

- The previous Chancellor had announced her retirement.
- The chief academic officer, Dr. Carl Drummond, was tapped to oversee enrollment at the University.
- Major academic program structural changes were being made.
- The name, logo and colors were all in a process of change.
- A redesign of the website was underway.

The previous Chancellor, Dr. Vicky Carwein, contacted me to conduct an enrollment audit to identify admission and financial aid areas in need of improvement after years of enrollment declines. We agreed on an outline of a new plan.

The enrollment transformation began prior to the arrival of the new Chancellor. Dr. Drummond, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management, appointed a new enrollment implementation team that included, among others, Dr. Krissy Creagor, Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Ken Christmon, Associate Vice Chancellor for Admissions. We worked together to complete the design of and introduce a new recruitment model. In addition, we retired all of the old institutional financial aid programs and consolidated them into more targeted scholarships and grants specifically focused on rewarding academic talent and making the University more affordable for all students.



*Dr. Ronald L. Elsenbaumer, Chancellor*

In the midst of all the change, Dr. Ronald L. Elsenbaumer was appointed the new Chancellor after serving in several leadership positions, including provost, at University of Texas at Arlington. He

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ON SFI CERTIFIED PAPER

## **NEW CHANCELLOR, NEW VISION, NEW PLAN CONTINUED:**

provided the vision, leadership, direction and resources for transformational enrollment change.

Dr. Drummond summarized the major components of the new enrollment initiatives:

- The University designed and introduced new scholarships for incoming freshmen.
- Personal and systematic communication mechanisms were created to effectively educate and communicate with both inquiries and applicants for admission.
- A new scholarship program for transfer students was created. It was designed in a manner to demonstrate the affordability of the University.
- The University modified its policy for students eligible for readmission and proactively reached out to these students. It was important to attempt to bring previously enrolled students back to complete their degrees.
- The graduate student admission process was transformed with the introduction of a coordinated marketing plan, a targeted focus on the enrollment management funnel and ongoing communication with admission applicants along with accelerated admission decisions.
- Most importantly, the improved outcomes were a product of the hard work of everyone involved in the admission and financial aid process.

The final numbers are impressive:

- The number of undergraduate new students increased by more than 17% compared to last year.
- The University increased the number of international students by 15%.

- The University expanded its geographic reach. Enrolled students hail from 32 states and 49 countries.
- The number of newly enrolled graduate students grew by 19% compared to last year.
- Overall, university-wide headcount is up by 18% compared to last year.
- Last year, the occupancy rate in the campus residence halls was a respectable 70%. Beds in the residence halls are overfilled this year with an occupancy rate of 105%.
- The number of students living on campus is the most in the history of the University.
- The University held its largest new student orientation in history with more than 1,900 students in attendance.

After years of declining enrollments, budget cuts and retrenchment, the University is now repositioned for the future. The new Chancellor is poised to realize his vision for growth and academic excellence.

## **NEW PRESIDENT, NEW VISION, NEW PLAN AND EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS AT SMALL HBCU**

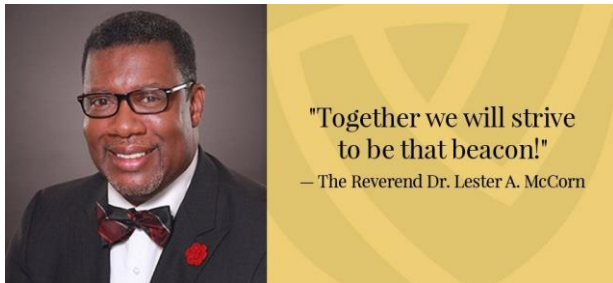
John W. Dysart  
President  
**THE DYSART GROUP**

When I first met Dr. Lester McCorn and Ms. Archinya Ingram at a conference last January, he was a newly appointed Interim President and she was the Vice President for Finance at Clinton College in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

They both were seeking transformational change for Clinton College. The College had been struggling on the enrollment and revenue fronts for a long period of time. While many have worried about the future of Historically Black Colleges and Universities over the last decade and others have questioned the value of their continued

## NEW PRESIDENT, NEW VISION, NEW PLAN CONTINUED:

existence, Dr. McCorn has a different vision for the sector and the 124-year old college. Dr. McCorn is intent on making Clinton College “a beacon of light for today’s scholars and tomorrow’s leaders.”



Dr. Lester McCorn, President

The new President’s commitment to the mission of the College is clear.

*“As a product of an historically Black college and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, this appointment allows me the opportunity to expand the very important mission of a faith-based institution of higher learning at a critical period in our nation’s history. I am committed to leading the College and serving the community with ‘Excellence Without Excuse.’”*

Although we were already half-way through the recruitment cycle, we agreed to work together on an aggressive, new admission and financial aid model to attempt to dramatically increase the number of new students for Fall 2018.

- The financial aid process was changed to aggressively encourage admission applicants to apply for financial aid.
- Financial aid applicants were packaged quickly, usually within 48 hours of receipt of the application.
- A weekly report was introduced to track progress. The Director of Financial Aid was able to monitor success in securing financial aid applications throughout the cycle and was able

to take additional steps to encourage students to apply for financial aid as needed.

- A new emphasis was placed on telephone conversations with admission applicants to provide information and help them and their families navigate the admission process.
- Dramatic changes were made to the physical plant on campus. New signage was posted. The Admission Office was moved and significantly upgraded.
- An enrollment initiative committee was established to discuss strategic and tactical options and to monitor outcomes and progress throughout the cycle.

Despite the late start, Clinton College was able to make extraordinary change and the successful results speak for themselves:

- The number of admission applications increased by 15%.

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## NEW PRESIDENT, NEW VISION, NEW PLAN CONTINUED:

- Better communication increased the number of applicants accepted for admission my more than three-fold.
- The number of new student enrollments increased by more than 70%.
- Clinton College enrolled an all-time record number of new students.

Dr. McCorn has since been appointed President of Clinton College and his interim title has been removed. He continues to make structural and strategic improvements to the College. A new Vice President for Enrollment has been hired. The new recruitment cycle for Fall 2019 is underway and Clinton College is poised for even greater enrollment success in the future.

## NEW PRESIDENT, NEW VISION, NEW PLAN AND EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS AT SMALL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

John W. Dysart  
President  
**THE DYSART GROUP**

Terry Stine came to St. Louis Christian College after an extremely successful tenure as the President at Boise Bible College. He returned to his Missouri roots to take the Presidency during an extremely difficult period of declining enrollment and decreasing revenue.

Stine brought his passion for the mission of the institution and his leadership experience to a college in need of transformation.

He assumed the presidency on June 1, 2018 and we agreed to work together on a new plan to increase enrollment. Unfortunately, the beginning of June was a challenging time to start!



*Terry Stine, President*

Terry Stine decided to direct a late cycle, full-court press for Fall 2018 while simultaneously creating and implementing a more detailed, long-term strategy for Fall 2019 and beyond. Thanks to the efforts of the professionals in the Admission and Financial Aid Offices, the College was able to realize significant gains even with such a late start in the cycle:

- Inquiries grew by 42% compared to the previous year.
- The number of applicants for admission more than tripled over the count from the previous year.
- The number of admission applicants accepted tripled.
- St. Louis Christian College realized a whopping 129% increase in newly enrolled students compared to last year.
- Total headcount at the college increased by double digits.

St. Louis Christian College still faces an uphill climb. The new President, however, has already demonstrated the ability to make quick changes and achieve improved outcomes. His vision, leadership and commitment to mission positions the small college well for future success.

## INNOVATION, TRANSFORMATION: A PLAYBOOK FOR SUCCESS

Dr. Marylouise Fennell  
Principal  
Hyatt-Fennell

Dr. Scott Miller  
President  
Virginia Wesleyan University

For nearly thirty years, we've written extensively on higher education best business practices for *College Planning and Management* and *Enrollment Manager*. We've also shared important thoughts as publishers via a major national presidential thought series, *President to President*.

Scott and Virginia Wesleyan University have received attention recently for application of these practices and the major transformation that has occurred on the VWU campus since 2015. A CEO of a national leadership organization commented recently that "what you're doing at Virginia Wesleyan is a compendium of all the best practices you've suggested through the years – I'm sure this will make for a great chapter or book."

Earlier this month, Aramark Higher Education released a new [case study](#) highlighting Virginia Wesleyan's transformation "in a time of unprecedented competition in higher education." The study credits Scott's experienced leadership for strengthening the curriculum, launching new construction, and substantially increasing enrollment and fundraising. The results drew national as well as regional attention. Last winter, Dwyer Education Strategies' *Enrollment Manager* featured VWU in a cover story, "The Commonwealth is Witnessing a Major Transformation at Virginia Wesleyan University in Virginia Beach," and in May [Virginia Business](#) chronicled recent success.

How did this astonishing transformation of a liberal arts institution on a 300-acre, parklike campus come about? Scott's new administration had to look back before it could go forward. Over the previous 10 years, enrollment and fundraising were flat even as tuition rose yearly. Logical initiatives were overlooked in a region where eight colleges and universities competed for the same students and resources. The bottom line was that Virginia Wesleyan was a well-kept secret—negatively so.

Arriving during summer 2015, Scott charted a plan of action that followed many of the steps we've outlined in our writings. Early on, this included a comprehensive Institutional Review and overhaul of the enrollment process

— a risky endeavor in an intensely competitive market place seriously impacted by military sequestration and a declining number of high school graduates. The local community college, the least expensive institution in the region, had declined by some 15,000 students since 2012. With its antiquated business processes, lack of tuition controls, and weak revenue streams, Virginia Wesleyan seemed destined to fare no better.

*Develop a Vision* –

By the time of his arrival as Virginia Wesleyan's fourth president, Scott had worked with the Board of Trustees to take the institution on a bold new course.

*Institutional Review* – The Board commissioned an Institutional Review, led by noted author and higher education consultant James V. Koch. The IR assessed the current condition of the institution (celebrated strengths and acknowledged limitations) and provided a framework with priorities for the first year.

*The Priority: Enrollment* – John Dysart, President of The Dysart Group, was retained to conduct a comprehensive enrollment audit that included staffing and processes. The firm also assisted with identifying new leadership for the program.

Three-year recruitment goals and objectives included defining the ideal size and quality of the incoming traditional class and establishing new programs for early enrollment, transfers, community college graduates, a graduate program and online division, dual-degree graduate programs with prominent partners, and a campus-based laboratory school and honors college.

Focusing on affordability, the new plan addressed:

- Establishment of the endowed Honors College in year two.
- Opus, a work program for financially at-risk students in year two.
- A tuition freeze in years three and four.
- In partnership with Tidewater Community College-Virginia Beach, establishment of the Virginia Beach Access Scholarship for local commuters.
- A fifth-year tuition guarantee.

*Brand Analysis/Market Share*—With professional assistance, the institution completed a brand analysis and

## INNOVATION, TRANSFORMATION CONTINUED:

market share study which led to new logos and themes, an improved website, and overhaul of all marketing that now emphasized the location in a thriving metropolitan area—home to the Chesapeake Bay, the Atlantic Ocean, and abundant student-internship potential.

Meanwhile, a space-utilization study and condition assessment became part of a 10-year Master Plan with recommendations that immediately caught the interest of donors. Virginia Wesleyan applied for Level III status and approval to become a university. University College became the umbrella for not-for-credit, online, and non-traditional initiatives. Donors funded \$600,000 in corrective maintenance and stepped up with gifts for construction of the new Susan S. Goode Fine and Performing Arts Center, enhancements of athletic facilities, and even a makeover for a landmark bell tower corroded by the area's sea air. Virginia Wesleyan University was no longer a well-kept secret.

Within three years, the results were impressive: the award-winning Greer Environmental Sciences Center; the new Frank Blocker Youth Center, serving the Tidewater Collegiate Academy during the academic year and YMCA Camp Red Feather during the summer; landscaping and other physical improvements for traffic flow and campus security; a public-private residential complex; improvements to the Kenneth R. Perry baseball field; the new Tom and Betty Broyles Field at TowneBank Park for VWU's NCAA national champion softball team; the new Betty S. Rogers Track and Field Center, and relocation of the University's Alpine Tower to the athletic complex.

Virginia Wesleyan's experience demonstrates the importance of bold, visionary leadership followed by effective planning. Working together, Scott and VWU's Trustees identified vital issues early on. Then, with the aid of consultants, comprehensive planning and fresh approaches to branding and marketing led to success in enrollment and fundraising—paving the way for institutional transformation.

Following a realistic "playbook" ensures that change is managed, often leading to positive outcomes that exceed expectations for a promising future.



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