

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING AT ALL LEVELS SHOULD BE AN IMPERATIVE STRATEGY

Dr. Scott Miller
President
Bethany College

Marylouise Fennell, RSM
Principal
Hyatt-Fennell

With some 50 percent of all college presidents at age 61, or older, according to a recent American Council on Education report, many campuses will experience significant change in leadership in the near future. Further, these shifts will not be limited to the presidential level; because changes at the top usually result in replacement of a number of senior personnel, an institution stands to lose momentum, vision and significant funding without a solid succession plan in place.

Unlike corporate America, which has witnessed countless quick internal appointments during recent transitions, higher education has not actively embraced the importance of this ongoing and vital process.

In the words of our colleague Dr. Jack P. Calareso, president of Anna Maria College in Massachusetts: "Succession planning is really about leadership. . . it is developing a clear roadmap for the future and ensuring that strong leadership will be in place to guide the institution."

Further, Calareso continues, "Succession

planning is more than thinking about the next president. It is just as important in anticipating needs at every senior level of the institution, developing internal candidates and being prepared for a search."

Therefore, it is critical not only for institutions to begin ongoing discussions about succession planning now, but also that these conversations include the following steps suggested by Dr. Calareso in a recent conversation:

- *Defining clear timelines and processes* for selecting an interim administrator;
- *Delineating the profile* of the desired leadership qualities, skills and experience;
- *Engaging the best consultant* to conduct the search for a permanent replacement;
- *Identifying a search committee*; and
- *Preparing for the transition and induction* of the new president or senior administrator.

Several of these key elements require special consideration, among them the significance of identifying and *mentoring* internal candidates with the potential to succeed in senior-level positions. Because of shared governance, multiple (sometimes competing) constituencies often play an active role in the search process. They tend to believe that external candidates always bring prestige, translating into enhanced institutional reputation and an ability to attract other candidates from aspirational colleges or universities in future searches.

However, "Insiders have a better ability to understand how to affect change within an

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LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION CONTINUED:

organization than outsiders typically do,” reports Per-Ola Karlsson, managing director of Europe for Booz & Co. in the corporation’s recent newsletter. Its recently-released survey on succession planning suggests that in terms of their tenure, “inside” CEOs usually outlast those hired from the outside.

“When you do an external executive search and bring in an external leader,” notes Lucie Lapovsky, president of Lapovsky Consulting and past president of Mercy College in New York, as quoted in the Booz & Co. newsletter, “you often lose a year or more of time. Productivity is likely to suffer during the 1-2 years of transition in executive leadership.”

Not only do boards and senior management need to be consistently developing promising administrators who can think strategically, not just tactically, but also they need to take a more proactive role in grooming colleagues as part of the entire succession process, notes John P. Butler, III, Chairman of Barnes & Roche, Inc. “There is often an unwillingness among senior academics to mentor colleagues in lesser administrative roles, limiting their preparation for higher positions,” Butler observes.

Succession planning today will mitigate institutional crisis tomorrow. As Dr. Calareso notes, “Succession planning helps to avoid a leadership crisis.”

“The Lewis Carroll quote, ‘If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there’ is a dangerous approach for colleges and universities,” Dr. Calareso concludes.

We couldn’t have said it better.

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 nearly 22 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 nine books, including “President to President: Views on Technology in Higher Education” (2009) and “Presidential Perspectives: Strategies to Address the Rising Cost of

Higher Education” (2012). Both serve as consultants to college presidents and boards. They are regular columnists for “College Planning and Management” and “Enrollment Manager.”

For more information on Succession Planning, contact Dr. Jack P. Calareso at thedysartgroup@aol.com.

THE INFLUENCE OF FINANCIAL AID POLICY AND PROCESS ON RETENTION

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

As you think about the very complicated subject of retention, understand that there are often some simple things you can do to promote student satisfaction and retention. Let’s focus our thoughts on just some issues related to financial aid. Changes in financial aid policy and procedure are not necessarily complicated, do not require faculty committee discussions, are not expensive, but can make a real difference. See if your Financial Aid Office is doing the following:

Proactively Encourage People to Apply for Financial Aid

The role of an effective Financial Aid Office is not just to package those returning students who apply for financial aid. It is also the responsibility of the Office to solicit applications for financial aid. At minimum, written reminders should be sent every two weeks to currently enrolled aid recipients who have not applied for financial aid to encourage them to do so. The written reminders should be supplemented with text messages and email. This process should begin the first week in January each cycle and continue through the summer. Be prepared to use telephone outreach for the students and families who have not responded to the written and electronic reminders. Every Financial Aid Office should have a specific communication plan for currently enrolled students to ensure that they reapply in a timely manner. Senior institutional leaders must review the plan and everyone should be willing to evaluate the success of the plan and make adjustments and enhancements annually.

THE INFLUENCE OF FINANCIAL AID POLICY AND PROCESS ON RETENTION CONTINUED:

Establish Weekly Financial Aid Reports

I am surprised by the number of Financial Aid Offices that do not produce weekly progress reports to track success through the Financial Aid Funnel. If we agree that financial aid is important for both retention and recruitment, then it makes sense that colleges and universities create a tracking mechanism to evaluate the success of the Financial Aid Office in securing applications for financial aid, awarding aid applicants in a timely manner and collecting required supporting documents to facilitate disbursement.

Every week, the Office should report the total number of enrolled students who receive aid and are eligible to return. Out of that total, how many have actually applied for financial aid? Out of the number of returning students who have applied for financial aid, how many have been packaged? Out of the number of returning students who have been packaged, how many have submitted all required documents and are ready for disbursement?

This report, produced weekly beginning in January and ending with the beginning of classes in September, should be shared with senior leadership. The President should be able to see how well the Financial Aid Office is performing in support of retention objectives. The chief

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Marylouise Fennell
Partner

mfennell@hyatt-fennell.com

p: 412.521.1417

Cheryl Hyatt
Partner

chyatt@hyatt-fennell.com

p: 724.242.0476

www.hyatt-fennell.com

financial officer should be interested because the financial aid process impacts cash flow.

Begin Financial Aid Packaging in January

Notifying currently enrolled students of their eligibility for financial aid is important, but early awards can really have a positive impact on retention.

- Students awarded financial aid early in the Spring term can be confident about how they can afford to return.
- Early packaging affords opportunities for financial planning. Families who learn they will owe money for the Fall term in February have seven months to save, identify alternative loans or establish reasonable payment plans. When students and families are not packaged until the summer, there is insufficient time to make other financing arrangements.

THE INFLUENCE OF FINANCIAL AID POLICY AND PROCEDURE ON RETENTION CONTINUED:

- Early packaging also means that students have plenty of time to file financial aid appeals if necessary.

Intervene When Currently Enrolled Students Do Not Re-Apply for Financial Aid

Utilize the tracking mechanisms to monitor financial aid recipients who do not reapply for aid. This might be an indication that the student is thinking about transferring to another college or dropping out. Contacting these students while they are still enrolled in the Spring term might allow time to address concerns.

Every office on campus can make a beneficial contribution to the college retention plan. Perhaps the Financial Aid Office can be the first on your campus to change policy and procedures to facilitate retention.

CANDIDATE DERAILEMENT

Cheryl Hyatt
Partner
Hyatt-Fennell

Marylouise Fennell, RSM
Principal
Hyatt-Fennell

We've seen it more times than we'd like to recall. Often a promising candidate begins the executive search process and seems to offer many of the skills and strengths our clients are seeking. He or she then frequently makes it into the semi-finals or even the finals of a rigorous, intensive search. But then, before the offer is tendered, something is said or done that derails the process. Usually it's an action or oversight that could easily have been avoided with advance thought, preparation or planning. Such candidates cost themselves, us and our clients unnecessary time, energy and money. Here are some of the most common that we observe:

"Puzzling" resumes: Too many cv's that we receive for senior level searches are incomplete or require an inordinate amount of time to determine such basics as contact infor-

mation for candidates and their references; exact dates and locations of employment; and specific job responsibilities for each position held. "Consulting" is a term often used to mask unemployment; candidates need to show that this work is *bona fide* by listing clients, responsibilities and current contact information.

A closely related challenge is:

Honest communication: We can manage most common issues such as employment "gaps" if candidates are completely honest with us from the start. When we know the real reason for a termination or for seeking a new position, we can package and position the candidate to future employers. If we don't know, however, we can be caught off-guard and jeopardize any possible chances for search success. Committees usually 'assume' the worst when something is not clearly defined. Effective search communication also includes:

Buy-ins from family: Serious search candidates for positions, especially those involving relocation, need to have this conversation with spouses, significant others and children earlier rather than later in the search process, certainly before the semi-final stage. It's best to discuss a move with the family early in the process so there are not surprises during the end stage. We had a finalist who was about to receive an offer but pulled out of the search because his nine year old daughter did not want to move!

Finally,

Availability: While most professional search firms will respect a candidate's desire not to be contacted at his or her current place of employment, don't narrow your availability to just a few hours a day or rule out evenings and weekends. If you've given an email address as your means of contact, be sure to check it often. Remember, you are looking for a job! The Search Consultant should have all your phone numbers.

Other derailers typically involve a lack of preparation for the interview or serious gaffes during the conversation itself. Expectations rise with the level of the position, so slip-ups for senior level positions will typically end consideration.

Serious candidates need to position themselves for success by:

CANDIDATE DERAILEMENT CONTINUED:

Dressing conservatively and appropriately. For gentlemen, this means jacket, ties and shirt collars buttoned. For ladies, it means business suits and professional accessories and grooming.

Don't over disclose about your reasons for leaving or about specific differences with former presidents or supervisors. Higher education is a small world. The person whom you are "dissing" may very well be a friend of the interviewer. Loyalty is also vital; if you aren't loyal to your current employer, it's unlikely you'll be loyal to the next.

Manners count. Stay in touch with your executive search firm; respect the professionals' time. Don't expect them to track you down. This also goes for the interview process itself. It should go without saying, but we have actually seen candidates take personal cell phone calls during interviews. Leave your electronic devices turned off and preferably, at home.

In today's highly competitive job market, every possible advantage counts. Unfortunately, candidates are often their own worst enemies; avoid these derailers, and maximize your chances for success.

Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, has spent more than 35 years in higher education administration and search and is among the best-known and highly respected consultants in the field of independent higher education. She served as president of Carlow University in Pittsburgh and is the senior counsel to the Washington, DC-based Council of Independent Colleges. She has been an independent search consultant for more than 20 years, and has consulted widely throughout the world, where she worked with many colleges, universities and non-profits. Dr. Fennell currently sits on three college boards .

With almost 20 years of executive search consulting experience, Cheryl Hyatt has been responsible for successfully recruiting senior administrative professionals for educational and non-profit organizations. She brings 30 years of management and organizational leadership experience to her role with clients. Cheryl's breadth of experience, knowledge and contacts make her sought after profes-

sionally in her field. Mrs. Hyatt also sits on various local non-profit boards offering a variety of expertise to each organization.

*Both authors are partners in the Executive Search Group **Hyatt – Fennell**, a firm that works with not-for-profit clients with a strong commitment to education.*

ADMISSION YIELD: AN INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

This is the time of year when pressure is on the leadership team in the recruitment division to finalize the new student numbers for the coming term and to use every means possible to increase yield. One of the simplest ways to increase new student enrollments is to increase the conversion rate from accepted applicant to enrolled student. More students can be enrolled even if application pools are stagnant by encouraging a higher percentage of accepted applicants to enroll.

Other offices at the institution can have a positive influence on yield. Colleges and universities have the best chance to realize improvements in yield when the task becomes an institutional priority.

Registration and course selection can be important in keeping deposited students interested. Many colleges and universities wait until late in the cycle to register new students and often require students complete the process face-to-face. Consider telephone course selection and start the process for deposited students in March.

- Beginning the course selection process early will enable admission counselors to use the possibility to solicit deposits.
- Course selection should be conducted over the telephone. Deposited students should be called and their schedules should be finalized over the telephone as well.

ADMISSION YIELD: AN INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY CONTINUED:

- The sooner students can visualize their enrollment at the school, the better for yield. Understanding your class schedule months in advance will facilitate the visualization process.
- Orientation programs are terrific, but it is not necessary to make course selection part of the on-campus experience.
- It may be necessary for leaders in the academic division to complete course scheduling earlier in the year so that returning students can still be given priority in course selection. Frankly, earlier pre-registration for currently enrolled students will have a positive influence on retention.

The Housing Office can contribute to increases in yield by making housing assignments much earlier in the process.

- It is not unusual for colleges and universities to hold housing assignments until the summer. This makes no sense. Deposited students should be able to find out their living arrangements no later than the end of March.
- Early assignments facilitate positive visualization. Early assignments provide ample time and opportunity for new students to connect with roommates via social media.

The Business Office could enhance yield with early billing, at least for accepted students, and proactive outreach to deposited families to provide counsel with regard to financial aid and payment plans.

- Consider billing in early April.
- Be sure to provide information on how financial aid will impact the net price.
- Work with representatives in the Financial Aid Office to telephone deposited students and their families to discuss net price and options to pay remaining balances by utilizing alternative loans or payment plans. Early discussion means that families will have time to plan!

Faculty members can play an import role in yield.

- Perhaps select faculty could be used to telephone, email or text accepted students. They could welcome these students to the school and discuss the attributes of academic majors.

The Office of Student Services can assist in encouraging accepted students to deposit and deposited students to enroll.

- There is a wealth of information regarding student interests outside of academics in the Student Services Office. Schools can use student leaders in clubs and organizations on campus to invite the participation of prospective students.

Obviously, the Admission Office is the entity primarily charged with increasing yield. But in these difficult economic times, a comprehensive institutional approach to yield will result in better outcomes.

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