

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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LEARNING AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

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Institutional research is needed to utilize assessment results. Research enlightens us on how to have an impact on outcomes that are important to us. Research identifies contributing factors so we can manage, or control, outcomes. Learning is one such outcome. Institutional research enables Learning Management, just as it enables Enrollment Management. Although learning and Enrollment Management are often separate pursuits, Enrollment Management has long term success with Learning Management – students graduate and knowledgeable and competent alumni enhance the reputation of the institution in the workplace and community. Learning Management and Enrollment Management could not be more closely linked.

The limelight on bottom line results is not attenuating. In the public eye, the bottom line is addressed in terms such as return on investment (ROI) and gainful employment and associated measures are graduation rates, student loan debt, starting salaries and employment rates in one's major field of study. Inherently student learning is a key objective in education. Learning has been considered necessary for graduation, gainful employment and overall life-long success – professional and personal. *Measuring* learning outcomes and competencies for accountability has gained prominence in the higher

education landscape.

Philosophically it has long been accepted that colleges groom lifelong learners. A strong liberal arts, or general education, curriculum develops and shapes the cognitive capacity of students, including those in career-path programs, to accommodate changes in the workforce and society. This is increasingly important when one considers the short half lives of many major fields of study. Moreover we want our alumni to *lead* positive changes in the workforce and society.

One may argue that measuring learning has been a tradition in education, a sector in which tests and grades are endemic. Historically, the institution's role was providing a fertile environment for learning and the rest was up to the student. Today institutions are increasingly accountable for *ensuring* learning – specifically, learning outcomes of value and relevance – and *proving* learning through the rigor of objective measures which we term *assessment*.

Certainly, assessment of learning outcomes provides important feedback about the extent of student learning; that is, it tells us the extent to which learning objectives are achieved. However, assessment does not always tell us what to do to improve learning. When colleges assess learning results often indicate that there is a need for improvement, so often we are back at the drawing board, but without knowing exactly what to change. The scenario below illustrates the dilemma and how to resolve it.

In the better of circumstances, an institution has performed: (a) a program review

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in which programs are reviewed for productivity and relevance, and (b) learning objectives of value are defined for each program, (c) a learning objectives-based curricula review, and then (d) a course review that structures delivery of curricula and establishes course sequencing and prerequisites. Additionally, grading is rubrics-centered for standardization across course sections taught by various faculty over time and implementation is monitored and realigned when needed to maintain the validity of rubrics and the reliability of grading. Faculty development covers various methods of instructional delivery. Student support services are in place such as academic advising and tutoring.

Given the value of a package of multiple measures, course-specific learning *objectives* are converted to survey items to be measured as learning *outcomes* in Course Evaluations. Students rate the degree to which they felt they achieved each learning objective and the extent to which they feel specific methods of instruction helped them learn. Students also rate support services and experiences.

Suppose 25% of our entering students report on Course Evaluations that they did not adequately master course-specific learning objectives. Both course grades and faculty feedback corroborate the statistic and with little variation across courses. The 25% figure is lower for sophomores, lower still for juniors and down to a handful for seniors. Twenty five percent of our entering class is too high a percentage to write off. Results suggest a shortfall in achieving important learning objectives. What do we do? In our ardent effort to improve learning we go back to the drawing board. We review curricula and instruction for ways to improve. What changes can we confidently make?

Suppose factors other than the course and its delivery impact learning of 25% of our entering class. In that case, a curricular or instructional change will be ineffective, at best, and possibly raise the 25% if we inadvertently change what works well. Research is necessary to enlighten assessment results. We need to know what factors impact student learning in order to strategically impose effective solutions.

As a start, examine the literature of research on national data bases for leads on factors that are associated with grad-

uation. Research how these factors could pertain to your institution – individually and collectively as profiles of “successful” students. Which factors, and by which measures, predict learning and year-to-year persistence to graduation? For example, how might particular measures of *academic preparation* and *ability to pay* predict learning? How might the measures predict persistence to graduation? Research might reveal identical student profiles as predictors of learning and persistence to graduation. Thus, your assessment results may coincide with your year-to-year persistence rates. Presidents, Vice-Presidents of Enrollment Management and Provosts: take notice.

You can strategically utilize your assessment results to improve learning when curricular and instructional modifications are exhausted and you have identified other contributing factors. You center solutions on the other contributing factors. Through institutional research on enrollment management, underprepared applicants can be identified as *at-risk* before acceptance; research also can qualify major-specific preparation. Should some underprepared applicants be admitted, they can be targeted for early intervention. (Many “Early Alert” systems kick in when the student is already in free fall.)

So, too, financially needy students can be identified as *at-risk*. Informed by institutional research on the effective distribution of financial aid, discounts can be more effectively distributed – and with budget sensitivity – and merit-based scholarships can actually generate more tuition revenue for need-based grants. For underprepared and financially needy students (research shows a correlation), course loads might be reduced to 12 credits per semester to allow more study and tutoring time (with advising on course combinations based on levels of challenge), particularly for students who will, nonetheless, hold part-time jobs during semesters. Free summer sessions might keep these students on schedule, and can possibly be delivered on-line so students save money living at home and institutional operating costs are controlled.

In short, data-based institutional research integrates admissions, financial aid and learning for a holistic approach to Enrollment and Learning Management. Research enlightens and informs assessment results so that assessment results can be utilized to improve learning. Enrollment and Learning Management propels enrollment beyond one-year persistence to graduation and beyond, and promotes the caliber of

LEARNING AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT CONTINUED:

alumni in the workplace. Consider the implications for return on investment, how alumni represent your institution in the workforce and community and the reputation you create for prospective students and employers.

GETTING YOUR COLLEGE KNOWN

Dr. Scott Miller
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"With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed." When he uttered these words, President Lincoln, besieged from all sides, was in the midst of the Civil War, yet he realized that mobilizing public opinion in support of the conflict was critical to the Union's success. Effective marketing is no less vital to a college CEO.

"Doing well by doing good" has become a philanthropic mantra, but if institutions don't market their own successes, who will? Don't rely on others to tell your story. In a previous article, we emphasized the importance of knowing your institution; honing a focused self-identity; and bring in all key stakeholders, especially faculty, staff, and administrators, on board. Internal audiences are your best marketers if they know and understand your mission and objectives.

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We've heard many times remarkable stories of internal constituents leading to major gifts and national recognition for a college or university. There's the modest grounds worker at a private college who, after his passing, made the national news by leaving the bulk of his \$1.6 million estate to his employer of 30 years. Then, there's the 85-year old man who, upon endowing a chair in Religion at a poor Appalachian college, spoke of his unannounced visit to the campus one quiet Sunday morning and being emotionally moved by an unassuming enrollment staffer working in his office. Marketing by key stakeholders led to national media exposure in both cases.

Here are some recommendations:

Be strategic. Three marketing objectives well executed are better than a dozen implemented haphazardly. Ask yourself, "What is the biggest single need in our marketplace?" Then, "What can our college do better than anyone else?" Marry

GETTING YOUR COLLEGE KNOWN CONTINUED:

the two and you have a recipe for success.

Repeat, repeat, repeat. In real estate, its location, location, location. In marketing, repetition and consistency of message trumps all. In his 2006 *Messages That Stick*, author Chip Heath emphasized that compelling messages withstanding the test of time are succinct, unexpected, concise, and surprising. It's not always doing something new that counts; it's execution and consistency.

The medium is the message. How often and in what format do your key constituencies prefer to receive information? While it's usually better to over- rather than under-communicate, both carry substantial risks.

Add value. What activity or program, if enhanced by 20 percent, would increase results exponentially?

Know your institution, know your market, know your competition. It's surprising to consultants that when we ask long-time employees to give a "business card" summary of their principal product or service, they can't do it. If you cannot deliver a crisp, compelling, 30-second "elevator message" to key audiences, don't think further about branding strategies until you can do so.

Do it first. The marketing adage, "It's more important to be the first to do it than to do it the best," is anathema to the college ethos, with its participative committee structure. We are often loath to roll out a new course, major, or service until it's been talked to death. By then, the window of opportunity has often closed. This doesn't mean that we should introduce shoddy or substandard "products" into our marketplaces. It does imply that where opportunity lies, we should strike while the iron is hot, making necessary modifications and adaptations along the way.

Capitalize on institutional strengths. Successful organizations and leaders build on their areas of strength while minimizing their weaknesses. What is your strongest brand? It's often more effective to add value to it rather than trying to introduce a new one.

Look for synergistic opportunities. The new era of philanthropy is all about organizations proactively seeking creative

ways to deliver needed goods and services. By partnering with other like-minded organizations, not only does the whole become greater than the sum of its parts, but also your institution will enhance its donor and membership base.

Above all, **keep it simple.** Marketing need not be complicated. Basically, it exists to find an unmet need and to fulfill it. It's just that simple. Find an unfilled niche and fill it, and you will succeed.

"He who molds the public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions," President Lincoln pronounced. Our 16th President knew the priceless value of positive marketing in effecting policy change. It helped him to preserve the Union; it will help you to build your institution.

Dr. Scott D. Miller is president and M.M. Cochran Professor of Leadership Studies at Bethany College in West Virginia. He is now in his 22nd year as a college president.

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

Both serve as consultants to college presidents and boards.

ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION: ADMISSION COUNSELORS MUST ACCURATELY COMMUNICATE

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

Working in an Admission Office at a private college or university has always been challenging, but with the poor economy putting more pressure on students and their families, higher cost private institutions have become less attractive for price-sensitive consumers. Misconceptions regarding student debt levels, net price, the make-up of

ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS CONTINUED:

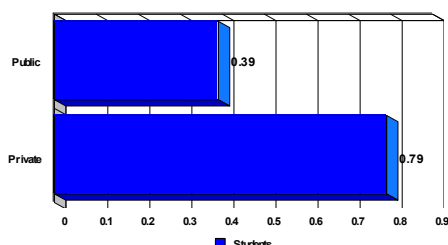
student populations and graduation timetables can make a private education seem less valuable.

Perhaps we need to better educate admission counselors on the realities of private higher education so that the facts can be actively shared with prospective students and their families. Information made available by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Council of Independent Colleges can be useful:

Average net tuition at private four-year colleges was only \$13,380 in 2012

Everyone understands that the sticker prices at private schools tend to be significantly higher than those at their public counterparts. We often fail to emphasize, however, the impact of financial aid, especially the role of institutionally funded aid. On average, small, private colleges discount tuition by approximately 43% and some have discount levels exceeding 60%. Only 39% of students receive scholarships or grants directly from the institution at public schools while private colleges and universities package 79% of their students with institutional scholarship and grant funds. Admission counselors should emphasize net cost and value when speaking with prospective students.

Students Receiving Institutional Grants



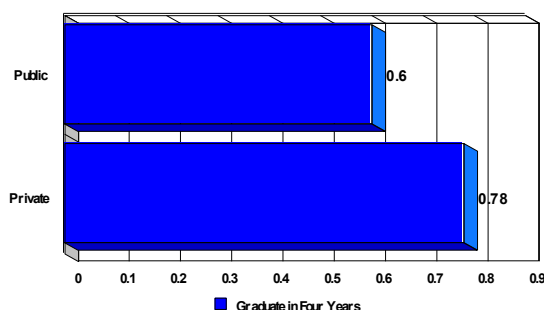
78% of students who earned a bachelor's degree from a four-year private college were able to complete it in 4 years, while only 60% of graduates at public institutions completed in four years. Students graduate faster and thus do not incur the expense of extra years of tuition.

Timeframe for graduation is rarely discussed by admission counselors with their applicants. Budget cuts for state col-

leges and universities have been significant in recent years and are likely to continue. Fewer funds often mean fewer course offerings and limited course availability can make it difficult for even well qualified students to attain their undergraduate degrees within four years. The majority of students attaining degrees at private schools do so in four years and this can mean real savings for students and families.

Prospective students often fail to calculate the tuition costs of enrolling four and a half to six years in order to earn a degree. There is also opportunity costs to consider. Extra semesters in school translate into fewer months of full-time employment. On average, students at private schools graduate approximately ten months sooner than students at public institutions.

Graduates Completing in Four Years



Students at private colleges are as racially and economically diverse as their peers at public institutions. Approximately one-third of students enrolled are minority students and 41% of students enrolled at four-year private colleges come from families earning less than \$50,000 a year.

There is still a perception among people that private colleges are elite. Many believe that the majority of students come from upper income families and are unlikely to be diverse. This is just not the case. The majority of private colleges and universities offer welcoming environments for student bodies that are economically, socially and racially diverse. In fact, minority students are more likely to graduate from private schools compared to public schools.

- 45% of Black students graduate within six years at private schools while 38% of Blacks graduate within the same period at public institutions.

ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS CONTINUED:

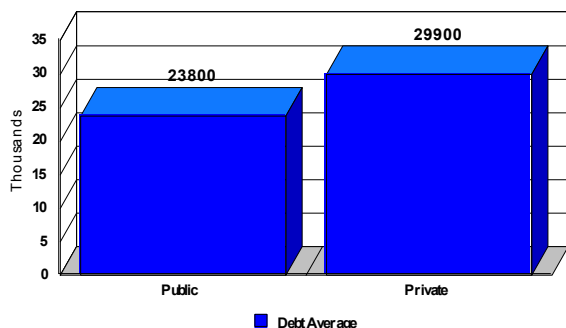
- 60% of Hispanic students enrolling at private colleges and universities graduate within six years while only 48% of Hispanic students graduate within six years at public institutions.

Admissions counselors should be able to recite minority student enrollment and graduation rates along with average or median incomes for enrolled students when communicating with prospective students and their families.

Average debt for borrowers who earned bachelor's degrees at private four-year schools was \$29,900 in 2011 versus \$23,800 at public schools.

Another misconception is that students attending private colleges and universities are forced to take on daunting debt levels. Everyone recalls reading stories about students having borrowed \$100,000 or more to attain their degrees. The fact is that borrowing rates for graduates do not differ that much between public and private institutions. Approximately 85% of graduates from private schools borrow less than \$40,000 and 75% borrow less than \$30,000. Admission counselors must be realistic about student indebtedness when discussing financial aid with students and families, but they must also ensure that unrepresentative reports in the media regarding student debt are addressed.

Average Debt for Grads who Borrowed



Many articles have been written about these kinds of misconceptions and dozens of presentations have been conducted at professional organization conferences. The information may not, however, be making it down to the level

of admission counselors who are charged with direct communication with applicants for admission.

Enrollment managers should be sure to educate the counseling staff members and ensure that they communicate it to prospective students via telephone, electronic means and social media.

LAST MINUTE INITIATIVES DURING THE FINAL FIVE MONTHS TO IMPROVE RE- CRUITMENT OUTCOMES FOR FALL 2013

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group, Inc.

There are only four months remaining in the recruitment cycle and many colleges and universities are still concerned about their ability to realize their recruitment goals for Fall 2013. Perhaps you are running behind in applications? Maybe the number of applicants you have accepted for admission is less than at this time last year? Perhaps you have generated fewer enrollment deposits compared to the same time last year.

It is not too late. There are still some initiatives that can be undertaken to improve outcomes:

Consider a late search

If your customer base seems insufficient to meet your enrollment goals, you may want to consider another search outreach via regular mail or electronic communication to prospective student names that can be purchased from The College Board, American College testing or National Research Center for College and University Admissions. While it is true that most students have made their decisions on which college to attend or at least to which institutions to send applications, there are still undecided students even this late in the cycle. Some students start the college selection process late. Some may have decided upon a school, but recently learned that they were not accepted for admission. Even students accepted for admission may have recently discovered that their financial aid packages are insufficient to make at-

ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS CONTINUED:

tendance realistic. There is still time to identify new inquiries.

Initiate late outreach to students in your inquiry database who have not applied for admission

The majority of students who have taken action to express an interest in a particular college or university never actually apply for admission. You may have as many as 90% of prospective students in your database who have not yet applied for admission. It is not too late to initiate contact with these students to encourage them to apply. Telephone calls tend to be the most effective mechanism, but you may also wish to consider sending email messages or text messages to encourage students to apply for admission. Late applicants for admission tend to enroll at relatively high rates.

Proactively encourage all of your admission applicants to apply for financial aid

It is not unusual for colleges and universities to have as many as 50-70% of their admission applicants never actually apply for financial aid at the institution. Given the state of the economy and national concerns with regard to college affordability, outcomes are likely to improve for colleges able to provide financial aid packages to a higher percentage of admission applicants.

Package applicants for financial aid

It is important to send financial aid packages to new students who have applied for financial aid. Sometimes, the timing of the award can be as important as the details of the award. Resist the temptation to accept excuses for delayed packaging such as verification.

Schedule a late Spring visit day

Campus visits are so influential in the college selection process. It may be beneficial to schedule a late visit event before the end of the Spring semester to allow an opportunity for students who may have started the selection process late or may have applied for admission in just the last 30-60 days.

It is not too late to increase the number of newly enrolled students for Fall 2013. If you are concerned about your latest recruitment reports, it makes sense to schedule a meeting with key enrollment management staff to discuss a fourth quarter action plan.

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