

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AT ALEXANDRIA BREAKS ALL HISTORIC ENROLLMENT RECORDS!

John W. Dysart
President
THE DYSART GROUP



I am excited to report that Louisiana State University at Alexandria has absolutely crushed nearly every all-time historic record regarding recruitment, retention and enrollment for Fall 2015. The leadership team at LSUA contacted my firm in 2013 to assist in the design and implementation of a new approach to enrollment management with the goal of transforming admissions, financial aid and persistence. We agreed to apply a traditional “private school” model to a public university.

The institution was at a crossroads, having experienced an eight-year steady decline in enrollment that might have threatened its very existence.

Everything changed under the direction of a new Chancellor, Dr. G. Daniel Howard and with the leadership provided by the chief academic officer, Dr. Bobbie Hatfield. School administrators often say that enrollment is everyone’s responsibility. The leadership team at LSUA put that dictum into practice:

- The Chancellor immediately became an integral part of the enrollment management team.
- He attended every strategy meeting.
- He made enrollment growth the institutional priority.
- He ensured the cooperation of all institutional constituent groups even remotely involved in enrollment.
- Dr. Howard challenged the athletic department to expand and reach out to students. The addition of new sports such as rugby and rodeo served to increase enrollment and enhance diversity.
- Dr. Howard worked tirelessly on improving relations with local and regional constituent groups. He reinvigorated local support for the institution.
- Most importantly, he provided all of the necessary resources to implement the new initiatives.

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ON 100% RECYCLED PAPER

LSUA BREAKS ALL ENROLLMENT RECORDS CONTINUED:

Dr. Bobbie Hatfield, the associate chancellor and chief academic officer, agreed to supervise the activities of admission and financial aid in addition to her other responsibilities:

- Dr. Hatfield worked to make significant adjustments in academic advising to improve retention and support recruitment.
- She made difficult changes in course scheduling and offerings to accommodate more students.
- She ensured that advisors and department chairs took responsibility to enroll and register students. They did not wait for the students to come to them, they reached out by email and telephone to both new and returning students.
- Dr. Hatfield worked to make exceptional changes in dual enrollment for high school students. While this massive initiative provided much needed opportunities to high school students, it ensured higher enrollment rates at LSUA and will likely lead to higher college attendance rates for students in the region.

The initial outcomes are record breaking, despite major budget and demographic challenges. My latest numbers indicate the following:

- In less than two years, total enrollment has increased by 39%.
- During the same period, the number of students electing to live on campus soared by 41%.
- The number of international students has grown by 20 times!
- The number of newly enrolled freshmen is at the highest level in ten years.
- The number of newly enrolled transfer students is up by 92% comprising the largest number ever.

- Academic quality has improved and more students are participating in the Honors Program than ever before.
- While enrollment rates from the local area have improved dramatically, the University has enrolled the highest number of out-of-state students in history. The institution has achieved 100% occupancy in on-campus housing despite the increase in capacity this year.

The management team at Louisiana State University at Alexandria has demonstrated how an institutional-wide, collaborative effort can produce extraordinary enrollment outcomes.

SUREFIRE IDEAS TO RECRUIT STUDENTS MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED

April Clark
CAS

We are finding there are so many channels available to reach prospective students that it is harder to find the best ways to communicate. This means that institutions are struggling to find the most effective channels while trying to stay competitive and still meet enrollment goals. Managing your school's marketing mix using data-driven methods helps the targeting, recruiting and retaining student processes to be more efficient.

Here are four ways to enhance your marketing strategies in the quest to influence those students most likely to succeed at your school, and then to maximize outcomes.

Utilize Market Research

The body of students comes from many lifestyle segments. By targeting the types of students your school needs to recruit, you can be successful in finding them by using events throughout the student lifecycle to determine whom to recruit. This process of using market research to define your piece of the multifaceted landscape of students starts with categorizing your target audiences through research-based trends, demographics and psychographics. This data can often be found by reviewing government reports on student enrollment and through third-party research firms.

Workforce and Program Coordination

As in all marketing and sales, degree programs must change based on the supply and demand of workforce needs and our ever-changing business landscape. It is important to monitor and measure current success rates in particular academic programs by following up on graduates' job placement. The upshot of monitoring placement is the inevitable need to explore updating, or perhaps even removing, certain programs that are no longer relevant in the workforce. This information is also valuable in the quest to focus marketing efforts on those prospects best matched to your school programs – an important goal.

Academic Analysis using Predictive Models

The process of building a model to improve marketing efforts involves input from data analytics software, historical information, and a targeted base of data to define the parameters. All of this information contributes to developing new and improved recruiting methods. The previous workplace data plus the modeled data work together to help your job placement department to inform prospective students of the labor demand in the school's area, or of places where demand for their degrees exists. The so-called big data incorporated into the process of your institution's marketing efforts generates the best outcomes for students.

Build the Focus of Student Outcome into Your Curriculum

Student retention continues to be an increasingly important topic for both universities and colleges. In recent months, significantly more attention is being paid to the role that higher education institutions play in achieving student outcomes, and the students are counting on necessary improvements to enhance their education. Gone are the days where education of students was the end of the school's responsibility. These days the school is taking on more responsibility in the success of their students. The incoming freshman more often than not are not prepared to study independently or be able to exist in the college environment without support. Both gradual large-scale changes and smaller reforms will lay the foundation for a reinvigorated, modern school system that ends in a successful student matriculation.

As everywhere else in our new world, government

oversight and regulation have created their own challenges for today's colleges. The press has highlighted several for-profit schools that were fined and remain in the public eye for non-compliance to legislation. As a result of negative press and government action, for-profit schools have been stigmatized unjustly as entities that rely on deceptive marketing and recruiting tactics. The first priority needs to be the assurance that institutional improvements happen soon, and this begins with understanding the student lifecycle from initial contact to job placement and the importance of that relationship. It is clear that utilizing and combining external marketing strategies with student data is instrumental in determining where improvements should be made.

The student lifecycle data collection includes all marketing channels, school tenure and employment outcomes. Schools, along with their partners, must ensure marketing tactics are transparent and straightforward. Marketing strategies need to be nimble and easy to revise on the fly, allowing the school to respond to changes in public interest and demand. Coordination across all marketing channels allows school marketing departments to execute superior brand experiences that deepen student loyalty and provide

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SUREFIRE IDEAS TO RECRUIT STUDENTS CONTINUED:

the support they expect.

After inspecting marketing strategies and updating them, the other side of the coin says that there is not enough data being shared among the schools and their marketing partners to make informed, data-based decisions and optimize the information. Schools can partner with their marketing agencies to leverage that big data and analysis to make those improvements needed for the flow of information. This transparency aids the understanding of success, events and factors between school and agency for future success.

As the industry continues to focus on reviving our existing education system, there are many alignments that schools and marketing partners need to consider. Improved marketing tactics, utilizing external sources and consolidated partnerships will lead to better understanding and improvement upon the success of the student lifecycle.

These methods help you to understand the student landscape and the relevancy of your marketing to student opportunities. It relies heavily on market research, constant measuring and using data to optimize your school's relevant enhancements to programs.

Incorporating the above suggestions into your marketing approach will allow recruiting efforts to focus on targeting students that are most likely to succeed, and make the student experience the best possible scenario to maximize outcomes.

ENSURING THE RIGHT "FIT" WITH THE CHIEF ENROLLMENT OFFICER

Marylouise Fennell
Principal
Hyatt-Fennell

Scott D. Miller
President
Virginia Wesleyan College

In the last issue of "Enrollment Manager," we discussed

concluding and assessing the most recent recruitment cycle, and implementing an effective enrollment strategy for the coming year. Because turnover in chief enrollment officers often occurs at this time of year, too, it is important not to disrupt momentum.

Solid planning is a key to recruitment continuity, and essential in attracting the right vice president or dean of enrollment. Institutional Reviews can establish strategic priorities—including those impacting student recruitment and retention. We also believe, however, that a detailed assessment of the program should include identifying the most desirable qualifications for the chief enrollment officer.

To save time and resources, we suggest contracting with a reputable executive search firm with a proven enrollment search history to facilitate the match with the best candidate. Many of our colleagues have utilized John Dysart, President of The Dysart Group, for enrollment assessment. His firm typically devotes two weeks to historical data analysis before conducting an onsite visit. The data process steers the onsite visit. Once completed, the enrollment assessment can be utilized to locate the best executive "fit" for the college or university.

Executive Essentials

Chief enrollment officers should have demonstrated ability in the following areas:

- A strategic and comprehensive vision of enrollment for undergraduate, graduate, adult-education, and non-traditional students.
- An understanding of financial-aid policies and practices; compliance with all government, auditing, and accreditation requirements, and focused, results-oriented marketing strategies through aid packaging. Particularly important are aid disbursement, preparation of summaries and reports, and strategic leverage of financial aid to maximize enrollment within net-revenue parameters.
- Ability to work with marketing, media, and public-relations staff, as well as outside vendors, to produce a comprehensive and cost-effective marketing plan for enrollment—including tracking and evaluating cost benefits and making adjustments as necessary.

ENSURING THE RIGHT “FIT” CONTINUED:

- Leadership on the President’s Executive Council, providing timely updates, reports on new programs and activities, and discussion on the initiatives and goals of the division as they relate to the college’s strategic plan.
- Appropriate interaction with the Board of Trustees and applicable Board committees for communication of initiatives, strategies, and progress.

Above all, he or she must be an active institutional spokesperson, a team builder, and an accomplished motivator who holds staff accountable.

Transformational Vision Begins at the Top

We’ve written before on transformational presidential leadership. In such an environment, the relationship between the college president and the chief enrollment officer is crucial. Because enrollment is the single most important revenue driver at most colleges and universities, and with competition becoming ever more intense, institutional viability depends on the success of that relationship.

In dozens of consultancies at institutions, we’ve found that all have at least one thing in common: a proactive president who demonstrates commitment to a culture of recruitment and retention.

Dr. James L. Fisher, noted author and President-emeritus of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, states, “A transformational leader can be likened to the captain of a ship; others may steer the ship, but the captain must first chart a clear vision.” Presidents should develop such a vision, insist on best enrollment practices, and openly link recruitment and retention to the financial health of the college.

Although vision is vital, attention to detail is equally important. Weekly reports from the chief enrollment officer should include:

- **An overall report** that includes, but is not limited to, contacts, inquiries, applications, completed applications, acceptances, and

confirmations;

- **Individual reports** for counselors and call-center personnel that include volume of contacts and conversions, and
- **Financial aid reports** including, but not limited to, pre-awards, awards, and acceptances.

The effective president always has command of this information.

Presidential expectations for the chief enrollment officer include setting realistic goals; energetic development of website and e-marketing (including social media), and strategic use of print media, direct mail, and the college’s first-year program. Further, he or she must understand the vital role of research in analyzing trends in the volatile world of admissions and financial aid, the value of student orientation, and the necessity of retention and advising. Finally, the effective chief enrollment officer must operate from a bottom-line perspective, focusing on the objectives of each component reporting to this area. When the president and the chief enrollment officer work together to combine big-picture and detail-oriented factors, successful outcomes are much more likely.

Dr. Scott D. Miller is President of Virginia Wesleyan College. Previously, he was President of Bethany College, Wesley College and Lincoln Memorial University. 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 13 books, including “President to President: Views on Technology in Higher Education” (Volumes I to III) and “Presidential Perspectives” (Volumes I to IX). They edit the popular higher education on line thought series “Presidential Perspectives” (Aramark Higher Education), now in its 10th year (www.presidentialperspectives.org).

Both serve as consultants to college presidents and boards.

Congratulations to **Alverno College** in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for achieving a 19% increase in new, first-year students this year while growing the number of new students living in the residence halls by 56%!

Congratulations to **Wesley College** in Dover, Delaware for securing a 14% increase in the number of new students this year!

Congratulations to **Georgetown College** in Georgetown, Kentucky after posting another consecutive year of growth by 6% in the number of new students!

Congratulations to **Louisiana State University at Alexandria** for achieving the largest enrollment ever!



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