

# ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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## LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AT ALEXANDRIA CONTINUES UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH

John W. Dysart  
President  
THE DYSART GROUP



The last decade has been extremely difficult for public colleges and universities in Louisiana. Tax cuts and funding reductions have decimated the budgets of public institutions. Consider the following:

- Louisiana has cut \$684 million dollars from public higher education since 2008.
- This amounts to a 40% reduction in the last decade.
- The state has cut funding more than any other state in the country.
- Louisiana still faces a \$900

million deficit for the current year so additional cuts are likely.

- It has been estimated that another \$70 million could be cut from the higher education budget.

One institution is growing in spite of budget cuts. Enrollment has soared at LSUA since the arrival of the new Chancellor, Dr. G. Daniel Howard and the implementation of a new recruitment and financial aid plan. The growth at Louisiana State University at Alexandria has been extraordinary and it continues as enrollment outcomes were released for Spring 2016.

- Total enrollment is up by 13% this Spring.
- It marks the highest Spring enrollment in more than ten years, when the University had “open enrollment.”
- The number of newly enrolled freshmen grew by 140% compared to the previous year.
- The number of new transfer students jumped by 38%.
- The number of students participating in dual enrollment at LSUA increased by 28%.
- Significant gains were also realized with international students, minority students and out-of-state students.

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THIS NEWSLETTER IS PRINTED  
ON 100% RECYCLED PAPER

## LSUA CONTINUES UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH CONTINUED:

Congratulations to the Chancellor and enrollment team at LSUA for increasing college attendance rates in Louisiana and providing educational opportunities despite budget cuts.

## ENROLLMENT MARKETING 101: POSITIONING YOUR WEBSITE AND PRINTED PUBLICATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Dr. Marylouise Fennell  
Principal  
Hyatt-Fennell

Dr. Scott D. Miller  
President  
Virginia Wesleyan College

Having advised over a hundred institutions about effective communications for student recruitment, we've learned a troubling truth: too often, administrators choose outmoded web and publication design strategies that appeal to their personal tastes rather than approaches tested through focus groups.

**Rule number one in enrollment management is *know your audience*.**

The student recruitment landscape today is driven by texting and social media. Yet many colleges and universities rely on a mixed-use publication policy—writing in a content-heavy style for alumni and friends of all generations, and then applying the same publication strategy to communicating with prospective students.

Younger audiences, the “digital natives” of our time, are unlikely to read lengthy articles; they respond better to the brevity and informality of texting and the latest, hottest social media. Print articles can be used to drive readers to the institution’s website and social

media sites, and links to these should be prominently displayed throughout the publication. A college magazine, along with other print publications, no matter how beautifully designed, cannot fulfill the responsibility of informing and persuading tech-savvy high school juniors and seniors.

**Hone your messaging and sharpen your media in traditional and online publications.**

- Enhance the readability and graphic appearance of publications by significantly cutting text.
- Use subheads, italics, bolding, boxes and screens for greater visual impact.
- Run larger, tightly cropped photos.
- Call-outs can be used to add interest to publication content and to break up type.
- In addition to using high-quality, large, tightly cropped visuals, we recommend eliminating “potpourri” pages in favor of shots that yield greater impact and eliminate distraction.
- Replace staged, staring-at-the-camera photos of students and faculty with those showing greater interaction between students and between students and faculty.
- Eliminate photos of building exteriors without students or people. Use front and back magazine covers to reinforce strategic messaging and to display stunning visuals.
- Inconsistent headline styles and type fonts contribute to a cluttered appearance. Fonts should be clean and consistent, with no more than two, or at the most, three, different styles employed. We recommend no script, as it is difficult to read. Headlines also need to be standardized, with active verbs and no passive or “label” headlines.

## ENROLLMENT MARKETING 101 CONTINUED:

- Features should showcase current student, faculty and alumni achievement. Boxes, blurbs and short text can replace some lengthier features.
- Print and web platforms need to show, not tell:
  - Strong value for tuition dollar;
  - Safe and attractive location within convenient travel time;
  - Opportunities to network and develop mentors;
  - Unique advantages of the location (i.e. Scott's college is located in Virginia Beach — a real attraction to college-aged students—and Weezie served as president in Pittsburgh, "The Most Livable City in the USA"). Other institutions might be located near independent high-tech or research centers which offer opportunities for students in math, engineering and computer science fields;
  - Close student/faculty interaction;
  - A vibrant campus with diverse opportunities for student engagement;
  - A sense of community and purpose in career preparation;
  - A variety of undergraduate and graduate programs and majors.
- Write copy with the "so what?" factor in mind, answering:
  - How will my experience translate into career opportunities after graduation?
  - Will I gain a leadership edge over those at large universities?
  - Do student athletes stand a better chance to play?
  - Does student/faculty engagement translate into a richer academic experience and mentoring that will assist in employment and graduate school opportunities?
  - How about networking opportunities compared with those available at larger schools?
- Stress outcomes. Link degree completion to specific career advantages. Highlight employers of recent graduates. Profile young alumni in hot career fields.

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## ENROLLMENT MARKETING 101 CONTINUED:

- Your website and print publications should articulate ways in which your institution is distinctive, not simply different.
- Websites and print publications should complement each other, with the printed pieces driving audiences to the more interactive platforms of the website and social media.
- Use your website effectively to reach today's tech-savvy students (and young alumni).

Thanks to online technology, current and prospective students, as well as young alumni, process information that is brief and convenient to absorb. Your website should therefore anticipate the heavily visual perspective of the “millennial” generation:

- Put the admissions section at the front and make it easily navigable for prospective students to schedule a tour and to apply.
- Make a 360-degree virtual tour available from the home page to showcase the scenic beauty of the campus.
- Add quick links to profiles of current students/young alumni, showcasing successful career outcomes.
- Make a separate page for employers and referral possibilities.
- Focus on value for tuition dollar.
- Consider creating an entirely online admissions interview process and application using avatars to facilitate enrollment of international and out-of-state students.

- Develop a secure “My \_\_\_\_\_” site for admitted students to create a virtual community with other accepted students, faculty, current majors in their field and young alumni.
- Secondary pages should be designed for each academic program including specifics on internships, employment of young alumni, average starting salaries and enrollment of recent alumni in graduate and professional settings.

Increasingly, colleges and universities are embracing vehicles such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, and more. More than 60 percent of college students report visiting these sites daily, and all have great potential, with a high return on investment and nominal or no production or distribution costs for marketing compared with more traditional media. All are “musts” when used strategically to reinforce your brand and message across multiple platforms.

Remember the basics of research, analysis and evaluation that you would apply to traditional media: Who is your target audience? Where is it? When and how is it using social media? And finally, how will it advance your institutional mission?

By implementing these recommendations, you can convey messages and traditional strengths to new and future audiences in an interactive, compelling and contemporary manner.

*Dr. Scott D. Miller is president of Virginia Wesleyan College in Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Virginia. He was previously president of Bethany College, Wesley College, and Lincoln Memorial University. He is chair of the Board of Directors of Academic Search, Inc. and serves as a consultant to college presidents and boards.*

*Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, a former president of Carlow University, is senior counsel for the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and principal of Hyatt-Fennell, a higher education search firm.*

## RECRUITMENT AND FINANCIAL AID STRATEGIES ARE CHANGING AT MANY GRADUATE SCHOOLS

John W. Dysart  
President  
THE DYSART GROUP

The marketplace for graduate schools is changing. Many colleges and universities have been implementing significant adjustments to their recruitment and financial aid tactics and strategies to respond to the new, more challenging landscape.

- Across the country, colleges and universities are looking for revenue streams and the pressure is on graduate programs to produce revenue like never before.
- Even many of the most prestigious institutions are no longer able to rely on academic reputations alone to meet their graduate enrollment objectives.
- Competition continues to increase as more and more schools add new graduate offerings.
- Opportunities for students to cover their graduate education expenses by utilizing employee benefits are declining.

We know that the marketplace has changed. Why are so many schools struggling to identify the appropriate approaches that will improve outcomes?

- Many schools have operated for decades without employing professional admission administrators and counselors.
- Just identifying the customer base at a reasonable price for graduate recruitment is difficult. Unlike the testing services for undergraduate students, there is no central database available to identify students who might be interested in graduate school.

- Available research data on important metrics in graduate recruitment are scarce. Trying to find reliable industry standards for application rates, the size of inquiry pools, acceptance rates, discount rates and yield rates is virtually impossible.

So what are colleges and universities doing to improve recruitment outcomes for graduate enrollment?

- Some schools are moving graduate recruitment and financial aid out of the academic departments and into centralized enrollment divisions.
- There is movement from graduate professionals acting as gate-keepers to professionals serving as recruiters.
- Some schools are conducting reviews of recruitment tactics and assessing “return on investment” for the first time.
- Financial aid, including scholarships, grants and assistantships, is being more effectively targeted to meet enrollment goals.
- More institutions are front-loading scholarship offers in order to encourage students to apply for admission.
- Deals are being negotiated with companies for discounts for employees enrolling in graduate programs at particular institutions.
- Colleges and universities are starting to begin recruitment activities at the inquiry stage rather than the traditional method of just working with prospective students after they apply for admission.
- Schools are generally taking a more data-driven approach to graduate recruitment.

The marketplace has changed and many graduate schools are slowly adapting to new realities.

## **Ten Recruitment Challenges Faced by Many Colleges and Universities**

Low Retention and Graduation Rates

Rising Tuition Discount Rates

Stagnating Federal and State Support for Financial Aid

Scarce Admission Resources Due to Budget Cuts

Increased Competition

Student Loan Indebtedness

Changing Demographics

Slow Economic Recovery

Technological Evolution

Insufficient Endowments  
Creating Over-Reliance on Net Tuition Revenue



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