

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY AND OUTCOMES FOR YOUR ADMISSION COUNSELORS

John W. Dysart
President
THE DYSART GROUP

The role of admission counselors in the enrollment management process is important. While at a few institutions they serve as folder reviewers and gate-keepers, for the majority of colleges and universities they are on the front lines of educating and influencing prospective students and their families. What can enrollment leaders do to maximize the impact of admission counselors?

Select Carefully

Often, insufficient effort is put into identifying and hiring admission counselors.

- Seek candidates outside of your recent graduates. While recent graduates can be an excellent source, it is always a good idea to try and hire at least one or two individuals with experience outside of just your college or university.
- Interview a diverse candidate pool. It is helpful if the gender and ethnic makeup of your admission counselor team reflects the student population you serve.

- Be crystal clear during the interview process regarding your expectations. Do your best to describe the job in detail including hours, travel, telephone work, electronic communication outreach, social media and any weekend commitments.



Pay Appropriately

No one wants to talk about compensation, but admission counselors are often among the lowest paid professionals at colleges and universities.

- Understand both the importance of their role and the very real financial impact of their failure or success.
- Unlike some other positions on campus, admission counselors are often expected to travel and work weekends and evenings.

Research Position Pay Scales Nationally and/or in Your Region

You cannot expect superior performance without competitive compensation.

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INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY AND OUTCOMES CONTINUED:

- Recall that compensation includes consideration of salaries, benefits, work schedules and vacation time.
- Many organizations publish means and averages on admission counselor compensation including NACAC, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Indeed.com, Glassdoor.com and Payscale.com.

Provide Internal Training

One cannot underestimate the value of training for admission counselors and much of the training can be provided on campus.

- All admission counselors should be given access to an electronic training manual. Creating Power Point presentations on the important topics for admission counselors helps.
- Electronic format means that counselors can easily refresh their memories on specific topics throughout the cycle.
- Topics for training presentations include institutional mission, history of the institution, details on each academic major, the admission standard, conducting effective college fairs, co-curricular opportunities on campus, service opportunities, benefits of residential life, athletics, campus visits, effective communication basics and utilization of social media in the recruitment process.

Testing

Providing training materials is not enough.

- Leaders should implement testing for admission counselors to ensure sufficient knowledge of the institution, its history, attributes and mission.

Insist on Professional Development

Admission counselors should be encouraged to engage in professional development outside of campus.

- Administrators should budget to invest in such professional development.
- Many organizations offer excellent professional development opportunities for admission counselors. Begin by researching the following:
 1. NACAC
 2. NASFAA
 3. ABHE
 4. TRACS
 5. AACRAO
 6. Academic Impressions

Proper Scheduling

Understand that if you intend for your admission counselors to develop relationships with their prospective students and to provide information about your institution and assist them through the process, they must be in consistent telephone communication with admission applicants.

- Telephone communication means evening hours every week as high school students are not available for telephone calls during 9:00-5:00 working hours.
- Counselor schedules must include flex scheduling to avoid, as often as possible, working more than 40 hours a week. If a counselor is to call until 9:00 in the evening on Monday, she must be able to start her work day at noon or 1:00.

Technological Support

It seems so obvious, but effective admission counselors utilize text messaging as the primary electronic communication mechanism with admission applicants.

- Admission counselors must be equipped with college-provided smart phones.

INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY AND OUTCOMES CONTINUED:

Reduce Travel

Admission counselors need time to communicate with applicants to explain your academic and co-curricular opportunities, tout your location and physical plant and discuss the success of your graduates. Unproductive travel to high schools not generating admission applicants, and college fairs unlikely to produce inquiries, is an impediment to counselor success.

Track Contact Rates and Outcomes

Have mechanisms in place to track counselor performance so that leadership can continuously offer positive feedback and provide additional training or counsel as necessary.

Create Career Tracks for Advancement

Securing an admission counselor position can be a terrific entry-level job at most institutions. In order to effectively encourage excellence and promote retention, establishing a clear career track for admission counselors is essential.

- At minimum, be clear in demonstrating the requirements, achievements and expectations for pay increases.
- Enrollment success and experience should provide opportunities for title changes and increased responsibilities. Consider the following track:
 1. Admission Counselor
 2. Senior Admission Counselor
 3. Assistant Director of Admission
 4. Associate Director of Admission
 5. Director of Admission

Mentoring

Mentoring is critical. Directors of Admission and Vice Presidents for Enrollment must set aside time for

engagement, encouragement and role modeling for admission counselors.

The majority of colleges and universities rely on the work of admission counselors for success on the recruitment front. Counselor productivity is imperative to meet new student enrollment goals and to achieve total headcount targets and net revenue objectives. In this competitive market, Presidents and enrollment leaders must make sure that the stage is properly set to ensure admission counselor efficiency, productivity and ultimately, success.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL CONTENT IN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

John W. Dysart
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Digital content has become a major component of college and university marketing. Institutions are utilizing web

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THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL CONTENT CONTINUED:

sites, text messaging, email messaging and social media to reach prospective students and parents. As you consider your use of digital content, consider the following:

- More online video content is uploaded in 30 days than the major U.S. TV networks have created in 30 years.
- When seen in a video, 95% of a message is retained.
- 81% of millennials check Twitter at least once a day.
- The optimal length of a video is no longer than 30 seconds for 81% of viewers.
- More than three billion people are on some type of social media.
- Google is responsible for 96% of all smartphone search traffic.
- It would take 10 years to view all the photos shared on Snapchat in the last hour.
- 57% of all mobile users will not recommend a business if their website is unresponsive or poorly designed.
- On average, 63,000 Google searches are performed every second.
- By 2020, 50% of all searches will be voice searches.
- The top four search results yield 96% of clicks.
- About one-half of all searches are four words or more.
- 15% of Google searches have never been previously searched.
- 90% of searchers have not made up their minds about a brand before their search.
- Video content is 50 times more likely to drive search results than text.
- Companies spent \$90 million on SnapChat ads in 2016.
- Mobile devices are the tools to access nearly 80% of all social media content.
- Videos generate 12 times more shares on social media than text and images combined.
- About 72% of Internet users are now active on social media.



Digital communication and marketing are important, and their influence is growing. Be aware of the trends and take advantage of digital communication opportunities in your enrollment management tactics.

WHEN CELEBRATING SUCCESS IS NOT ENOUGH: AVOIDING COMPLACENCY IN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Dr. Marylouise Fennell
Principal
Hyatt-Fennell

Dr. Scott D. Miller
President
Virginia Wesleyan University

Your institution has had a successful recruitment year, the incoming students have experienced a fun orientation and said their goodbyes with family, and classes have begun for the fall term. It's late August, and all is well, right?

There's something missing, however: what you're supposed to be doing *next*. To keep enrollment momentum going, it's imperative that admissions staff never take their eyes off recruitment goals for even a second. Complacency among enrollment staff, coupled with lax accountability and expectations by their supervisors, can undo winning programs.

The result? One successful year without strict adherence to goals for next year can mean loss of market share, empty beds in residence halls, even new rounds of operational budget cuts.

With extensive experience in student recruitment during his 28 years as a college president, Scott has learned to take nothing for granted in the enrollment office. Simultaneously he has developed a set of "recruitment commandments" that cannot be broken.

Visit the enrollment office early and often.

To ensure that staff are not simply sitting back and reading their own press reviews, presidents need to insert themselves in each recruitment cycle. Ask for trends data, regular reports on conversion of applications to deposits, coherence with marketing strategies and institutional messaging, and updates on staff evaluation and accountability. Each day he's on campus, Scott makes a point of checking in personally with the Vice President for Enrollment once or twice a day. When he's on the road, emails and texts prompt updates.

Stress the vital revenue stream of enrollment.

Most institutions are enrollment-driven, meaning that operating budgets are balanced on occupied seats in classes and beds in the residence halls. Unless your college or university has an exceptionally large endowment, as enrollment goes so goes the budget. One year's downturn can have significant consequences on the balance sheet, usually leading to required cuts in personnel and program budgets. Therefore, not meeting admissions goals is not an option.

Clarify goals.

Make sure that the head of enrollment and his or her fellow coordinators and counselors have clear understanding of goals. Counselors may have more than one set of numbers to hit, depending on what kinds of students are being recruited. Goals might be met for one group of students, while others are neglected. An example is bringing in the targeted number of commuting transfers while failing to produce the full-time, residential students who really drive the operating budget.

Beware the downward spiral of declining enrollment.

Campuses represent multiple realms of internal and external communication. Students talk to students—on campus and back home. Faculty listen closely for enrollment updates and the possibility of salary increases. Trustees and alumni councils expect to hear that the numbers are up, not down. Email and social media can spread negative or false perceptions about the health of your institution. The best antidote is good news from the enrollment operation. Just as important is transmitting that good news to your stakeholders—including current and prospective students—because exciting your internal constituents empowers them to be strong advocates externally.

Make sure the enrollment operation has the right kind of support.

In addition to establishing clear goals and holding staff accountable, regularly review your electronic and printed publications, website, social media, and marketing and communications collateral. Be consistent and current across all platforms with your messaging, branding, and constituent talking points. Someone on

AVOIDING COMPLACENCY IN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT CONTINUED:

staff should monitor institutional social-media sites, and counter negative, invalid, or out-of-date postings quickly. Set up welcome signage for open houses and related events. Train student tour guides to respond to questions with easily understood answers.

Be adaptable.

Even the best enrollment plan can use updating or adjusting. While being careful not to change strategies too quickly without adequate evaluation of results, be open to new directions for marketing. Tweaking can make a huge difference. For example, focusing on a few key themes (think value of education, not just cost; stress timely completion of undergraduate work, dual-degree programs) can help prospects and their families see your institution's commitment to student success.

With each passing year, the enrollment game becomes more challenging—and the rules often change without notice. Two constants, however, should be resistance to complacency and adherence to a comprehensive enrollment plan and the goals it outlines. Otherwise, it's all too easy to go backward in August instead of ahead.

Dr. Scott D. Miller is President of Virginia Wesleyan University, Virginia Beach, VA. 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, is senior counsel for the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and principal of Hyatt Fennell, a higher education search firm.

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New Year
to all
our readers!**



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THE DYSART GROUP is a higher education consulting firm specializing in enrollment management. We have provided enrollment management services to nearly 200 colleges and universities throughout the United States with extraordinary results.

Admissions

We have worked collaboratively with colleges and universities to significantly grow enrollment. Our institution-specific recommendations have helped colleges and universities increase the number of admission applications as much as three-fold. Improved communication strategies and new tracking metrics have resulted in higher folder completion rates and increased the number of students accepted for admission.

Financial Aid/Pricing

Client institutions have been able to transform policies and practices to significantly improve financial aid operational efficiency, design better targeted institutional scholarship and grant programs, stabilize or reduce discount rates and utilize scarce institutional aid resources to specifically support recruitment and retention objectives.

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