

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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MAKING BOLD CHANGES TO EASE THE TRANSITION FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

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President
THE DYSART GROUP

As demographics continue to decline, the value proposition for college is under attack and competition increases, the need to increase or stabilize new student enrollment is paramount for most colleges and universities.

Transfer students can be a valuable source of new enrollments for many colleges and universities. The nature of transfer enrollments has changed over the last decade, yet institutions have been slow to adapt.

Schools have become more aggressive in their attempts to lure transfer students but often have introduced traditional tactics and half-measures to attract transfer students.

Scholarships and Grants

Affordability is a key metric for transfer students so many institutions now have scholarship and grant programs designed specifically for the transfer market.

Transfer grants and scholarships are great, but *bolder* mechanisms may be necessary.

- Consider increasing the amount of merit scholarships and grants to make the starting net price more competitive.
- Review your packaging formula to ensure that even after merit assistance you are prepared to meet a reasonable percentage of financial need.
- Understand that more and more transfer students have attended multiple institutions in the past. Such history often means that they might run out of state or federal eligibility for some financial aid programs before they can secure enough credits to graduate. Is your Financial Aid Office prepared to address aid gaps for these students even if it means higher discount rates?
- Your Financial Aid Office may need to consider estimated financial aid packages for both incomplete transfer applicants and transfer inquiries. Transfer students tend to be more informed consumers and sometimes wish to get an idea of the net price prior to completing the admission process.

Transcript Evaluations

Virtually everyone understands the importance of transcript evaluations in the transfer process and every college and university has a procedure in place to review transcripts. Evaluation outcomes

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MAKING BOLD CHANGES FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS CONTINUED:

are critical for prospective transfer students because they will impact the length of time it takes to complete a degree, will determine the remaining cost of the degree, will have vital implications for financial aid eligibility and student debt and will establish how soon students will be able to enter the workforce.

Transcript evaluations are great, but *bolder* approaches may be necessary.

- Reduce the number of credits needed to graduate.
- Reduce the cap on allowable transfer credits.
- Be more lenient in granting credit for work and life experience

Easing the process for transfer students will take more than just talk. It is important to consider difficult changes in institutional policy and process to make your school more attractive to transfer students.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES!

Pat Ford
Program Director
Martin Methodist College

Laura Morefield
Program Director
Martin Methodist College

First Year Experience at Martin Methodist College looked really good on paper—it was evidence-based with substantive student learning outcomes but somehow or another did not really seem to produce the results that it should have. After an unexpected change in leadership and a year of study, FYE faculty concluded that no, in its current configuration, the program was solid but it did not fit the needs of the demographics of our first year

students; there was more emphasis on academic discourse and less on “how to do college.” FYE was not addressing the transition from high school to college for first-gen students from largely rural and poor communities.

One of the first changes to FYE was to replace the “common reader” with a very common reader that nobody was reading: the college catalog. The FYE students used the catalog in a variety of ways, from day one, including during opening week sessions and a “Catalog Question of the Day” at the beginning of each class period. “What do I do if I want to drop a class?” “What is drop-add?” “What does TTh mean on the schedule?” “What is FERPA? FAFSA?” “What??”—all serious questions that can lead to expensive lessons for those who are learning the language of college.

A second change that led to an immediate change in student behavior was the implementation of the philosophy to learn by doing, so instead of faculty telling students about campus resources, a whole class took a “field trip” to the support offices on campus. In the past these offices had come to meet with each class, inviting students to visit on their own. Now, though, students physically walked up the hill to the Clinic, down the hill to the Library, across the campus to the Student Resource Center, etc. These visits ensured that students not only knew what services were offered, but where they were located; more importantly, they met staff and were able to put faces with the office and its services. Student use of support services increased dramatically, especially in the library, the Clinic and the campus life house.

A third change focused on incorporating college students into the college community, of course, but also into the community at large. So the FYE program implemented a problem-based learning assignment and a service project. The semester-long, problem-based learning assignment began when students arrived on campus and concluded with a presentation during finals week. Each class was tasked with discovering a “problem” on campus or in the community. Once the project was identified, the group was charged with researching the solution to the problem and presenting their findings at the end of the semester.

Another component added to FYE was a day of service during opening week. All first year students, their faculty, some staff and about 100 other students walked “Into the Streets” with bright red “town and gown” tee shirts to engage in service projects across the community.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES CONTINUED:

This project was invaluable in so many ways, from helping FYE groups bond to acquainting students with their community to emphasizing the importance of giving back.

Student evaluations told us we were doing something right and retention from fall to spring increased almost 10% over the previous year. Students told us they felt at home, felt a part of things, and many declared that FYE was their favorite class.

FYE will implement the following data-driven changes in the 2019-20 school year: A Peer Academic Leader (PAL) tip of the week, trending topic of the week and cultural/educational trips. The PAL tip of the week will be PAL-driven, based on a topic that the PAL in each FYE class wishes that s/he knew during their freshman year. The trending topic of the week will help teach cultural awareness by keeping students abreast of the news and discussing it each week.

We are also looking to implement cultural/educational trips for the FYE students, large numbers of whom have never travelled out of the local area. These day trips are designed to allow students an opportunity to expand their horizons, to experience different cultural or educational events such as a visit to the Tennessee Capitol Building, a play or concert at The Tennessee Performing Arts Center, a museum, a formal dinner. And very practically, these trips also allow faculty and staff another avenue to build relationships with first-year students outside of the classroom.

Assessment data from the 2018-19 school year showed that students have a better understanding of "how to be a college student." We are seeing a big difference in the freshman class. They seem to be very knowledgeable about campus resources and offices, how and where to ask for help, and, yes, how to use their catalog. The FYE program 2.0 seems a good fit for our students; it is certainly student-oriented and will continue to serve as a clear resource for students transitioning to college.

CONCERNS REGARDING GROWING DISCOUNT RATES AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

John W. Dysart
President
THE DYSART GROUP

Much has been written in recent months regarding the implications for the latest tuition discounting survey published by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). While the rate keeps growing, so much of the media has attributed it to declining demographics and the attempt by private colleges and universities to buy students. This could not be further from the truth in my experience. College discount rates are increasing because financial need is growing while state and federal aid have not kept pace to meet the rise of aggregate financial need.

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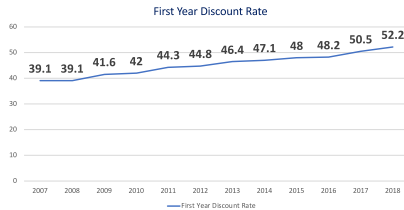
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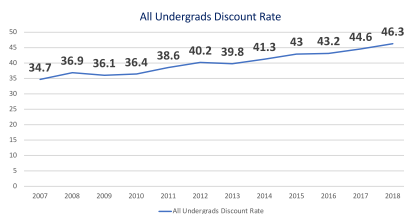
CONCERNS REGARDING GROWING DISCOUNT RATES CONTINUED:

NAACUBO Average Institutional Discount Rate 2007-2018



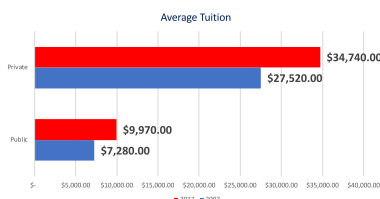
- More minority students are attending college as opportunities expand. Unfortunately, most of these families do not possess the financial resources to cover costs.
- As prices increase each year, financial need for currently enrolled students goes up and the colleges must cover the increased costs for many students.

NAACUBO Average Institutional Discount Rate 2007-2018



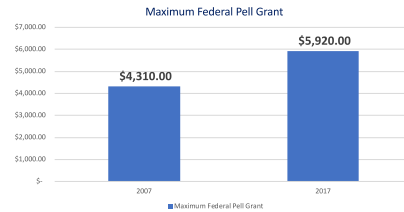
- Tuition costs have risen over the last ten years.

Average Tuition Costs 2007 versus 2017



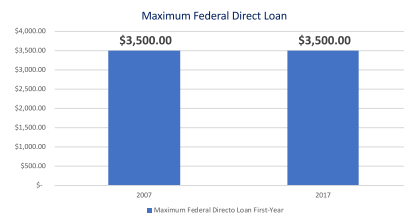
- Federal and state financial assistance has simply not kept pace. We have seen an increase in the Federal Pell Grant in the last ten years but 68% of college students do not qualify for Federal Pell Grants.

Maximum Federal Pell Grant 2007 versus 2017



- Regardless, the \$1,600 increase over ten years does not come close to covering increases in tuition.
- There has been no corresponding increase for the Subsidized Federal Direct Loan over the decade.

Maximum Subsidized Federal Direct Loan (First-Year Student) 2007 versus 2017



Colleges and universities are not investing additional funds into scholarship and grant programs to simply lure more students. The bulk of these funds are being utilized to meet demonstrated financial need.

I am sure there are some institutions engaged in some kind of arms race for students without financial need. If the country wishes to address the problem of growing discount rates, we must consider significantly increasing state and federal funding for need-based financial aid. In the meantime, private colleges and universities have no choice but to either invest in meeting the growing need or deny college access to needy families.

THE ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

Dr. Marylouise Fennell
Principal
Hyatt-Fennell

Dr. Scott D. Miller
President
Virginia Wesleyan University

Once, social media were considered newfangled. Today, we urge you to use these platforms for doing business. It is a cost-effective way to expand your visibility to targeted audiences while promoting your institutional brand. What's not to "like"?

Social media platforms provide the opportunity to expand, reach and engage with a wide variety of audiences on unlimited topics. Those who do not employ social media are missing out on ways of communicating efficiently and quickly to stakeholders.

For years we have advised college and university presidents on a wide variety of operational issues. In this issue, we make recommendations on developing a social media strategy for presidents, the chief spokesperson and primary communicator for any institution.

When Scott was appointed president of Bethany College in 2007, we created and tested a long-term social media strategy. The strategy focused on reinforcing the brand of a nationally ranked liberal arts college in a rural section of West Virginia, and further engaging an already loyal base of alumni and friends. The results during his eight years as president were astonishing, with minimal cost and maximum benefits.

In 2015, he was appointed president of Virginia Wesleyan University—another nationally ranked liberal arts institution, in the thriving metropolitan area of Hampton Roads in Coastal Virginia. Here, he established multiple platforms of social media that he utilizes as president. This is in addition to visibility through regular e-cards, e-blasts, opinion pieces, monthly presidential e-letters, a weekly online newsletter and monthly online commentaries for *The Virginian-Pilot* and other news outlets.

As an active university president who is closely identified with the university's brand, Scott controls eight different platforms from his multiple devices, including desktop, iPhone and iPad. All content reinforces the branding message of Virginia Wesleyan University. These include Flickr, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and a daily blog about campus life which feeds into the university's website. He has 32,959 LinkedIn connections, 1,756 followers and 2,079 page likes on his business Facebook page. He has tweeted more than 58,400 times garnering 2,470 followers and counting. On his newest platform, Instagram, he has 759 followers.

In January of 2015, Scott was one of 22 presidents of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada profiled in "#FollowTheLeader: Lessons in Social Media Success from #HigherEd CEOs." In February 2015 he was named in a national study (by Roland H. King of PhairAdvantage Communications) as one of the "Top 14 Presidents Publishing Op-eds" in 2014. He ranked third in the survey behind Dr. Michael Roth of Wesleyan University.

He and other higher education administrators utilize social media in many ways. Some use multiple platforms, while others focus on one. Some give students a behind-the-scenes look at the life of a university president. Presidents celebrate, advocate, recognize campus achievements, or simply interact—responding to questions, comments and concerns. Most, however, implement a balance of multiple approaches.

Different audiences gravitate toward different platforms and content. For instance, current students and young alumni utilize Twitter and Instagram more than Facebook, while donors and parents are geared toward other platforms.

Here are a few highlights on creating and maintaining an effective social media presence:

Social media quickly and effectively allow you to send multiple, tailored messages to diverse audiences. The varying functions of each platform allow you to expand your audience.

THE ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COLLEGE PRESIDENTS CONTINUED:

Social media permit you to control the frequency and distribution of your messages; keeping content fresh is a must.

You can engage with a variety of constituents with tools that gauge the interests and concerns of your audience.

Through analytics provided by the platform, you can see how many users view and interact with your post. Electronic distribution services at nominal cost allow you to time-deliver messages to balance distribution. These might include campus news, reports and relevant articles from outside organizations that reinforce your institution's message and image.

Finally, in times of crisis, social media platforms are essential in distributing timely alerts, messages, and updates. This not only gets important information out quickly, but also reinforces that the administration is focusing on communications 24/7.

The impact of a social media strategy far outweighs the time needed to create and implement it. And it's clearly here to stay.

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.

Did You Know?

The percentage of students with unmet financial need after financial aid packaging continues to grow according to a 2018 CLASP study. The study indicated that 71% of community college students, 75% of public college students and 78% of students attending private colleges had unmet financial need.



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Florida Hotel and Conference Center
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American Council on Education
Annual Conference
March 14-16, 2020
Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina
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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/Net Revenue

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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