

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 2

APRIL 1, 2020

CORONAVIRUS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

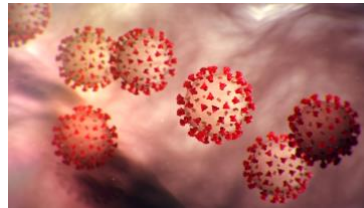
John W. Dysart
President
THE DYSART GROUP

Colleges and universities are being devastated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Every sector of the national economy has been adversely impacted. Keep the following in mind as enrollment managers prepare for the immediate future:

- ✓ Cancel group visit days scheduled on campus for at least the next six weeks.
- ✓ Cancel admission counselor travel for the immediate future.
- ✓ Cancel individual student and family visits to campus for the next six weeks. If possible, direct families to your website for a virtual campus visit.
- ✓ Extend the deadline for refundable enrollment deposits past the general May 1 date. Some colleges are offering refundable deposits for as late as June and July.
- ✓ Continue communication outreach to admission applicants via telephone and text messaging. Use the opportunity to update applicants and their families on any changes in

policy or process and to wish them well.

- ✓ Many of your prospective students will no longer have the benefits of a campus visit to inform their final decision. Systematic communication is essential to assist families in decision making.
- ✓ It is critical to provide frequent updates and be honest in how the pandemic is affecting your campus and your admission process.



- ✓ Begin communication now about how the student experience for Fall 2020 might change for students:
 - Detail any new cleaning protocols on your campus.
 - Explain any new health resources to be available on campus.
 - Even if the virus declines in the Summer, prepare your plans now for how you will react if it reoccurs in the Fall and Winter.

ENROLLMENT MANAGER is a publication of **Dwyer Education Strategies, Inc.** Inquiries and comments can be mailed to dwyereducation@aol.com. An electronic version of the newsletter is available at www.dwyereducationstrategies.com.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PAGE 1

Coronavirus and Enrollment Management

PAGE 4

Consider Your Director of Financial Aid for the Position of Vice President for Enrollment Management

PAGE 5

Masking Your Enrollment Issues

PAGE 7

Upcoming Conferences

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CORONAVIRUS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT CONTINUED:

- ✓ Financial aid awarding should continue, even if packages must be sent remotely. Targeted access is going to be more important than ever. So many Americans are experiencing a rapid reduction in assets. The stock market has dropped more than 30% in a matter of days. School and business closings have resulted in an extraordinary number of layoffs. Many of those laid off, or who have had their work schedules reduced, have stopped receiving paychecks. It was reported that nearly 3,300,000 people applied for unemployment benefits in a single week. The financial repercussions are devastating for students and their families.
- ✓ Plan how you will deal with high schools unable to send transcripts.
- ✓ There may be significant differences in state solutions for all of the school days students are missing.
- ✓ There are accreditation restrictions on your credit options for your currently enrolled students.
- ✓ Offer flexibility with standardized test requirements for late test takers. You may wish to move to a temporary test optional status for at least Fall 2020.
- ✓ Count on many institutions accepting greater numbers of students to mitigate expected losses. This means that some of your peer +1 competitors may be enrolling students out of your traditional market.
- ✓ Offer an option for skype communication with admission counselors, faculty and staff.
- ✓ Offer an online campus visit event.

- ✓ Explore new opportunities for additional online offerings for at least the next twelve months.
- ✓ Students and families who have always planned on a residential college experience are now reconsidering. More students are going to consider options for academic programs offered completely online.
- ✓ Keep in mind, however, that some institutions lack the technology and expertise for a quick shift to online education.
- ✓ While most Americans have access to computers and smart technology, some do not. Consider how you might offer online courses to students who do not have easy access to a computer. Even if technology is available in the local area, lockdown rules may make it impossible for some students to get to the technology.



- ✓ Understand that if the situation continues, students will be less likely to enroll at colleges that are not close to home.
- ✓ For institutions that rely on Summer sessions for enrollment revenue, the situation is alarming as many have been forced to cease on-campus summer offerings.
- ✓ Economic changes are likely to create increased financial need. You may want to dedicate additional institutional funds to assist students negatively impacted directly by economic upheaval.

CORONAVIRUS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT CONTINUED:

- ✓ The pandemic is impacting state budgets. State financial aid allocations for all colleges and universities and subsidies for public institutions are not guaranteed at current rates as legislatures are forced to address massive revenue shortfalls.
- ✓ Colleges and universities are already forced to make difficult, and sometimes very unpopular, decisions about tuition adjustments to refunds and/or room and board adjustments and refunds. Many institutions just do not have the financial ability to reduce charges or the resources to issue a large number of refunds.
- ✓ The pandemic is creating havoc for students and families, but let's not forget that professionals working in enrollment management are also being affected. Many have been charged with working at home. Some are facing extended layoffs and not every college and university can afford to pay employees sent home temporarily. In some cases, staff reductions are going to be permanent.
- ✓ It is likely that student enrollment numbers are going to decrease for Fall 2020 for both new and returning students.
- ✓ Significant disruption in international recruitment is a given. Consider that there are currently more than 350,000 Chinese students attending colleges in the United States. It is uncertain when current travel restrictions will be lifted or if additional restrictions will be imposed.
- ✓ Congress just passed new legislation that has components to assist higher education:
 - Federal student loan repayments will be suspended for six months.

- More than \$6 billion has been set aside for institutions and for additional assistance for students.

- The Department of Education has been allocated \$300 million to help colleges and universities.

- Dollars have been targeted for institutions serving minority populations. It may serve as a real lifeline for some HBCU's.

- ✓ So many colleges and universities were already under extreme financial stress. The financial impact of the pandemic may push some schools over the edge. Some institutions will not recover.

It is impossible to predict the ultimate outcome of the pandemic for colleges and universities. There are, however, a few steps that enrollment managers can take to mitigate the impact.

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CORONAVIRUS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT CONTINUED:

Higher education has survived recessions, a depression, war and more. Over the next weeks planning, discussion and communication will be vitally important.

CONSIDER YOUR DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID FOR THE POSITION OF VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

John W. Dysart
President
THE DYSART GROUP

Turnover is a given in higher education and these days there are more likely to be openings in enrollment management. Demographic challenges, competition and the decline in net revenue have forced many enrollment leaders to reconsider their career tracks and have many presidents seeking a change.

You can always take the traditional route of doing a national search for a new vice president for enrollment management. Candidates will surface and the bulk of them will apply with backgrounds and experience in admissions. There are limitations to taking the traditional route.

Just because someone has experience in admissions does not mean that their work at other institutions was successful. I am often amazed that candidates with decades of experience land new leadership roles when they have never proven to be effective in previous admission positions.

Even when candidates with significant experience in admissions have been successful, it does not mean that their experience is going to translate to your institution. Just because someone has consistently met enrollment objectives at a tier one public university, or a nationally known private college, does not mean that they have the kind of background necessary to lead a recruitment and

retention effort at a small, rural college serving large numbers of at-risk students.

If you do not have an heir apparent currently working at your college or university, consider your Director of Financial Aid.



Your Director of Financial Aid brings institution-specific experience to the table. You will not need to spend time acclimating the individual to your campus culture and the individual will already be familiar with the students you serve.

Let's face it. Financial aid is critical to enrollment management and it is time to bring leaders to the table who have a detailed knowledge of the intricacies of financial aid. So often, admission professionals with little knowledge about financial aid are placed in enrollment leadership roles. We should not overlook currently employed talent with a detailed, front-line knowledge of the importance of aid in both recruitment and retention.

The skill set for an effective Director of Financial Aid is exactly that needed for a Vice President for Enrollment Management:

- **Attention to Detail**

Financial aid professionals pay great attention to details in order to ensure compliance with often complex federal and state regulations related to financial aid administration.

- **Data-Driven**

Enrollment management is a data-driven enterprise and financial aid professionals are used to data-driven decision

CONSIDER YOUR DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID CONTINUED:

making. Your Director of Financial Aid may have been the driving force behind your financial aid award policy or leveraging formula to improve yield and retention while maximizing revenue.



- **Broad Constituent Groups**

Successful enrollment managers must be capable of working with a variety of other offices and concerned parties. Your Director of Financial Aid has likely worked with colleagues in the Admission Office, Registrar’s Office and Student Services. Managing endowed funds has likely exposed them to relationships with personnel in development and alums. Enforcing standards of satisfactory academic progress often involves working with faculty and other academic administrators.

- **Recruitment is Easier than Financial Aid**

Finally, an effective leader in enrollment must understand admission and financial aid. Of the two, financial aid is harder to learn.

Next time you have an opening for the leadership position in enrollment management, you may not need to conduct a regional or national search, hire a search firm or consider only internal candidates from your Admission Office. You might locate the perfect candidate down the hall in the Financial Aid Office.

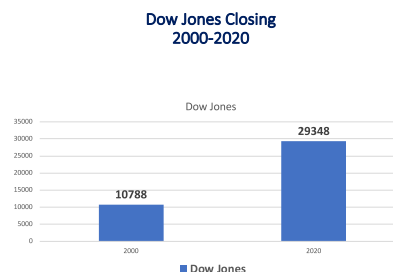
MASKING YOUR ENROLLMENT ISSUES

John W. Dysart
 President
THE DYSART GROUP

Having conducted enrollment audits at hundreds of colleges and universities, I sometimes find difficult enrollment challenges and problematic trends that institutional leaders, board members, faculty and alums have not recognized, or have not taken seriously. Sometimes, problematic outcomes can be hidden by other entities and practices.

Endowments

Up until recently, the stock market has soared. Many individuals, as well as colleges and universities, have benefitted from the extraordinary growth over the last decade. Endowment growth has enabled many institutions to cover revenue shortfalls in some areas with greater draws on investments.



Such growth is obviously not going to continue in the short term as markets have been in free fall. Basic economic realities coupled with unpredictable threats such as the Coronavirus, make it risky to rely too much on investment growth. While events over the last few weeks have been dramatic, it is always risky to rely too heavily on unpredictable endowment growth. At the time of this writing, the market has dropped more than 30% in just weeks!

Fundraising

The growth in the market has also contributed to improved fundraising in recent years for many colleges

MASKING YOUR ENROLLMENT ISSUES CONTINUED:

and universities. While the generosity of benefactors is terrific, it might be dangerous to assume the current giving rates will continue. Both companies and individuals have lost an extraordinary amount of wealth in recent weeks and it is going to reduce fundraising outcomes. The generosity of donors is important, but over-reliance on hiding enrollment revenue declines via donor generosity is dangerous.

Creative Budgeting

Certain constituent groups may not even be aware of budget shortfalls due to declining enrollment, increased financial aid costs or both. Some institutions do not cut budgets and reduce expenditures, even when faced with shortfalls. It is important to communicate any revenue challenges to important constituent groups such as administrators, faculty and board members even if resources are available to cover losses in the short run.

Athletic Recruitment

While athletics make for excellent co-curricular opportunities for both players and fans, many colleges and universities are increasing the number of student athletes to stem steep declines from other student types. Institutional leaders should be mindful to track the percentage of undergraduates comprised of student athletes. Roster sizes should be examined to ensure that they do not become bloated. Listing 24 women on the basketball team, for example, is excessive. Over-

recruitment of student athletes is likely to translate into growth in attrition rates.



Selected Major Offerings

Some very popular majors can also serve to mask overall declines in other concentrations. If your institution offers Nursing, for example, the popularity of that program across the nation can be tapped for growth. Be careful that success in recruiting nursing majors does not distract from addressing challenges in other academic offerings. Keep in mind that clinicals and accreditation requirements will likely place limits on significant enrollment growth.

The important thing is to understand your current situation in a detailed way. It is helpful to mitigate enrollment challenges in some areas with greater draws on the endowment, additional athletic offerings and popular majors, but understand that there are limits. Short term revenue injections are not going to solve longer term enrollment challenges for most colleges and universities.

Did You Know?

A recent study indicated that there are approximately 36 million Americans who attended college but do not have degrees. The market for degree completion programs is large and growing.



Mark your calendar to meet with John Dysart, President of **THE DYSART GROUP** to discuss your enrollment and revenue needs at these upcoming conferences:

TRACS
Annual Conference
October 28-30, 2020

Hyatt Regency Orlando Int'l Airport
Orlando, FL

CIC Presidents Conference
January 4-7, 2021
Boca Raton, FL

ABHE
Annual Meeting
February 17-19, 2021
Rosen Plaza Hotel
Orlando, FL

ABACC
Annual Conference
February 22-26, 2021
Florida Hotel and Conference Center
Orlando, FL

American Council on Education
Annual Conference
March 20-23, 2021
Marriott Wardman Park
Washington, DC

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The Importance of Campus Visits

A three-year longitudinal study performed at Midwestern State University (MSU) concluded that students who visit campus are twice as likely to matriculate as students who do not.

Visiting is often cited as the most important element that helps a student decide if a college is right or not for them.

A study administered by Noel-Levitz found campus visits to be at least 90% effective when used as a marketing and recruitment practice.

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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/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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