

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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For many years, this space has been occupied by strategies and best practices in the marketing and enrollment fields, written in the context of The Dysart Group Model — a model that we have advocated for 25 years.

For the first time in many years, this communication about strategies in higher education is being released without our esteemed partner and friend, Marylouise “Weezie” Fennell. Weezie had an incredible impact on the higher education industry, the communities she loved and the institutions she served. She was a mentor, a friend and a collaborator. She peacefully left this world on Wednesday, October 12, but her legacy remains.



The picture is Katie, Weezie and Scott at the 2006 MLB All-Star Game in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Several months before she passed away, Weezie suggested who should succeed her as the writing partner for this publication. As such, Dr. Katelyn “Katie” Sanders, Director of Admissions and Alumni Affairs at the Bernard J. Dunn School of Pharmacy of Shenandoah University, is the new co-author of this series. Katie was handpicked by Weezie as her successor and has shared our philosophy espoused by The Dysart Group having experienced this enrollment philosophy over the past 25 years.

The Dysart Group Model asserts that comprehensive private colleges, typically those with endowments under \$250 million, should have an eight-part enrollment plan to guarantee long term stability and success. Short term declines in any one of these areas can be offset by strength in the others.

A successful enrollment plan will include recruiting students who fall into one of the following eight categories: traditional undergraduate, online undergraduate, evening and weekend, transfer, graduate, international, early enrollment, and continuing education. While traditional undergraduate students may be the bread-and-butter of comprehensive private colleges, bolstering enrollment in the other seven categories will pay dividends when the Enrollment Cliff of 2025 hits enrollment offices hard.

So how do you do that?

Be strategic. Three marketing objectives well executed are better than

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Three More Colleges Announce Permanent Closure

A record number of colleges and universities have ceased requiring the SAT or ACT standardized test for admission. What started as an experiment during the pandemic has now altered the landscape of the admission process.

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PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE CONTINUED:

a dozen implemented haphazardly. Ask yourself, “What is the biggest single need in our marketplace?” Then, “What can our college do better than anyone else?” Marry the two and you have a recipe for success.

Do it first. The marketing adage “It’s more important to be the first to do it than do it the best,” runs counter to campus tradition with its endless committees. We are often reluctant to roll out a new course, major, or service until it’s been talked to death. By then, the window of opportunity may have closed.

Strike quickly, making necessary modifications and adaptations along the way. Capitalize on institutional strengths. Successful organizations and leaders build on their areas of strength. What is your strongest feature? It’s often more effective to add value to it rather than trying to introduce a new one.

Above all, **keep it simple.** Good marketing need not be complicated to motivate its audience. Have clear messages for each of the target recruiting audiences to differentiate your university that make a compelling case for enrollment.

We look to continue in this space the commentary on marketing and enrollment strategies, with special emphasis on recruiting underrepresented and non-traditional populations, as was the lifelong passion and pursuit of our dear friend, Weezie.

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WISHING ALL
A
HAPPY
AND
PROSPEROUS
NEW YEAR!

SMALL BAPTIST COLLEGE INCREASES ENROLLMENT BY 26%

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group

I worked with the administrative team at Southeastern Free Will Baptist College last year to review admission and financial aid operations. Like many small colleges and universities, enrollment declined in recent years.

- New student enrollments had dropped by 22% over the previous five years.
- Total enrollment was down 31% since 2017.

We collaborated to review recent practices and outcomes and agreed upon an action plan of new initiatives to grow enrollment.



Nate Ange, President, Southeastern Free Will Baptist College

The institution has already realized promising results after beginning the implementation of a new strategic enrollment plan:

- The admission process has been simplified.

SMALL BAPTIST COLLEGE INCREASES ENROLLMENT CONTINUED:

- Systematic communication with prospective students has been emphasized.
- Financial aid eligibility has been front-loaded to facilitate access and financial planning.
- New student enrollment increased by 26% this past Fall.

While there is still much to be done, and a total transformation of the enrollment plan will take more time, Southeastern Free Will Baptist College has already reversed the negative enrollment trends of recent years and is poised to continue significant enrollment growth.

THREE MORE COLLEGES ANNOUNCE PERMANENT CLOSURE

John W. Dysart
President
The Dysart Group

In recent weeks, three more colleges have announced that they will close permanently. This continues the unfortunate trend of institutional closures. The reasons are numerous:

- Demographic declines in the national customer base mean fewer available students.
- Many colleges and universities have never recovered from the impact of the pandemic.
- More families question the ROI of a college education.

The enrollment challenges are real and unlikely to improve. Despite the obstacles, many colleges and universities have been able to maintain enrollments and even grow during these difficult times. What can enrollment leaders do to increase the odds of enrollment stability and even growth?

- Take a hard look at your current strategies and practices. Has your enrollment plan evolved in response to financial and demographic challenges?
- Are you effectively utilizing the data in your recruitment operation? Do you know if your admission obstacle is in the inquiry pool, the application count or in conversion rates?
- Are you taking advantage of social media and digital platforms in your communication process with applicants for admission and their families?
- Have you introduced real accountability into your recruitment plan?
- Does your financial aid process specifically support your goals regarding recruitment and retention?
- Is your institutional aid program sufficiently funded to provide access and to recognize academic achievement?
- Do you have adequate reporting mechanisms and accountability metrics when it comes to retention?
- Consider bringing in an outside professional to help you review current practices and recent outcomes.



While the enrollment cliff is real, it is not determinate. You can ensure your college is among the winners if you take bold action and implement serious changes to produce better outcomes.

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

We have worked collaboratively with colleges and universities to significantly grow enrollment. Our institution-specific recommendations have helped 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. New student enrollments have grown by as much as 70% in a single cycle while discount rates have been controlled. Proven strategies have increased retention rates by as much as 7% in one year.

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