

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

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HOW TO SHOWCASE YOUR CAMPUS VALUES AND CULTURE DURING RECRUITING

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How do prospective students *really* decide on which college to attend? While the quality of your curriculum, the prestige of your faculty, and the affordability of your tuition are all undoubtedly influential, one of the most important decision-making factors when it comes to selecting a college is also one of the most intangible: the unique spirit of a school's values and culture.

[Studies have shown](#) that Gen Z sees their emotional well-being as a priority when making decisions related to their education. Young people seek educational opportunities in places where they feel they belong as a valued part of the community, where they can see themselves being happy in their surroundings, and where they expect their enthusiasm and curiosity to be highly engaged. In addition, Gen Z prioritizes finding a balance between their academic pursuits and personal passions, and they expect resources to be available to assist them in both areas.

This means that how your school supports and strengthens its students both socially and emotionally is every bit as important as how it challenges them academically. In fact, discussing the distinctive aspects of student life that help your school stand out is a great way to engage and connect with prospective students on a personal level. As such, it's essential that you understand how best to describe the special benefits and nuances of campus life at your school.

Show How Your School Supports Personal Growth

Highlight how your college's culture encourages new conversations and gets students interested in exploring different perspectives. Be sure to emphasize key aspects of the school's founding principles, as well as any steps the administration has taken to ensure that all voices are heard and respected. This can include highlighting the broad spectrum of student-run groups, sharing a recent schedule of guest speakers, or even having recruits speak with a representative from the study abroad office.

Bring the Community into Focus

A school's location means far more than just its place on the map. Young people are looking at the big picture of the entire college experience, which often includes interacting with the local community. Volunteer opportunities like environmental cleanups or food drives may speak to the character of the student body and can help prospective

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FAFSA Delays

Approximately 15% fewer high school graduates have filed the FAFSA this year due to problems with the launch of the new application.

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HOW TO SHOWCASE YOUR CAMPUS VALUES AND CULTURE CONTINUED:

students picture themselves making an impact on the surrounding community.

Lead with Experience

Gen Z places a high value on personal experiences, whether they're related to education or to their own individual growth. Be sure to point out how your surrounding community can provide students with experiences they can't find anywhere else. For example, do groups in your area organize outdoor activities like hiking or historical walks, enrichment classes in art or cooking, recreational sports leagues, contests or competitions, or seasonal festivals? These can all be great resources for satisfying students' desire not just to belong but also to be active.

How Do In-Class Efforts Support Big-Picture Learning?

Being challenged academically is technically an intangible value, since it's an abstract concept that will mean something different to each individual student. You should work to find out as specifically as possible what the prospective student is looking for in a challenge, whether that's exploring a completely new field of study, moving at an accelerated pace, being involved in research projects, and so forth. Also shed some light on support systems, mentorship programs, peer tutoring, work-study arrangements, or opportunities to participate in national academic organizations.

Mental Health Care Is A Feature, Not a Bug

Young people view mental health as an essential aspect of their overall wellness. You should be able to describe any counseling services the campus provides in an open and stigma-free way. You can also mention elective classes, clubs, or activities such as yoga, choir, or volunteering that offer both course credits and wellness combined.

Enlist Student Ambassadors

Student ambassadors can serve as highly personal advocates for the college. That's because prospective enrollees are more likely to trust firsthand accounts of

campus life from their peers rather than school employees. Consider building (and regularly refreshing) a list of current students who are comfortable speaking about their campus experience, especially if they're members of a club, team, or other group.

Know What Matters Most to Each Student

Not every prospective student will have the same priorities when it comes to evaluating your school's intangibles, so asking the right questions is the key to understanding what to emphasize in your recruitment efforts. You can start more generally by asking about a prospective student's hobbies or interests, then move into more specific questions such as asking what helps them stay motivated or what kind of change they'd like to create in the world.

Practice Being Personable

Knowing which individual experiences and academic challenges a prospective student would find most enriching will also help you better highlight the ways in which your university supports those efforts. To help ease into such in-depth conversations, try practicing. Since you'll likely already know their academic goals, ask them about their goals apart from a career. Their answers will give you a personalized roadmap to help you determine which of your school's intangible values and benefits will be the most critical to demonstrate on a person-by-person basis.

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AVOID JOINING THE RANKS OF CLOSED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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More colleges have announced that they will close permanently. This continues the unfortunate trend of

colleges and universities succumbing to the enrollment cliff, inflation and increased competition. It seems like another school is added to the mix of failed entities every week. The fallout from the FAFSA disaster this cycle is likely to trigger even more institutions ceasing operations. The reasons are numerous:

- Demographic declines in the national customer base mean fewer available students.
- Many colleges and universities never recovered from the impact of the pandemic.
- More families question the ROI of a college education.
- Financial aid funding has not kept pace with rising costs.

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 for enrollment stability and even growth?

- Take a detailed look at your current strategies, tactics and practices. Has your enrollment plan evolved in response to financial and demographic challenges?
- Are you taking immediate, pro-active measures in response to market obstacles?
- Enrollment management is a data-driven enterprise. Are you *effectively* utilizing the data in your recruitment operation? Do you know if your admission problem is in the size of the inquiry pool, the application count or in conversion or yield rates?
- Are you taking advantage of the telephone, text messaging, social media and digital platforms in your communication process with applicants for admission and their families?
- 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 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. The time is right to invest in your future for successful enrollment 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.



**According to
The Hechinger Report,
about one university or
college per week will close
or merge this year,
compared to a little more
than two per month in
2023.**

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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 250 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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