

# ED432939 1999-00-00 Enrollment Management for the 21st Century: Delivering Institutional Goals, Accountability and Fiscal Responsibility. ERIC Digest.

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## Enrollment Management for the 21st Century:

# Delivering Institutional Goals, Accountability and Fiscal Responsibility. ERIC Digest.

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Public universities continue to experience significant change precipitated by a number of internal and external factors, among them constant turnover in administration, state and federal government regulations, and the general public's perception of higher education's value to society. Enrollment managers sit in a unique position to influence change, frequently high enough in the organization to have the president's ear. As an adviser to the president and governing boards, the enrollment manager must have excellent communication skills and extensive knowledge of policies and practices influencing the enrollment of students. The development, maintenance, and continuing enhancement of a conceptual framework for enrollment management and attention to external constituencies affecting enrollment are essential if the enrollment manager is to assist with positive institutional change.

## WHERE HAVE WE COME IN THIRTY YEARS?

Nearly three decades after the introduction of the term "enrollment management," individuals and organizations have developed a body of work describing various models of enrollment management. Enrollment management is an organizational concept and systematic set of activities whose purpose is to exert influence over student enrollments (Hossler, Bean, and Associates 1990, p. 5). It has four primary goals: to define the institution's nature and characteristics, and market the institution appropriately; to incorporate all relevant campus constituencies into marketing plans and activities; to make strategic decisions about the role and amount of financial aid for students and the institution; and to make appropriate commitments of human, fiscal, and technical resources to enrollment management (Dixon 1995, p. 7). Expanded and refined definitions of enrollment management have evolved over the past 10 years. In addition, computerized databases for recruitment and application, and telecounseling have provided tools enabling more efficient management of huge amounts of data about students (Bryant and Crockett 1993; Krotzen 1993).

## WHY DEVELOP TOOLS FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT?

Within the past two decades, two important situations have had significant impact on the business of higher education. The first was the decline in the number of young people graduating from high school who were eligible to attend a college or university. This decline signaled the start of increased competition among institutions for eligible

potential students. After years of soaring enrollments with huge investments in physical plants to accommodate the new students, the number of people eligible and interested in attending college started a steep decline. It meant a scramble for the available students to fill classrooms and residence halls, with the result a buyer's market. The second circumstance was the general public's erosion of trust in all types of public institutions (Hartle 1994), precipitated by a series of highly publicized events. Legislators responded by introducing legislation, calling for greater accountability, implementing performance-based funding, and mandating reports of specific statistical measures.

## WHAT IMPACT DOES A SUCCESSFUL ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

HAVE? Numerous surveys and studies over the course of 15 years show the impact of enrollment management systems on colleges and universities. Enrollment management programs vary widely in the way the concept is practiced, but the basic need to manage college enrollment from the point of initial contact through graduation has become increasingly apparent. Declining enrollments are second only to declining appropriations as the reason for colleges' and universities' financial problems. And enrollment management is an important factor in assisting institutions attain stated goals and remain financially viable.

## WHAT CAN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT DO FOR ADMINISTRATORS?

Institutions with a viable enrollment management program in place have reported success in meeting stated goals. A wide variation of the four original models is possible, with each model as distinctive as the institution itself. Although the division continues to be the most popular model, it does not guarantee success. Models range from a loose committee with representatives of student services involved to institution-wide committees with academic, fiscal, and student services areas involved. External factors play a huge part in the ultimate success of any enrollment management plan; some of them lead to more clearly stated goals, the development of measurement tools, and attention to the institution's mission. Other external factors may contribute to a complete breakdown in a once-viable management system. Internal factors also can lead to positive outcomes or to disruption. Loss of top executives when a plan is being implemented can halt the process and derail several years of planning and work. Enrollment managers' concentration on data, quality service, cooperation, communication, and collaboration is important to institutional success. Those in the field must have broader formal and informal education. The chief enrollment officer must stay abreast of state and federal legislation, be able to discuss funding allocations, and know how to measure the general public's support for higher education. This professional

needs background in computers, communications, marketing, research and analysis, personnel management, and fiscal concepts (Noel-Levitz 1996). The support generated for a comprehensive enrollment management program may be the result of the manager's ability to influence, communicate, persuade, lobby, and bargain with others. If a program is to be successful, the president or chief officer of the campus or system must not only endorse the program verbally, but also make sure it is funded. Therefore, the relationship of the chief enrollment officer to the president can be a critical element in a successful program.

The professional enrollment manager can, by using information databases and a combination of theory and practice, provide academic deans, the president, and fiscal officers with information about programs, the quality of students, demographic trends for graduates and potential students, attrition, and image. In an era when the number of potential students is beginning to rise again, less than 50 percent of those starting college actually graduate. Practices in awarding financial aid that may assist some students present financial problems for the institution and ethical concerns for the enrollment manager.

Institutions need to concentrate on the use of enrollment management tools, including predictive modeling, outcomes-based research on retention, programs, and activities, and evaluation of students' satisfaction to meet the needs of students, graduates, and society in general. Enrollment management changes the way colleges and universities approach the business of higher education. With appropriate planning and evaluation, institution-wide participation, well-prepared professionals, and adequate fiscal resources, enrollment management can help colleges and universities meet the challenges of the 21st century. References

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