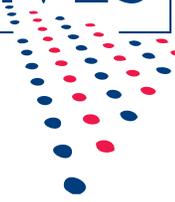


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*A HIGHER
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2012-2013 Series:

Responding to the Commoditization of Higher Education

Chapter

8:

Strategic Enrollment Planning to Educate a Diverse Workforce

Strategic Enrollment Planning to Educate a Diverse Workforce

Dr. Dana Gibson: President of Sam Houston State University

The national debate about student debt and the ability of college graduates to attain jobs in their chosen field of study, have increasingly turned the focus on universities to improve accountability measures. Additionally, the state and national goals relate to improved educational attainment with a call for higher education to prove their ability to educate the workforce of the future. The increased attention to attainment and workforce has proliferated a consumerism or commodity approach to a higher education degree. Additionally, the dramatic increase in the for-profit sector in the past ten years only emphasizes this commoditization.

While the for-profit segment of the postsecondary educational marketplace has focused on nontraditional students, those adults 25-64 years old have not improved in educational attainment. To accomplish the “Big Goal” established by the Lumina Foundation for college attainment, that 60 percent of adults 25 to 64 will have a credential by 2025, higher education will have to target a more diverse student demographic. Additionally, President Obama proposed “best in the world” status by 2020 for the U.S. in the number of degrees, certificates, and other postsecondary credentials. Overall, these national and state landscape issues impose an even more critical need for higher education to become more strategic about enrollment planning. Our University realized that our student types were changing and that the most proactive way to offset a commodity approach to higher education was to emphasize the value of education to all student types. Therefore, the University undertook a progressive strategy to enrollment planning to accomplish this task.

The Demographics

To begin a more strategic journey in enrollment management, it is imperative that the working group analyze the national, state, and regional demographics as they exist today as well as the projected changes. From the 2000 to 2010 Census, the U.S. population increased by 9.7 percent with a move away from rural to urban centers and

“ ... higher education will have to target a more diverse student demographic.”

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an increasing ethnic diversity. The working group should analyze this same data for the state and region as well as delving more deeply into areas that are important to understand the planning needed for current and future enrollment needs. The following data should be defined for the state and region: ethnicity, geographic dispersion, average age, and educational attainment by geography. The information provided by this data directly impact the next steps in the planning process. For example, our working group found that the state is growing at twice the national average. They determined that the regional ethnicity is currently very close to what is projected for the U.S. by 2050. The migration is from rural to urban with the number of high school seniors increasing only slightly. Also, in the region only about 25 percent of adult learners (25-44) have a bachelor’s degree or higher, with another 55 percent having some higher education completed credit. These facts are examples of a portion of the data that was evaluated and impacted the next steps in the process.

To better use the state and regional data, the working group performed a detailed analysis of the University student profile, the enrollment statistics, retention, and graduation rates, tuition and fee comparisons and net revenue (or tuition discounting) data; most of the data points included trend lines over time. While none of these data items were new to certain individual units, the compilation of a single report with all this information was very beneficial. This group also defined the current processes for marketing, admissions, advising, student services, and success initiatives and procedures used by the various units that handled different student populations (i.e., undergraduate versus graduate).

Based on all the preliminary analysis to understand the state and national goals and the demographics, the basic knowledge was in place to really begin a new model of enrollment planning. The group proceeded very intentionally by defining what a strategic enrollment management plan meant for the University with the full impetus being that it was implementable. The purpose statement for Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) was “a complex, organized effort to connect and align the University strategic plan with state higher education initiatives and given the changing environment to a long-term enrollment and fiscal stability workable planning guide.” With this purpose in mind the context for the planning was outlined and discussed.

Context

One contextual area important to further discussion of SEM was the internal and external factors that were important to the decisions in higher education

How are we operating today?

| External Conditions | Internal Conditions |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Legislative – reduced state funding, law changes, reporting, un-funded mandates, knowledge of HE b. Competition – for profit, other inst: c. Market change – K-12 preparation, adult learner market d. Accountability – student vs institutions, expectations from public e. Job market/economy for graduates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase enrollment (SEM); new buildings, staff b. Resources – technology, budget, time, financial aid c. Communication – divisions and departments d. Customer service – the importance e. Personnel – delegation versus doing |

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Then the group compared what they defined as enrollment management in the 20th century versus what they saw for the 21st century. Most universities' enrollment plans would have different aspects based on their state and regional demographics and the University demographics.

University Enrollment Management in the 20th Century

- Driven by academic administration
- Relatively stable demographics
- Federal and state aid a major supplement to financial aid
- Traditional delivery of degrees - dominant
- Marketing of degrees was not something normally done
- Traditional-aged populations were dominant
- Functional roles of enrollment offices were heavily business process driven
- Limited targeted discussion of diversity

University Enrollment Management in the 21st Century

- Driven by managing enrollment for various student populations (i.e., undergraduate, first-time freshman, transfers, and adult learners, graduate)
- Unstable and changing demographics
- Federal and state aid dynamics are changing – oversight is increasing and the state funding of higher education is decreasing
- New models of degree delivery are pertinent including a more flexible approach to course scheduling
- Marketing of degree programs a strategic necessity
- Traditional-aged students now in the minority
- Need to diversify revenue generation
- Strategic roles for marketing and enrollment offices to align with academic units versus just business process driven
- Diversity initiatives are imperative
- College graduates expect universities to connect degree plans to job opportunities



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The University Plan

These changing roles for the University's academic and enrollment units rely on a very collaborative approach between the academic and enrollment divisions. The group then defined what they saw as the reasons this unified approach was critical to the plan and to the future implementation at the University. These reasons include:

- Changing demographics
- Access to underrepresented populations
- Rapidly changing economy/workforce needs
- Fiscal pressure for higher education (HE) to operate more efficiently
- More emphasis on accountability in HE
- Changes in traditional delivery methods
- Decreases in federal and state support for HE
- Commoditization of HE (assignment of economic value to something not previously considered in economic terms is when a product becomes indistinguishable from others like it and consumers buy on price alone.)
- Pressure to discount tuition (charging different students different prices for the same educational opportunities)
- Instability in student loan industry – student debt concerns rampant
- Increased competition and the changing of the traditional HE culture
- Meeting the statewide goal to compete in the global economy with a better educated population

For strategic enrollment planning to be successful at the University it must permeate the culture and be an ongoing process used to identify key performance indicators. This process identifies, evaluates, and modifies strategies and enrollment goals with academic program planning. Strategic Enrollment Planning is an ongoing process that effectively addresses the goals of the institution and impacts:

- How the University serves students today and in the future
- How the prospective student market is changing
- Academic and co-curriculum program planning (based on students/workforce demand)
- Fiscal planning (analyzing operating revenues, expenses, auxiliary income, competitor pricing)
- Financial Aid policies and procedures
- Affordability across student demographics

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- Shaping the prospective student profile
 - » Freshmen (HS, Veterans, International)
 - » Transfer (CC, Veterans, International)
 - » Adult-Learner (age 25-44) (CC, Veterans, International)
 - » Graduate
- Student Retention (all classifications)
- Internal/External communication

The Key Performance Indicators that are used in the SEM Plan to monitor the impact on the previous areas should include, but are not limited to:

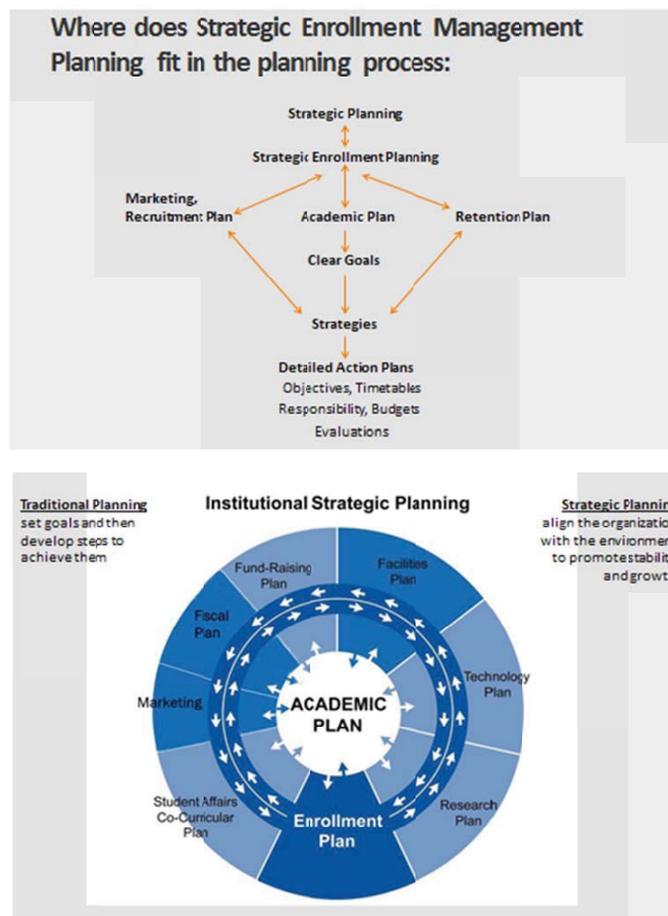
- Admission indicators (competition, application)
 - » Freshmen (ACT/SAT scores, quartile)
 - » Transfer (GPA, hours)
 - » Adult Learner (new or transfer hours, age)
 - » Graduate
- Enrollment indicators (orientation, residence life, financial aid, advisement, student to faculty ratio, net tuition per student)
 - » Undergraduate Headcount (Freshmen, Transfer, Returning, and Current)
- Graduate Headcount (Master's, Post-Bac, Doctoral) Retention indicators (GPA, time to graduation, financial support, ethnicity, employment profile, what are 18 characteristics)
- Fiscal reports (Net revenue, net revenue per student)
- Diversity indicators
- Retention and Persistence to completion indicators (1st to 2nd year retention rates, 4-5-6 year graduation rates)
- Job placement rates/graduate school enrollment)
 - » Career/strength/interest assessment
 - » Debt to income ratio

The final result of all the work and effort of this planning group was the creation of an SEM plan that fit into the overall planning process at the University. The planning group was renamed as a university committee called the SEM Steering Committee. A Recruitment and Retention sub-committee was named and reports activities to the SEM Steering Committee. This group is assigned to implement recommended annual initiatives derived from the analyzed enrollment indicators. The marketing/recruitment plan, the academic plan, and the retention plan reflect

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the collaborative efforts between the academic and administrative divisions to support the University's strategic plan, goals, and budget process, hence, creating a dynamic, working plan for the University.

Specifically related to the University goals of: (a) having the ability to educate the workforce of the future and (b) compete in the global market with a better educated population, the Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management divisions are working together to intentionally provide services to graduating students to find jobs. This approach is to engage students in a clear pathway through advising and the student's degree plan for timely graduation, while also engaging students early to identify possible career paths. The planning group also identified ways to (a) reconnect alumni to the University with career advancement opportunities, (b) connect employers to qualified students, and (c) provide faculty with real-time job requirements to match current workforce needs to the academic programs.



Summary

While this may seem like any SEM plan, the underlying details provide enrollment, academic, and service targets for all student types, whether undergraduate (first-time freshman, transfers, nontraditional, or adult including veterans) and graduate (online professional, master's, and doctoral). The emphasis on all student types, from recruiting to helping them find employment, makes it necessary for the University to be consumer driven. Whereas, the student,

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legislators, or business leaders may think of public and private higher education as a commodity compared to for-profit institutions, our plan shows the value of a degree in a way that, hopefully, offsets some of this idea of commoditization.

The University culture has always emphasized each individual student's success. The plan allows us to realize that culture in a way that provides us an opportunity to quickly react to changes in types of students, program needs, and workforce demands more quickly. Yet, this ability to quickly respond did not change the basic mission or strategic plan of the University. The collaboration across divisions of the University should ensure the importance and viability of a plan that is truly an evolutionary document. The University undertook all the work in developing this plan to control our destiny and not be reactive to the concept of credentialing and commoditization so rampant in the media as it relates to the higher education industry. Only time will tell if we made lemonade out of lemons or focused on the value of a degree versus obtaining a credential by this approach.

Dr. Gibson acknowledges the assistance of Provost, Dr. Jaimie Hebert and Vice President for Enrollment Management, Dr. Heather Thielemann for their work on this chapter and on the project discussed.

Information included by: Sam Houston State University, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, The Lumina Foundation, The Federal Reserve – Houston Branch



Dr. Dana L. Gibson became Sam Houston State University's 13th president on September 1, 2010—the University's first female president—following unanimous approval by The Texas State University System.

Dr. Gibson grew up and attended schools in north Texas. She also attended Texas universities, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in business-accounting and a Master of Business Administration at Texas Woman's University and a doctorate in business at the University of Texas at Arlington.

A Certified Public Accountant since 1984, Dr. Gibson began her career in private industry. She joined academia in 1986 as a Texas Women's University lecturer in accounting and management information systems. She was promoted to assistant professor in 1989, and later received tenure as an associate professor.

In 1996, Dr. Gibson was named TWU's special assistant to the vice president for finance and administration. She was promoted to associate vice president for finance and administration and university controller and was named vice president for academic and information services in 2000.

She left TWU to become vice president for finance and administration of the YMCA of Metropolitan Denver (Colorado). After serving two years, she was named vice chancellor for administration and finance at the University of Colorado at Denver where she oversaw the consolidation with the health science center.

Dr. Gibson returned to Texas as the vice president for business and finance at Southern Methodist University. After her service at SMU, she was selected as president of National University, the second largest not-for-profit university in California. In 2009, she joined Sam Houston State University as vice president for finance and operations.