

Current Strategies for Enrollment Management-January 2008  
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This paper has been prepared to make you aware of the strategies and activities recently implemented by the Enrollment Management unit in an effort to enhance the recruitment of new students to the university and to positively impact the retention of currently enrolled students.

As you are aware, the Enrollment Management unit was formed in July 2006 by combining the Offices of Admission, Financial Aid, Registrar and Student Success Center. The objective of the unit is to coordinate the tasks and responsibilities of these offices in a systematic effort to increase enrollment. Enrollment data are generally viewed as the number of “new” students who enroll each term (recruitment) plus the number of “returning” students who enroll each term (retention).

The Enrollment Management unit is housed in the Academic Affairs division. Thus we tend to concentrate on those sorts of issues. Dr. Settle and his Student Affairs colleagues are examining student life issues and making improvements where necessary.

President Morris established two ad hoc committees dealing with recruitment and retention issues shortly after the unit was established in July 2006. Those committees provided several recommendations to her and the cabinet. These two ad hoc committees have been formalized, this year, into a single university wide Enrollment Management Committee. This committee, whose membership is comprised of representatives from all constituency groups, including students, has been meeting throughout the Fall 2007 semester. Their “learning curve” has been steep and it is expected that they will make recommendations to President Morris and the cabinet during the Spring 2008 semester.

### *Changes Implemented Through University College*

A key office associated with the retention efforts of the university is the Student Success Center. In July of 2007, the Student Success Center expanded its academic purview and grew into a University College. With intentionality, the growth and development of the University College is progressing at a slow but steady pace.

We have identified three broad “at risk” sub populations of our student body. These groups include “pre health science” students, “developmental education” students and “undecided” students. The persistence rate of each of these groups from the freshman year to the sophomore year is substantially lower than the student body as a whole. The focus of the university college is to improve retention rates from freshman to sophomore of each of these subsets of students.

With the help of the Financial Aid office, the university has changed its procedure in dealing with undecided students. In the past, we used to “force” students to declare a major by the end of the freshman year (45 quarter hours/30 semester hours). We now permit students to remain undecided until they have completed 60 semester hours. Thus the pre health science students and

the undecided students are able to remain, for advising purposes, under the auspices of the Student Success Center rather than being forced to move into an academic department when in fact they were not really interested in that department at all. Our hypothesis is that these students will probably receive more effective academic advising from the staff of the SSC than from faculty advisors in programs the students are not really interested in. The Cabinet added a staff position in the SSC in order to accommodate this change.

The creation of the University College also allowed us to accept the academic responsibility to offer classes. Three classes; UNIV 1101 (Academic Development Skills), UNIV 1105 (Career Planning and Job Development Strategies for Life) and UNIV 1106 (Memory Techniques) were moved from the Department of English & Humanities into the University College. In essence, the curriculum of both 1101 and 1105 were rewritten and standardized in an effort to impact first year retention. The faculty of these classes meet on a regular basis to discuss issues and teaching methodology. Additionally, we have been able to increase the number of sections of these classes being offered and increase the limits in each. Enrollment in 1101 has increased by nearly 40% this fall.

Furthermore, the Development Foundation funded a grant which has allowed us to experiment using upper class peer mentors with two sections of 1101 (study skills). Should there be a marked difference in fall to spring retention rates of the different sections, budget expansion will be requested to fully implement this program in the future.

Enrollment management has been instrumental in urging the College of Professional Studies to develop a four-year degree in Health Sciences. Our thinking is that when a pre-health science student does come to the realization that he/she will not be admissible to the program of choice, the university needs a “viable” degree option for this group of students. Our suspicion is that such students often drop out of college when their goal is not achievable. Our hypothesis is that if there is a viable degree option, a certain number of unsuccessful pre-health science students can turn a failure into a success by earning the general health science degree. Dean Kadel and Dr. Burton are working on such a degree. It is our hope that this degree will come to fruition soon.

The university’s new Registrar, Ms. Burke, has proven to be an energetic hire who is thoroughly reviewing academic policies and procedures. She has recommended several changes for consideration which should remove some hurdles our students have previously faced.

The Office of Financial Aid has made several changes which should have some impact on student retention. In addition to the aforementioned change in the number of hours an undecided student may accumulate, the aid office has removed a tremendous hassle from our returning students by making all academic merit scholarships automatically renewable if students achieve a certain GPA and satisfy progress requirements. In the past, we used to make students file a scholarship application by January 15 each and every year in order to be considered to receive

academic money for the subsequent year. Many times students and parents missed this deadline and/or were confused about this reapplication process. We frustrated many a student at SSU!

At the urging of the Provost, we created a "Provost's Scholarship" to reward students who entered SSU without any academic merit money and subsequently achieved well. We now award a \$500 scholarship to such students during their sophomore year. We currently have 27 students enrolled (Fall 2007) receiving the new Provost's Scholarship.

The aid office has been instrumental in recruitment efforts of the university. We have simplified our merit award process. As you know, the academic preparation of the new student group, as measured by ACT, again rose for Fall 2007. I am convinced this simpler and aggressive merit award system helped achieve this result.

The aid office is also working to find the correct sub-population of the pool for which need-based grants will be a factor. We implemented a strategy last year but had limited success. We have adjusted parameters this year and will assess the results as they become known.

Listed below are bullet points which the different offices have implemented in an effort to impact both retention and recruitment numbers

### **New Retention Activities (University College/Student Success Center)**

- Re-entry workshops (students referred by academic appeals committee)
- Revised curricula for UNIV 1101 (Study Skills) and UNIV 1105 (Career Planning)
- Student peer mentor pilot with UNIV 1101
- PRAXIS Preparation Pilot (to begin January, 2008)
- Technical Assistance Program (assist students with individual projects such as Powerpoint and Blackboard)
- Summer bridge program pilot (to begin June, 2008)

### **Continuing Retention Activities (University College/Student Success Center)**

Specialized advising for undecided, pre-health science, developmental, and pre-education students (The University College houses just over 1,000 advisees and a new advising position was added in August 2007)

Tutoring (peer to peer, group, and on-line tutoring) & Supplemental instruction

Student and family orientation activities for both fall and spring semesters

Services to non-traditional students (This includes a specialized website, Ask-an-advisor on-line advising, non-traditional student sessions at orientation, extended advisor hours in the SSC, and a non-traditional bridge course)

Academic Improvement Plans

Disability services (includes note taking, interpretation services, and specialized equipment services)

Multicultural services until recent transfer of office to Student Affairs

Letters to students enrolled the previous semester but not yet enrolled for current semester

Textbook loan program

Specialized software in computer labs 111, 149, and 150

Make-up exam program

Placement testing and exit exams

### **New Retention Activities (Office of Financial Aid)**

Automatic renewal of merit scholarships (provided GPA and progress criteria are achieved)

We created a new scholarship (Provost's Scholarship) to be awarded to those students who entered SSU without any scholarship support and then achieved well during their first quarter/semester/year.

Aggressively market the Foundation Scholarships to upper class students. Moved deadline two weeks later to accommodate our students under the semester calendar.

### **New Recruitment Activities (Office of Admission)**

Three new young, energetic staff members have led to an increased number of high school visits and college day/night programs. We have visited nearly 400 high schools and participated in nearly 100 college day/night program. Likewise, I expect those staff members to conduct a more aggressive series of yield activities.

Renewed advertising efforts in Columbus market

The university purchases names from ACT test takers in August and January. This year, we modified the scholarship message to those students who have an ACT  $\geq 25$ .

Began advertising efforts in Cincinnati market

We purchased “search” names from the four Kentucky counties covered by the new “Cincinnati Metro Scholarship” 592 letters out in mid October. An additional purchase of names will occur in December when the Oct test takers are available.

We mailed a letter to counselors in the Kentucky counties announcing the new scholarship

A staff member will be visiting those high schools in those four counties.

The Social Sciences Department and the Graduate Program in Occupational Therapy have developed a program designed for academically able students who may be interested in a “3/2” early entry program. We have supported this program by again purchasing names of ACT test takers who meet minimum academic criteria and mailing them details about this new program.

### **New Recruitment Activities (Office of Financial Aid)**

Simplified and marketed academic merit scholarships to prospective students and counselors.

Added the “Advantage” Scholarship to be awarded to those students who would normally qualify for the University Professor’s or Presidential but missed the Feb 1 deadline.

We increased the budget for “transfer scholarships”.

We added the “Cincinnati Metro scholarship” in an effort to attract students from the four Kentucky counties just south of Cincinnati.

We make every effort to begin writing financial aid packages (need based) in early March. Many of our sister institutions don’t begin this process until late March or early April.

While I am pleased to be able to report on these recent accomplishments, many challenges remain.

### **Next Steps**

The Enrollment Management Unit, based on input from last year’s Retention Committee, this year’s University-wide Enrollment Management Committee, the former AQUIP committee that dealt with academic advising, the marketing report of 2001, the Noel Levitz report of 2005, and the Hanover report of 2007 has identified a need to request that the Cabinet thoroughly review the current academic advising structure at the university and consider structural changes

Most recently, in its 2007 report prepared for SSU, the Hanover Research Council explains that the relationships between students and their advisors have a powerful impact on retention and graduation rates. In particular, “positive interaction with faculty members has a direct bearing on whether students persist to earn a degree” (Tinto, 1989). Clearly, a strength of our current advising structure is that it encourages direct interaction between students and faculty.

SSU’s commitment to faculty advising poses some challenges, too. Our faculty maintain office hours each week to meet with students. However, depending on the faculty member’s advising load or individual student schedules, it can be difficult for advisors and students to connect, especially during the peak advising times prior to registration. When students have difficulty contacting their assigned advisor, they often meet with the department chair, or seek help from the department secretary.

To relieve some of the burden on department chairs, secretaries, and faculty advisors, it may be helpful to have a full-time academic advisor assigned to each college and/or department. Though the college or departmental advisor would not provide the career mentoring and academic guidance that full service faculty are best suited to provide, this advisor could assist with a variety of administrative tasks. In particular, the college advisor could assist with routine adjustments to the student’s schedule, major exploration and changes, and disseminating information to students about important university deadlines (fee payment, drop and withdrawal deadlines, etc.). Rather than replacing the faculty advisor, the college advisor would supplement faculty advising efforts by assisting students in navigating the bureaucracy of SSU.

Another initiative which merits study and consideration is the concept of asking the faculty to provide “mid-term progress reports” to our student population each semester. The grade reports would provide an important reminder for students of their academic progress, along with resources and information for help. Such a report will give both the student and his/her advisor an early warning if academic difficulties are occurring.

Another area of interest to the Enrollment Management Unit is that of “financial aid verification.” Data suggests that nearly 35% of the students who are selected for Financial Aid verification do not complete the verification process. Thus, several hundred students every year do not receive an aid package from the university. It is highly unlikely that any of these students will enroll at the university.

Our Office of Financial Aid is reviewing the current verification process, including the methodology by which we select students for “verification” (as opposed to the group that is selected by the Department of Education) and the set of activities which we currently employ to encourage selected students to complete the verification process. Our goal is to increase the number of students completing verification which in turn should lead to an increased number of students choosing to enroll at Shawnee State University.

Finally, the Enrollment Management Unit will be hosting a series of “focus group” sessions in late January 2008. We plan to assemble groups, randomly generated, of currently enrolled students and ask them “What are the policies, practices and/or procedures of Shawnee State

University that hamper your progress toward your degree or educational objective?" Information gathered from these sessions should be very valuable as we chart our course of future activity