

All Roads Lead to Student Success

Early in my career I worked at an institution that employed what I called the seesaw approach to student recruitment. When enrollment was up and their recruitment targets were achieved, everything was great—the status quo was the answer; when the university’s traditional market yield was down, they began looking at out-of-state recruiting. That would last about one recruitment cycle and they would then re-focus on their traditional markets. The admissions staff didn’t seem to comprehend the need to establish a long-term, strategic approach to enrollment. Of course in the 80s few public universities thought about comprehensive enrollment management.

Times have changed, as Stephen Pelletier’s article, “Managing Your Enrollment Destiny,” makes clear. An institution’s commitment to new markets is but one component of enrollment management. Steve quotes a source who says, “Building a successful new market requires an institution to have a sustained presence there . . . [but] most institutions don’t have the appetite for that. . . . They want a solution tomorrow. If it doesn’t pay off in the first year, they stop. And that’s not the right way to do it.” Obviously the desire for a quick fix hasn’t changed.

This article, the conclusion of a two-part series on enrollment management, offers readers a valuable, in-depth look at the strategies and tactics employed by AASCU members. As Steve notes, public universities have started to become more sophisticated in the ways they manage enrollment. But there is no perfect

model; his interviews with presidents and chancellors reveal that while there are some commonalities each institution addresses enrollment management from a perspective they believe is critical for their university.

I began this column at the Academic Affairs Summer Meeting in Portland, Oregon, which focused on “Re-Designing the First Year of College for Student Success.” On page 27 of *Currents & Transitions*, readers will find a short article about AASCU’s “re-imagining the first year project,” and the USA Funds grant that will provide support for the project was announced in Portland. In his remarks, Lorenzo Esters, USA Funds senior program director, said “USA Funds is delighted to support what we believe will be a **groundbreaking project** that will provide valuable guidance to the entire higher education community on best practices for promoting student success.”

AASCU and its members have been leaders in focusing on student success and degree completion; the first-year project is one more investment in educational attainment. USA Funds is focusing on a program called Completion With a Purpose that works to increase the numbers of students “who finish what they start when they enroll in college.” Esters said, “We are pleased to partner with AASCU to help answer the question, what really works to help first-year students—especially those from low-income households

and those who are first in their families to attend college—succeed and persist to their second year and ultimately to graduation.”

The standing features in *Public Purpose* provide us with the opportunity to share good advice from our members. In this issue I call your attention to Presidents & Practices where James Clements, president of Clemson University, writes about the “Strategy of Strategic Planning.” In Snapshot, R. Vic Morgan, interim president at the University of Houston-Victoria, highlights initiatives begun to increase the universities graduation rates. Also addressing the importance of degree completion on EndSights is AASCU President Muriel Howard in a short commentary on “Higher Education and the Public Good.”

And finally . . . watch for the fall issue of *Public Purpose*; it will be a themed issue focusing on the 50th anniversary of the Higher Education Act.

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