AASCU **American Association of State Colleges and Universities**

Delivering America's Promise

MANAGING YOUR
by Stephen Pelletier

ENROLLMENT DESTINY

Investing for Holistic Change in Enrollment,
Revenue and Retention

AASCU Symposium White Paper on Enrollment Management

royall & company

Contents

Executive Summary

S tudent enrollment is, of course, a linchpin of a university's health. Today, however, ongoing institutional financial pressures, shifting student demographics, increasing competition, and other manifestations of disruptive change in higher education make it imperative that institutions be particularly diligent in managing for success in enrollment. At the same time, continued economic difficulties for families, reduced funding by state governments, and the reduced number of high school graduates in many areas are among the many macro trends that also have a significant impact on enrollment success. The bottom line? Perhaps as never before, the practice of enrollment management in public universities today needs to be active, aggressive, sophisticated and strategic.

To help college leaders better understand some of the practices that are helping successful institutions achieve critical success in enrollment, AASCU held a symposium for university presidents and chancellors. Convened in Minneapolis, Minnesota in September 2015, the symposium was sponsored by Royall & Company, a leading consulting firm in higher education enrollment management, financial aid optimization, and alumni fundraising. This paper captures insights from the symposium—findings that can be summarized as follows:

■ Changing student demographics and institutional fiscal realities today significantly challenge a university's ability to meet its recruitment and enrollment goals, precisely at a time when public universities are more dependent on tuition revenue. Public institutions need to be more strategic than ever before about enrollment management.

■ More students are coming to college who are generally less well prepared for college both financially and academically, creating compounded challenges for public universities.

■ Effective strategies for reaching prospective students have changed considerably in the last five years—and have become much more complex.

■ Student success strategies focused on what might be called "the murky middle"—students between their first year and completion—can help universities help students reach their academic goals while adding revenue to the institution's coffers.

■ Institutions need to update their strategies for traditional undergraduate enrollment with more expansive and more disciplined student targeting and messaging and a better focus on yield.

■ As public universities strive to collect all the revenue they can from tuition, effective financial aid strategies are more vital today than ever before.

Simply put, public universities need to be more strategic than ever about enrollment management. This paper offers important strategies in that regard.

The Enrollment Landscape

KeyTakeaway

Today's demographic and fiscal realities significantly challenge a university's ability to meet its recruitment and enrollment goals, precisely at a time when public universities are dependent on tuition revenue as never before. Those challenges are compounded by a student population that is generally less well prepared for college both financially and academically. Consequently, public institutions need to be more strategic than ever before about enrollment management.

◆　◆　◆　◆　◆

Colleges and universities face a raft of negative pressures on revenues—including long-term student demographic trends, declining state support, increased demands for financial aid, and declining incomes overall. Costs, on the other hand—for such line items as employee benefits and health care, deferred maintenance, increased student services, and regulatory compliance—continue to escalate. A survey by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* found that for the fall of 2015, 27 percent of public colleges and universities polled had not met both their revenue and enrollment goals.[1] Reflecting the impact of these colliding forces, a different poll found that just 34 percent of the presidents of public baccalaureate universities thought their institution's financial model was sustainable over the next 10 years.[2]

Peter Farrell, senior enrollment management consultant at Royall & Company, put some of these data in perspective at the symposium. Before the recession of 2008, he observed, higher education enjoyed fairly bullish economic prospects. Revenue from tuition and non-

---

[1] "Missing the Mark on Enrollment and Revenue: No Easy Fix," by Scott Carlson. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 25, 2015. *http://chronicle.com/article/Missing-the-Mark-on-Enrollment/233898*.

[2] "Economic Angst, Rose-Colored Views on Race: A Survey of Presidents," by Doug Lederman. *Inside Higher Ed*, March 13, 2015. *https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/economic-angst-rose-colored-views-race-survey-presidents*.

Figure 1. The Recession as Turning Point

		The Good Old Days (2002–2007)	The New Reality (2007–2012)
Total Revenue	Total revenue growth	5.0 %	1.6 %
	Non-tuition revenue growth	3.9 %	-0.3 %
Net Tuition Revenue	Net-tuition revenue growth	6.9 %	3.5 %
	Institutions with declining net-tuition revenue per capita	11.3 %	33.1 %
Enrollment	First-year enrollment growth per year	5.0 %	1.3 %
	Institutions with declining first-year enrollment	32.6 %	47.8 %

Source: Royall & Company

tuition lines was generally positive and enrollment was growing. The recession effectively stopped that progress: Revenue growth slowed significantly, for example, and nearly half of all colleges saw their first year classes become smaller. Figure 1 shows those trends in stark relief.

A panoply of other factors conspire to further constrict public university finances:

- Even as they provide less money, for example, state legislators are placing more restrictions on universities, such as caps on tuition or the number of out-of-state residents public institutions can enroll, or are requiring that appropriations be tied to performance.

- Institutions that once turned to master's degree programs for extra revenue have seen that revenue stream eroded by oversupply of such programs—and declining interest among potential students.

- The potential economic payoff of MOOCs has turned out to be overstated.

- The possibility of free tuition for community college could erode student market share for baccalaureate institutions. At the same time, one potential new market of students, transfers, has yet to fully populate a pipeline to four-year schools.

Such trends have led—some would say driven—many public universities to focus much more attention on enrolling undergraduate students and ensuring their continued success

through to completion of their programs. That is a good and necessary trend, but enrollment of undergraduates faces its own headwinds. As has been well documented, more than half the four-year colleges in the country are in states with either no or slow growth in the number of high school graduates. Northeastern states and many of the largest Midwestern states continue to see declining numbers of high school graduates.

The ethnic mix of potential college students is also evolving. Across the Midwest, for example, the number of Caucasian students—traditionally the largest consumer of higher education across the region—is expected to continue to decline until 2023. At the same time, growth in the number of Hispanic students offers opportunities for campus enrollment growth.

When we align the numbers of high school graduates with markers of academic preparedness and financial ability, however, we see inherent challenges for both student recruitment and persistence, particularly in some of the sub-groups where growth in high school graduates is projected. Figure 2, for example, outlines differences in academic performance and income. Certainly such challenges can be addressed, but we need to acknowledge that some of the growing student populations will be more challenging—and perhaps more expensive—to recruit and graduate. Accordingly, many campuses are already making changes to their business practices and student services to create an environment that welcomes new student populations.

An important demographic factor for colleges and universities is that lower-income families are growing

The Enrollment Landscape: Policy Trends

Whether at the state or federal level, policy decisions can, of course, affect public universities directly. Particular areas of intersection include student preparation, transparency around college finance and performance, access, and funding. In a session at the symposium, Gregory Kienzl, a senior research associate at ACT, explored recent trends in policy.

Kienzl noted, for example, efforts in some states to shift remedial education to the high school level. Apart from relieving some of the burden of developmental education from colleges and universities, such moves would obviously impact students who will one day enroll in college, and could increase the flow of college-ready students in the educational pipeline. The trend toward performance-based funding, now adopted in some 30 states, will continue to impact public higher education. Another major trend is the blurring of lines between K-12, the workforce and higher education. Lawmakers at both the state and federal level are incentivizing policies that encourage more interaction between those three typically siloed entities.

To better understand the impact of policy, Kienzl suggested that university presidents think like policymakers—taking note, for example, legislators who use such data as a basis for policy focus not on academically prepared students, but on those who are underprepared. In other words, policy is shaped based on the needs of the academically underprepared, not those who are ready for college. Another consideration for higher education leaders is that in any given political cycle, some 40 percent of policymakers may be new to their post. The bottom line, Kienzl suggested, is that institutions and their leaders must recognize how policy can affect enrollments and financing, and should engage with policymakers to effect legislative outcomes that will help colleges and universities.

Figure 2. Changes in High School Graduates by Ethnicity

The Largest Consumer of Higher Education Across the Region Traditionally	Change in High Graduates 2013-2023	SAT Deviation from National Mean	Income Deviation from National Mean
White — Non-Hispanic	-6.2 % the largest consumer of higher education across the region traditionally	53	$6,331
Hispanic	45.5 %	-100	-$10,976
African American	5.1 %	-43	-$17,341
Asian Pacific Islander	44.8 %	111	$15,126
American Indian Alaska Native	14.5 %	-43	-$32,039

Source: Royall & Company

at a faster pace than middle and higher-income families. That presents a number of related recruitment challenges. Many low-income households do not have a tradition of pursuing higher education that would push students toward the college pipeline, and the rate of college-going tends to be lower in lower-income families. There is a correlation between income and tested academic ability, which creates a higher hurdle for accessing higher education for many low-income students—and an increased need for developmental education support. Moreover, low-income families are more sensitive than better-resourced populations to price increases.

At the same time, stagnating median incomes have put a financial squeeze on middle-income families. Those families often have incomes that are just high enough to exclude them from eligibility for Pell grants, but not so high that they can fund their student's education from household resources alone. Changes in PLUS loan eligibility have made it difficult for many of these families to access that funding option. Middle income families are most dependent on student and parent loans to make college a reality.

One effect of such trends is that, absorbing much of the demographic growth in students from low-income families, regional public universities are being called to serve a substantially changed student population, one that is drawn increasingly from a resource-constrained market segment. Overall, the composition of the student body at regional publics has gone from 33 percent to 43 percent Pell-eligible. Roughly half of all new Pell-

eligible students have enrolled in regional public institutions. At the same time, regional publics have generally not benefitted from the growth in tuition revenue from out-of-state enrollments that flagship and other public universities have reaped. The result is that regional public colleges enroll a population that comes with many challenges related to completion. Six-year graduation rates hovering around an average of 43 percent underscore the outsized pressure that regional publics must shoulder.

Students today apply to more colleges and focus more on cost/value questions than on an institution's academic reputation. One specific ramification for enrollment management is that average yield rates for colleges and universities nationally are falling: for public colleges, yield dropped from 42.7 percent in 2003 to 33.2 percent in 2013. Practically speaking, that means that for every 1,000 students a university admitted in 2003, today it needs to admit 30 to 40 percent more. "With most colleges' applicant pools growing only in incremental ways, the reality is there aren't enough students in your pool to move the needle on admission sufficiently to keep ahead of this trend," Farrell told the symposium. "Without strategic intervention, the result is shrinking enrollments or decreasing entering class quality."

Enrollment management operations cannot count on the metrics and approaches that served them well even just a few years ago to carry them successfully into the future. To adapt, they will

The President's Role in Strategic Enrollment Management

The symposium concluded with brief presentations from two presidents who talked about how they addressed some of the enrollment challenges that they faced. Kathryn Cruz-Uribe, chancellor of Indiana University East, described a declining enrollment that was so drastic that rumors swirled that the university was going to close. Working in an area where student demographics does not support enrollment growth, and operating also within the constraints of a recruitment area that is restricted by state policy, Cruz-Uribe and her team refined the basic mission of the campus. The university stopped offering certain degree programs while selectively adding others, reduced its programming in developmental education, and added several master's degree and online programs. The college intentionally developed its campus life, including active athletic teams and a new student activities center. This package of activities resulted in significant improvement in enrollment and a rosier picture for the institution's future.

As president of Lincoln University (Penn.), a historically black institution, Kevin Rome inherited a legacy of long-term underfunding, which translated to under-development of the university's infrastructure over time. The university also had rapidly declining enrollment. With Rome actively engaged in enrollment development, the school began to recruit in new markets, including some outside the state. Recognizing the challenges that African-American men face, Lincoln began a special program targeting student success for that population. A mandatory two-day orientation was started, and Lincoln rejuvenated its honors program. Lincoln eliminated all remedial courses, moving to co-remediation in existing courses. "If we are going to exist and thrive, we have to do something different," Rome said. In 2015, Lincoln saw an appreciable increase in the size of its freshman class. Two residence halls that had been closed reopened, and the school also negotiated with a nearby hotel to house overflow students. Lincoln has also seen an appreciable rise in its retention rate.

need to adopt new strategies in such areas as the awarding of financial aid, enrollment marketing strategies, and targeting geographic regions. The different segments of higher education are navigating this difficult terrain with varying degrees of success. In general, elite private colleges have been able to increase both their income and their quality (as measured by student SAT scores) fairly consistently over the past decade. The same holds true with the next tier of private colleges and with flagship public universities. "Rising publics" also have been moving the needle on price and quality, but at a slower rate. Among regional publics and regional privates, however, we see much slower increases in revenue and negative trends on quality. Additionally, regional public universities face pressure points around the price they can charge, in the sense that federal and state legislation does not support price growth and the need to remain low-cost is essential to intuitional missions focused on access to higher education.

Questions for University Leaders

■ How have demographic and fiscal realities changed your institution's thinking about enrollment management?

■ How truly strategic are your institution's enrollment management strategies?

■ How effective are your institution's administrative structures in support of enrollment management–do they remain siloed and isolated, or do campus functions and offices collaborate productively toward common institutional goals?

■ How effective is your institution in supporting student success, and what more should it do to ensure that students complete their degrees in a timely fashion?

Students' College Search and Decision Processes

KeyTakeaway

Strategies for reaching prospective students for your institution have changed considerably in the last five years. Students today want to be contacted earlier in their high school tenure and want their parents to be involved in their college search. Channels for reaching students—including lower income students and others from populations that your school might not have recruited heavily in years gone by—are much more complex than ever before.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Securing revenue from students has never been more important to an institution's bottom line—or harder to get. The reasons are all too familiar to university leaders and their enrollment staffs. Overall, the supply of high school graduates has flattened. After a plateau in 2010, we saw a 7 percent decline in the number of high school graduates between 2010 and 2013. Projections estimate that by 2023, the number of high school graduates will decline by nearly 4 percent in the Northeast, remain flat in the Midwest, and increase by 14 percent in the South.

To gain more insight into how students make decisions about the college they attend, Pamela Kiecker Royall, Ph.D., head of research at Royall & Company, collaborated with colleagues to collect and analyze online survey data designed to shed light on how college-bound students view the college search, application and decision process.

Studying both student behavior and preferences through collected data, Royall and colleagues pinpointed five critical activities in which institutions should engage to reach potential students in today's competitive market:

- Communicate with students early in their high school tenure.

- Align information and engagement with a student's progression through high school career.

- Leverage multiple communications channels.

- Engage parents early and often.

- Customize communications for low-income students.

Overall, Royall said, potential college students today seek an institution that is the "right fit" for them, that will help them graduate on time with their desired degree and major, and that will help them find timely employment in their field of choice. Moreover, she noted, students "really are looking for a lifelong relationship with institutions," and want universities "to be their partner as they work through their early career, mid-career and beyond." That gives institutions tremendous potential to engage not just a vibrant student body, but a stronger, more active alumni cohort as well. Recruiting, enrolling and retaining this kind of student, Royall said, hinges on institutions increasingly taking a student-centric approach and becoming more market-responsive.

Questions for University Leaders

- Has your institution's enrollment management operation adapted as potential students' preferences have changed about how and when they want to hear from colleges?

- Has enrollment management at your institution become more sophisticated in dissecting segments of potential students and reaching out to them appropriately?

- Is your institution effective in engaging parents in the college search process?

- Does your institution effectively use up-to-date channels to contact potential students, with the right mix of media and messages?

Increasing Tuition Revenue by Focusing on Upper-Division Persistence

KeyTakeaway

At many, perhaps most institutions, student success strategies tend to focus on either students in their first year or students at the very end of their education cycle. But interventions targeted at what might be called "the murky middle"—students who return for their second year with a GPA between 2.0 and 3.0—can help universities help students achieve the educational success they want and need, while adding revenue to the institution's coffers.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Enrollment managers—and their supervisors—must deal with something of an iron triangle for enrollment. They have the triple mandate of becoming more selective, growing institutional enrollment, and somehow extracting a greater price from the students that they recruit. Realizing all of those goals simultaneously is impossible. Essentially, institutions have to face the reality that they are either going to have to take a hit on price, by offering more discounts in tuition, or selectivity, which might work for a few years but is ultimately not sustainable in that over time the institution would accept more students that it might not take otherwise and may not be prepared to serve.

How can institutions break that iron triangle? A university could go "all in" on recruiting transfer students or more students from out-of-state, but many institutions are also pursuing those strategies. A different tack might be working to gain revenue from existing student populations—but with a somewhat different focus. Ed Venit, a senior director at the Education Advisory Board (EAB), shared information at the symposium about EAB's

Student Success Collaborative, a new venture that applies sophisticated data analytics to identify best practices and strategies for change that can support student success in what EAB has come to call "the murky middle" of students—the large cohort of students who finish their first year in college with a GPA between 2.0 and 3.0.

Targeting "The Murky Middle"

Venit posited that given that most current strategies for student success focus either very early or very late in a student's academic career, that essentially creates an opportunity to improve retention practices targeted to students in "the murky middle." Apart from an institution's general interest in retaining first-year students, there is much to be gained solely from a revenue standpoint in doing more to retain sophomores, juniors and seniors.[1]

At the same time, data show that while the first year in college is the most significant one in terms of attrition, less studied is the fact that there is significant attrition after that. EAB data show an average of 8.5 percent attrition in the second year, 4.7 percent in the third year, 4.2 percent in the fourth year, 3 percent in the fifth year, and 4.5 percent in the sixth year.

In addressing the attrition problem, institutions traditionally focus on first-year students who are academically adrift or who fundamentally are a poor fit for that institution. Venit argued that first-year students with severe academic difficulties may need remediation and time to mature before completing, and thus may be costly to help. Further, he said, first-year students who are not well matched to a campus' culture and programs might be too difficult to engage and may be more likely to transfer. By contrast, interventions with students in their second and third years may offer more opportunity for return on investment. Retaining just 1 percent of students from "the murky middle" could have a significant impact on overall institutional revenue.

---

[1]Noel-Levitz, which surveys practices for student success every two years, recently found that nearly all (98 percent) public universities had retention practices tailored to first-year students and two-thirds (67 percent) had programs tailored to students close to completion of their academic programs. Just 20 percent of institutions, by contrast, had programs for second year students. Noel-Levitz does not survey institutions about programs for third and fourth year students, because they simply do not exist in significant enough numbers.

The theory in practice: Working with Middle Tennessee State University, for example, EAB has helped the institution improve its enrollment revenue through interventions targeted at students on the verge of dropping out for a wide variety of reasons. Between spring of 2014 and spring of 2015, every college on campus saw increases in enrollment. The institution added a total of 390 undergraduate students, reaping additional revenues for tuition fees estimated at more than $1.5 million.

Questions for University Leaders

■ To what extent has your institution considered student success interventions targeted at sophomores, juniors and seniors?

■ Could strategies targeted to help students in their second, third and fourth years help your institution retain those students—and the tuition revenue they provide—while also helping those students progress toward their educational goals?

■ What new thinking or tactics would be needed at your institution to pursue that tack?

Expanding Beyond
Traditional Markets

KeyTakeaway
Institutions need to update their strategies for traditional undergraduate enrollment with more expansive and more disciplined student targeting and messaging and a better focus on yield. At the same time, they also need to develop the new enrollment strategies that are needed to reach "nontraditional" student populations such as international and online students.

◆　◆　◆　◆　◆

Too many campuses have not updated their enrollment management playbook to meet today's challenges. Among other strategies, adopting a new paradigm for enrollment management might mean expanding efforts in local markets while also tapping national markets. An institution might expand its recruiting efforts to include freshman and juniors in high school, as well as juniors and seniors.

Sharon Fuller, vice president for client development at Royall and Company, suggested at the symposium that the time is right for a two-part strategy for enrollment success. First, she said, it is time to modernize the undergraduate enrollment playbook with more expansive, disciplined student targeting, broadening recruitment efforts to all potential markets; delivering the right marketing messages through the right communications channels at the right time and with the right messages for student engagement; and with dedicated, sustained focus on optimizing yield. At the same time, she also said, it's time to double down in devoting appropriate enrollment resources to recruit non-traditional student populations, including international students, transfer students, online students, and degree completers.

Another critical strategy is for universities to manage yield more tightly. Integrating enrollment financial aid efforts more closely, including integrating data and operations, can help a university manage yield. Improving the way and the speed by which the institution monitors and decides about student applications can help enrollment managers triage student follow-up. Intelligence gleaned from students who do not enroll in your institution can help a university better understand both its competitors and the factors that play most significantly in a student's decision, and can help the institution hone its messaging. Another component of effective strategy is helping students and their parents understand the process of completing the FAFSA form.

The theory in practice: As an example, a regional public institution had missed enrollment targets for the previous year and was at risk of missing targets for the current year. Exemplifying the need for enrollment cycles that now persist throughout the year, this institution radically revised its recruitment strategy in January, late in its traditional cycle. It conducted a comprehensive high school senior marketing campaign, looking in particular at in-progress inbound inquiries, non-responders to previous university campaigns, and new senior names drawn from key list providers. It redesigned its application platform, optimizing it for all devices, including tablets and mobile. Despite its late start, that rapid change in strategy resulted in over 260 additional student enrollments.

As university leaders know, additional streams of revenue can come from tapping into new and different markets. To that end, experts at the symposium offered strategies about engaging with international students and online students.

International Students

As part of a new comprehensive strategic enrollment plan, St. Cloud State University (Minn.) has stepped up its recruitment of international students. In addition to using tactics like international agents and conducting outreach at college fairs, St. Cloud has also started to draw more intentionally on connections it has through innovative partnerships with other educational institutions, including regional community colleges and colleges abroad. Speaking at the symposium, Amber Schultz, St. Cloud's assistant provost for undergraduate recruitment and new student transition, said a cultural change was also needed, requiring the institution to shift in thinking of recruiting internationally as an add-on to thinking of

international students as an integral and important segment of the student population, with their academic success as a central goal. Also important was better coordination across the many university departments and offices that play a role in enrolling international students and supporting their success.

Institutions interested in expanding their enrollment of international students should ask themselves fundamental questions, Schulz said:

- How does international enrollment fit into your overall enrollment plan? What priority level does international enrollment have on your campus?

- How can and do institutional partnerships fit with and nurture international recruitment?

- How is your international enrollment strategy structured and staffed and how does it fit with other enrollment strategies? Are all staff and departments who are engaged in enrollment management on the same page regarding recruitment and retention of international students?

Online Students

Providing a snapshot of online learning, Susan Aldridge, senior vice president for online learning at Drexel University and president of Drexel University Online, said the demographics of online students differ from those of many traditional students—warranting different enrollment strategies. For example, she noted, online students tend to be between 21 and 39 years old, and more are female. Most online students are employed at least part-time. Online students might dwell in rural or urban areas, but 75 percent live within 100 miles of the campus that sponsors the online program that they are enrolled in. What motivates online students? Research by Eduventures shows that most online students (40 percent) can be categorized as "career advancers," while 20 percent each can be categorized as "degree completers" or "career changers." The balance can be considered as lifelong learners.

Aldridge said that digital content optimized for blogs, videos and infographics, professional development webinars, "nano" courses, and social media campaigns may be more effective

recruitment strategies for online students. Institutional partnerships—with industry, nonprofit agencies, other four-year institutions that do not offer given programs, and community colleges—can also play a key role in building healthy online enrollments. Another key is to shape online programs based on what the market needs and on niche markets. Many online students look for programs that emphasize employment opportunities, or that provide workplace licensure or certification.

Institutions that are committed to doing online learning right typically have to adopt new ways of serving students. Prior learning credit evaluation, 24/7 customized service support, ongoing career services, readily available digital library/textbook resources, and designated scholarships are all critical tools for recruiting and retaining online students. Making students wait five months for review of transfer credits or for approval of financial aid means that you will lose potential students, Aldridge said. Drexel reverse-engineered systems that online students must undergo to find process improvements.

Questions for University Leaders

■ How well do recruitment strategies at your institution identify right-fit students?

■ How well do they move those students to explore your institution and then progress to applying and enrolling?

■ Assuming that your institution is also doing more reaching out to student populations that were once considered nontraditional, how is your enrollment management operation tailoring its recruitment strategies to those populations?

■ If your institution is involved in online learning, how strategic are those efforts?

Maximizing Revenue by Strategically Leveraging Financial Aid Dollars

KeyTakeaway

As public institutions strive to collect all the revenue they can from tuition, effective financial aid strategies are more vital today than ever before. Optimizing financial aid requires identifying enrollment challenges, clarifying strategic enrollment targets, having access to relevant data to help drive decisions (and the capacity to analyze that data productively), and a willingness to let net tuition, not expenses, drive budgeting.

◆　◆　◆　◆　◆

Perhaps taking a page from the playbook of private higher education, more public universities are learning how to maximize revenue by doing a better job of leveraging financial aid as a strategic driver of student yield. A key to making this strategy work is improving the ways an institution's enrollment management and financial aid functions work together. Lesley A. Di Mare, the president of Colorado State University-Pueblo, and Paul Orscheln, the institution's vice president of student services and enrollment management, shared insights at the symposium about their institution's experiences.

Appointed president of CSU-Pueblo in 2011, Di Mare inherited an institution that was in flux. Three weeks before she became president, she was made aware of an accounts receivable audit with some 35 findings. In response, Di Mare made tough policy decisions and implemented a new financial system in order to establish a firm fiscal foundation for the university. Additionally, CSU-Pueblo faced the challenge of a brand that was not as

strongly recognized as it might like, and the school wanted to broaden the geographic and demographic mix of the students it enrolled.

A major part of the institution's turnaround strategy focused on aligning enrollment marketing and financial aid and packaging financial aid as a recruitment and retention tool. "A lot of people think that financial aid leveraging is a private university concept," Orscheln said. "But with state support declining and the cost of educating students going up, it has become a critical piece of our recruitment strategy." As another part of the strategy, consultants helped CSU-Pueblo search for students at the inquiry and applicant stages, which helped the institution go from approximately 4,000 applicants annually to over 10,000. In addition to helping put CSU-Pueblo on a trajectory to enroll more freshmen, the school's new strategies are helping it enroll more out-of-state students and attract students with higher ACT and SAT scores.

Orscheln said that having oversight from many different enrollment-related functions through his office is a critically important strategic structure. His portfolio includes all of the traditional enrollment management offices—admissions, financial aid, registrar, first-year advising—as well as student life. That means, he said, that CSU-Pueblo can fold the efforts of all those different functions into meeting its enrollment management goals. "Every institution has those functions, and you should be able to collaborate, but we all know the silos that exist on our campuses," he said. "But with my office having oversight for all those areas, everyone understands what we are trying to do."

Granular Look at Financial Aid

Another speaker at the symposium, Carol Stack, principal of the firm Hardwick Day and a nationally recognized leader in financial aid, provided a more granular look at financial aid optimization. Adapting a strategy to optimize financial aid requires a mix of first identifying an institution's enrollment challenges, clarifying its strategic enrollment targets, having access to relevant data to help drive decisions—and the capacity to analyze that data productively—and a willingness to budget by revenue, especially net tuition revenue, versus expense, Stack said.

Hardwick Day analyzes data deeply to produce descriptive analyses that can be summarized in a broad high level but also provide detailed information for specific sub-populations. It is vital, Stack said, that an institution's financial aid staff be able to explain the institution's financial aid policies both quantitatively and in narrative form. In part, she said, such knowledge helps institutions track nuanced changes in institutional financial aid policy over time, but at another level having relatively simple, easy to understand financial aid policies helps the institution answer questions about financial aid decisions from students, parents, faculty and other interested stakeholders.

Questions for University Leaders

- Leveraging financial aid in support of institutional revenue, a key strategy in private higher education, has now become a vital strategy in public higher education as well, particularly in light of state disinvestment in education through reduced appropriations. In those regards:

  ◗ Has thinking, policy and practice at your institution shifted adequately to reflect that new reality?

  ◗ How well does your institution leverage financial aid to achieve its tuition goals?

  ◗ Could and should your institution be doing more to align enrollment marketing strategies and tuition and financial aid practices, and if so, what should it be doing?

Conclusion

One of the particular challenges for public colleges and universities today centers on enrollment management. The pressing need for institutions to reap more revenue from tuition makes it vitally important, perhaps as never before, that every institution have a robust plan of attack for recruiting and retaining the student body that it needs. At the same time, shifts in student demographic trends and more competition among institutions create related challenges of their own. At the same time, too, public universities have an obligation to remain true to their fundamental goals of offering accessible and affordable education for all.

Such challenges create an environment in which every public institution of higher learning must be more attentive in developing its enrollment management strategies, and more intentional in executing those strategies. Overall, today's public institutions need to be more sophisticated about enrollment management.

Fortunately, models are emerging that point the way toward more refined—and more productive—enrollment strategies. In that regard, this paper captures many good ideas that surfaced at a recent AASCU symposium on this critical topic. We hope that every AASCU institution will draw on these insights to benchmark and perhaps strengthen their own enrollment management practices.

Speaker Links

- AASCU: *www.aascu.org/*

- Royall & Company: *www.royall.com/*

- ACT: *www.act.org*

- Colorado State University-Pueblo: *www.csupueblo.edu/*

- Drexel University Online: *http://online.drexel.edu/*

- Education Advisory Board: *www.eab.com*

- Hardwick Day: *www.hardwickday.com*

- Indiana University East: *www.iue.edu*

- Lincoln University: *www.lincolnu.edu*

- St. Cloud State University: *www.stcloudstate.edu/*

Select Resources

Enrollment Management

- 2015 *Inside Higher Ed Survey* of College and University Admissions Directors. *https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/pressure-all-sides-2015-survey-admissions-directors?utm_content=buffer49d40&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=IHEbuffer*

- "How Presidents and Enrollment Leaders Can Get on the Same Page," by Eric Hoover. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 17, 2015. *http://chronicle.com/article/How-PresidentsEnrollment/231731/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en*

- "Managing Your Enrollment Destiny," by Stephen G. Pelletier, AASCU *Public Purpose* magazine, Summer 2015. *http://www.aascu.org/MAP/PublicPurpose/2015/Summer/#4*

FAFSA

- "Next Steps on FAFSA," by Josh Logue. *Inside Higher Ed*, September 15, 2015. *https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/09/15/excitement-and-concern-about-prior-prior-year-fafsa-changes?utm_source=WhatCounts+Publicaster+Edition&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Higher+Education+%26+National+Affairs%3a+Join+ACE+This+Friday+for+a+Book+Talk+and+Discussion+on+Student+Learning+&utm_content=Inside+Higher+Ed*

- "Common Errors on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid." College of William & Mary. *http://www.wm.edu/admission/financialaid/howtoapply/commonfafsaerrors/*

"The Murky Middle"

- For more information about research on intervening for student success among "the murky middle," see this site for EAB's Student Success Collaborative: *https://www.eab.com/technology/student-success-collaborative*

Online Learning

- *Wired for Success: Real-World Solutions for Transforming Higher Education*, by Susan Aldridge. AASCU, 2014. Available through AASCU's online bookstore.

Delivering America's Promise

AASCU's membership of more than 400 public colleges and universities is found throughout the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. We range in size from 1,000 students to 44,000. We are found in the inner city, in suburbs, towns and cities, and in remote rural America. We include campuses with extensive offerings in law, medicine and doctoral education—as well as campuses offering associate degrees to complement baccalaureate studies. We are both residential and commuter, and offer on-line degrees as well. Yet common to virtually every member institution are three qualities that define its work and characterize our common commitments.

- We are institutions of access and opportunity. We believe that the American promise should be real for all Americans, and that belief shapes our commitment to access, affordability and educational opportunity, and in the process strengthens American democracy for all citizens.

- We are student-centered institutions. We place the student at the heart of our enterprise, enhancing the learning environment and student achievement not only through teaching and advising, but also through our research and public service activities.

- We are "stewards of place." We engage faculty, staff and students with the communities and regions we serve—helping to advance public education, economic development and the quality of life for all with whom we live and who support our work. We affirm that America's promise extends not only to those who come to the campus but to all our neighbors.

We believe that through this stewardship and through our commitments to access and opportunity and to our students, public colleges and universities effectively and accountably deliver America's promise. In so doing we honor and fulfill the public trust.

AASCU
American Association
of State Colleges and
Universities
Delivering America's Promise

1307 New York Avenue, NW ■ Fifth Floor ■ Washington, DC 20005-4701

ph 202.293.7070 ■ fax 202.296.5819 ■ aascu.org