Enrollment Initiatives & Collaboration

Presenters:
Jason Cronk, University of Pennsylvania
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Liz Rihl Lewinsky, St. Joseph’s University
Rebecca Schreiber-Reis, Penn State University
Lori Williams, Northampton Community College

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GRADUATE SCHOOL IS EXPENSIVE, TAKES HARD WORK... AND MAY CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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SR. ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS
THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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Using financial aid communications to convey value

- Authenticity is compelling
- Candor leads to better conversations
- You are not the right school for everybody
  - But are probably the single best choice for somebody
Leverage Financial Aid To Boost Conversions

- Knowledge can overcome objections to cost
- Segment pool by SES, quality & affinity to assign scholarship
- No separate application for scholarship
- Supplemental Scholarships at faculty/program manager discretion
Getting Students to Listen on SM

- Are you saying what you think you’re saying?
  - A series of unfortunate posts
  - If you don’t understand them, they will not hear you
Is Collaboration Overrated?

- Collaboration is not:
  - Being Nice & Keeping Everyone Happy
  - Having Meetings
  - Doing Other People’s Jobs or Letting Someone Else Do Yours

- Collaboration Requires:
  - Humility
  - Courageous Conversations
  - Seeing the Big Picture
  - Sponsorship
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Elizabeth Rihl Lewinsky
Director of Financial Aid
Saint Joseph’s University

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Admissions Funnel

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Prospective Student Financial Aid Communication Plan

**Inquiry Stage**

- Affordability messaging
- Advertise NPC (if your NPC user yield is positive!)
- Promote merit scholarship opportunities
- Key statistics (% receiving aid/total $ amounts)
- Messaging on what makes your institution’s financial aid program distinctive (i.e.- ‘value-added’ services such as: creating a 4-year financial plan, financial literacy programming).

**GOAL:** Drive to apply for admission!
The Prospective Student Financial Aid Communication Plan

**Applicant Stage**

- Communicate financial aid application process
- Communicate key deadlines
- Advertise any ‘special’ scholarships that require separate applications
- Share how to research outside scholarship opportunities
- Weave ROI messaging into your communication

**GOAL:** Drive to file FAFSA and list your school code!
The Prospective Student Financial Aid Communication Plan

Admit/Accept Stage

• Educate on available financing options (Payment plans, PLUS and alternative loans).
• Outside scholarships (treatment/student sends award notice to Financial Aid)
• Communicate new tuition costs
• Communicate how to deposit/benefits of early deposit
• Provide specific financial aid counselor contact info.
• Offer assistance reviewing aid package

GOAL: Drive to Deposit!
The Prospective Student Financial Aid Communication Plan

Deposit Stage

• How to apply for available financing options (Payment plans, PLUS and alternative loans)
• Notify students selected for federal verification
• Communicate billing timeline
• Advertise Financial Aid Office’s services for new student orientation
• Continue to weave ROI messaging into communication

GOAL: Anti-Melt!
Different Communication Methods to Reach Varying audiences

- Text Messages
- Emails
- Phone Calls
- Tweets
- FB posts
- Instagram
- Virtual Information Sessions
- Print - postcards - letters - publications

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Utilizing Financial Aid to Increase Enrollment

• Planning Phase:
  – Review merit award levels (are award amounts/academic criteria in line with your primary competitors? Collect competitor offers.)
  – Review packaging formulas and formula for administering need-based aid. Does it align with your institutional priority? (i.e.-if increasing academic selectivity and enrollment are primary goals, are you meeting greatest amount of institutional need for academically strongest?)
Utilizing Financial Aid to Increase Enrollment

-Analyze historical data: What academic cells (i.e., SAT/ACT bands, GPA’s)/income and/or need levels do you yield the worst with? Look at your “gap” ranges, geography, majors, etc. What categories do you yield the best with/the worst with? Use this information to inform your packaging formulas.

-Leverage need-based aid to target your sweet spot.

-Use prior year data to run simulations (i.e., if you increase your merit levels or % of need met by xx amount, what would your yield and TDR look like?)
Utilizing Financial Aid to Increase Enrollment

- Working backwards can help. What’s target TDR (tuition discount rate) and enrollment goal (FR/TR)?
- Partner with Admissions in these conversations.
- Establish your financial aid awarding “PLAN” and if you consider appeals, allocate funding for that in your financial aid budget.
- Appeals: Review in conjunction with Admissions. Use these $’s to “shape” the class (i.e.-academic profile, diversity, major, gender, etc.)
- Set clear parameters: PJ only or PJ+Appeal?
Using Social Media to Contact Students

• Partner with Admissions to post to admitted student/deposited student channels (FB groups, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)

• Consider “virtual” information sessions

• Give specific content for financial aid posts (i.e.-drive to file FAFSA, review aid package, explore financing options, etc.)

• Once enrolled, establish separate “enrolled” student channels for financial aid.
Using Social Media to Contact Students

• Develop monthly calendar of posts (ex: May: how to accept aid, advertise payment plan opening, how to complete MPN/EC, opting out of health insurance. June: share billing cycle, how to apply for alt/PLUS loans, etc. July: How to apply for FWS jobs.)

• Build membership

• Cross-post: Outreach to other campus FB groups to share your posts/reciprocate!
Collaborate Between Offices

• Identify your key campus “partner” offices:
  – Student Accounts/Bursar
  – Registrar - Housing/Residence Life
  – Admissions - Career Development
  – One-Stop Shop
  – Student Success Center
  – Academic Advising
  – Veteran Services

• Establish regular meeting schedule between the “key” areas
Collaborate Between Offices

• Clear lines of communication are critical!
  - Schedule meetings at regular intervals between leadership and among staff from all areas if appropriate
  - Share updates with your own team.

• Provide critical financial aid updates with other areas. Examples: key deadlines, legislative changes, policy/procedural changes, etc.

• Avoid “communication inundation”!

• Keep the “big” initiatives front and center and discuss how your offices can work more efficiently toward achieving them:

  • 1. New Student Enrollment  
  • 2) Retention (example: pre-registration outreach  
  • 3) New Student Check-in  
  • 4) Graduation
Collaboration Between Offices

• Seek out opportunities to support other departments’ initiatives.
• Share costs when possible to reduce budget impact. (ex.-publications, training, technology)
• Explore how technology initiatives can be cross-departmental. (ex.-ticketing system, secure document upload process)
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Rebecca Schreiber-Reis, Director of Admissions & Financial Aid
Penn State’s Dickinson Law

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Director of Admissions & Financial Aid

Admission Decisions & Merit Awards

Need-Based Aid & Loans

Federal Work Study

Endowed & Special Awards

Refunds & Balances Due

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Competitive Offer

• Merit based on holistic application review.
• Reserve part of budget for need-based aid.

Consider Appeals

• Law school enrollment = students’ market.
• Review awards from other schools.
• Create COA comparison.

Cost Education

• Take time to explain net cost.
• Provide personalized assistance with budget planning.

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Coordinated Communication Efforts

Goal: Applicant to Matriculant

Template Email Stream
Text Messages
Social Media
Highly Personalized Connections

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Email Stream

• Effort led by Communications.
• First contact with Financial Aid – be thoughtful & deliberate with language.
• Invite further conversation.

Dear Abby,

The thought of paying for a legal education is often a source of anxiety for prospective students. Paying tuition, fees, books, and living expenses completely out-of-pocket is rarely feasible. Some individuals prefer to close their eyes, sign loan documents, and hope for the best, but the stress of financing an education can push others to walk away from their dream of becoming a lawyer without looking at the real financial picture.

In my years as a financial aid administrator and as a former financial aid recipient myself, I understand that navigating options to finance your education can seem overwhelming. I can help you apply for need-based grant aid, identify outside scholarships, and know your student
Text Nudging

- Advise applicant of upcoming deadlines
- Increase engagement with staff
  - Build relationships
  - Gauge interest
- Invitations to events feel more personal

- Offer assistance and answer questions
Social Media Success

Active Listening

Strategic Engagement

Information Sharing

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Director of Admissions & Financial Aid: **Must work well with others!**

- Audience Members:
  - Career Services
  - Dean of the Law School
  - Veteran’s Support
  - Office of Student Aid
  - Alumni Relations
  - Bursar & SFS
  - Admissions Team

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Lorraine Williams
Assistant Director of Financial Aid
Northampton Community College

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Strategize

Leveraging is less of a strategy at the community college level based on the resources available.

Increasing enrollment at an open enrollment school relies on increasing communication of the message that financial aid is available and accessible.

Communicate

Share information, trends and data to support the recruitment efforts of the institution.

As an institution DON’T send mixed messages to students.

Advocate for financial aid to have a seat at the table where institutional goals are developed.

Collaborate

Be willing to go beyond "the way it has always been done".

Deadlines and policies need to work for all departments with a part in the enrollment process in order for them to work for students and families.

Ex: Lead reports are generated from financial aid to admissions whenever students list NCC on their FAFSA but have not applied for admission.
Use caution with FERPA-sensitive information!

Coordinate/piggyback messages with other areas so students are not overwhelmed.
Northampton Community College: Collaboration between Offices 1 of 1

Propose innovative ways to collaborate between areas:
Teach Financial Aid 101 to other areas

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THANK YOU!