

ENROLLMENT MANAGER

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 1, 2017

ENROLLMENT MANAGER is a publication of **DWYER EDUCATION STRATEGIES, INC.** Inquiries and comments can be mailed to dwyereducation@aol.com. An electronic version of the newsletter is available at www.dwyereducationstrategies.com.

TRANSFORMING THE ENROLLMENT MACHINE: WHEN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP MATTERS MOST

Dr. Marylouise Fennell
Principal
Hyatt-Fennell

Dr. Scott D. Miller
President
Virginia Wesleyan College

Stay on message.

In the ferocious competition for students today, effective presidents ensure that their enrollment teams not only understand the recruitment message, but that they also promote it effectively in each and every communication distributed to prospective students, parents and families— alumni, too.

Because the best marketing strategies derive from strong and consistent messaging, presidents must insist on hiring enrollment staff who are fully briefed and conversant on the institutional brand, programs and unique features. Other institutional stakeholders can help you.

Here are some tips for making sure that your enrollment team is walking in step with your presidential vision and direction:

Craft a vision that can be understood by every member of the campus community. If your “elevato

TRANSFORMING THE ENROLLMENT MACHINE CONTINUED:

speech,” the 25 words or less that sum up your mission, uniqueness and special opportunities, is truly effective, everyone on campus is potentially a sales associate. Endorse the vision as president, then share it with current students, their parents, faculty, staff and graduates. The enrollment team can and should include those in your wider institutional universe. Empower them.

Monitor performance daily. Every member of the enrollment staff should be held fully accountable for the flow of inquiries, applications and deposits. Establish data-driven performance metrics and ensure that objectives are met daily, weekly and monthly. Be a visible and frequent presence in their suite of offices. Remember, the “annual” enrollment cycle is short; effectively you have under five months to seat your next class.

Be the top salesperson. Once you’ve established the targets and messaging that contribute to a successful enrollment cycle, be sure that you are the public face of recruitment. At open houses on campus and other promotional events, the president has the visibility and ultimate responsibility of turning applications into deposits, of sealing the deal. Enrollment call centers and knock-out communications are vital, but prospective students and their families expect to be won over by the president in person.

Freshen up your act. Consider how prospective students process what you’re telling them. At Scott’s current college, located about 15 minutes from the Atlantic Ocean, the enrollment strategy was upgraded from inviting students to enroll in “Hampton Roads,” a regional reference that few outside Virginia—and including some in-state residents—understood. “Coastal Virginia” with all the connotations of sun, fun and beach, and complemented by a redesigned, interactive website, has proved to be far “sexier” as a branding device.

Focus on your strengths. You don’t have to walk in sand to capitalize on the attractiveness of your institution. What do you do best? Are you effective with non-traditional students? Do you have energized alumni who can make the collegiate experience and its lifelong benefits and connections come alive? Historic buildings with their suggestions of a storied and dignified campus can often speak volumes to those seeking a place that “looks like a

college.” Perceptions of location—not just locations themselves—are critical.

Speak to value, not cost. You can have the prettiest campus, the friendliest faculty and the sharpest communications, but cost remains for most families the single most important deciding factor when choosing a college. (It is also vital in retaining students once they’re enrolled.) Your job as president is to speak to the value of their investment in a four-year degree program. Assure them, first, that the tuition sticker price is reduced through institutional grants and scholarships. Then talk up the value of completing the students’ degree programs in four years or sometimes less, of earning more over the course of their careers with a college diploma and of being prepared not only for their first job, but the ones after that—and for the life success that derives from a quality educational experience that includes networking with other successful graduates of your institution.

Recruiting an enrollment team that includes more than just staff is vital in keeping the admissions machine running smoothly. There is room for many engineers of success.

Dr. Scott D. Miller is president of Virginia Wesleyan College in Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Virginia. He was previously president of Bethany College, Wesley College, and Lincoln Memorial University. He is chair of the Board of Directors of Academic Search, Inc., and serves as a consultant to college presidents and boards.

Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, a former president of Carlow University, is senior counsel for the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and principal of Hyatt Fennell, a higher education search firm.