

MARKETING FOR ENROLLMENT – UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES: AN ACTION PLAN

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ABSTRACT

This marketing action plan was developed for the use in universities and colleges to boost their enrollment. It was initially prepared when I was pursuing aspects of higher education at Nova Southeastern University. All universities and colleges embark on some sort of marketing to lure students and boost enrollment. For too many the marketing strategy is limited mainly to advertising. After reviewing the literature an action plan was developed that can be implemented over a nine month period... Evaluation questionnaires are included in the Appendix and it is suggested that an evaluation of the action plan should be carried out to determine its effectiveness. There are questions that should be resolved before and after a marketing an institution and these are considered in the literature review and questionnaires. All the aspects of marketing should be employed to some extent in the marketing of a college/university

Keywords: *Planning, Evaluation, College, University, Market Research, Marketing Plan, Action Plan, Program*

INTRODUCTION

Lee and Clery (2006) reported that enrollment in higher education is up by over three million since the nineteen eighties. Lee and Clery (2006) informed that the demographic trends indicate that the number of people wanting to attend college will continue to grow for some time to come.

The author of this paper worked for a small university. There is a strategic plan to increase student enrollment

The marketing program presently being used by the universities utilize one major marketing tool, which are short television and internet (Wifi) advertisements illustrating some course offerings and mentioning the college degrees offered. This program is localized. The problem is that such an emphasis in the marketing strategy for increase enrollment is not very effective and can very costly. This marketing strategy employed by universities can be considered an investment to enhance the visibility of the institution rather than have a direct impact on enrollment. Additionally, an effort should be made to increase the number of foreign students to the universities through the use of the internet and website. The marketing tool currently being used by the universities can be viewed as a short fall in the marketing strategy for enrollment.

The author of this paper suggested a marketing action plan that would adequately increase student enrollment using a combination of marketing tools in addition to television and radio advertisements.

Literature Review

Hossler and Bean (1990) reported that in nineteen seventy-one when American Colleges began to project declines in student enrollments the concept of marketing found its way into the admissions and recruitment practices of many colleges and universities. Clark and Hossler (1991) informed that colleges and universities have been slow in accepting the need for marketing. Kotler (1982) defined marketing as the analysis, planning, implementing and control of carefully formulated programs designed to about

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voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. Moti (2006) informed that marketing activities are all those activities associated with identifying the particular wants and needs of a target market of customers, and going about satisfying those customers better than the competitors. Moti (2006) suggested that the marketing activities involve doing marketing activities involve doing market research on customers, analyzing their needs, and then making strategic decisions about product design, pricing, promotion, and distribution.

Small Business Administration (2006) suggested that in target marketing there are two segments, (a) the geographical segment and (b) the customer segment. Small Business Administration (2006) suggested that the geographical segment emphasizes the specialization in serving in a particular geographical area, such as the neighborhood, and within a specified radius from the organization. Small Business Administration (2006) informed that the customer segment of marketing places emphasis on identifying those people most likely to buy the products or services targeting those groups.

Cohen (1995) outlined four principles to defined a target market, (a) demographic, which is age, income and education of the target market, (b) the geography, which is the location of the target market, (c) the psychographics, that is how the targeted individuals think, and (d) they lifestyle, which is their activities, interest and opinions. The Small Business Association (2006) identifying marketing tools as newspaper and magazine activities, advertising-radio and television, direct mail, telemarketing and public relations, such as community involvement, sponsorship and press releases. Stern (2006) emphasized that the marketing tools mentioned by the Small Business Administration (2006) represents the old media whereas the internet and website comprise the new media. Hossler (1999) mentioned fliers and high school visits as other marketing tools that are relevant to higher education recruitment. The Small Business Administration (2006) reported that every marketing program contains the following four key components.

1. Products and Services
2. Promotion
3. Distribution
4. Pricing

Lauer (2000) reported that competition for students and dollars intensified significantly in the nineteen nineties and colleges and universities now faces prospective students who are shopping them differently. Lauer (2000) emphasized that consumers are comparing institutions more carefully expecting more carefully expecting personal service in every corner of the campus, and defining quality more in terms of teaching effectiveness and earning potential rather than test scores required for admission.

Hossler (1999) informed that a strong marketing plan and research are central to successful admissions recruitment (enrollment) because they enable the admissions staff to reach prospective students when they are ready to make decisions about colleges. Hossler et.al. (1998) reported that most students begin this process in late spring or summer between their junior and senior years. Hossler (1999) informed that an analytical approach to admissions (enrollment) enables institutions to reach students when they are first considering broad types of colleges and which to apply to, or when they are starting to ask how they will pay for their education. Hossler (1999) reported that the ability to segment prospective student markets and reach them with targeted, personalized information and recruitment activities is more important than the quality of paper on which direct mail pieces are printed, the style and kind of information provided on these pieces, or the interpersonal skills of the admission professionals.

Hossler (1999) informed that market research, geodemographic databases (such as the Enrollment Planning Service (EPS), or Predictor Plus, both available from the College Board, Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) from the American College Testing Service (ACT), or Forecast Plus developed by Noel-Levitz), and sound marketing principles provide the context for effective efforts. Hossler (1999) emphasized that admission research and a marketing plan enable admissions professionals to understand the challenges they face in achieving their recruitment objectives, and also set the stage for implementing a successful recruitment effort. Hossler (1999) reiterated that understanding the market

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position occupied by a college or university is the first step in developing an effective recruitment strategy.

Hossler (1999) informed that there are two primary stages to recruitment (enrollment). Hossler (1999) identified the stages as, (a) the development of the applicant pool, and (b) converting applicants to enrolled students (matriculants). Hossler (1999) informed that in developing the applicant pool the degree of institutional visibility is an integral part of the process. Hossler (1999) emphasized that an integrated marketing effort that uses the resources of the public relation staff and the office of admissions could help build a stronger applicant pool. Hossler (1999) informed that the print and electronic media provide some of the most effective methods of reaching older and non- traditional students. Hossler (1999) emphasized that traditional age prospective students are more likely to respond to such as direct mail, telemarketing, high school visits, and previews if they are familiar with the college or university. Hossler (1999) reported that the use of the print media, radio and even television might be a prudent investment to enhance institutional visibility. Hossler (1999) reiterated that media tools also reach parents and local community opinion leaders. Hossler (1999) suggested that as parents, other family members, friends, and teachers begin to encourage college attendance, they mentioned the names of specific colleges and the visibility of the college is important in this regard. Hossler (1999) reiterated that a systematic recruitment plan (marketing tools) that include many different types of direct mail, telemarketing, off-campus previews, on campus visitation events, and a variety of mechanisms for communicating the probable net price of attendance. Hossler (1999) emphasized that direct mail is the most cost effective way to keep young prospective students interested in a specific institution.

Hossler (1999) reported that when prospective students are ready to determine which college they would attend they become highly interested in gaining detailed information about the academic programs and the social life of campus. Hossler (1999) informed that campus visits and opportunities to visit with faculty or learn more from student affairs staff become important parts of the conversion process. Hossler (1999) emphasized that admissions personnel need to communicate to faculty and campus administrators that the admissions office should be the expert in developing the applicant, but once the prospective students are ready to apply, the faculty, student affairs, and other campus representatives can play a key role in converting the applicant pool.

Hossler (1999) reported that during the past fifteen years colleges and universities have increasingly competed not only on the basis of quality of academic programs and costs but also on the basis of financial aid. Hossler (1999) informed that multivariate analyses are used to determine the optimal level of financial aid awards to students with desired academic traits or other personal attributes in order to enroll more of those students. Hossler (1999) suggested that the use of logistic regression and other statistical techniques to determine merit and need-based campus financial aid strategies enables admissions offices to inform prospective students and their families about potential and actual financial aid awards.

Hossler (1999) reported the two important principles should guide all recruitment activities. Hossler (1999) informed that those principles are (a) personalization and (b) timing. Hossler (1999) reported that the more personalized an admissions office can make the admissions process, the more positive the response would be from students. Hossler (1999), quoting Dehne et.al. (1991), informed that higher education is an intangible product, and as such the more it can be personalized during the recruitment process, the more effective the marketing efforts are likely to be. Hossler (1999) suggested that with marketing tools such as direct mail, telemarketing, campus visits, and other forms of recruitment, students view the level of personalization as a form of courtship, and that personalization is the way for campuses to let students know that institution would like them to join and spend time there. Hossler (1999) reiterated that in addition to a foundation of market research and marketing plan, successful recruitment efforts often hinge on timing on timing and personalization.

Hossler (1999) suggested that by focusing on timing institutions should thrive to reach students when they are ready for information. Hossler (1999) reported that for too long, many institutions of

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higher education were more likely to recruit prospective students when it was convenient for them rather than trying to match their behaviors to the readiness stage of the students. Hossler (1999) informed that timing is essential also from the perspective that the sooner an admissions office can provide information, turn around an admissions decision after an applicant has been submitted, or determine the amount of financial aid award, the more likely it is that the prospective student would respond favorably to the recruitment efforts. Hossler (1999) suggested that the optimal goal for admissions personnel is to provide information for prospective students at just the right time so as to keep them interested in their respective institutions. Gallotti and Mark (1994) informed that trying to reach prospective students at times when they are at a readiness point for information or to take another step in the college choice process should be a central part of the marketing plan.

Hossler (1999) citing other researchers informed of the following emerging patterns for the timing of the college choice process among traditional age for the sophomore and junior years and the senior year.

1. Sophomores who plan to attend a college or university after high school begin to form a list of schools they might consider attending. Additionally, most do not actively seek or read information about colleges and friends and parents are still their primary sources of information.
2. Parents of sophomores start to become concerned about college costs, and many start to seek out more information about financial aid and college costs.
3. Throughout their junior year, students begin to broaden the kinds of characteristics they are looking for in the institutions they consider. Additionally, students begin to add and drop colleges from their consideration set.
4. As juniors, especially those in their second-semester, students begin to seek out and read information about colleges and universities. Most importantly, students with higher grades in high school tend to start the process earlier in their junior year. Hossler (1999) informed that they normally seek information from friends, teachers, counselors, and family members, and they study written information from colleges and universities.
5. Juniors begin to take the SAT and ACT, which become trigger events in terms of thinking more about their college choice decision.
6. Many juniors make their first campus visit in the late spring or in the summer between their junior and senior years.

Hossler (1999) indicated that the finding related to sophomore and junior students suggested that the marketing and recruitment resources directed to high school sophomores should be restricted. Hossler (1999) informed that direct mail pieces should be written as much for parents as for prospective students. Hossler (1999) emphasized that during the junior years students are ready for, (a) detailed information, and (b) to visit campus or attend previews hosted in locations near their hometowns. Hossler (1999) reiterated that the summer months are increasingly becoming a good time for both of these activities. Hossler (1999) suggested that at this time parents are very interested in specific information about college costs and the possibility of scholarships.

Hossler (1999) reported the following research findings about the timing for students in the senior years of high school.

1. Student information-gathering activities reach their peak in fall of the senior year.
2. Peers, teachers, counselors, and admissions offices become primary sources of information about colleges, and the role of the students' parents begin to recede.
3. During the fall, students finally start to become interested in college costs and financial aid information.
4. Most students have applied by January.
5. After January, few students add new colleges to their consideration set.
6. The consideration sets of colleges that students evaluate become more realistic, and students begin to rate more highly campuses that are less costly and closer to home.

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Hossler (1999) informed that by fall of the senior year, seniors are simultaneously very active in seeking out information about colleges and universities and are more likely to report that they are feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information. Hossler (1999) suggested that students also reported that they are no longer reading everything or are reading everything carefully. Hossler (1999) emphasized that the timing research on seniors reinforces the idea that spring and summer of the junior year are becoming a better time to reach prospective students. Hossler (1999) informed that at this time students are now more interested in college costs and scholarships, and that information about a possible scholarship or an award that is communicated during the fall may have an impact on students' decision about where to apply or even where to attend. Hossler (1999) emphasized that sending direct mail pieces to students for the first time in January is no longer productive.

Hossler (1999) reported that colleges and universities now trim or expand their recruitment territories on the basis of geodemographic analyses. Hossler (1999) suggested that for admissions recruitment to be effective and efficient the director of admissions must be able to answer the following questions.

1. Have there been any increase or decreases in the number of high school graduates from high schools and regions where the institution is attracting its prospects, applicants, and matriculants? If there have been changes, have they come about because of a shift in the number of seventeen and eighteen-year-old students or the number of students dropping out of high school?
2. Are there regions where the institution currently does not recruit but for which the characteristics of the population base are similar to other territories where the institution is recruiting very successfully? If the answer to the question is yes, this might be a good area in which to expand recruitment efforts. Hossler (1999) reported that geodemographic tools such as the Enrollment Planning Service from the College Board and the American College Testing product PRIZM could enable admissions office to focus efforts where they are most likely to be successful.

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Answers to the above questions posted by Hossler (1999) are important to the marketing effort. Clark and Hossler (1990) outlined the following five general principles for marketing in higher education.

1. Strategic Planning
2. Analyzing Markets
3. Selecting Target Markets
4. Developing a Market Mix
5. Planning, Implementing and Managing the Marketing Effort.

Clark and Hossler (1990) reported that many institutions now incorporate marketing plans and enrollment plans into their overall strategic planning process. Clark and Hossler (1999) informed that marketing could help guide strategic planning by providing a framework, identifying the market, assessing the institutional potential for the market, and guide the development of objectives.

Kotler (1986) suggested the use of an organizational portfolio as a means of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. Kotler (1986) informed that the organizational portfolio involves analyzing such areas as market size, market share, price, competitors, and product quality, knowledge of consumer and market and sales effectiveness. Clark and Hossler (1990) informed that a strategic plan developed through research could guide colleges and universities in the implementation and management of their marketing efforts.

McCarthy and Perreault (1984) defined marketing as a way for higher educational institutions to understand their target populations and the related marketing mix. McCarthy and Perreault (1984) suggested that the four P's (Product, Place, Promotion, and Price) are a useful tool to delineate the major aspects of marketing. McCarthy and Perreault (1984) emphasized that the four P's provide a framework for future marketing efforts.

Clark and Hossler (1990) suggested that as part of the strategic marketing plan, the administrators of the institution should first make decisions about the school's current product and determine if the product is meeting the needs of the target populations. Clark and Hossler (1990) reported that college and

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university administrators should list all products ranging from curriculum to ancillary products, such as entertainment and community services. Clark and Hossler (1990) informed that market research might be needed for the administrators to identify target populations. Clark and Hossler (1990) also suggested that the institution must determine if the product distribution is effective, is efficient and meets the needs of the consumers, and that it involves determining if the place of the product is appropriate.

Clark and Hossler (1990) informed that the administrators of universities and colleges must look at their current promotional activities and determine if those activities are reaching the target population. Clark and Hossler (1990) suggested that research into the promotional activities might also help enrollment managers determine the best way to attract a new population. Clark and Hossler (1990) emphasized that market research could aid colleges and universities in determining if adjustments in the price of the product is necessary.

Clark and Hossler (1990) suggested that each college and university exists in a marketing environment that is separate from the management function of marketing activities. Clark and Hossler (1990) informed that the marketing environment consists of two components, (a) the microenvironment, and (b) the macro environment. Clark and Hossler (1990) suggested that the microenvironment for colleges and universities include teaching, research, student services, service to the community, and finance. Clark and Hossler (1990) reported that to successfully stimulate consumers in the microenvironment marketers must identify their competition, including direct competitors who market very similar products, indirect competitors who market within a product framework. McCarthy and Perreault (1984) defined the macro environment as those environments outside the organization that affect marketing, but over which the institution does not have control. McCarthy and Perreault (1984) listed the macro environment as (a) cultural and social, (b) technological, and (c) political and legal.

Clark and Hossler (1990) informed that for institutions of higher education identifying target markets is an important step. Kotler (1986) reported that institutions could identify their targeted markets by analyzing and forecasting demand, identifying market segmentation and positioning. Clark and Hossler (1990) informed that segmentation provides enrollment managers with ways of identifying groups of students who are most likely to respond positively to the mission and image of the school. Clark and Hossler (1990) reported that colleges and universities might opt to create a marketing niche for themselves that clearly distinguishes them from their competitors. Clark and Hossler (1990) reiterated that it is important for there to be an interrelationship between marketing and other functions of the institution.

Dolence (1991), quoting Talmage (1982) informed that the basis purposes of program evaluation are to judge the worth or value of a program, to assist in policy decisions, and to provide information to support or refute political decisions. Dolence (1991), quoting Growen and Green (1980) suggested that program evaluation could fulfill the above purposes by addressing the following five questions.

1. Is the program any good?
2. What is the program good for?
3. Is the current program better than something else?
4. Can the current program be made better?
5. Is the current program appropriate for policy objectives?

Dolence (1991) informed that evaluations could be formative or summative. Dolence (1991) reported that formative evaluations are used to aid in the development of the program, whereas summative evaluations assess the overall effectiveness of a program. Pagano and Terkla (1991) informed that when evaluating a marketing enrollment program it is essential to break it down into its components.

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Implementation of Marketing for Student Enrollment Universities and Colleges.

The implementation of this action plan/program should be done over a nine- month period.

Time	Procedure
First Month	- Development of strategic plan for enrollment and Program objectives. Carry out a SWOT analysis. Develop organizational portfolio analyzing market Size, market share, price, competitors, service Quality, knowledge of consumer market and sales Effectiveness. - Outline marketing strategies and tools to be utilized In marketing program. -Market research on segmented population- high School students and eligible students from foreign Countries (especially third world countries). Analyze Market information.
Second	- Obtain research information from geodemographic Databases (such as the Enrollment Planning Service (EPS) or Predictor Plus, both available from The College Board; Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) from the American College Testing Service (ACT) and Forecast Plus developed by Noel-Levitz For selected markets.
	Have the director of admissions address the following Questions. (a) Have there been any increases or Decreases in the number of high school Graduates from high schools and regions where The university/college is attracting its prospects, Applicants, and matriculants? If there have been Changes, have they come about because of a shift In the number of seventeen and eighteen-year-old Students or the number of students dropping out Of high school? (b) Are there regions where the Institution currently does not recruit but for Which the characteristics of the population base Are similar to others territories where the Institution is recruiting very successfully?
Third Month	- Direct personalized information to juniors and Sophomores in geodemographic regions of Interest. Generalized information about the University/College - Specific personalized direct mail information To high school seniors with admissions application and information about financial aid and scholarships
Fourth Month	- Post application forms along with general Recruitment information on the university Website specifically for students outside the U.S.A with internet responses -Select participants to oversee campus visits, Previews in turns outside university area, and High school visits
Fifth Month	- Mail fliers with contact information to various High schools to be posted on their information Board. -Place television, internet and radio Advertisement in the Targeted market with general information about The university, its curriculum and sports and Community service.
Sixth Month	-University Previews, high school visits in the Targeted market, and mail university booklet to Teachers, guidance counselors, youth groups, And other community organizations in the Targeted market.
Seventh Month	- Direct mail personalized information to Sophomore students in targeted market With application- make information relevant To parents. - Assess the applicant pool. - Make personalized telephone calls to Sophomores and juniors in the targeted Populations.
Eight Month	- Have alumni make contact through high school visits and community outreach to high school students And other prospective students in their Living area.
Ninth Month	- Arrange campus visits for all prospective Including those in the applicant pool- Sophomores and juniors included. -Arrange tours of campus with guide for All students -Mail video of university to community

Groups, high schools and other community Representatives to be shown in areas outside The university’s geographic area.

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Evaluation

The evaluation of the marketing effort would be done through formative and summative evaluation. The marketing program would be evaluated by answering the following questions.

1. What is the percentage increase in student enrollment with the marketing strategy?
2. Is the percentage increase greater than the average for those years without the current marketing strategy?
3. Is there a significant increase in student enrollment from other regions as a result of the marketing strategy used in those regions?

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the marketing tools used should be done through an enrollment questionnaire given to new students developed according to the guidelines of Pugano and Terkla (1991), Appendix A. The intervention should be monitored through the electronic databases containing contact and new student information. This contact information would give the responses as a result of marketing strategy used in the implementation.

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Appendix A. Survey Questionnaire on the Quality and Quality of Marketing Tools

Used in the Intervention.

1. Did you visit the University or College? Yes ___ No ___
2. Did you visit the school/college you are attending? Yes ___ No ___
3. In the columns below please indicate whether you visited the University/ College you are attending during a specified time periods. In the left hand column please indicate whether you visited any specific university/ college and in the right hand column whether the college you are attending.

Yes	No		Yes	No
___	___	(a) Prior to your sophomore year.	___	___
___	___	(b) During your junior year.	___	___
___	___	(c) During your senior year	___	___
___	___	(d) Senior year-before applying.	___	___
___	___	(e) Senior year-after applying-before acceptance	___	___
___	___	(f) After acceptance.	___	___

4. For each of the events listed below, please indicate the influence it had on your decision about accepting about accepting enrollment at the University /college. On the scale 1= very influential and 5= not influential.

Very influential 1 2 3 4 5 Not influential

- (a) Meeting with university personnel at your high school. _____
- (b) Tour of university by campus personnel. _____
- (c) Direct Mail. _____

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- (d) Personalized Telephone Conversation. _____
- (e) Alumni contact. _____
- (f) Preview of the university/ college _____
- (g) Video of University/College _____
- (h) Radio and Television Advertisements _____
- (i) Website _____
- (j) Fliers at your high school _____
- (k) Community meetings in your home hometown. _____