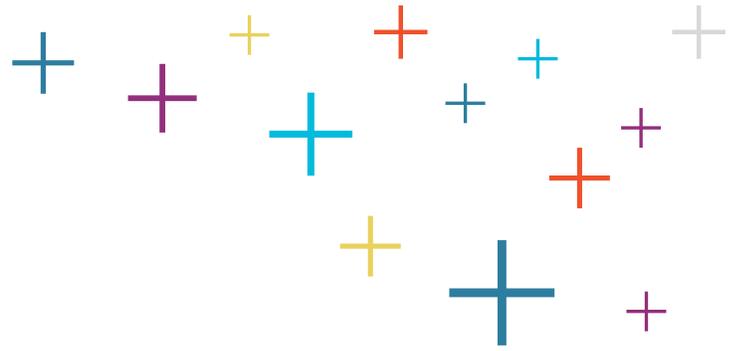


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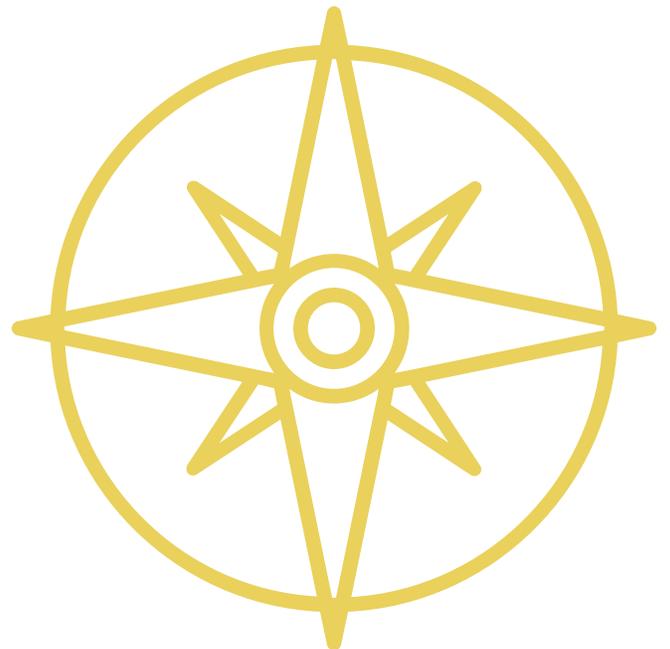


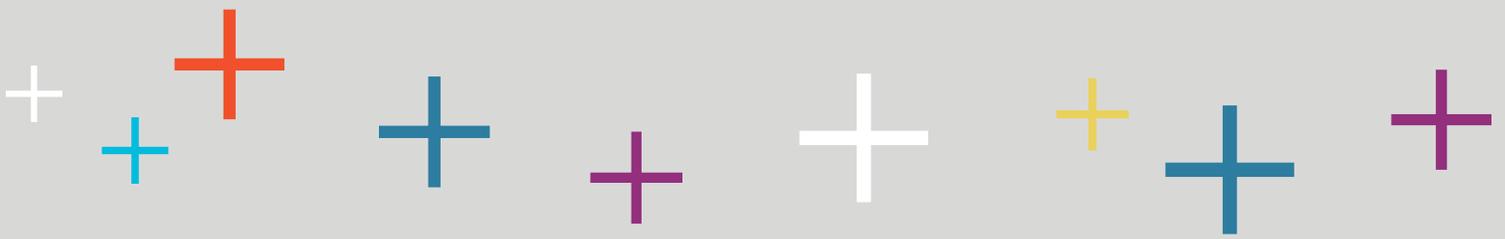
Yield Your Best



Special Report:

What Every Head Needs to Know About Enrollment Management





The Enrollment Management Association provides unparalleled leadership and service in meeting the admission assessment and enrollment needs of schools, students, and families.

At The Enrollment Management Association, we believe that the admission practices of the past will not sustain the independent schools of the future. Every day, we serve enrollment leaders, increasing their success through the best science, research, and training. Because when great schools enroll great students, everything is possible.

Suggested Citation

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Dear Colleagues,

Reforms and innovations crowd the educational landscape. Some are focused on new thinking or the latest research in curriculum design and assessment. Others are more systemic—focused on the institutional policies and practices put in place to achieve successful outcomes. One such reform that effectively shifted institutional strategy in higher education over the past 30 years is enrollment management.



As Don Hossler and Bob Bontrager describe in the *Handbook for Strategic Enrollment Management* (published by the American Association of College Registrars and Admission Officers), the idea of enrollment management was first conceived in college admission offices in the 1970s in response to a projected decrease in demand, and was characterized by new demographic research and revamped segmented marketing efforts. By the late 1980s, the concept had grown to include all of the functions necessary to attract and retain students. Today, strategic enrollment management hinges on an institution's ability to integrate through data, to build predictive models for enrollment, and to create varied pathways to enrollment success.

Therefore, the work of admission—getting students through the door—is a key component of enrollment management, but is just the beginning. As independent schools are increasingly challenged by the same external forces that have shaped the adoption of strategic enrollment management structures, processes, and policies in higher education, the national conversation on K-12 enrollment management has taken center stage.

This report is intended to provide independent school leaders with both a high-level overview of enrollment management and some specific examples of enrollment management practice in schools. We hope that this report provokes dialogue and new thinking about the changing conditions of and expectations for enrollment management—at a time when sustainable enrollment remains, for the foreseeable future, the number one issue facing independent schools.

Heather Hoerle, Executive Director, The Enrollment Management Association



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Why Enrollment Management Is Needed in Independent Schools

The enrollment landscape of private colleges and universities serves as a bellwether for independent schools, and in the past few decades, college admission has undergone an extraordinary evolution—from admission to that of enrollment management.

A number of external forces drove this change, including increased competition for students, which called for a more systemic and data-driven way to manage school enrollments. As Don Hossler and Bob Bontrager, preeminent scholars in this area, write, “the field of Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is arguably the newest major administrative function to emerge at the senior levels of college and university administration” (*Handbook of Strategic Enrollment Management*, AACRAO, p. xi).

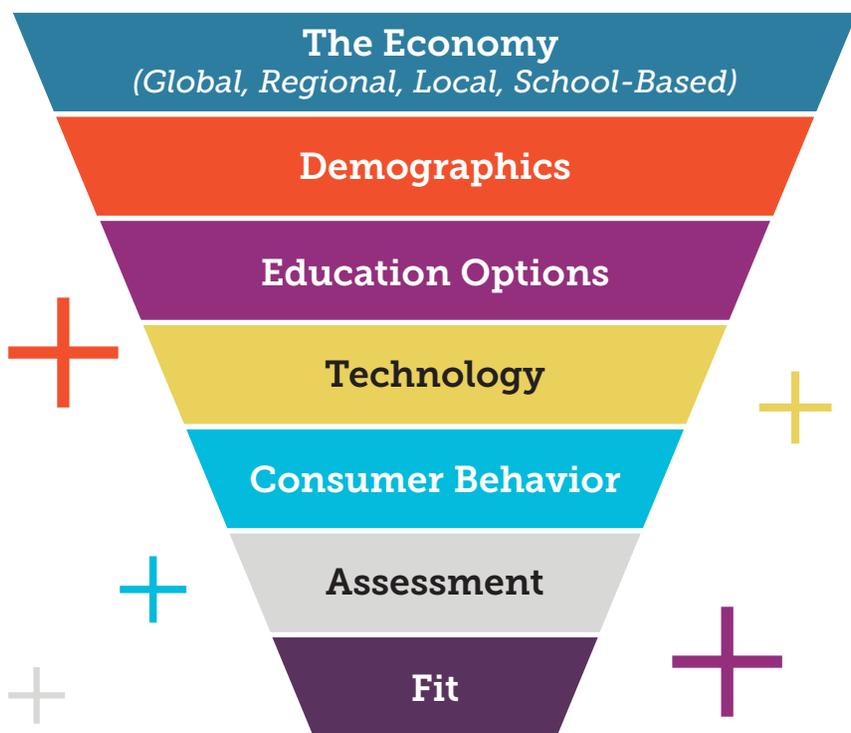
Today there are powerful external forces shaping independent school enrollment. These forces are both big and small, and mostly out of schools’ control. With net tuition revenue concerns building in most independent schools, a softening

market for “tuition capable” students, financial aid requests on the rise, and serious enrollment declines for some, independent schools, which are highly tuition-dependent institutions, need to look seriously at their long-term enrollment strategy. When doing so, heads and boards, in particular, must appreciate the larger context in order to position their schools for a sustainable future.

There is no doubt that the independent school community will be challenged over the next decade. All signs point toward continued demographic and economic declines, particularly in the U.S. The population is aging; the middle class is shrinking; incomes are stagnating (for almost all income brackets); and the gap between the haves and the have-nots is growing.

We also know that the number of school-age children is only growing among those groups not traditionally enrolled in independent schools. The U.S. population projections for 2014 to 2060 indicate that, “by 2020, more than half of U.S. children are expected to be part of a minority race/ethnic group... [and] the U.S. population as a whole is expected to follow a similar trend, becoming majority-minority in 2044” (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). In addition, population patterns will vary across regions, with the Northeast and Midwest impacted most by absolute declines in the numbers of school-age children.

Forces Shaping Your Admission Funnel





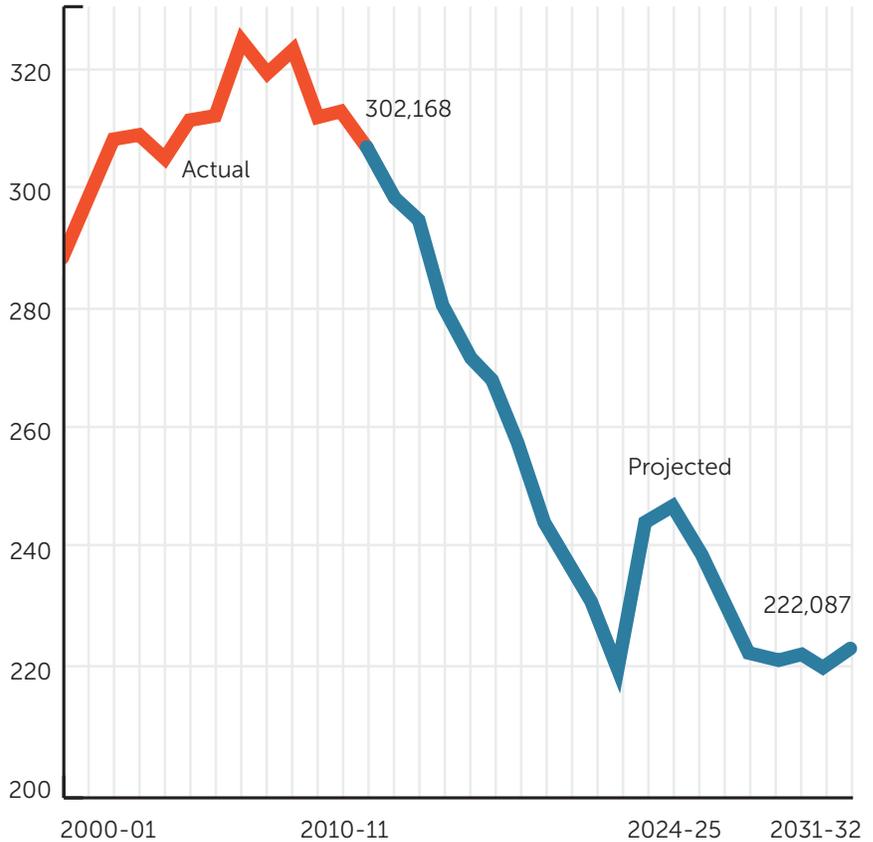
U.S. Private High School Graduates (2000 through 2032)

As reported by the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education in its latest *Knocking at the College Door* statistical projections (9th edition), “the number of students graduating from private high schools will decline more sharply than the decreases in the overall numbers of graduates. The number of high school graduates from private religious and nonsectarian schools is projected to decline at an even greater rate than the overall trend, from 302,000 in 2011 to about 220,000 by the early 2030s—a decrease of 80,000 graduates, or 26 percent.”

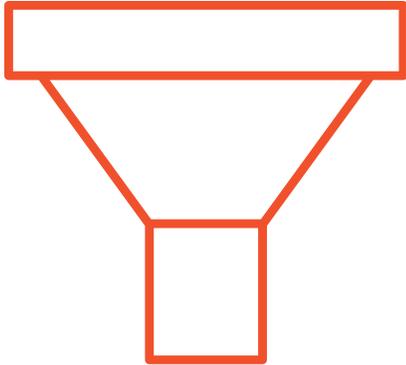
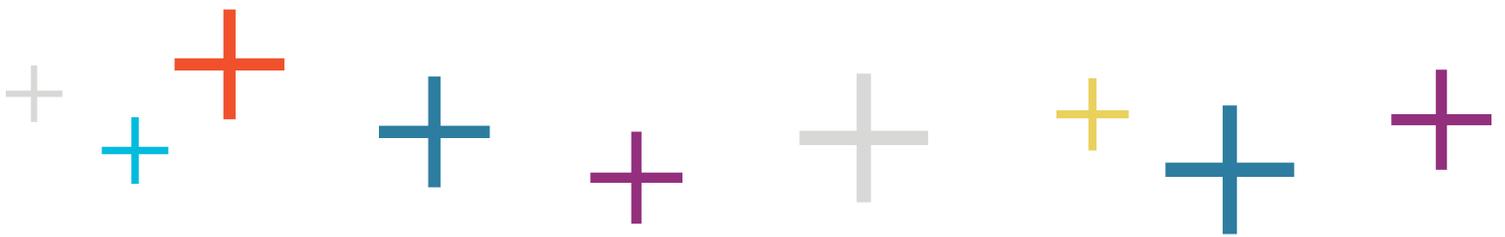
As we are beginning to see in independent schools, U.S. private colleges have been relying on tuition discounting as an enrollment strategy, and small private colleges are particularly susceptible to a reliance on discounting. In its recent report, *2026 The Decade Ahead, The Chronicle of Higher Education* cites a 2016 study from

Parthenon-EY noting that “since 2007, 72 institutions have shut down, nearly all of them with enrollments of less than 1,000. The [Parthenon-EY] report outlined six different risk factors facing higher-education institutions in the future, including small size, no online programs, tuition discount rates greater than 35 percent, and deficit spending.” While the National Association of Independent Schools Data and Analysis for School Leadership (NAIS DASL) data indicate that tuition discounting in independent schools is not as deep as in U.S. higher education, the numbers are nonetheless significant—and are definitely increasing (see page 17).

Independent schools also will be challenged in the future to mitigate increasing competitive threats, as well as to manage increasing expectations from families for an easier, more seamless, and more personalized independent school admission and enrollment process. The *2016 Schooling in America Survey* illustrates that, if given the choice to obtain the best education for their child, a large percentage of families would choose private schools (42%), yet the reality is that only 10% have actually enrolled their child in a private school (Source: EdChoice). Of course, affordability is likely the number one factor, but we should not discount lack of knowledge about independent schools, lack of differentiation of program, and a potentially burdensome application process as contributing barriers to enrollment.



Source: *Knocking at the College Door*,
Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE)



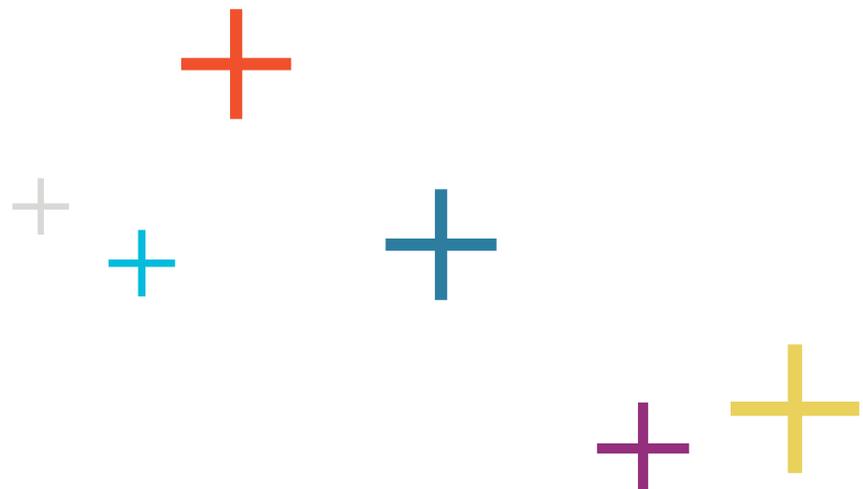
Indeed, the story of higher education's journey to a different model for managing enrollment is useful in building a case for change in the independent school community.

As the market continues to soften, we will likely see a subtle (yet significant) paradigm shift in the independent school application process. Schools will require and begin to seek more comprehensive student profile data—in addition to academic readiness measures—in order to make more informed admission decisions. As the process moves from “selection to understanding,” enrollment leaders will ask themselves, “What data and tools do we need to say ‘yes’ to families?” And, schools will need to be prepared to support the academic readiness of a broader range of potential students.

Probably most important, in the next decade the independent school community will begin to recognize “independence” as both a strength and a weakness. Differentiation by industry (and not just by school), common philosophies of teaching and learning, a common application process, common data sets, shared market intelligence, shared applicant pools, and large-scale collaborative marketing will be required in this shifting educational landscape.

Inside the world of independent school admission, it is time for a major shift in perspective, and higher education can teach us a great deal about using an enrollment management model. Indeed, the story of higher education's journey to a different model for managing enrollment is useful in building a case for change in the independent school community. As colleges and universities have learned, for strategic enrollment management to function effectively it must encompass all aspects of the student journey.

If independent schools are to survive (or more importantly, thrive) well into the future, admission offices must push beyond their conventional focus (acquisition of new students) and become more strategically focused on the marketplace and all the drivers that contribute to steady, long-term enrollment success.



Defining Enrollment Management

In past decades, demographic and economic shifts necessitated higher education's move from a traditional admission model to a strategic enrollment management model in order to achieve institutional goals.

In the independent school landscape, the changing demographics of school age children means that we must educate more families who have not previously experienced the process of applying for admission and financial aid, while changing economics mean that affordability and access are among the top challenges facing schools. At the same time, families across all socio-economic groups have evolved as more experienced consumers, and they are asking more sophisticated questions that require deeper levels of analysis related to educational equity, inclusion, and outcomes.

The most important thing that heads and boards need to remember is that first and foremost, enrollment management is not a title. It can be, of course, but enrollment management refers to an institution-wide system designed to achieve enrollment goals, sustain institutional revenue, and serve the needs of students (*Handbook of Strategic Enrollment Management*, AACRAO). As Hossler and Bean defined it in 1990, "Enrollment management is an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities. Designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments, enrollment management activities are organized by strategic planning and supported by institutional research. Processes are studied to guide institutional practices in the areas of new student recruitment and financial aid, student support services, curriculum development, and other academic areas that affect enrollments, student persistence, and student outcomes."

As Don Hossler describes in AACRAO's *Handbook*, the adoption and definition of enrollment management in higher education evolved to meet the admission and enrollment needs of the times:

1970s

- + "Enrollment management" first coined in response to declines in demand
- + Focused on demographic analysis and segmented marketing

1980s

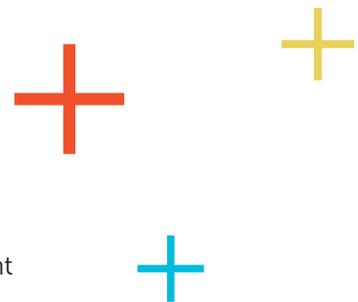
- + Grew to include all functions for attracting students
- + Grew conceptually to link these efforts to retention and graduation rates

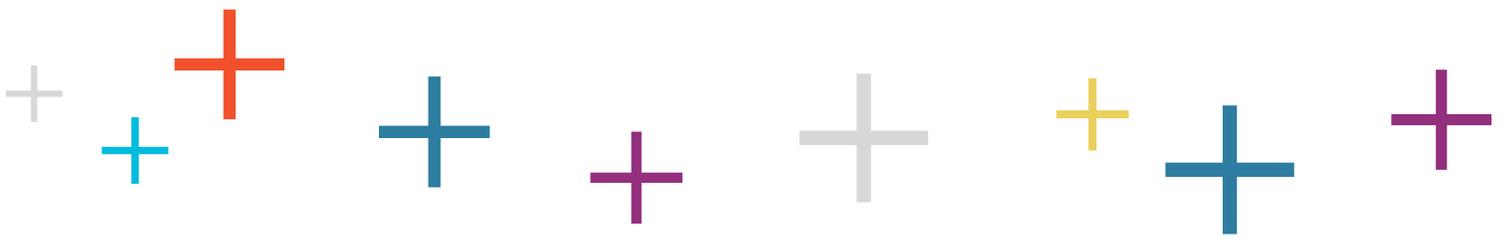
1990s

- + Became more sophisticated vis-à-vis financial modeling
- + Became a major strategic component of institutional operations—strategic enrollment management was born

2000s

- + Established professional in-house skills in marketing and segmenting
- + Grew sophisticated with data to build predictive models for enrollment and to create varied pathways to enrollment success
- + Enrollment management leader became part of president's cabinet





Therefore, enrollment management is a “structural framework that can be simultaneously considered as an organizational structure, as a set of processes, and as organizational policies” (Bolman and Deal, 1991). For many independent schools, organizing under a single enrollment management division would require fundamental shifts to how work is typically organized, so it is important to note that the research has identified (and as is synthesized in the AACRAO *Handbook*) a number of organizational models, including the single division.

Committee

(Hossler 2015)

Committee

Does not garner any authority, does not require any financial investment to operate, and only serves to raise awareness related to student marketing, recruitment, and retention (Hossler, 2005).

Coordinator

(Hossler and Bean 1990)

Coordinator

This position is considered only to have staff authority and therefore does not carry any formal direct authority to implement needed change in enrollment management. However, the coordinator, who is usually a mid-level manager, serves to organize student recruitment and retention efforts that may be spread across various units (Hossler and Bean, 1990).

Matrix

(Hossler, Bean and Associates 1990)

Matrix

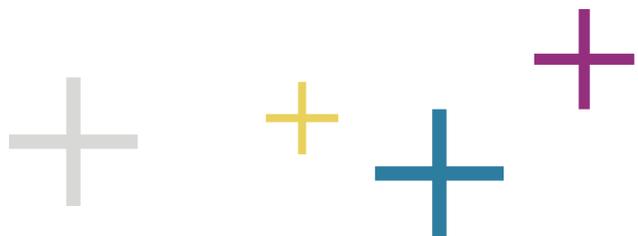
Responsibility and decision making are assigned to a senior-level administrator. This then bridges the work of various areas, whether or not they report to the person charged with enrollment management responsibilities (Hossler, Bean, and Associates, 1990).

Division

(Caren and Kemerer 1979)

Division

Organizational units involved in enrollment management are brought together in a newly-created division. These departments often include, but are not limited to, recruitment and marketing, admissions, financial aid, academic advising and career advising, institutional research, orientation, retention programs, and student services (Caren and Kemerer, 1979).

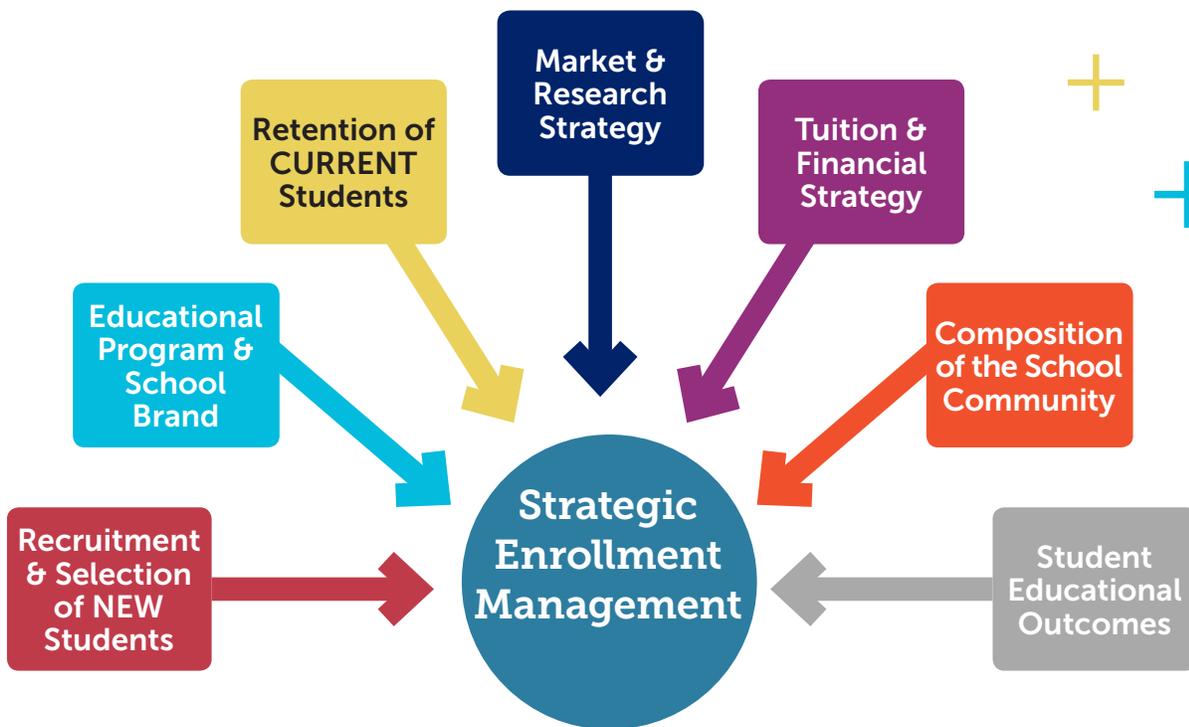


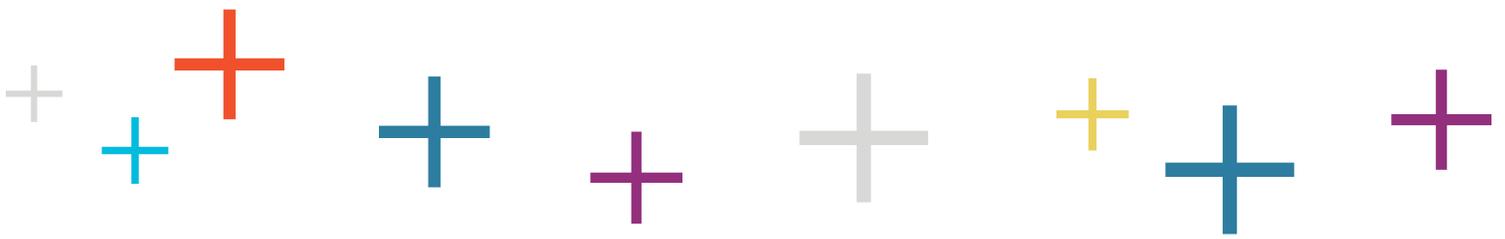


As Hossler, Kalsbeek, and Bontrager note, “there is no empirical evidence as to whether the organizational configuration and composition of enrollment units influence their effectiveness.” The most important conclusion of all the research, in their studied opinion, is that “organizational models and reporting alignments need to be reflective of the strategies, priorities, organizational culture, and specific mission of an institution.” These authors and researchers also emphasize that by definition enrollment management touches every aspect of an institution’s policies and practices, and it would be very difficult for one department or division to “wholly manage” everything associated with it. This is particularly true at large institutions.

For independent schools, sophisticated predictive modeling, integrated institutional research, and “big data” is probably the biggest stretch in terms of moving toward an enrollment management model. Colleges and universities not only have professional staff dedicated to research, but also have access to enormous data sets and numerous industry-wide student databases. Yet for independent schools, all the elements of strategic enrollment management are very much a part of what schools are focused on, including market research and strategy; educational program and school brand; recruitment and selection of new students; tuition and financial aid strategy; school culture and community; retention of current students; and student educational outcomes. Independent schools simply need to think differently about the policies, practices, processes, and structures that best support a more centralized view of enrollment management for institutional success.

By definition enrollment management touches every aspect of an institution’s policies and practices.





Expert Advice from Don Hossler

Enrollment management (EM) is a comprehensive approach to the recruitment and retention of students. EM is informed by research on demographic trends, how parents make enrollment decisions, price sensitivity, and the factors that influence student retention. It is an organizational structure that brings together offices that manage new student marketing and recruitment, financial assistance, and student retention efforts. This helps to create a synergistic approach to enrollment management. Senior enrollment officers at independent schools need to have a seat at the metaphorical “table” for senior administrators. This is essential because the enrollment management perspective has to be included along with those of the senior academic administrator and the CFO.

The factors that influence enrollment are seldom responsive to quick turnaround strategies. Short of using financial aid to buy students, successful enrollment professionals are boundary spanners who can link perspectives from academic affairs, advancement, enrollment management, fiscal affairs, and the office of the headmaster. Academic program offerings, admission and recruitment, pricing and financial aid, and retention strategies should be linked together in an enrollment management model. Careful and realistic long-term planning to achieve recruitment and retention goals is key. Enrollment management is not a panacea, but the thoughtful and strategic use of enrollment management strategies can assist independent schools in achieving their enrollment and revenue goals.

Creating a healthy environment for successful enrollment management requires open communication about key metrics between the board of trustees and the head of school. The factors that affect enrollments in independent schools are complex. Trustees should not try to understand or guide school strategies and policies, rather they need to understand the broad factors that affect enrollments and have a data-driven understanding of their school’s position in the educational marketplace. There should be a standing board committee that focuses on the intersection between enrollment and finance; this is because student enrollments are easily the largest and most predictable source of revenue for a school. School heads, CFOs, and the senior enrollment officer all need to be on this committee. An enrollment committee should determine the key enrollment metrics they want to see on an annual basis. Establishing annual reporting metrics can help to assure that the board is well informed. Similarly, without this kind of reporting, some trustees may urge actions that will not serve the school well. Creating a standing enrollment management committee and a key set of metrics are essential to assuring the health and vitality of independent schools.

Don Hossler is senior scholar, Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California. He is the former vice-chancellor of enrollment services and an emeritus professor of educational leadership and policy studies at Indiana University Bloomington. Hossler is the co-editor of the *Handbook of Strategic Enrollment Management* published in 2015 by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO), which is cited throughout this report.



How the Admission Funnel Has Changed

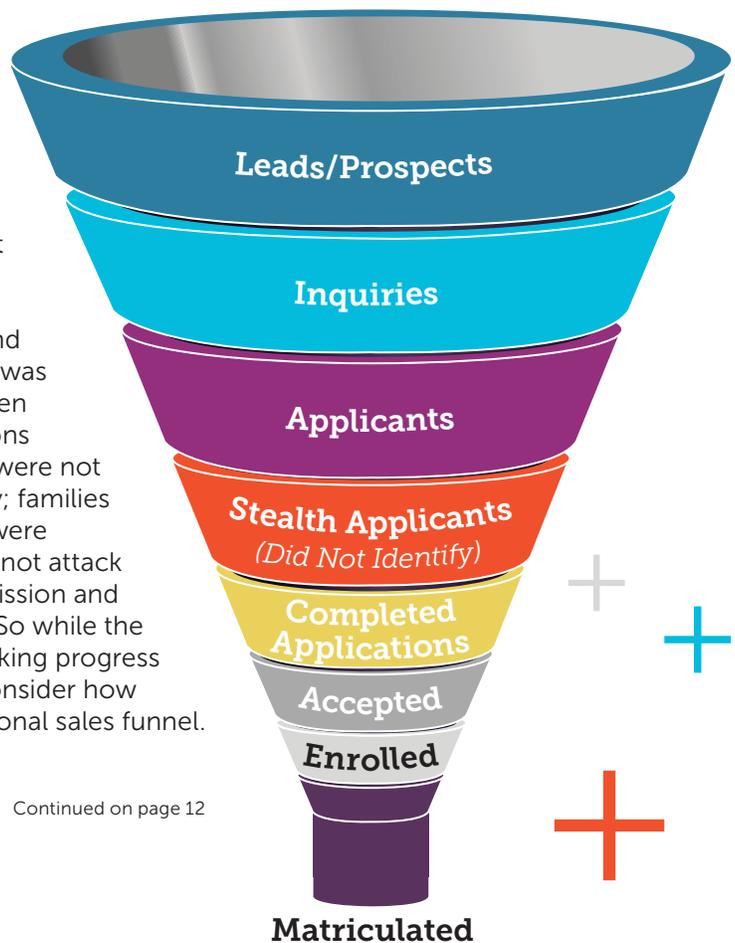
External forces are putting pressure on the current independent school model. Like colleges and universities, independent schools will need to move toward a strategic enrollment management model in order to maneuver successfully through these challenging times.

Since admission and financial aid strategy are the most powerful levers available to schools for enrollment management and planning, it is critical for school leaders to appreciate the ways in which the admission funnel has changed.

Admission policies and practices require keen and creative attention to the strategies needed to fill seats and beds and equal attention to the variety of data needed by all constituents to ensure students and families benefit from the experience. Simply put, “of all the issues of sustainability that face our schools, one fundamental is true—if the students do not walk through the doors, little else matters” (*Data-Driven Admission: A New Look at the Admission Funnel*, SSATB, 2007). The complexity of this means that schools will need to adopt new ways of doing business and espouse a less linear understanding of the funnel.

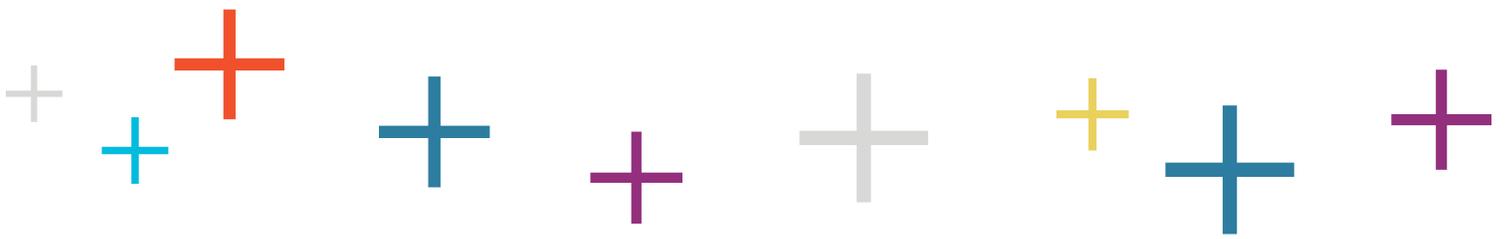
The admission funnel—a sales funnel—was created for one purpose: to facilitate predictive modeling to aid school planning. “[It was] first introduced in the 1970s as a way of looking at the recruitment and admission process on a more systemic level... it presents a static view of customers (or prospects) as they ‘fall out’ of interest in a product/service” (Admissions Lab). At a minimum, enrollment information gleaned from the funnel is needed to make critical resourcing decisions. School leaders must rely on funnel data to build budgets and to inform hiring: How many new teachers will be needed next year? Should we replace those who are retiring or leaving?

Yet decades ago, when the funnel framework was first used, population downturns were not occurring; the middle class was not shrinking; tuitions were not through the roof; schools did not have websites; prospective students and parents did not have email addresses; Google was not where you went or something you did when you wanted information; completed applications were never the first point of contact; schools were not looking to increase enrollments internationally; families did not seek investment returns; and, if there were helicopter moms, they were in rescue mode—not attack mode. All of these factors have impacted admission and financial aid strategy in independent schools. So while the admission funnel remains the best way of tracking progress from one year to the next, it is important to consider how these external factors are reshaping the traditional sales funnel.



Continued on page 12





Beware the Vanity Metrics

Most notably, it is no longer necessary for families to reach out and inquire if they want information or an application. Independent schools, like colleges, are seeing more “stealth applicants”—students who do not identify themselves in the process until an application is submitted. In higher education, institutions report that as many as 50 percent of students do not reach out prior to submitting an application. In the last decade, independent school admission offices have seen a similar narrowing at the top of the funnel. In 2001, NAIS member day schools received 7.5 inquiries per enrolled student. In 2009, that number decreased to 5.6, and in 2017, day schools received 4.6 inquiries per enrolled student (Source: NAIS DASL).



Noel-Levitz, a college consulting company, believes that the inquiry-to-applicant conversion rate is becoming a meaningless metric and advises colleges to “adapt to the new ways that prospective and future students enter (or don’t enter) the admissions funnel, as well as evolving yield and admit rates.” Despite such challenges, they still advise colleges to “stick with it,” because “without funnel data everything becomes just a guessing game.”

Practically speaking, this means independent schools have less time to engage with families who are entering the funnel later in the process. Less time to engage means less time to convince a family that your school is the right fit for their child. This complicates independent schools’ quest for funnel tracking and predictive modeling, as does a focus on “vanity metrics.” If families no longer have to inquire about schools, why do so many heads and boards still view the number of inquiries as a measure of admission—and institutional—success?

Boards and trustees also tend to place great importance on proxy measures for demand such as the number of applications received or the number of students on the wait list. Yet, we know, for example, that steep increases in applications from China in the past five years have buoyed funnel metrics for many schools. If not reported and recognized separately from other application sources, these data might give heads and boards a false sense of enrollment health. We also know that families are submitting more applications to schools, driven in part by the need to secure the best financial aid package. Similarly, a simple wait list number provides no insight on a school’s market demand by mission-appropriate and/or tuition-able students.

It is worth noting that colleges and universities are increasingly looking at something called “draw rate,” as yield numbers are driven down by the increasing number of overall applications students are submitting. Anxiety and affordability are driving the increase, but so are online technologies and common application platforms. As reported by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in *The Future of Enrollment* (2017), “the proportion of college freshmen who applied to seven or more colleges reached 36 percent in 2015, [and] some eight in 10 freshmen in 2015 applied to at least three colleges.” According to data from the Standard Application Online (an independent school “common app”), students are submitting an average of 3.3 applications in 2016-17. So with falling yield rates, a draw rate—defined as the yield rate divided by the admit rate—might be a better “indicator of market position, because it shows institutions that are able to achieve both application volume as well as high yield.”

Adding to the complexity of traditional funnel metrics is the fact that very few schools are highly-selective, yet schools place significant emphasis on applicants to acceptances ratios. Even at the college level, and despite hype to the contrary, most colleges and universities accept the majority of applicants. The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) reports that the average admissions rate for colleges for enrollment in the fall of 2014 was 65.8 percent. And in its *Trendbook 2016-2017*, NAIS reports that the average acceptance rate in 2015-16 for “high growth” schools was 58 percent and was 81 percent for “high decline” schools during the same time period.



The Customer Has Changed

Marketing guru Scott Stratten asserts that today's parents are loyal to one thing only—their child. It is not news to anyone working in independent schools today that institutional loyalty is waning and that parents expect a higher level of transparency and service in return for their significant educational investment. This puts financial pressure on schools, as families expect more—more personalization, more programs, more everything.

Today's families are putting pressure on the admission office and on all those who play an active role in student recruitment. In a 2015 survey of more than 2,300 parents who had just completed the independent school application process, The Enrollment Management Association found that what prospective families seek most are more opportunities to interact with current students, more information about the academic programs, more opportunities to visit class, and more opportunities to interact with current teachers.

This same research also found that families are anxious about the admission process. All survey respondents experienced anxiety levels above the midpoint (on an anxiety scale of 1 to 10). In addition, 42 percent described the amount of work required to apply to independent schools as "more than expected." Importantly, 24 percent of these families dropped schools from their list due to the amount of application time required (total=14%). So while they want more chances to engage authentically in campus life, they do not want to jump through hoops to get these opportunities.

This trend shows no signs of abating. The millennial parents having children today will show up at schools in the next five-10 years, and this group of parents is decidedly different. MaryLeigh Bliss, chief content officer for YPulse, a youth marketing and millennial research firm, offers these insights:

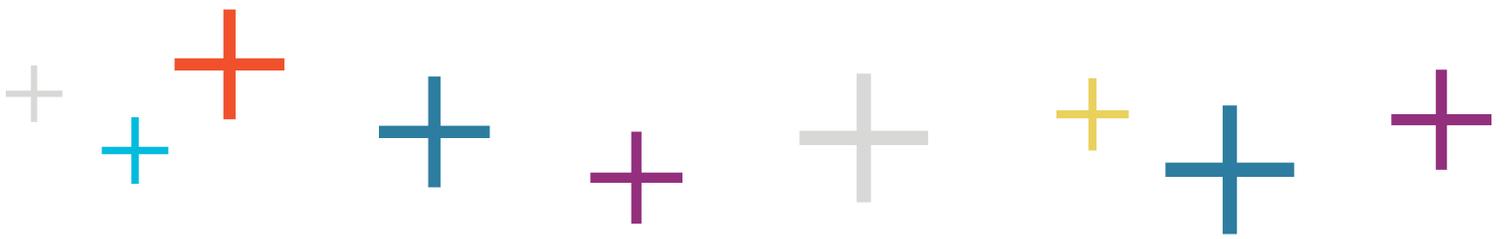
- + Millennial parents expect innovation.
- + 70% of millennials say advertisements usually bore them.
- + 75% would like it if brands surprised them.
- + 92% of millennial parents agree: "It is important that my children know they are special/unique."
- + 6 in 10 millennial parents would prefer their child stand out rather than fit in.

In sum, Bliss reports, "Major life milestones are being impacted by the desire for things that feel one-of-a-kind." Schools will need to impress these families, and admission offices will need to craft and execute a highly personalized student recruitment process.

The Most Sought after Resources by Prospective Families



Source:
The Ride to Independent Schools Report, The Enrollment Management Association (2015).



More Nuanced Data Needed

In today's environment, enrollment leaders need to parse demographic data both by those whose first point of contact was an application and also by those who inquired, in order to better understand family behavior. In the absence of the traditional inquiry, schools are looking for other data points to gauge interest—a great example of this is receipt of admission test scores. Campus visit and interview numbers, open house attendance, and Google analytics can also help. At a minimum, independent school admission directors should see a five-year history of inquiries, admission test scores, applications, campus visits/interviews, accepts, enrolled, and number of students lost after depositing. Data on financial aid applicants is also needed: How many applied? How many qualify? What is the yield rate?

Given the critically important role data play in the modern admission office, it is also necessary to track month-over-month statistics to see if there are any emergent issues. The need to create and assess different funnels for different categories of students is also essential. For example, many schools separately track students applying for financial aid, knowing that they will likely yield more of the students who receive aid than full-pay students. Boarding schools (and increasingly day schools) also do this for international applicants. Learning support might warrant a separate funnel. One metric that colleges track is the application-to-admit ratio for students depending on the type of application submitted—paper, online, common, etc.

The funnel remains the best vehicle for predictive modeling, yet it has changed significantly. Therefore, its metrics must be appropriately captured and explained, so that funnel data are not misinterpreted by school leaders and boards of trustees. The funnel must be used to appropriately interpret the external environment, accurately gauge demand for a school's program, and better understand student and parent motivation in the application process.

Key Enrollment Metrics

Recruitment	Marketing	Financial	Retention
Percentage of students moving from one funnel stage to the next	Percent increase in recruitment activity in targeted marketing areas	Tuition revenue discount rate Net tuition revenue	Percentage of students that re-enroll and percentage of attrition (<i>breakdown by target group</i>)
Number and percent of students for each identified target group (<i>geographic, feeder schools, athletes, etc.</i>)	Market share: Percentage of potential students in target market who enroll	Total financial aid Average award Unmet need Total tuition paid by financial aid families	Exit survey data (<i>reasons why enrolled students depart; trends</i>)



The Role of Price in Enrollment Management

Perhaps no topic gets more attention across independent school stakeholder groups than price. And given that tuition is what universally differentiates independent schools from public schools in the educational market, there is no enrollment management lever more powerful than price.

Yet, price is complex when viewed from the demand side of the supply and demand equation. Schools understand easily how many seats and/or beds they can supply given the human and other resources available to them. They can calculate with reasonable ease the amount of tuition needed to support the math. Where it gets tricky is in understanding how price affects demand.

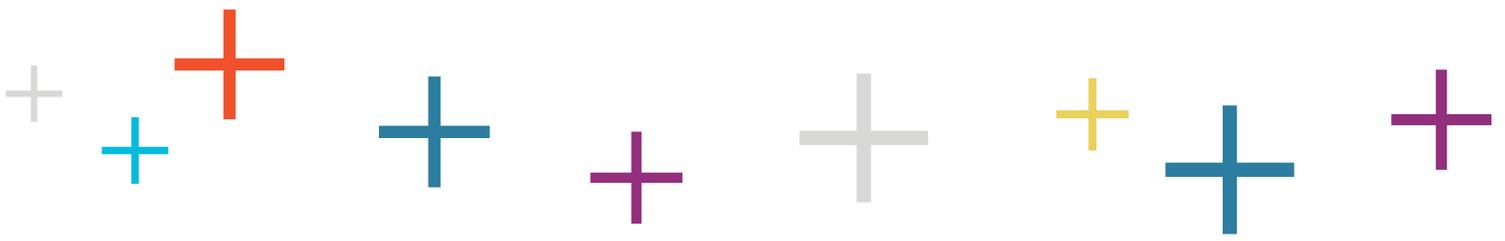
As colleges learned long ago, there is a big difference between a family’s ability to pay and their willingness to pay. A family’s willingness to pay is multivariate—from how much they value what you are offering, to the quality of alternatives, to how many children they have, to how much they value making other consumer goods purchases. In fact, a recent study conducted by ISM, Measuring Success, and the National Business Officers Association (NBOA) confirms this—there is no single variable that can be isolated which predicts, on a one-to-one correlative basis, the effects of tuition increases on enrollment demand. Simply put, price matters only when it matters. And it matters more for schools that occupy less prestigious positions in their markets. As Kent Chabotar explains in his book *Strategic Finance*, “highly selective institutions have an easier time making [a high tuition/high aid] model work, because they have the prestige to attract many high-income students who are also academically well qualified.”

Comparative Analysis of Pricing Models

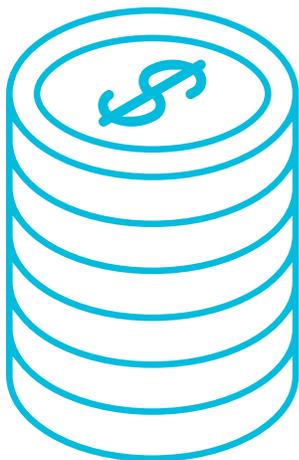
	Advantages	Limitations
High Tuition/ High Aid	Price is closer to actual cost of education because all students are subsidized regardless of need.	Subsidy should be broadened through low tuition rather than targeted only at needy students.
	Provides more tuition revenue to use on financial aid for needy students.	Less likely to enroll high-income and low-need students without preferential packaging.
	High “sticker price” may be associated with higher quality.	High “sticker price” may lead to sticker shock and fewer applications.
		Targeting aid and identifying eligible students is a complex undertaking.
Low Tuition/ Low Aid	More equitable subsidization of all students.	Increases subsidy regardless of ability to pay.
	Short-term publicity and boost in applications.	Long-term effects on applications vary with institution.
	Appears more affordable, especially to first-time college applicants.	Low price may be associated with lower quality.
		Academic reputation and career prospects are more important in college choice than cost or aid.

Source: Chabotar, Kent. *Strategic Finance: Planning and Budgeting for Boards, Chief Executives, and Finance Officers* (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2006), p. 81.

Continued on page 16



Independent schools also have grown more comfortable with the many enrollment goals that creative financial solutions afford besides access, and the rise in the number of discounting strategies is evidence of that.



In a study released March 2017, Royall & Co., the enrollment management consulting arm of EAB, say they have “confirmed what enrollment leaders have suspected since the Great Recession of 2008-10: Cost is the leading determinant in students’ college choice. It turns out, in fact, that concern about cost is the number one reason why students forgo their top-pick schools.” Analyzing data from 54,810 students who were admitted to their client institutions this past fall, they found that 11 percent—over 6,000 students—said “no” to their first-choice institution, and 40% of those who declined their dream school cited price-related concerns as the reason.

The Enrollment Management Association’s *2016 State of the Independent School Admission Industry* survey found that among the 652 admission directors responding, tuition is seen as a major barrier to recruitment. Nearly 50 percent of admission directors indicate that tuition is a significant or great barrier to securing applications and enrolling students. Less than 10 percent report that tuition offers barely or no barrier at all. And among the relatively low number of families that leave a school, cost is one of the reasons they do so.

Like colleges, independent schools have grown more sophisticated in their view of tuition discounting and its use in enrollment management. Independent schools also have grown more comfortable with the many enrollment goals that creative financial solutions afford besides access, and a rise in the number of discounting strategies is evidence of that.

As Christopher Tompkins, head of school at Episcopal Collegiate School (AR), noted in the summer 2016 issue of *Independent School* magazine, “Financial aid comes in many forms these days—tuition assistance, scholarships, merit aid, discounting, preferential packaging, need-blind admission, student loans, net-tuition revenue, work-study programs, tuition remission, and the newest iteration, the “sliding scale” (which indexes tuition to family income). They all have their value and purpose and can be used in service of both the school’s mission—who gains access and why—and the budget.”

For example, the number of independent schools offering merit-based scholarships is not yet at the same level as colleges and universities, but there is a significant upward trajectory. The *2016 State of the Independent School Admission Industry* revealed that slightly less than a third (29%) of all independent schools surveyed offer merit scholarship awards, though 58 percent of boarding schools report doing so, and 37 percent of day schools with higher grades are doing the same.

Of course, any form of tuition discounting must be practiced with extreme care, and the long-term implications of any student entering on some form of aid be taken into account. In sum, tuition realized from both newly enrolled and currently enrolled students must always be accounted for in the financial models. It seems reasonable to assume that schools do not wish to offer merit aid or tuition indexing at the expense of their need-based financial aid programs.



Not to be confused with a net *tuition revenue model* (see p. 18), *net tuition revenue* is the actual money in tuition and fees that a school collects, net of all discounts and aid provided. This is the budget number on which a school must focus in order for its operations to be financially sustainable. According to a report released by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) in May 2016, the tuition discount rate for first-time freshmen at private, nonprofit colleges and universities was estimated at 48.6 percent. This means that incoming freshmen are only generating about half of the revenue from published tuitions and fees—and most importantly, that private colleges and universities are relying on deep discounts to enroll students.

Growing Tuition Discount Rates at NAIS Schools

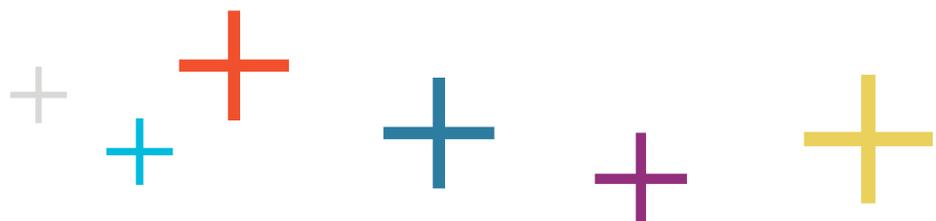
Source: NAIS DASL (All Schools Reporting)

	2015-16	2005-06
All Schools	15.1%	11.8%
Boarding	27%	20.5%
Boarding/Day	25.7%	19.4%
Day	14.4%	10.7%
Day/Boarding	21.4%	15.9%

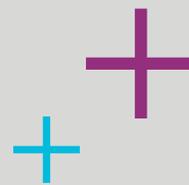
As has been witnessed in higher education news, this is a slippery slope and one that puts small schools, which are more susceptible to cash flow issues, particularly at risk. In looking at independent schools, according to tuition discount rate data provided by NAIS, independent school tuition discounting has also been on the rise (see chart above).

In addition, the NAIS *Trendbook 2016-2017* reveals that school size is related to enrollment decline. NAIS categorizes 45 percent of schools with 200 students or less as “high decline” over the past decade, versus just 9 percent of schools with more than 700 students. Data from the *2016 State of the Independent School Admission Industry* survey similarly sound the alarm bells for small schools—for schools with 200 students or less, 33 percent reported meeting neither their net tuition revenue or enrollment goals in the previous year versus just 8 percent of schools with more than 700 students.

Enrollment management is a strategic and long-term approach to school sustainability, it is not a quick fix or silver bullet. And price, one of the most powerful enrollment management levers, should be successfully but judiciously utilized. As Matthew Ward, vice president of enrollment management and marketing at California Lutheran University (CA), warns, “Lots of institutions can buy themselves classes, where you put a particular amount of aid on the table to try to influence a single year’s results. But, a good strategy, I think, looks at it generationally. It is important to consider the long-term ramifications of providing [aid] to students who might not enroll without [it].”



Financial Aid and a Growth Mindset



The following is excerpted from an excellent article written by Christopher Tompkins, head of school at Episcopal Collegiate School (AR), published in the summer 2016 issue of Independent School magazine. The complete article can be found online at www.nais.org.

It's a mistake for school leaders to get overly fixated on expenses alone and miss the opportunity for positive growth—especially through wise, flexible, and strategic use of financial aid. While both net-tuition revenue and merit scholarships come with their pitfalls, in my experience they can be of great value to a school when used well—helping to ensure that a school enrolls a broad range of students, stays on mission, and maintains its long-term financial health.

Let me explain. Inevitably, at the end of every admission cycle, after all the budgeted financial aid is awarded and students are enrolled, there is a group of students who sit in a wait pool—usually for no other reason than funding. Some of them are high need, while others are majority-pay students. In many cases around the country and abroad, there are desks and beds that, using the old model of strictly budgeted financial aid, go empty, even as the faculty and staff remain at fixed budgeted levels.

Schools with a growth mindset, however, look at those empty desks and seats, do some simple arithmetic, review various mission-based needs, and then begin pulling files from the wait pool drawer to ensure stable enrollment and additional revenue.

Say your school is a day school with a tuition of \$25,000. You offer the game-changer [student] with high financial need \$22,000 in financial aid, with the effective family contribution being \$3,000. For the other, a very capable student with less financial need, you offer \$8,000 in financial aid, with the effective family contribution being \$17,000.

The return on investment yields two students, both mission appropriate, both good additions to the school, both with demonstrated need, and both yielding revenue to the bottom line—the equivalent of 80 percent of one full-pay student. The process was neither negotiated nor bartered and, therefore, neither unethical nor an expense.

What if the school wants to shift the profile of the student body or reduce excess capacity, or both? In this case, it makes sense to consider merit. Colleges initially used merit scholarships to extend “preferential packages” to students they desired and who would improve the colleges’ profiles and attract more students. This packaging program grew to include merit awards as enticements—as a yield tool. Eventually, the merit model evolved into a marketing tool, not just a yield tool, with its use designed to attract students into the applicant pool.

Schools that have used both the net tuition revenue and merit scholarship models abound with stories of success and some failures. Some schools have used net-tuition revenue only to find that 60 percent of their students are on financial aid after several years. But I would argue that, in these cases, the unintended result has little to do with net tuition revenue and much to do with a program that doesn't resonate in the marketplace, or it's the result of the outright failure of communicating the value added of attending said school.

Regardless of whether your school has a significant endowment, excess capacity, highly selective admissions, or the need to improve revenue, the use of net tuition revenue and merit scholarships makes good sense.



Christopher R. Tompkins is the head of school at Episcopal Collegiate School (AR).

Who Leads Enrollment Management

What Knowledge and Skills are Required?

The chief enrollment officer or director of enrollment management has principal responsibility for achieving the institution's long- and short-term enrollment goals and directing all aspects of enrollment management.

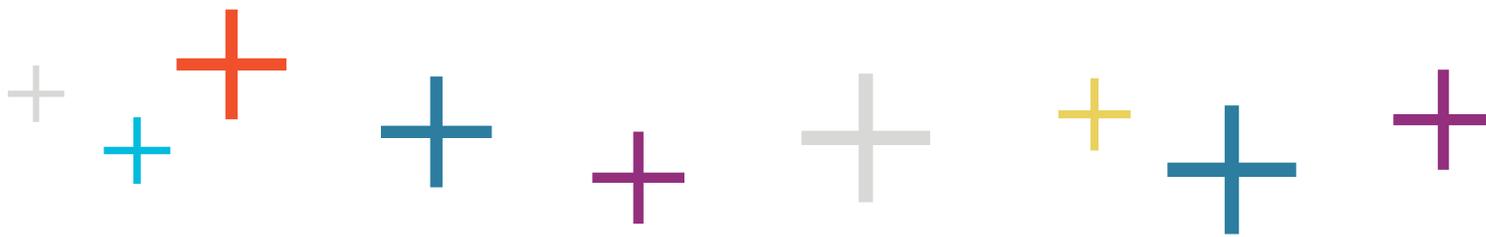
This includes replacing graduates, accounting for attrition, expanding a class that grows in size at specific entry grade levels, deploying financial aid resources as a strategic marketing and retention tool, and maintaining a stable enrollment required to meet budget. This position reports directly to the head of school and is a key member of the school's leadership team.

Key responsibilities of a chief enrollment officer in an independent school include:

- + Developing and implementing a comprehensive strategic enrollment management plan to differentiate the school's unique brand, addressing size, scope, and shifting student body composition, enhancing recruitment, retention, revenue generation, and constituent relations—all consistent with the school's strategic goals and direction
- + Articulating the plan's goals, strategies, and tactics to the wider internal community
- + Managing and overseeing the offices of admission and financial aid, managing the school's annual financial aid budget, and executing the deployment of the school's financial aid resources while adhering to all regulations of the board's financial aid policies in conjunction with the head of school and chief financial officer
- + Compiling and disseminating data for institutional benchmarking purposes; making data-informed decisions; reporting on longitudinal enrollment and financial aid trends
- + Determining the organization and membership of the school's admission committees and chairing these committees
- + Advising the head and board on market trends to maintain the school's relevance in a broader educational context and inform appropriate short- and long-term enrollment for each division
- + Working closely in collaboration with other team members to achieve enrollment goals; developing and enhancing valuable partnerships with external constituents
- + Attending all meetings of the board of trustees and serving on the following trustee subcommittees: committee on trustees; advancement and major gifts; finance; buildings and grounds; and strategic planning
- + Presenting regularly to trustees on enrollment-related matters
- + Articulating the school's unique mission and opportunities through public speaking appearances

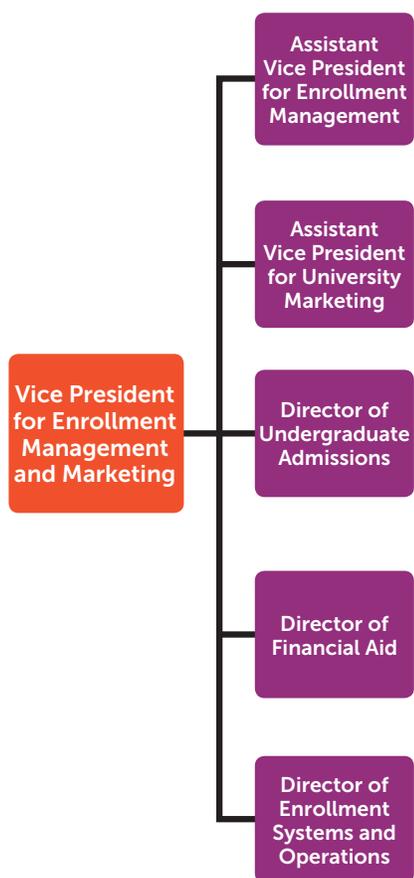


As one particularly salient job description for a small private college puts it, "The new vice president for enrollment will be asked to address the following critical leadership issues, among others: develop a competitive enrollment strategy within a culture of evidence, advance [the school's] competitive position, and provide strategic and tactical leadership for admission and financial aid."



Sample Organizational Structure of a Higher Education Enrollment Management Team

(Courtesy of California Lutheran University)



In considering the knowledge, skills, and abilities someone would need to possess in order to deliver on these responsibilities, it helps to scan the job listings at the post-secondary level. The following key skill areas are taken from a posted position for a director of enrollment management at Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, PA and are representative of the competencies required for this position:

- + Excellent administrative, oral, and written communication and interpersonal skills
- + Demonstrated strategic and long-range planning skills
- + Knowledge of revenue-based enrollment management
- + Understanding of current market trends and the skills to translate that knowledge into successful enrollment management programs and objectives
- + Proficiency in computer software applications to support the work
- + Demonstrated ability to collaborate and build consensus with internal and external stakeholders at all levels
- + Proficiency in managing/analyzing large amounts of data, presenting outcomes of data analysis in a logical manner, and utilizing this information to make data-driven decisions
- + Demonstrated success in process management and process improvement

Successful chief enrollment officers are supported by highly competent directors of admission, who maintain primary responsibility for analyzing the landscape and for developing and executing a student recruitment plan to achieve the annual enrollment goals. As outlined in AACRAO's admission core competencies, this includes:

- + Utilizing search tools to develop a prospect base
- + Conducting community/school outreach
- + Developing marketing material to promote the school and its programs
- + Creating a communications plan that integrates social media and that provides prospective students with appropriate messages at specific points in the admission decision cycle

- + Collaborating with other departments to ensure consistent flow of communications from the point of inquiry through enrollment
- + Developing speeches and presentations that highlight the school and encourage students to enroll
- + Evaluating the staffing structure of the admission office and identifying the optimal configuration to complete necessary tasks and meet the enrollment goals
- + Deploying technology solutions that improve business processes and student satisfaction
- + Developing reports to help inform administration and faculty of progress toward goals

As this report has emphasized, there are varying models for how schools can strategically manage their enrollment policies and planning. Hiring a chief enrollment officer and amassing key strategic functions for enrollment management—admission, marketing, institutional research, financial aid, retention—under the purview of a single individual may be possible. If not, strategic enrollment management planning must be a shared across a number of divisions, and the primary drivers should be situated within the admission office.



Case Studies

For strategic enrollment management to be successfully implemented and executed in independent schools, it must touch all aspects of the student journey, including market research and strategy; educational program and school brand; recruitment and selection of new students; tuition and financial aid strategy; school culture and community; retention of current students; and student educational outcomes.

Some schools have already commenced strategic enrollment practices—some at an institutional level and others at the department level. With external pressures building on the sustainability of the independent school model, admission office and enrollment teams must focus on all facets of a school’s enrollment and become expert trend watchers, data analysts, and strategic planners. Importantly, they must understand their school’s unique enrollment drivers and pull the appropriate and necessary levers accordingly.

Here we have examined four independent schools driving enrollment strategy through four different lenses. First, one school describes how it used the organizational structure to affect change. Second, one school explains how it changed the conversation with families around affordability. Third, another school describes how an institution-wide focus on student retention took root and is cultivated on a daily basis. And fourth, one market leader reports how they looked strategically and long-term to leverage high demand for institutional success.

Case Studies

Georgetown Day School

Taking the Lead



Barbara Eghan

Director of Enrollment Management and
Financial Aid, Georgetown Day School

For nearly 15 years, Georgetown Day School (GDS), a coed PK-12 day school on two campuses in Washington, DC, has structured its admission operations around a director of enrollment management. Instituted in 2002 by a forward-thinking head of school, the structure, which includes several directors of admission working at different grade levels, was primarily intended to ensure alignment and that admission and enrollment goals reflected the school's mission of diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

Barbara Eghan, GDS' current director of enrollment management and financial aid, has taken this approach to the next level. "We've restructured things since I got here, but we still maintain a structure wherein I oversee the Pre-K through 12 teams, which include directors and associates at the lower, middle, and high school levels, as well as two assistants who support the whole team." During her two years at GDS, Eghan has spent time clarifying her role relative to those of her colleagues. "Very little of my current role is directly related to admission. I don't actually interview many families," she asserts. "I do a lot of planning, obviously. I set our strategic goals for the year. I supervise each of the members of our team relative to their goals." Eghan's broader strategic view helps to ensure the school's healthy enrollment in future years.

Eghan explains: "In continuing to better define this role, one of the pivots that I've made this year is focusing much more externally, whether it's building school and program relationships or engaging a marketing consultant and thinking about the scope of our market and what we need to be doing within the next six months, 12 months, 18 months, and so on. That's my primary focus, and then of course serving along with our director of finance and operations and head of school on our financial aid committee. In terms of the day-to-day operations, financial aid is about as nitty gritty as I get. For the most part, I'm focused on the larger scheme—how we're going to continue to move forward, meet our admission and enrollment goals, and connect with colleagues throughout the school to have enrollment management-related conversations concerning things like transportation or a summer bridge program, thus ensuring student success by leveraging the longitudinal data that we're gathering in the admission process."

Eghan asserts that exploring topics like transportation, which initially do not appear to fall under her strategic umbrella, are vital to the enrollment management discussion. "We're not a school that provides any transportation, and I know that it's a huge equity issue," she notes. "For a school that is oriented around equity to the extent we are, we still haven't really discussed whether there is something that we can do to support families as we think about broadening our prospect map."



Eghan is equally focused on enrolled student success. Drawing a lesson from her five-year tenure at Groton School (MA), she developed an admission rubric at GDS that measures both quantitative and qualitative student attributes that were essential for success in Groton's program, such as grades, test scores, positive personal qualities, and a range of additional contributions that an applicant might make to the school. Eghan used this rubric as the basis for institutional research which helped fine tune the admission process. She says, "In my previous school, what we learned was really interesting, because we found that a student's track record of success at their previous school and their ability to work hard were the two biggest success predictors. That allowed us to more comfortably take some 'risks' on kids who perhaps had lower test scores than others in the pool, yet had these other success factors."

Eghan's use of school wide data is not limited to identifying where GDS' achievement gaps lie. She has brought a strategic and sophisticated use of data to the school's board of trustees, and her efforts to illustrate the numbers and to articulate GDS' competitive advantages have been met with appreciation. "I remember the first year I gave my board presentation—they were grateful for being able to take some deep dives into, for example, financial aid," she recalls: "I showed them a big aid budget number, and they responded, 'Hey, we're doing great.' I responded, 'Yes, I know that it seems like a really big number, but here's what actually happens to it, how it's allocated, and here's how it impacts the enrollment and financing of new and returning students.'"

While the board appreciates what she presents, Eghan is similarly pleased that she is able to move with them from data to action. "I've been grateful to them for being willing to have hard conversations and make some tough decisions and take action, and in general, I'm thrilled with our board because they are super engaged and they love the school," she says. "They've been hugely supportive and focused on where their governance is most needed. The nitty gritty, such as reorganizing our office, they don't feel the need to direct, but they do care about future trends. I know that they are just as interested in this admission season as they are in the five-year outlook, so I try to bring focus there."

Eghan asserts that for admission professionals seeking to expand into an enrollment management position, it's important to first gain and display an understanding of the interconnectedness of every person with a stake in the school—that the entire school is responsible for maintaining enrollment. "We all have some skin in this game. I think it's important to be able to speak the language of teachers, be able to talk to what student success looks like, and convey that you have a really holistic sense of what that looks like beyond applications. When you think about all of the partnerships within your school, some of them are joined by solid lines and some are joined less obviously, by dotted lines. Enrollment management recognizes the importance of all those dotted-line partnerships that you have with other leaders in your school."



University School

Changing the Conversation around Education Finance



Christina Townsend-Hartz
Director of Upper School Admission
and Director of Financial Aid (K-12),
University School

The messages—explicit and implicit—that prospective families receive and internalize about your school’s educational program, admission policies and process, and composition of the current parent and student community, for example, have a significant impact on how your school is perceived in the wider marketplace. But what about the messages these families are receiving about whether or not they can afford to send their child to your school?

Like many schools, University School, a boys’ K-12 day school on the outskirts of Cleveland, Ohio, was concerned about its long-term enrollment health related to issues of cost and affordability. “We are a school with a healthy enrollment, but we are always looking for the best students and make our pipeline a little bit bigger,” explains Christina Townsend-Hartz, director of upper school admission and director of financial aid (K-12) at University School. “The cost of tuition was a constant conversation with enrolled families and a theme that carried over continuously in the admission office. We have a commitment to access for students up and down the socioeconomic ladder, but we also didn’t want upper-middle income families to feel that our education was out of reach. So three years ago we decided to do something about it.”

Townsend-Hartz and her colleagues knew from demographic data and their own research that there was a sizeable population making more than \$200,000 per year with a school age children, yet they were not considering an independent school education. Even once they got over the “sticker shock” of tuition, these families were not calling University School’s financial aid office to inquire about their options—unmotivated to do so out of fear of exposure or possible embarrassment at the request for financial aid. Yet, Townsend-Hartz and her colleagues were well aware, following the Great Recession and in looking at data from sources like School and Student Services (SSS) by NAIS, that financial aid requests from families on the higher end of the income scale were on the rise across all independent schools.

“The discussion was about changing the language around requesting financial aid and demystifying the process, if, in fact, families could afford to send their kids to our school with assistance,” she explained. “The simplest solution was to create an education campaign around affordability, using that language specifically, and establishing a low-stakes forum where families could have their questions answered without fear of judgement.”

The University School team pitched their idea to the CFO. “When we went to the CFO, and ultimately our head and board, we had to get them to understand that need-based financial aid is not about giving away money, but about an investment in our student body in a calculated manner. We structured the discussion by showing how financial aid is not money spent, but money earned.”



The campaign idea was well received and ultimately approved. The team first focused on a complete overhaul of the information surrounding financial aid and then relied on their mission to help shape their messaging. “Part of our promise is that every student is known and loved,” Townsend-Hartz shared. “Our goal was to carry that same feeling and sentiment to prospective families, so that every parent and family is known and loved and looked at individually. To accomplish this, we determined that one voice for financial aid was necessary, so that parents felt they had an ear and an advocate. We decided I would serve as that voice. Second, we determined that ‘financial aid’ often carried a negative connotation for families, and we needed to adjust the language to ‘affordability’. So, when I speak with parents now I say: ‘My goal is not for you to work within my budget, it’s for me to see if I can work within your budget.’ This simple change has created a more open dialogue.”

To support the efforts, the school created a video about how its tuition was within reach of most families. They housed the video on a page in the admission section of their website titled “Affordability.”

The video’s simple language and clean graphics address how more money and resources are spent on University School students versus local public schools, and how the school’s goal is finding the right boys for the University School experience, and addressing the misconceptions about affordability including: aid granted is a reduction in tuition, not a loan; the average household income of award recipients is \$100,000; and 69 percent of awards are over \$10,000.

“We realized that by changing the message to affordability and putting real facts forward, we were able to remove the stigmas associated with the process and open the door to more communication with our currently enrolled families and families of applicants,” Townsend-Hartz explained.

The team then hosted a webinar, where families could ask financial aid questions in an anonymous, low-stakes environment. This forum allowed the team to present information and answer questions in a safe environment with no commitments required from the families to inquire formally or take a tour. “We were thrilled because we had 100 people attend the webinar the first year, and the trend continued year after year,” she extolled. “Yet, the real surprise came when we saw the number of views and downloads of the recorded webinar. The numbers clearly indicated that the families we needed to reach were finding the information on their own.”

The results of this messaging campaign are still being measured, especially given that a merit aid program was implemented at the same time. But Townsend-Hartz emphasizes that it was the right move for their enrollment strategy. “We are seeing more applications for the school and more applications for financial aid in general,” she explained. “We have had a greater number of people applying in the third and fourth income quartiles, but we haven’t lost the people who are in the first income quartile either. It’s a win for our school and our community.”



UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL

Hawken School

Personalizing the Process to Tackle Attrition



Heather Daly
Assistant Head of School
for Enrollment Management,
Hawken School

Heather Daly joined Hawken School, a coed PK-12 day school in the suburbs of Cleveland, Ohio, in 2008. To say the least, it was a tenuous time for schools and their families impacted by the recession. As Hawken's new assistant head of school for enrollment management, Daly immediately saw the need for an overarching retention strategy to combat the effects of an uncertain future. She understood that recruitment and retention are two sides of the enrollment strategy coin, and continually assessing attrition risk is key to a healthy enrollment.

"Our strategy was clear and deliberate, and one we live by even today," said Daly. "We believe that retention and re-enrollment starts day one every year. It is not something that is limited to members of the admission or enrollment management team. We had to develop a culture here that emanates responsibility and accountability. Every single person at the school understands that we all have a part to play in our school's value proposition to families, and they are part of the reason families keep selecting Hawken."

Daly worked with Hawken's head of school, Scott Looney, to define his role in setting the tone and directive around retention. Their now-yearly plan begins in late August, with Looney addressing the full staff on how enrollment management drives success at Hawken. Looney also emphasizes too that by working together on behalf of students, they also make the school a more successful environment for staff. Beyond the community-building element, Looney takes the time to educate his staff about the way tuition revenue works in conjunction with enrollment strategy, and how it affects re-enrollment and attrition. Looney holds a second meeting in January. He's careful to make the connection between tuition revenues and the benefits and salary increases the staff receives.

Daly, meanwhile, ensures that this message is being carried through all exchanges, asserting the importance of each department and division's role in faculty meetings throughout the year, explaining and reinforcing expectations for their interactions with prospective students and current families. "We try to push the point that families have a lot of choices. Independent schools are a luxury, and we need to be mindful of that fact as we deliver on the promises we shared with students and families when they first joined our community," she says.

"I share a spreadsheet with my admission staff and all the members of our administrative team," Daly continues. "It's usually created some time in September, and records any sort of concerns that come up, grade level by grade level. In it, we document information about the students, any concerns that may be coming up, where those concerns originated, what the plan of action is going to be, and who is responsible for following up. While I may not be the appropriate person to follow up with a second grader having questions about fit, the classroom teacher or the division director might be. As the person who oversees our flexible tuition budget, I may reach out to a family with financial concerns." Daly ensures that she is the one ultimately responsible for coordinating re-enrollment efforts with her division directors.



Beginning in mid to late November, Daly ramps up communication: “At that time, we have an administrative council meeting every other week, in which I’m typically the first person on the agenda talking about enrollment and attrition concerns, about what might be cropping up. This helps me get face-to-face with members of the administrative team about areas of concern. It’s a nice touch point, but also a place where all pertinent high-level administrators are made aware of how we’re doing and how things are tracking with both new enrollments and our retention efforts over the course of the year.”

At the end of every year, she analyzes data that track attrition by grade level and division, takes a look at the breakdown of those students, investigates why they left, and then categorizes some of them so she can determine if there are trends among students, who may be looking at other independent schools. As a result of this analysis, she noticed that having two campuses six miles apart was leading to family uncertainty about the transition between schools. In response, the school created transition programs for students moving from 8th to 9th grade. “We have a whole series of events that we plan for those families. For example, our entire eighth grade was just on campus this morning for an extended tour, and they got class of 2021 T-shirts as they left. We have events for their parents to come and take their own look at the upper school and ask questions. We also have several different events that we plan throughout the course of the year for prospective students.” The work of validating families’ choice to remain at Hawken is also bolstered through an extensive social media campaign and internal newsletters.

Daly emphasizes that open communication with families is the ultimate key to maintaining enrollment: “Make sure families feel heard and work with them. At the end of the day, even if a family ultimately chooses to head in a different direction, I don’t think that there’s anything that’s lost by reaching out and letting them know that it matters to you as an institution whether their family is with you or not.”

For those seeking to create a more robust re-enrollment and retention plan, Daly advises reflection and research. “I would advise people to get at the heart of what might be driving attrition in a particular area or across the school and take a hard look at yourself, at your school. Sometimes it means addressing issues that are cropping up and having a team at the ready to take a look at and amend things. It’s important not to be afraid to try new things.”

“Every year we start over again. Every year a family (even a long-time family) is experiencing your school,” finishes Daly. “We have to continue to deliver on the promise that we give to families. If there are ways we are not, then I think it’s up to the whole school to work to try to address that. Enrollment management requires that faculty, staff, and administrators are all working toward this common goal.”



Lakeside School

The “Micro” Strategy to Increasing Enrollment



Booth Kyle
Associate Head of School
and Admissions Director
Lakeside School

Enrollment management strategy comes in many forms. Some schools need to employ innovative strategies to help meet capacity. Others have chosen to “right size” in an effort to balance enrollment against budget, while taking into account the demographic and financial realities of their markets. Sometimes there are cases where schools are seeking to increase enrollment, because demand is high, but facilities are limited. Lakeside School, a coed day school with grades 5-12 located at the northern city limits of Seattle, is one such case.

“Our board was impressed at the increasing demand for Lakeside and wanted our team to explore how we could expand our enrollment,” explains Booth Kyle, associate head of school and admissions director. “A Lakeside education was in high demand, as demonstrated by a 68 percent increase in applications over the last 10 years. Our board saw this as an opportunity for expansion, but it was more of a challenge than we initially thought.”

The board’s directive was to explore options that would increase enrollment by 200 students. Following a capacity and campus planning study, administrators determined that on-campus growth was cost prohibitive and not a feasible long-term solution.

So the team began exploring different models that would allow expansion but not stretch or utilize Lakeside’s current facilities. First and critically, they needed to determine why demand was increasing and how the school could satisfy the demand. “We collected data from our applicants, asking “How important were the following criteria when you were considering schools?” The top four most important things were academic program, faculty, class size, and college placement. Next was facilities, athletics, arts, diversity, with a third tier focused on affordability. When the academic pieces came out on top, it really gave us confidence that creating a school that is really just about academics (and aligned with our own good reputation for academics) could be feasible. The micro-school movement had already taken off in other parts of the country, and these data solidified our decision for this model.”

As described in 2015 in The Enrollment Management Association’s report *Sizing up the Competition: Exploring Choice in Today’s Independent School Market*, micro-schooling, which began in Silicon Valley, is now an oft-used term to describe schools that are intentionally small and stripped of fields, gyms, or full libraries. These schools are much more connected to, and interdependent with, their urban surroundings, and this keeps them nimble, able to deploy and expand (or contract) as necessary, and serve families in their immediate neighborhoods.

Planning began immediately for Lakeside’s micro-school, and as of press time Lakeside is focused on a downtown Seattle facility that will have access to the commuter highways and proximity to the city’s new light rail system. Lakeside hopes to open the school in fall of 2018 for grades 9-12. Enrollment will build over several years with an ultimate enrollment target of 160 total, with 40 students per grade.



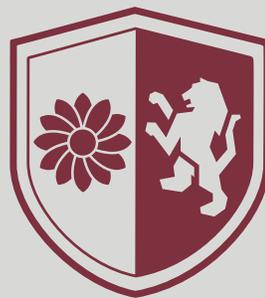
With the strength of the academic program as the driving force for the new school, Lakeside has already started modifying the curriculum to adapt to its new location. “We’re treating the city as our lab for teaching and instruction,” he explains. “With access to museums, art centers, parks, and more, these students will experience hands-on learning using the myriad of options afforded by its urban location. In fact, we’ve worked in internship opportunities with downtown businesses for juniors and seniors.”

Tuition at the Lakeside micro-school will be \$17,000, a substantial difference from Lakeside School’s \$32,000 tuition. “When we conducted our family research, affordability didn’t top the list in terms of need, and while in general it was a lower priority, we know it is a huge priority for those that checked that box,” he explained. “The lower tuition has excited our school community and board, because we’re now in a position to attract a new applicant group. We think having a more modest tuition will be attractive to many families that don’t typically apply to independent schools because of cost. But, it raises challenges for different financial aid standards between our main campus and the micro-school.”

Kyle explained that the main school’s admission and financial aid teams will help the faculty and staff at the new school get set up, embed best practices, and then hand over all admission and financial aid responsibilities for the micro-school applicants over to the micro-school team. In fact, most of the adults at the micro-school will be teachers, and while there will be one traditional principal, the remaining administrative functions will be spread across the faculty, with perhaps a math teacher also serving as the director of admission.

Marketing and communication plans for the new school are still in the planning phase, but communication is underway among internal and external audiences, such as Lakeside alumni. “This has come with its own set of challenges, as alumni are concerned about potentially creating different cultures on the two campuses or diluting the Lakeside brand, because the micro-school offers less in terms of activities and programs. Our response is that the new school is just a different choice with a different kind of classroom attached—the city.”

There is more planning and work to be done, but Kyle is continually asked the same question: Are you afraid you’re setting up your own competitor school? “You have to take a step back and look at our mission,” Kyle explains. “We’re resourced enough to have the funding to build a new school, driven by the high demand for our current school. We are a school community that just wants to offer a great education to more students. I know this may sound unusual for a director of admission to say, but I look forward to the day that a student is admitted to the main campus and the micro-school, and selects the micro-school.”



LAKESIDE
S C H O O L

A Head's Perspective on Enrollment Management

It is often said that success must come from the top down. As enrollment management strategy is integrated into independent schools, heads must take the lead to ensure a smooth development, transition, and execution of the strategy.

The Enrollment Management Association inquired with four heads of school about their view of the head's role in strategic enrollment management leadership. **John Palfrey**, head of school at Phillips Academy (MA), **Kevin Plummer**, head of school at Tampa Preparatory School (FL), **Antonio Viva**, head of school at Walnut Hill School for the Performing Arts (MA), and **Betty White**, head of school at Sacred Hearts Academy (HI) responded with four similar, yet varying positions on the topic.

How has enrollment management strategy changed your relationship with your school community?

JP: Enrollment management strategy is central to the culture of our community and to my work as head of school at Phillips Academy Andover. Our school revolves around creating access to opportunity, not only for our current students, but also for prospective families. Our focus lies on identifying a broad and deep pool of students who will thrive in our community! Enrollment management is handled by our admission and financial aid office, fondly referred to as "Team Shuman," named after the donor of the warm and cozy building where they work. It is also the business of our entire faculty in important ways. I see my own role as supporting Team Shuman and all those community members who are engaged in enrollment management—which is pretty much everyone.

Our enrollment management strategy is grounded in our mission and values. As a need-blind institution, we are committed to finding students from across the United States and around the world for whom Andover is a great next step in their lives. We want to be certain that young people and families know that they can and should apply to Andover whether or not they can afford our tuition and whether or not they believe they will be admitted.

We know that many prospective families are concerned about the cost of an Andover

education and that the extremely high academic standards might inhibit their access. Through our financial aid strategy, we try to minimize the concerns about the cost. The academic excellence is certainly true—and is central to who we are as a school—but we also don't judge admissibility on any particular rubric of simple grade point average and standardized test scores. We use a community-based selection process that involves our faculty as admission readers and as interviewers, and we seek to attract intrinsically motivated students whose best academic years are ahead of them. We also want students whose character is what stands out, who would thrive here because of their personal attributes, who ask hard questions about the world around them, and who would push our community forward. Our admission process is not just about the metrics in a student profile but also about the context of the student's educational experience.

One of my favorite things to do is talk about the warmth and energy of our community with families who are considering the school. Sometimes our warmth, in particular, surprises people because they have preconceived ideas about a school like ours that is steeped in tradition. I do my best to learn about the experiences of our students and faculty and staff members in order to develop an authentic sense of what the experience is like for all different types of community members. This helps me to describe the essence of the experience to those I meet.





John Palfrey



Kevin Plummer



Antonio Viva



Betty White



KP: Our enrollment strategy had to evolve following the economic downturn of 2008-2009. As a head of school, my transformation included admitting I simply did not know what I did not know and that I had a lot to learn about admission and enrollment strategy. The only way to improve this was to take a deep professional development dive and immerse myself into the opportunities that were available through The Enrollment Management Association (SSATB at the time) and learn as much as possible to support my admission team and school.

The Annual Conference became a must, and I have attended every national meeting since 2008. Additionally, I had to deeply engage with my admission team, learn, and quite literally, share the leadership mantle. Dennis Facciolo, our director of admission, and Tammy Honegger, our associate director of admission and director of financial aid, became key mentors, collaborators, and leaders to transform our school culture to better support and understand the admission and enrollment needs at our school.

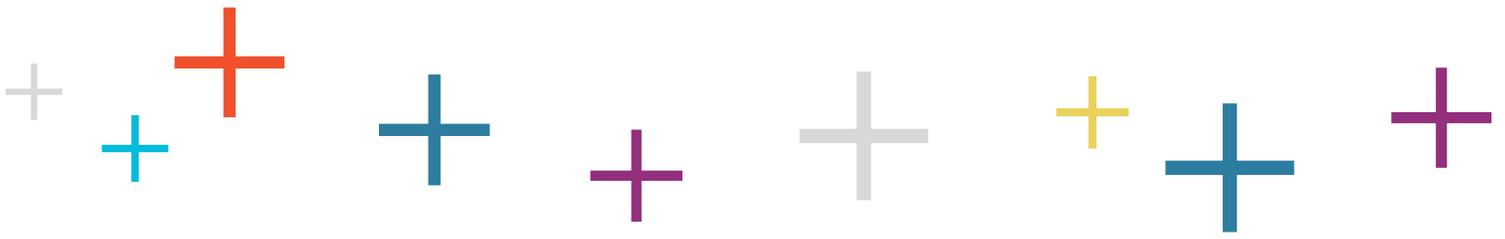
An example of a key initiative from admission was to strengthen our focus on retention. We also had a set of short- and long-term strategic initiatives that included marketing and communications. Admission at our school had to become a point of pride shared by every single person that worked at the school and all had to understand where, when, and how they were contributing to the admission goals we had.

AV: When I first arrived at Walnut Hill back in 2010, one of my very first presentations to the faculty and staff included a slide that introduced the concept of enrollment management. While it was not a term that many were familiar with at that time, it has become part of our regular vocabulary and fundamentally shifted the way we do our work.

It is often easy for those of us who work in schools to focus on the day-to-day work of our particular departments and offices, but embracing a concept like enrollment management requires that you break down silos and reframe conversations, so that groups of individuals including faculty, administrators, and staff are engaged in work that connects to the larger goals of the institution. I would say that every level of our school community has a better understanding of how they fit into this strategy and how their work helps to move the school forward in meeting its enrollment management goals.

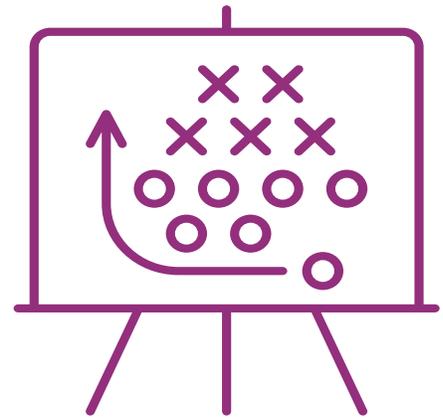
The most important and most beneficial outcome of moving towards an enrollment management strategy is to see how department heads and directors are able to find connections between the work they do on a daily basis, and how critical that work is to successfully managing everything from communications and marketing, to admission, to re-enrollment, and attrition, as well as to program development and student life.

Continued on page 32



BW: Our enrollment management strategy creates a team approach, where all members of the school community are working together more effectively toward common goals and objectives.

Outsiders would observe that our school community better understands the fundamental importance of enrollment to the mission and viability of the school. We take pride in the fact that we view enrollment, for both new and returning students, as a team effort with the admissions director and the head of school leading the team, but with all administrators, faculty, and staff as primary players. Even students, parents, and alumnae are part of the team.



The enrollment management system allows the admissions director and the head of school to present enrollment/retention challenges more effectively to the board with concrete data on which it can make decisions regarding funding and the future direction of the school.

Given it's a full community effort, faculty, staff and counselors do not "help" with enrollment as a favor. Their contributions to promoting the school, and welcoming and retaining students are identified and expected as part of their duties. This means that they are trained in, and valued for, their roles in the enrollment management process. This involvement means more members of the school community acknowledge the competitive nature of independent schools, which demands that we have passionate and competent teachers, that we remain strong financially, and that marketing and branding our institutions is important.

What do you wish your admission team and enrollment manager understood about your role in the school's enrollment management strategy?

JP: I want the enrollment management team to know that I am their biggest supporter. I see my job as being a spokesperson to the community of prospective families whenever they want me there. I am constantly asking for more involvement from our enrollment management team: "Put me in, coach!" is my mantra! I am inspired by telling the world about what Andover is trying to accomplish and inviting students and families to explore the fantastic education that young people can get at our school. I believe deeply in the type of residential education in general that we provide, and I believe that Andover in particular has something special to offer. It's great to be a part of creating the excitement around the possibilities.

I also want our enrollment management team to know that I wholeheartedly support their efforts to travel far and wide to find the absolute brightest, kindest, and most courageous students they can. I know that they regularly discover extraordinary young people who have never even heard of Andover (or boarding school, for that matter). And the membership of students like this in our community is what makes it such an interesting place to be.

When it comes to disappointment, I certainly partner with our enrollment management team on messaging. Managing disappointment is one of the especially hard parts of the equation for us, particularly when it involves alumni families or friends of the school. Enrollment management in part is about keeping our school size manageable, so the students who are here can get the full benefit of our favorable ratio of students to faculty and staff. That message is understandable in theory for all members of our community, but when it is someone's child who is not admitted, that can obviously be hard for the family, and we exercise full sensitivity in our outreach as admission decisions are released.



KP: I have to admit I am extremely fortunate. The members of my admission team had served in diverse school roles earlier in their careers. This diversity of experiences helped them communicate across school constituencies, explain the “why” of what we were looking to accomplish, and literally bring everyone into the “tent” including the head of school. Dennis and Tammy have been critical to the success of our admission effort and history.

The most successful relationship outcomes have been the establishment and maintenance of the highest level of trust, honesty, and collaboration imaginable. There is a very special free flow of communication, support, and exchange of ideas. It would be safe to say that there is a high-velocity and high-value conversation between the head’s office and the admission office.

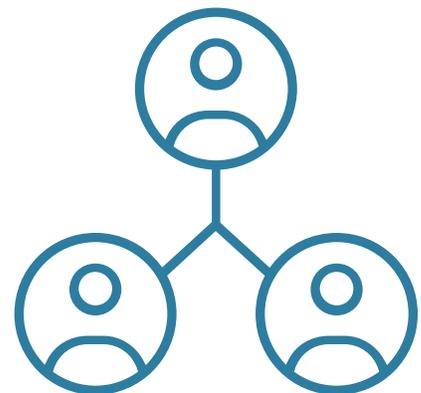
The relationship and communication between our strategic admission and enrollment teams has been fantastic and, consequently, there has been a lot of honest conversation and feedback. I just hope they understand and know how much I appreciate all that they do for me and for our school.

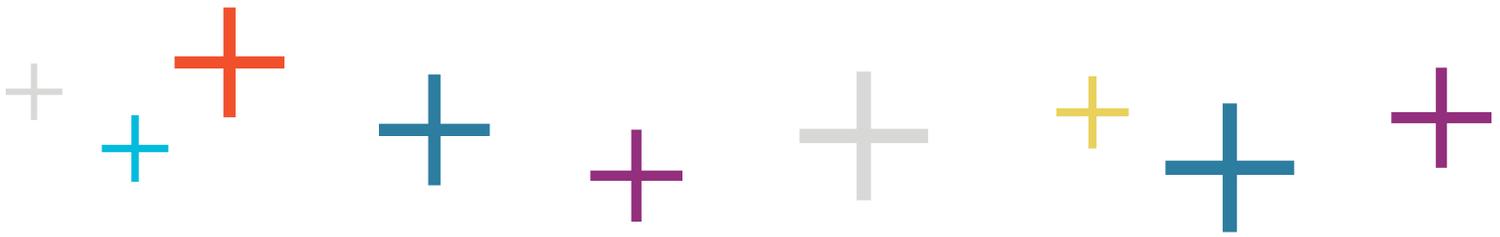
AV: I feel the best outcome has been a much deeper sense of how we look at our strategic decisions and filter them through our enrollment management lens. As Head, I have an ability to access a broader and deeper set of data and metrics. I can use this information with various board committees, and it helps me make real-time decisions as well as long-term decisions. There is a larger footprint at the senior administrative level, where my assistant head of school who oversees enrollment management can help shape conversations with our board, our curriculum team, and our external relations committee.

I feel fortunate that my team has a good sense of how to utilize me as head, and I am confident that our regular communications gives us a great deal of flexibility as well as autonomy. I trust that my admission team is working hard to meet our enrollment targets. I am equally confident that the enrollment management committee is looking at institutional questions like attrition and retention, student success rates, and external outreach. I think the challenge every head of school faces is that they are the only individual in their organization who is sitting in the center of the organizational chart. Each department may or may not have an ability to see how their work is connected to another, but a head of school is able to see across 360 degrees of an organization and make the links and connections needed to advance the work and mission of the school.

“I think the challenge every head of school faces is that they are the only individual in their organization who is sitting in the center of the organizational chart.”

-Antonio Viva





BW: The enrollment management strategy certainly brings change among the various segments of the school community: enhanced communication; better division of workload; a more supportive network; greater creation of innovative ideas; and increased efficiency.

More important is that the enrollment management strategy results in the admission director experiencing the support of the whole school community. The admission director ‘sells’ what the school can do for its students; the head of school has to make sure that the promises are delivered by all areas of the school community.

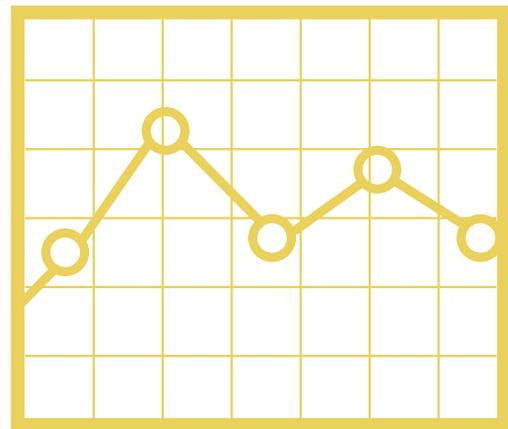
The outcomes include having our admission team spending more time with me and our great team of administrators to better understand the market. As an example, the whole team review of the analysis of the data of the schools with which we overlap and this has been particularly advantageous in our strategy development. As head, I want the school community to better understand that the enrollment of a student is just the first step in the process, and all members of the school community must be committed to the retention and success of each student who is enrolled.

Our enrollment strategy is better served if all individuals understand that enrollment management is the practical focus, but the ultimate focus is the mission of educating and empowering young men and women. Often times, it is challenging for the head of school to keep the school community’s sight on the mission, which should ultimately drive enrollment.

We’ve noticed that education on this process is critical, including having our school community understand that the as head, I have, by necessity, the financial sustainability of the school on my shoulders, and the enrollment and retention of students accounts for 80 percent of the operating income.

How do you ensure faculty accountability and participation in relation to enrollment?

JP: One of the blessings of the culture at Andover is that enrollment management embodies the faculty’s deep involvement in the process of selecting students. Our faculty spend time interviewing applicants and meeting with many students interested in the arts, athletics, community engagement, and various subject areas. They also read large numbers of admission applications from among the 3,000 or so candidates for an ultimate admitted number of a little over 300 students each year. The faculty play a central role in determining who is admitted. The faculty also participate actively in our spring revisit days. It is notable that our faculty is involved in enrollment management throughout the entire academic year. We hear over and over again that the role the faculty play in choosing the student body and in guiding families to see that Andover can be a good match for them is essential to our success in enrollment management.

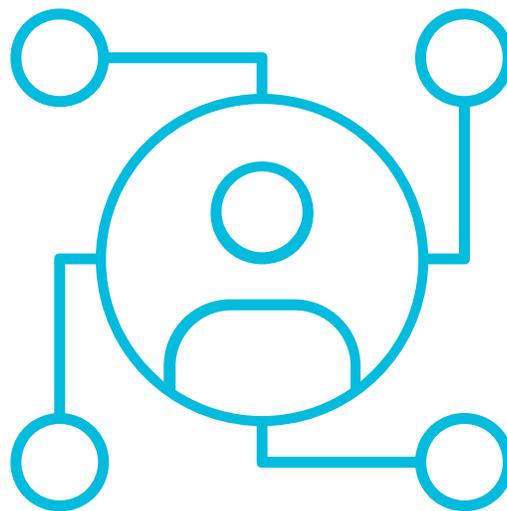


Faculty is also actively involved in the way that we think about the key ideas behind our enrollment management strategy. As part of our strategic plan, we committed to some essential ideas: need-blind admission, academic excellence, equity and inclusion, and the importance of empathy and balance in student experiences. These ideas drive the way we think about enrollment management, the research that needs to go into it, and the changes that we need to make each year in our recruitment strategies. The faculty obviously needs to focus on the core teaching and learning in the classroom, arts facilities, athletic fields, and dorms, but at the same time, it is essential that the faculty at large has a key voice in the educational goals that shape our enrollment management strategies.



KP: The key here was being clear to explain the “why!” Our entire school, from security and housekeeping, through the faculty and administration, and our board of trustees, must understand the admission office and our enrollment strategy is the lifeblood of revenue for our school. Their continued success in chaperoning families from inquiry to attendance leads to the largest source of revenue generation for our school. Our focus on explaining the “Why” has made a real difference: why visits are important, why our phone greeting is important, why our website is important, why our school culture is important, and why we must retain our mission-appropriate students and families.

I am pleased to share that we are a community of professionals, so there has been no need to go beyond that and look for ways to measure or enforce accountability. Our school community understands how important the admission function is; how they can support the experience of visiting families and students; and how they can enhance the student experience.



AV: If you speak with any family or student about why they chose to attend your school—or more importantly what made them stay, I am certain that the question is often answered with some version of the faculty and program. Students don’t choose to come to our schools because of the buildings or facilities, they become inspired by how they can see themselves grow and succeed, and the faculty and staff are central to that success. By including faculty in the admission process, during open house and revisit days, I think many schools can safely say that faculty understands and appreciates their role in those enrollment tasks.

However, sharing data, reporting out on admission activity, and engaging faculty in conversations around programs can help to make those areas feel more connected to the more traditional ways we engage faculty. Ultimately, I believe that the hardest concept to communicate to any school community is that the effort of each individual contributes to the success of the whole. Great teaching, engaging classrooms, dedicated advisors, and committed dorm parents all play a role in the experience our students and families have while they are with us, and ultimately, assist our enrollment strategy. Focusing on those efforts will, in my opinion, make for the greatest buy-in and the best end result.

BW: Faculty participate in enrollment of new students through helping with open houses, welcoming visitors into their classrooms, and participating enthusiastically in outreach activities in the community.

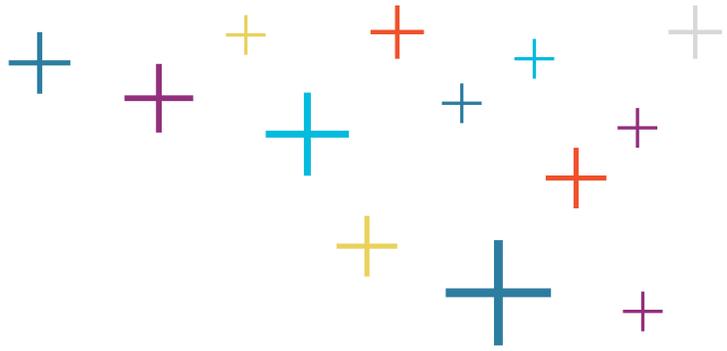
Regarding retention, faculty builds relationships and communicates with students and parents, offers extra help, and continuously hones teaching skills and modifies curriculum to support student success. These expectations must be very clear from the time teachers are hired, beginning in the interview process. Faculty is held accountable when students regularly evaluate their courses and teachers. There are also surveys to parents and students to see “how we are doing.” Counselors frequently make calls home to check in and become aware of any concerns. All of these practices provide useful data to improve and address issues and hold faculty accountable—for both areas of improvement and to acknowledge their successes.

Training about, and for, the admissions/retention process guarantees more positive and active participation of all members of the school community.

The
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Management
Association



Yield Your Best



Enrollment Management Questions for School Leaders

- + What is your school's current approach to enrollment management? What is working? What is not?
- + What steps might you take to employ an institution-wide approach to strategic enrollment management?
- + Does your admission and enrollment leader have a seat at the leadership table?
- + As a school leader, how have you educated and empowered your faculty and staff to own their role in the enrollment management strategy?
- + How have you encouraged a greater understanding of each employee's role in customer satisfaction (for parents, for students)?
- + What steps have you taken to present a clear retention metric to your faculty and staff?
- + What percentage of your school's operating revenue is dependent on tuition? Who in your school is held accountable for that income stream?
- + What institutional data and research efforts have you defined and executed to help further your understanding of your school's enrollment strategy?



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