

Enrollment Management

Report

Practical Guidance in Recruitment, Admissions, Retention & Financial Aid

VOLUME 19, ISSUE 12

MARCH 2016

SNAPSHOTS

REALITIES & INNOVATIONS

Marguerite Dennis explains what changes enrollment managers should make. **Page 3**

RECRUITMENT

A new book by Janet and Paul Marthers could lead students to your institution. **Page 8**

MANAGING YOUR OFFICE

Restructuring your office could help you and your staff serve students more effectively. **Page 9**

LAWSUITS & RULINGS

Review summaries of recent court cases related to enrollment. **Pages 10–11**

LEADERS & INNOVATORS

Peter Gadol, department chair of the graduate creative writing program at Otis College of Art and Design, shares tips for recruiting students to a very small program. **Page 12**



Admissions

Learn best practices for communicating with students

By Halley Sutton, Assistant Editor

ANAHEIM, CALIF. — At any given time, students at your institution of higher education are receiving emails, phone calls, texts and social-media communication from every possible corner of their lives. How do you make sure that your most important messages are getting through to them? In a session at the Pacific Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers annual conference, Julie Schulte, the assistant registrar for technology at the University of Oregon, held a brainstorming session to develop guidelines for best practices for communicating with students to make sure that your messages don't get lost in all the noise. Use the following challenges and suggestions to help tweak your own campus

Continued on page 4.

Change Management

Recognize strategies for killing change, use them to your advantage to create change

By Joan Hope, Ph.D., Editor

HOLLYWOOD, FLA. — If you've ever tried to lead change on campus, you've probably encountered resistance. Faculty members are the experts in their fields, and many think their expertise carries over to other areas, said Loralyn Taylor, Ph.D., director of analytics for student success initiatives at Ohio University. Faculty members function as individuals rather than members of a team. And to the extent they see themselves as part of a team, they identify more with their discipline than with their department and more with their department than with the university.

And faculty members aren't the only ones likely to resist change on campus. When you work toward change, you encounter resistance twice, Taylor said:

Continued on page 6.

Continued from page 1

communication system for maximum efficiency.

Student feedback is often a difficult measure to guide communication policies on campus since, as many participants pointed out, students are not uniform in their wants regarding communication channels. Adult students often desire a telephone call and a personal relationship to receive notifications, while younger students often report more interest in text messaging. Email is the most universally requested platform, but students receive so many email notifications daily that it is the platform most likely to lead to missed messaging. “At what point is it our responsibility to communicate with students rather than the student’s responsibility to understand their responsibility to adhere to guidelines?” Schulte said.

Standing out in the sea of emails

Schulte asked for audience participation regarding communication types and challenges on individual campuses. Lindsay Stadler of Claremont Graduate University shared that for her campus, “All official communications come through email — but then we have students telling us they never received the message.” This was a common sentiment echoed throughout the room — how can Registrar’s Offices make sure that students receive the messages, and what are the consequences for the institution as well as the student if they don’t?

One possible solution was offered by a representative of Brigham Young University, who detailed her campus’s YMessage system, a homegrown central portal through which all official campus communications are passed to students. There, system administrators have a log of messages sent by administrators that are time-stamped to note when they were read by students.

The portal also contains other important student information, such as icons for tasks that need to be completed, upcoming scheduling notes, and financial aid verification. However, even that system is imperfect — the representative from BYU noted that the campus still required multiple logins for different Student Information Systems on campus, making the YMessage portal less user-friendly for the student. And, of course, there remains the problem of ensuring that students actually log in and read their messages.

One barrier brought up regarding email communications to students was the disparity between information that makes sense from your perspective and information that will make sense to a student reading the communication. Leesa Beck of the

**Adopt best practices
for catching attention with email**

For effective communication with students, the following best practices can improve your emails:

- Post text of emails on an advisors resource page on the registrar’s website to get feedback on wording from student advisors as well as keep them in the loop about important communications and dates sent out.
- Make sure that the most important text of your email communication fits in the screen of a cell phone, so that students understand the bulk of what they need to know in the first few lines of your email.
- Consider divvying up communications from different offices at the beginning of the year by day (i.e., registrars send emails only on Thursdays). This will help prevent daily email information overload for students.
- Alternate who sends out email messages to provide different voices to appeal to different types of students.
- Ask the student-workers in your office and on campus to provide feedback on your email communications and subject lines — how readable are your emails from a student perspective? ■

University of California, Santa Barbara, related an anecdote regarding the overhaul of subject lines at UCSB. Beck reported that her office saw a huge change in student open and response rates when the Registrar’s Office changed to an attention-grabbing subject line, such as “You are no longer enrolled at UCSB.”

**Explore challenges
of reaching students through text**

Another session member, Sandy Hendrickson of Northwest University, shared that her campus had implemented text messages as a communication system to students on campus. Hendrickson reported an increased response rate from students, but there were plenty of challenges still to navigate with this communication system as well, including:

- Administrators may have to use their personal cell phones to generate text messages to students — who pays for the service plan?
- Mass messages will have to be generated through email — it’s not practical to send mass texts to thousands of students because administrators would need both phone numbers and phone carriers for all students. Text messages offer only a limited number of characters, and directing students back to email creates a longer chain of communication for students to follow.

However, another participant from Brigham Young University in Idaho related a different method for using text messages to students. After realizing that students were missing key deadlines for important markers — paying tuition and registering for classes, among others — BYU contracted with a third-party provider to send three text messages per semester. The opt-in system, advertised for students on social media, sends one text message for each deadline to notify students of drop, withdraw and discontinuance deadlines for the semester. The participant reported a large increase in success for meeting student deadlines with the new system, helping students to avoid missing deadlines and being surprised by notices that they are no longer registered at their university.

Give students incentives to read your communications

A participant from BYU Hawaii recounted an on-campus initiative to build student accountability for meeting dates, called the RSVP Initiative. Students receive dates and deadlines to get everything lined up for their next semester, and these dates are well before the final deadlines. Students who make these early deadlines receive early opportunities to register for classes. If students miss these deadlines, they are assigned later registration windows but aren't in danger of being kicked out of school. While BYU Hawaii didn't offer hard statistics for how well this program is working, anecdotal evidence suggests an upswing in early registration rates, meaning students are hitting the earlier deadlines. This also helps students learn to be accountable without dire consequences if they don't meet deadlines.

Schulte also shared ideas for involving parents in helping to grow student accountability. Her office

has a policy of refusing to talk to parents regarding student deadlines, which serves as a way to help grow accountability while at the same time complying with FERPA regulations. However, Schulte added that her campus issues a newsletter with dates and deadlines for students and parents to understand upcoming academic timelines. Schulte also handed out magnets with important deadlines to parents at orientation, another strategy that worked well for her campus. "We want to see our relationship with parents as a partnership to help students become accountable," Schulte said.

One agreed-upon best practice for communicating with students is to layer types of communication and methods of communication delivery. This makes it that much more difficult for students to miss important deadlines or to ignore messages. Types of communication layering at campuses include email, text messages, phone calls, physical mailings, portal communications, live chat options on the website, social-media postings, monitors in buildings with important dates, and even physical banners on campus buildings advertising important dates.

Providing students with a cafeteria of options for messaging, with students self-selecting which methods of messaging they prefer along with the types of messages they desire, is another way of ensuring that your students' important communications are layered, although this method is more complicated and might require more manpower or backend coding than some campuses can accommodate. By giving students the opt-in clause, campuses can create an atmosphere of customer service for students, give students the option to decide which method of communication is most effective for their individual needs, and hopefully ensure more effective communication across the board. ■

Enrollment Management Report Board of Advisors

Deborah L. Anderson

Associate Vice Chancellor of Student
Affairs and Institutional Research
Ivy Tech Community College

Susan Blake

Senior Executive Director
of Enrollment Services
Kennesaw State University

Daniel Villanueva

Dean of Enrollment Management
Lone Star College-CyFair

Allen C. Meadors

Senior Consultant
The Global Leadership Group

Roger J. Thompson

Vice President for Enrollment Management
University of Oregon

Scott Baumler

Director of Institutional Research
Loras College

Marguerite J. Dennis

International Higher Education
Consultant

Yvette Underdue Murph

VP for Enrollment Management
and Student Affairs
Minnesota State University Moorhead

Paul M. Orehovec

Consultant
Higher Education
Enrollment Management

Barbara Elliott

Director of Enrollment Planning
Pennsylvania College
of Art & Design

Paul P. Marthers

Associate Vice Chancellor/Vice Provost
for Enrollment Management
and Student Success
The State University of New York

Copyright of Enrollment Management Report is the property of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.