Steps for Optimizing Graduate Enrollment

Enrollment management is an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to enable institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments -

Optimize Enrollment
- More students
- Better students
- More diverse students
- Lower attrition

Data Driven Process

Identify Admissions & Enrollment Trends
- Number of Inquiries
- Number & Type of Contacts with Potential Students
- Number of Applications/Admits/Denies
- Yield Rates
- Enrollment Trends
- Attrition Rates
- Funding Trends

Very Important to Review Data
- Look at Application Trends
- Look at Admission Trends
- Look at Enrollment Trends
- Look at Trends in Degrees Conferred

Enrollment Questions
- What are the enrollment goals for my program?
- What enrollment data are available?
- Do we need a larger pool of applicants?
- Do we need to improve the quality of our students?
- What are some of the recruiting challenges?
- What has worked in the past?
- Have other programs had success in optimizing their enrollment?
- Is diversity a priority for my program?
- Are our completion rates satisfactory?
- Who is responsible for recruiting for our program?
Develop a Plan!

Graduate Enrollment Management Plan

The plan should guide and direct all enrollment management activities. Specific and measurable goals should be identified in the enrollment management plan.

Tactical plans to reach these goals should be divided into one, two and three year time frames.

The plan should be re-visited on a regular basis for evaluation and revision.

Recruiting Funnel and Goals at Each Stage:

How Do Students Get Information?

- Websites (VERY IMPORTANT)
- Emails
- Letters
- Brochures / fact sheets
- Phone calls
- Faculty / conferences
- Other?
Active Recruiting

“It is no longer sufficient for graduate programs simply to wait ... for applications and then select the best candidates. Programs must actively recruit the students they desire. Programs must assume that any student they would be interested in having in their class is probably also being recruited by other top universities.”
Lynne Goodstein, Associate Dean, Graduate School Penn State University

Possible Solutions
Promotion/Awareness

- Increase inquiry pool
- Review your website
- Network at professional conferences
- Brochures / postcards / fact sheet
- Email faculty providing references
- Others?

Conversion

- Increase communication with inquiries
- Establish rapport with inquiries
- Respond quickly to voice mail / email inquiries
- Visitation Program (High Yield Activity)
- Display and communicate deadlines
- Utilize support staff and students in recruiting efforts
- Communicate Unique Selling Points
- Funding opportunities
- Brag about your program

Where to Begin? Collect Data - This data should guide the entire process!

SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

- Involve Your Department
- Institutional Trends
- National Trends
- Identify New Markets
- Diversity of student enrollment
- Quality of student enrollment

Goals, Strategies and Tactical Plans

- Establish Measurable Goals for Your Department
- Determine Specific Strategies to Meet the Goals
- Implement Tactical (operational) Plans

Relationship Advice

- Stay in touch
- Fix stuff
- Comfort them
- Be attentive
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Make them feel special
- Think like a Prospective Graduate Student
- Don’t Take Them for Granted!