

STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

Final Report and Recommendations

January 2015

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Executive Summary

Enrollment at Harper College has not met budget expectations during the past few years. This is notable because tuition and fees, which are aligned to enrollment, account for 43% of Harper's overall operating revenue. As such, during the opening of the fall term of 2014, Dr. Kenneth Ender charged the newly created Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Task Force with the development of bold recommendations that can be operationalized, scaled, and measured. Of particular focus is the ability to recommend strategies to improve Harper's enrollment of young adult and adult students (within the context of understanding the market and Harper's market penetration in these segments) and to improve retention and completion rates for all Harper credit-earning students.

The Task Force was comprised of faculty, staff and administration and was advised by Dr. Lewis Sanborne, Associate Vice President from noted enrollment consulting firm Noel-Levitz. The Task Force was also supported by Ron Serio, Information Analyst and Krista Vitrano from Enrollment Services.

Key to the work of the Task Force was the review and synthesis of data that were reviewed during regular weekly meetings. These data were supplemented by discussions with subject matter experts at the College and a student satisfaction survey that was conducted at the request of the Task Force during the fall 2014 term.

The data revealed that Harper is following national trends in that the district is changing demographically and becoming more diverse. In addition, like other colleges, enrollment increased during the Great Recession, decreased during the recovery period and continues to decrease, and has returned to pre-recession levels. A closer look at enrollment by market segment indicates that the largest population of students served at Harper is the young adult (ages 19-24). This is followed by the adult population (25 years and older). The smallest population is the recent high school graduate referred to as First Time in College (FTIC). Harper's percentage share of public high school graduates (penetration rate) is 39.8% and has remained at this high level over the last four years. Although this data point is promising, demographic trends reveal that the overall number of graduates from local high schools has declined and will continue to decline for a number of years. Thus, the pool of potential FTIC students is decreasing which places additional emphasis on the importance of the adult market.

Retention data also emphasize the need to develop recommendations that focus on the adult market. Fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall persistence rates are much lower for adult students. In addition, adult students are more likely to "stop-out" or leave the College before completing a credential.

To address these challenges, the Task Force has formulated 15 bold recommendations that can be operationalized, scaled, and measured. These recommendations have been segmented into two areas:

- Operational – those that enhance work that is currently underway or provide additional organizational support for enrollment management at the College. These recommendations would be implemented by specific functional areas and may yield more immediate results. (Recommendations 1-9)
- Special Projects – those that require longer timeframes to implement. These recommendations will be more costly to implement and require involvement from cross-functional teams. Detailed project plans are presented for these recommendations. (Recommendations 10-15)

Tier one recommendations are those that should receive first priority. Tier two recommendations are also germane to improving enrollment of adult students, but may take longer to implement.

Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below were developed after extensive review of data, practices and trends. Recommendations are segmented into two areas:

- Operational – those that enhance work that is currently underway or provide additional organizational support for enrollment management at the College. These recommendations would be implemented by specific functional areas and may yield more immediate results.
- Special Projects – those that require longer timeframes to implement. These recommendations will be more costly to implement and require involvement from cross-functional teams. Detailed project plans are presented for these recommendations.

Tier one recommendations are those that should receive first priority. Tier two recommendations are also germane to improving enrollment of adult students, but may take longer to implement.

FTE projections represent best estimates at a point of time and will vary depending on how recommendations are implemented. Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and modifications are needed to ensure recommendations will yield enrollment growth.

Operational

Tier 1

1. Redefine the adult student at Harper College as 19+ years of age (or those who are not just graduating from high school)

The way the adult market is defined needs to be changed. Currently, the College differentiates by age: young adult 19-24 years of age and adult 25+ years of age. To more adequately address the needs of the adult market, a more holistic definition and approach needs to be taken, one that views adults as anyone over the age of 19 who is not attending Harper right out of high school. Unlike the high school market which is somewhat contained within the district's high schools, the adult market is disbursed throughout the 23 communities served by Harper, and includes those who commute into the district for work. Expanding this view and understanding the complexities of this market are critical. Recommendation 1 discussed previously highlights the need to better understand sub-markets within the adult population. It is understood that for IPEDs and other required reports, the College will continue to gather and report student data based on required age categories.

Responsibility: Bob Parzy and Mike Barzacchini and the Admissions Outreach and Marketing Services teams

Approximate cost: \$0

Enrollment yield: not applicable

2. Define and monitor an adult penetration rate

The Task Force was asked to identify the penetration rate for the adult market as one of its key deliverables. The adult penetration rate is currently 7.3% (2014). This penetration rate compares the number of 19+ year olds who attend Harper to all residents in the district who are between the ages of 18 and 65 who completed a GED or alternative high school diploma, and have some college, or no degree. This calculation also takes into account the number of individuals who commute into our district to work and have no or some college or an associate's degree and excludes district high school graduates. Although not perfect, this methodology can be replicated using reliable data.

$$\frac{21,097}{173,785 - 6,595 + 121,790} \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{(students } \geq 19 \text{ years of age at Harper)} \\ \text{(Census data of 18-64 year olds in the district – high school graduates + commuters)} \end{array}$$

*Note Census data does not disaggregate the adult population. Therefore, the formula above includes 18-24 year olds and then subtracts the number of high school graduates in the District.

Responsibility: Maria Moten and the Enrollment Services team (with assistance from Kathy Coy and the Institutional Research team)

Cost: \$0

Enrollment yield: not applicable

3. Form a permanent enrollment committee that is an extension of the Enrollment Task Force

Thoughtful and regular dialog about enrollment trends should continue at the College through a cross-functional team, as was the case with the Strategic Enrollment Task Force. The group should be institutionalized under the Provost and include faculty, staff and administration from enrollment, retention and academic programming areas. This group should monitor the Task Force recommendations that are accepted and implemented.

Responsibility: Judy Marwick

Approximate cost: \$0

Enrollment yield: not applicable

4. Appoint a Retention Officer (under the Provost)

Harper College has traditionally turned to one person who has been responsible for reporting and monitoring enrollment trends; however, retention has been viewed as everyone's responsibility. The argument can be made that enrollment is also everyone's responsibility. It is important to

designate someone at the institution who will monitor and report retention trends. As such, a retention officer should be appointed and operate within the Provost's area. This would not involve an incremental increase in staffing; rather, a current administrator should be asked to include oversight of this function in their overall job responsibilities.

Responsibility: Judy Marwick will appoint Retention Officer

Approximate cost: \$10,000 (additional salary to existing position)

Enrollment yield: +50 FTE by FY17

5. Increase marketing spend to attract adult students

The marketing budget for adult attraction and recruitment has decreased since 2009. In 2012 and 2013, one-year budget exceptions have been granted to help reverse enrollment declines specific to the adult market. This sporadic approach can be confusing. A fixed increase to the marketing budget dedicated to adult recruitment is needed.

Responsibility: Bob Parzy and Mike Barzacchini and the Admissions Outreach and Marketing Services teams

Approximate cost: \$250,000 annually

Enrollment yield: +75 FTE by FY17

Tier 2

6. Improve processes and services to better address needs within the adult, Hispanic, and veteran markets

Data revealed that the current high school market is flat. Harper College already enjoys high penetration rates of district high school students (approximately 35%) who apply and enroll at the College. Therefore, to grow enrollment, emphasis must be placed on the adult market which represents a diverse group. Additional information should be gathered via targeted focus groups to better understand the unique needs of this market.

- 6.1 Conduct research to better understand needs within these markets, such as focus groups of adults who apply but do not enroll, current and prospective Hispanic students and veterans (veteran research is being conducted via HLI)

Responsibility: Maria Moten and the Enrollment Services team

Approximate cost: \$10,000 per focus group

Enrollment yield: +100 FTE by FY17

7. Set specific annual goals that strengthen student connections throughout the educational process for the adult, Hispanic, and veteran markets

The College currently sets specific goals for enrollment, at large. To better understand conversion rates at various points, specific targets should be set as follows.

7.1 Set goals for inquiry to application

Responsibility: Bob Parzy and Mike Barzacchini and the Admissions Outreach and Marketing Services teams

Approximate cost: \$0

7.2 Set goals for application to enrollment

Responsibility: Bob Parzy and Paula Hanley and the Admissions Outreach and One Stop Services teams

Approximate cost: \$0

7.3 Set goals for retention

Responsibility: Retention Officer (see recommendation 6) and Judy Marwick

Approximate cost: \$0

7.4 Set goals for completion

Responsibility: Academic deans for the career programs in their areas and Associate Provost for transfer programs

Approximate cost: \$0

Enrollment yield for 7.1-7.4: +50 FTE by FY17

8. Enhance onboarding of all new students

Providing an engaging onboarding experience for new students helps to ensure enrollment, retention and completion. This experience sets the tone for the college experience and outlines expectations. As such, the following strategies are recommended.

8.1 Offer a first year course at scale that includes the development of an education plan for all degree-seeking students in phase 1 and all certificate-seeking students in phase 2 (First Year Seminar Strategy Team is currently addressing this issue)

8.2 Require orientation for all students (possibly online for certificate-seeking and at-large students)

Responsibility: Maria Moten and the Enrollment Services team

Approximate cost: \$20,000 to develop online orientation; \$20,000 annually to staff

Enrollment yield: +75 FTE by FY17

9. Offer high-touch adult services

Adults prefer seamless experiences when analyzing options, asking questions or seeking information. This recommendation also aligns with recommendation 11.1 which focuses on creating an overall service philosophy that is reinforced via campus-wide training. High touch services for adults are offered within the Center for New Students and Orientation (CNSO) and the One Stop. These areas need to be promoted as advocacy centers for adult students.

Responsibility: Vicki Atkinson and Paula Hanley and the CNSO and One Stop Services teams

Approximate cost: \$0

Enrollment yield: +50 FTE by FY16

Special Projects

Individual plans have been developed for each special project in the appendix.

Tier 1

10. Enhance faculty engagement with students

Increasing engagement between faculty and students is a proven strategy to increase retention. Faculty need more data and notifications when students withdraw; setting up systems to do this is needed. Integrating student photos into class lists will help faculty better learn student names. In addition, professional development and idea sharing on proven student engagement methods is recommended for faculty.

Responsibility: Academy for Teaching and Learning led by the Associate Provost

Approximate cost: \$170,000

Enrollment yield: +500 FTE annually by FY20

11. Develop a formal structure for online learning/programming

Online courses are offered in varied formats and expectations at Harper. Some courses ask students to complete readings and then take exams. Others offer more opportunities for engagement with students throughout the semester. In addition, course layouts within Blackboard vary. Thus, it is recommended that the College develop a unique, quality online structure that creates more opportunities for students to complete full programs of study online. This would include hiring a consultant who would guide the development of effective online operations.

Responsibility: Judy Marwick and Brian Knetl

Approximate cost: \$200,000 and current resources

Enrollment yield: +215 FTE annually by FY20

12. Design a centralized process for Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

The College should provide a more proactive approach to awarding credit for prior learning for incoming students by establishing an office or dedicated person to manage prior learning assessment (PLA) processes at the College. PLA is used to evaluate acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be awarded for college credit. These learning experiences come from on-the-job experiences, corporate training, independent study, military service, and volunteer experiences. Adult learners are likely to have accumulated knowledge, skills, and abilities which are reviewed by faculty experts for relevance. Granting credit in this regard increases completion and has the potential of increasing enrollment for adults who would engage in PLA activities. Currently, the College manages PLA in fragmented manner with no overarching coordination.

Responsibility: Judy Marwick and Brian Knetl

Approximate cost: \$70,000

Enrollment yield: +100 FTE annually by FY20

13. Develop new programs of study that align to market needs and review current programs for relevancy

New program development is critical to enrollment planning. A more comprehensive and strategic approach is needed in developing new programs and evaluation of existing programs. Currently, this is done via the five-year program review cycle. This needs to be done annually by reviewing current program-level data related to: enrollment trends, retention and completion. Annual goals for

new programs within each division should be set with department coordinators and chairs. These programs should be supported by labor market data and surpass hurdle rates—meaning they would offer a certain minimum level of enrollment growth to the College. Those that do not surpass hurdle rates would be developed via the 1.6 credit process, which is discussed in recommendation 13.1.

Responsibility: Judy Marwick and Academic Deans

Approximate cost: \$75,000

Enrollment Yield: +85 FTE annually by FY20

13.1 Increase the number of 1.6 classes in Continuing Education

These career-focused offerings contribute to the College's enrollment. Efforts to increase enrollment through more 1.6 offerings have been sporadic. Goals to increase enrollment will be set and monitored annually.

Responsibility: Maria Coons, Mark Mrozinski, and the Continuing Education team

Approximate cost: \$0

Enrollment yield: +15 FTE by FY16

Tier 2

14. Improve information on student pipeline and foster a service culture college-wide

14.1 Develop an Enterprise Relationship Management (ERM) system to track student engagement with the College

Invest resources and acquire the appropriate technology to implement a system that fully integrates all of the existing communication channels into one routing, queuing, and tracking system; a system solution that can deliver sophisticated communication solutions with case management, storage, retrieval and tracking capabilities. This solution provides Harper with the ability to adapt best business practices as they relate to communication plans and targeted recruitment and retention strategies. Additionally, this solution tracks students' interactions with the College from application to completion and possibly beyond and creates a consistent level of service across departments, which will require process flows that are clearly understood across all departmental units. Increased training opportunities will be needed for faculty and staff to enhance and improve the overall experience for students.

Responsibility: Maria Moten, Bob Parzy, Sheryl Otto (Information Technology support)

Approximate cost: \$300,000

Enrollment yield: +490 FTE annually by FY20

- 14.2 Develop a service philosophy and engage in College-wide training (similar project is being conducted via HLI)

Establish a service philosophy towards students and offer training for all employees. This seeks to build a strong and comprehensive College-wide culture of exceptional service that will provide accurate and timely information and serve students in a more thorough fashion. This would include a brand identity and image for Harper that reinforces an outstanding service culture throughout the institution. This would be done through a service program that helps determine the internal messages that set priorities and create an external image/brand of the organization. This service program will have mechanisms in place to gather feedback to better understand and anticipate students' needs and to update and adjust services based upon the feedback received. The goals include reducing redundancy, minimizing runaround, and providing better service with fewer complaints. This solution will play a central role throughout a student's cycle from inquiry to application to enrollment to graduation to alumni gift giving.

Responsibility: Roger Spayer and Paula Hanley and the HR and One Stop teams

Approximate cost: \$80,000

Enrollment yield: +585 FTE annually by FY20

15. Improve scheduling/registration/pathways to ensure completion

Scheduling and registration that simplify the path to completion are needed. Two sub-strategies are offered below.

- 15.1 Align scheduling to ensure classes in the education plan are available

Two-year grids for each degree and certificate program (as appropriate) will be developed and will require commitment by the institution to run courses consistent with the grid schedule to ensure student completion.

Responsibility: Academic Deans

Approximate cost: \$25,000

- 15.2 Ensure registration process is seamless (Project Discover is also addressing)

Enhance the registration experience for all students by presenting them with an academic plan that populates their registration cart as they attempt to enroll. With this enhanced platform, students can input their preferred availability for when to take classes. Additionally, during this process, the system will generate options that are in line with their preferred schedule. The system will also alert students if courses are not available or if courses are off their academic plan and offer alternatives.

Responsibility: Enrollment Services and Information Technology

Approximate cost: \$300,000

Enrollment yield for 15.1 and 15.2: +490 FTE by FY20

Additional details specific to these recommendations are offered in the body of this report and detailed action plans for special projects are included in the appendix.

Finally, as charged, the Task Force has developed a formula for calculating the adult penetration rate. This penetration rate compares the number of 19+ year olds who attend Harper to all residents in the district of similar age (from Census data) including those who live outside of Harper's service area, but commute into the District for work. The current adult penetration rate is 7.3%. The methodology used is explained in detail later in the report.

