Improving Marketing and Recruitment Strategies for Master’s Programs

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**Andrea Golato**, Dean, The Graduate College, Texas State University  
**Ranjit Koodali**, Associate Provost, Research And Graduate Education, Western Kentucky University
Plan for today

• 2:00-2:05  Session introduction
• 2:05-2:20  Recruiting and Marketing Master’s Programs: What do we mean? (Andrea Golato)
• 2:20-2:30  Q&A followed by small group introductions
• 2:30-2:45  Going *All In*: Technology in Recruitment and Marketing (Brian Carolan)
• 2:45-3:10  Interactive activity – branding elements, keyword strategies, costs, show-and-tell
• 3:10-3:20  Break
• 3:20-3:35  Recruiting Diverse Students (Ranjit Koodali)
• 3:35-3:50  Q&A followed by interactive activity
• 3:50-4:00  Take aways and conclusions
Part 1: Recruiting and Marketing Master’s Programs: What do we mean?

Andrea Golato, Dean
The Graduate College
University Profile

- Texas State University is a Hispanic-serving, public university, classified as a doctoral university: higher research activity in the Carnegie Foundation classification system.
- Located between Austin and San Antonio; it is the sevenths largest university in Texas.

37,849 Students
- 33,230 Undergraduates
- 4,157 Graduate Students
- 462 Post Bacc Students

Degree Programs
- 99 Bachelor’s Programs
- 83 Master’s Programs
- 14 Doctoral Programs (Ph.D., Ed.D., DPT)

Diversity
- First Gen – 46% of total population, 30% of graduate population
- HSI – 38.67% of total population, 26.6% of graduate population
- International – 1.5% of total population, 9% of graduate population
Marketing and Recruitment – what do we mean?

- Any activity along the following continuum to increase graduate enrollment

Application  Admission  Registration
Marketing and Recruitment – what do we mean?

- Any activity along the following continuum to increase graduate enrollment

**Application**
- ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE APPLICANTS TO COMPLETE THEIR APPLICATIONS
  - Emails
  - Text messages
  - Phone calls

**Admission**
- ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE ADMITTED STUDENTS TO ENROLL
  - Transactional info
  - Info about what makes the university special
  - Campus visits
  - Scholarships/Fellowship/Assistantship offers

**Registration**

GENERAL AWARENESS RAISING
- Advertising campaigns
- Search engine optimization
- Geo-fencing advertising
- Information sessions and other forms of outreach

GENERATING APPLICATIONS
- Communication with leads
- Campus visits etc.
- Application boot camps
Who completes these steps?

• University Marketing
• Enrollment Management Companies
• Graduate College Staff
• Graduate Program Faculty / Staff
What do you need?

• A flexible and functional CRM System (Customer Relations Management System)
• Adequate staff: recruiter(s), communications specialist(s), marketing/publications specialists
• Advertising budget
• A webpage that is easy to navigate
• Solid admissions and enrollment reports
• Regular meetings / communications with programs
Additional Information

• Additional tips and strategies at various levels of expense and effort can be found on the recruiting handout
• Additional idea: Hold a recruitment session with your graduate advisors and ask each to bring their three most successful recruitment strategies and have them share them in groups (and compile the information for all to share back)
Let’s chat...

- Introductions
- Questions, recruitment successes, recruitment challenges

- For off-line questions/comments:
  Andrea Golato
  agolato@txstate.edu
GOING ALL IN: TECHNOLOGY IN RECRUITMENT AND MARKETING

OBSERVATIONS ON CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING A DIGITAL FIRST STRATEGY

Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY
OVERVIEW

1. Institutional context
2. Understanding the “new” admissions funnel
3. Blurring the line between marketing and recruiting
   • Series of research projects prepared by an external partner
4. Creating and implementing digital first strategy
   • New tools and tactics
5. Web page optimization
   • Exercise to assess UX of your programs’ web pages
1. Founded in 1963 as an independent, Catholic University.

2. First Catholic University in the United States to be founded by lay people.

3. 9,156 total students: 5,348 full-time undergraduates, 810 part-time undergraduates, 2,998 full- and part-time graduate students (fall 2019)

4. Over 44,000 living Sacred Heart University alumni. Approximately 50% have graduated in the last 10 years.

5. Carnegie Classification: Doctoral/Professional University
PLACE: COMPETITION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
THE “OLD” AND “NEW” ADMISSIONS FUNNELS

[Diagram showing the old and new admissions funnels]
BLURRING THE LINE BETWEEN MARKETING AND RECRUITING

- MARKETING TO INDIVIDUALS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE FUNNEL
- INCREASING THE PERSONALIZATION OF THOSE EFFORTS AS THEY MOVE CLOSER TOWARDS ENROLLMENT
- HOW DOES THIS FORCE US TO RETHINK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARKETING AND RECRUITING AND THE BUDGETING TO SUPPORT THIS RELATIONSHIP?
KEY INSIGHTS FROM THREE DATA SOURCES

• RESPONSIVENESS MATTERS!
• LOW BRAND AWARENESS
• NEWLY ENROLLED STUDENTS APPLY TO ABOUT TWO SCHOOLS
• PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO ASK BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT A PROGRAM
• TOP OF THE FUNNEL ENGAGEMENT IS DONE ON A MOBILE DEVICE, INCLUDING APPLICATION

Sacred Heart UNIVERSITY
DIGITAL FIRST STRATEGY: NEW TOOLS AND TACTICS

- Significant investment in leveraging the CRM
- Personas
- Sourcing newly enrolled students
- Mobile first
- Webpage optimization and tracking UX
MOBILE FIRST AND WEBPAGE OPTIMIZATION

Growth in data consumption via cellular networks and fixed networks
Global, data consumption by content category, 2016-25

Source: Global Entertainment and Media Outlook 2021–2025, PwC. Gmmedia
THE VALUE OF OPTIMIZING A PROGRAM’S MOBILE WEBPAGE

1. SEO AND WEB ANALYTICS MUST BE REGULARLY EVALUATED
2. INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS, INCLUDING CHAT OPPORTUNITIES, PROGRAM COMPARISON TOOLS, TOURS, ETC. TOO MUCH TEXT IS NOT HELPFUL
3. CALLS TO ACTION (CTA), INCLUDING REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) SHOULD BE PROMINENT AND SIMPLE—THIS IS WHAT LINKS AN INQUIRY TO THE CRM
4. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT A PROGRAM SHOULD BE HIGHLIGHTED, INCLUDING START DATE, APPLICATION DATE, MODALITY, COST, AND LENGTH
5. USERS’ ENGAGEMENT PREFERENCES
MS in Accounting

Begin Your Journey
Take the Next Step

Request Info  Visit  Apply
EXERCISE: ASSESSING THE UX OF A PROGRAM’S WEB PAGE

1. Using your mobile phone, search for a graduate program at your school.
2. Scroll and locate the following information:
   - Start date, application date, program cost, program length, and career outcomes
3. Click on the calls to action. Are they prominent and simple? Submit one or more and see what happens.
4. Do Step #s 2 & 3 for two of your competitor programs.
QUESTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP AND DISCUSSION

1. IF YOU WERE A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT, WHAT WOULD YOU THINK OF YOUR SCHOOL’S PROGRAM? WOULD YOU CLICK A CTA?

2. WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED IN ORDER TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT?

3. WHAT DID YOUR COMPETITORS DO BETTER?

4. WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU WILL DISCUSS WITH YOUR WEB TEAM?

5. DOES YOUR PROGRAM’S PAGE ENGAGE DIVERSE AUDIENCES?
THANK YOU

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Improving Marketing and Recruitment Strategies for Master’s Programs: Recruiting Diverse Students

Ranjit T. Koodali
Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Education,
Western Kentucky University

Pre-Meeting Workshop
CGS Annual Meeting
New Orleans, LA
Search Engine Optimization

79% use search engine
66% search for programs

Website

About 90% visit website to explore more details

Other “Forums”

24% visit blogs, online forums
13% visit social media

Wiley Education Services Survey, 2018
How to Showcase Diversity?

Showcase accomplishments, publications, honors of faculty and students

About 90% visit website to explore more details

24% visit blogs, online forums
13% visit social media
Partner with Allies

Partner with the Diversity Office

Partner with Academic Affairs

Partner with International Office

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4.5 out of 5 Stars

Western Kentucky University
Partner with Allies

GRADWELL – Partnership with Counseling Center

Partner with Student Accessibility Center

Partner with Career Center
Establish Programs & Activities

Distinguished Minority Fellowship (DMF) Program

Hire Diversity Ambassadors

Thanksgiving Meal for International Students
Establish Programs & Activities

Volunteer at a Conference

Host a Conference

Recruitment Fair
Examine Policies

Graduate Catalog

Application Fee Waiver

Institutional Policies
Build a Pipeline - Partnerships

Partner with TRiO
Engage with student groups

Engage with Faculty
A Conversation with Faculty Women of Color in Academia
Build a Pipeline - Partnerships

Partner with HBCU's

Partner with HSI's

Partner with TCU's
Build a Pipeline - Conferences

Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans (SACNAS)

Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS)

American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) meetings
Build a Pipeline - Campaigns

McNair Scholars database

Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering & Science (GEM) consortium

National Name Exchange
References

1. Broadening Participation in Graduate Education
2. Hispanic Serving Institutions: A Critical Pipeline to Graduate School for Latinx Students
3. Extending the Pipeline: Model Programs for Enhancing Diversity and Inclusiveness in Graduate School at the University of Memphis
4. Meyerhoff Graduate Fellows Program at UMBC
5. Investigating Challenges to Matriculation and Completion for Underrepresented STEM Graduate Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic
6. Minority Attrition and Completion in STEM Doctoral Programs
7. Ph.D. Completion Project
8. NAGAP-The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management
9. Ruffalo Noel Levitz
10. Education Advisory Board (EAB)
11. Hanover Research
12. Carnegie-Dartlet (digital marketing expertise)
13. Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) (non-profit for low-income students)
14. American Council on Education
Thank You!
1. Websites
   a) Have you done an audit of graduate school website? YES ________ NO ________
   b) Do graduate school & graduate program showcase diversity of faculty? YES ________ NO ________
      If yes, list 3 examples
      1. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      2. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      3. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
   c) Do graduate school & graduate program showcase diversity of students YES ________ NO ________
      If yes, list 3 examples
      1. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      2. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      3. ___________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Recruitment and Marketing Materials (Brochures/Flyers)
   a) Is diversity captured in printed and digital marketing items? YES ________ NO ________
   b) If yes, is it inclusive (capturing gender, age, experience etc.)? YES ________ NO ________
   c) If No, what strategies would you explore as a first step? _____________________________________________
      _____________________________________________________________________________________________
      _____________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Recruitment Activities
   a) Have you participated in recruitment activities focused on DEI. List three examples below
      1. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      2. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      3. ___________________________________________________________________________________________

4. Recruitment Pipeline
   a) Have your explored or established relationships with four-year Colleges and Universities in the region? How many are BHCU’s, HIS,’s and TCU’s in the region.
      1. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      2. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      3. ___________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Programming Activities
   a) What activities are organized/co-organized by the Graduate School/College to foster Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI). List three below.
      1. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      2. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
      3. ___________________________________________________________________________________________
Take Aways and Conclusion