ABSTRACT: 2014 ELAM Institutional Action Project Poster Symposium

Project Title: Strategies to Increase Enrollment in Master's Degree Programs at Wayne State University

Name and Institution: Ambika Mathur, Wayne State University

Background, Challenge or Opportunity: Since 2002, enrollment has declined in most of the 124 Master's degree programs at Wayne State University (WSU) across all disciplines. There are several reasons for this including the collapse of the auto industry and the resultant effect on Southeast Michigan (and particularly on Detroit's) economy, competition from regional institutions, competition from online colleges, funding for students, lack of cohesive recruitment efforts and in some instances, lack of updated program offerings.

Purpose/Objectives: The purpose of my project is to develop strategies at the institution-wide level that will result in increased enrollment in Master's programs by 10% over a three-year period across the university. The declines were at three stages: recruitment of new students, retention of continuing students, and completion/graduation of students in the programs.

Methods/Approach: As the Dean of the Graduate School my role is to provide oversight for all 7,000 or so graduate students in 124 Master's and 59 Doctoral training programs across all schools and colleges at WSU. This includes responsibility for establishing and administering policies and processes for enrollment management, programmatic issues, and academic standards for all graduate programs. The Graduate School works closely with the Deans of all individual schools and colleges, as well with Program Directors of each graduate program to achieve this mission. All Deans, including me, report to the Provost, who in turn reports to the President, and overall the university is governed by an 8-member Board of Governors. Working with each of the Deans and the Provost, I developed a 5-step plan to improve recruitment, retention and completion of students for our master's programs. This 5-step pathway/plan includes: (1) increased scholarships for each of the recruitment/retention and completion stages for students; (2) refining of existing programs to meet needs of local area employers to enhance marketability of our graduates; (3) creating new innovative programs and internships to meet the needs of new industries developing in the region also to increase the ability of our students to be placed in successful careers; (4) creating online programs to meet the needs of non-traditional students; and (5) creating pipeline programs with partner institutions to recruit students directly into our graduate programs. I presented this plan to several faculty groups, the Provost and the President, and finally to the Board of Governors. I was given significant funding to start all these programs. I am now working with faculty and deans to begin creating and implementing these approaches.

Outcomes and Evaluation Strategy: Success of our outcomes will be measured annually by: (1) the number of new students recruited into our programs; (2) the number of students retained in the programs; (3) the number of students completing and graduating from our programs; (4) career placements of our graduates; (5) satisfaction of employers with our graduates (surveys will be developed, administered and evaluated by an external evaluation company). We anticipate an increase of 10% in the total enrollment of master's students at WSU.

Strategies to Increase Enrollment in Master's Degree Programs at Wayne State University

Ambika Mathur, Ph.D.
Dean, The Graduate School
Wayne State University

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

DREXEL UNIVERSITY
Executive Leadership in
Academic Medicine
College of Medicine

Background, Challenge and Opportunity

Wayne State University (WSU) is a research-intensive institution with an urban institution in mid-town Detroit. It has total enrollment of nearly 28,240 students including 8,000 graduate students in 59 doctoral programs (2,000 Ph.D. students) and 124 Masters' programs (6,000 master's students) across all 13 schools and colleges.

Historically WSU enrolled high numbers of master's students, primarily due to the vital auto industry in Detroit. The Big 3 automakers enrolled their employees and family members to our programs and subsidized the costs of some programs in all areas, particularly in Engineering, Management, Communication, Design, Law and Labor Relations. As the auto industry went into decline, WSU's enrollment was greatly affected. In addition, the state of Michigan changed the credentialing requirements for K-12 teachers so that teachers were no longer required to obtain master's degrees. These and other factors combined to create the "perfect storm" for enrollment in our master's programs across the institution, resulting in 20% loss of enrollment and a resultant $11 million loss in tuition revenue over a 5-year period.

WSU is now poised to leverage these challenges into opportunities to reinvigorate master's programs, energize faculty to develop innovative programs that meet employer needs, deliver course content using cutting edge delivery methods, and prepare students for the best job opportunities regionally and nationally, while reversing the enrollment decline and increasing the tuition revenue.

Purpose of the Project

As the Dean of WSU's Graduate School, I am ultimately responsible for enrollment management. The purpose of my project therefore is to develop strategies at the institution-wide level that will result in increased enrollment in Master's programs by 10% over a three-year period across all 13 schools and colleges (S/Cs) at WSU. The enrollment declines occurred at three stages: recruitment of new students, retention of continuing students, and completion/graduation of students in the programs. I am working with the Deans of all S/Cs to develop and implement initiatives aimed at effecting changes at each of these levels.

Presented at the 2014 ELAM® Leaders Forum

Approach

Working with each of the Deans and the Provost, I developed a 5-step plan to improve recruitment, retention and completion of students for our master's programs.

5 Step Pathway to Success
5. Raise Visibility & Recognition
4. Student Progress & Tracking
3. Scholarships
2. Recruitment & Retention
1. Program Development

I presented this plan to several faculty groups, the Provost and the President, and to the Board of Governors. I was given funding to start all these programs. I am now working with faculty and deans to begin creating and implementing this plan.

Our strategy is aligned with the overall Strategic Vision of Wayne State University in terms of enhancing programs and increasing enrollment and revenue.

Timeline for implementation of our plans is:

(1) *September-December 2013:* Work on convincing stakeholders to fund our proposal (2) *January-April 2014*: Establish a Master's Advisory Group composed of faculty to flesh out our proposal (3) *April-June 2014:* Establish Master's Office in the Graduate School to implement changes
(4) *May-August 2014:* Staff new office with Associate Deans and support personnel; create scholarships to recruit new students; announce a call for proposals to create innovative master's progress that are interdisciplinary and receptive to market needs
(5) *September 2014-August 2016*: Implement all programs
(6) *September-December 2016*: Measure outcomes

Outcomes and Evaluation Strategies

We will use enrollment numbers from institutional databases, career outcomes from alumni databases, surveys of employers of our graduates to assess their satisfaction with our students, reflecting the success of our training programs. These evaluations will be conducted by an external evaluating company that has worked with us previously in similar measures.
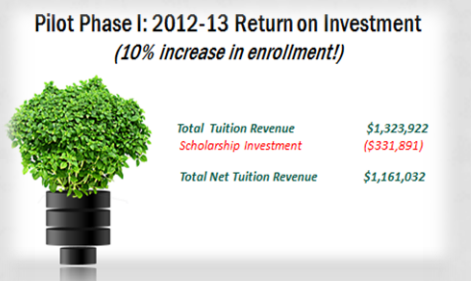Success of our outcomes will be measured annually. The metrics used will be:
(1) the number of new students recruited into our programs;
(2) the number of students retained in the programs;
(3) the number of students completing and graduating from our programs;
(4) career placements of our graduates
(5) satisfaction of employers with our graduates (surveys will be developed, administered and evaluated by an external evaluation company)
We anticipate an increase of 10% over a 3-year period in the total enrollment of master's students at WSU.

Discussion

In 2012, the Graduate School initiated a Pilot Program in which we invested some funds to create recruitment and retention scholarships for master's students in four S/Cs. Our goal was to increase enrollment by 10% in these S/Cs in one year

Pilot Phase I: 2012-13 Return on Investment
(10% increase in enrollment!)

Total Tuition Revenue	$1,323,922
Scholarship Investment	($331,891)
Total Net Tuition Revenue	$1,161,032

Summary

Working in partnership all the stakeholders, based on the results of our pilot program, we believe that we will increase enrollment in master's programs by 10% and increase net tuition revenue over a 3-year period at Wayne State University.