Forecasting Enrollment Using Historical Trends: Going Beyond Benchmark Data

Session: 422
Wednesday, March 16, 2011
9:15 AM - 10:15 AM

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Focus of this session

☑ Recap: enrollment forecasting using historical trends

- Developing an inquiring mind
- Discovering enrollment patterns
Basic principles - enrollment forecasting:

Collaborative process

Understand the primary drivers that impact enrollment & revenue outcomes

Analyze current trends

Understand new tactics deployed which may influence past trend lines and future projections.

Use information to influence future strategy & resource decisions.

Refine models overtime (adapt)
Enrollment forecasting – where to begin?

Determine critical information needed and begin data collection
Excel, access, frozen data tables/information system, data warehouse

Verify data quality
accurate, complete, shared definition & metrics

Identify key benchmarks
points in time when data must be gathered and compared to build historical trends

Data segmentation
start with macro then identify sub-sets

Holistic approach to data management
requires buy-in from “data managers” (create / manage data)

Build baseline year
assess effectiveness and refine over time
Starting assumption: Your institution has in place

- Mission statement
- Enrollment plan (written)
  - New & continuing students
  - Financial aid strategy
  - Enrollment projection / tracking models
- Assessment plan (cycle)
  - Established benchmarks (point in time reviews)
  - Key performance indicators (KPI)
- Communication plan
  - Share achievements / challenges
It boils down to institutional mission & goals
Is progress being made?

- Entering student profile – selectivity, mix
- Enrollment growth: recruitment & retention, new programs, full-time vs. part-time
- Net tuition revenue growth
- Facilities & utilization
- Learning & teaching experience; research
- Student services & program satisfaction
- Student goal attainment – diploma, certificate, certification, or degree
- From satisfied graduates to involved alumni
Developing an inquiring mind
Think outside the box

Brain Rules
Dr. John Medina
Exercise boosts brain power
- Concentration
- Impulse control
- Foresight
- Problem solving

We don’t pay attention to boring things.

Permission to temporarily check out from the communication network to focus
Brain Rules

Sleep – sleep well, think well

Everyone’s brain wired differently

Let people work at their optimal time -- more productive & happier
Stress: Brain not designed to learn under long term stress

Exploration: We are powerful and natural explorers

Be curious – have a spirit of adventure
Discovering enrollment patterns
Look beyond boundaries
Discovering enrollment patterns
A process for inquiry
Identify the question & explore:
Why is our graduation rate lower than our peers?

- Who are our peers & what are their rates?
  - Is the incoming student profiles different than ours?
  - Is academic program & learning experience similar?
  - Consider commuter, residential or mixed experience

- When do significant numbers of our students drop out (never return)? How many stop out, yet return?

- Is there a difference between leavers & those who stay?
  - Entrance indicators?
  - Based on experiences here?

- Where did they choose to attend?

... Etc (create a list of related questions)
Identify the question & explore:
Why did we miss our new student headcount goal?

- Follow the recruitment / admissions /enrollment cycle
  - Compare current year with trends
  - Inquiries – prospects -applications
  - Completed applications – admits - yield

- Was there a difference in specific student segments?
  - In and out of “region”
  - Mix – gender, ethnicity, need levels
  - Academic ability at entrance
  - Visit program participation

- Where did they choose to attend?
  - National Student Loan Clearinghouse
  - Institutional survey

... Etc (create a list of related questions)
Connections at your institution: Graduation or completion rates

- Various segments of student population
- Institutional experiences
Look for the connections:

- Various segments of students
  - Gender, ethnicity, first generation
  - Enter as true freshmen vs. those with advance standing
  - Traditional college student vs. adult learner
  - Specific programs
  - Need levels

- Institutional experiences
  - Commuters vs. residential students
  - Timely admission to major vs. undecided
  - Level of satisfaction with experiences
  - Tied to specific course or course patterns
Explore connections across boundaries
Graduation – completion rates

One way to view the question
Explore connections across boundaries
Graduation – completion rates

An alternative way to consider the question
Other issues to consider

- What data required for the research?
- Is it available, accurate & complete?
  If not available now, can benchmark data be built over time?
- Who can fine-tune the inquiry?
  What would enrollment, academic or finance leaders want to know?
- Value to institution?
  How could the results be utilized to improve programs & services?
Process of Inquiry

Explore related questions

Connection

Other Issues

Exploration Begins

Gather data

Analyze info from varying points of view

Document & present results

For future tracking, set KPI & benchmarks
Going beyond benchmark data

Understanding institutional mission & goals establishes the road map & points towards areas of inquiry

Develop your curiosity & explore areas valued by your institution

Consider the “Brain Rules”

Develop a process for inquiry – then gather the data

Make connections across institutional boundaries
Session 422

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