

# Enrollment Management

Practical Guidance in Recruitment, Admissions,  
Retention & Financial Aid

## Report

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### SNAPSHOTS

#### IDEA FILE

Consider whether lowering your sticker price would appeal to families without cutting into revenue; engage first-year students with a group study-abroad program; review student loan cohort default rates; and get a free white paper on the *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* Supreme Court decision. **Page 2**

#### LAWSUITS & RULINGS

**QUICK STUDY:** Review recent cases and rulings on dismissal of students with disabilities. **Page 9**

**DISMISSAL:** Sovereign immunity protects an institution from a dismissed medical student's case seeking readmission. **Page 10**

**RACIAL DISCRIMINATION:** The U.S. Supreme Court tells the Fifth Circuit to hold the University of Texas at Austin to a burden of strict scrutiny in the *Fisher v. UT* case. **Page 10**



### COVER STORY

## Prevent summer melt with cross-campus collaboration

TORONTO — Getting the right number of new-student deposits by May 1 doesn't ensure that your target number of students will be enrolled in August. You know that some students will change their minds over the summer months.

But officials from Wagner College in New York explained how they greatly reduced summer melt at a session at the National Association for College Admission Counseling National Conference.

Their collaborative approach engaged offices across campus. Administrators worked together to help incoming students feel connected to the institution. **Full story, see pages 4–5.**

#### Understand millennials

Knowing the common characteristics of millennial students can help you plan retention strategies. **See page 5.**

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Boost yield by making admissions personal

At many institutions, admissions officials work to encourage as many applications as possible. But at Drake University, the goal is to attract applicants who will enroll if they are accepted. Find out how the focus on yield impacts the admissions process. **Page 3**

#### Enroll adult students with Plus 50 programs

Adults seeking retraining for second careers could be a great source of enrollment for your institution. Find out how the American Association of Community Colleges' Plus 50 initiative could help make programs for them successful. **Pages 6–7**

#### Manage risks when terminating a staff member

Terminating a staff member could result in retaliation and litigation. Attorneys Dave O'Brien and Timothy O'Brien explain what you should do to minimize risks before you let an employee go. **Page 8**

#### Take steps to adjust to a new position

Peter Dueck became director of admissions and registrar at Royal Roads University in British Columbia after 25 years at another institution. Find out what strategies helped him through the changes the move brought. **Page 12**

## Prevent summer melt with a comprehensive approach

TORONTO — When you think you've met your institution's enrollment goal, summer melt can create a crisis. And recruiting students who have committed elsewhere causes a chain reaction of problems across institutions.

At Wagner College in New York, 41 students who had committed did not enroll in fall 2011. After officials in admissions, student affairs and other divisions worked together to create new initiatives to retain students through the summer, the number of no-shows dropped to 28 for fall 2012 and 27 for fall 2013, said Jake Browne, director of admissions.

He explained the initiatives at the recent National Association for College Admission Counseling National Conference, along with Ben Fabian, who formerly worked in residence life at Wagner. Fabian is now assistant director of residential life at the Pratt Institute.

Consider whether a strategy like Wagner's could help your institution reduce summer melt.

Shifts in enrollment numbers over the summer are common. According to statistics Browne cited from *Inside Higher Ed*, 59 percent of private bachelor's institutions and 7 percent of public institutions had not met their enrollment goals as of last May 1. And 29 percent of admissions officials who responded to a survey admitted that after May 1 they recruited students who had deposited elsewhere. That figure could be low considering that some officials would not admit to what's considered an unethical practice, Browne said.

### Reasons for attrition

Students change their minds during the summer

for a number of reasons, Browne said. Those include:

- **Financial reality.** Once parents receive the bill, some of them say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa," Browne said. That's true even though they already know how much aid would be awarded.

- **Waitlist releases.** Some students are admitted to other institutions to fill spaces left by summer melt there.

- **Negative experiences.** Wagner has orientation right before classes start, so students don't have time to change their minds because of problems with registration or residence life. But the late orientation gives them a lot of time to reconsider their decision.

- **Lack of campus connection.** Wagner officials recognized ways to improve this. Sometimes students didn't connect at all, Browne said. They made their deposit and didn't know what would happen next.

Efforts to get students off to a good start continue to make a difference into the first year. Students typically leave then, even in the first semester, for the following reasons, Browne said:

- ✓ **Academic difficulties.** Students might not be prepared or can't handle the workload.

- ✓ **Education and future goal conflict.** Students realize what they want is not in line with what the college offers.

- ✓ **Lack of intellectual or social connection.** Connection is a huge determining factor in retention, Browne said.

### Wagner's plan

Administrators from offices across Wagner worked together to improve the transition students made from deposited to enrolled status. They focused on helping incoming students engage with the institution by:

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**1 Improving communications.** The communications plan for the summer included:

➤ **Centralized and branded emails.** Admissions was responsible for delivering them, but communications could come from offices around campus.

➤ **Facebook page for the admitted class.** It helps the students get to know each other through the summer months. The director of social media in the admissions office shares administrative privileges with orientation staff members.

➤ **Instagram and Twitter.** Officials adopted these because students use them. “They’re Instagramming admissions packets and scholarship letters,” Browne said.

➤ **Live online chats.** Officials use Google Hangout and Skype. Students ask questions such as “How do I order my books?” or “What does this part of my schedule mean?”

➤ **Photo contests.** Postcards are sent as reminders to participate in them.

➤ **Blogs.** Entering students gain information and feel connected through the personal writing style.

➤ **Counselor involvement.** Counselors maintain their relationships with admitted students and families through the summer. That way, the students can turn to someone familiar if they have questions.

**2 Forming a new student transition committee.** It is responsible for orientation. Participating units include admissions, orientation, residence life, health services, public safety, student affairs, financial aid, the registrar and academic advising. “The handoff from admissions has to be done well,” Fabian said.

**3 Creating a unified new-student form.** Rather than each office sending forms to students that ask many of the same questions, students complete one form electronically.

Browne started developing that form in October for use the next summer. He knew he needed to meet with officials in all the relevant offices to make it effective.

Student affairs and admissions need to have a partnership for the new-student transition to go smoothly, Browne said.

That requires officials from the two offices to understand each other’s needs and challenges, Fabian said. Admissions officials who want to work with student affairs will enjoy a warmer reception if they demonstrate that they understand something about that field, he added.

Email Jake Browne at [jbrowne@wagner.edu](mailto:jbrowne@wagner.edu) and Ben Fabian at [bfabian@pratt.edu](mailto:bfabian@pratt.edu). ■

## Understand students for better retention

When you’re making plans for retaining students, it’s helpful to figure out who those students are, said Ben Fabian, assistant director of residential life at the Pratt Institute. He previously worked in residence life at Wagner College, where he helped devise strategies to combat summer melt.

The traditional-aged students currently entering college are part of the millennial generation born from the 1980s to the 2000s. Common characteristics are that these students are conventional, sheltered, special, pressured, confident, team-oriented and achieving, Fabian said.

You can expect them to:

- Seek a cohort and enjoy group dynamics.
- Rely on set paths, structure and schedules. They need specific directions.
- Require special attention, feedback and reinforcement.
- Have limited experiences and seek parental approval.
- Set high expectations for themselves and their resources. They expect a lot from their academic programs.
- Focus on achieving excellence and being well-rounded. ■

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