

Strategic Enrollment Planning Report Purpose, Price, and Promotion Sub-Committee

Introduction

Selecting, enrolling, and persisting in college is a complex and multifaceted experience for all students. College choice theories grounded in economic and sociological paradigms provide a foundation of understanding for how students and their families experience the various factors that impact an enrollment decision (Park & Hossler, 2015). Research by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) further supports college choice and successful persistence as “part of a complex interaction of family-, school-, and college-related factors,” (p. 643).

As important partners to students in their pursuit of higher education, post-secondary institutions are also navigating a decline in high school graduates, multiple shifts in student demographics, decreasing sources of financial support, and increased pressure to award academic credentials (Crockett, 2016). Enrollment is increasingly considered a shared responsibility throughout the campus community fostering a comprehensive approach to strategic planning for growth and sustainability. Although the College of Coastal Georgia already approaches enrollment issues through collaborative efforts, the strategic enrollment planning exercise through Ruffalo Noel Levitz illuminated opportunities to expand and capitalize on the existing practice.

In January of 2018, the purpose, price, and promotion subcommittee was established and its charge was to consider how these elements impact the enrollment process. Additionally, they were asked to identify opportunities to better align each of these areas to Coastal Vision 2021 and enrollment expectations set by the University System of Georgia as well as the Interim President of the College. Members of the subcommittee—which included representatives from academic student engagement, recruitment and admissions, marketing and public relations, advancement and alumni relations, student life, financial aid, and budget and finance—considered institutional enrollment opportunities and challenges from their fundamentally different perspectives. The exploratory exercises and conversations held by this subcommittee resulted in a well-rounded list of initiatives that were further narrowed down to four priority recommendations for action.

Committee Charge and Membership:

This subcommittee was specifically charged with examining relevant information and data in order to develop analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the areas of purpose, price, and promotion as they relate to student enrollment. The committee defined these three areas as follows: Purpose—institutional character and identity; Price—tuition/fees, scholarships/financial aid, and general fiscal health; and Promotion—institutional marketing and recruitment strategies. Throughout the process, the subcommittee considered how maintaining

existing purpose, price, and promotion strategies or employing new strategies would likely affect key performance indicators (KPIs) related to enrollment

Bontrager and Hossler (2015) suggest that engaging a variety of individual departments in the strategic enrollment planning process assists the college in “addressing student enrollment issues from the required multidimensional perspective,” (p. 27). The purpose, price, and promotion subcommittee reflects this standard, having members from seven departments represented through the Division of Academic Affairs, Office of Advancement, Business Office, and Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management.

Membership roster:

Amy K. Clines (co-chair), Assistant Vice President for Recruitment and Admissions, Enrollment Management

German Vargas (co-chair), Assistant Vice President for Academic Student Engagement, Academic Affairs

Michelle Ham, Assistant Vice President for Budget and Finance/Comptroller, Business Affairs

Allison Lyon, Assistant Dean of Student Life, Student Affairs

Linda Sackett, Director of Development and Alumni Relations, Advancement

Brenda Taylor, Associate Director of Financial Aid, Financial Aid

Jason Umfress, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

Christy Lynn Wilson, Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Advancement

Key Performance Indicators identified as critical to the consideration of this subcommittee include: Enrollment, Student Progress, Graduation Rate, Diversity Enrollment, and Fiscal Health.

Process:

Step One: Environmental Scan

The work of this subcommittee started with a broad environmental scan to identify opportunities and threats, and how these connect with our institutional strengths and weaknesses. We performed a SWOT analysis and categorized all of our findings under the themes of Purpose, Price, and Promotion. The summary of this analysis can be found here:

<http://www.ccg.edu/uploaded/SEP/SWOT-Purpose-Price-Promotion.pdf>.

Step Two: Strategy Development and Preliminary Ranking

Based on the results from the SWOT analysis, the themes and common elements were distilled and transformed into a variety of strategies that would support institutional success and the achievement of our enrollment goals. Once again these were categorized under the themes of Purpose, Price and Promotion, and a preliminary ranking of the proposed strategies was performed in order to select a subset of strategies for the Action Planning stage of this process. The list of all the strategies developed and the selection of a subset of strategies and their

alignment to the full list can be found here: <http://www.ccgga.edu/uploaded/SEP/Purpose-Price-and-Promotion-Strategies.pdf>.

The selected strategies (in no particular order) were:

- ***Establish and enforce a College of Coastal Georgia identity and image.*** Desired outcome: Distinguish the College of Coastal Georgia as a unique institution of higher education with value for key audiences.
- ***Implement a Customer Service Management Software (CRM) System.*** Desired outcome: Provide prospective students a comprehensive, consistent, and cohesive experience as they discover, apply, and enroll at the College of Coastal Georgia.
- ***Leverage Scholarship Funds and Financial Aid Packaging.*** Desired outcome: Provide an affordable education for new and returning students through the disbursement of merit- and need-based financial assistance.
- ***Repurpose the College Website.*** Desired outcome: Provide an appealing and informative virtual space where prospective students and the general community can learn more about the College of Coastal Georgia and navigate opportunities for engagement with the College.

Step Three: Action Planning

For each of the identified strategies, the committee prepared an action plan that started with a broad description of the strategy and its alignment with the KPIs, but that also included a specific implementation timeline with the action steps to follow, the estimated cost, time of completion, and responsible party for each step. The action plans also include an estimate of the enrollment impact and the rationale for the estimate as well as a revenue-expense analysis to help inform the final considerations of Return on Investments (ROI) once all the strategies from the subcommittees are being considered by the Steering Committee.

While the summary of this analysis will be presented in the next section, the complete action plans including the enrollment impact and revenue-cost analysis for each of the selected four strategies is linked below (not in ranked order):

- [Brand Action Plan](#)
- [CRM Action Plan](#)
- [Financial Aid Action Plan](#)
- [Website Action Plan](#)

Step Four: Secondary Ranking of Proposed Strategies and Evaluation of Return on Investment

After completing the Action Plans, the committee members were asked to use the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Prioritization Rubric to rank the four strategies based on nine criteria: Alignment to KPI/strategic plan, scope of services/functions, demand (student growth), student retention/progression, differentiation (others are not in the same market space), relevance (how

relevant is the strategy/action for today's student and the direction of the College), authenticity (degree that the action/strategy builds on the true mission of the College), revenues or cost savings, and resource analysis vs. peers.

The return on investment (ROI) was analyzed for each of the ranked strategies, where an estimate of enrollment and retention goals were used to compare the cost vs. revenue generated from the additional enrollment. While some of the strategies may have costs or revenues that are realized during different years of their implementation, for consistency we will summarize the ROI for the academic year 2020-2021.

The secondary ranking, estimated cost, and goal of return on investment are shown in the following table.

Table 1. Prioritization Results

Strategy	Estimated Cost	Goals of Return on Investment			Rank
		Enrollment	Retention	ROI*	
Repurpose the College website	\$30,000 (1st year) + \$3,500 /year	+ 20/year (New) + 5/year (Transfer)	-	\$196,500/year	1
Establish and enforce a College of Coastal Georgia identity and image	\$65,000 Total Cost	+ 5/year (New) + 3/year (Transfer)	+ 10/year	\$110,000/year	2
Leverage scholarship funds and financial aid packaging	\$59,150/year (after 2nd year)	+ 10/year (New) + 3/year (Transfer)	+ 5/year	\$107,350/year	3
Implement a customer service management software (CRM) system	\$98,303 (1st year) + \$67,894/year	+ 20/year (New) + 10/year (Transfer)	-	\$172,106/year	4

* This ROI is based on academic year 2020-2021, and it only includes the costs directly associated with the strategy (additional instructional and operational costs associated with the increase in enrollment are not included).

Recommendations

Based on the prioritization results (Table I) and the Purpose, Price, and Promotion subcommittee's focus on the Key Performance Indicators related to enrollment, student progress, graduation rates, diversity enrollment, and fiscal health, the following are recommended for immediate implementation:

1. A comprehensive repurposing of the college website in order to provide an appealing and informative virtual space where prospective students and the general community can learn more about the College of Coastal Georgia and navigate opportunities for engaging with the campus.
2. Align the mission, vision, and attributes of the College through the establishment of a cohesive identity, distinguishing itself as a unique institution of higher education with value for key audiences.
3. The use of scholarship funds and timing of financial aid packaging as a recruitment and retention tool, increasing the affordability of a Coastal Georgia education.
4. Strategic use of a customer service management system that provides prospective students an all-inclusive and consistent experience as they discover, apply, and enroll at the College of Coastal Georgia.

References

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- Park, E., & Hossler, D. (2015). Understanding student college choice. In D. Hossler, B. Bontrager, & Associates (Eds.), *Handbook of Strategic Enrollment Management* (pp. 49-76). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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