

Strategic Enrollment Plan

University of Nebraska at Kearney
June 2009

Executive Summary

As is the case with many universities across the nation, the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) is increasingly faced with many enrollment challenges. In particular, UNK is seeing a loss of the traditional base of student population due to rural out-migration in Nebraska. Other variables that have and will continue to affect enrollments are recent economic challenges for families, the increasing costs of higher education, and the projected decreases in the overall number of traditional college bound students, changing demographic profiles of those students who plan to attend college.

In order to remain competitive and ensure its success in the future, UNK must address these challenges including building its student market share and increasing the success rates of all of its students.

Process

Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP) was initiated in August 2008 in partnership with Noel-Levitz. The Enrollment Management Council, officially convened by the Chancellor on October 28, 2008, has been charged with leading the creation and implementation of a Strategic Enrollment Plan that is mission driven and closely aligned with the vision and goals of the institutional strategic plan of the University of Nebraska at Kearney (see Appendices A and B).

The Enrollment Management Council includes the following members:

- Ed Scantling, Dean, College of Education, Chair *
- Renee Ballenger, Director of Marketing Communications *
- Mary Daake, Director of Academic Advising
- Gary Davis, Director of Honors Program
- Bruce Elder, Accounting and Finance Faculty, appointed by Faculty Senate
- Juan Guzman, Director of Multicultural Affairs
- Linda Johnson, Director of Graduate Admissions

- John Lakey, Asst Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance
- Kathy Livingston, Director of Institutional Research
- Diane Longo, Coordinator of International Language Institute
- Dusty Newton, Director of Undergraduate Recruitment & Admissions *
- Kim Schipporeit, Registrar
- Mary Sommers, Director of Financial Aid & Scholarships
- Gloria Vavricka, Director of eCampus
- Gail Zeller, Dean of Student Life *

The following structure serves to ensure both the implementation and effectiveness of the Strategic Enrollment Plan:

- The Strategic Enrollment Action/Steering Committee (i.e., a subgroup of the Enrollment Management Council identified above with an *) have primary oversight for the implementation, assessment, and modification of the Plan. The Action/Steering Committee will meet twice monthly at the beginning and then on a monthly basis to review data, assess strategies and action plans, and determine directions. The main role of this action group is to oversee the implementation process, to keep the process dynamic, flexible, and forward moving, and ensure success.
- The Enrollment Management Council, initially charged with leading the development of the Plan and facilitation of campus wide engagement and participation, meets monthly as the plan is implemented and then quarterly or as needed. The Council members will continue to provide functional expertise as well as continuous input/feedback from their respective areas; they review progress, recommend modifications of the Plan, and foster institutional learning, support, and involvement.
- Each overarching strategy is associated with secondary strategies as well as corresponding action plans that include action steps, designated faculty and staff members responsible for overseeing/accomplishing specific initiatives, anticipated completion dates, budgetary requests, and assessment strategies/protocols. The Enrollment Management Council will monitor these.
- The Enrollment Management Council will also continue to consider strategic issues related to enrollment (marketing, recruitment, retention, graduation) and make recommendations as needed.

Institutional Mission, Vision, and KPIs

Strategic Enrollment Planning serves to affirm the University of Nebraska at Kearney's mission of providing access to students in the state and surrounding region with an affordable, high quality undergraduate education in a broad range of liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies as well as to affirm its vision of becoming a nationally recognized public master's/comprehensive

institution in the Midwest. The Strategic Enrollment Plan also serves to align the various planning functions and supports UNK's strategic planning goals, primarily in regard to increasing enrollment, expanding geographic representation of students, and improving student retention.

The planning process has been informed by a review and analysis of the University's top-level objectives in the UNK Strategic Plan Phase I. As a result, below is the top seven categories of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) identified by the Enrollment Management Council.

1. **Enrollment Performance Indicators:** Enrollment measures including fall undergraduate and graduate full-time equivalents (FTE), headcounts, and semester credit hours (SCH). Freshman cohort. Freshman, transfer, and graduate student applications and acceptances.
2. **Diversity Indicators:** Diversity profile, including details of freshman, transfer and graduate student cohort profiles; measures by county, contiguous states, international, and economically-disadvantaged percentages.
3. **Academic Preparation and Selectivity Indicators:** Standardized test averages (ACT), high school grade point averages (GPA), and high school class rank (top 25%).
4. **Fiscal Health Indicators:** Revenue and costs, including net revenue, expenditures, remissions, and discretionary student charges. Comparisons to peers and competitors.
5. **Quality, Climate and Appeal Indicators:** Freshman cohort persistence rates after one, two, and three years; freshman graduation rates after four, five, and six years; faculty to student ratios, average class size, campus housing occupancy and return rates. Student engagement summary scores (NSSE).
6. **Visibility Indicators:** Marketing and web traffic. And increasing/improving student response rates, including out-of-state (particularly the front range of Colorado), eastern Nebraska region, freshman, transfer, and graduate student inquiries.
7. **Academic Offerings Indicators:** Educational programs that align with the career and personal development needs of both traditional and nontraditional students. Distance education enrollments, enrollments by major and discipline.

Situational Analysis

Analysis of both the internal and external environment has been conducted, which informed the development of key enrollment strategies to ensure the UNK's realization of mission and vision. The most notable finding related to the external environment is that the demographic projections provided by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE 2008) indicate that the pool of students that the University has historically attracted will have limited growth in the near future.

In addition, internal institutional analysis has been conducted considering the strengths and challenges with respect to UNK's purpose, product, promotion, place, price, and processes. The main results of this analysis point to the need to strategically expand geomarkets and strengthen recruitment efforts as well as to enhance retention and success of all students, especially minority students.

Key Enrollment Strategies

After carefully analyzing current institutional plans, available data, and operations and processes with consideration of the institutional strengths and weaknesses in light of the external opportunities and threats, the Enrollment Management Council has developed a well-defined, integrated Strategic Enrollment Plan with recommended Key Enrollment Strategies that will serve to strategically reposition UNK in order to realize its vision.

The first seven strategies below represent those considered to be most important for immediate implementation. In other words, although all of the strategies are deemed important these seven have the greatest likelihood for the greatest impact on UNK enrollments.

- Strategy 1 Expand dual enrollment programs.
 - 1.1. Identify courses and partners for development of agreements.
 - 1.2. Create and establish agreements with designated partners.
- Strategy 2 Utilize faculty, staff, and students in recruitment events to a greater extent.
 - 2.1. Educate/train regarding faculty, staff, and students key messages
 - 2.2. Create pool of available recruiters
 - 2.3. Develop process to assign to events; reward/acknowledge.
- Strategy 3 Increase community college transfer enrollments.
 - 3.1. Develop a plan for recruitment of transfer students.
 - 3.2. Staff part time UNK recruiters/advisers at the community college site.
 - 3.3. Promote on-site programs.
- Strategy 4 Expand online offerings.
 - 4.1. Opportunities for degree completion, whole degrees, general studies courses.
 - 4.2. Develop a plan to promote distance education.
- Strategy 5 Increase minority student enrollments.
 - 5.1. Develop minority student recruitment plan.
- Strategy 6 Expand recruitment efforts in markets beyond immediate area near campus.
 - 6.1. Expand recruitment out of state.
 - 6.2. Expand recruitment efforts to Eastern NE.
- Strategy 7 Increase first-year student enrollments.
 - 7.1. Develop a plan for recruitment of freshmen.
 - 7.2. Conduct outreach activities.
- Strategy 8 Recruit students with strong academic credentials

- 8.1. Send targeted communications to prospects, inquiries, and applicants who may qualify for Honors (26+ ACT, top 25%)
 - 8.2. Send targeted communications to prospects, inquiries, and applicants who may qualify for merit scholarships (23+ ACT and top 30%)
- Strategy 9 Use scholarships competitively to attract top students.
- 9.1. Offer a greater number of and more competitive scholarship awards for top 25%.
 - 9.2. Refine scholarship award criteria.
 - 9.3. Reward students with ability/backgrounds not currently recognized (legacy, leadership, potential for success, selected ACT scores).
- Strategy 10 Publish enrollment reports that are distributed campus wide to improve understanding of enrollment issues and statuses.
- 10.1. Determine what data is to be reported, when, and to whom.
- Strategy 11 Increase graduate enrollments
- 11.1. Develop graduate recruitment plan.
- Strategy 12 Improve freshman and transfer student inquiries
- 12.1. Develop plan for obtaining prospect names.
 - 12.2. Develop communication plans for prospects.
 - 12.3. Develop marketing plans for targeted segments.
- Strategy 13 Utilize the web to recruit students.
- 13.1. Target market audience using online advertising strategies.
- Strategy 14 Increase the number of prospective students who visit UNK.
- 14.1. Provide transportation for student and parents to visit campus; promote.
 - 14.2. Develop incentives for campus visits (application fee waiver, t-shirt, etc.)
- Strategy 15 Increase international student enrollment.
- 15.1. Develop a written international student recruitment plan
 - 15.2. Establish goals for international students.
 - 15.3. Seek and establish partnerships with overseas institutions.
 - 15.4. Develop new scholarship criteria for international students.
 - 15.5. Develop strategies to recruit international direct admits.
- Strategy 16 Support first-year student success.
- 16.1. Improve the financial literacy of students.
 - 16.2. Increase student involvement and engagement in student life.
 - 16.3. Create a comprehensive, coordinated freshman success program.

- 16.4. Develop a program for Fall Orientation
- 16.5. Provide an enhanced first-year experience for incoming freshmen to support student success throughout their tenure at UNK.

Strategy 17 Develop a transfer student success program.

- 17.1. Examine and enhance transfer student orientation
- 17.2. Determine interest and viability for developing and implementing an online option for transfer orientation.

Strategy 18 Utilize NSSE scores to monitor changes in student engagement over time.

- 18.1. Enhance the information provided by NSSE to make it more useful for monitoring UNK performance on student engagement variables.
- 18.2. Implement selected strategies to support student engagement opportunities.

Strategy 19 Improve academic advising.

- 19.1. Evaluate processes and improve; ensure consistency and quality.
- 19.2. Explore a new model.
- 19.3. Develop plan to recognize and evaluate faculty for quality of advising.

Strategic Enrollment Goals

Based on the situational analysis, including the opportunities and needs of the institution, the Enrollment Management Council recommends the following five-year Strategic Enrollment Goals.

1. Increase overall university enrollment to 7,154.
 - Net increase of 477 undergraduate and 134 graduate over 2008 figures
 - Additional annual goals in years 2010-2013
2. Expand geographic representation (out-of-state) of student body to 15.5 percent.
 - 15.5 percent of student body will be 1,107, compared to current 9.55 percent
 - Additional annual goals in years 2010-2013
3. Increase the number of international students to comprise 15 percent of the student body.
 - 15 percent of student body will be 1,073, compared to current 9 percent.
 - Additional annual goals in years 2010-2013
4. Increase enrollment of first-time, full-time students to 1,400.
 - Increase of 40 percent
 - Net increase of 355
 - Additional annual goals in years 2010-2013

5. Increase enrollment of new transfer students to 475
 - Net increase of 183
6. Increase graduate students to 1,573 students.
 - Maintain 22 percent of student body
 - Net increase of 134
 - Additional annual goals in years 2010-2013
7. Increase racial and ethnic diversity of the student body to 9 percent.
 - Net increase of 266 students
 - 9 percent of student body will be 644, compared to current 5.78 percent
 - Additional annual goals in years 2010-2013
8. Improve undergraduate retention rate (To Be Determined).
 - Assigned to Retention Team to assist with recommendation.
9. Improve the six-year graduation rate (To Be Determined).
 - Assigned to Retention Team to assist with recommendation.

Return on Investment (ROI)

The implementation of the Key Enrollment Strategies contained in the Plan will support and strengthen existing UNK programs and enable the institution to expedite the achievement of its Strategic Enrollment Goals. Implementation of the Enrollment Management Council recommendations (i.e., Key Enrollment Strategies) and the institution of an ongoing SEP process will allow the UNK to respond to the uncertain economic and demographic future with improved understanding of the characteristics, needs, and expectations of high school graduates over the next five to ten years. SEP will also serve to maximize the University's ability to take advantage of new opportunities for stabilization and/or growth and help avoid investing in untested strategies and activities that provide little or no return on investment.

According to preliminary calculations based on estimates of projected enrollment trends, an annual investment of \$455,950 in development and support of the Strategic Enrollment Plan will result in approximately a \$646,608 in revenue by 2014. Over a five year period the ROI is projected to be \$606,846 and an increase of enrollment to 7,154, assuming that all of the strategies are fully implemented and barring any unforeseen events.

In addition, it is expected that enrollment of dual-credit students will reach at least 60 students and generate annual tuition revenue of \$12,000 by 2014.

Next Steps

Next steps include:

1. Immediately implement the top seven priority enrollment strategies and associated action plans and to move forward with the timely implementation of the other enrollment strategies/action plans in the Plan;
2. Complete the proposed action plans that are not yet fully developed and create new action plans in support of the Key Enrollment Strategies;
3. Monitor progress of the implementation of the Strategic Enrollment Plan by tracking the institution's KPIs and making adjustments to specific action plans as necessary based on empirical analysis of internal and external factors and evaluation of overall progress; and
4. Systemically integrate the Strategic Enrollment Planning (SEP) process in the routine life of the institution so that it becomes a part of the institutional culture and how it operates. It is important that all phases of SEP reflect shared vision, shared responsibility, and campus wide learning, as well as incorporation of state-of-the-art best practices to ensure seamless enrollment delivery systems and the maximum engagement and involvement of students in the intellectual life and learning.