

Winthrop University
Staff Assembly Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2019
Whitten Auditorium

Staff Assembly Present: Nicole Chisari, Julia Fockler, Lydia Johnson, Wes Love, Kelly McGinnis, Alicia Marstall, Cheryl Gomez, Thomas Cornelius, Brittany Neely

Absent: Johnathan Brabson, Linda O'Connor, Kirk McSwain

Vacancies: Three

Nicole Chisari, Chair, called meeting to order at 2:05 pm.

Approval of Minutes:

- Staff Assembly minutes of Dec. 4 were approved.

The purpose of this meeting was to meet with Vice President for Access & Enrollment Management Eduardo Prieto and President Dan Mahony to discuss the enrollment issues that Winthrop is facing. A list of questions were presented to Nicole from our represented divisions. The questions were combined into one document and presented to Eduardo.

Nicole also mentioned that the February meeting would be all about enrollment.

President Mahony stated that when the message went out about the record number of applicants to Winthrop, no F/S liked or shared it, while students, alumni, community members, and even people from his former institution did. He is concerned about the negativity on campus and wants to change the conversation on the campus, because if we don't talk positively about ourselves, how can we expect others to?

Eduardo stated that the financial aid had to be adjusted on the fly. Since decisions were made years ago that caused issues, the issues had to be taken care of this year. We were over budget in aid, so aid had to be reduced by approximately \$1 million (60 scholarships) and it had to be fixed, which caused these short-term issues. EAB Research, a financial aid leveraging firm, has been here doing a study on our financial aid program. The cost for EAB to come here and review our financial aid program was \$72,000. Eduardo said the model now will put us back in the normal range for financial aid.

QUESTIONS

On recruitment:

1. What parts of the country do we concentrate recruitment efforts on?

EP: Primarily South Carolina, North Carolina, and the Eastern seaboard. Winthrop's visibility is greatest in South Carolina. Admissions has moved toward more recruitment in North Carolina over the years. Due to funding, we cannot travel to some locations, and can't afford some of the "misses" that other, larger schools can. We look at the per capita income of areas before traveling there. We also travel to markets that are growing economically. We have not had many students from the Mecklenburg County area, but we have developed a niche in South Charlotte schools, such as the faith-based schools.

*map – please send

2. What other institutions are realistically considered our competition – i.e., USC and/or Clemson, yet shouldn't we also be looking at Lander and Francis Marion?

EP: (Handout was given out showing the numbers of students that we admitted to Winthrop but went elsewhere.) It appears that University of South Carolina, Clemson and College of Charleston are the biggest competition. USC and Clemson alternate the No. 1 spot. Reasons include family relationships; highly regarded; and the sports focus. We typically don't lose a lot of students to Francis Marion University.

*handout – clarify

3. Do visiting students/tours go into the dorms? Are there any plans to improve the dorms? To outsource the facilities work for the dorms? Do we actually use all the available dorm space? Could we consolidate as to provide higher-quality living areas?

EP: (It was suggested that this question be referred to Residence Life.) Yes, currently the tour features show rooms in Margaret Nance and Lee Wicker. We invite you to come take a campus tour. They're 9:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday-Friday, and we'd like to do more Saturday tours.

DM: Revenue vs. expense standpoint. The current dorms are paid for, so it's 100 percent profit. It's not feasible to expect a state referendum to build a new dorm at this point. There's also no data that suggests a new dorm would attract a large amount of students. With the age of the buildings, there's only so much you can do, and they're comparable to what other institutions' dorm offerings.

4. What are we doing to work with the technical schools to recruit their students?

EP: We have the bridge program agreement with York Tech. Older students transition into four-year degrees at Winthrop. We are looking to expand our agreements. Touchpoints have increased by 100 percent; for example, Admissions reached out to Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC), with CPCC personnel saying it's the first time Winthrop had approached them. One-third of our new transfer students (115) are coming from York Tech, so we have a lot coming who don't go through that bridge program.

On enrollment:

1. Students who W/D from Winthrop fill out a W/D form. Who analyzes this information and how does it get used? Do we follow-up with students who *don't* come to see why they left or did not return? What about students who enroll, but then don't ever show up?

EP: He feels that this form needs to be revised and updated. He's unsure who all sees it. It appears that most students leave for financial, personal or medical reasons. He's unsure what relevance we can take from it in its current state, and we may not always find the *real* reason. We need to figure out better ways to capture students *before* they leave campus.

2. Can we increase enrollment by dropping Admission requirements and/or tuition?

EP: No. Dropping admission requirements will not happen. There's been discussion about making us a test-optional facility. We are missing approximately 30 students a year who qualify for S.C. Lottery money (LIFE scholarship) but do not meet our requirements for admittance.

DM: Data shows that high school GPA is the only thing that matters; if they do well in high school, they will do well in college. They've also looked at new tuition models (i.e. capping the tuition for all four years), but data

suggests they don't work all that well because the school is still left with the financial difference. It's a board decision.

EP: We have to get out of apologizing for our cost. People lament our cost, but find ways to afford others.

3. Would bringing back LEAP help Admissions?

EP: Some schools are not telling students that they are considered LEAP students, such as USC. There are thoughts are bringing it back.

DM: Some students/parents do not like their students being labeled "LEAP students."

4. Why are we losing admitted students?

EP: Students are applying to 3-5 schools on average. We are a back-up school in some cases. Other reasons are: (1) some apply because their friends applied, boyfriend/girlfriend applied, then they break up; (2) change majors before graduating high school to something we don't offer; (3); financial reasons in the family (about a \$2-3,000 gap in tuition).

Students are also now attending multiple Orientation sessions before making a final decision later. Wingate and Anderson have hit us hard and have taken some students.

On operations:

1. What acceptance criteria does Admissions follow when accepting an applicant?

EP: Very few schools will state what it takes to be admitted. 3.0 GPA for an in-state student (based on 5.0+ scale), mid-to-high SATs (800 and up), and mid-to-high ACT (19 and up). Our average ACT score is 23-24, within the top four in the state. We review class rank and the amount of credit hours as defined by the state. Letters of recommendation are requested for students that are on the edge of our requirements.

2. Why do students seem to hear back from other schools about admittance and financial aid so much sooner than they hear from us?

EP: No difference in time frame for acceptance. We are a little slower this year due to the EAB Research study, so we haven't been as out in front as we'd like to be. The feedback we got from recruiters was that some schools (Francis Marion) are making admittance decisions on the spot. We don't want to do this. It is normally a 2-3 week process after the application is complete. The key word there: complete.

3. Can we contact you if we have identified qualified prospective students?

EP: Yes! The new CRM (which saves Winthrop about \$50,000 a year) allows them to tag students as VIPS, which means they would receive more correspondence/phone calls/contact from us.

4. Can we consider lowering the TOEFL score from 61 to 68?

EP: Academic Affairs would need to look into this. Our retention rate drops when we lower standards. If a student is denied acceptance, they can appeal that decision. Admissions has over one page of standards that must be followed. There is also a 13-14 step process to determine if a student qualifies for in-state tuition.

5. **Can there be a simple formula or graph available for academic scholarships in the beginning of the school year?**

EP: This was delayed because of the EAB financial analysis.

6. **Are there plans underway to accept an AA or AS degree as the equivalent of general college requirements? If not, why not?**

DM: Associates degrees can be misleading because they can allow a person to believe he or she is two years into a degree, which may not be the case. Some requirements may not have been met yet. General education requirements are being reviewed now to see if changes need to be made or should be made.

On financial management:

1. **Do we know anything about our return on investment as far as money spent on recruiting vs. enrollment?**

EP: The average cost to recruit a student is \$2,000 for a private school and \$900 for a public school. We typically spend approximately \$600 per student to recruit them. And feel that's a good return on investment. The budget for recruiting is now less than in the past. This \$600 includes gas, travel costs, mailings, etc. Admissions is being as efficient as possible. They are looking into making some additional investments. The new CFO has some fresh ideas and new perspective on spending money in these areas.

2. **Why can't we lock in tuition for incoming students for the ideally four years they'll be enrolled?**

EP: This question should be referred to senior staff. It was mentioned that different scenarios were presented to the board. It has been found that locking tuition does not help financially. Keeping it flat helps some students but not all.

We need to stop apologizing for our costs. The average income for hardship students is \$22,000/year. A certain percentage of students will not be able to afford us, but a greater number of students are finding a way to pay for school. Our tuition is in the middle. Huge fees are being charged by some schools to be in a certain major, which those costs are not presented as cost of attendance.

On marketing:

1. **What are the academic departments doing to recruit students?**

EP: The tours now include the academic colleges if requested by the students. They can spend time in their respective academic college while here for the tour. We have calendared out quarterly meetings with the academic colleges to discuss strategic plans. We are now working better with these departments, such as working together on mailings.

2. **What strategies are we using to turn high application yield into increased enrollment?**

EP: (1) Focusing on engagement and high-touch practices, i.e. holding admitted student receptions around the area

(2) involving high schools in the process

(3) better coordination with emails and mailings – they're being staggered so items from different areas of campus arrive on different days

(4) segmented messaging - Rock Hill students may receive one type of mailing while outside area students receive a different one.

(5) having the outcomes/values discussion – we are affordable

(6) refining what makes us special

20 percent of area students who go elsewhere to college will transfer to Winthrop sometime during their college years.

What messaging does the rest of the university need to be telling prospective students?

Unclear.

What makes us worth the extra price compared to other state universities?

Not sure that we pinpointed this?

EP: Winthrop is affordable. He believes that everyone should have an important information on a business card and those should be our "brag points." Twenty (20) percent of applications are submitted and that is the first time that Admissions has even heard about these prospective students. If we do not believe that Winthrop is great, how can we sell it?

Next Staff Conference is Jan. 22 at Dina's Place 2 p.m.

Next Staff Assembly is Tuesday, Feb. 5 at 2 p.m. in the West Center.

Meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm.