Data Wise Strategies for SIOs: Driving International Enrollment Impact in Turbulent Times

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I am satisfied with the use of data to inform international enrollment strategies at my institution
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- Recognized scholar-practitioner on data-informed internationalization strategies in the context of shifting student mobility trends and evolving transnational education models
- Presented over 100 sessions at professional conferences including AIEA, APAIE, EAIE, and NAFSA.
- Blogs and tweets as DrEducation
- Holds a doctorate in higher education administration from University of Denver
US and UK enroll nearly one-third of all globally mobile students

4.34 million globally mobile students in 2014
Source: UNESCO
US and UK maintained global marketshare despite turbulence

2.08 million globally mobile students in 2000
Source: UNESCO
2016: turbulence accelerated
Conceptual framework of global engagement strategies

- **Defenders**: Familiar programs delivered in English-speaking countries through student mobility

- **Adapters**: Familiar programs delivered through new capabilities of online, blended, and transnational models

- **Innovators**: New programs delivered through new capabilities of lifelong learning, unbundling and networks

- **Challengers**: Familiar English-taught programs delivered in new destinations in Asia/Europe

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How to sustain int’l enrollment growth and diversity?

- Increasing Competition
- Increasing Tuition Cost
- Decreasing Budgets
- Unfavorable Policies

?
Data informed decisions can help achieve goals

- Asking the (right) questions
- Working with (perfect) data
- Making the (informed) decision
- Improving the (continuous) process
Source Ian Saunder (2015) the source of business intelligence
Ian Thomson
Head of International Recruitment & Partnerships at University of Glasgow
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• Worked in Higher Education in Scotland for nearly 25 years, mostly in recruitment and marketing.
• Previously Headed up recruitment at The Glasgow School of Art.
• Past chair of the Scottish Universities International Group.
• Presented at numerous conferences including; NAFSA, EAIE and APAIE
Institutional Context

• Public comprehensive University
• Founded 1451
• Fourth oldest English speaking University in the world
• Over 29,000 students studying in Glasgow
• Over 140 nationalities represented on campus
• World Top 100 ranked University (THE and QS)
• Situated in one of the world's friendliest and dynamic cities
• First Internationalization strategy in 2010 (current 2015 – 2020)
Institutional Context:
Total Cohort v International Growth
Institutional Context: International Growth at UG, PGT and PGR Levels
Data - Institutional Context

External Data Sources:
• HESA, HEIDI+, British Council HESD, OECD, Agents, Independent Marketing Analysts

• Internal Data Sources:
  • QlikView, MyCampus, BIOnline, Admissions
• Online reporting tool provided by our media buying agency SMRS
• Allows us to track, measure and modify all digital marketing spend
• Used by central marketing team and College Recruitment and Conversion Managers
• One Master dashboard provides overview of all digital activity
• Setup can be configured specifically for individual campaigns
- Allows us to track a range of defined conversion points including submitted applications, prospectus downloads and open day registrations
- Able to track View Through Conversions (VTC) as well as Click Through Conversions
- Used for A-B testing of creative messaging and optimises best performing creatives
- Has allowed us to be more flexible with marketing spend and adjust creatives and/or platforms accordingly
Challenges/Trends with International Enrollment

Who is UoG comparing ourselves with and why?

➢ Country trends
➢ UK HE institutions
➢ Scottish HE institutions
➢ Russell Grp Institutions
➢ Ivy League/Uof8/Uof15

Student Channels

➢ Direct - 32%
➢ Agents - 49%
➢ Pathway Provider - 19%
➢ Government Sponsors (7% of total international population)
Challenges/Trends with International Enrollment

• Overseas government policy
• UK Government policy (Immigration)
• Scottish Government policy
• Regional conflicts
• Development of courses taught in English
• Word of mouth
• Return on Investment (internships/career opps)
• Temptation to lower standards
• Internal structures and resources (staff and consumables)
Role of Data/Insights in informing decision

"What do you do with all the data you have gathered"

- Set realistic targets
- Manage diversification
- Identify trends (course development)
- Work with overseas governments/institutions in priority fields
- Become proactive NOT reactive
- Invest in new modes of delivery; TNE/ODL/partnerships 2+2, 3+1 etc.
- Prioritize subject areas for expansion
- Engage with your priority markets (staff investment?)
Lessons Learned (do's and don't)

❖ No one-fit solution - each market is different (different channels)
❖ Do not put all your eggs into one basket
❖ Do not live off past reputation
❖ Consult your stakeholders (they know best)
❖ Brand awareness – what are your communication channels
❖ Incentivize with targeted scholarships
❖ Invest in your recruitment and marketing operations
❖ Word of mouth is everything (one bad experience!!!)

You can never have too much data – it’s how you segment and analyze it
There are students out there for every type of institution
Brandon M Boulter
Assistant Dean for Marketing, Admissions, Enrollment Services at Johns Hopkins University - Advanced Academic Programs
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- Enrollment and marketing practitioner with over 18 years of experience
- Consults private and public institutions on international target markets, strategy, brand messaging, and online program enrollment management and development.
- Recognized Enrollment Management and Marketing Engineer.
Institutional Context

• Johns Hopkins University:
  **THE GOOD**
  • Comprehensive Research – Private Non-Profit
  • Highly selective
  • Undergraduate, Graduate, Doctoral Programs
  • 6 physical campuses in Maryland, 1 in Washington DC, 3 international campuses including Singapore, China, Italy, and we are online.
  • Enrollment = 5,326 Undergraduate and 14,848 Graduate
  **THE BAD**
  • Decentralized - little international cooperative enrollment management and planning
  • 10 Academic Divisions with differing needs and goals
Institutional Context Cont.

International Enrollment

- Graduate enrollment counts for nearly 85% of total
- Undergraduate enrollment is shrinking
Division Context

• Krieger School of Arts and Sciences – AAP Graduate Programs

**THE GOOD**
• Nimble organization able to create new degree programs and concentrations based on partnership and market demand
• Academic Chairs maintain pedagogical control and QA
• Programs offered on-ground and online
• Deep culture built on data analysis driving division direction

**THE BAD**
• Little to no cooperative work with other JHU divisions due to decentralized culture
• Minimal staff and budget to tackle large scale initiatives
Division Context Cont.

3 YEAR INTERNATIONAL ENROLLMENT DATA

- Chinese enrollment has tripled over three years
- On-Ground enrollment counts for nearly 75% of total
- Online enrollment account for 25% of total
Division Context Cont.

Top 5 Programs

- STEM programs remain top programs
- Public Policy and Administration programs showing promise
Data Driven Decision Making

• Key data findings

  • Positive growth in key international markets
    • Key finding: High touch campaigns
      • Dedicated Chinese FTE FY16-FY17
      • Word of mouth campaign
      • Student and alumni listening
  
  • Negative persistence
    • Key Finding:
      • No correlation between high English language scores and graduate level writing
      • Cultural differences have an inherent impact on student and faculty interaction

  • What else did we learn? Students and alumni report that:
    • Applications can be complex, and require a variety of confusing materials that can cause anxiety
    • High touch - personalized efforts increased enrollment by 50% year over year
    • Fewer than 10% of enrollees felt dual language material was an important part of their decision to enroll
    • Student and alumni listening activities resulted in improvements in budgetary support, policy changes, systems, processes, and workflow
    • Partners report: Cooperative academic partnerships are in demand, but require a lot of time and effort
    • Foreign institutions are agile and flexible, but they perceive our bureaucracy as a barriers to growth and partnership
Lessons Learned (Dos and Don’ts)

Don’t

• Marketing:
  • Underestimate word of mouth advertising
  • Assume you know what students want
  • Miss opportunities to learn from your current students and alumni
  • Fear failure as you test new market initiatives
  • Apply the same tactics to all international markets
  • Believe that your brand is concrete

• Enrollment:
  • Avoid yield events due to logistics
  • Allow current processes to stand in the way of the student experience
  • Fear failure as you test new market initiatives
  • Misinterpret historical enrollment data and assume future growth

• International Development:
  • Lose face with potential partners by promising immediate action
  • Forget current student and alumni introductions
  • Neglect international rankings
Lessons Learned (Dos and Don’ts)

Do

• Manage your Brand
  • Good Brand = Growing Enrollment
    • Brand loyalty
    • Brand recognition
    • Prestige is important in most markets
  • Poor Brand = Declining Enrollment

• Understand and Convey Outcomes
• Establish Connections and Networks
• Understand Shifting Academic Needs
Questions/comments

• What are the challenges and approaches of leveraging data for international enrollment strategies at your institution? What worked and didn’t work?

• “It is better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong”
  - Gupta & Lehmann (2005) “Managing Customers as Investments”

• “Measure what you want, not what you can measure.”

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