

March 10, 2005

Dr. Randy Webb
President
Northwestern State University
Natchitoches, Louisiana 71497

Dear Randy:

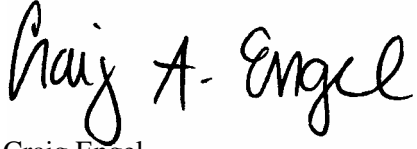
The attached report serves as an executive summary of my visit to Northwestern State University (NSU) on February 1-2, 2005. I was very impressed at the level of commitment among faculty, staff, and administration for enrollment management at NSU. The amount of preparation that Mary Edith, Jana, and Reatha conducted in advance of my visit was evident and made for a very productive visit. I also appreciated being a part of the visit from Dr. Sally Clausen and meeting members of your Board. It helped me to learn more about not only the priorities of the Louisiana System, but NSU as well.

It was good for me to visit another campus during the same week, because I'm very familiar with NSU and it provided me with a comparison. While both NSU and the other campus I visited are making good progress towards the Master Plan admissions criteria, I was able to see that your team is doing a very good job implementing your recruitment plan in comparison. In addition, the database management sophistication present at NSU showed me that you are comfortable with both the "art" and the "science" of enrollment management.

You should have already received an electronic copy of the PowerPoint presentation that I used during the exit briefing and I have included a hard copy in the Appendix of this report. If you have any questions or concerns about either the presentation or this report, please contact me immediately.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that if you have specific issues that you would like addressed through a follow-up consultation, please let me know so that we can consider your requests as we allocate a limited number of follow-up consulting visits this spring. During our visit on Wednesday, you mentioned that some additional retention consulting to assist Reatha as she begins to implement the retention plan would be helpful. In addition, you indicated some assistance with the development of an enrollment management committee could be useful as well. Finally, I would suggest you give strong consideration to submit an application for capital funding from the BOR for the use of computers to help build on the success of the Enablelearning (EnableMath) initiative that you have already begun.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig A. Engel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig Engel
Senior Vice President

C: Jimmy Clarke, deputy commissioner for planning, research, and performance,
Louisiana Board of Regents
Theresa Hay, assistant commissioner for planning and research, Louisiana Board of
Regents

Goals and Approach of the Consultation

The February 1-2, 2005 consultation was commissioned by the Louisiana Board of Regents as part of its ongoing relationship with Noel-Levitz to aid and abet the enrollment management aspects of the Master Plan for Higher Education. As the State approaches full implementation of admission criteria this fall, these consultations were designed to accomplish the following objectives.

- Evaluate the realism of NSU's fall 2005 enrollment goals.
- Provide a high-level assessment of NSU's marketing, recruitment, and retention strategies, as well as the implementation of its enrollment plans.
- Make recommendations on enrollment management strategies that should be emphasized in future iterations of NSU's enrollment plan.
- Support one of the original project goals – to achieve statewide self-sufficiency in enrollment management by 2005 and beyond – by continuing to shift the responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of institutional and statewide enrollment strategies from Noel-Levitz to the Board of Regents and individual campuses. This was the reason for Theresa Hay's involvement in the consultation.
- Identify possible projects and raise awareness regarding the capital outlay RFP that the Board of Regents is issuing this spring.

I believe we were largely successful in accomplishing these objectives and I hope you and your colleagues share that perspective.

Recent Enrollment Results and Fall 2005 Enrollment Goals

New Student Enrollment

The following table displays NSU's first-year (FTIC) student enrollment funnel results for the past four years and its fall 2005 goals.

**Northwestern State Univeristy
FTIC Student Enrollment Funnel Results and Fall 2005 Goals***

Stage	2005 Goals*	2004	2003	2002	2001
Inquiries	22,500 <i>17.8%</i>	21,471 <i>16.3%</i>	27,753 <i>12.4%</i>	20,409 <i>19.3%</i>	26,806 <i>13.6%</i>
Apps	4,000 <i>80%</i>	3,506 <i>100%</i>	3,440 <i>100%</i>	3,936 <i>100%</i>	3,652 <i>100%</i>
Accepts	3,200 <i>56.3%</i>	3,506 <i>56.5%</i>	3,440 <i>59.9%</i>	3,936 <i>54.9%</i>	3,652 <i>46.1%</i>
Enrolled	1,800	1,980	2,061	2,159	1,684

* From NSU self-inquiry form – I pulled the goals in based on the conversations with the president, Mary Edith, and Jana.

As I mentioned in the cover letter, NSU does a very good job with database enrollment management techniques and their funnel is very “pure” as a result. But with that said, it should be very clear to all who review the data that it is going to be extremely difficult for NSU to enroll 1,800 new FTIC in the fall of 2005 based on the fact that only 941 of the 1,980 FTIC enrolled in 2004 met the Master Plan admissions criteria. In fact, during Phase I of the Noel-Levitz/NSU relationship, we predicted that FTIC enrollment in fall 2005 would be 1,200 (with 1,050 meeting the admissions criteria and the remaining 150 exceptions). This is closer to what I would expect for fall 2005 and funnels should be developed accordingly.

Apart from what I perceive to be an unrealistic FTIC goal for fall 2005, I believe that NSU is doing an excellent job of implementing its new student recruitment plan. Jana and her team have taken the best of what they have gleaned from their sustained relationship with Noel-Levitz (first with Jackie Clark and then with Paula Compton) and combined it with her own years of experience, to develop a recruitment plan that should serve NSU for many years to come. Mary Edith noted that wasn’t necessarily the case in 2003 when the plan was first developed, but that Jana has revised the plan since that time, and “made it her own,” which I commend her for.

For example, Jana has created and developed a half-dozen new recruitment initiatives that are directly tied to building the inquiry pool with a better quality, or more diverse (e.g., admissible) applicant pool, and yielding this group, and that is just in this admissions cycle. The out-of-state initiatives that were developed in earnest in 2003 with the hiring of an out-of-state recruiter have already begun to pay dividends, with an increase of out-of-state students of 49 (+44.5 percent) since the fall of 2002. These new strategies include:

- Expand electronic communication with prospective students.
 - Created electronic monthly newsletter for EFR group in September 2004. Newsletter is sent electronically to entire EFR database that have e-mail addresses on the system. Approximately 8,000 mailed each month. Graduate, adult, and Internet only electronic newsletters were created in December 2004 and mailed electronically each month. The first Louisiana Scholars’ college electronic

newsletter and the transfer newsletter will be designed and sent out in January 2005. The international recruitment newsletter will be designed and mailed in February 2005.

- Initiate the “Picture yourself at Northwestern” campaign in the FTIC market to work to increase the applicant to enrollment rate.
 - Embossed note cards were purchased that say “Picture yourself at Northwestern.” Digital pictures are taken at all campus tours with the tour guide and at all alumni recruiting receptions with the hosts. We also use these for the “priority” student receptions at presidents’ home. After the events, these pictures are printed and mailed in the note cards, with personal notes on them.
- Expanded the recruitment efforts in the transfer market and initiated the first international recruitment plan.
 - Hired an assistant director of recruiting for transfer and international students in July 2004 and developed a transfer marketing and recruiting plan. Currently we are researching international recruiting plans to develop a comprehensive international recruiting plan that is cost effective.
- Initiated the first recruiting campaign for the 25+ age group of potential EFR students known as a “Better Life Tour.”
 - Increased communication for this plan with news releases, radio spots, and presentations at clubs and organizations in our service area in an effort to create awareness of new opportunities for these potential students.
- Initiated a comprehensive “Internet only” campaign to increase the number of enrollments in this market.
 - Worked in conjunction with the Electronic and Continuing Education Office to recruit adjunct professors for additional online courses. The University Recruiting Office increased the number of interested students in this market by contracting with companies to provide inquiries for Northwestern.
- Initiated the “priority student” presidents’ receptions at the president’s home to increase the enrollment rates of these high quality students for both Louisiana Scholars’ College and the FTIC students at NSU.
 - These receptions are held at the home of the president to honor these students. On the day before Fall Senior Day, we invite students who have applied for scholarships and are ranked in the top of their class or have ACT/SAT scores of 25+ or have significant leadership. On the day before Scholars’ Day, we invite all students that have been offered admission to the Scholars’ College or have 28+ACT scores and qualify for the highest scholarship awards. The evening prior to Spring Senior Day, we invite top quality scholarship recipients.

The strategies listed above are all new and will be tracked to determine the return on investment during the 2005 admissions cycle (and beyond). And while many of the strategies are designed to attract the non-State of Louisiana FTIC, they are designed to build enrollments since Mary Edith and Jana fully expect the traditional FTIC class to drop as a result of the new admissions criteria.

That being said, it should be noted that NSU has waited until the 2005 admissions cycle to really implement the new admissions criteria, which I believe will especially hurt the number of new students enrolled in the fall of 2005. This can be seen from the number of students enrolled with an ACT <20 or from the bottom half of their high school class or with less than a 2.0 HSGPA going up in 2004 (even though the number of total students went down). The academic profile of the NSU student has declined in the past year, and this will need to change in 2005 and beyond.

One of the results of having to go “cold turkey” in 2005 with regards to the admissions criteria will be a decrease in the overall yield rate. Currently, NSU experiences a yield rate of around 56 percent. My guess is that out of approximately 1,000 students who did not meet the 2005 admissions criteria, that yield drops by as much a 10 percentage points. Jana is going to have to take this into account as she admits the 2005 class.

Assuming NSU was unable to enroll any of the 1,039 students that did not qualify in 2004 and that the university is able to fully utilize its allocation of exceptions (15 percent), I project that first-year enrollment would decline to 1,082 students or 718 short of the FTIC goal. However, this does not take into consideration any increase in students completing the Regents’ curriculum, adult students that fall outside the admissions criteria (the university needs to quantify this number), and any students for whom there was incomplete data (256 who we aren’t sure if they had the Core).

This is a “literal” look at the numbers, and as I noted earlier, I believe that NSU is likely to be much closer to the 1,300 FTIC range; in fact, once you factor the good work that Jana and her team are doing working the adult and out-of-state market, and the current increase in the applicant pool, my feeling is that FTIC enrollment for the fall 2005 could even be a bit higher than that.

The following is my own prediction of where the NSU FTIC class will fall in 2005.

**Northwestern State Univeristy
FTIC Student Enrollment Funnel Results and Fall 2005 Goals (Craig's prediction)**

Stage	2005 per Craig	2004	2003	2002	2001
Inquiries	22,500	21,471	27,753	20,409	26,806
	17.8%	16.3%	12.4%	19.3%	13.6%
Apps	4,000	3,506	3,440	3,936	3,652
	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Accepts	3,000	3,506	3,440	3,936	3,652
	45%	56.5%	59.9%	54.9%	46.1%
Enrolled	1,350	1,980	2,061	2,159	1,684

While we didn't spend very much time discussing transfer issues, the next table displays NSU's transfer student enrollment funnel results for the past four years and the fall 2005 goals.

Northwestern State University Transfer Student Enrollment Funnel Results and Fall 2005 Goals

Stage	2005 Goals*	2004	2003	2002	2001
Inquiries	1,400	1,060	1,213	No Data	No Data
	75%	88.3%	63.8%		
Apps	1,050	936	774	734	
	95%	100%	99.1%	100%	
Accepts	1,000	936	767	734	
	60%	62.1%	68.6%	65.9%	
Enrolled	600	581	526	484	

* From NSU self-inquiry form – I pulled the goals in based on the conversations with the Mary Edith, and Jana.

NSU has increased transfer student enrollment steadily since the fall of 2002, which should continue in 2005 and beyond. In fact, I told the president, Dr. Sheffler, Mary Edith, and Jana that I think that the recruitment and enrollment of transfer students represents a tremendous opportunity for NSU, especially with the large numbers of students that will need to begin their college education at Louisiana two-year schools beginning this fall with the implementation of the Master Plan admissions criteria. My own feeling is that if NSU wants to consistently enroll approximately 2,400 new students each fall, why not put a plan in place to enroll 1,400-1,500 qualified FTIC and 900-1,000 transfer students? The funnel below shows approximately what it would take to do just that based on the historical data.

Northwestern State University Transfer Student Enrollment Funnel Results and Potential Funnel for Future

Stage	Future	2005 Goals	2004	2003	2002
Inquiries	2,000	1,400	1,060	1,213	No Data
	75%	75%	88.3%	63.8%	
Apps	1,500	1,050	936	774	734
	95%	95%	100%	99.1%	100%
Accepts	1,425	1,000	936	767	734
	65%	60%	62.1%	68.6%	65.9%
Enrolled	925	600	581	526	484

Future planning aside, for fall 2005 I believe that NSU will fall short of its overall new student goals by approximately 450 new students or approximately 18.75 percent.

Retention

The following are the primary retention goals that are contained in the university's retention plan submitted to the Board of Regents in 2003.

- Increase the fall 2002 to fall 2003 retention of first-time, full-time freshmen from a Board of Regents baseline weighted trend of 66.5 percent to 68.0 percent; the fall 2003 to fall 2004 retention from 68 percent to 69 percent; and the fall 2004 to fall 2005 retention from 69 percent to 70 percent.
- Increase the fall 2002 to fall 2003 retention of other full-time freshmen from 57 percent to 58.5 percent; the fall 2003 to fall 2004 retention from 58.5 percent to 60 percent; and the fall 2004 to fall 2005 retention from 60 percent to 62 percent.
- Increase the fall 2002 to fall 2003 retention of full-time, first-time African-American freshmen from a Board of Regents baseline weighted trend of 64.9 percent to 66 percent; other freshmen from 54.6 percent to 56.1 percent; and sophomores from 74.9 percent to 77 percent. Continue to increase all groups by 1.0 to 1.5 percentage points per year for the 2003 and 2004 cohorts.
- In spring 2003, design and implement a comprehensive system to assess graduate program retention and graduation. In 2003-04, establish a baseline from a newly created database to begin monitoring retention. In 2004-05, increase the graduation rate for master's students by two percent from 2002-03.

The retention program at NSU is the total antithesis of the recruitment program, with the exception that I believe we have a good person, Reatha, in charge. The issue is that Reatha has no position power and no budget. The result is that there is little buy-in for retention initiatives from others outside of her office and what she can implement has to be done by herself. This fact, coupled with an entering class that has a declining academic profile, and the result is that instead of slowly moving retention in a positive direction since 2003, it has been going in the opposite direction. The following table displays NSU's first-to-second year retention rates.

Year	Retention Rate
2004 entering FTIC students	70% (TBD)
2003 entering FTIC students	69% (63.1% actual)
2002 entering FTIC students	68% (65.2% actual)
2001 entering FTIC students	67.4% actual

No results were provided regarding NSU's other retention goals for full-time students, African-American students, or graduate students. My recommendation is that NSU should prepare an annual report summarizing historical data and progress towards each of its retention goals. This should occur no later than November 1 each year.

It should be noted that by simply eliminating the students who don't meet the Master Plan admissions criteria, we figured that NSU should see an increase of first-to-second year retention of at least of eight percentage points, up to 71 percent in one full swoop. But please don't let this put you at ease, because as the academic profile goes up, you encounter a whole other group of retention issues that will need to be address (good students are often more demanding than average/below average students).

My greatest concern regarding the retention program at NSU is the lack of commitment overall in terms of staffing, budget, and buy-in from faculty who need to be a large part of the program because of their contact with students. However, despite these obstacles, Reatha has implemented a host of retention strategies that are low budget and "grass roots" in nature. For example, I learned that the following activities are being implemented among the thirty-plus strategies in the retention plan:

Recruit Back/Stop Out Program

- The "Recruit Back" plan has recently been revised in an effort to gain more insight into why students are not enrolling for subsequent semesters. A telephone survey has been developed, which will be utilized by staff and students in the Office of Student Success to call those students not re-enrolling at Northwestern for the spring 2005 semester. A random sample of students with a minimum of a 2.5 GPA will be called following the 14-day count. The information on students not enrolled will be in two categories: Those not returning to the university and those who "stopped out" for a semester.

Shreveport and Leesville Orientation Programs

- Two additional sessions of Freshman Connection were added during the summer 2005 – one each for the Shreveport and Leesville campuses. The sessions were well attended (Shreveport – 40; Leesville – 95) and evaluations were very positive. These sessions will continue in the future. It is possible that a session for nontraditional students will be added to the Leesville campus.

Demon Volunteers in Progress (VIPs)

- Ten continuing students, who have previously been involved with the Freshman Connection orientation program, were identified to serve as Demon VIPs for the Office of Student Success and New Student Programs. These students were assigned approximately 125 new freshmen to contact and correspond with throughout their first year. These students completed "Interest Forms" during the summer orientation program – campus interests, clubs and organizations, etc., and this information was utilized by the mentors to inform them of activities and resources on campus. The first time effort was a great beginning – with e-mail updates, phone calls, mailings, and

small group sessions/activities being conducted. The program has been well received and has great potential for growth. The coordinator of new student programs has researched other programs and has new ideas to implement for the continuation of this program into the spring 2005 semester.

Demons on Tour

- The idea of having “tour guides” to assist new students in locating their classes during the first week of school was a tremendous success. The program involved faculty, staff, and students. Volunteers were provided a “Demons on Tour” bright orange t-shirt so that they would be easily distinguished on campus and were available from 7:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in and around the main academic building on campus. They welcomed new students, answered questions, handed out maps, guided students in the right direction, and offered complimentary soft drinks and water. The initiative was well received and informal data indicated that more than 1,200 new/continuing students took advantage of this opportunity to ask questions.

Academic Advising Council

- The Academic Advising Council was established in August 2004 and has made significant progress in several areas: Reviewing the recommendations listed in the Advising Audit, developing policies and procedures for the Council, developing a mission and goal statement for advising, identifying sources for advisor training and development, and drafting a proposal for an Advising Center.

Alcohol Awareness Education

- The Office of Student Success and New Student Programs sent an October mailing to the parents/guardians of all new students during the month of October (National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Month). The mailing included a booklet entitled, “College Talk” and a letter to parents encouraging them to continue the dialog on the subject of alcohol with their new college student. This was the first initiative in developing a parent’s program.

Freshman Frenzy

- This is a month long activity planned by the Office of Student Success and New Student Programs to help new students become more familiar with the activities and resources available to them on campus. Each new student was provided with a booklet of possible activities/events to participate in throughout the month of September 2004 – which included participation in campus organization activities, technology resources, meeting the University president, and exploring campus buildings and traditions. Four weekly drawings were held throughout the month, with one grand prize consisting of a meal plan and book voucher for the spring 2005 semester. The program was well received by new students.

Minority Affairs Council

- The Minority Affairs Council was established in October 2004 and has since held two meetings (fall semester). With the formation of the Council, a review of the current mission of the Office of Cultural Diversity is being reviewed, as well as research on opportunities for engaging minority students in campus life programs, identifying barriers, and exploring/researching new programs and initiatives.

Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs)

- Established FIGs include: Business, Criminal Justices, Education, Journalism, and Social Sciences. FIGs in the exploratory stages: Nursing, Psychology and Hospitality, Tourism and Management/Family and Consumer Science. This program continues to gain momentum with faculty and department heads, and deans.

My NSU Portal

- The myNSU portal was available for student use in the 2003 fall semester. Based on feedback from students and advances in technology, the University has been able to provide additional online services to students through the portal. Through the portal, students are able to register, confirm housing arrangements, utilize 10MB of file storage, access an online help function along with a variety of other services.

My feeling is that the Reatha has the desire and energy to run a strong retention program, but with 30 actual retention strategies in NSU's retention plan, she must prioritize these strategies (which is evidenced by the list of activities above). However, none of these programs will work well (or any others) unless Reatha does not get good faculty commitment and support of the intervention efforts.

Of concern is NSU's five-year graduation rate, which did improve last year from 27.3 percent to 31.6 percent, but is still well below the ACT average of between 59 and 61 percent for like institutions. I suspect that with the ratcheting up of the admissions criteria, this will change.

Implementation Strengths

As I mentioned in the cover letter and earlier sections of this report, NSU has a competent, well trained enrollment team lead by Mary Edith. I think that Jana's intelligence, competitive desire, and love for NSU make her the right person for the outreach and recruitment role she is in; and Reatha's work ethic and can do attitude in the face of deficiencies in staffing and budget are real strengths. In addition, the kinds of data and information that NSU is tracking and utilizing, with the assistance of a strong IR department, allow Mary Edith and her team to conduct planning in a more scientific manner as opposed to "gut instinct." I believe that NSU is implementing their recruitment plan well, and doing the best they can at this time with their retention plan. I only wish that NSU would have chosen to ease into the new admissions criteria over time instead of waiting until the fall 2005 class to implement the criteria. The ramifications to the fall class of 2005, the "face" of NSU, and the overall budget bottom line will be significant as a result.

The following implementation strengths were identified and discussed during the exit briefing.

Recruitment and Retention Strengths

- As I mention above, the development of metrics and informational reports to track activities and progress towards goals in both recruitment and retention are solid. I think back to how far NSU has come in this area from when I first visited in 2002 and NSU is right where I'd want them to be in this area.
- The recruitment plan, in its "workable" form, is very functional. By "workable" form, I mean that Jana took the plan that was largely developed by others, and has made it her own plan. Again, this is just what I'd want to see.
- The development of an admissible inquiry pool (including out-of-state) is coming along nicely. This is a necessary change with the more selective admissions criteria and takes a couple of years to do in order to be ready for 2005. Jana and her team (with some help from Jackie and Paula) have utilized search to "set the table" with a stronger inquiry pool for the fall 2005 class. Now we will need to see how this group yields and matriculates.
- NSU has taken advantage of the ACT resources provided by the Board of Regents (EIS, AIM, PLAN). With only just over 20,000 high school graduates in the State of Louisiana who have an ACT ≥ 20 , it is important to use these services to zero in on those students who are qualified academically.
- Jana and her team understand the importance of building ongoing relationships through consistent communications at each stage of the funnel. They have a good communication management program that includes all four ways to communicate with students (electronic, written, phone, and face-to-face).
- I like what I heard from Jana as she described how her admissions team has had to transition from simply an admissions outreach team to an admissions counseling team. They understand that they have to do a lot more advising for students and high school counselors who are still learning the impact of the Master Plan criteria and are providing options for students who don't meet the criteria.
- I believe that Jana and her team have embraced the admissions criteria, as has most of the campus community. This is a critical component. Unfortunately, my impression is that not everyone at NSU is on the same page with regards to the Master Plan initiatives and the impact it will have at NSU this fall (and years to come).
- The campus as a whole is beginning to embrace the fact that the "face" of the campus is going to change – but we are not fully there yet. If NSU enrolls 600 fewer students, all coming from what has been the bottom third of their enrolled pool, the make-up of the campus is going to change. This can be a positive in some cases and a negative in others.

- The retention plan is solid, but may contain too many initiatives to be successfully implemented considering the staffing and budget. Reatha has done a good job of prioritizing what she can physically and financially do, as well as what will have the greatest impact on retention.
- “Demons on Tour” and other strategies to connect the student to the campus during the students’ first month on campus should prove to have an impact on first-to-second year retention.
- NSU’s 2003 retention for the bachelor cohort was 68 percent (the overall retention for first to second year is 63 percent), versus the ACT average of 62 percent for like institutions. Simply removing the students who did not meet the admissions criteria in 2003 will significantly raise the retention percentage (+8 percent).
- As an early-alert strategy, the four-week grade reports for all first year students is a good strategy to identify students who are struggling in their transition from high school to college. The key will be faculty involvement in intervening with these students.
- The piloting of EnableMath on campus has proven successful, with over two-thirds of the students in the program passing successfully completing the course, versus about one-fourth of students who did not participate. This initiative should be continued.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to assist NSU in strengthening its enrollment management program. In some cases, the recommendations reflect strategies from NSU’s enrollment plan that were partially implemented and require improvement. In other instances, they are either strategies that were never implemented or that did not appear in your current plan.

1. **Appoint a permanent enrollment management committee with two standing sub-committees on the quality of student life and learning (QSL) and marketing/recruitment.** For one reason or another, the overall campus has not totally bought into the Master Plan initiatives and the impact that it will have on the culture of the campus. This can be seen in radical differences in goals, from a lack of participation by faculty in retention and by the absence of staffing and budget in retention. To help change this institution attitude, I recommend that an enrollment management committee be developed to help with the development and implementation of universitywide enrollment management initiatives. Some potential responsibilities for this group are summarized below.
 - Determine the desired enrollment state for the institution (projecting three to five years).
 - Establish overall and program-specific annual enrollment goals.
 - Approve and monitor implementation of the annual master enrollment management plan (recruitment and retention). In NSU’s case, both planning documents should be revised in preparation for fall 2006.

- Review all recommendations related to enrollment management and work within the institution’s decision making process to gain approval for recommendations deemed important to achieving university goals.
 - Design, conduct, analyze, and disseminate enrollment-related studies and research.
 - Conduct periodic audits of key program/service areas.
 - Initiate a process for identifying and eliminating problems that interfere with the quality of student life and learning.
 - Establish a communication plan designed to keep campus personnel informed about enrollment issues and progress.
 - Discuss and determine strategic enrollment issues (pricing/aid strategy, positioning, image/reputation, product, etc.).
2. **Revise, prioritize, and use the existing retention plan.** A key component of the first and second phases of the Noel-Levitz relationship with NSU, comprehensive recruitment and retention plans, were developed. Currently, only a small part of the retention plan is being implemented at this point and it has not been revised since it was first developed. One of the reasons that it has not been used is that it is overwhelming in the number of recommendations in relation to budget and staffing. I recommend that Reatha take the retention plan make it her own, just as Jana has done on the recruitment side.
3. **Develop and implement a more aggressive transfer recruitment plan.** While NSU has take initial steps in this direction with the hiring of a transfer counselor, I believe there is more the university could do to strengthen its transfer recruitment program. Moreover, this should be a growth market for NSU as an increasing number of Louisiana students start in a community college with the intention of transferring to a four-year institution. I suggested the following initiatives during the exit briefing.
- Systematically build a pool of prospective transfer students by obtaining graduate lists from local community colleges, purchasing Phi Theta Kappa names in Louisiana, and by tracking students that are denied admission to NSU for fall 2005 and enroll at a two-year school.
 - Develop a scholarship program for transfer students.
 - Implement the inquiry-level transcript evaluation process called for in your current marketing and recruitment plan.
 - Develop advisory boards with your local community colleges to discuss ways that NSU can better access and serve their graduates (especially with Bossier Parish Community College coming to campus).
4. **Transform your student telecounseling team into a student contact team.** Currently your student telecounseling team makes several thousand contacts per year. As you continue to develop this program, I have five suggestions.
- Hire additional telecounselors so that we can reach a minimum of 75 percent of our inquiry pool and 100 percent of our acceptance pool.

- Have them send a follow-up e-mail to students with whom they speak on the phone in an attempt to strike-up an electronic dialogue.
 - Test some chat sessions on selected nights whereby students wanting to chat could communicate with telecounselors in this way.
 - Consider identifying a second group of students (and space) to conduct the calls to current or recently enrolled students so you are not cannibalizing your contacts with inquiries and applicants to make these calls.
 - Track telecounseling contacts just as you do other key initiatives so we can determine how will the program is working.
5. **Segment your funnel to determine differences in yield.** NSU has enjoyed a very strong yield from acceptance to matriculant, but has not taken into account how that yield varies from one sub-population in their pool to another (e.g., in-state, out-of-state, those meeting the Master Plan criteria, those that do not). As Jana was calculating the number of admits needed to enroll a class of 1,800 for fall 2005, she used the overall average yield. I pointed out that the 900+ students who do not meet the new criteria likely yielded much higher than our 56 percent average and those that did meet the criteria had a lower yield. Jana needs to run a yield report by these and other sub-populations as she builds her funnel goals for 2005 and beyond.
6. **Implement a qualifying and grading program.** NSU has worked hard to build a stronger inquiry pool, but there are thousands of students who inquire who will not meet the admissions criteria in 2005. It is very costly to communicate with students who are not admissible and the messages to students who are and are not admissible should be different. I believe that we should begin qualifying a students interest and grading our interest in the student as soon as they become an inquiry so that we can put the inquiry in the proper market segment for communications. This will save NSU time, effort, and money.
7. **Strengthen your recruit-back program by focusing on recent stopouts.** I noted earlier in this report that NSU's five-year graduation rate of approximately 30 percent is a real issue. I suggest we turn this problem into an opportunity by focusing some effort on students who have dropped-out during the last several terms and who did not have a transcript sent elsewhere suggesting that they have stopped-out and could be encouraged to resume their studies.
8. **Start to consider sophomore-to-junior strategies in your next plan.** You are making good progress on your freshman-to-sophomore retention rate, especially if you are able to replicate or improve upon your 2004 return rate (63 percent) this coming fall. That said, we noticed that NSU is losing an additional 20 percent between the sophomore and junior year, which is contributing to NSU's low five-year graduation rate of approximately 30 percent. This suggests you will need to expand your retention strategies to the second and third year of college. As you might imagine, sophomore strategies tend to focus on managing the transition to a major field of study and faculty advising.

9. **Obtain faculty buy-in for retention.** All of the retention activities implemented by Reatha and students affairs combined may not equal the impact faculty can have on whether a student is successful and stays at NSU or chooses to leave. At NSU, faculty workload issues and an attitude that retention “is not my job” have lead to a lack of commitment by faculty on their role in retention. This commitment has to come from the top down.
10. **Change the culture among residential students.** They say “where there is smoke, there is fire,” and that is the case among the residential students at NSU. It appears that the attitudes and behavior of students who live on campus is having a very real effect on campus climate, recruitment, and retention. This has been documented in the ACT Student Opinion Survey and by NSU administrators, and must be addressed (Dr. Webb has asked Dr. Seymore to be responsible for this important initiative).
11. **Modify the current strategic plan for the university.** My understanding is that a strategic plan is currently in place at NSU, but isn’t widely recognized or used. It may be time to update that plan in light of the great impact that the Master Plan will have on the university. This includes how the “face” of the campus will change as the university enrolls a smaller number of FTIC, but retains more students as a result; or the impact of increasing the number of transfer students who are enrolled.

Conclusion

Again, I wish to compliment NSU for all that it has accomplished since this process started back in 2002 with the development of its first integrated marketing and recruitment plan. The university has a great deal of momentum from which to build from as it prepares for the new admissions criteria this fall. The many recruitment and retention strategies you have been implementing should begin producing even better results with the 2005 entering class. It is important for you to re-launch your enrollment planning process through the creation of the permanent enrollment management committee that I suggested in recommendation number one.

Thank you again for all the courtesies that were extended to me during my time on campus and please feel free to call or write if I can clarify any of my observations or recommendations.

Appendix

PowerPoint attached.

Enrollment Management Plan Implementation Progress Analysis

Northwestern State University

Craig Engel
February 2, 2005




Exit briefing agenda

- Goals of the analysis
- 2005 recruitment goals compared to 2002 (when the initial plan was developed), and progress towards goals
- Commentary of what you are doing well
- Areas and strategies that need additional attention
- Key recommendations




Goals of the analysis



Goals of the analysis

- Assist all Louisiana four-year public postsecondary institutions in the full and effective implementation of their marketing, recruiting, and retention plans to achieve institutional and statewide enrollment goals for fall 2005 as described in the campus-based plans and in the Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education 2001.
- Support one of the original project goals – to achieve statewide self-sufficiency in enrollment management by 2005 and beyond – by continuing to shift the responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of institutional and statewide enrollment strategies and identifying opportunities for improvement from Noel-Levitz to the Board of Regents, the System Management Boards, and the institutions.



What you can expect from Noel-Levitz this semester

- Enrollment management plan analysis (February 1-2)
- Written summary report
- Statewide enrollment management summit (April 19-20)
- Additional consulting (as needed)



2005 recruitment goals compared to 2002 (when the initial plan was developed), and progress towards goals



NSU minimum admissions criteria for 2005

- Completion of Regents Core Curriculum (16.5 units)

And at least one of the following:

- ≥ 2.0 HS GPA, or
- ≥ 20 ACT, or
- ≥ 50 th percentile HSPR, and
- No more than one remedial course for immediate admission

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Fall 2002 goal for fall 2005

- Increase the percent of traditional, FTIC students who meet the 2005 admissions criteria from **48 percent** (840) in 2002 to **50 percent** (900) in 2003; **55 percent** in 2004 (1,020); and **60 percent in 2005** (should be 85 percent or 1,020).

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Traditional FTIC who meet selective admissions standards for 2005*

Traditional FTIC Who Meet Selective Admissions Standards for 2005				
Stage	2005	2004	2003	2002
Inquiry	33,000	31,000	30,000	25,784
Application	4,040	4,000	3,900	3,878
Admitted %	60%	55%	50%	48%
Accepted	2,424	2,200	1,950	1,861
Conversion %	42.1	46.3	46.2	45
Enrolled	1,020 (85%)	1,018 (51%)	900 (44%)	837 (39%)

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What NSU is doing well

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What NSU is doing well

- The development of metrics, and informational reports to track activities and progress towards goals
- The recruitment plan, in it's "workable" form, is very functional
- The development of an admissible inquiry pool (including out-of-state)
- Use of ACT resources in recruitment (EIS, AIM, PLAN)
- Relationship management strategies (electronic, written, phone, and face-to-face)

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What NSU is doing well

- Transition of the admissions outreach team to admissions "counselors" (TBD)
- I believe that Jana and her team have embraced the admissions criteria, as have most of the campus community
- The campus as a whole is beginning to embrace the fact that the "face" of the campus is going to change – but we are not fully there yet
- The retention plan is solid, but may contain too many initiatives to be successful (30 total)
- "Demons on Tour" and other strategies to connect the student to the campus during the first month

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What NSU is doing well

- 2003 retention for the NSU bachelor cohort was 68 percent vs. the ACT average of 62 percent (NSU's overall retention was 63 percent)
- Simply removing the students who did not meet the admissions criteria in 2003 will significantly raise the retention percentage (+6 percent?)
- Four-week grades (early alert)

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Areas and strategies that need additional attention

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Attention needed

- Goal setting and the articulation of goals to the community
- Campus culture for enrollment management
- Strategic plan for the university (many are not familiar)
- Tracking of key strategies (e.g., telecounseling)
- Tracking yield rates by various populations (e.g., those meeting criteria, out-of-state, honors)
- Qualifying and grading
- Delivery of departmental scholarships earlier to affect retention

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Attention needed

- Commitment to engaging the faculty for retention, including academic advising (workload issue?)
- Commitment to recruit-back strategy
- No real understanding why there is such large attrition after the sophomore to junior year (15% fall 2002 class between soph/jr; 22% fall 2001 between soph/sr year)
- Interaction among the campus community to implement retention strategies
- Changing the culture among residential students

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**ACT Student Opinion Survey
Residence Hall rules and regulations**

Year	Four-Year State	NSU	Gap
2004	3.07	3.00	.07
2003	3.02	2.88	.14
2002	2.98	2.86	.12
2001	3.05	2.83	.22
2000	3.11	3.22	+.11

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**ACT Student Opinion Survey
Residence Hall Services & Programs**

Year	Four-Year State	NSU	Gap
2004	2.95	2.83	.12
2003	2.98	2.90	.08
2002	2.87	2.82	.05
2001	2.96	2.89	.10
2000	3.06	2.94	.12

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ACT Student Opinion Survey Availability of instructors (out of class)			
Year	Four-Year State	NSU	Gap
2004	3.81	3.72	.09
2003	3.80	3.79	.01
2002	3.78	3.76	.02
2001	3.78	3.76	.02
2000	3.82	3.90	+.08

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ACT Student Opinion Survey Attitude of the faculty toward students			
Year	Four-Year State	NSU	Gap
2004	3.82	3.77	.05
2003	3.80	3.84	+.04
2002	3.76	3.76	-
2001	3.77	3.76	.01
2000	3.79	3.75	.04

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ACT Student Opinion Survey Availability of your advisor			
Year	Four-Year State	NSU	Gap
2004	3.69	3.60	.09
2003	3.69	3.71	+.02
2002	3.67	3.74	+.07
2001	3.68	3.69	+.01
2000	3.70	3.90	+.20

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Key recommendations

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Key recommendations

- Modify the current strategic plan for the university
 - Articulate the vision of the university in light of the Master Plan
 - Address campus culture for enrollment management
 - Address campus climate issues
 - Address the changing face of the campus as a result of the Master Plan initiatives
- Appoint an Enrollment Management Committee
 - Chaired by Dr. Sheffler and Dr. Stacy
 - Involve key directors, deans, departments
 - Provide authority to implement, not just generate ideas
 - Meet monthly

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Key recommendations

- Evaluate how goals are set and articulated (clear and realistic)
 - Internal budget goal
 - Realistic goal
 - Internal "reach" goal
- Address residential life and campus climate issues (students and staff)

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Key recommendations

- Commit to the retention plan
 - Budget
 - Prioritize key strategies (e.g., academic advising)
 - Champion the plan (via the strategic plan)
- Develop a comprehensive transfer recruitment plan
 - Recruit non-admissible FTIC applicants
 - Update articulation agreements
 - Enhance the degree audit Web page (also for current students)

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