

Student Engagement in the Recruitment and Admissions Funnel

Arrand Troy Pavy, DBA, MBA
 Indiana Wesleyan University
 troy.pavy@indwes.edu



INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Background

Indiana Wesleyan University's (IWU; 2022) National & Global (N&G) campus experienced a decline in enrollment starting around 2010 and accelerating from 2015 to 2021. During that time, some programs realized slight enrollment increases but not enough to offset the decline of business and nursing program enrollments.

The enrollment problem was explored with the N&G vice president of marketing, which set the stage for the partnership and the research. Following problem identification, the researcher diagnosed the problem, developed the driving research question, and created guiding questions to direct the research.

Driving research question: What can IWU National & Global change operationally to improve prospect enrollment and student retention?

An extensive literature review was conducted to understand the problem better and set the stage for further research.

Methods & Solutions

Inquiry into the problem was accomplished through two focus groups: one face-to-face focus and one via Microsoft Teams. The student participants ranged from associate to master's level across multiple academic disciplines. The focus group findings revealed persistence was required from the prospects for them to get enrolled. Also, many prospect emails, texts, and phone calls did not receive a response across all communication points.

Dr. Eileen Hulme, chancellor for N&G, found many potential students disappeared, and not only did not enroll at IWU but also gave up completely and did not enroll elsewhere. The focus groups revealed a potential connection between enrollment counselor (EC) connectivity with prospects and persistence to enrollment.

Solutions were explored to fill the communication gap and facilitate prospect enrollment. Based on the focus group findings and an evaluation of solutions, the researcher proposed implementing EC-hosted weekly Microsoft Teams sessions with student prospects at the middle funnel stages.

Results & Change Plan

The change plan was developed to ensure a successful rollout of the EC-hosted sessions. The Prosci ADKAR model provided the framework for implementing the N&G solution. ADKAR's people-centric approach aligns organizational needs with the students' and staffs' needs.

The study and the recommended solution could help solve the engagement gap at any institution of higher learning. Institutions struggling with insufficient enrollment staff can maximize their efforts by implementing the solution recommended in this study. Implementing the plan could overcome some of the turnover and overload challenges across the industry for enrollment teams. The solution optimizes the enrollment counselors' time by answering many everyday questions in a group setting and freeing up their time for more critical enrollment questions.

The EC-hosted sessions and other enrollment efforts should increase the fiscal year 2023–2024 enrollment for N&G.



Image from Indiana Wesleyan University. (2022). Indiana Wesleyan University. www.indwes.edu

Conclusions

In June 2023, N&G had 55 ECs connecting with students; that number fluctuates but translates to a minimum of 55 prospect engagement opportunities per week with multiple participants per session. If every EC implements the strategy as planned, based on degree level and academic focus, the number of sessions could reach as many as 150. If ECs could secure one student from each session that might have joined the unexplained lost, it would equate to 150 enrollments. If 15 prospects per session are converted over the fiscal year 2023/2024, N&G would exceed pre-pandemic numbers and excel above the 10,000-student mark.

References

Indiana Wesleyan University. (2022). Indiana Wesleyan University. www.indwes.edu

Prosci Inc. (2022). *The Prosci ADKAR model overview* [Brochure].

Collegis Education. (2023, July 17). *Rethinking the enrollment funnel for higher ed.* <https://collegiseducation.com/news/marketing/rethink-the-enrollment-funnel/>

N&G Prospect Communication Points

N&G Lead/Prospect Points of Contact

- Corporate Representative
- Qualification Team
- Enrollment Counselor
- AES Operations
- Spirit Care
- Financial Aid
- Student Account Services
- Student Success
- N&G Marketing
- Academic Departments

New Enrollment Funnel

Awareness

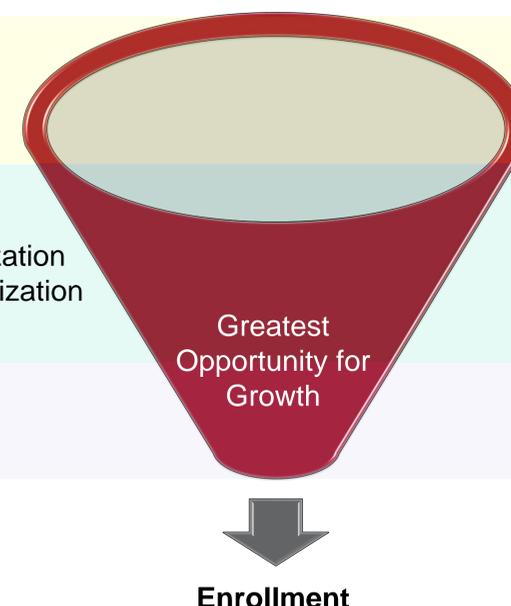
- Name buys
- Direct mail
- Radio
- Student search
- Billboards
- TV

Consideration

- Paid search (PPC)
- Social media ads
- Display/retargeting
- Website strategy
- Referral strategy
- Search engine optimization
- Conversion rate optimization

Yield

- Admissions training
- CRM utilization
- Enrollment process optimization



Note. Taken from Collegis Education. (2023, July 17). *Rethinking the enrollment funnel for higher ed.* <https://collegiseducation.com/news/marketing/rethink-the-enrollment-funnel/>