



MEMORANDUM

TO: Strategic Enrollment Management Committee

Dr. Sharon Johnson, Chair	Mr. John Mark Jones
Mr. Jeremy Anderson	Ms. Dolly Lasater
Ms. Tina Boitnott	Dr. Jerry Parish
Ms. Paige Bussell	Mr. Nathan Pieratt
Dr. Ricky Dobbs	Ms. Veronica Reed
Ms. Barbara Forbes	Mr. Charles Robnett
Mr. Luis Franco	Ms. Louise Skinner
Dr. Harry Fullwood	Dr. Stephen Starnes
Mr. Stephen Garretson	Ms. Amber VanLue
Ms. Wendy Gruver	Ms. Hope Young
Mr. Jack Harred	Student Representative
Ms. Stephanie Holley	

FROM:

Dan R. Jones
President

DATE: October 10, 2008

SUBJECT: Strategic Enrollment Management

Since its founding, Texas A&M University-Commerce and its predecessor institutions have awarded more than 105,000 degrees, preparing generations of Texans and citizens of the world for careers and leadership positions in a wide variety of settings. While our mission of providing access to educational opportunity has remained constant, the environment within which we deliver that mission has changed in profound ways. Our students come to us from increasingly diverse backgrounds, and they face formidable challenges in their quest to earn a college degree. We, in turn, are challenged to deliver the service and support they require if they are to persist and graduate in a timely manner. In this era of increased accountability, our success as a university will be measured by the success of our students. Our future as an institution will therefore depend on our ability to attract qualified students and provide them the support they must have to realize their academic objectives.

With these considerations in mind, I am establishing the Strategic Enrollment Management Committee. I suggest that the work of the committee proceed along three fronts:

- Setting strategic directions;
- Defining implementation activities, performance indicators, and measurable outcomes; and,
- Assessing key processes and engaging in continuous improvement of service and performance

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Setting Strategic Directions

The first task of the Committee will be to draft a strategic plan for enrollment management that aligns with the Texas A&M University-Commerce 2007-2012 Strategic Plan. The document should be grounded in vision and mission statements that provide the conceptual framework for an integrated enrollment management effort. Following the structure of the University Strategic Plan, these broad directions should provide the foundation for clearly articulated objectives, strategies for implementation, and measurable performance outcomes.

A central goal of the university's Strategic Plan is to increase undergraduate and graduate enrollment in a manner that is consistent with academic excellence. This goal is closely related to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's goal of "Closing the Gaps" in participation and success. I therefore anticipate that measured and high-quality enrollment growth will be a central goal of the Strategic Plan for Enrollment Management. Additional goals you adopt will be informed by the experiences and aspirations of every member of the committee. Each of you is aware of strengths and challenges in your areas; each of you can share exemplary practices as well as opportunities for improvement. All, without question, understand and embrace the mission of Texas A&M University-Commerce.

It is my hope that, by the end of the fall semester, the committee will be prepared to present a Strategic Plan for Enrollment Management to the Executive Council.

Defining Strategies, Performance Indicators, and Performance Targets

After the Strategic Plan for Enrollment Management has been reviewed and approved by the members of the Executive Council, the committee will begin implementation. The first task will be to inventory and evaluate the effectiveness of current practices that are central to the attainment of the goals outlined in the Plan. In compiling this inventory, it may be useful to outline the many points at which students interact with the university in their journey from recruitment through graduation to alumni status. This "flow chart" of enrollment experiences, defined from the students' perspective, will provide a context for identifying and assessing key processes.

Once essential enrollment management processes have been defined, committee members should determine performance indicators for measuring whether these processes are being conducted efficiently and effectively. These indicators may be both quantitative and qualitative. For example, quantitative key performance indicators for financial aid processes could be the total amount of aid awarded during a defined recruitment cycle, the percentage of students receiving aid, the per capita amount of aid awarded, the gross amount of financial aid being distributed, and so forth. Qualitative indicators for the same area could include students' satisfaction levels with the process as determined through formal and informal surveys, feedback from high school and community college counselors regarding their experiences in dealing with university staff, and so forth. Once these performance indicators have been identified, committee members should set performance targets associated with each. These targets should be specific, reasonable, and ambitious.

It is anticipated that this phase of the committee's work will be accomplished in the spring semester.

Assessing key processes and engaging in continuous improvement of service and performance

The third phase of the committee's work is a natural continuation of the first and second. As strategies for improvement are implemented, the committee will collect data, monitor and reset performance targets as appropriate, and engage in continuous review of strategic goals. It is anticipated that the committee will issue an annual report documenting its successes as well as opportunities for continued improvement, to be shared with the university community.

"Quick-Start" Initiatives

The process as outlined will, I am confident, result in a comprehensive plan for improving enrollment management processes and outcomes. It is, of necessity, lengthy and time-consuming, requiring broad consultation and extensive data collection. As the committee's work proceeds, I ask that the members identify three "quick-start" initiatives that will result in short-term gains in the attainment of key performance objectives. I ask that the committee identify these initiatives by November 1 so that they may be reported to the Executive Council and implemented this semester.

Many factors contribute to the development of a comprehensive enrollment management plan, not all of which are subject to our control. For example, one of the best predictors of college success is the level of educational attainment of students' parents, a variable over which we have no control. However, we have complete control over both the frequency and quality of interactions we have with prospective and current students and their family members. As the committee plans and implements a comprehensive enrollment management plan, I urge its members to gather information from other institutions that have been successful in this area, and to adapt best practices to our local circumstances. Insofar as our mission compels us to extend to prospective students the opportunity to transform their lives through higher education, we are mandated to grow. I am confident that the committee will engage that aspect of our mission in creative and intentional ways.

Next Steps

Dr. Sharon Johnson, interim associate vice president for academic and student affairs, has agreed to chair the committee. She will be contacting you with information about meeting times. I appreciate your commitment to this important effort, and thank you in advance for the contributions you will be making to the success of our students and the future of our university.