



October 3, 2016

Dr. Edward Martinez
Vice President for Enrollment Management
New Mexico Highlands University
1005 Diamond Street
Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701

Dear Edward,

This letter and ensuing report serve as a follow-up to our meetings on September 19-20, 2016.

First of all, congratulations on your relatively new assignment! As I mentioned to you in person, I am impressed with the level of enrollment management knowledge that you possess after such a short time in your role as vice president.

Thank you for arranging a full schedule on my last visit. I really appreciate the tremendous work you did in preparation for the visit. Meeting the key players and learning what has been established thus far was critical for me in gaining an understanding of the current situation at New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) and the desired outcomes.

We both know the challenges ahead are daunting; however, I am convinced that, through development of a good enrollment plan and persistence in adhering to the plan, NMHU will achieve its enrollment goals. Both you and Jessica bring the essential leadership skills necessary to create and execute an effective plan. The first key step in this process is building a reliable and dependable infrastructure.

After each visit, I will provide you with a written summary of what I consider to be the key findings, recommendations, and next steps from the visit.

Key findings will identify important strategic, operational, or tactical situations currently employed at NMHU. With each visit, I will gain a greater understanding of the enrollment operation at the Highlands. In so doing, I will contextualize the information, identify it as a strength or opportunity, and prioritize the finding not only in light of the specific visit in which it is discovered but also within the broader context of the consulting engagement.

Recommendations are correlated to the key findings and are designed to provide the best course of action to be taken in order to achieve stated enrollment objectives. As was true with findings, my recommendations will be prioritized in order to address the greatest opportunities for achievement of our goals, given time and resources available.

Finally, next steps are concrete suggestions regarding how NMHU may want to implement the recommendations that are made. Generally, we will need to work together to determine who should be responsible for a stated next step, in what timeframe, and at what budget expense if applicable. Next steps also refer to agenda items for the following visit.

Our current contract is for (3) two-day on-campus visits plus access to me in between visits. However, if during the course of our consultation you wish to alter this plan, we have some flexibility within general perimeters.

Key Deliverables

- Focus on activating tactical strategies and activities while the enrollment plan is developed.
- Develop clear and measurable annual goals and strategies.
- Create detailed action plans that outline how each strategy will be implemented and evaluated for effectiveness.
- Provide exit briefings and written follow-up reports after each on-site consultation.
- Ongoing access to your consultant between visits.

Initiatives

- Identify annual new-student enrollment goals and key recruitment strategies.
- Produce collaborative, data-informed, and detailed marketing/recruitment plans which will achieve annual new-student recruitment goals.
- Provide guidance on the securing of a customer relationship module (CRM).
- Encourage collaboration across departments to increase admitted student yield to enrollment.
- Build the recruitment funnel stages to the levels necessary to support NMHU's goals.
- Create a stronger inquiry pool that will produce the student mix you desire.
- Ensure NMHU staff spend the majority of their time and resources on students who are most likely to enroll.
- Assess current data capabilities and improve reporting.
- Review written and electronic communications to focus them on the most effective recruiting messages.
- Segment communications by unique populations and levels of interest.
- Analyze current web and social media efforts to improve academic content and connections with students.
- Review and strengthen the enrollment impact of your telecommunications and campus visit programs.
- Improve collaborations between admissions and financial aid, including cross-training to empower admissions staff.
- Improve territory management with complete funnel goals and tracking.
- Train staff and student workers to improve their impact on student recruitment.

I felt energized after leaving the campus and am confident that, by building a solid infrastructure to enhance the processes you have established, we can achieve your goals.

Sincerely,



John Plotts
Associate Consultant

JP/cvc

c: Anne Monroe, vice president for recruitment consulting services, Ruffalo Noel Levitz
Brian Jansen, executive consultant, Ruffalo Noel Levitz
Dave Trites, senior associate, Ruffalo Noel Levitz

Overview

New Mexico Highlands University is a regional public university with a very beautiful campus, situated approximately two hours northeast of Albuquerque, in Las Vegas, NM. With increasing challenges facing universities enrolling first-time-in-college freshmen and decreasing state support, NMHU desires to establish a recruitment plan to enhance both freshmen and transfer enrollment with an added emphasis on out-of-state students. Ruffalo Noel Levitz has been retained to provide consulting services with a view toward developing an annual enrollment plan which would result in NMHU achieving a total enrollment of 4,000 to 4,500 students by 2020.

Key Findings

1. In a milieu of state funding reductions and increased competition in the marketplace, the senior leadership recognizes the need to enhance enrollment revenue and is willing to commit resources to that end.
2. The university employs many of the key components typically found in an effective recruitment plan; however, the coordination of these components needs to be enhanced.
3. The admissions office lacks a robust CRM to administer and track prospective student contacts.
4. Marketing materials and consistent branding are areas for opportunity.
5. Website resources, particularly a designated “content manager” in admissions, are absent.
6. The staff is proud of the institution and welcomes the opportunity to grow the enrollment.

Recommendations

1. Secure a CRM in order to manage prospective student engagement.
2. Establish a coordinated communication plan that includes admissions, financial aid, student life, and academic departments.
3. Be sure to include the international office, veteran affairs, and the campus centers in the enrollment plan. Consider assigning enrollment goals to these groups.
4. Fill open admission counselor positions.
5. Assign application, admit, and enrollment goals for each counselor.
6. Cross-train admissions counselors on the fundamentals of financial aid.
7. Consider adding a student calling program to assist with prospect qualification, among other projects.
8. Establish a prospect qualification system so that priority can be placed on students who are most likely to enroll. (This is what ForecastPlus will eventually do for NMHU, once it is implemented.)
9. Consider having a day dedicated to a campus visit for seniors in the fall and admitted students in the spring. Current individualized/customized tours are excellent.
10. Explore opportunities to connect with coaches in the recruitment process.
11. In late summer, invite department chairs to a meeting with admission counselors to make sure the counselors are accurately representing the academic programs to prospective students and parents.
12. In addition to department chair meetings at the end of summer, consider creating a “one-page” fact sheet on each major to be used by counselors as handouts at high school programs and campus visits.

These fact sheets should mirror the academic information found on the web pages, which also should be populated with current information.

13. Generate a “you are special” admit letter. Perhaps consider send a small box to include the admit letter and some NMHU “swag” to convey an idea of pride and ownership in the admitted student.
14. Create a prospect communication plan. This can be as simple as an email “drip campaign” to highlight “points of pride” at NMHU and encourage the student to apply.
15. Communication plans for applicants and admitted students is highly personalized, which is good but time-consuming. The acquisition of a CRM can help enhance and streamline the personal communication while keeping it very personalized.
16. Leverage the work being done in student life regarding student activities. It appears the assumption is there is little to do in Las Vegas. Highlighting some of the recent activities in the marketing material can dispel that idea.
17. Create a dedicate Facebook page for admitted students. This is very easy and gives admitted students a sense of belonging. Be sure to have an admissions staff member monitor the page. It can also be a means of “re-selling” the school to admitted students. Postings of alumni achievement or athletic success can enhance this page.
18. Use a cost comparison worksheet to help students ascertain the real, direct costs of attending NMHU as opposed to other schools.
19. Consider automating the uploading of ACT and SAT scores to save on data-entry time.

Next Steps

1. Schedule a Slate CRM demo.
2. Create an interdepartmental “admit student communication” committee.
3. Set the date and agenda for our next meeting.

Edward, I believe we are off to a great start! You have some fundamental needs to address; namely the need for a system of organizing your recruitment data. Before we start building a large structure, we need to be sure you have a good foundation. If Slate is not the solution, we can consider a less expensive (and less robust) system like a “Constant Contact” or other tool.

I am happy to work with you and Jessica remotely on anything you desire. I have sent Jessica the information for the Slate demo. I will send other tools that may be helpful (cost comparison worksheet, fact sheets for majors, etc.).

I look forward to our next visit!