Enrollment Professionals: The Centralization Movement and External Influences

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USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice

• Founded in 2007 at the University of Southern California

• Center Goals
  – Provide forums that allow scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to share their perspectives and further generate ideas that enhance our understanding of enrollment issues
  – Conduct and sponsor research
  – Enhance the level of professionalism within the enrollment management field
  – Serve as a central hub for information relating to enrollment issues
OVERVIEW

ON THE WEB:

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I. Explore the educational and career backgrounds of chief enrollments and chief admission officers

II. Examine enrollment structures

III. Study the extent to which market-oriented influences are shaping the practice of enrollment management
• Interview participants were gathered using data from a 2007-08 salary survey of HR representatives at 3,800 institutions conducted by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR)

• Institutions self-identified themselves as having a Chief Enrollment Officer (CEnO), Chief Admissions Officer (CAdO), or both
Chief Enrollment Officers defined as:
  • Responsible for development of marketing plans for recruitment and retention of students. Also coordinates institutional efforts in admissions, financial aid, records and registration and advising.

Chief Admissions Officers defined as:
  • Responsible for the admission of undergraduates. May also be responsible for recruitment and selection and for the admission of graduate and professional students or for scholarship administration or similar functions.
• Interviews of approximately one hour in length each were conducted in the spring of 2009

• Final set of interview participants (n=52) included in this analysis consisted of:
  • 19 CEnOs (out of 48 volunteers)
  • 17 CAdOs at institutions with CEnOs (out of 32 volunteers)
  • 16 CAdOs at institutions without CEnOs (out of 61 volunteers)

• Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, coded, and themes extracted for analysis
Popular bachelor’s degrees
• English, History, Psychology and Business

Popular master’s degrees
• Education/HED Administration, College Student Personnel/Counseling, and MBA

Doctoral completion
• 2 CAdOs had completed doctorates
• 5 CEnOs had completed doctorates

None of the doctorates were earned at the enrollment professionals’ current institutions
Why do enrollment professionals believe it may be beneficial to earn a doctorate?

• Career stability/advancement
  • Many stated possible presidential aspirations
  • A “status factor”
• Credibility/confidence with subordinates and within the institution
• Theoretical and practical knowledge that can be applied to the position
• Personal gratification
For those enrollment professionals without a doctorate, what has prevented them from earning the degree?

• Lack of access to a nearby doctoral program
• Lack of time
• Lack of desire/interest
• Degree not necessary for career advancement/success or lack of desire for career advancement beyond a point requiring a doctorate
• Lack of programs specific to needs of enrollment professionals
• How did enrollment professionals initially enter the profession?
  • Recruited
  • Connections made as students
  • Alumni connections
  • Career uncertainty
  • Lack of available jobs in areas of expertise
Building Careers in the Profession

• How do the careers of enrollment professionals evolve?
  • Cosmopolitan approach
  • Local approach
  • Relational approach
  • Network approach
  • Falling into the position due to institutional need
Attributed to:

• Experience
• Education
• Great mentors – locally and nationally
• Involvement with professional associations
• Work ethic
Areas of responsibility **CEnOs** commonly not prepared for:

- Personnel issues
- Knowledge of various units within a comprehensive enrollment system
- Budgeting
- Statistical modeling
- Marketing
Looking to Future Professional Development Opportunities

• Knowledge in the following areas would help enrollment professionals become more effective:
  • Best practices and strategies
  • How institutional units in- and outside EM work together
  • National EM public policy trends and how they will affect institutions
  • Marketing
  • How to be politically influential within institutions
  • Government regulations
Reporting Structure – Institutions with CEnOs
Reporting Structure – Institutions with CAdOs only
Enrollment Structures at Institutions with CEnOs
Centralized Enrollment Systems

• “Core” enrollment units under the oversight of the CEnO
  • All of these CEnOs oversee UG admissions and financial aid
• Many other enrollment related units also under the CEnO
  • About half of these CEnOs oversee graduate admissions and aid
  • 14 of 17 oversee the registrar
  • 7 of 17 oversee marketing and communications
  • 6 of 17 oversee institutional research
  • 6 of 17 are directly responsible for student retention
Centralized Enrollment Systems

- What motivated these institutions to centralize?
  - The need for greater coordination of EM units
  - Because other institutions were centralizing
  - To put enrollment experts in charge of enrollment functions
  - Consultant recommendations
  - New presidents/provosts with an agenda to centralize
Centralized Enrollment Systems

• Advantages to centralization
  • A greater capacity to respond to budgetary challenges through enrollment; improved fiscal position for the institution
  • Greater access to internal resources for EM
  • Ease of communication/sharing of data among EM units
  • Effective use of personnel
Challenges associated with centralized enrollment models

• Diminished capacity for success if CEnO not at a cabinet level
• Constant need for collaboration/clarity of focus/collective identity to lead a diverse set of units
• Faculty may defer all enrollment responsibilities to the central admin
Hybrid Enrollment Systems (moving toward centralization) are characterized as such because:

- Some programs remain historically autonomous with their own admissions processes
- Narrow front-end focus
- Graduate admissions processes often remain uncoordinated
- EM committees have substantial ownership of institutional enrollment priorities
- Functional silos remain
- Physical barriers to centralization
Hybrid Enrollment Systems (moving toward centralization)

- Challenges faced by institutions with partial or decentralized enrollment systems headed by CEnOs:
  - Students sometimes not made aware of all of their options/opportunities during the admissions process
  - A lack of oversight over graduate admissions
  - Individual interpretation of each unit’s EM role
  - Transfer students can fall through cracks due to credit review and registration delays
Hybrid Enrollment Systems (moving toward centralization)

• What is preventing greater centralization?
  • Historical belief in departmental autonomy
  • A sense that a less centralized approach is already working
  • Lack of physical space on campus to visibly bring EM units together
Why is a movement toward centralization expected to continue?

• Presidents/Provosts and senior leadership teams committed to centralizing EM units
• New senior personnel from centralized shops bring expectations for centralization to their new positions
• Consultants recommending centralization
“CAdO Only” Systems

- Why do they exist?
  - Historical
  - In response to failed attempts to centralize EM units
- Advantages of this model
  - More buy-in across the institution
  - Checks and balances
  - More collective enrollment management responsibilities
Disadvantages of the “CAdO only” model

• Slow processes and/or progress
• Communication and timing issues
• Conflicting interests lead to collective complications
• Reactionary approach
• Lack of access to resources
“CAdO Only” Systems

- What makes the model work?
  - A well-articulated and executed enrollment plan
  - A lack of competition
  - Local personnel

- What prevents centralization behind a CEnO?
  - Lack of funds for the position
  - Perception that the current model works
  - Personnel who maintain status quo
  - Concern about “unit crowding”
Themes to Explore: Professional Strategies and Development

- Groups and associations met with/followed regularly:
  - NACAC
  - AACRAO
  - AIR
  - American Marketing Association
  - College Board
  - State consortiums
  - NASFAA
  - USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice
  - ACT
Regular Use of Consultants and/or Vendors

- Virtually every participating institution reported regular use of consultants and/or vendors
- The most common reasons for not using consultants/vendors regularly:
  - Have already sustained growth
  - Have internal capacity for research and policy analysis
  - Limited funds available for consultants and vendors
Themes to Explore: Professional Strategies and Development

In what areas do enrollment professionals utilize consultants/vendors?

- Visibility and marketing
- Financial aid modeling
- Financial aid leveraging – including the matrix awarding process
- Tuition discounting matrices
- Search
- Electronic items
- Publications (includes viewbooks)
- Strategy/Idea generation
- Outreach – including e-mail campaigning
- Registrar functions – including student information systems
- Predictive modeling
- Campus visit experience
- Imaging
- Survey research
- Data analysis
- Branding
- Online applications
Themes to Explore: Professional Strategies and Development

Why turn to consultants/vendors?

• Build internal support by having a third party validate ideas
• Financially advantageous compared to hiring personnel
• Expertise
• Politically easier than trying to expand EM operations
• Lack of staff (already overworked)
• CEnO’s lack of familiarity with a unit’s responsibilities
• Institutional anonymity while gaining information from students
A Culture of Sharing (or Borrowing)

Where do enrollment professionals look for strategy ideas?

- Consultant firms
- Business resources
- Professional association publications/communique
- Professional association conferences/events
- State coordinating board events
- Research journals
- Online/Published Literature
- Colleagues
A Culture of Sharing (or Borrowing)

- Online advising tool
- One stop model
- Straight cell analysis and model
- YouTube
- Contacting HS counselors directly
- Modifying campus tours
- Recruiting program for seniors who left in good standing
- Grant programs
- Front-loading financial aid awards
- Creating no-loan and loan cap programs
- Parent handbook for parents of first-time freshmen
Additional Observations and Questions

• Enrollment professionals and advanced degree attainment
• Role differences among CAdOs in various enrollment systems
• Less than half of CEnOs mentioned student retention and/or graduation rates as a performance pressure
• What do various reporting structures reveal about institutional priorities?
• How are business values influencing higher education?
• Terminology issues – “enrollment” and “admissions” were often used interchangeably
• How can we improve efforts to prepare future enrollment professionals and meet the anticipated needs of institutions?
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http://www.usc.edu/cerpp

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