Translating the Mission in Student Selection

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Institutional Context

- National, residential liberal arts college with a School of Music and a School of Business & Leadership
- One of five national liberal arts colleges in the Pacific Northwest
- $280 million endowment
- 80% of revenues derived from tuition and fees
- Tuition, room, and board: $52,648
- 2,600 undergraduates from 44 states, 16 countries
- 96% of first-year students received need-based or merit aid;
  - 82% of need met with grants, scholarship, loans, work;
  - 20% Pell recipients
## A 40-Year Trajectory

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1970’s</th>
<th>2010’s</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Headcount</td>
<td>3,257</td>
<td>2,837</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average SAT</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>1241</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-Year Graduation Rate</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freshmen from outside WA</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students of Color</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts Majors</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>89%</td>
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A new financial aid model provided greater insight into the influence of “price” on the composition of our entering class.

We met our enrollment goal while lowering our discount rate.

Academic profile, first generation college, and underrepresented students declined from last year.
Trustee Enrollment Work Group

- Our Market Position
- Our Students
- A Financially Sustainable Enrollment Strategy
University of Puget Sound – Competitive Landscape: FAFSA Based Cross-Applicants Fall 2011-2013

weighted by size of entering freshmen class
“The mission of the university is to develop in its students capacities for critical analysis, aesthetic appreciation, sound judgment, and apt expression that will sustain a lifetime of intellectual curiosity, active inquiry, and reasoned independence. A Puget Sound education, both academic and cocurricular, encourages a rich knowledge of self and others; an appreciation of commonality and difference; the full, open, and civil discussion of ideas; thoughtful moral discourse; and the integration of learning, preparing the university’s graduates to meet the highest tests of democratic citizenship. Such an education seeks to liberate each person's fullest intellectual and human potential to assist in the unfolding of creative and useful lives.”
“Conventional wisdom tells you that college is all about the mountaintop, all about the frenzied pursuit of some high golden peak. We’re not interested in conventional wisdom. We’re interested in every kind of landscape, every kind of life, every destiny. We make our own wisdom.”
“Our 2,600 students are proudly unclassifiable and universally kind... We’re ambitious and modest. We’re collaborative and independent minded. We’re rooted in the pioneering Pacific Northwest and in love with the world. None of these things are contradictions. All of them make sense.”
How Do We Define “Quality?”

• How we have been defining it
  • For admission: holistic process incorporating academic factors plus personal qualities and characteristics
  • For need-based and merit aid: Combination of Standardized Tests, High School GPA, Rigor of Curriculum, Financial Need

• What we are discussing
  • Our mission is about outcomes – not inputs.
  • Our branding is about intellectual engagement, personality and possibility – not standardized quantitative measures.
  • We need to define “quality” in a way that reflects our “brand”
A First Step

• Analyzed several years of data to see what information gathered during the application process best predicted student success (first-year retention and performance)

• Found some new criteria with predictive value.
  • Added in Overall Fit” and “Writing”
  • Reduced weight for standardized testing by 60%
  • Increased weight for GPA by 120%

• Should have a positive impact on diversity and retention

• Enrollment Work Group engaged in conversation about defining quality, diversity, and financial sustainability
How Do We Make this Financially Sustainable?

- Discussing big picture of “revenue streams” at February Board Meeting. Currently 80% of revenues are derived from tuition, room and board.
- Increasing access sustainably
  - Announcing today that we will meet full demonstrated financial need for students who have participated in our Access Programs – college preparation and tutoring programs operated in partnership with the Tacoma Public Schools
  - Goal is to enroll 5-10 new first-year students annually in a cohort program
Reflections

• Market position can both constrain and liberate institutions, as can history and brand, as they try to align selection with mission
• Puget Sound has a certain freedom given its relatively strong position, but relatively less well-known brand and its shorter history as a national liberal arts college
• Every institution has a different conversation