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Why North Campus is important

It should be apparent to everyone by now that the College is facing and will continue to face serious recruitment challenges in the near to medium term. It is not my case to make in front of the senate but the folks who are familiar with the situation believe we have reached, if not passed, the tipping point with our out-of-state tuition. Meanwhile the traditional population of 18 year olds from the Northeast whose parents we have come to rely on to pay that tuition is diminishing. The same decline is taking place in all regions of the country except the South. Meanwhile, adult students make up a fast growing segment of the undergraduate population in the US, comprising around 40 percent. When adult students will soon be 50 percent of all undergraduate students in the US, no university can build a long term enrollment strategy without planning for significant growth in the adult student population. This is not new ground for the College. The College once had a robust night school that lasted for decades.

Challenges faced in implementation phase of BPS

1. Market awareness: The name is a challenge. We are introducing a new degree with a new name that no one outside of higher education has heard of and most people insiders have never heard. So we are asked what is professional studies fairly often. Things are further complicated by the fact that the degree is organized into concentrations and not majors. Prospective students and employers know what majors are.
2. Market saturation: The market already has many options; many of them have operated in the area for decades. Adults have come to accept these institutions as the legitimate options in adult education.
3. Aggressive advertising: The advertising strength of the competition is no secret. Many for-profit schools in the area advertise aggressively, bringing awareness and legitimacy to their brand. On the other hand the community was largely unaware that the College has a North Campus until recently. The College itself is viewed as a private institution for white students, and definitely not interested in adult learners.
4. Minimum GPA requirement: All students who apply for the BPS are evaluated as transfer students and must have a GPA of 2.6 to be eligible to admission. It is hard to say what impact this is having because many prospects do not submit transcripts once they learn about the entry requirements. However, we believe about 40% of prospects have GPA between 2.25 and 2.6.
5. Transfer credit: Transfer credit is important for adult students because credits transferred speed up the time to degree completion. Credits are transferred to the College and not to the program. Even though students can theoretically transfer up to 87 earned hours, the common practice is that a lot of hours are rejected. Because transfer credits are so important to these
students it would be very helpful to them if they were able to receive even elective credits. (4) and (5) are frequent deal breakers for students as they decide between BPS and completing their degree at another institution.

6. Too few offerings: The BPS is the only undergraduate program of study that can be completed at the North Campus. Additional undergraduate degrees and certificates will bring greater visibility and attract students who are interested in completing a degree in other subject areas. Some areas might include Education, Business, Healthcare, Human Services, History, Psychology and Communication.

What can the Senate do to help?

1. In the short term there is definitely a need to add more concentrations to the BPS. Work is taking place at the moment of new concentrations in Human Resource Management and Healthcare Management. We expect both of these concentrations will have good market appeal.

2. As early as 2015/2016 we should undertake the task of upgrading the concentrations to majors.

3. Adult students are interested in more than just the BPS. Every branch campus carries a university’s popular majors (History, Psychology, Business, and Education). Departments and schools study the feasibility of offering their major in an evening/night school format, in addition to the day school format.

4. On the question of transfer GPA, it seems to me this is definitely a role for the Academic Standards Committee to undertake the research that would inform whether there is a case to be made for treating entry requirements for adults differently.