

Westville Committee-Recruiting Subcommittee

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Who are we? We need to be realistic about the students we are getting. We are not a first choice or destination school right now but we can be. We are not a large D2 or D1 but we can be. We need to operate as if we are still an NAIA or D3 university. That means doing everything in our power to increase the student population. We need to take advantage of every opportunity to enhance the student experience, from application to graduation. These are the six steps to our plan for PNW Westville but should also be applied to Hammond.

Initial Student Interaction

Phase One – Three steps – Marketing, Recruiting, Admissions

Marketing

The PNW social media and billboard campaigns are a great start to the marketing strategy. That's what it is though, a start. We need to combine this with in-person marketing in high schools and with direct mail flyers to high school juniors and seniors regardless of their interest in PNW. From my personal experience being on the recruiting trail, the majority of students (not just out of state or international students) have no idea what PNW offers. I run across students from Indianapolis and Chicago who have never heard of PNW. The first step to marketing is getting the knowledge into the hands of the decision makers, parents, advisors and school guidance counselors.

Recruitment

We need to get in front of the students/counselors and get the potential students on campus to meet with staff and faculty. This can happen by regular meetings with HS guidance counselors, advisors and principals in the following areas, Portage, Michigan City, Valparaiso, LaPorte, South Bend, and Ivy Tech.

We need to make this in a setting to include the decision makers, parents, and advisors. They need to see the all the information including price, programs, and possibilities after graduation. Price and Purdue degree are our biggest selling points. These two areas need to be highlighted in every recruiting session we conduct.

We should showcase our campus and how nice it is during the visits. This can be done virtually with the YouTube video that already exists or by coordinating school visit days. The school visit days should be a priority for us at both campuses. Personally, I do team visits where I can get in front of 20 kids to do a tour and explain the campus and programs. This is something that should be done for all HS juniors and seniors from the surrounding areas. The last stop on the tour is the application station where we get students to apply before they leave. We should offer a free application if they apply while on the tour or during any visit day.

The Westville campus can be actively offered as a meeting place for surrounding community organizations emphasizing its central location between Michigan City, Valparaiso and LaPorte and availability of indoor and outdoor space.

Westville could advertise itself by resuming programs that bring community members and high school students to campus. An example is the Odyssey series of guided tours of Westville's artwork. Classes could be opened to senior citizens gratis or at reduced rates.

(NOTE: The Westville campus is part of the local area community in a way that Hammond simply is not. This is a real strength that needs to be built upon. KS)

Admissions

The Admissions Department needs to work closely with the Recruiting and the Marketing Departments, to track who is applying and from what area they are applying. This information is crucial to identify where our marketing and recruiting efforts are working.

Admissions also needs to follow up with each student in multiple ways to ensure that we don't lose any prospective students. Follow up calls, texts and emails need to be sent to each and every student until they are on campus each fall. The Admissions Department need to act as secondary recruiters to enhance the student application process. In my experience, students can get frustrated with the process and fall through the cracks. When this happens, students generally take the easier way to a university. We have many first generation students, students from low income areas, and students where PNW is not their first choice. Regardless of the reason they are exploring PNW, we need to pay extra attention to make the application and admissions process run smoothly.

Advanced Student Interaction

Phase Two – Three Steps – Follow Up, Retention and Experience

Follow Up

Follow up is the most important part of recruiting and should include calls, emails and texts as students respond differently to each. Admissions need to have detailed descriptions of where each student who inquires is at in the process. A new Division within Admissions needs to be created with the sole focus of transitioning an inquiring student to full admit. The entire staff needs to be well versed on everything PNW, campus, housing, and programs of study.

Retention

PNW has a poor track record with retention. This stems from customer service issues, academic issues, and not providing the students with the best overall experience we can. Why are students leaving? We need to figure out the why, and at the same time give the students the best experience from the initial tour and application through their graduation. Students stay at a university for a variety of reasons. This is directly connected to how they interact with staff and professors. If students like how they are learning and how they are involved in campus, they will stay.

Westville students need to be convinced that should they make a commitment to PNW, PNW will commit to them by delivering on promises of degree programs, classes and student life.

Experience

Personalization, making the student and the family feel important, is vital. We need to be better at customer service and making sure we address efficiently any issue a students may have in the application process and beyond. We aren't a big, destination university, but our size afford students the opportunity to engage with professors, staff and coaches. That personal attention is the reason the students will stay at PNW until graduation. People will make the difference to increase the retention rate.

In addition, PNW needs to try to create more campus events to give the students a reason to stay on campus. We are perceived as a commuter school so we need to combine athletic events with student activities to enhance student engagement.

Plan

We can't cut anymore; we need to spend to get students. If we continue to cut, we will no longer be an institution. Eventually there will be nothing left to cut.

We need to build and restart to increase enrollment and retention. This starts with better coordination between the Admissions Department and Marketing and Communication. Both should be opened to greater participation from Westville faculty in recruitment activities. We need to get information to the local high schools and households to make sure as many students know all the good things PNW has to offer. The second step is to retain the students we already have. Most important to all of this is the experience the students receive. Each student needs to feel that everyone at PNW is doing everything they can to help the students succeed. Lastly, we need to use the resources we have within each department to enhance the student experience with events and recruitment. This includes expanding varsity sports, creating a club sports division, and expanding our intramurals and actively cultivating student clubs.

i Marketing

- Target every HS within an hour radius of Westville with materials
- Blanket the area with direct mail marketing to area juniors and seniors
- Direct mail to households needs to include pricing and programs
- Continue with billboard marketing
- Continue with all digital marketing
- Continue with social media and online marketing
- Advertise degree in the local press like the Herald Dispatch and The Beacher
- Advertise Westville through concurrent enrollment classes
- Utilize faculty and coaches for guest lectures at local high schools

i Recruiting

- Target every HS within an hour radius of Westville
- Work with advisors and school officials to promote PNW to students
- Assign recruiters to cover regions
- Create in-person recruiting sessions at all area high schools
- Create visit days for area high school juniors and seniors

- Create individual visit days for specific high schools
- Create Zoom Virtual visit days
- Create a new tuition structure – out of state and international same price
- Target Canada as a way to increase student population
- Incorporate departments that are involved with campus tours
- Incorporate all departments in campus visit days
- Make sure to include low income individuals to ensure they are aware of university opportunities
- Make sure to include minority students to ensure they are aware of university opportunities
- Build durable, active relationships with local communities to promote students to attend PNW

ii Admissions

- Monitor who and from where students are applying
- Create mentorship program to work with incoming freshman from acceptance through their sophomore year
- Work closely with Marketing and Communication to be involved with all events
- Create free application days during all visit days on campus and at high schools
- Create an exit interview strategy with all students who do not graduate PNW

ii Follow Up

- Text, call and email weekly to all students who have not accepted their offer
- Create a division within Recruitment and Admissions to monitor the progress of each student application

ii Retention

- The new division will assist students from application to through their sophomore year
- The Dean of Students Office, faculty and advisors will increase the monitoring of students to make sure they are succeeding in the classroom and social life
- The same will connect students with activities on campus
- The Student Government Association should be encouraged to pay special attention to Westville students during the years of Westville revitalization.
- Continue the excellent work of TRIO Student Services and the Disabilities Access Center

ii Experience

- Provide more staff and professors visibility to students
- Students stay because of us
- Combine sporting events with campus events to create a positive on campus experience
- Create more food events, intramural events, campus vs. campus events
- Expand fall festival and homecoming week
- Create new events to involve students, staff and faculty
- Increase frequency of these events to increase student traffic on campus
- Provide a group element in all virtual classes
- Expand athletics with new varsity sports

Expand athletics with a new club sports division

Reintroduce fraternities and sororities to campus

Allow the use of softball/baseball fields for student intramurals but also community events

Advertise meeting space and gym facilities to local HS and groups

Revive old programs to bring community on campus like Odyssey tours and academic Olympics