

Fall 2002 Roundtable – Undergraduate Enrollment

The following is a summary of the Fall 2002 roundtable on Undergraduate Enrollment that was held on Saturday, Sept. 21, at Lake Tiak-O'Khata. I have attempted to collect the many thoughts expressed during the meeting into logical subdivisions as much as possible. The summary is intended to be an outline of topics more than a set of opinions. The order of topics within subdivisions should not be taken as a measure of importance but merely as the order in which the topics arose in the discussion. Obviously not all topics related to enrollment were covered, and not all topics covered received equal attention. Thus this summary does not constitute a set of conclusions; rather it represents an exploration of ideas. Thanks go to all the participants who made this a very successful roundtable.

-Walter Diehl, Chair, Robert Holland Faculty Senate

A. Participants

Jimmy Abraham – Student Affairs
Brian Baldwin - Agriculture & Life Sciences
Michael Berk – Architecture
Daniel Bryant – Business Affairs
Tim Chamblee – Agriculture & Life Sciences
Susan Diehl – Forest Resources
Walter Diehl – Arts & Sciences
Paul Grimes – Business & Industry
Richard Harkess – Agriculture & Life Sciences
Carlen Henington - Education
Homes Hogue – Arts & Sciences
Tom Hosie - Education
David Huddleston - Engineering
Charles Lee – Interim President
Bruce Leopold – Forest Resources
Nancy McCarley – Arts & Sciences
Harold Nichols – Meridian Campus
Phil Oldham – Arts & Sciences
Gail Peyton – Library
Lynn Reinschmiedt – Agriculture & Life Sciences
Roy Ruby – Education, Student Affairs
Bob Taylor - Engineering
George Verrall – Academic Affairs
Clyde Williams – Arts & Sciences

B. Enrollment Goals

1. Largest in State vs. Best in State?
2. Definitions of “Best”
 - a. Good Student/Faculty ratio – Problem of counting the number of faculty; MSU Student/Faculty ratio = 16 (good compared to other comprehensive universities)
 - b. Quality of students entering university
 - c. Student success after leaving the university and other outcome measures
 - d. Quality of teaching, counseling, advising
 - e. Enrollment numbers
3. Higher standards can produce increased enrollment

C. Factors Affecting Enrollment

1. State Demographics - Enrollment should track state census numbers; A goal of some legislators and board members is to increase the proportion of MS population with college degrees; State demographics should be flat for next 10 years based on numbers of 1st graders
2. Legacy – 1st generation students attending college
3. Control of admissions – ACT & GPA limits
4. Economic Health of the State
5. Community Colleges – About 50% of our students come from community colleges
6. Other
 - a. Tuition – Differences among universities not thought to be a significant factor
 - b. Scholarship availability – Important to parents

D. Existing Enrollment Patterns

1. How is enrollment counted? - Total head count vs. numbers of true freshmen, Transfer students, International students, In-state vs. Out-of-state students
2. Patterns in 2002 – Down in all categories
3. Effects of enrollment vs. retention on patterns
4. Desire to coordinate enrollment with other universities?
5. Application patterns – If application numbers are down early, then enrollment will tend to be down
6. Effect of ACT cut-off on enrollment of African Americans
7. Enrollment patterns among units – Shifts among majors; Some units are in need of more students & some units have more students than they can handle effectively; patterns may be short-term or long-term

E. Recruitment

1. Marketing Strategies – Cornerstone Units vs. Whole University?
2. Letter to low ACT students - Poor PR but honest expression of chance of success
3. Orientation Chaos
4. Perception of marketing MSU as a “Research University” on potential students? Perception on faculty? Is time being taken away from teaching? Perception that teaching does not count; Importance of national rankings
5. Effect of moving up application deadline to May 1
6. Effect of athletic performance – Significant but slight effect
7. Recruiting out of state
8. Problem of sending mixed messages in recruiting
9. Issues of access to the “People’s University” – Concept is engrained in the culture of the university
10. Why do high ACT students come to MSU? – Programs, scholarships, parents & close friends associated with MSU
11. Honors Program – Need to put a better face on selling the honors program
12. Selling the university – Myth busting; 125 year anniversary next year; Selling success in entry into professional school
13. ITS Resources – Best students are making decisions based on what they see on the computer; Importance of an effective university website; Need for resources to help departments keep up their websites; Critical need to improve the MSU website
14. Mississippi Association of Colleges – Junior/Senior College Conference
15. MSU Junior College Conference – Invitation to junior college administrators to come to campus and talk about junior college students
16. Outreach to get prospective students on campus

17. Summer programs for prospective students – University has not made optimal use of athletic camps for recruitment; follow-up on camps and other programs not as effective as they need to be; Use of a common form to track participants in all camps; Use of common ID cards for participants in all camps; No centralized advertisement for camps/fairs; Camps may make money for departments who would be reluctant to split with university
18. Engineering & Science Fairs – Target parents while students are in the science fair
19. Other fairs - Discovery Day; Wood Magic Science Fair, Design Discovery Camp (Architecture)
20. Use of Bettersworth lecture series
21. Role of current students in recruiting new students & use of visible high school teachers in academic camps

F. Retention

1. Use of gateway courses – Courses that introduce the discipline, how to be successful students of discipline, opportunities for graduates, etc; Importance of other courses that help students adjust to college
2. Importance of faculty and students knowing each other's names
3. Mentoring program – Effective in increasing retention; Retention of mentored 1st year students is 85% (compared to 80% overall)
4. Retention of transfer students
5. Local Option Admission to programs, departments, colleges - Make sure grades are a meaningful threshold for local option; If every one does this, what is effect on students who do not get into a program? What to do with students who cannot gain admission to program or department? Local admission policies may have widespread, unintended consequences; Pedagogical vs. Financial motivation for internal standards?
6. Effect of high variance in ACTS scores on entering students
7. Academic Fair – Each department may sell itself to 1st year students and other interested students.
8. Remedial courses and placement tests
9. What to do with lower quartile in class, program, department?
10. Students often have no idea what they want to do or what they are good at; Need to counsel students as early as possible
11. Does university have an ethical obligation to students to find a major?
12. Concept of a “Freshman College”
13. Junior Division Concept (based on LSU model) – Students do not declare major until 30 hours completed, “C” average, core courses completed
14. Concept of Academic Orientation – University “Rush”; Delaying Fraternity/Sorority rush for 1 semester
15. Performance Assessment – Assessment midway through college career; junior writing class; outcome based assessment replacing input based assessment

G. Budgetary Issues

1. State allocation of funds largely based on enrollment numbers
2. 40% MSU budget (E&G) from state funds; 40% from tuition; 20% from other
3. Percent of E&G money in scholarships; MSU has lowest “discount rate” (proportion of \$1.00 income from state/tuition spent on scholarships, waivers, etc) among state universities
4. Costs associated with recruiting best students – Greater scholarship load
5. IMPACT – Statewide tuition savings plan

H. Consequences

1. Early-out Program (early retirement incentive) – As replacement faculty are hired there will be an opportunity to deal with programs that are stretched to the limit; Programs with declining enrollment may need additional faculty resources to turn trend around
2. Increased numbers of part-time faculty in classrooms – Freshmen seem to know the difference between part-time and full-time faculty; MSU spends about \$2M on part-time faculty; MSU has more expensive programs than other universities; Parents want to know who is teaching in the classroom

I. Needed Data

1. Tracking success of transfer students
2. Tracking graduates after leaving MSU
3. How many faculty FTE's are directed toward undergraduate instruction by decade?
4. How many students with $ACT \leq 20$ come to MSU and perform well?
5. What % of classes taught by full-time faculty?
6. How many faculty are at MSU?