

## **Ten Enrollment Roadblocks for Graduate and Programs**

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<http://tinyurl.com/9pozly7> (part I)

<http://tinyurl.com/8km2lgg> (part II)

“...my observation is that graduate recruitment is often *not* handled with an optimal level of direction, efficiency, and precision, making it a much more uneven process than undergraduate admissions. The problems I see fall into ten issues that affect everything from planning to marketing to financial aid.” ~ Craig Engel

### **Issue 1: There is little influence from “the top”**

- Cultural difference between UG and G recruitment, leads to hands-off approach to goal setting at Graduate level
- Grad recruitment often seen as “the program’s” territory.
- “The result is passive or no overall direction, and consequently little pressure to set goals or establish accountability – both of which are enormously important to recruitment planning.”

### **Issue 2: Graduate recruitment is decentralized**

- Issue # 1 above makes Grad recruitment a decentralized effort.
- “Graduate program directors who are charged with working with prospective students are typically faculty members whose primary purpose is to teach, conduct scholarly research, and advise students; they tend to have no training or experience in the fundamentals of recruitment.”
- Lack of follow-up, inconsistent faculty commitment, uneven communications and web content, no management of database
- Recruitment efforts lack focus.

### **Issue 3: A desire to shape the class, not grow it – creating a disconnect between the two.**

- We can have growth & a better class.
- “Growth can bring significant benefits to graduate programs such as more qualified students, increased revenue, and a wider diversity of students.”

#### **Issue 4: Ignoring the top end of the funnel**

- Graduate recruitment often begins at the Applicant stage, forgetting the prospects and inquiries.
- Reactive not strategic.
- “Graduate and professional programs need to take a lesson from undergraduate admissions and proactively build their inquiry pools through travel, solicitation, referral, and self-initiated avenues.”
- Understand and use **conversion theory** to grow and shape enrollments.
  - Focus on inquiry pool development and the conversion of inquiries to application to get desired results.

#### **Issue 5: An inadequate database to track all funnel activities**

- “...having a robust, organized data process is crucial.”
  - Centralized database, accessible to all, able to be tracked.
  - Trained staff (proper data entry, tracking)
  - Management reports

#### **Issue 6: Lack of a Strong Annual Plan**

- A strong graduate recruitment plan is necessary.
- Should be specific to graduate recruitment
  - Situation analysis
  - Goal setting
  - Strategies for goal achievement
  - Action plans
- “There should also be one master plan that is in synch with the plans for individual programs—the whole equals the sum of its parts.”

#### **Issue 7: Little personal relationship building with prospective students**

- “To get the graduate and professional students you want, you have to let them know they are wanted.”
- Building relationships early is the best way to engage prospects and move them to applicant and towards enrollment.
- Connections must be maintained.
- Takes steps with the most promising leads first.
- Build personal connections.
  - E-mails, phone, social media
  - Personal notes
  - On-campus visits, tours,
  - Interviews, meeting, open houses – WITH FACULTY!

### **Issue 8: Communication management**

- “You need to have a communication plan that is coordinated with various programs and departments and touches students at each key stage in their enrollment decision process.”
- Build a communication flow! Relevant communication is key!
- Quantity is key too. At times communication may be “bottom heavy” – lots at application, but little else beyond that.

### **Issue 9: Scholarships and financial aid**

- Master’s degree students don’t need full funding to enroll.
- “As employer benefits decline, institutions will need to discuss providing more merit and need-based assistance, but at this time, most master’s degree students exhibit a willingness to pay for the majority of their graduate education.”
- Financial aid office/assistance needs to have a different level of expertise/sensitivity

### **Issue 10: Not enough coordination among faculty/graduate directors**

- “Simply put, all of your efforts can be for naught if your graduate directors and faculty do not coordinate their efforts, especially if there is a centralized office for graduate enrollment.”
- Coordination & Communication!
  - Prevent duplication of effort
  - Decrease oversights
  - Unify programs, departments, etc.
- Bring Grad School, Graduate Program Directors & faculty together to:
  - Develop a master graduate recruitment plan
  - Identify who does what in the recruitment/enrollment management process
  - Create a communication flow
  - Establish standards of communication (content, follow-up, etc.)
  - Commit to use the data
  - Support and coordinate Graduate Recruitment/Enrollment Management efforts

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*Summary prepared by Len Roberson, Dean of the Graduate School, University of North Florida.*

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