Strategic Enrolment Management in Canada: A Framework for Success

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Outline

- Morning Session:
  - Develop a common understanding of SEM
  - Emerging SEM issues in Canada
  - Getting started with SEM

- Afternoon Session:
  - Review the major SEM planning components
  - Provide SEM plan examples
  - Tools & Resources
SEM Audit
What is SEM?
SEM: What is it?

- Lack of clarity as to what SEM is (e.g. setting enrolment targets, renaming of registrar’s function, conceptual framework, organizational structure?)

- Some manage SEM from the Registrar’s Office

- Some institution-wide committees

- Many institutions use enrolment management strategies
  - Many tactics fundamentally marketing activities

- Few have a SEM Plan
SEM ...
A Process to Shape an Institution’s Enrolment
The Classic Admissions Funnel

- Prospects
- Inquiries
- Applicants
- Admits
- Matrics
Enrolment Management: The Classical Definition

Enrollment management is an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments. Organized by strategic planning and supported by institutional research, enrollment management activities concern student college choice, transition to college, student attrition and retention, and student outcomes. These processes are studied to guide institutional practices in the areas of new student recruitment and financial aid, student support services, curriculum development and other academic areas that affect enrollments, student persistence and student outcomes from college.

- Don Hossler, 1990
SEM is...

...a comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain optimum enrolment, where optimum is defined within the academic context of the institution.

-Michael Dolence, 1993
Strategic enrollment management (SEM) is a concept and process that enables the fulfillment of institutional mission and students’ educational goals.

-Bob Bontrager, 2004
SEM Started in the U.S.

- Started in the late 1970’s at Boston College
  - As a result of declining traditional student enrolments

- Early focus on attracting new students (e.g., returning adults, women, minorities, low-income)

- Expanded to all types of PSE institutions (e.g., public, private, 2-year, 4-year, grad)
SEM Started in the U.S. (Cont’d)

- Grew to include student success
  - *First-Year Experience programs*
  - *Increased levels of student engagement*

- Increasing emphasis on connecting with institutional financial management

- Now the concern of the senior leadership team – presidents, provost, deans
Emergence of SEM in Canada

- Slower emergence of SEM in Canada

- Driven by funding cuts, lack of revenue, heavier reliance on tuition, changing demographics, increasing competition for students

- Many Canadian institutions have now adopted SEM in name, practice or both
  - We’re attending webinars, workshops & conferences
  - Some of us are working with consultants
A Few Core Concepts
The Purposes of SEM are Achieved by...

- Establishing clear goals for the number & types of students needed to fulfil the institutional mission

- Promoting student academic success by improving access, transition, retention, & graduation

- Promoting institutional success by enabling effective strategic & financial planning
The Purposes of SEM are Achieved by…

- Creating a data-rich environment to inform decisions & evaluate strategies
- Improving process, organizational & financial efficiency & outcomes
- Establishing top quality student-centred service
- Strengthening communications & collaboration among departments across the campus to support the enrolment program

-Bontrager (2004)
The Concept of Optimum Enrolment
The Student Success Continuum

Traditional Enrolment Perspective

- Recruitment/Marketing
- Orientation
- Classroom Experience
- Co-curricular Support
- Student's College/University Career
- Financial Support
- Academic Support
- Retention
- Attain Degree/Goal

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The Student Success Continuum

- **The SEM Perspective**

  - Recruitment/Marketing
  - Orientation
  - Classroom Experience
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SEM Planning Model

Meeting Goals

Tactics

Strategies

DATA

Enrollment Infrastructure
*Structure, Staffing, Skills, Systems, Service*

Clear Mission and Goals

Starting point for long term success

Typical starting point

Clear Mission and Goals

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The Enrolment Funnel is Different for Different Students

Student Type:
- New Immigrants
- International Students
- First-Generation Students
- Rural Students
- Students with Disabilities
- Dislocated Workers
- Sole Support Mothers
- Low-income Students
- Minority Students
- High-Achieving Students
A Few Ways to Look at SEM
“Capacity Development Loop”

- Programs & Courses Offered
- Demand for Programs & Courses
- Programs & Courses Developed & Approved
- Gov’t Approval For Credit Programs
- Gov’t Grants & External Funding
- Tuition & Other Sources Of Revenue

“Delivery Loop”

- Courses Taught
- Reasons For Not Continuing
- Student Attrition
- Programs & Courses Completed
- Students Graduated, Transferred, Hired
- Programs & Courses Completed
- Student Retention
- Courses Enrolled
- + or -

Seto, 2008
## Enrolment Management System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Characteristics</th>
<th>Environmental Factors</th>
<th>Institutional Goals</th>
<th>Institutional Objectives</th>
<th>Institutional Strategies</th>
<th>Desired Outcomes</th>
<th>Enduring Effect</th>
<th>Enduring Behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Member of underserved student group | Student enrolment behaviour | Quantitative Goals | Student headcount | • Marketing  
• Recruitment  
• Admission  
• Financial aid/pricing  
• Orientation  
• Residence  
• Athletics  
• First Year  
• Experience  
• Advising  
• Supplemental instruction  
• Service learning  
• Learning communities  
• Academic support  
• Peer support  
• Teaching & learning approaches  
• Student engagement  
• SEM organization  
• Data mining | Awareness  
Interest  
Commitment  
Enrolment  
Persistence  
Satisfaction  
Education  
Relationship | Awareness  
Institutional Loyalty  
Institutional Image |
| Beliefs & values | Demographic trends | Qualitative Goals | Admission average Transfer GPA | Enduring Effect | Enduring Behaviour |
| Academic preparation | Competition | Diversity Goals | Visible minorities, Aboriginal, international |
| Motivation to learn | Public Accountability (loan default rate, graduation, Accessibility, retention) | Persistence Goals | Retention rates, Student Satisfaction, graduation rates |
| Educational aspirations | Student geographic draw | Capacity Goals | Classroom capacity, adequate sections, Class size |
| Self-discipline | Economic Trends | Net Revenue Goals | Financial aid discount rate, international enrolment |
| Adaptability | Off-campus employment availability | | |
| Interpersonal skills | Federal & provincial polices | | |
| Peer involvement | | | |
| Ability to pay | | | |
| Study habits | | | |
| Family & peer Support | | | |

Adapted by Smith & Gottheil from: Kuh et al, 2007; Black, 2003
What SEM is Not

- A quick fix
- Solely an organizational structure
- An enhanced admission & marketing operation
- A financial drain on the institutional budget
- An administrative function separate from the academic mission of the institution
Mission & SEM Goals Determined By:

- Programs
- Range of Influence
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Resources
- External Policies
- Aspiration Status
- Historical Status

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Mission & SEM Goals Determined By: Niche
Determine your niche, focus on it, and deliver on it as well as you possibly can . . .
Enrolment Goals: The Classic Conundrum

➢ All may want better students
➢ Administration may want more students
➢ Faculty usually want fewer students
➢ Access vs. Quality

Adapted from Henderson
Major SEM Components

- Accessibility
- Accountability
- Admission Policies
- Financial Aid
- Geographic Draw

- Enrolment Marketing
- Organization
- Planning
- Recruitment
- Retention
SEM in Canada vs. the U.S.

...some things are the same
AND some things are different...
Values/History

- Different cultures, history, values & systems of education
- Social justice vs. market orientation
- Historical immigration patterns
- Privacy issues
- Equity/affirmative action
Emerging SEM Issues in Canada
Educational System

- Provincial control in Canada; state & federal control in U.S.
- Number & size of institutions
  - Canada has fewer institutions (230 colleges & universities vs. 3,500+), more homogeneity
  - Vary in size, not quality
  - Private, faith-based & for-profit institutions
  - Commuter vs. residential institutions
  - Quebec: Cegep system
- Tiering of institutions has been apparent in U.S., beginning to emerge in Canada
Educational System (Cont’d)

- Highest OECD education participation rate; flat graduation rate
- Blending/overlap of college & university roles, offerings
- Pressure for more seamless pathways, collaborative program
- Re-conceptualization of post-secondary education, move to differentiation
- Expanding capacity
Educational System (Cont'd)

- Emergence of accreditation bodies (quality councils)
- Private institutions (e.g. Quest, Meritus)
- Out-of-country universities establishing campuses in Canada
  - e.g. Australia’s Charles Stuart U in Burlington; Fairleigh Dickinson U in B.C.
Fiscal Pressures

- Decreased government funding
- Heavier reliance on tuition, revenues
- Increasing costs (food, energy, construction)
- Deferred maintenance, crumbling buildings & infrastructure
- Fixed costs are high & difficult to reduce (e.g., faculty & staff levels, salaries)
- Targeted funding with more strings attached

*Maintaining/expanding enrolment becomes necessary from a financial perspective*
Enrolment Planning

- Demographic “bubble” about to burst
  - Will increase in educational participation rate & immigration make up for it?

- The economy → a “wild card”

- Not just first-year numbers, but total enrolment....right through the funnel
  - Swirling, transfers
Impact of Online Learning

- Double digit growth in recent years

- Why?
  - Focus on high demand programs with strong career orientations
  - More convenient & flexible delivery mechanisms

- Distinctions between on-line and bricks & mortar institutions blurring

- Impacts enrolment & service planning & provision
Data

- Puts the “S” in SEM
- Data mining: sifting through existing data to identify patterns, relationships & trends
- Forecasting: using patterns in data to predict future
- Use of NSSE, CSSE, CUSC & other student surveys to improve student experience
- KPI’s
  - A tool for assessment of strategies, tactics & outcomes but....
  - Also used as a basis for funding (& ranking) institutions
Recruitment

- Escalating competition
- Seeking new markets (geographic, post-secondary, “mature”)
- Concern with access & persistence of “1st generation”, Aboriginal & “low-income” students
- Branding & positioning initiatives widespread
- Changing parental expectations & involvement
  - Gen-X parents involved in children’s college search, selection & career choices
- Desire for increased flexibility (scheduling, course offerings, mode of instructional delivery)
Impact of E-Recruitment

- Changing notion of “enrolment funnel”
- Development of the “stealth” marketplace
  - Proliferation of secret shoppers
  - Resistant to traditional marketing
- People get information directly from each other, not from institutions
  - Growth of WOM, “viral” marketing, social networking
  - We no longer control our own messages
- CRM systems, Web portals & enhanced Web sites
  - Information “just in time”
  - Personalized & customized communication
- Expectation of 24/7 e-services
Targeted Recruitment

- One-half of students from low-income families don’t continue past high school vs. one-quarter from high income families (Baldwin & Parkin, 2007)

- By age 20, non-Aboriginal youth 3x more likely than Aboriginal youth to be in PSE (Baldwin & Parkin, 2007)

- 81% of 18 to 24 year olds whose parents have a university education participate in PSE, compared to 53% for young people whose parents didn’t go past high school (CMSF, 2008)
Targeted Recruitment Initiatives

- Specialized academic programs
- Summer camps, bridging & transition programs
- Targeted bursaries & scholarships
- Community-based activities/partnerships/mentorships
- Marketing in other languages, in community & ethnic-based publications
- Web microsites
Admissions

- Change in philosophy from gatekeeper to facilitating enrolment
  - Self-admission; self-reporting of grades

- Centralized application centres

- Shift in timing of offers

- Some universities beginning to advocate entrance testing due to a concern over grade inflation at the high school level
Admissions (Cont'd)

- More holistic admissions assessment
- Pressure for more transfer pathways & collaborative agreements
- Dual enrolment programs
- Reserving spaces for under-represented groups
Hoping to convince the university that he is worthy of a wrestling scholarship, Nick pins the director of admissions in 13 seconds.
Financial Aid

- Shift from student support service to key SEM activity

- Before the late 1970’s:
  - Financial aid generally used to meet students’ demonstrated financial aid
  - An incentive for enrolment

- Modern financial aid practices focus on:
  - Both students’ willingness to pay & ability to pay
  - Influencing institutional brand, reputation & rankings
  - Recruitment & retention goals
Total student aid in Canada by type, 1993-94 to 2006-07

- Aboriginal
- Merit
- Education Savings Grants
- Education Tax Credits
- Need-Based Student Aid

Constant 2007 dollars.
Financial Aid (Cont’d)

- Governmental student aid has substantially increased in the past decade
- Share going to those who need it most is in decline
  - 2007: 61% targeted to students based on need
  - 1997: 80% targeted to students based on need (Berger, CMSF, 2008)
Financial Aid (Cont’d)

- Increasing government intervention (tuition decreases, freezes or limits; tax credits & rebates; savings programs)
  - Since 1999/2000 these credits have completely offset effects of any increases in tuition (Usher & Duncan, 2008)
  - Differences in level of support offered among provinces & type of support given
  - Universal aid theoretically benefits all students equally but used predominantly by higher income families
Financial Aid (Cont’d)

- Biggest failure of student financial aid system has been its inability to close gap in access to post-secondary education for low-income youth
  - Favours students with high costs, not low incomes

- Higher student debt load
  - 57% of Canadian graduating class of 2005 had student loans, up from 49% 10 years earlier (StatsCan, 2010)
  - Increase in proportion of graduates with debt loads of at least $25.00 increased to 27% (2005) from 17% (1995)
Financial Aid (Cont’d)

- Development of on-campus work-study programs

- Poor financial aid literacy
  - Need for financial aid workshops for families when students in middle & high school to explain what is available
  - Need to simplify financial aid & made it more transparent
Student Services

- In general, very similar & of good quality
  - *Budgetary pressures: cuts to services, addition of fees*

- High tech, high touch

- Student government coordinates & funds many student life services, including student union management
  - *In U.S. more faculty mentors & advisors*

- Relatively small number of residence students at most institutions
Student Services (cont’d)

- Antiquated policies, procedures, programs, delivery methods & organizational culture that developed during period of student abundance continue to function.

- Lack of a strong “culture of service”
  - Students seen as interrupting more important activities
  - Need for more e-service programs & support

- Bicameral governance structures & collegial decision-making processes make it difficult to respond quickly.
Student Success

- Recognition of link between recruitment & retention

- Many students unclear about career goals, what program to take

- Primary obstacles to access & success for under-served groups are unmet financial need; inadequate academic preparation; & insufficient information, guidance & encouragement
  - Students drop out because of dissatisfaction with their program, financial concerns, & career indecision (CMSF, 2008)

- Much focus/discussion on enhancing the student experience & student engagement
Student Success (Cont’d)

- Many programs focus on academic support & social integration
  - Importance of integrated orientation programs, academic advising, supplemental instruction
- Bridging & transition programs, service learning
- Need to review/revisit academic policies & procedures
- Recognition of need to reach out to parents, families & communities
What has been your SEM focus?

What have been the SEM challenges at your institution?
The SEM Plan: 
A Great Place to Start
When you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there.

- Cheshire Cat, *Alice in Wonderland*
I HAD A PRODUCTIVE TIME AT THE MANAGEMENT RETREAT.

WE GOLFED AS HARD AS WE COULD UNTIL WE CAME UP WITH A NEW VISION FOR THE COMPANY!!!

BUT NO ONE WROTE IT DOWN, SO WE'RE GOING TO TRY AGAIN NEXT MONTH.
"Would you please elaborate on ‘then something bad happened’?"
The enrolment plan serves as the road map for achieving specific institutional goals, typically connected to student body size, enrolment mix, and revenue, while also providing specific indicators on the effectiveness of the learning environment.

- Janet Ward, 2005
Canadian SEM Bibliography


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