

**Student Recruitment Strategy Outline**  
**Office of International Recruitment and Services**  
**St. Louis Campus**  
**Calvin W. Smith, Director**  
**November 28, 2007**

**1. SWOT Analysis**

The most recent SWOT analysis was conducted in October 2007. All members of the Office of International Services, including Calvin W. Smith, David West, Melanie Gottlieb, Bert Barry, Dorothy Nootbaar, Maureen Hamed, and Lela Prodani contributed.

**I. STRENGTHS**

*A. International Campuses*

As our name Webster University Worldwide implies, one of our main strengths is our global presence. Study abroad linked with the International Business and International Relations programs make a strong marketing tool for Webster University.

*B. Individual attention and service to students*

Webster University's faculty/student ration of 13 to 1 is a testimony to individual attention and making a personal connection with students. This message is strengthened by our policy of picking up new arrivals at the airport, and courteous attention from our staff members.

*C. New/modern facilities*

The library, dorms, Webster Village Apartments, Community Music School, and Opera Theatre are outstanding selling points. When taken in conjunction with the many computer labs and wi-fi spots on campus, Webster University offers a complete package of modern buildings and services. New state-of-the art Audio Production facilities increases marketability of media programs.

*D. International Credential Specialist and International Academic Advisor*

These two positions add to the University's commitment to provide individual service to international students, allowing for a higher level of personal service.

*E. Attractive campus in a safe, residential area*

The Webster Groves campus and surrounding community offers a friendly atmosphere that fosters learning in a peaceful atmosphere.

*F. A diverse array of majors*

We are fortunate to have programs ranging from the hard sciences to the fine arts, and everything in between.

*G. Scholarships and grants*

The limited scholarship and financial aid awards we are able to offer do help certain students achieve their dream of obtaining a U. S. university bachelor's degree.

## II. WEAKNESSES

### A. *Communication*

Communication needs to be improved in the following areas:

1. Delivery of billing statements, Connections passwords, financial aid statements and results, and health insurance cards to international students are neither quick nor efficient;
2. Other departments do not understand all of the complexities and challenges when dealing with international student issues, if one of the University's goals is to be "international", then the message needs to be reinforced from the top.

### B. *Scholarships and Grants*

Our scholarship and grant amounts have not increased in several years, whereas tuition has risen approximately 5% every year for the past several years. Students are lost to other universities that offer higher awards. Our current tuition and living expense budget places us in a financial bracket that competes with universities that have a higher level of prestige and more consistent branding. We also do not offer sports scholarships, which is a common question during recruitment trips.

### C. *Lack of Adequate Staff*

Active Admissions, increasing numbers of applicants, increased reporting expectations for a variety of University stakeholders, expanding travel requirements, and the need for even greater amounts of individual attention require more work and more staff to execute it properly. We are known in the international market for our ability to provide a high level of personal service; that reputation gives us an edge that we may lose without additional human resources.

### D. *Multiple Campus Locations*

Students often express confusion over the rules and regulations regarding which campuses they can attend, for how long, financial aid ramifications, etc. This can be very time consuming to explain, confusing for the student, and lead to indecisiveness for the potential applicant, especially compared to single campus universities.

## III. OPPORTUNITIES

### A. *International Student Loans*

We have met with the Education USA Advisers from Peru, Ecuador, and other countries, and they have asked if Webster University offered loans to international students. Given the standard of living for the great majority of families from developing nations, the only path to study in the United States would be via a student loan. However, U.S. banks and other institutions do not distribute loans to non U.S. citizens without a co-signer who is a U.S. citizen with a permanent U.S. address. The development of a loan program would further set us apart in a very competitive marketplace.

### B. *Partnerships*

The Strategic Planning Committee states that Goal #1 is to "Set the Standard for Global Education" and "Webster University will expand its presence in the

international (global) community.” There are opportunities to set up articulation agreements and distance learning partnerships with universities outside the U.S., with adequate resources.

*C. Alumnae recruiters*

On occasion we have used alumnae for recruiting in their home countries; however, there exist more opportunities in this low cost resource.

**H. THREATS**

*A. Economic*

As costs rise across the board at a higher rate than wages, more and more students require financial aid and/or loans.

*B. Political*

The worst of the backlash from 2001 and the subsequent reduction in international student enrollment in the entire U.S. appears to be behind us. The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State have publicly stated that the Embassies will be more lenient in the granting of F1 visas. However, instability and uncertainty will always be factors to consider.

*C. Local*

Unfortunately, St. Louis has been mentioned in news articles in a negative manner. The Education USA Adviser in Lima mentioned this to me during my visit. Also, it is difficult to overcome the perception that many international students have about how wonderful California and Florida are when compared to the Midwest. We need to emphasize the positive but be aware of this perception.

Webster University is less expensive than St. Louis University and Washington University but both of those schools have greater endowments and name recognition.

*D. Lack of Market Diversity*

It is important that we recruit students from new markets while maintaining ties to current ones. We need to continue to explore new markets in South America and Asia to balance our student intake across multiple markets, to protect our enrollments in the event of a political, economic or natural crisis/disaster in on of our primary markets.

*E. Competition from other internationally-involved institutions*

Every year more US-based universities begin international recruitment efforts. In addition, competition remains stiff from lower cost locations such as Canada and Australia. The United Kingdom and New Zealand, along with those mentioned, allow students greater opportunities to work off campus and generate income toward university costs.

**2. Enrollment Goals**

Freshmen = 30. Transfer student recruitment is undertaken by the Office of Admissions. Graduate and Evening Student Admissions undertakes all graduate student recruitment efforts. Adequate staffing to manage articulation agreements

would yield an increase in transfer student recruitment from the International Recruitment & Services Office.

### **3. Inquiries, Applications, Enrollment History**

Please see Excel Spreadsheet attached

### **4. Recruitment Strategies: Generating Inquiries**

The profile of our undergraduate target market is relatively affluent traditional age undergraduate applicants from the International and American high school systems abroad. The majority of applicants are International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma or certificate holders, or have taken some IB or Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Many are expatriate US citizens wishing to return to their home country for a university degree, while others are affluent host country nationals who have become comfortable with the US style of education. Most come from developing nations and require some degree of financial assistance. This also is true of our efforts to attract undergraduate transfer students from partner institutions, such as Nilai International University College in Malaysia. We do not have a standard profile for transfer or graduate students in that the recruitment efforts geared for these constituencies originates in the respective domestic offices.

Our strategies for generating inquiries from this market include:

- a. \*School visits including extensive counselor networking during dedicated regional recruitment trips to Southern Cone South America, Northern South America and Central America, and Malaysia
- b. Education fairs such as EducationUSA in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand
- c. Alumni dinners in Ecuador, Costa Rica, etc.
- d. Advertising with Sakae Japan, Nilai Malaysia, etc.
- e. Counselor networking at CIS, OACAC, NAFSA, ECIS conferences, etc.
- f. Sponsoring promotional items at OACAC, EducationUSA, etc.
- g. Active Admissions/on-line inquiries and applications; e-recruitment marketing messages to targeted online inquiries

*\*Note:* Pre-visit communication is crucial; as is bringing or sending the correct amount of materials, knowing how many students to whom the Webster rep will present, the forum (e.g., classroom or auditorium), how much time they will have, and general expectations of the counselor. Each has his or her idea as to what constitutes a recruitment visit, so we never can assume.

The social component should not be overlooked. During the visit, a small Webster logo gift (coffee mug, nice pen, paperweight etc.) should be given to the counselor. It's not only a nice gesture, but they probably will leave/use the item in the office, thus providing a brand promotion opportunity. However, it is important to keep track of what you gave to whom so as to avoid showing up with the same gift two or more times in a row. If arrangements can be made to take the counselor to lunch or dinner, it will provide an excellent format to establish trust and demonstrate our friendly approach to our "customers," both students and counselors alike. A note or e-mail to thank the counselor after the visit is a nice follow-up touch as well as crucial to Webster's image as a high personal contact institution.

We find these efforts to be highly effective and therefore cost-effective, as a recent in-house survey of accepted freshmen indicated that 72% chose Webster University based on individual recruitment visits to their particular high school or a direct counselor referral.

#### **5. Recruitment Strategies: Turning Inquiries Into Applications**

All inquiries from all sources, including individual recruitment visits, recruitment fairs, counselor referrals, Active Admissions, friend of a friend, etc. immediately are answered in the form of a personal e-mail to initiate the conversation. Students are encouraged to ask any question regarding the campus, degrees, programs, housing, advising, etc. If students do not ask certain questions, we volunteer information. Typically this involves cost, campus life, immigration, and other areas of detail pertinent to the inquiring student's individual situation.

We find this to be cost effective in that it involves largely human resource time, much of which initially can be undertaken by our Graduate Assistant. Also, initial inquiries can be directed to the website for "big picture" information. However, we always follow-up with the inquirer after a "website forward." We do not rely on the website to end any discussion. It is not until later in the process when the inquiry requests documents, such as sports or housing brochures, that other resources are utilized.

#### **6. Recruitment Strategies: Turning Applications Into Enrollments**

Once inquiring students apply, we begin a process of answering initial applicant questions, and gathering the necessary documentation required for admissions, such as transcripts, TOEFL scores, essays, etc. Inevitably something is missing, which, rather than a problem, actually presents the opportunity to increase contact time with the applicant. This high-contact individualized approach is what Webster has become known for in our strongest markets.

Experience has taught us to send our freshman admissions decision early and in a cohort, which allows the student longer to bond with Webster University, and then give the applicant a break to consider other offers. Freshman applicants in the major markets are considered in a cohort rather than rolling admissions, to allow for better cohort-based decisions on scholarship and financial assistance within specific markets. This allows us to be both consistent and flexible in our approach, while at the same time build some excitement within the market. This approach works especially well in the relationship-based Latin American market (our primary freshman market).

We then follow up with the student to gauge his or her interest, and establish a contact interval according to what we perceive is that applicant's position in the decision-making process. We have to be careful not to seem pushy or bothersome with too many messages, but we also want to remind the student that we are here to help. Again, this strategy is cost effective in that the resource input is minimal as it mostly consists of human resource time, an acceptance letter, and perhaps a scholarship contract. Once they decide to accept our offer, we get the required financial documentation to issue the I-20, request the housing deposit, etc.

Spring “Yield” travel to the most promising cities has become one of our best recruitment tools. Travel locations are chosen based on the highest accept locations with the most likely prospects. The additional visit to cement the relationship with the student and parent proves to them (and to the counselor or other primary influencer) that Webster is committed to the success of the student through this process.