

Behind the Scenes:

An insiders view of marketing to prospective students

Office of Admissions

May 2008

Questions to consider

- What role does your unit play in the recruitment of new students?
- What messages do your programs and services send about Western?
 - Positive?
 - Negative?
- How are these messages played out in
 - Customer service
 - Your website and written materials
 - Your programs

Assumptions about prospective students

- **Image is everything - of self and WWU**
- **Ego and Identity**
 - **Is WWU good enough for me?**
 - **How much does Western want me?**
 - **Am I good enough for WWU?**
- **Decisions are frequently more emotional than rational**
- **Students are recruited one at a time – which requires market segmentation, targeted messages, and recognizing that each student is special**
- **Parental and peer influence is significant**

Assumptions about prospective students

- **Many prospective students are undecided on a career or a major**
- **Much of what prospective students know/think they know about Western does not come from Admissions**
- **If we don't distinguish WWU from our competitors, they will differentiate based on price or what they have heard from others**
- **Everything we do and say is scrutinized**
- **Are messages from cross-campus consistent?**

Fall 2008 freshman class

- **25,000** “Recruits”
- **9,500** freshman applications
 - 8,040 resident; 1,450 non-resident; 27% SOC
 - 1,000 “stealth applications”
 - 850 granted a fee waiver
- **6,440** admits plus waitlist
- **40.12%** yield in Fall 2007
- **2,650** - enrollment target
 - 2,400 resident, 250 non-resident; 23% SOC

Casting the Net/ Spreading the Word

- **Customer Service/Referrals**
 - Current students
 - Alumni/Parents/Employers/Others
 - General interaction with WWU
- **Admissions Initiated**
 - Generating applications
 - Converting applications to enrolled
- **Internet – WWU website; search engines, social networking, etc.**
- **Media**
- **Paid Advertising**

Strengthening Recruitment Initiatives

- Identifying/delivering our messages
 - What is the most effective way to collect information and to share Western's story?
 - Centralized vs. each unit on its own
 - Understanding why/how people make decisions
 - Targeting messaging is essential
- On-going customer service
- On-going communication - frequent, personalized, emotional appeal
- Campus Visits
 - Actions speak louder than words

Actions speak louder than words

- Are we what we say we are?
- Streamlining the process
 - 90% of admissions applications are online
 - Students see us all as one - Working with other offices to make overall process feel seamless
- Knowing the competition

Refining our collective efforts

- Playing out the strategic plan – putting Engaged Excellence into words, images, photos
- Shaping the message and our services
 - Changing demographics
 - Understanding expectations
 - Market segmentation
 - What is the perceived value of a WWU education
- Consistency and continuity outside of Admissions and after enrollment confirmation

Thinking about the future

- **What messages and themes should be consistent**
 - In Student Affairs
 - Across the university
 - Internal and external
- **Integrated marketing and messaging**
 - Relevancy, look, feel, content
 - How do we move out of silos?
 - How do we strengthen and coordinate institutional and unit websites
- **Who are your customers? Competitors?**
- **Strategic use of decision packages**
 - ie, Leadership Advantage, Early Outreach
- **Systematic and sustainable**

Samples of online communication students receive after admissions

- Combination of written, online and personalized communication
 - Primarily not about Admissions process
 - Academic and other information
 - Fact and feel – appeal to the mind and the heart
 - Written with the specific audience in mind – including word choice and style