SEM Assessment Report

AACRAO Consulting Report for
Wichita State University

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Project Overview

Wichita State University (WSU) engaged AACRAO Consulting (AC) to conduct a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) assessment to include an evaluation of the following:

- Evaluation of current short-term and long-term enrollment goals and potential limitations that could potentially impede meeting enrollment goals.
- Review recruitment and retention strategies, and provide recommendations on how to develop strategic plans that are supported by data and incorporate the use of metrics.

Pre-visit activities

Prior to the on-site campus visit, WSU provided the consultant with multiple documents including at least 10 recruitment plans for targeted groups as well as individual admission representatives’ territory management plans, planning documents for recruitment events, and evaluations. Additionally, the consultant reviewed recruitment publications, recruitment communications, videos, recruitment mail flow, financial aid award letters, academic communications, academic program sheets, international recruitment materials, student engagement materials, student success materials, annual reports, and organization charts. The consultant was also able to examine a full range of data related to enrollment, including trend reports, enrollment projections, predictive modeling, retention and persistence data for multiple groups—all with detailed analysis. Finally, the consultant reviewed the WSU web site and read pertinent news stories about WSU from the Wichita Eagle.

On-site activities and analysis

Over the course of two-days spread over two on-site visits, the consultant met with campus senior leadership, directors and staff of the Enrollment Services offices, Faculty Senate leadership, Student Success Office staff, Diversity and Inclusion staff, Student Affairs leadership and staff, TRIO Program directors, academic advisors, Strategic Communications staff, and
students (see Appendix A for a full listing of individuals). These interviews focused on what was working well in enrollment, areas that needed attention, and the challenges the various groups and individuals faced.

**Executive Summary**

Wichita State University is, in many ways, a place with an embarrassment of riches. A beautiful campus, respected academic programs, talented faculty and staff, supportive alumni and boosters, all led by a relatively new president with the vision for a future of innovation and growth with extraordinary support from the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR). Hundreds of members of the campus community, and beyond, contributed to the development of a tightly drawn strategic plan that gives comfort to the traditional Big Three of academe—instruction, research, and service—while also raising the challenge to make a difference in access and innovation. A treasure-trove of data, managed by a Chief Data Officer of uncommon skill and insight, illuminates every facet of campus administration from new student enrollment to student success to faculty load to net tuition revenue to scholarship and financial aid awards—and beyond. In the face of significant enrollment decline in the fall of 2015, the university responded with a 10-page document with 79 short-term enrollment initiatives, the bulk of which were assigned to Academic Affairs to address perceived enrollment barriers, a happy recognition that enrollment is everyone’s responsibility. Operational offices in Enrollment Services use best practices to guide programs, processes, and services. The Student Affairs division embraces learning outcomes and assessment that can make the co-curriculum significant in retention work.

So, what’s the matter with Wichita State?

The campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students interviewed for this report validated the positive features of WSU, but they also suggested a remarkably consistent view of how the campus communicates and works sometimes at cross-purposes with the desire to bring all of the campus’s strengths to bear on issues. The campus is at a place where groundwork has been
laid with the institutional strategic plan, but its implementation itself is not yet strategic. “We have no plan,” was an often heard refrain about enrollment. Senior leadership may disagree with that as they sit on the excellent new strategic plan, but they may also agree that the campus has not had time to put strategies and action plans in place to carry out the broad goals of the institutional plan. The style of the current hard-charging new president is different from the more laissez faire approach of his predecessor, and the campus is still adjusting to what one vice president referred to as “the president’s loving attention” (in the president’s presence). A tendency to seize and capitalize on opportunities throughout the campus leadership has operational staff scrambling to keep up with new initiatives that may come with one-time resources and that have to be integrated into the regular work that doesn’t go away. Assessment suffers because there is not time to see if new things work before the next new thing comes along. The perceived need to fix the enrollment decline leads to a search for multiple tactics that have not been knitted into a strategic and focused approach. The scattergun technique may, indeed, work in the short term, but there is worry about how it will work going forward.

Staff members in multiple areas of the campus express a sense of being “out of the loop” about things in their wheelhouse. Sometimes the concern is as simple as an administrator who assumes an office reports to one division when in fact it is part of another, leaving people feeling unappreciated. At other times it involves scheduling testing in the middle of an orientation program for new students. It might have greater ramifications such as the academic department that worked on setting up a scholarship for a year without the Financial Aid Office knowing about it. Or it might be as serious as changing admission requirements in a graduate program in isolation, leaving the enrollment units flat-footed and unable to adjust for the enrollment consequences when they found out about it in the midst of the recruitment cycle. The umbrella view seems to be that, too often, people do not feel they are at the table (and this is not so much about separation from the senior leadership table) when things being discussed need their expertise and input.
The report makes recommendations that will move WSU to a more strategic and focused approach to enrollment as well as improve collaboration and communication on campus. More attention to and use of assessment will improve areas such as recruitment practices, new orientation/new student transition programs, and Student Affairs learning outcomes for the co-curriculum. Strategic messaging can more effectively convey WSU’s resources in experiential learning (a career pathway rather than just a job) and use the university’s culture of community to set expectations around engagement and contribution. While WSU needs to maintain its emphasis on traditional new students, it must also raise the optics on students from new or underrepresented markets, including students of color, adults, veterans, first generation, and others. More purposeful presentation of scholarships and a new institutional priority to fund need-based financial aid will be necessary to attract, support, and retain students from these new markets. Process changes in areas such as transcript evaluation will be essential to ensure all WSU students find as few barriers as possible. Finally, leadership in Enrollment Services will need support in implementing the recommendations in this report and those included in the Strategic Enrollment Planning Project currently underway.

**Top Ten Priority Recommendations**

1. Admissions should undertake more intensive assessment of recruitment strategies, events, and programs to determine how they affect students’ decisions to enroll.
2. WSU’s recruitment should use the concept of a “Career Pathway” to describe to prospective students and their families how the university will help them move towards their career goals.
3. WSU should adopt across the entire campus the messaging strategy that the university is a “Community of Higher Education, not just an institution of higher education” to communicate the expectations and support of an engaged and contributing place where individuals can make a difference.
4. WSU should give greater emphasis to the recruitment of student groups that can have impact on enrollment growth: students of color, adults, veterans/military, first generation students, students in market-based tuition programs, while maintaining
efforts directed at traditional new students that will continue to provide a foundation for enrollment.

5. WSU should publish and publicize the scholarship rubric currently handled internally to maximize recruitment impact.

6. WSU should create a new position in Financial Aid to coordinate program-based scholarships for the campus. The position would continue current efforts to streamline the scholarship process, eliminate barriers to scholarship application, and centralize the awarding process (distinct from the selection process which would remain in the units).

7. WSU should make funding for institutional need-based aid a priority by committing at least $250,000 per year base budget in each of the next five years.

8. WSU should review the entire credit evaluation process to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in communicating to transfer students how their credits will apply to their WSU program. Simply improving turnaround time of evaluation will not solve the underlying problem.

9. The Division of Student Affairs should reallocate its next available position to create a director of assessment position for the Student Affairs initiatives, collaborating closely with the Office of Policy and Analysis. Learning outcomes and assessment of the co-curriculum can have a similar impact on retention as in the academic units.

10. WSU should provide external support for the development of leadership and expertise in Enrollment Services to ensure the university’s ability to identify and introduce new practices and processes in enrollment management.

Admissions

Observations

A prospective student starting her visit to Wichita State would find her name on her personal parking space at the impressive Marcus Welcome Center. That touch, a splendid upgrade of the old practice of putting visiting students’ names on a board in the Admissions Office, is an introduction to a sophisticated and well-crafted admission and recruitment operation at WSU.
Materials and publications provided to the consultant were extensive and incredibly detailed. These various recruitment pieces were just part of at least 10 recruitment plans, one for virtually every targeted group imaginable. Multiple on-campus recruitment events had detailed planning guides to ensure everything was done on-time and in impressive fashion. This included evaluations of the programs, although they appeared to be mostly “feel-good” evaluations (“Everyone just felt so GOOD about WSU after the program!”). Yield data are tracked for recruitment events, but there does not appear to be in-depth assessment after enrollment to determine what impact various events had on a student’s decision to attend. The evaluation for the Distinguished Scholarship Invitational, a signature WSU event serving as a vehicle for selecting the Gore Scholarship winners for nearly 45 years, indicated that 60% of students attending said they had probably or definitely decided to attend WSU before the competition held in November. Queried how they felt after attending the DSI (but before actual enrollment), 73% of participants said they were probably or definitely planning to attend WSU. These pre- and post-event metrics are similar for most of WSU’s recruitment events.

Hanover Research has completed a survey of attenders and non-attenders on behalf of the university. The study looks at students’ enrollment motivation, experiences with the application/recruitment process, and perceptions of WSU. Both groups of students viewed the university positively (attenders had an 82% positive view; non-attenders 79%). Both groups gave great weight in decision-making to academic quality and affordability. Both saw WSU’s greatest strength as its academic quality while both gave low marks to its affordability. When asked to choose words that come to mind when thinking of WSU, both groups chose “Basketball,” “Shocker,” and “home”. Forty-one percent of attenders applied only to WSU, and 84% said WSU was their first choice or in their top choices. Program offerings and academic quality were rated very highly by attenders. Those who chose not to attend gave high marks to large campus events and interactions with WSU admissions staff and “other officials.” Financial considerations were a major reason students decided not to attend WSU.
The office is in the midst of implementing Ellucian’s Recruiter Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool, which they expect to have a significant impact on their ability to communicate with students. There is an impressive communication plan already in place, which should fit nicely into Recruiter and help move the implementation forward. The communication flow includes a congratulatory video from a student’s admissions representative as part of the admission notice, telephone calls from students (pulled back from previously being outsourced) as well as letters from the provost and deans of students’ major colleges. The value of the letters may be more from the interest of senior leaders shown in the students than from content as they were dense and probably too long for Twitter-focused students to read.

The staff reports they are working harder at staying in touch with prospective students and admits through calls. And there is a good deal to communicate to students. The campus visit program has been improved. The addition of Shocker Hall, the new housing venue in the heart of campus, has helped significantly to energize student life. The staff expects new tuition breaks approved by the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) for WSU in Oklahoma and Texas (the I-35 corridor) to be a real benefit, but a newly approved expansion of that tuition benefit for Oklahoma may have come too late in the recruitment cycle (November) for optimal impact in 2016. The fact that WSU tuition is 25% lower than that of the University of Kansas and 20% lower than at Kansas State University was noted as a significant advantage in Northeast Kansas, one of two major population centers in the state (the other being Wichita).

The staff has a good sense of what differentiates WSU from the competition beyond tuition advantages. The admission reps see the campus’s being in a big city as a plus in recruitment (One has to ask, however, whether the city would be seen as an advantage in Kansas’s more rural areas). WSU has had the top job placement rate of the Regents institutions, although this may be more of a selling point for parents. There was talk of WSU as having a family feel, of the guidance and personalized attention from faculty. In fact, one admissions representative related that her own high school senior son declared that his WSU visit conveyed the best
individualized feel of the eight college visits he made (unfortunately, he has decided to attend a school with a more significant athletic program [football]).

Others on staff discussed the WSU “feel” as being a community. They felt that the university’s Innovation Campus, just starting to build to the east of the main campus, would enhance that feel by blending start-ups and innovative research with student experiential education opportunities and community-like amenities. The staff is clearly excited about their university and articulate in describing that excitement.

The staff believes that the campus is moving to a sense that recruitment is everyone’s job. They see more departments involved in recruitment and seeking help from Admissions. They think the new CRM can play a significant role in growing this nascent collaboration.

The campus uses a number of consultants in enrollment areas. In recruitment, consultant-driven work in increasing application and admits has seen lower yield rates from admitted to enrolled, going from the 40-45% range to mid-30%, hitting a low of 30% in 2015. This is not an indication of the consultants’ efforts not working. When application numbers increase, yield goes down.

Outside of traditional recruitment for new freshman students, Admissions is involved heavily in the recruitment of community college transfer students. Work led by a veteran community college administrator now in WSU Admissions, has resulted in the university’s being more transfer friendly. This, in turn, has influenced transfer enrollment patterns, making WSU the number one transfer destination among the KBOR four-year institutions. Unfortunately, community college enrollments are declining in Kansas. Admissions also has a unit devoted to recruiting adult and military personnel. The latter is described as “a work in progress” with the statement that outreach needs to grow. The relationship between Admissions efforts in recruiting adult students and the Office of Adult Learning was unclear. WSU is a top 50 school for returning adult education (BestColleges.com). While adults are a category of prospective
students on the campus’s home page, veterans and military personnel do not have their own designation.

The staff wishes that the university would be more cognizant of admission cycles when considering policy changes. A recent change in exceptions policy, rather than being effective for the next cycle, was made retroactive and required reevaluation of a number of students turned down. There is a sense that priorities keep changing, which can take resources—fiscal and human—away from primary recruitment priorities. Some of these priorities come with one-time money, but they become standard practice without permanent funding, thus creating budget challenges. The office has requested $150,000 for the current fiscal year to cover unfunded programming.

As is often the case with strong admissions operations, which use data to track student reactions to recruitment treatment, this staff is confident that it is doing what is needed and necessary. And, indeed, senior leadership is quick to recognize the hard work and commitment of the staff. However, as would happen on any campus, when engaged WSU leaders with concerns about enrollment ask, “What about this?” or “Shouldn’t we be doing that?” a strong admissions response in support of what they are doing can be perceived as being defensive.

Staff suggested that the lack of a scholarship rubric at WSU was a disadvantage. Nearly all other KBOR four-year schools publish a scholarship rubric that tells prospective students what their scholarship award will be. WSU uses an internal algorithm that accomplishes relatively the same thing but is not published. It also appears that WSU has a large number of scholarships that require separate applications, often seen as a barrier to students.

A proposed merger with the Wichita Area Technical College, a market-based tuition option, and reduced tuition for students in the I-35 corridor through Oklahoma and Texas provide outstanding opportunities for further enrollment growth.
**Recommendations**

Admissions should reconsider how it assesses its recruitment strategies, programs, and events. The recently completed study completed on behalf of WSU by Hanover Research provides an excellent basis for reviewing the recruitment process and student motivations for making college decisions. The report can provide an early basis for considering adjustments to recruitment practice as well as looking at further in-depth evaluation of some of the programs that the research report touches on. While admissions is assiduous in collecting evaluations of on-campus events, tracking yield rates from program participation, and using focus groups to adjust content, the main thrust is on the content and structure of a program or event rather than the impact on the enrollment decision. Typically, the evaluations ask students whether they have decided to attend WSU, if so, when, and if not, where else are they considering. After enrollment, there is analysis of yield rates by program/event. However, this is still primarily “feel good” evaluation. It does not get at what impact the event had on the student’s decision to attend WSU. This evaluation must be done after the student enrolls and should be probed with questions such as, “What impact did this program have on your decision to attend WSU? a.) I would not have chosen WSU without this program, b.) I was much more likely to attend because of this program, c.) This program had some impact on my decision to attend, d.) This program had no impact on my decision to attend.” The use of focus groups after students have enrolled can get at some of this, but for major programs, students should be surveyed periodically in a fairly systematic way. Faculty in the social sciences should be solicited to ensure that survey instruments will get at the desired behavioral information.

The venerable Distinguished Scholarship Invitational should be one of the programs studied for impact. The “feel good” evaluations indicate that 60% of the participants have already decided to attend WSU before the program (held in November this year). Although after the event, the metric of probably/definitely decided rose to 73% (indicating a positive reaction to the program), the high pre-event number may be an indication that the program is simply reinforcing those already decided. The assessment recommended here is intended to get at how participation in the DSI influenced students’ decisions in the context of the overall decision

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to attend. Part of the assessment should also be to determine the impact on the DSI’s ability to expand WSU’s geographic draw among talented students. The out-of-state participation has increased from 4% in 2013 to 16% in 2015. This impressive statistic should be tested in assessment after enrollment to see how the DSI is affecting geographic distribution of the class. A full review of the DSI might also include the selection criteria/tools to determine if the process is achieving an appropriately holistic look at both student leadership and academic qualities based on academic success and co-curriculum contributions after enrollment of all participants (not just the eventual winners).

The admissions staff should consider a different way of presenting how the university helps students get jobs after college. While the statistic that WSU has the best job placement rate of the KBOR four-year institutions is certainly impressive, it may be most effective with parents. Students, while they may be settled on a major and want to be assured of the quality of that program, do not always find job placement rates of immediate interest or importance. Research into student decision-making on some campuses has shown significant impact in how a college presents the pathway to a career. This career pathway approach does not put the emphasis just on the final product—the job after college. Instead, it lays out for the student how she would actually get to that final outcome. Students tend to gravitate to schools that start talking about the pathway by clarifying interests through gateway courses, giving early opportunities to shadow or get into internships, other experiential work, and capstone projects. Students apparently can relate to that more readily, and it tends to play to their significant interest in the quality of the academic programs. To illustrate, consider a student interested in pre-med. The recruitment message could speak to opportunities to be involved in pre-health clubs, network with med school admission officers, attend conferences, shadow health professionals, intern at Wesley, work with the WSU pre-med advisor—all leading to taking the M-CAT, applying, and getting into medical school. The approach for engineers could be opportunities to join discipline-related clubs, participate in Engineering 2020, co-op, and senior design project. The final job placement rate then becomes a product of the process students go through at WSU. The building block process makes it easier for students to understand how
they get from high school senior to a practicing professional. WSU may want to commission a Hanover Research study of how current students access and value the career pathway at the university to gain insight into how it might play in recruitment.

This career pathway format seems ideally suited for talking about what the WSU Innovation Campus can mean for prospective students. Here the student has the opportunity to get connected to a start-up through an internship, actually be involved in creating a product, and be part of a functioning business in ways more embedded in the college experience than just having an internship. The admissions staff should have significant training in how to recruit for the Innovation Campus, possibly even including visits to other universities with a similar set-up. This resource could lead to a commitment that every WSU student would have the opportunity for an applied learning experience as part of her degree program and could be a major differentiator for WSU. As such, it would require different recruitment approaches.

Admissions should review letters to students to ensure brevity and readability. While the consultant saw no letters that were more than a page long (the first principal of recruitment letters), they usually completely filled that one page with dense verbiage, little white space, few bulleted points, little or no bolding of text. For students used to communicating in 140 characters, letters should be used sparingly, more for impact as almost a novelty, and in a format that guides the eye to the most important points immediately without having to search for them.

Admissions should test the perception that being in a big city is one of WSU’s strong recruitment points. It may be a factor to be targeted more finely: Students in Shawnee Mission or Dallas-Ft. Worth may actually think coming to Wichita would be like going to the sticks. It would certainly be important for them to put emphasis on Wichita’s metropolitan ambiance to be reassured that they would not be leaving civilization to come to WSU. However, students in Liberal or Dodge City may be put off by too much emphasis on Wichita the city. Parsing the message could make it more widely effective.
Given how admissions staff—and others—describe WSU, admissions messages should deliberately focus on “community” as a part of the WSU personality. Shun the “I” word (institution). Explicitly positioning a campus as a “community of higher education” rather than an “institution of higher education” can be highly effective with both students and parents. The imagery is that in an institution you are in a passive place where things happen to you, often without much input from you. However, in a community you are a member, a participant, a contributor. The community imagery allows a way to communicate a university’s expectations of its students: they are expected to engage in and out of the classroom with professors and other students. On a campus where many students commute from home, it is a powerful message to say, “We expect you to contribute as a member of our community by getting involved with faculty and other students, instead of just being a parking lot stalker.” Few messages resonate with families as much as the explication of what being a “community of higher education” means.

Campuses tend to focus excessively on traditional freshmen, even if the campus attracts other, more non-traditional, students as well. While there are multiple recruitment plans in WSU’s Admissions Office for targeted groups, the conversation in the time with the consultant seemed to focus more on traditional freshmen. There was nothing dismissive about recruitment of adults, or transfers, or students of color, or other groups, but the staff may want to consider ways to raise the optics around other groups. Traditional 18-year old freshmen will continue to be a major building block of WSU’s enrollment—the campus’s “bread-and-butter” so to speak—but these students will provide stability rather than growth in the future. The campus cannot afford to back away from traditional student recruitment, but Admissions must lead the campus’s efforts to reach into other groups. Students of color would be one area that will bring 18-year old freshmen but not necessarily from the usual suspect schools or geographic regions. Outreach to campus groups such as the TRIO programs that work with underrepresented students might need to be rethought to ensure maximum access to prospective students already touched by other WSU offices. Similarly, Admissions should review its relations and collaborations with such groups as the Office of Adult Learning, and the new Veterans Center to
assure that the campus is leveraging all resources to reach out to students who are not always as easy to reach as traditional college-bound freshmen.

Admissions leadership and staff should be confident that they are regarded as hard-working, committed, and competent, which may help them be more positive about the “loving attention” from others on campus. There is probably not an admissions office in the country that has not heard a well-meaning faculty member say, “Have you ever thought about visiting high schools? Wouldn’t that be a great way to get students?” The art of response is first to appreciate the different perspective the speaker has and how that perspective colors the suggestion or comment. If a faculty member becomes a dean, or a director becomes a vice president, the perspective changes and puts emphasis on different issues. The admissions office with excellent data, such as at WSU, can respond with evidence of why things are done a certain way, but there should also be a receptiveness to the different perspective. Openness to researching a program suggested by another member of the university community validates the person’s interest without ceding how recruitment is run to him or her. Willingness to respond to a suggestion with, “Well, we might try something like this to address that,” instead of, “We have data that tell us what we’re doing is already addressing that” (even though that might be the case), can make the speaker a collaborator instead of an adversary.

WSU should consider using a published rubric for awarding scholarships rather than its current internal algorithm (more on this in the Financial Aid section). Merit scholarships can be significant in a needy student’s financial aid package, particularly in light of Hanover Research that suggests students are concerned about WSU’s affordability.
Financial Aid

Observations

Financial Aid has changed a great deal in the last two years, strategically and operationally. They have a more strategic approach to their involvement in enrollment-related activity. The Elliott School of Communication came in to consult on social media, publications, and their involvement in campus visits. They have more outreach and participation in campus visits, high school visits, and collaborative efforts across campus as a result of this strategic look at what they do.

Financial Aid participates in the university’s One-stop operation along with Admissions, Registrar, Financial Operations, and (some) advising functions. Most Financial Aid Office phone calls are initially routed to the One-stop call center. One-stop escalates student issues back to the Financial Aid Office for in-depth questions through the use of a ticket system (BbCRM). The One-stop physical location is in Jabara Hall, some distance from Jardine where Financial Aid, Registrar and Financial Operations are housed. Ivy Tech was the model for WSU’s One-stop.

A number of changes have been made in the scholarship area recently. The university made the decision to end the Deans Scholars program. This program provided on average a $30,000 package (full cost for first year and approximately $6,000 per year) for 50 new students annually from a targeted area they wanted to cultivate (Sedgwick County and surrounding MSA). While there appear to have been many especially strong and involved students from that program (given the number of former Deans Scholars on staff), it also had negative comments from students who were not in the eligible area. Admissions staff reported there was some negative fallout, especially from high school counselors when the program was ended. The funds for the program were transferred into the general merit scholarship pool.

The merit scholarship program derives from an algorithm recommended by a consulting firm working with Financial Aid with involvement from the WSU Office of Planning and Analysis.
(OPA). For high school seniors it uses GPA, ACT, and class rank to award students into four scholarship categories. The highest level required a 3.9 GPA and a 30 ACT. A fifth exception category is used for students who miss the rubric due to one component, but otherwise have excellent scores. The director refers to it as an internal rubric, with all eligible students being offered a scholarship according to the formula. Additionally, a similar process awards transfer students using cumulative transfer GPA and transfer hours. Over 3,000 students are given scholarship offers, with a current yield between 25 – 35% for seniors and between 65 – 75 % for transfers.

Admissions finds this scholarship system problematic in recruitment as WSU is one of the few KBOR schools without a published scholarship rubric. Students may not consider submitting an admission application to WSU because they cannot self-determine what level of scholarship they might have, while they can see it in a chart at the other state schools. “Make it transparent,” says the Financial Aid staff, which claims that they get many inquiries about scholarship levels because other Kansas schools publish their rubrics so students will know what they are eligible for. The staff also points out that a published rubric can be an incentive for students to strive harder in high school in order to get the scholarship reward. Some commented that WSU has a rubric without the benefit of telling people what it is.

Keeping the algorithm under wraps from the public gives the university some flexibility, especially since there is no scholarship application or published deadline (as with other KBOR schools). The director indicates that one of the reasons for not publishing the rubric is to allow for potential scale adjustments for later applicants if funding becomes low or is exhausted. The program is still relatively new—it has not yet gone through a four-year cycle—and there is not great comfort with the potential exposure financially. The university has no enrollment deposit, and Financial Aid continues to award up to a May 1 deadline.

In addition to the merit program, WSU has a wide range of other scholarships. The larger and new student scholarships are awarded by competition, based on major, and require additional
materials. The application is centralized through one portal and students opt into their competition of interest, although during the campus visit discussions, there seemed to have been some glitches in that process in the current cycle. A separate audition process is used for Fine Arts scholarships. The top awards are two Gore Scholarships (now $60,000) chosen in the Distinguished Scholarship Invitational (DSI) from 10-12 finalists (each getting $25,000 as a Gore runner-up) of the several hundred who participate. The second most prestigious award is the Barton Scholarship for business students valued at $44,000. Nearly all other scholarships for current students require separate academic college applications (although only one for each college) and selection is determined by the respective college.

Financial Aid has begun to use a limited practice of stacking scholarships to reach desired enrollment outcomes. This is new since the introduction of the new merit scholarship program. The consultant working with the university in the design of the merit scholarship program was opposed to the extensive stacking of awards based on the negative impact to net tuition revenue.

Financial Aid has no need-based institutional funds, making it impossible to meet full need for students in the recruitment cycle, fully one-third of whom are Pell eligible. A lack of institutional need-based aid makes leveraging to realize desired enrollment outcomes very difficult. Given the number of Pell-eligible students applying to WSU, existing Federal programs cannot be expected to meet full need, even using loans. This is a real disincentive for these students to enroll at WSU, giving significant advantage to those schools that can meet full need, possibly even without using any loans.

When asked about the impact of the Department of Education’s FAFSA change allowing prior prior year (PPY) family financial data, staff pointed out that even though the policy change would allow students to apply earlier, WSU would not know what costs would be for the next year. If they awarded students in line with the earlier application for aid now possible with PPY, they would package with cost of attendance for the current year rather than the year the
students would begin. This could necessitate repackaging, requiring significant staff time during other peak processing timeframes.

With respect to Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), staff indicated that 18% of students fall below SAP criteria. Six hundred students (roughly 30% of the total) appeal for aid reinstatement. Somewhere close to 90% of first-time appeals are approved. However, 50% of those approved on appeal do not make their academic plan.

Transfer students can be admitted with less than a 2.0, which immediately puts them at risk for SAP. The Financial Aid staff is not analyzing whether these transfer students eventually succeed, whether they go on SAP or not. Subsequent review of the numbers of transfer students falling into these categories showed six in 2014 and 11 in 2015. These are generally exceptions that might have bad work several years before a recent period of real turn-around.

Military credit is also a SAP issue. Many veterans who run afoul of SAP do so because of maximum time, a situation which is exacerbated by military credit. Military credit is usually approved as elective credit, which becomes excess credit not applied to the program, but is counted for SAP. Vets are almost always approved on SAP appeal, but it remains a barrier.

In a discussion of relationships on campus, Financial Aid staff felt that relations were improving with Admissions and the academic advisors in the colleges. However, they reported they are struggling with relations on the faculty side.

The biggest problem is securing attendance or last date of attendance from faculty for Return of Title IV Funds and Federal Pell Grant Eligibility. The staff wants faculty to give students an “earned” F grade (if, indeed, the student attended and did the work) so they know the student attended some portion of the semester. The staff suggests that faculty politics get in the way: “This student failed, so she doesn’t deserve a break,” some faculty have said. If, indeed, the student did attend enough of the semester—or all of it, it is important to know because the
amount of funds to be returned might not be as great, which would reduce what the student owed and might make it possible for her to return. As an example of the struggle to get the cooperation of the faculty, staff told a story of a faculty member who refused to complete the Last Date of Attendance form. When they appealed to the faculty member’s dean, the dean upheld the faculty member. Only when Financial Aid escalated the case to an associate vice president was the form submitted.

Financial Aid staff expresses concern about being out of the loop on many issues. They feel as though they are the last to know about things with which they should be intimately involved. To illustrate, they told the story of a public announcement of a new WSU scholarship that they knew nothing about in Financial Aid. The college involved had been working on it for a year, yet the people that would be charged with administering the award (Financial Aid staff) knew nothing about it.

They also cite communication issues exacerbated by not thinking through things as simple as naming an office. Shortly after a business office name was changed to Financial Operations, seeming to be inexplicably similar to Financial Aid, a senior leader on campus said to one of the Financial Aid staff, “So you now report to Lois [the director of Financial Operations]?”. The Financial Aid staff expressed frustration with what they saw as unnecessary confusion that could have been avoided by discussing the name change in business affairs more broadly.

These last three points are part of a recurring theme in other areas. Things seem to happen in a vacuum without taking the time to bring other people in who might be affected by a decision about admission criteria or a name change or a new scholarship or testing in the middle of an orientation session. It may be the result of the campus trying to respond in rapid-fire fashion to developing initiatives. WSU is being called upon to be nimble in its policies and processes—not a bad thing in and of itself, but that can inhibit established practices of communication and deliberation.
Recommendations

It is unclear how many students who go to the One-stop operation in Jabara Hall must go to Jardine Hall to actually talk to someone in one of One-stop’s “home” offices—Financial Aid, Registrar, or Financial Services (let alone, Admissions in the Marcus Welcome Center). While Financial Aid telephone calls have decreased since most of the calls initially go to One-stop, there has not been a corresponding decrease in the number of students coming to the office. Conceptually, most issues are escalated by One-stop through a ticket process, but there are no data on the number of students sent physically to Financial Aid from One-stop, nor are there data on whether students just go straight to Financial Aid when an issue is escalated. Ideally, One-stop should track when they send a student physically to a home office, and Financial Aid should ask and track students coming to the office whether they have been to One-stop. WSU should consider whether moving One-stop into Jardine would be an aspirational goal at some point in the future.

WSU should move to a published rubric system for merit scholarships based on the algorithm currently used to award scholarships. There does not appear to be any additional financial exposure if the rubric is published than what exists with the current “internal” rubric. An initial disclaimer statement in publications could allow for some control over the program’s expenditures, for example: “Scholarships will be awarded until April 1, or until funds are expended. Early application for admission is encouraged to ensure full consideration for scholarships.” This published rubric should be seen as an important advantage in recruiting against KBOR schools—most with published rubrics—that are among WSU’s biggest competitors.

WSU should review the scholarship application processes it uses with the goal of continuing to streamline and remove barriers to students’ applying. Specifically, the university should consider whether new students applying outside the merit scholarship program for additional scholarships tied to majors should be required to use a portal to “opt in” for a particular scholarship program. An alternative that makes the student more central is outreach by the
university to students whose admission scores show him/her to be eligible for consideration with a request for additional materials. While scholarship programs now reach out to students who may be eligible to encourage them to go to the portal, the portal may be seen as a barrier. While it appeared that the DSI student activities form generally serves as the involvement capture for all programs, one program was reported as also requiring a resume. This requirement should be eliminated. If different scholarships require an essay, the university should work to design an essay question that could fit for all scholarships. The goal should be for new students to have to go through as few hoops as possible for scholarship consideration. Criteria for scholarship selection should not include how many hoops a student went through. Scholarships should be a major focus of recruitment, not a barrier that discourages students from consideration. The sizable disclaimer about other scholarship consideration processes on the DSI invitation falls into that barrier optic category. Because there are a large number of scholarships for new students in the academic units, the mechanics of the awards can be cumbersome. The university should approve a new position in the Financial Aid Office to coordinate these awards. This should in no way be construed as taking the selection process away from the units, but it would prevent inadvertent awarding of a unit scholarship to a student who already had another award. The central scholarship officer should coordinate the sending of award letters from the unit dean or other official.

WSU should consider a scholarship management system to include an online application for all current students to use for all continuing student scholarships in the colleges rather than the one application per college process currently in place. The scholarship position recommended above could also handle this management system.

Financial Aid should use carefully defined stacking of scholarship awards to reach strategic, targeted enrollment outcomes. This could be used in under-enrolled academic programs where enrollment needs to be bolstered, to recruit students from particular geographic regions from where the university wants to boost enrollment, to help make on-campus housing more attractive, or other strategic directions. Stacking guidelines may need to be more specific
regarding the percent of tuition and fees covered and/or whether housing charges will or will not be included for stacking consideration.

WSU should prioritize funding for institutional need-based financial aid to supplement Federal need-based aid programs. The campus should use such institutional aid to leverage enrollment by combining desired characteristics (academic, low-enrollment majors, geography, race/ethnicity, first generation, socio-economic levels, others) with need. The campus should work to identify a threshold of need below which students would receive, say, 80% of their cost of attendance from gift aid, thereby limiting their loan indebtedness at the time of graduation.

WSU should anticipate the impact of PPY financial information on the Federal financial aid application timing by setting tuition and room and board rates a year ahead of time, or by building a preliminary projected increase into the institutional cost of attendance. This could give students a more accurate indication of their aid package and avoid having to repackage after actual rates were set.

WSU should rethink services and monitoring for students on SAP appeal academic plans. Given the numbers suggested by Financial Aid staff that only 50% of students on academic plans are successful, this should be seen as a significant retention issue. SAP students should have more intrusive monitoring and wraparound services to avoid losing their financial aid.

When WSU admits transfer students with less than a 2.0 on an exceptional basis, these few students should have special attention regarding SAP, as they will be more at risk of losing their financial aid.

Veterans who get in SAP trouble because of military credit that becomes, essentially, excess elective credit present a challenge. The military credit is recognized nationally as valid and awarded by most colleges and universities. As such, the refusal to accept such credit would be a barrier to recruitment of veterans to the university. However, if it is contributing to their
getting into SAP trouble, it is also problematic for their success at WSU. The university should bring together academic and Enrollment Services staff to consider how to mitigate the possible difficulties for veterans who receive military credit.

WSU needs a formal academic policy that directs faculty to complete Last Date of Attendance forms for students when requested by the Financial Aid Office for Return of Title IV Funds and Federal Pell Grant eligibility to the Federal government. If faculty are unwilling to indicate when a student has an “earned” an F (if, indeed, he did), whereby he attended for some portion of the semester, the student may need to pay less money back to the university. This could also mean less money the university has to return to the Federal government. A student with less financial obligation might be more likely to return at some point. This simply makes good sense from a student success and business standpoint. Financial Aid staff should not have to deal with faculty who refuse to complete the form because the student “deserves it.” A policy in place would eliminate staff having to keep escalating the issue until they find an administrator who is willing to step up and get the form. Staff should have support from administration to do what the Department of Education has charged them to do.

WSU should put in place protocols that include the Financial Aid Office in the development of new scholarships. It is best practice in countless institutions to have the Financial Aid and Admissions offices included in planning for a new sponsored scholarship to ensure the award will be fully integrated into recruitment materials for new students. This should not be perceived to be an attempt to tell either a donor or an academic unit what the requirements for a scholarship should be or to take over the selection. However, academic and development staff could benefit from financial aid experience with process and consistency to optimize the impact of a new award.

Likewise, the campus should be much more transparent in issues such as renaming offices to think about how similar names can cause confusion with students, not to mention staff and
faculty. We all know what we are familiar with. Imagine a new student at WSU trying to figure out the difference between Financial Operations and Financial Aid.

As the campus undertakes strategic enrollment planning, it should ensure that there is strategic inclusion of relevant parties in the planning and the implementation of the resulting efforts. The campus should work to be as nimble in inclusion of relevant parties to change as it is called upon to be in actually making the changes.

**International Admissions**

**Observations**

The Office of International Education is a significant operation covering international admissions, international student services, international employment and exchange, and study abroad, with dotted line responsibility for intensive English. They work with over 1000 agents and agencies around the world, all requiring high maintenance. There are approximately 1600 international students at WSU, 900+ undergrad and 600+ graduates (although the latter is declining). Five to ten percent come just for Intensive English.

International Programs is concerned about graduate student admissions, which they do not control. When grad applications are received, the graduate programs office responds with the same letter and subsequent communication as they send to domestic applicants. This is very misleading to international students because there is additional information and processes required of them. Eventually, this becomes an International Programs issue.

Additionally, there is a concern over timeliness in response to international graduate students. Delays in response can mean lost enrollment. New student surveys of undergrad international students would suggest that 90% of students list the most important reason for choosing a particular school as timely response. Graduate students, with similar concerns about getting visas and travel arrangements made, might be reasonably expected to have similar views.
At the international transfer admissions level, there is concern about transfer credit evaluation. Transfer credit evaluation is handled in the colleges at WSU. Staff reported that it can take as long as four years to get some evaluations back from the colleges. International Programs is currently waiting on 169 evaluation requests from 2012 to 2014. This was a frequently heard concern in multiple offices during the site visit and has been singled out in discussions at the leadership level for action.

Staff indicated that international students are not retained. They run into issues getting online courses. Since they are required to live on campus for the first year, they incur heavy expenses because of the cost of room and board. As a result, they transfer out. This puts all the focus on recruitment rather than retention.

As with other operational offices, staff in the International Programs Office felt they are often not at the table when issues pertaining to them are decided. International Programs is an afterthought. As an example, academic advisors in the colleges have monthly meetings, which do not include international student advisors from the International Student Services (ISS) unit. The day of the on-site visit by the consultant, an academic department had scheduled testing for new students in the middle of ISS orientation. The International Programs staff reports that they cannot get room reservations for their programs in a timely fashion. They even point to their (just) off-campus location as an indication of their “out of sight, out of mind” status.

While not mentioned by the staff, the decision by Engineering to curtail significantly enrollment in the Electrical Engineering graduate program would be another indication of not giving International Programs a heads up in time for them to recommend strategies that the Graduate School might employ to stave off the loss in graduate enrollment. Although the need to lower enrollment was appropriate, the decision was known a year in advance of it becoming known to International Programs and the Graduate School did not appear to be proactive in trying to find
solutions to the problem. By the time International Programs became aware of the issue, it was too far into the recruitment cycle for any recommended changes to mitigate the impact.

The executive director of International Programs is well-liked by his staff, but they do not see much of him (“I see him more often at Dillon’s [the local grocery store] than I do in the office,” one staffer said lightheartedly). He was promoted from the associate director position to executive director when the previous director retired, but he has been doing both jobs since (an associate director hire was being finalized during the on-site visit). The executive director is a technology whiz kid, so he is in high demand around campus. He is heavily involved in the implementation of Recruiter, the new campus CRM, and sits on multiple committees. The staff expressed great confidence in his ability but lamented not being able to work through issues with him often enough.

The director of the Intensive English program noted that there is a need for three or four more TESOL/ESL specialists as well as for more space.

**Recommendations**

International Programs should be able to do more than just say, “Oh, well,” when graduate programs send the same letters to international students as they do to domestic students. There should be an expectation that staff should engage in relationship building that would facilitate problem solving on a variety of levels. However, enrollment directors (and perhaps others in other divisions) also need an escalation protocol to take issues to a higher level when one unit is unable or unwilling to rectify what is identified as a problem.

WSU should consider putting responsibility for the processes around recruitment and admission of international graduate students under International Programs. Under no circumstances would this entail making admission decisions, which would be reserved to the academic units. However, this move could significantly improve the university’s ability to recruit well-qualified students for the departments’ consideration and ensure those admitted
by the departments would have a smooth transition to WSU. There are significant similarities between what is required of undergraduate and graduate international students, and International Programs could handle navigation of Homeland Security processes more effectively and efficiently for both groups.

The importance of timely credit evaluation should be reemphasized in terms of lost enrollment opportunity: International Programs does not recruit at two-year institutions in other countries because of the challenges in getting credit evaluations done.

In the spirit of it is better to include than exclude, International Student Services should have one of its international student advisors join the monthly meetings of the academic advisors. While it might be argued that ISS advisors are not academic advisors in the same sense as the college academic advisors, there could be very important information shared both ways in these meetings. It would seem to be a win-win for both groups.

International Programs staff should hold a meeting with any academic departments that might have claim to international students in the lead-up to the start of school to ensure both sides understand what the other has to accomplish, whether with testing or orientation or anything else. The goal of the meeting should be to understand each other’s needs and determine how communication can avoid scheduling conflicts.

The university should accommodate International Programs’ requests for room reservations well in advance of their anticipated dates. Programs such as international student orientation are a university priority and should be treated that way.

The highly respected and liked executive director should soon be more available to his staff with the hiring of a new associate director to relieve him of some of his two-job responsibilities. As someone with extensive technical skills, he may have to work to extricate himself from
engaging in technology issues and projects that the campus has come to expect of him and that he undoubtedly enjoys doing.

**TRIO Programs**

**Observations**

WSU has sponsored the largest, most comprehensive community of TRIO programs of any college in the US for 45 years. These programs include Upward Bound Wichita Prep, Upward Bound Math Science, Upward Bound Communication, Veterans Upward Bound, Student Support Services, Educational Talent Search, Disability Support Services, McNair Scholars, and Kansas Kids GEAR UP. Serving students in middle school through college and, in the case of McNair Scholars, preparing students for professional schools, these programs contribute significantly to WSU’s access mission. The wraparound services that programs such as Student Support Services provide are a model for how to support students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

While host institutions are not supposed to recruit actively students in these programs, part of TRIO programs’ mission is to get students ready for college. Many universities welcome Upward Bound and GEAR UP students to campus visit programs that stress academic preparation in high school. It is a kind of “soft sell” that puts a campus’s name out there and ensures the students have a positive experience. TRIO programs are often an important part of a university’s enrollment plan.

However, leaders of the TRIO programs indicated that WSU has not been one of those campuses. Whereas other KBOR institutions have sent buses to Wichita to pick Upward Bound students up for campus visits, provided the students with meals while on their campuses, and gave free T-shirts, WSU has charged per head to host the students for a campus visit.
One program head asked a faculty member at WSU to provide support for a program she wanted to have on campus. The faculty member declined. When the program director reminded him that she had sent him three students whose tuition would more than pay for what she wanted, he still declined. She escalated to more no’s until she found an associate vice president who agreed to provide the support.

The TRIO directors were very clear that students, whether those in the middle school programs, or adult service members in Veterans Upward Bound, respond to a spirit of welcome from a campus. This welcome can grow into relationships that will lead students to enroll. But WSU people “don’t reach out.” As a result, many students in these programs do not see WSU as a fit.

Academic Affairs staff in the session with TRIO directors expressed a desire to work on these issues in a proactive way. The Associate Vice President for Data has initiated weekly meetings with TRIO staff to integrate the TRIO programs with Enrollment Services offices. Planning is underway to integrate calendars so that Admissions and Financial Aid can have months to plan and integrate activities. Enrollment Services staff will undertake a scholarship/need review of TRIO students who have attended WSU to see what kinds of additional support can be created for these students. Resources for campus visits will now be made available for TRIO students instead of charging. Alumni is looking at ways to develop alumni scholarships, events, and mentoring that can be used in the TRIO programs. The university is taking the position that “our goal is for TRIO to be a part of the team rather than an outside marginal unit.”

**Recommendations**

WSU should continue the new initiatives to include TRIO programs. The approach that TRIO should be a part of WSU’s strategic enrollment planning is spot on.
University leadership should expect that TRIO programs will find collaboration on campus and the leadership should let deans, faculty, and staff know that expectation. If collaboration is not forthcoming, a pathway to obtain the collaboration should be in place.

To further this partnership with WSU, TRIO staff should provide information on the wraparound services they provide to students in programs such as Student Support Services, along with the data on results, to student success staff and others at the university working to improve persistence and graduation. Sharing what has been working for 45 years could be very significant for growing success at WSU.

**Student Success/Diversity and Inclusion**

**Observations**

Diversity and Inclusion Office moved into the Rhatigan Student Center (RSC) in 2014 and saw a 125% increase in student traffic after the move. They are seeing 1800 to 1900 students per month.

They provide professional mentors from the community—functioning something like Big Brothers/Big Sisters—to first gen students. WSU has about 300 students of color who are also first gen.

Diversity and Inclusion staff indicated that an African American faculty group is interested in being involved with students. It appeared that this faculty group was reaching out to the staff to determine how to develop such relationships.

First Year Programs within the Student Success Office has led a recent remake of orientation at WSU. They use Transition Mentors (a new name for Orientation Leaders) who work with students in groups during orientation and then make contact every week after they enroll in their first semester.
The change in orientation was to refocus on advising and student success. Students do online pre-advising to get the general information given by advisors in large group sessions before advising starts. Then advisors reach out to schedule advising appointments (as early as March). The section on Advising below discusses advisors’ assessment of the pre-advising program. Then students have to come to an orientation session in the summer. Four hundred new students had a hold on their record because they skipped the orientation session. They are then given a kind of survey of resources and policies and their hold is lifted.

Student Success provides Supplemental Instruction in 20 sections throughout 70 courses. These are generally lower division STEM courses with some upper division ones that are gateway courses.

Diversity and Inclusion staff does presentations in WSU 101.

Working with first gen students is a natural collaboration between Student Success and Diversity and Inclusion.

WSU participates in the Student Success Collaborative, a service of the Educational Advisory Board (EAB), of which WSU is a member. The Student Success office is now starting to use WSU data from the Collaborative project to identify and reach out to students who are predicted to be at risk.

Two big areas where Student Success will be working: counseling and testing, and student money management.

**Recommendations**

The interest of African American faculty to connect with students should be strongly encouraged and facilitated. Students of color who connect with faculty of color are more likely
to be retained if they develop academically centered relationships with those faculty. Students should be encouraged to take courses from these faculty where appropriate.

WSU should ensure that faculty play a significant role in helping to mark student milestones such as graduation. For example, the university should have faculty play a prominent role in graduation celebrations, held prior to the commencement ceremony, for students of color and LGBT students.

Diversity and Inclusion and Student Success should redouble efforts to work with first gen students at WSU. This will almost certainly be a major thrust for future enrollment growth.

Student Success and First Year Programs should do an early assessment of how the new orientation program is working. Areas to study further: how do students react to coming to campus for advising and then coming back for orientation? How do students from a distance feel about the two part approach (advising and orientation) and how they are accommodated if travel is an issue? Should there be a pre-test and post-test on the pre-advising online segment to determine how much students are retaining from the online program? What is the impact of 400 students skipping orientation from the perspective of the co-curriculum, which plays a very important part in student success? As more students from Oklahoma and Texas access in-state tuition at WSU, how will this model accommodate their needs? Will the program require them to make two trips to campus for advising and orientation? If not, which will be “forgiven” and how will the activities of the forgiven element be made available to the new students disadvantaged by distance. What may work for commuter students may not work as well for a more geographically diverse student population.

Starting to build a sense of community in orientation is an excellent way to set expectations for student engagement in and out of the classroom. While there is a tendency to try to dump too much into orientation, and students subsequently zone out, the importance of orientation as the first step in retention cannot be denied. Yet it is also true that most of the student
development elements of orientation happen because of the pull of students to come for advising and registration. There should be careful assessment of whether the orientation section is getting short shrift when advising has already happened. The number of students ending up with holds because they did not attend orientation should be monitored very carefully to see if the number grows as students realize that there is no real significance placed on skipping orientation.

**Student Issues**

**Observations**

The consultant was able to meet with only a small number of students (four) during the on-site visit. Although the number is certainly not representative, those who were there were very involved in a number of activities, including student government, and articulated a number of issues.

Communication came up again. “Students want straightforward information,” one student said. There is a lack of knowledge of resources on campus, or poor communication about them. They like Shocker Blast, a relatively new communication tool to get information out about the campus.

The students present described WSU as a place with many outlets for student voices to be heard.

They do not think students know they have a hold and when they go to register, there it is, and it is too late to do anything about it. This keeps students from getting classes, which in some majors where classes are offered only once a year would mean another year before graduation.
In fact, an email is automatically sent to students when a hold goes on, but, as the students said, “we know students don’t read email.” Discussion ensued about sending a text to say, “Look at your email re: holds.” The key is to get students to take action before registration and missing out on those classes. Getting a hold lifted is a horror, or at least perceived as such.

**Recommendations**

The concept of reaching out to students multiple times to get them to acknowledge and take action on university business is one that warrants further discussion. The old adage that one needs to tell the audience what they are going to hear, then tell them, and then tell them what they heard might apply in the instance of getting students to take action on removing a hold. If the student misses or ignores an email, a text might get his attention.

**Advising**

**Observations**

Advisors suggested that they do not think there is as much retention of pre-advising information from the online presentation as there was from the in-person presentations they did as part of orientation. As a result, they find themselves going over the information again when they meet with the students in advising sessions.

The advisors identified transcript evaluations as a major roadblock for transfer students. They stated that departments are not responsive to credit evaluations with months sometimes elapsing without an evaluation’s being completed. They also want in-progress courses to be evaluated.
Students’ transcripts are evaluated at the time of admission against the university’s course equivalency tables. This allows at least a designation of general education applicability for most courses. However, if the student might need a course evaluated for general credit for a specific requirement, or if there are courses that do not appear in the equivalency table, these are marked on the credit evaluation as needing review. The student sees this when she goes to her academic advisor.

A very positive discussion developed around the call from leadership for more consistency in advising. The advisors seemed amenable to the concept, but they felt defeated at the prospect of how to make it happen. They talked about the differences in policy in each college and how that could defeat the attempt to reach consistency.

**Recommendations**

Advisors should be consulted by First Year Programs for input on an assessment of the split of advising from orientation. The advisors have ideas that might inform the design of a study to determine the efficacy of the new approach.

Advisors should begin their search for consistency across the colleges by looking at practices not policies. Practices are more amenable to change. For example, how students schedule advising appointments could be standardized. Perhaps every advising office could use the same scheduling software. The advisors agreed this might be a more realistic first approach than trying to change policies.

The concern over how untimely credit evaluations are in the academic units is widespread. It gives emphasis to leadership’s including it as one of the enrollment management initiatives.

WSU should also look at its credit evaluation process. The process seems to begin after students are ready to enroll—or already are—when they meet with their advisor. The process
of having academic departments handle credit evaluation should be initiated whenever a course cannot be evaluated through the equivalency table.

**Student Involvement**

**Observations**

The Student Involvement Office has a very pragmatic approach to student engagement: they believe in meeting students where they are. They have a Community Service Board that offers those students who cannot commit to a club or organization the opportunity to do service projects. Adults especially are responding to the opportunity to be involved in service as a way of becoming engaged besides the traditional student organization route.

Student Involvement is also growing traditional engagement through the Greek system. An innovative Greek Ambassador program targets high school juniors in the summer for a Greek immersion on what it is like to be in a fraternity or sorority. The program also includes parents to engage them with Greek life. They work to find tipping points to get students to consider WSU and Greek life both. They now have 900 students in the WSU Greek system, representing a 25-30% growth, with five new chapters added in the last three years.

I-Engage lunches bring faculty and students together to build engagement. The lunches have outcomes that staff can track for assessment.

The Student Affairs division is creating a culture of assessment to gain more information on what students want. Assessment is having an impact on events to make students more involved.
Student Affairs offices are now using card swipe machines to track traffic patterns. The goal is to build a system that will allow for assessment of the impact of involvement on retention and student success. They want to be able to talk about the advantages of engagement in the co-curriculum.

Staff can point to examples of how Student Affairs engagement activities have advantaged students academically. Students seeking internships use student leadership activity in clubs and organizations as evidence of strong work experience. Other students combine their involvement with academic credit as in an Alternative Spring Break course being taught through the Honors College.

They have a Student Engagement Assessment Team made up of staff from different Student Affairs areas. However, they are concerned because, while many student affairs divisions nationally have dedicated assessment staff, WSU does not. The Team can make progress, but a dedicated assessment staff person could do far more.

The meeting ended with a spirited conversation about how Student Affairs can underpin the academic message: the co-curriculum meets the curriculum.

**Recommendations**

The pragmatic concept of meeting students where they are should be continued and enhanced wherever possible. Building a culture of service that maximizes opportunities from on-off work at a local foodbank or a community center to Alternative Spring Break to service learning classes will draw more students than any club, activity, or student government. It is easy to forget that many students come from a faith-based commitment to charity and service. Students of faith often have service as a foundation of their faith, so they naturally gravitate to service opportunities in college. As they become involved, they engage.
The growth of the Greek system at WSU is another splendid example of the multiple ways Student Involvement meets the students where their interests are. Greek chapters can bring considerable value to the culture of service.

Faculty who might have research interests in student engagement should be included on the Student Engagement Assessment Team to build faculty/student affairs partnerships. Student Affairs should consider cannibalizing the next position that comes open from retirement or resignation to create an assessment officer for the division. The value from having a dedicated person to lead assessment efforts cannot be overemphasized.

**Strategic Communication**

**Observations**

This division is working on building the new strategic plan into communications and marketing.

The communication area supports Admissions social media, helping with ideas about campaigns, and engagement tactics. They are accompanying the recruitment team to Tulsa.

There is some recruitment-based mass media, including a TV spot. They believe this is a better approach than advertising. They do have a presence in schools—District 259—with advertising in gyms.

A web redesign is coming with a new Content Management System (CMS).

In the course of the conversation someone mentioned the use of alumni as recruiters.
**Recommendations**

Some advertising would seem appropriate in new markets, such as Tulsa and Oklahoma City, to help establish the WSU brand. An environmental scan should be done to see whether universities are using billboards or not. In some markets a university would be conspicuous by its absence on billboards, especially one wanting to break into the territory.

Alumni recruitment is a viable tactic in many campus recruitment plans. However, it would require someone in Admissions to assume responsibility along with a counterpart in Alumni. Significant training, scripting, and monitoring of the alumni volunteers would be necessary to ensure positive outcomes.

**Data**

**Observations**

WSU rests on a rock solid foundation of data. The Office of Planning and Analysis (OPA) has data on every aspect of the university. In terms of the university’s access to available data, there is more access and more data than in 95% of other colleges and universities in America. However, what really sets the university apart is how the data are used for analysis. Too often, offices such as OPA lay the data out and walk away without providing the analysis that makes the data truly valuable. The difference at WSU is that OPA can use the data to tell the stories. Data analysis at the university is exceptional. The only other comparable operation known to the consultant is at Iowa State University, considered to have the preeminent enrollment data analysis team in the country.

In spite of the extraordinary resource available from OPA, there is general recognition that the campus does not use this resource to the fullest extent. It appears that leadership, including the deans, is well aware of the resource they have for data and analysis, but departments and units have less understanding and use of the tools to explain and guide.
Recommendations

WSU should consider a Data Academy for middle managers and staff to train them in the analysis of data that they most likely are familiar with and monitor on a regular basis. While WSU’s admissions staff appear to know how to make the data tell stories—to help guide practice—the OPA staff does not have the human resources to guide other areas in the analysis piece of using data. The advantage of having the full range of WSU operational staff using data for analysis would be worth considering additional resources for OPA to make it happen.

OPA should assist the Enrollment Services offices in rethinking their assessment of enrollment practices and programs to ensure that they are looking at the impact of practice on enrollment instead of just looking at an evaluation of an event’s moving parts (“feel good” evaluation).

OPA should assist Student Affairs in its assessment practices to ensure the campus has the benefit of seeing the impact of the co-curriculum on retention and student success.

Enrollment Services Leadership

Observations

There has been discussion about whether the Enrollment Services operational areas at WSU should have a designated Chief Enrollment Officer hired specifically for his or her enrollment management experience and expertise. The market for chief enrollment officers is not good right now. As one headhunter commented recently, “There are many positions and few well-qualified candidates.” Those who are successful are not easily enticed to move to another position. Those who are looking are not necessarily successful.

The WSU enrollment offices—and the university’s overall enrollment efforts—benefit significantly from the leadership team of David Wright and Gina Crabtree. The two complement and support each other remarkably well. Wright has the faculty connection and,
as a member of the Provost's staff, is able to ensure a hearing for ideas and needs of Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Registrar's Office. Providing functional coordination to the enrollment areas, Crabtree has experience in Admissions as well as being the University Registrar. She has high credibility with other university staff and faculty both and is an effective advocate of the Enrollment Services staff. Enrollment at WSU is exceptionally well supported by data because of Wright’s expertise. Both are especially adept at recognizing opportunities that present themselves such as the ongoing efforts to build collaboration with the TRIO programs. Their enrollment leadership skills could benefit from more familiarity with Strategic Enrollment Management practice nationally to enable them to introduce new strategies to the staff in the enrollment areas, as well as to the academic units.

**Recommendations**

WSU should continue to support—and benefit from—the strong leadership of David Wright and Gina Crabtree for the enrollment services offices and the university’s enrollment goals and strategies. Recent experience on other campuses would suggest that it is unlikely that a search would identify a chief enrollment officer that could match, let alone surpass, the skill set and team work of Wright and Crabtree.

This does not mean that WSU could not benefit from additional expertise. WSU should consider external coaching support for ongoing development of enrollment leadership, including that in the operational offices, to ensure WSU’s ability to anticipate, identify and implement new strategies and practices. Developing and strengthening current leadership is much more likely to bolster WSU’s enrollment success than an external search, given the difficulty in identifying and recruiting a chief enrollment officer. If leadership changes in the future, it may be appropriate to ask at that time if WSU needs a chief enrollment officer but the internal strengths of the two leaders today are unusual and warrant a “grow your own” approach with additional support from enrollment coaching.
Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to work with Wichita State University. This project and AACRAO Consulting’s ongoing Strategic Enrollment Planning efforts with WSU provide the university an opportunity to use best practices and knowledge transfer to focus its enrollment efforts strategically both for the institution’s and its students benefit. This report provides recommendations that would require reshaping processes and messages in the enrollment areas to ensure a strong foundation for the Strategic Enrollment Plan now being developed. At the university’s discretion, AACRAO Consulting would be prepared to provide assistance with the implementation of these recommendations, including support for the continued development of the current leadership in Enrollment Services and the managers of the operational enrollment offices.
Appendix A: Interview Participants

Enrollment Services
- David Wright, Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs and Chief Data Officer
- Gina Crabtree, University Registrar and Director of Enrollment Services
- Vince Altum, Executive Director of International Education
- Bobby Gandu, Director of Undergraduate Education
- Sheelu Surender, Director of Financial Aid

Office of Student Success/Associate Vice Presidents
- Richard Muma, Associate VP Academic Affairs (accreditation and student success)
- Linnea GlenMaye, Associate VP Academic Affairs (academic advising)
- Kim Sandlin, Director of Office of Student Success (orientation, success programs, military center)

President John Bardo

President’s Executive Team
- John Bardo, President
- Tony Vizzini, Provost and Senior Vice President
- Eric Sexton, VP of Student Affairs
- Mary Herrin, VP for Administration and Finance
- John Tomblin, VP for Research and Transfer Technology and Exec. Director of NIAR
- David Moses, General Counsel
- Lou Heldman, VP of Strategic Communications
- Andy Schlepp, Exec Director of Governmental Relations/Board of Trustees
- Elizabeth King, CEO and President of WSU Foundation
Council of Academic Deans

- Ron Matson, Fairmount College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Annand Desai, Barton School of Business
- Kimberly Engberg, Cohen Honors College
- Sandra Bibb, College of Health Professions
- Shirley Lefever-Davis, College of Education
- Royce Bowden, College of Engineering
- Rodney Miller, College of Fine Arts
- Don Gilstrap, University Libraries
- David Wright, AVP and CDO
- Rick Muma, AVP
- Tony Vizzini, Provost

Faculty Senate Executive Committee

- Peer Moore-Jensen, Anthropology, President
- Mehmet Barut, Finance, Real Estate, and Decision Sciences
- Janice Ewing, Curriculum and Instruction
- Victoria Mosack, Nursing
- Carolyn Shaw, Political Science

Student Affairs

- Christine Schneikart-Luebbe, AVP for Student Engagement/Dean of Students
- Trish Gandu, Assistant to the Dean
- Nancy Loosle, Director of Student Involvement
- Lyston Skerritt, Assistant Director of Student Involvement
- Chelsea Redger, Assistant Director of Student Involvement
- Alicia Sanchez, Director of Diversity and Inclusion
- Eric Maki, Director of Campus Recreation
- Vanessa Buehne, Assistant Director of Campus Recreation
• Scott Jensen, Director of Housing and Residence Life
• Katie Austin, Associate Director of Housing and Residence Life
• Gayle Veltman, Coordinator of Testing, Counseling, and Testing Center
• Eric Sexton, VP Student Affairs

Admissions Staff

Financial Aid Staff

Students

Office of Student Success and Office of Diversity and Inclusion
• Kim Sandlin, Director, Student Success
• Heidi Rodrick
• Shelby Metcalf
• Samantha Greenberg
• Sarah Sell
• Tim Hagan
• Alicia Sanchez, Director, Diversity and Inclusion
• Danielle Johnson
• Quang Nguyen
• Natalie Toney

Academic Advisors
• Mandy Konecny, Health Professions
• Christina Folkerts, Health Professions
• Sherena Langley, Education
• Randy Ware, Business
• Wendy Hanes, Fine Arts
• Leann Karr, Fine Arts
• Alicia Newell, Engineering
• Kitti Seavey, Honors

Strategic Communications Staff
• Lou Heldman
• Craig Lindeman
• Sandra Denneler
• Kristi Hahn
• Johanna Fonkert
• Andrew Hurt
• Amy Easum
• Tim Hart
• Jen Hendricks
• Lainie Rusco
• Quinn Hall
• Amy Schafer

Provost and Senior Vice President Tony Vizzini

Student Involvement Staff
• Christine Schneikart-Luebbe, AVP and Dean of Students
• Nancy Loosle
• Lyston Skerritt
• Chelsea Redger

TRIO Directors
• Deltha Colvin
• Kaye Monk-Morgan
• Corinne Nilsen
• Martha Lewis
• Alan D’souza
• Vic Chavez
• Frances Ervin
• Riccardo Harris
• LaWanda Holt-Fields
• Grady Landrum

International Admissions Staff