GRAD AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

Effects of a Public-Private Partnership on Graduate Enrollment Management

By Jonathan Clayden

In light of impaction, increasing operational costs, and increased competition among institutions in terms of degrees offered as well as marketing dollars to attract prospective students, state-funded institutions are under increasing pressure to maximize operations via increased efficiency in enrollment management efforts.

This study analyzes the impact of a limited-scope public-private partnership on various aspects of the enrollment management funnel for a target set of academic programs at the graduate level in a self-supporting college within a state university system.

Introduction to Graduate Enrollment Management

Strategic enrollment management (SEM) has been an established field since the 1970s. However, most SEM materials are geared toward institution-wide efforts at the undergraduate level. Efforts and material at the *graduate* level are still somewhat in their infancy. Efforts and materials with additional focus on professional and continuing education are even harder to find. Explorations in the graduate realm have been labeled "graduate enrollment management" (GEM) (circa 2014) by the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP). NAGAP defines GEM as:

> *a systematic approach to managing the graduate student lifecycle from initial awareness to alumna/alumnus by integrating the core functions associated with the enrollment and support of a graduate student.*

NAGAP's definition is in agreement with—if not identical to—Dolence's (1993) SEM definition:

> *a comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain optimum enrollment, where optimum is defined within the academic context of the institution…a process that enables the fulfillment of institutional mission and students' educational goals.*

Administrators seeking to apply SEM concepts to graduate/professional programming have some general, overarching ideas as to the nature of GEM from NAGAP as well as undergraduate-focused resource materials from organizations such as the American As-

sociation of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)—materials they must weave together to devise functional strategy for their areas within the contexts of their institutions.

Graduate and professional education delivered by self-supporting colleges of extended learning (ExLs) in state systems increases complexity. Such colleges—typically without their own faculty—partner with their institution's academic colleges to deliver programming at the graduate level. Even if reporting to academic affairs (as at California State University, Northridge), ExLs may not have as much faculty input, access, or buy-in as their traditional counterparts. Similarly—by nature of their potential inability to utilize state-supported offices in the same fashion as their non-self-supporting counterparts—they also may not have as much input, access, or buy-in with core campus offices (*e.g.*, student services, financial aid, registrar, etc.). This is detailed in the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) whitepaper "Hallmarks of Excellence in Professional and Continuing Education" (Cavalier *et al*. 2015), which states:

> *continuing education units…advocate for causes that are not necessarily mainstream issues for…universities….The challenge is…to create a system where the larger institution truly understands what PCE units do and why they do it, while recognizing and supporting the student body they serve* (6).

To limit the impact of the foregoing, ExLs may develop their own systems to facilitate services tailored to their student body (predominantly midcareer professionals seeking career advancement). This is the case at CSUN, where the College of Extended Learning houses its own marketing, admissions and registration, financial aid, program management (recruitment, retention/student support, administration), distance learning and IT units, as well as college-specific systems (such as customer relations management [CRM], faculty assignment/course staging, and data dashboard platforms). With such in-house systems, ExLs are, to some degree, a microcosm of the larger campus. Thus, SEM efforts for colleges with such a structure may not necessarily feature the campus as a whole and so may not necessarily be SEM *proper* in the context of its original definition. However, such efforts may well follow SEM theory, albeit with a smaller set of stakeholders and systems. This includes faculty-led determinations of desired enrollment levels and admissions methodologies through to retention-based program management efforts to graduation, encompassing student support in all aspects of the SEM funnel, from prospect to graduate.

It is within this framework and with this context that this study was executed.

Introduction

According to the Council of Graduate Schools' 2018 study "Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2007 to 2017" (Okahana and Zhou), applications for admission to graduate schools decreased approximately 2 percent from 2016 to 2017. Conversely, the number of master's degrees awarded increased 4.6 percent. In short, graduate schools are fighting for a diminishing share of the same pie.

This stark realization, in combination with increasing operational costs and reduced funding, puts state-funded institutions under increasing pressure to maximize operations. This study details efforts to utilize SEM practices to increase efficiency in enrollment management by analyzing the impact of a limited-scope public-private partnership on various aspects of the enrollment management funnel for a target set of academic programs at the graduate level at a self-supporting college within a state university system.

Strategic enrollment management has been studied extensively; however, as stated above, the preponderance of such work to date has been at the undergraduate level and with a focus leveraging existing institutional resources to implement and execute such work. This study focuses on leveraging the aggregate resources of the public and private sectors with a focus on graduate enrollment through the lens of graduate and professional education in extended learning at a four-year state institution. The study achieves this goal through the connection and analysis of data relating to specific aspects of the enrollment management funnel for a target set of academic programs.

Literature Review

This study is focused on the impact of a single public-private partnership on specific stages of the enrollment management funnel for a target set of academic programs offered by a graduate and professional education unit of a college of extended learning at a four-year state institution. However, because various aspects of the field presented themselves during the study, the following literature review touches upon such scope, if only in broad strokes.

Professional and Continuing Education Units: Structure and Systems

Much research exists regarding viable enrollment management services structures for general student populations. Although many aspects of such research support the efforts of (and are in evidence at) the site of this study, existing material broaches models in which such work is executed in house and on site. Such models require that institutional staff discharge a variety of responsibilities. This is reflected in "The Student-Centered Enrollment Services Enterprise" (Weiss *et al*. 2010):

> *The one-stop shop model of enrollment services not only centralizes the key enrollment functions under a single reporting hierarchy but also integrates the essential customer-facing services into a single physical location; as discussed below, this requires that staff be trained to answer a wide array of customer inquiries* (5).

This study aims to provide some data—by effectively *limiting* the number of responsibilities staff must discharge within the enrollment management (EM) process—on the efficiency of some of the stated functions of the enrollment management funnel specifically *not* being handled solely in house and on site.

In relation to the enrollment management funnel in the professional and continuing education area, "Hallmarks of Excellence in Professional and Continuing Education" (Cavalier, *et al*. 2015) states:

> *Just as concepts of instructional delivery must change, so too must the policies and procedures that have guided institutions on how to recruit, register, and retain students. To address PCE students' circumstances, leaders must advocate for technologies, systems, policies, and procedures that support and speak to the work and lifestyles of students whose lives do not follow a five-day, 40-hour-per-week calendar* (5).

Missing from this statement is the term "partnerships." Although there are many vendors in the field, there is less research on the impact of public-private partnerships (PPPs) designed to execute specific functions within the recruitment stage of the EM funnel—an area about which this study provides some data.

The Graduate and Professional Education Enrollment Management Landscape

It is often the case that in the current climate of impaction, in concert with increased costs and expenses, graduate and professional education units may be under-resourced, either in terms of access to or advocacy in relation to campus resources or budgetary allotments. Strategic initiatives to combat these issues may involve productivity efforts that center around either improvements to existing staffing and process models, or the redirection of funds to new models. Although the sector is clearly aware of these issues and the climate—as evidenced in *Integrated Interdependence: The Emergence of Graduate Enrollment Management* by Connor, LaFave, and Balayan (2014), referencing Selingo (2013) and Williams (2018)—the discussion regarding full-service graduate enrollment management is still focused on internal efforts:

> *As…universities…grapple with rising tuition costs, increasing competition for scarce resources, and calls for more accountability, [they]…look to strategically examine how to… recruit and retain students…At the graduate level, creating a full-service graduate enrollment management…support operation…is critical to…programmatic…viability. The emerging concept of GEM may improve productivity [and] continuity…This is especially challenging given that services for graduate students have been traditionally under-resourced…compared to undergraduate education…[T]he GEM sector is only beginning to be formalized* (Connor, LaFave, and Balayan 2014, 3).

GEM Staff Time

The NAGAP Salary Survey (Hanscom 2013), an instrument geared toward institutional employees with GEM responsibility, also seeks to frame other metrics, such as additional position responsibilities, amount of time spent on specific functions, etc. GEM professionals reported that they spent 30 percent of their work time on recruitment-based functions and 18 percent on retention-based activities. In short, surveyed GEM staff stated that they spent 66 percent more of their time on recruitment than on retention. (It should be noted that the NAGAP survey report did not directly reference the completion rates of the programs on which respondents were working. Thus, it was not possible to ascertain if the tabulated recruitment/retention working ratios for staff were affected.)

Although the delta were not so pronounced in this study, it was evident that GEM staff (those tasked predominantly with retention-based support) spent a volume of their time solely on recruitment efforts—something that was surprising to all stakeholders and could currently be the "hidden" case at many institutions.

Technology in SEM in the Graduate/ Professional Education Area

Examining data from an individual institution, a study by Marshall *et al*. (2017) at Presbyterian College, SC, found that 81 percent of admitted students opted in to receive SMS text messages from the institution; 40 percent of those students sent five or more texts to recruitment staff during their application process. Contextualizing those data on a larger scale, Lipsman *et al*.'s 2016 ComScore four-year study of the share of digital media time spent by platform found that mobile usage in the United States increased twelve percentage points to a 65 percent share from 2011 to 2015; desktop usage decreased twelve points to a 35 percent share over the same period. In addition, a 2015 independent study by Shift Communications (Stratten *et al*.) found that 82.1 percent of adult smartphone-using respondents stated that they opened every single text message that they were sent. In contrast, per a very large (n=5 million) email trends and benchmarks study by the Epsilon Group (Wiese *et al*. 2015), e-mail open rates in North America are approximately 32 percent. This is in keeping with internal data that confirm that 37 percent of prospective students at the study site open recruitment and application support-based e-mails from the institution.

What can be inferred from this? In short, data suggest that SMS text is the most effective channel by which to interact with prospective students. Unfortunately, for various reasons (fiscal, operational, data security/integrity, bureaucratic, etc.), many institutions are not yet able to communicate with prospective students via SMS text messaging; however, private partners may be able to offer this service within the framing conditions of institutional policy and within the fiscal and operational scope of the PPP agreement.

Public-Private Partnerships

As with *Navigating Public-Private Partnerships* (Dillingham *et al*. 2017), numerous articles and papers contain material that is general to all PPPs:

> *Historically, higher education leaders viewed PPPs primarily as a means to secure additional funds for major capital projects. However, leaders increasingly view these arrangements as risk-mitigation tools, which has altered the landscape of PPPs across higher education. Once limited to capital-constrained public institutions, now a wide variety of institutions...use PPPs to transfer the long-term risks of ownership, management, and maintenance, as well as to reap the benefits of private sector expertise* (7).

As noted, the bulk of the material related to PPPs is geared toward larger-scale physical initiatives, such as infrastructure, plant management, housing, etc. Although some of the overarching concepts of such PPP initiatives are applicable to PPP initiatives in general (*e.g*., project vision, scope, capacity, partnership values, etc.), they do not speak to the process integration and maintenance of the prospective student continuum of care most needed in a PPP designed to focus on the recruitment portion of the enrollment management funnel. Although several vendors operating in this area present their own advertising materials designed to promulgate the viability and success of their individual

services, there is not much independent research to substantiate these claims.

Data-Informed and "Right-Fit" Admissions

In *The History of Enrollment Management*, Hill (2017) references an early data-driven initiative at Boston College:

> *One thing Boston College did…was to send out annual marketing questionnaires to all accepted applicants… The surveys were analyzed, trends identified, and the admissions strategy adjusted to accommodate the newfound data. Maguire [the consultant on the initiative, stated], 'To understand and control this complex flow… the coordination of data retrieval, with analysis and timely decision-making based on that data, must be maintained.' Boston College began doubling its application rates and concurrently decreasing its acceptance rate—accepting students who were the right fit* (8–9).

Both elements—data and prospect fit—were key factors in this study. Boston College asked the following questions: "Have we established and can we capture the necessary metrics to quantify and illustrate the impact of the PPP?" and "Does the PPP maintain a focus on and ultimately ensure [that] 'right-fit' prospects matriculate through the recruitment and application support phases of the EM funnel to enrollment?"

Problem

Enrollment throughout the programs served by the graduate and professional education unit (GPE) remains robust. However, in light of the aforementioned campus-level impaction, increasing operational costs, competition and resources to attract new graduate students, as well as the ongoing pursuit of service and performance excellence in adherence with the campus and college mission, the following question was posed: "Does it better serve prospective and current student populations to execute the opportunity and application support functions of the recruitment segment of the enrollment management funnel solely utilizing internal staff and systems (as has been the tradition) or by creating a new system of utilizing the aggregate resources and skill-sets of a PPP?"

The study was designed to review, analyze, and determine if and in which ways a pilot public-private partnership has impacted and could further impact the GPE unit's support of prospective and current students through the opportunity and application support functions of the recruitment segment of the enrollment management funnel.

The stated review and accompanying determinations were accomplished by tracking and analyzing select data points in the enrollment management funnel and comparing those results to prior and current application cycles' ratios. In doing so, the study directly compared the work of internal teams and the PPP in execution of the same functions (*i.e.* shepherding prospective students from the opportunity phase to the application submitted phase.)

Study Setting

California State University, Northridge (CSUN) is a public campus serving approximately 40,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The campus comprises nine colleges, one of which is the Tseng College of Extended Learning for Graduate, International and Midcareer Education. (*See* the college organizational chart in Figure 1, on page 46.) The Tseng College serves some 1,500 students each year.

The Graduate and Professional Education and Services Unit (GPE) (highlighted in red in Figure 1; *see also* Figure 2, on page 46) partners with CSUN's other eight colleges to offer night, weekend, and online programming at the master's, baccalaureate, and post-baccalaureate certificate levels (Table 1, on page 47).

Table 2 (on page 47) highlights some core statistics of the GPE unit's operations for the fall 2017 application cycle. Figure 3 (on page 48) illustrates the formalized phases in the EM funnel at Tseng College along with corresponding "hand-off" points.

The two teams in the study executed both the opportunity and application support phases of the EM funnel (Figure 3, on page 48). The teams were structured as follows:

- **Internal Team:** Individual internal program management (PM) teams comprised one pro-

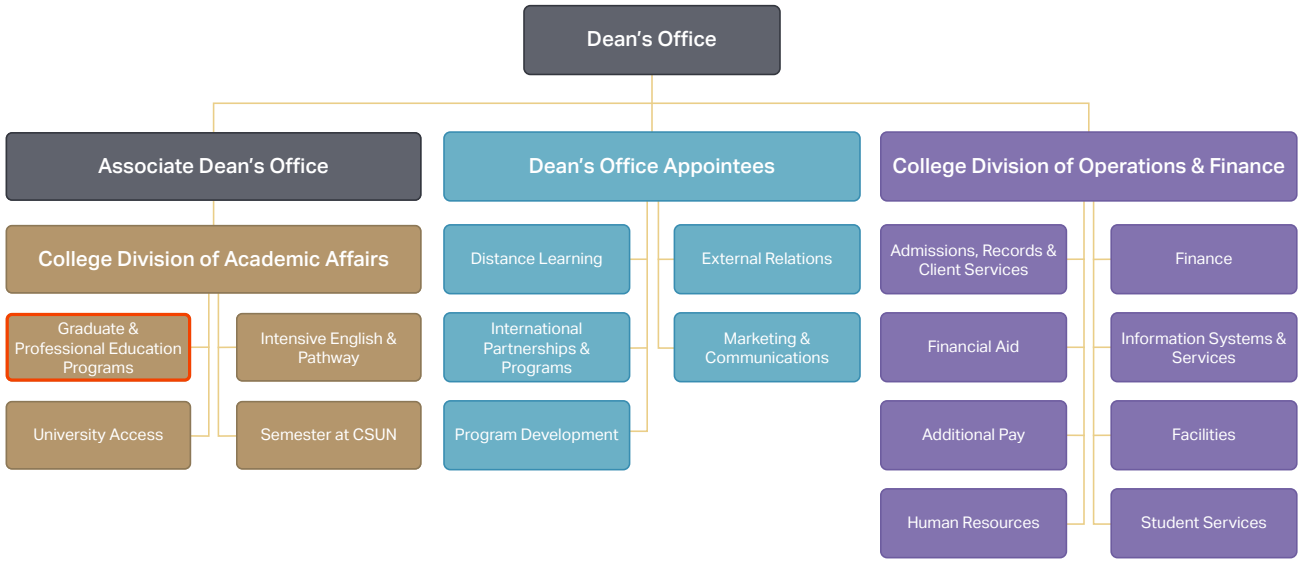

FIGURE 1 ➤ College of Extended Learning Organizational Chart

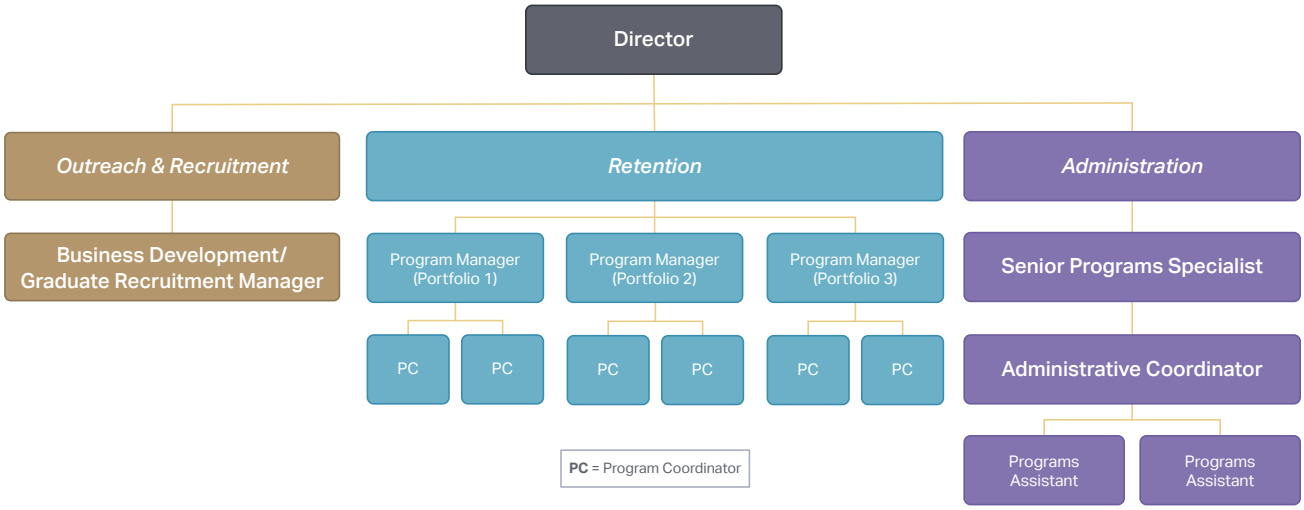

FIGURE 2 ➤ GPE Unit Organizational Chart

gram manager and two program coordinators (Figure 2). Academic programs had one to two of these individuals working on the reviewed segments of the EM funnel based on size.

- **Public-Private Partnership Team:** A centralized enrollment coaching team comprised one client manager, one coaching manager, and individual enrollment coaches assigned to each program in the partnership.

In support of both teams, these internal teams managed the following processes in the EM funnel:

- Lead management team: Handled the pre-opportunity "lead" outreach (*see* Figure 3, on page 48).

TABLE 1 ➤ GPE Unit Program Portfolio

Master's	Bachelor's	Certificate	
		Credit	Non-Credit
▸ M.A., Humanities ▸ M.A., Music Industry Administration ▸ M.S., Applied Behavior Analysis ▸ M.S., Assistive Technology Engineering ▸ M.S., Assistive Technology in Human Services M.S., Communicative Disorders ▸ M.S., Engineering Management ▸ M.S., Instructional Design ▸ M.S., Taxation ▸ Master of Public Administration (3 options): ↳ Certificate, Health Administration ↳ Certificate, Non-Profit Sector Mgmt. ↳ Public Sector Management and Leadership ▸ Master of Public Health ▸ Master of Social Work	▸ B.A.—Completion, Public Sector Management ▸ B.A.—Completion, Liberal Studies ▸ B.S.—Accelerated, Nursing	▸ Graduate Certificate, Business Administration ▸ Certificate, Speech-Language Pathology Prerequisite	▸ Non-Credit Certificate, Assistive Technology Applications ▸ Non-Credit Certificate, Design Thinking and Innovation ▸ Non-Credit Certificate, Leadership in an Age of Disruption ▸ Non-Credit Certificate, Radiologic Technician ▸ Non-Credit Certificate, Speech-Language Pathology Assistant

TABLE 2 ➤ Core GPE Statistics

Program Locations	Programs Supported	Current Cohorts	Applications Processed	Current Students	Leads Serviced	Revenue to CSUN
12	22	45	1,460	1,591	11,085	16M+

- Document management team: Received, processed, and checked off application documents for all applicants (within the "application support" phase of the EM funnel; *see* Figure 3).

In order to compare in-house and PPP efforts on assigned programs in the fall 2018 application cycle, four key EM funnel ratios were examined:

- Opportunities to applications started;
- Applications started to applications submitted (completed);
- Applications submitted to admitted to the program; and
- Admitted to the program to enrolled (started).

As Figure 4 (on page 48) shows, the college's internal team outperformed the PPP in terms of the per-stage conversion ratio in prospective student support efforts at the very front end of the EM funnel: Forty-four percent of prospective students that the college's CRM's automatic grading system designated as "opportunities" went on to start an application, and 65 percent of prospective students who started an application went on to submit an application; 61 percent of those who applied were admitted to the program. Eighty-six percent of those who were admitted ultimately enrolled.

By contrast, the PPP team had a much lower opportunity-to-application-started rate: 25 percent. However, the PPP team out-performed the internal team with higher conversion ratios at all subsequent stages of the EM funnel (*i.e.* application started to application submitted, application submitted to admitted, and admitted to enrolled).

While these data may lead one to conclude that the PPP team was more effective in its recruitment segment efforts for the fall 2018 application cycle, consideration should be given as to whether the large delta between teams at the front end of the EM funnel (25 percent for the PPP vs. 44 percent for the internal team for the "opportunity to application started" ratio) meant that the

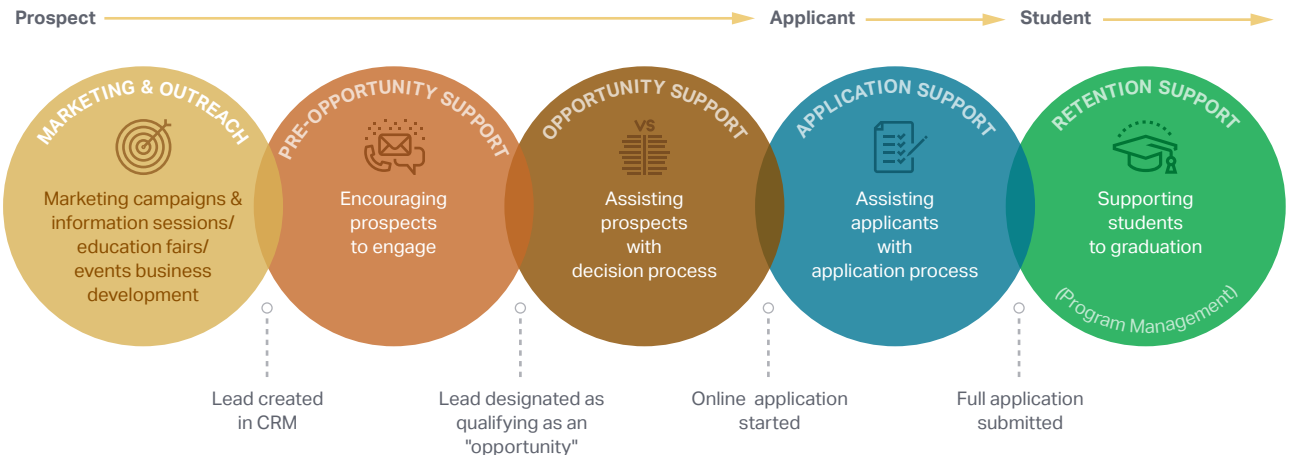

FIGURE 3 ➤ Phases in the Tseng College Enrollment Management Funnel

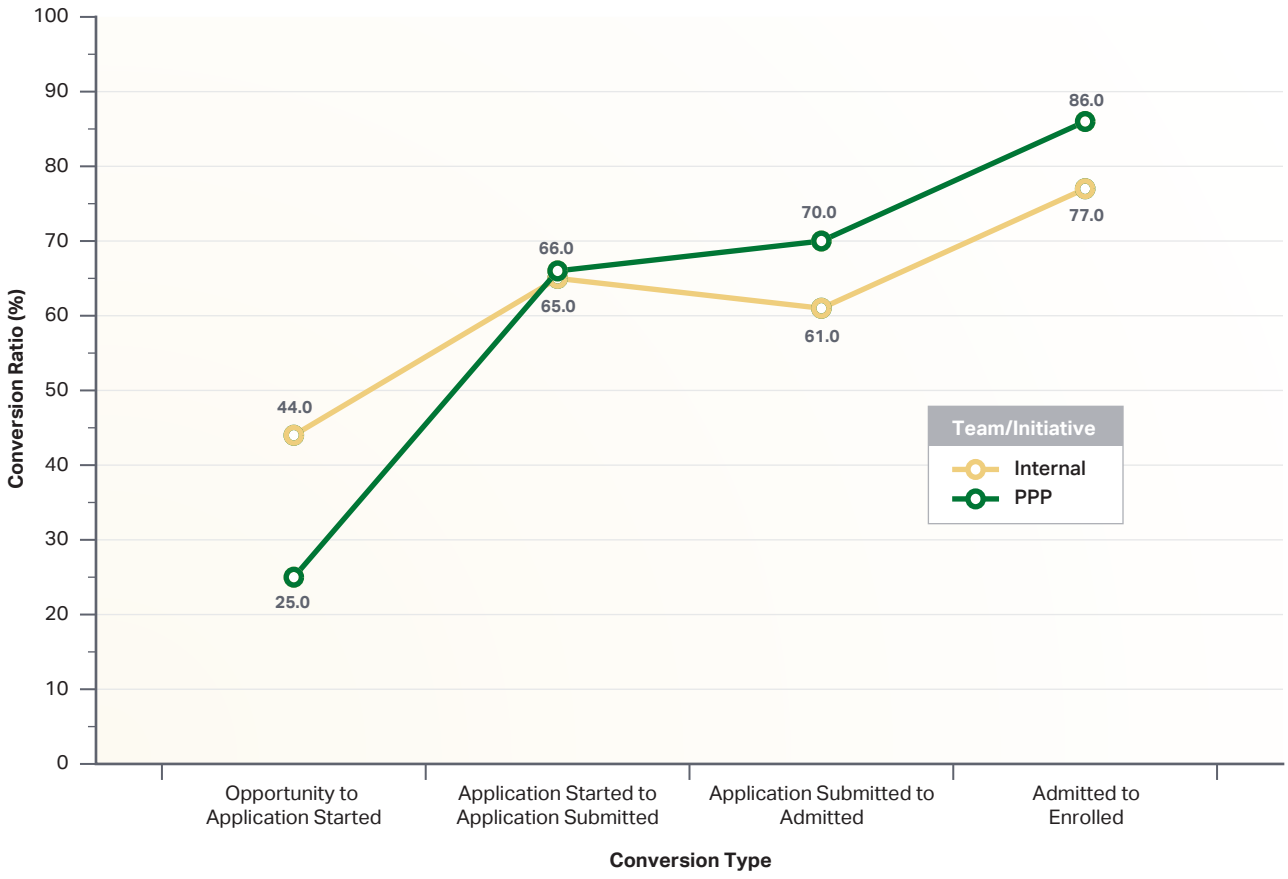

FIGURE 4 ➤ Internal vs. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Efforts in the EM Funnel

volume that the internal team secured in the first conversion ratio was so great that it ultimately provided a greater final enrollment volume at the *end* of the funnel.

To test this consideration, fall 2017 enrollment data for the same programs that the college had assigned to the PPP in fall 2018 were examined to provide a direct year-over-year enrollment comparison (*see* Figure 5). PPP efforts (represented by the orange sections of each column) increased enrollment over internal-only efforts in the prior year in an aggregate delta at a 29.3 percent average across the programs examined.

Taking these additional data at face value (in combination with the prior data on EM funnel conversion ratios), one might conclude that the PPP was more effective than the internal team. However, consideration had to be given to the possibility that the PPP received more leads designated as opportunities (and thus had more prospective students with whom to work), and that enrollment could have increased for most programs in the fall 2018 application cycle, not just those assigned to the PPP.

To test these considerations, the gross number of opportunities was compared on a year-over-year basis for the same programs in fall 2017 (when managed by the internal team) and fall 2018 (when managed by the PPP). Figure 6 (on page 50) shows that opportunities volume increased from fall 2017 to fall 2018 (an average of 23.8 percent). In fall 2018, the PPP received an average of 23.8 percent more prospects than the internal team did the previous year.

A sample set of like programs was reviewed to determine if the increased fall 2018 opportunity exhibited by the PPP-handled programs was college-wide (*i.e.* did all programs experience an increased volume of opportu-

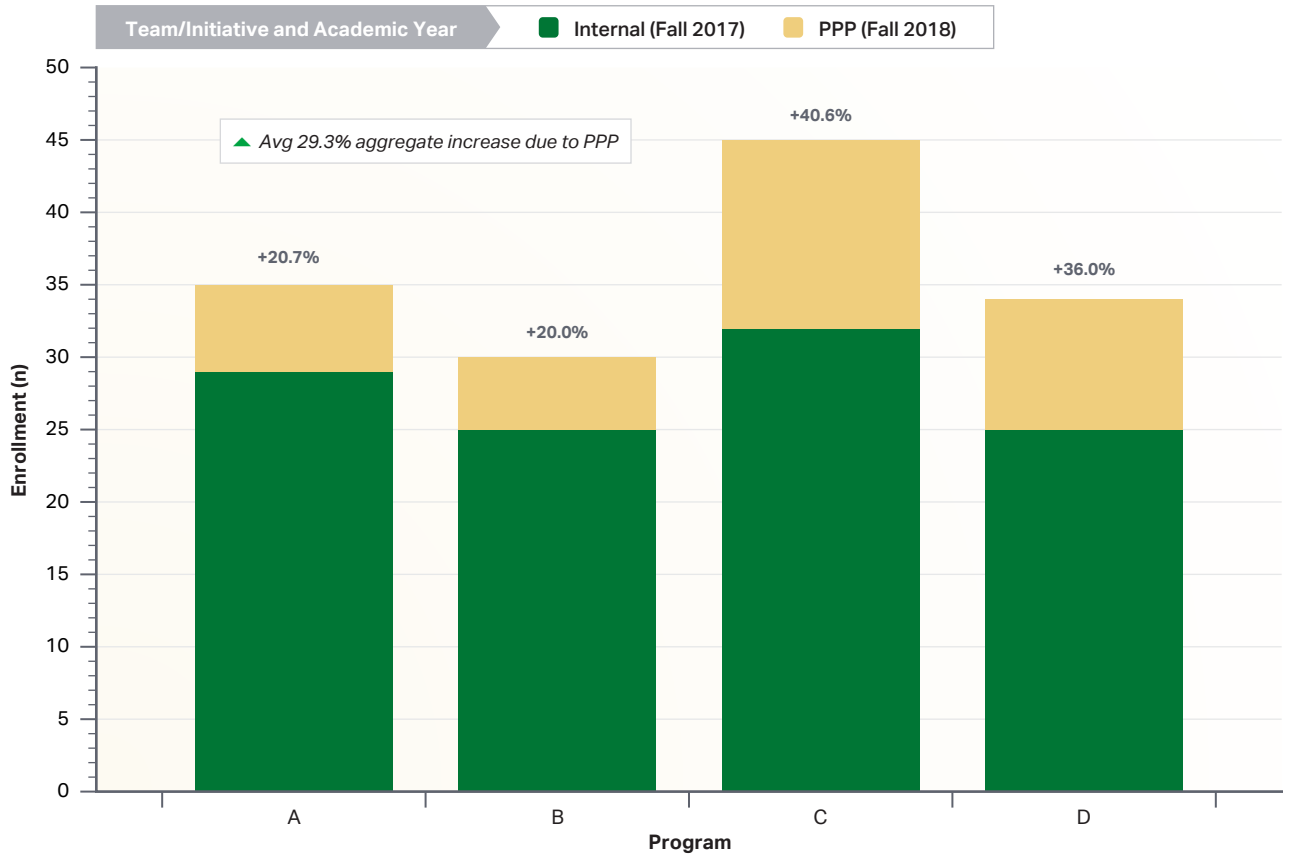

FIGURE 5 ➤ Year-Over-Year Enrollment Data Comparison

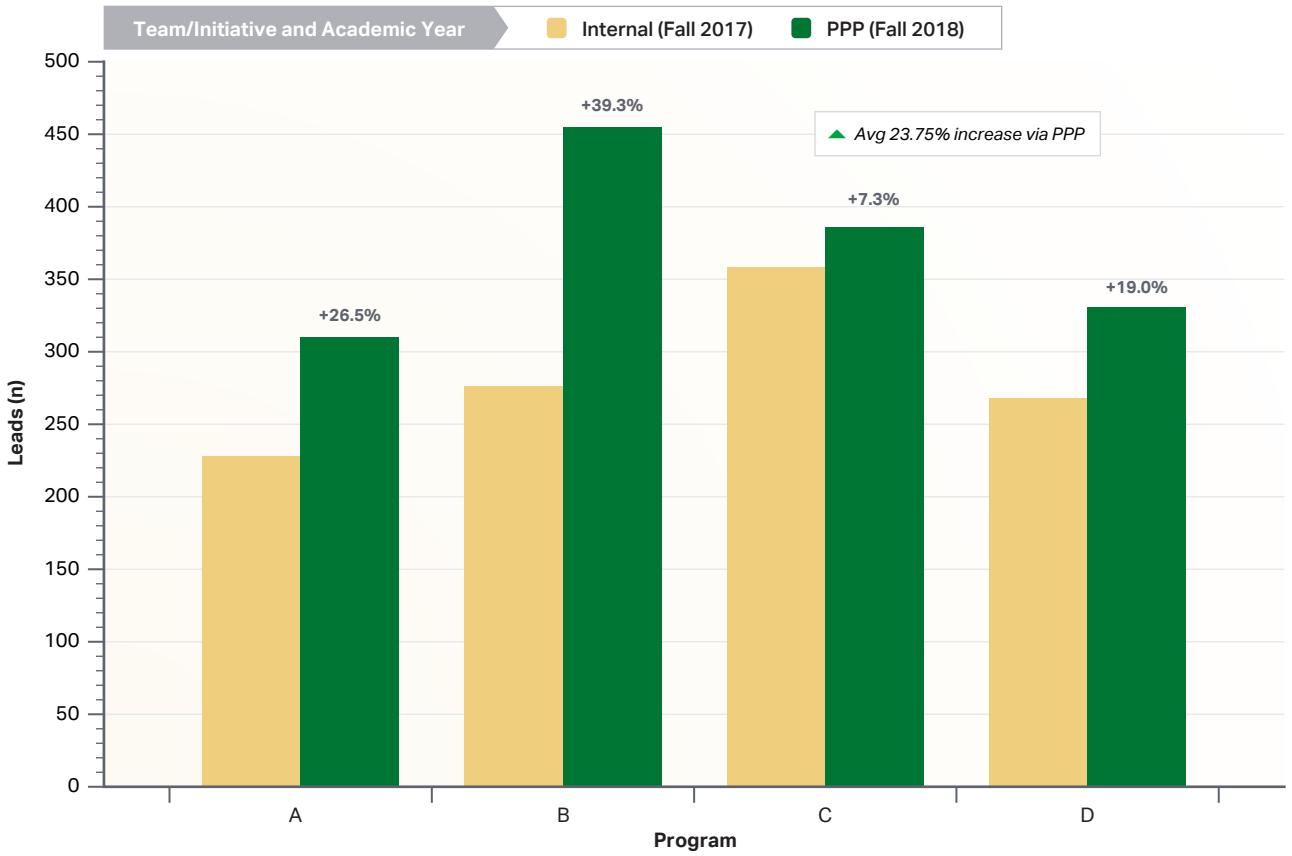

FIGURE 6 ➤ Fall 2017 and Fall 2018 Leads Designated as "Opportunities" Comparison: PPP

nities, and not just those managed by the PPP?). Figure 7 (on page 51) demonstrates that the number of opportunities increased year over year (by an average of 16.2 percent) for programs managed by the internal team.

A sample set of like programs was reviewed to determine if the increased fall 2018 enrollment exhibited by the PPP-handled programs was college-wide (*i.e.* did all programs experience increased enrollment, not just those managed by the PPP?).

Figure 8 (on page 52) presents year-over-year 2017 and 2018 enrollment data for a subset of like programs managed by internal teams at the college (*i.e.* programs that exhibited similar characteristics in terms of their modality/location/size/level/etc. to those assigned to the PPP). Fall cycle year-over-year enrollment for examined internal-team-assigned programs remained consistent in the years examined (in most cases, within a few percentage points).

Figure 8 (on page 52) presents comparative aggregate year-over-year enrollment data for both groups in the fall 2017 and fall 2018 cycles (*see also* Figure 9, on page 53). Taking into consideration the global increase in opportunities in fall 2018 (an average of 16.2 percent for examined internally managed programs and 23.8 percent for PPP-managed programs), one might expect an increase in internally managed program enrollment in 2018 similar to that of PPP-managed programs.

As an example, the 23.8 percent average increase in opportunities generated an aggregate average enrollment of +29.3 percent for PPP-managed programs for an opportunity to enrollment ratio of 1.231 percent for PPP-managed programs. Applying that ratio to the internally managed programs would generate an aggregate average enrollment of +19.9 percent (*i.e.* +16.2 percent opportunities for internally managed programs multiplied by the 1.231 ratio exhibited by PPP-managed

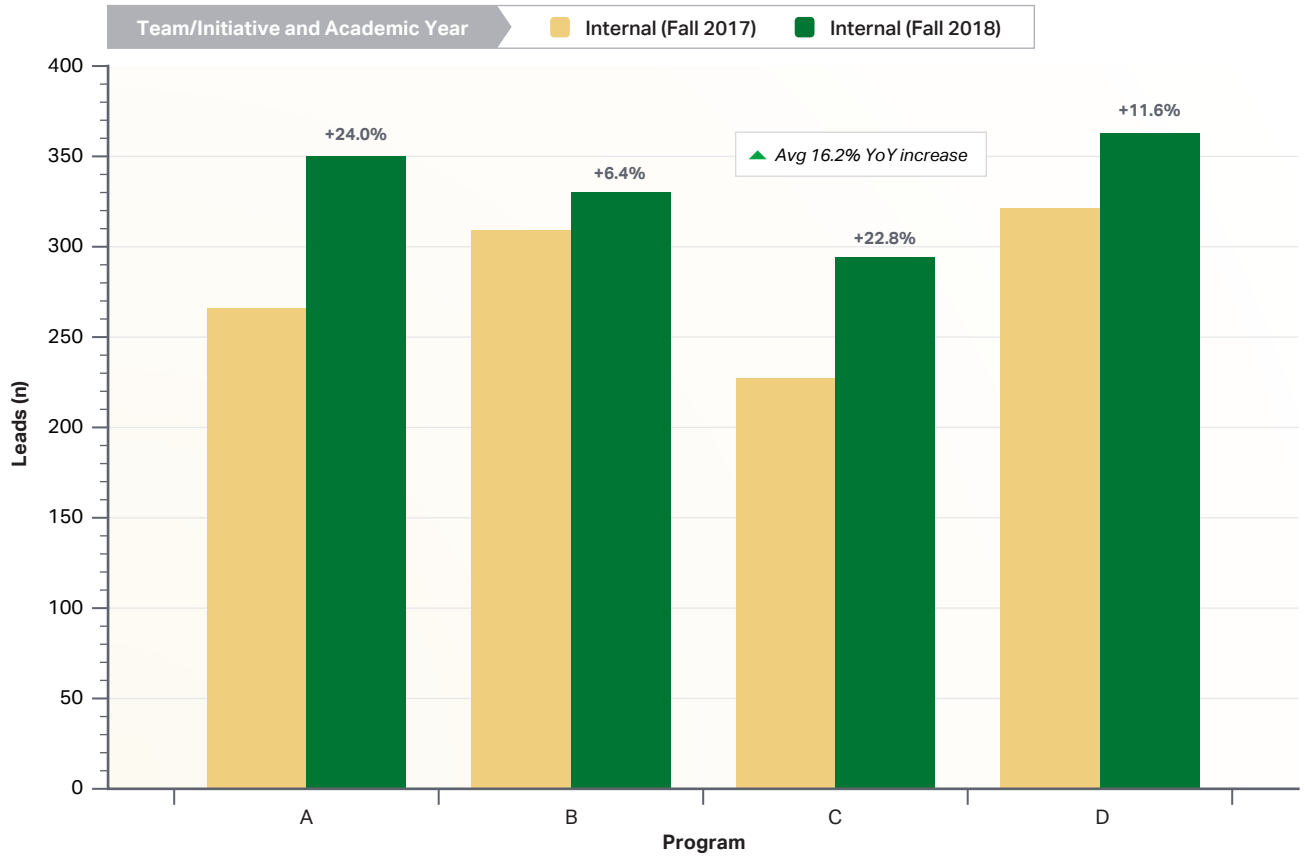

FIGURE 7 ➤ Fall 2017 and Fall 2018 Leads Designated as "Opportunities" Comparison: Internal Teams

programs). Despite the positive enrollment delta of 29.3 percent for PPP-managed programs, enrollment for programs managed by internal teams during the same period increased only 0.5 percent (resulting in a ratio for the internally managed programs of just 0.003) (*see* Figure 9, on page 53). Reverse-applying this 0.003 opportunity-to-enrollment ratio for internally managed programs to PPP-managed programs would generate a projected aggregate average enrollment increase of just 7.1—less than half of that actually attained by the PPP.

An increase in opportunities alone was not sufficient to increase enrollment uniformly across both of the groups in the study. With an average of +23.8 percent opportunities leading to an average of +29.3 percent enrollment versus the relative internal team effort of +16 percent opportunities leading to just +0.5 percent enrollment, the PPP effort experienced much greater prorated enrollment gains.

Figure 10 (on page 54) contrasts global enrollment management funnel stage ratios for both groups in the fall 2018 application cycle. (The percentages in the graph represent ratios calculated by comparing each EM phase to the total number of opportunities, not the conversion ratios of each individual stage to the next—thus the continuing declining ratios). That is, at 9 percent of prospective students designated as opportunities by the college's CRM system versus the internal effort of 6 percent, the PPP exhibits a global delta of +3 percent over the internal team. However, when compared to the internal effort, the PPP exhibits a much higher intergroup comparative delta of +50 percent.

In addition to the EM funnel conversion ratio and enrollment data, fiscal data were reviewed (*see* Table 3, on page 55). Aggregate fees from the PPP—when amortized over the duration of the three-year pilot—equated to just under $50 per prospect serviced. (Note

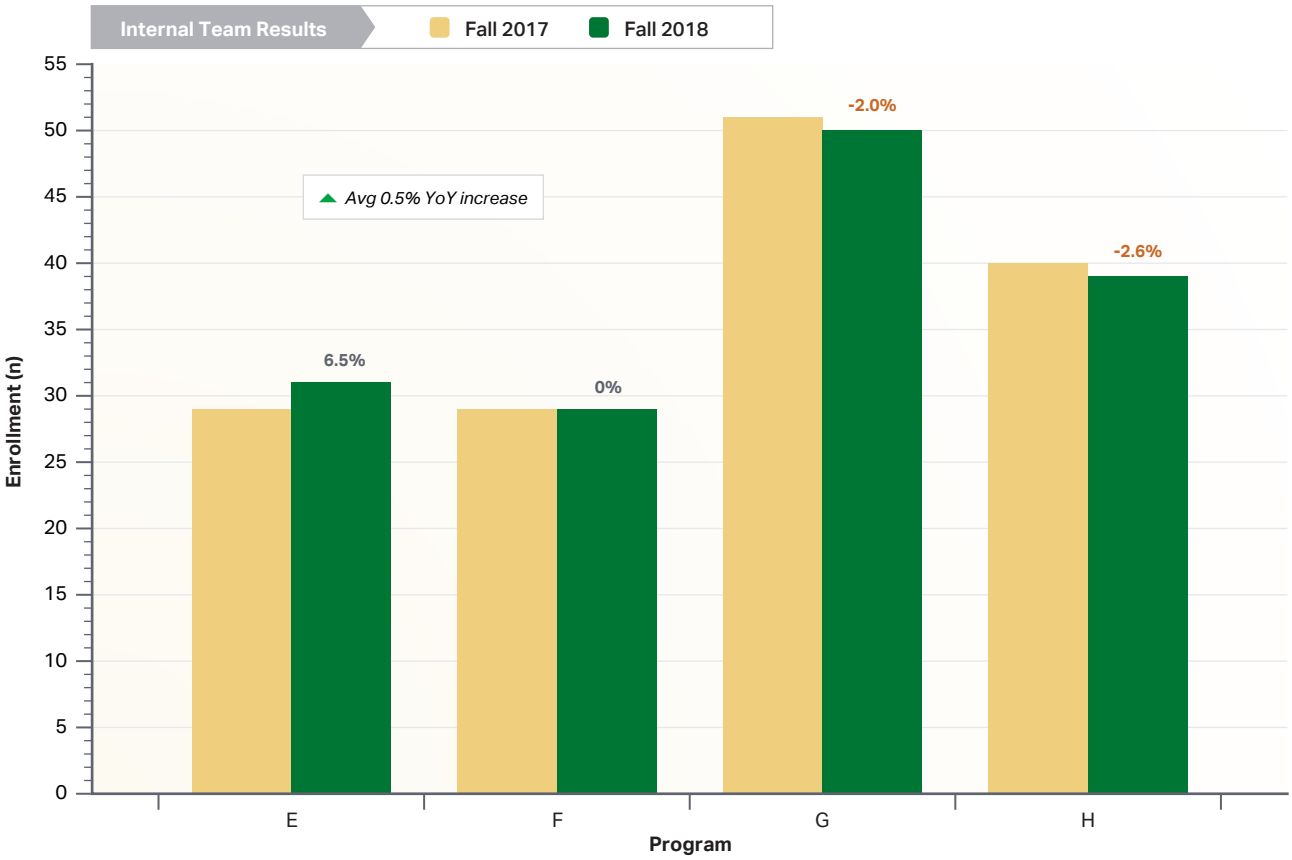

FIGURE 8 ➤ Internal Recruitment Effort Only; Year-Over-Year Enrollment Comparison

that the PPP's $50 per-prospect fee has no time limit; the PPP will service that opportunity for as long as it exists, even through multiple application cycles—something that would incur recurring cost if handled internally.)

Table 3 (on page 55) also presents a projection of the median hourly wage of internal staff tasked with EM funnel work. That hourly wage multiplied by the projected 2.08 hours spent on each prospect equates to a projected internal team–only cost of approximately $75 per prospective student.

Lastly, Table 3 (on page 55) presents the total number of opportunities serviced in the fall 2018 application cycle (6,053) along with some projections of the total cost to service those prospective students in the recruitment segment of the EM funnel if either the internal team or the PPP team had done so exclusively.

In summary:

- Internal-only recruitment segment efforts outperformed PPP efforts at the opportunity-to-application-started phase of the EM funnel (the start of the funnel).
- PPP efforts outpaced internal-only efforts thereafter.
- Under the PPP, fewer prospective students moved from opportunity to application started status, but those who did were more likely to see their application through to enrollment.
- Internal-only efforts yielded largely continuous enrollment numbers as the reviewed prior application cycle.
- PPP efforts increased enrollment in assigned programs by an aggregate projected 29.3 percent.

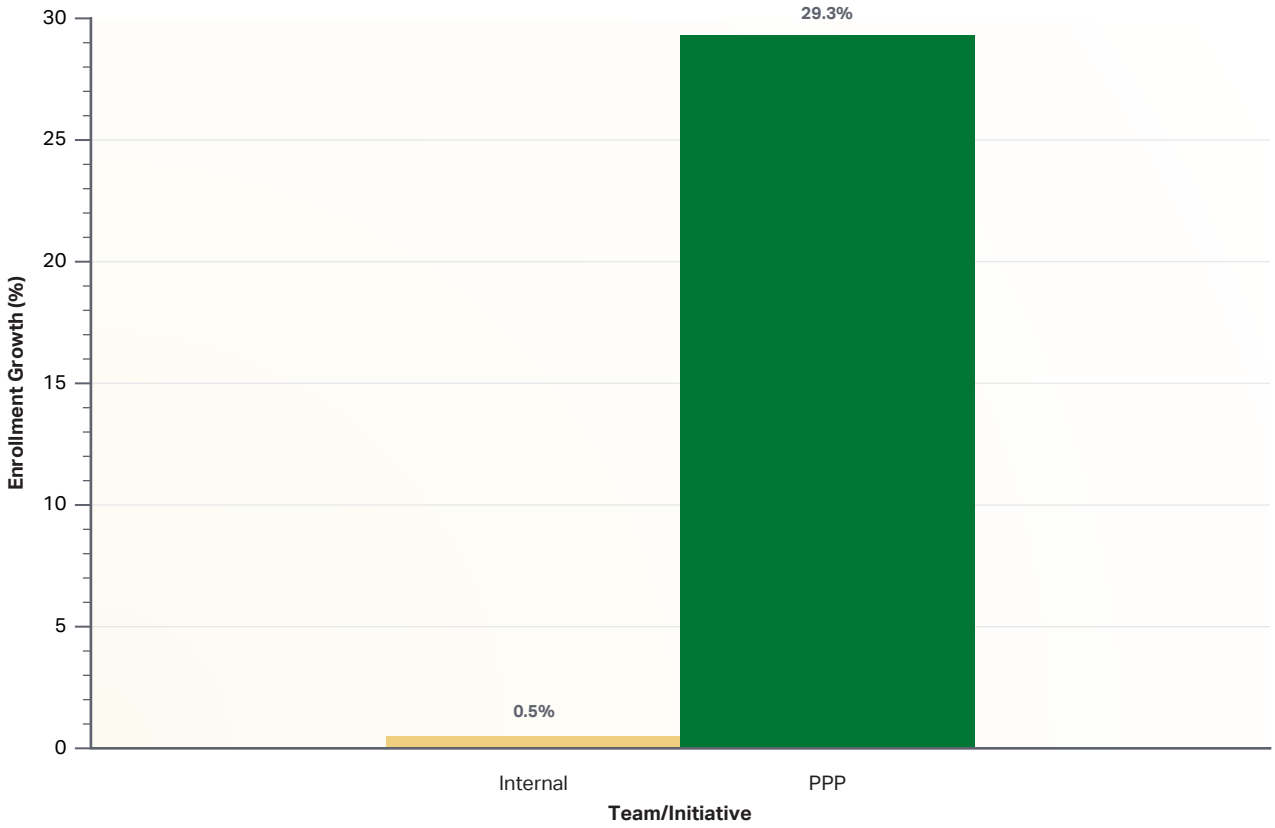

FIGURE 9 ➤ PPP vs. Internal Year-Over-Year Aggregate Enrollment Growth, Fall 2017–Fall 2018

- A lower opportunity-to-application-started ratio in the PPP model did not negatively impact final enrollment (quite the contrary, in fact).

Discussion

Enrollment

The PPP vendor's stated ethos and methodology (one of the key elements in its selection by the university and college) is that it is just as concerned with determining whether a student is a good fit for the program as it is with determining whether the program is a good fit for the student. It is logical that this approach resulted in lower conversion rates at the start of the EM funnel. Given the increased time during which to engage with prospective students (because they *didn't* also have to cover retention functions, as their internal counterparts did), it is possible that PPP coaches were able to better understand prospective students' academic, career, and life objectives and direct them in ways that would help them fulfill those objectives.

It is also logical that this methodology led to increased conversion rates in subsequent stages of the EM funnel through to final enrollment yield. This is based on the theory that if only those prospective students whose objectives best aligned with the program were encouraged to apply, they would be more inclined to complete their application and progress to enrollment than would those who may not have had such in-depth coaching—and who may realize at a later stage in the EM funnel that the program might not fulfill their needs.

Although internal teams seek to ensure that students and programs are a good fit, they may lack time to delve deeply into prospective students' goals, objectives, hopes, etc. Unlike their PPP counterparts, they serve multiple cohorts of *current* students, executing retention

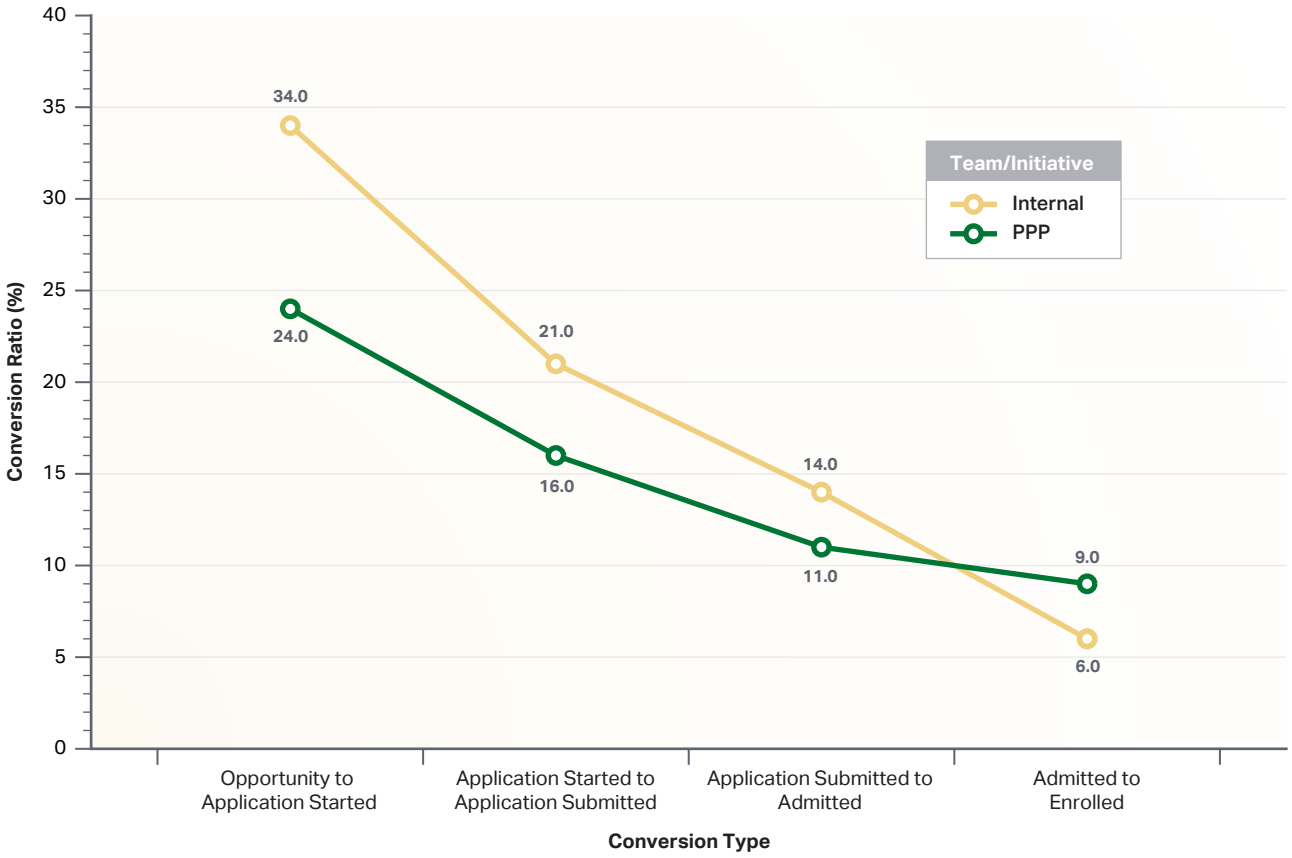

FIGURE 10 ➤ PPP vs. Internal Fall 2018 Global Enrollment Management Funnel Ratios

work that can span many years depending on program duration and student program completion rates. (Per-student time for such retention work has not been estimated but is projected to be significant.)

Fiscal

The PPP can execute this higher-yield recruitment segment work at a lower per-prospective-student cost than internal teams (and at a projected savings of $25.43 per prospective student). Across the 6,053 leads serviced in the fall 2018 application cycle, the total savings for the PPP to exclusively execute the recruitment segment work in the EM funnel equates to a projected $154,000.

Figure 12 (on page 57) illustrates the projected gross tuition revenue generated by the 29.3 percent increase in enrollment exhibited by the PPP-managed portfolio versus the prior internal effort for the same programs. The gross tuition delta for this methodology is approximately $1 million ($826.4 thousand). Although the unit's intent is to measure the fiscal impact of the public-private partnership in terms of increased *net* tuition revenue as well as retention staff's time for retention-based activities, such measurement is not possible within the framing conditions of the current study. By proxy of the college's charter to reamin self-supporting, it aggregates operating costs, amortizes development and start-up costs on a per-cohort basis (each cohort of each program has its own memorandum of understanding and accompanying budget that is updated annually), and tabulates such for programs of one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half years in duration. Net tuition revenue would need to be determined from fiscal data some years hence. Similarly, to determine whether the pilot had affected retention would require a study of future per-course and program retention and graduation rates. Preliminary effects of time savings for retention staff at

the coordinator and managerial levels include the following:

- *Respond to current students more rapidly:* Retention coordinators stated that they often can respond to current student communications within 24 rather than 48 hours, as previously.
- *Connect with current students in greater depth:* Examples include end-of-term registration hold communications. Previously, retention coordinators felt they only had time to send group emails. Now they report that they have time to contact students multiple times, including via individual e-mails and phone calls. They believe that this yields greater results, though they feel they have not been able to provide such a level of service in prior cycles due to enrollment volume in assigned program portfolios.
- *Liaise more with academic stakeholders*: Examples include devoting more time to reviewing and refining processes. Whereas retention coordinators stated that their prior dealings with academic partners were largely tactical (due to the volume and rapid-fire nature of their work) they now have the opportunity to be more strategic—something that they believe will lead to yet more time savings.
- *Program-level attention:* One retention manager stated that renewed focus on the remaining six programs in their portfolio was possible because of the recruitment functions of the most time-consuming programs being taken on by the PPP. In other words, *non*-PPP academic programs within the unit's portfolio were benefitting at a managerial/logistical support level.
- *Prospective/current student feedback:* Although direct feedback has not yet been collected regarding how retention staff's freed time has impacted support, retention coordinators stated that they did not have the impression that the level of prospective student queries/issues/complaints had increased in PPP-managed programs—something they had feared initially. Coordinators stated that they had received a greater volume of thank-you e-mails from current students—something that they attributed to their ability under the pilot model to be more proactive in relation to current student contact.

TABLE 3 ➤ PPP vs Internal Team–Only Costs

PPP	
PPP per-opportunity cost	$48.26
Set-up fees	$10,000
Minimum spend per year during the three-year pilot	$75,000
Projected leads serviced during pilot	10,000
Final, per-opportunity cost (including amortized set-up fee) over pilot	$49.26
Internal	
Median internal hourly "loaded-rate" wage (at 149%)	$35.85
Internal hourly wage multiplied by average 2.08 hours per-applicant time cost	$74.69
Totals	
Total opportunities serviced in fall 2018	6,053
Projected cost to internally service fall 2018 opportunities	$452.1K
Projected cost for PPP to service fall 2018 opportunities	$298.2K

Engagement

In addition to the stated enrollment and fiscal conclusions, the PPP had access to a prospective student texting platform (a tool the college and university do not yet have and are not likely to acquire in the near future). Data indicate that the contact rate was approximately 10 percent higher, and the student-to-college communication rate was much higher (43 percent vs. 19 percent) for assigned programs for which the PPP utilized this platform in comparison with those for which it did not.

Data provided by the PPP suggest that the texting platform is particularly popular among prospects who are more difficult to engage than most. Ironically, these students' applicant profiles suggest that they were informally perceived as having the most responsibilities outside of study (*i.e.* those holding higher-ranking positions in their respective fields) that may lead them to be more desirable candidates in terms of student quality.

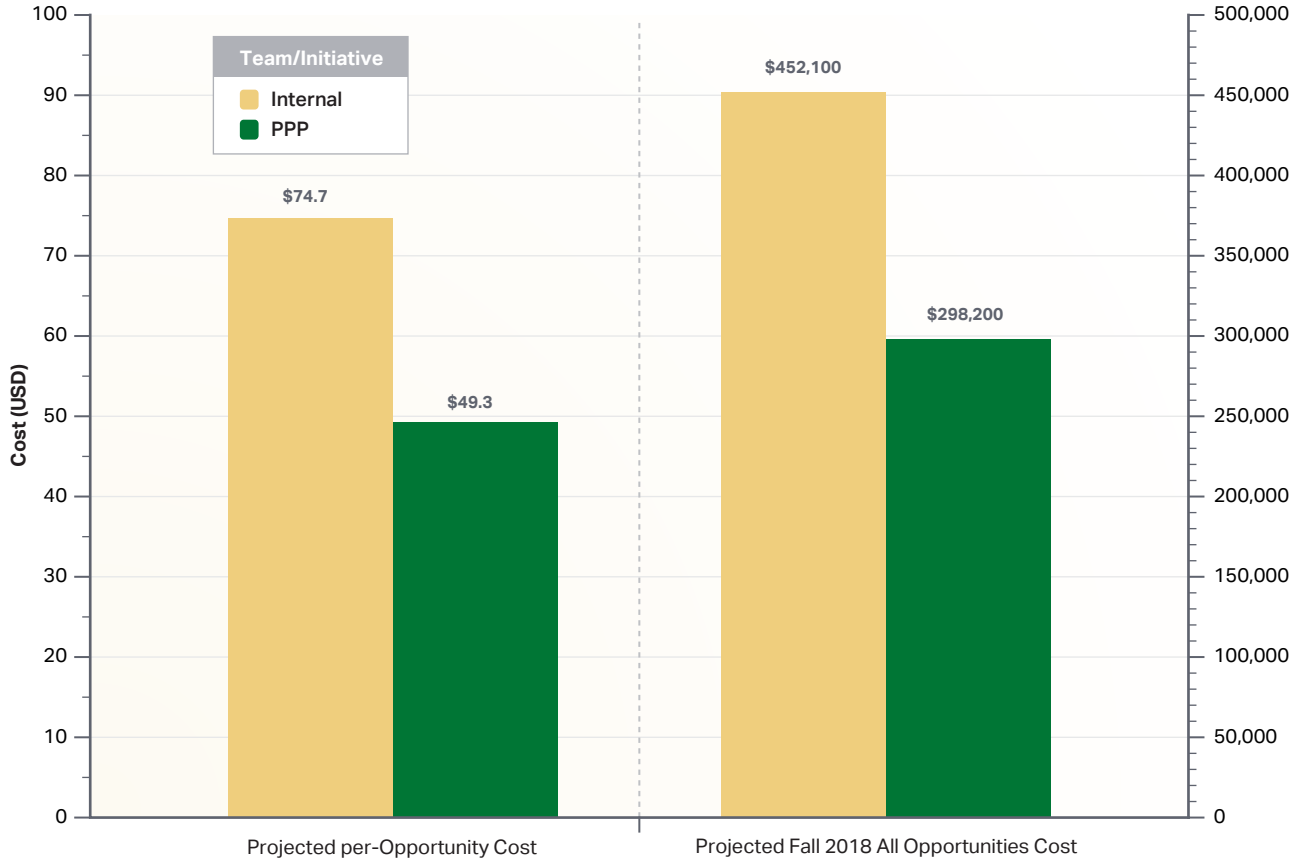

FIGURE 11 ➤ Projected Costs

Despite the data seeming to strongly favor the PPP model over internal efforts, it is prudent to consider potential risks and benefits before making recommendations.

Risks

- **Price:** Although it would be bad long-term business on behalf of the external partner, it is possible that they could raise their prices at some juncture, following the pilot period, once the college were to decide to assign more programs to the partnership. However, by proxy of the projected approximate $1M in additional gross tuition revenue that accompanies the projected 22 percent enrollment increase in PPP-managed programs, the assumption is that the partner would have to raise its rates in excess of these gains for service price increases to become problematic.
- **Control:** Even though the extended periods of discovery (12 months) and execution (12 months) were respectful, detailed, and involved, there is always the risk that an entity beyond the unit's direct control may be communicating incorrect program/college/university-related information to prospects—something that may be more easily determined and corrected by management of internal teams. With an external partner, one has to relinquish control to some degree and trust that the partner will follow the stated and agreed path.
- **Application Document Management:** The external partner does not handle application documents. Although this is not an increased burden on the unit (the unit was already executing this work), it is something that the unit was hoping to eschew. However, as this function has remained in house (to remove such a non-retention-based effort from

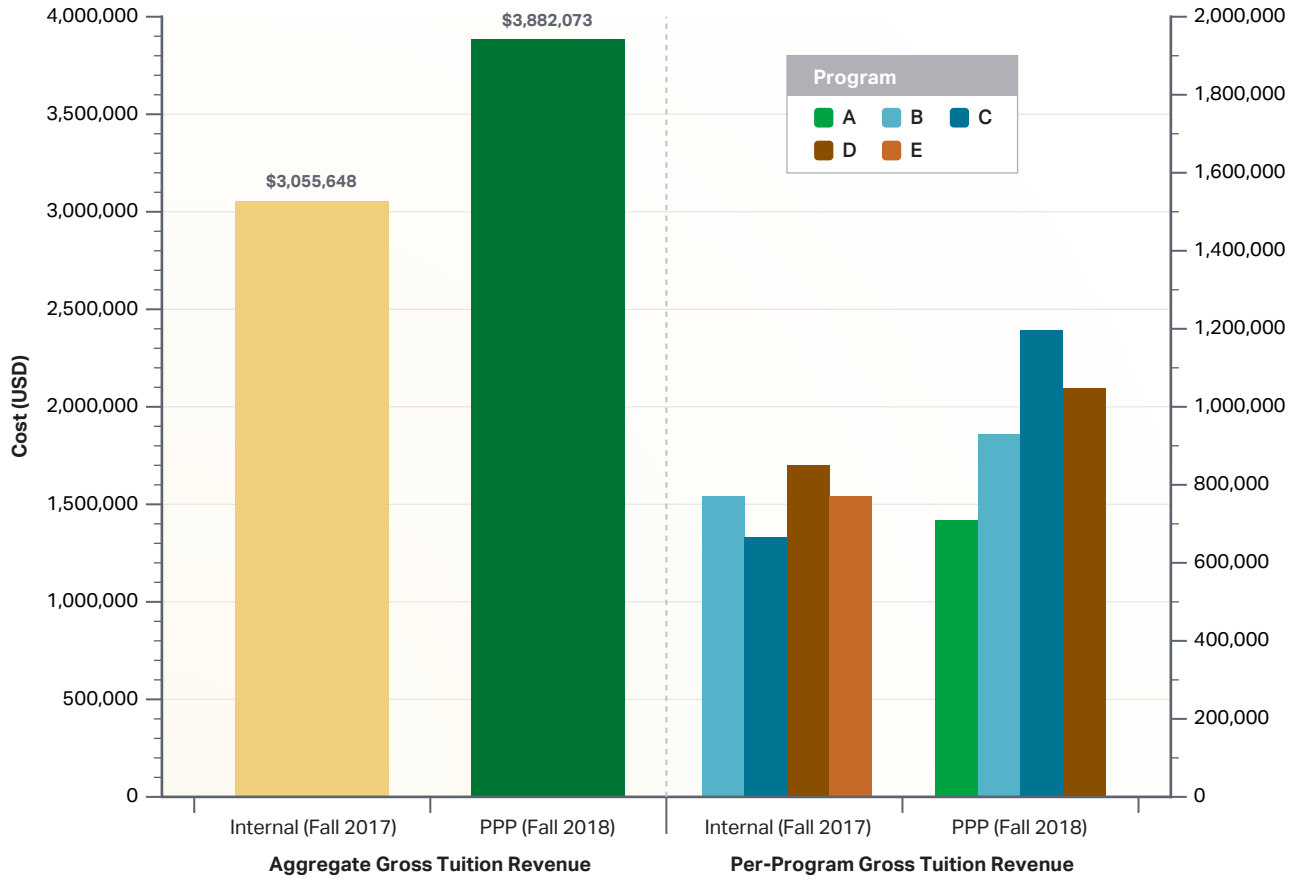

FIGURE 12 ➤ Projected Gross Tuition Revenue: 2017 Internal Effort vs. 2018 PPP Effort

Note: Gross tuition revenue was projected on the basis of enrollment numbers at the time of analysis. Although per-program attrition rates could be projected based on historical averages, as the goal of the chart is to determine the delta between the two recruitment efforts and as the future attrition rate may vary for students recruited during the PPP (said students potentially being a better fit for the program), the decision was made to utilize the gross incoming methodology.

the charge of the program management teams), the internal organizational chart was reconfigured in a second, internal pilot designed to create a team within the unit's admin group to execute the application document management work—a model that has been in effect for a number of months and that early reports suggest is functioning as planned.

- **Repurposing Staff:** If the unit were to decide to move all programs to the PPP model, the function of existing staff that *only* dealt with the recruitment segment of the EM funnel would need to be reviewed and potentially re-purposed. Fortunately, staff in that area are also currently tasked with outreach-based recruitment (*e.g.*, partnerships with city agencies, maintaining a presence at educational fairs, facilitating program-specific information sessions for prospective students in various modalities, etc.). As such, it is projected that those staff could be charged with focusing on those areas of their roles if such a development were to occur.

Benefits

- **Reporting:** The PPP provided much more detailed and wide-ranging reports on its engagements with prospective students than did internal teams. The unit received reports on data points such as which institutions prospects saw as our major competition and the reasons why prospects chose *not* to apply.

With their stated additional retention-based function and responsibilities, internal teams simply did not have the time to acquire that level of detail from prospective students. Moreover, internal teams had to limit their interactions with prospective students in order to manage the volume of both prospective *and* current student support tasks.

- **Technology:** As stated above, the PPP had access to texting—technology beyond the college's current capability. The PPP reported major gains in return communication from the busiest candidates (perceived as the most desirable).
- **Internal Retention Efforts:** The PPP model allowed program management staff to apply more focus to their core work: retention. The theory is that this increased focus will yield improvement in retention and its accompanying benefits over time. The unit's goal is to capture the outcomes in this area for future next steps in this process.
- **External Benchmarking:** The PPP executes their work for multiple institutions. As such, it was able to provide anonymized external benchmarking to help the unit compare its efforts (yield rates, etc.) with like programs/institutions in the region.
- **Scalability:** As many institutions are aware, market forces beyond the control of the university may create ebbs and flows in program demand. As a self-supporting college within a large state institution, the college must be mindful of the way in which it operates. It would be irresponsible to immediately add permanent positions at the unit level (*i.e.* unionized positions that could not be removed once created, despite the potential of decreased future enrollment) to manage programs that may or may not have long-term demand based on market forces. The PPP model is scalable in that it could also feature a reduced number of coaches working with prospects if program demand were to decline—something the Institution is unable to achieve internally in its unionized environment.
- **Savings:** One could argue that there are no immediate cost savings (in terms of wages) given the framing conditions of employment at a unionized institution. However, some ancillary savings should be considered:
  - ★ Fewer workspaces, computers, staff support, etc.
  - ★ Future ability to determine which new internal positions might best facilitate the core goal of retention support (*i.e.* where to most effectively apply future salaries for the greatest impact in prospective and current student support).
  - ★ Increased retention should produce additional revenue, especially if students who had dropped out of the program were able to reenter and complete it (of course, such revenue would not technically constitute "savings").
- **Risk Management:** The external partner has its own risk management. As such, the onus of workman's comp and the like is removed from the Institution.
- **Best Practice:** Prior to the PPP pilot, to determine if our practices were in keeping with industry best practice, the unit only had access to its own experience, conferences and webinars, general logic, peer institutions (those willing to divulge data), and publicly available scholarly articles. As the external partner executes this type of work for several institutions, and, by proxy of its service, is mandated to remain abreast of industry trends to remain a viable prospect for its clients, the unit was able to ask the partner for advice in certain areas. Examples include website verbiage, the best number and type of prospect student touch-points, appropriate technologies, best methodologies for engagement, etc. Not having to "go it alone" was a refreshing and welcome aspect of the pilot that the internal team came to appreciate.

Implications for Further Study

Prospective Student Support

The PPP pilot has positively impacted support of prospective students through the opportunity and application support functions of the recruitment segment of the EM funnel. In terms of the number of accepted, qualified applicants, this stance is borne out by the data, ulti-

mately culminating in an aggregate increased enrollment yield of an adjusted, comparative +29.3 percent in PPP-assigned programs over the internal-team-only effort of the prior application cycle (*see* Figure 7, on page 51).

Current Student Support

Similarly, given an up to 42 percent reduction in non-retention-based work for internal PM teams previously charged with executing recruitment-segment EM funnel tasks, the PPP pilot could positively impact support of current students as a result of the removal of a projected 594.2 hours of such work per PM team member per application cycle (*see* Figure 4, on page 48).

Risks and Benefits

Engaging an outside partner to execute this work incurred more benefits than risk. Additional levels of reporting, the PPP's ability to work extended hours beyond what an in-house unionized staff could, reduced in-house operating costs, benchmarking, knowledge of industry best practice, advanced technologies, and the ability of internal staff to increase their focus on retention together outweighed the risks of the relinquishing of control, the potential for the student-facing narrative to drift off mission, the potential for enrollment to decrease in response to poorer performance by the partner, etc.

Potential risks can be mitigated through ongoing communication with the partner, rediscovery/review meetings, reporting, and checks on the quality of coach-to-student engagement (via review of randomly recorded phone conversations, text interactions, e-mails, etc.).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are in support of prospective students in the recruitment and application support process as well as of internal teams' time for retention efforts:

Public-Private Partnership

- *Operational:* Based on the interpretations of the data reviewed and analyzed along with various unit members' evaluations of the quality of internal and student-facing interactions with the partner's various stakeholders, this study finds that the PPP is best positioned—and thus recommended—to execute the examined aspects of the recruitment segment of the EM funnel for any programs within the unit's portfolio that are available for such. Such a partnership should be reviewed to ensure service quality to prospective (and, thus, by proxy current) student populations; over time, a fuller data set could provide insights into the quality and persistence of students coached by each group through to graduation. Reviewed and analyzed quantitative data (*i.e.*, EM funnel ratios and enrollment numbers) and qualitative data (*i.e.*, internal team and prospective student feedback) indicate that the PPP model has many positive elements.
- Because of the one-year duration of the study, none of the students serviced by the PPP in the early stages of the EM funnel has graduated from a program yet. It thus is not possible to fully assess the impact of the partnership on the programs (though by proxy of the discussed "right-fit" ethos, it is expected to be positive). Further partnership will generate multiple data sets from which graduation trends for PPP-serviced programs can be established.

  Further study of per-course/semester/sub-program data may provide insight into longitudinal trends relative to retention.
- *Broader Application:* The PPP might be a viable model for consideration outside of the unit, college, and institution (consider that the California State University System has 23 campuses).

Application Document Management

- *Operational:* The additional internal pilot (comprising two core emergency hires supported by a scalable team of student assistants) to execute application document management in conjunction with the PM team and PPP efforts is operating well. However, according to the unit's seasonal projections, this model and team have not yet hit the peak of application document management. More time is needed to determine if the systems of process and staff are

sufficiently robust to manage the workload at its peak. Initial projections show that this function, in conjunction with the private partner's efforts in the PPP, is facilitating the PM teams' focus on the non-retention-based workload.

It therefore is recommended that either this pilot group should be solidified *prior to* its scheduled end in 2019 or the pilot should be extended.

- As a new pilot, group, and system, it is recommended that the application document management group be studied further. The unit is currently tracking various metrics in relation to this team's efforts (for example, the percentage of program application documents completed by prospects per timeframe in the application cycle) via a custom-generated application document checklist in the college's CRM tool. Study of longitudinal data in this area—when available—could provide valuable insights, including the identification of efficiencies, pinch points, areas for improvement, etc.
- GPE is only one unit within a college comprising additional units that also utilize applications systems; peer units may wish to consider centralizing their application document management processes and systems according to the results of further study in this area.

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