

## The Enrollment Management Learning Collaborative Helps Drew University Improve its Understanding of Why Some Admitted Students Choose Not to Matriculate

### **Challenge:**

In order to strengthen yield strategy, the Enrollment Management office at Drew University wanted to better understand why admitted students chose not to enroll.

### **Solution:**

To help Drew University achieve this goal, the Enrollment Management Learning Collaborative (EM-LC) designed and implemented a survey of admitted students who had chosen to enroll elsewhere. Among the issues examined by the survey were:

- How do perceptions of Drew's brand influence the admissions decision?
- How do affordability factors influence the admissions decision?

### **Results:**

Based on insight driven by the study Drew made several changes to help improve yield. These include the development of a new business major and Honors Program as well as an increase to their financial aid budget

### **About Drew University:**

*Location:* Madison, NJ

*Carnegie Classification:* Baccalaureate

*Ownership:* Private Institution

*Size:* 1,656 Undergraduate Students (2008)

### **About the Enrollment Management Learning Collaborative:**

The Enrollment Management Learning Collaborative helps colleges and universities increase operational efficiency in their marketing and recruitment activities, better measure prospective and current student perceptions and trends, and improve the impact of their financial aid and retention efforts.

### **About Eduventures:**

Eduventures is the industry leader in research, analysis, and consulting for higher education. With more than 15 years experience in the field of higher education, Eduventures is committed to providing colleges and universities with cost-effective, data-driven insight to support institutional success.

### **Looking for Hard Data to Inform a New Strategy**

In the spring of 2008, the enrollment management office at Drew University was looking to better understand why admitted students were choosing to matriculate elsewhere. Drew knew that students were attracted to its small student body, location near New York City, and strong academic reputation in several majors. However the school realized that if it was going to strengthen its overall yield it needed to improve its understanding of the factors that might impact a student's decision to enroll elsewhere.

Drew knew it needed hard data if it was going to be able to develop an effective strategy. In particular Drew needed to better understand its brand perception among potential students as well as enrollment drivers that were leading students to choose Drew or other schools. To gain greater insight on these issues Drew administered an admitted student questionnaire through the College Board and while the school found the information helpful the data was not as detailed as it had hoped. Drew realized that in order to receive the answers it was looking for it would need to pose additional specific questions. To assist them in this effort the school turned to the Enrollment Management Learning Collaborative (EM-LC).

### **Leveraging Past Experience to Move Quickly**

With considerable experience in conducting similar surveys for other institutions, the EM-LC research team was able to quickly share past examples with Drew to help refine its lines of thinking regarding the areas to examine and the appropriate questions to ask. The online survey was then launched with non-enrolling admitted students contacted and asked to participate.

### **Uncovering Student Perceptions and Enrollment Drivers**

The results of the research illustrated to the enrollment management office that while the perception of Drew was generally quite strong, it was facing some challenges it would need to overcome to improve its yield. The study demonstrated that students applied to Drew because of its size, characteristics related to its location, academic major, and the perceived value of a Drew education. When it came time to enroll, however, Drew was losing some students to other

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Vice President of College Admissions and  
Financial Assistance  
Drew University

institutions due to two broad reasons:

- The first was due to academic reasons as Drew was losing some students to institutions that offered specific academic programs Drew lacked.
- The second broad reason was due to concerns over affordability. The research confirmed that Drew is very generous with financial aid dollars as it strives to make Drew accessible to students from all backgrounds. However despite its generosity, some students indicated that financial concerns were still impacting their decision to matriculate elsewhere despite their desire to attend Drew.

## Implementing Changes to Improve Yield

Drew moved quickly after receiving the report and reviewing its recommendations. In order to highlight its academic strengths to top performing students, Drew developed a business program and created an honors program that will both begin in the 2009-2010 academic year. To address financial concerns, Drew also increased its financial aid budget to better help students and families struggling with the economic downturn.

After implementing these changes, Drew saw an immediate impact as applications for the 2009-2010 academic year increased over the previous year. Said Hillary Morgan, Data Analyst for College Admissions at Drew “we are even more excited for the 2010-2011 academic year because we will have a full recruiting cycle to educate students and families on the exciting new programs.” She added “The results (of the study) educated the entire Drew community and made us realize how much students wanted the business and honors programs we had been brainstorming about. Developing new programs can be challenging, and this was just the right push to make everyone comfortable and excited about the program implementation.”

As a senior member of Drew’s administration concluded:  
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