

## The Enrollment Management Learning Collaborative Assists Louisiana Tech in Improving the Effectiveness of Its Web Site Messaging

### **Challenge:**

The Enrollment Management office at Louisiana Tech University wanted to improve the effectiveness of its messaging on its general web site and department specific web sites to better attract high performing students.

### **Solution:**

To help Louisiana Tech achieve this goal, the Enrollment Management Learning Collaborative (EM-LC) undertook several steps, including:

- Analyzing the Louisiana Tech web-site and comparing it against peers
- Sharing past research on best practices for improving web site messaging
- Sharing past research on enrollment drivers among high performing students

### **Results:**

Louisiana Tech made several changes to its general web site messaging to highlight student outcomes and in addition was able to drive consensus to change college and department web sites to focus on outcomes as well.

### **About Louisiana Tech University:**

*Location:* Ruston, LA

*Carnegie Classification:* Doctoral

*Ownership:* Public Institution

*Size:* 9,331 Undergraduate Students (2007)

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

(EM-LC) 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.

### **Attracting High Performing Students**

In the summer of 2007, Pamela Ford, the Dean of Enrollment Management at Louisiana Tech University was facing a challenge. Responsible for marketing and public relations for the university, she realized that the general web site needed to be improved if it was going to attract high performing students to Louisiana Tech. However it was unclear what changes would lead to this result.

In addition, Dean Ford wanted to improve the consistency of the messaging across all of the university web pages in order to promote an integrated statement on the value of a Louisiana Tech education. However, her team only controlled the general university web site as the college and department web sites were overseen by the respective college deans. She wanted to develop a consistent message that could be used across all of the university web pages but each of the deans had a different idea for the information they wanted to highlight on the web pages for their colleges and departments so finding consensus was proving to be difficult. Dean Ford knew she was going to need to present a compelling argument if she was going to drive consensus on consistent messaging.

To overcome both of these challenges Dr. Ford turned to the Enrollment Management Learning Collaborative (EM-LC) for guidance.

### **The Importance of Student Outcomes**

As a first step to assist them in this effort, a member of the EM-LC research team came to Louisiana Tech to present recent research on enrollment drivers for high performing students as well as research on improving web site messaging effectiveness. Among the topics discussed was the importance placed on career preparation and student outcomes by prospective applicants, and in particular high-performing students, as highlighted in several recent EM-LC studies. In addition, research was presented on the importance of the institutional web site in driving student perceptions and application decisions.

The implications of this research was soon reinforced for Dean Ford at the Annual Member Meeting where she had the opportunity to see additional presentations on EM-LC research on these topics and discuss it with other member institutions.

*“At the retreat I was able to share the data on the importance of highlighting student outcomes as part of our web site marketing and Eduventures status as an independent third party helped me to make that case. Rather than it just being my voice always telling the deans what we need to do it was really helpful to back it up with Eduventures research and show it was data-driven insight; it was not just me saying we need to do this.”*

Pamela Ford  
Dean of Enrollment Management  
Louisiana Tech University

## Driving Consensus on Needed Changes

Armed with this data and insight, Dean Ford was ready for the following month’s annual dean’s retreat where she was able to start driving consensus on the needed web site changes. Said Ford, “At the retreat I was able to share the data on the importance of highlighting student outcomes as part of our web site marketing and Eduventures status as an independent third party helped me to make that case. Rather than it just being my voice always telling the deans what we need to do it was really helpful to back it up with Eduventures research and show it was data-driven insight; it was not just me saying we need to do this.”

## Examining Best Practices

When an EM-LC researcher came back for a follow-up Campus Visit in October, 2008, Dean Ford could see the message was getting through. After the annual dean’s retreat the previous fall, the Chemical Engineering Department at the College of Engineering and Science had decided to highlight student outcomes, including the salary levels of recent graduates, on its web site and subsequently both applications and enrollments at the department had increased. While this was probably just one of many factors impacting the jump in applications and enrollments, according to Ford the increase definitely caught the attention of the other deans. This message was further reinforced in the Campus Visit when the results of the Collaborative Research initiative *Maximizing the Effectiveness of the Admissions Web-Site* were shared. This report featured the results of a national survey that elicited over 5,500 responses from rising high school seniors and incoming college freshmen and covered topics such as patterns of web usage as well as navigation of school web sites by students when researching colleges and universities. In this visit the web site of each department was also reviewed by the group and a diagnostic was conducted by the EM-LC research team member that compared the web sites to best practices seen at other institutions.

## Turning Insight Into Action

Using this insight, Louisiana Tech has changed its main university web pages and improved its messaging by focusing on educational outcomes. Efforts have also begun to improve the consistency of these changes across all the college and department web sites. According to Ford these changes would not have been possible without the assistance of the EM-LC. She added “Eduventures seems to really have its finger on the pulse of what’s hot in higher education. As we are dealing with issues in real-time it has coincided with what you have been working on so your research has been very timely. Our membership has helped us make decisions and implement change much more quickly; we don’t have to go out and do our own research to the extent we would if we weren’t part of Eduventures. It is as if the work were ready-made – here it is – go use it.”

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