

The Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative Assists Marist College in Determining ROI of Proposed New Extension Center

Challenge:

Marist College was examining its options in regards to a long-standing extension center in the town of Goshen. After much debate a tentative plan was made to build a new facility, however first Marist wanted to better understand the potential ROI they would see from this investment.

Solution:

The Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative (CPE-LC) research team examined the ROI potential of the Goshen facility through several methodologies:

- Review of demographic data to analyze potential demand for postsecondary education at the undergraduate and graduate level in the area
- Identification of high-growth industries in the region and interviews with regional employers in those industry sectors

Results:

Based on the results of this research Marist decided to phase out its presence in the region and reallocate the resources that would have been spent on higher value projects.

About Marist College:

Location: Poughkeepsie, NY
Carnegie Classification: Masters
Ownership: Private Institution
Size: 4,300 Undergraduate Students (2008)

About the Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative:

CPE-LC helps universities and colleges identify new revenue and growth opportunities, improve organizational operational performance, and stay abreast of leading management practices within the continuing and professional education community.

A Tentative Plan to Build a New Facility

In spring 2007, the School of Graduate and Continuing Education at Marist College was facing a difficult decision. The School had operated an extension center in the town of Goshen in Orange County since 1993, and recently enrollments had been declining. In addition, the lease on the building they were renting was ending and the lack of maintenance over the years had left it not up to the standards Marist wanted – a relocation would be needed.

After much debate, a tentative plan was made to build a new facility in Goshen, but the investment that would be required for the construction and the accompanying staffing costs would be substantial. Wanting to ensure they would see a return on their investment, Marist turned to the Eduventures Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative (CPE-LC) for assistance.

Examining the Local Market

In order to determine whether sufficient demand existed for Marist's offerings to justify the required investment in Goshen, the Continuing and Professional Education Learning Collaborative research team reviewed data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania Departments of Labor. Demographic trends were analyzed to uncover demand for postsecondary education at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the Goshen, New York, region.

In conjunction with Marist, the CPE-LC team also identified four high-growth industries that warranted further research, and regional employers were interviewed within those industries to provide more insight.

Data and Insight to Inform Decision-Making

The research determined that while the Goshen area was expected to experience strong population growth over the next five years, the occupational trends and projections did not align well with Marist's offerings. Occupational trends showed a growing need for specific fields such as special education teachers, and healthcare positions such as respiratory therapy and physical therapy – programs that Marist did not offer. In addition, the programs currently being offered in the Goshen center were actually facing lessened demand, which probably explained the already declining enrollments at the center.

“As a college administrator, you need to balance the institution’s mission with the execution of a sound financial strategy. By working with Eduventures we’re better equipped to critically review our educational programs and evaluate our position in the marketplace. Eduventures’ research expertise has proven invaluable since we became a member two years ago and I look forward to future collaboration.”

Sean Kaylor
Vice President of Enrollment
Marist College

Reallocating Resources to Higher Value Projects

Based on the research, Marist realized that it would be difficult to achieve a positive ROI on their original plans to build a new facility in Goshen, and therefore the decision was made to phase out its presence in the region. Despite originally approving funding for the continuation of the Goshen facility, the President and senior administration willingly reallocated the financial resources to other projects when it was demonstrated that market research and analysis supported the decision. Said Sean Kaylor, Vice President of Enrollment, “As a college administrator, you need to balance the institution’s mission with the execution of a sound financial strategy. By working with Eduventures we’re better equipped to critically review our educational programs and evaluate our position in the marketplace. Eduventures’ research expertise has proven invaluable since we became a member two years ago and I look forward to future collaboration.”