

Recruiting & Retaining Adult Learners

Formerly Nontraditional Students Report

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Peter Gadol, department chair of the graduate writing program at the Otis College of Art and Design, recruits students for a very small program. **Page 12**

TRENDS

Review 10 trends impacting distance and continuing education, Part 2

By Reed Scull, Jennifer Thorup and Scott L. Howell

Part of maintaining a leadership role involves spotting, synthesizing and analyzing trends that will impact the work of distance and continuing education. In last month's issue, we explained four top trends impacting distance and continuing education. In our second installment of the article, we describe six more trends you should know about for effective planning and program delivery.

Trend #5: Globalizing education

Recent data from the Institute of International Education suggests that fewer than 10 percent of the approximately 2.6 million graduates in 2011–12 participated in study abroad programs. Responding to this need, the Institute has sought support from universities across the country for participation in its initiative called "Generation Study Abroad," which will entail a five-year effort to

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PROGRAMS

Ensure quality for adult programs by incorporating high-impact practices

By Joan Hope, Ph.D., Editor

BALTIMORE — Access to higher education for adult learners has improved dramatically in past years, said Marguerite Weber, vice president for adult and professional programs at Cabrini College. But are programs for adult learners as focused on quality as those for traditional-aged students? "We've come a long way in assessing for quality, but do we always make it the highest priority?" she asked.

"Your adult learners are already getting a bad deal," Weber said. Traditional-aged students will have 50 to 60 years to get a return on their investment. Students who are 50 years old when they graduate won't have nearly as long. "Their experiences have to be transformative," she said.

Weber explained how she incorporated the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Liberal Education and America's Promise initiative

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Learn how Brandman University created a successful recruitment strategy

By Lindsay Amanda Racen

Shelly Neal, Ph.D., is the vice chancellor of strategic initiatives at Brandman University, a nonprofit institution with a rich heritage of academic excellence and more than 50 years of experience serving nontraditional and adult students. Her division, which began as a one-woman show at the school's San Diego campus ten years ago, has grown to a team of more than 30 professionals who are dedicated to building enrollments by creating strategic community and corporate partnerships.

Q What was the most critical component to ensure success in Brandman University's early years?

A I believe the key component to success was the fact that key leadership members moved over from Chapman University to head the endeavor at Brandman University. Our founding Chancellor Gary Brahm and Executive Vice Chancellor Saskia Knight brought over 30 years of leadership experience within the system, which guaranteed the legacy of Chapman would be established from the very beginning.

Q How did Brandman build its recruitment strategy?

A As competition quickly rose, we realized the market demanded that we have a specific enrollment management planning methodology that focused on recruitment growth and retention improvements. Key strategies included:

➤ **Data-driven perspective.** We combined qualitative data from student satisfaction surveys with quantitative data such as inquiry results based on recruitment activity type and segment then built strategies around proven successes.

➤ **Direct feedback.** We have also built a network of community partners and advisory boards around our local campuses whose members regularly collaborate with us on succession planning to ensure that our programs continue to evolve and be relevant to our students' career needs.

➤ **Relationship building.** We look for organizations that align with our core values and believe in lifelong learning and develop pathways for their community members to achieve personal and professional growth.

Q How did Brandman's outreach division begin?

A When I was hired, I saw the potential that existed at each campus and recognized that there was a gap between outreach opportunities and activities. Faculty members and advisors participated in local

events and other basic recruitment tasks. But they were not consistent, and for good reason — their primary roles were to serve current students, not prospective students. It was clear that community outreach needed to be a separate and entirely focused effort. I quickly proved the model, then implemented it at other campus locations. Two years later when we launched our fully online programs, it became more important to expand outward, and the division flourished from there.

Q What are Brandman University's greatest successes?

A Through the team's efforts, Brandman has established more than 500 corporate and community partnerships across nearly every industry. Outreach members collaborate with these partners to enhance workforce development by offering workshops, scholarships, education fairs, and custom training that fits within their organizational goals and tuition assistance programs. Brandman also has more than 100 partnerships with community colleges, including seamless transfer programs.

With a success rate of over 70 percent, one of the highest graduation rates of any university of its kind, and low default rates, our success stories are our students' success stories. These outcomes dually represent how critical outreach is to informing future students and partners on the front end so they are well-equipped to make the best decisions for their own futures. My favorite day of the year by far is graduation. It is absolutely incredible to see our students celebrate their accomplishments. The looks on their faces and their family embraces are what my work is about, and it is an honor to be part of making those moments possible.

Q What does the future hold?

A Accomplishments over the past year include earning NCATE accreditation and introducing competency-based programs, and we look forward to broadening Brandman University's reach by making education possible throughout the country. ■

About the Author

As the director of new initiative development and implementation at Brandman University and graduate of the school's MBA program, Lindsay Amanda Racen is a business and marketing professional. Visit <http://www.lindsayamanda.com> for more articles, email lindsayracen@gmail.com, or follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/LindsayAmanda>. ■