

Gain business intelligence using StudentTracker

Do you know where your accepted students enroll if they don't choose your institution? And if they leave without graduating, do you know if they graduate from another institution?

Stanley Henderson, vice chancellor for enrollment management and student life at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, tracks all that data. And he does it using a tool that you probably already have access to.

Henderson uses the National Student Clearinghouse's StudentTracker tool. "StudentTracker is one of our most important enrollment management tools," Henderson said. "It is essential to our ability to analyze the competition and fine tune recruitment programs and even to influence policy and programming on our campus," he added.

Eighty percent of U.S. college student enrollments are at institutions with active StudentTracker accounts, according to Clearinghouse officials.

The tool is available to all institutions that use the Clearinghouse's core services, said Ed Torpy, assistant director of research services at the Clearinghouse. The tool's two major applications are to find out what happened to prospects who declined admission and to learn what happened to students who are no longer enrolled, Torpy said.

Institution officials can request summary reports or they can get data on individual students, he added.

The price to use the service is 10 cents per enrolled student. But the service can be free for institutions, Torpy said. Institutions that send degree data to the Clearinghouse get 50 percent off. Those that send additional enrollment data, including gender, ethnicity and level (e.g., freshman, sophomore, graduate student) also get 50 percent off. So if institutions send both, it's free.

Institutions can access the same types of data they provide to the Clearinghouse, Torpy said. For example, if they want degree data, they have to provide theirs.

Henderson started using StudentTracker six years ago. Conventional wisdom on his campus was that

the institution lost the most students to the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.

But when StudentTracker provided data about where the students had gone, it showed that Ann Arbor was number three on the list of institutions where admitted UMD students enrolled.

Henderson then broke the data down by intended major and learned that many students interested in biological sciences chose Wayne State University, which has a medical school.

That discovery led officials to create a prehealth advisor position. The advisor works with students before they enroll and once they arrive on campus to prepare them for graduate programs in pharmacy, medicine, and

other biological sciences fields, Henderson said.

Officials also learned which institutions were the biggest competitors for engineering and business students using StudentTracker, Henderson said.

Plus, they broke down where students enrolled based on geographic distribution. That made it clear that UMD faced increasing competition for students in affluent suburbs that are critical to its enrollment base. "There's an enormous implication for us in watching that," Henderson said.

Henderson also uses StudentTracker to learn whether students who leave UMD enroll at another institution and where they go. For students who don't return for their second year, he is creating a survey that he will use to tailor retention efforts to address the reasons students are leaving, he said.

Creating the reports Henderson's office uses required his staff members to write programs to match the data to that in admissions files. The effort was well worth it, he said.

Clearinghouse officials are exploring possibilities for a new release that will enable much more varied and detailed reports, Torpy said.

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Tell better story about student success

The National Student Clearinghouse's StudentTracker enables enrollment managers to learn whether the students who leave their institution enroll somewhere else and whether they graduate. Institutions that participate in the Voluntary System of Accountability share that data.

Based on the way the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System reports graduation rates, the University of Michigan-Dearborn's graduation rate within six years is 53 percent, said Stanley Henderson, vice chancellor for enrollment management and student life. But using StudentTracker to learn which students who started at UMD graduated somewhere else, the graduation rate is 84 percent, Henderson said.

Since the institution attracts many students who want to live at home for a few years and then transfer, the fact that they leave is not necessarily an indication that they are not successful, he said. ■