

WENDY KUTCHNER, UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

Generate revenue without adding student fees

When Wendy Kutchner became university registrar at Temple University in Pennsylvania four years ago, her office was facing budget cuts. She couldn't afford to lose staff members, especially with a new student information system coming online.



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"With a decreasing budget, we were up against a wall in terms of meeting student service needs," Kutchner said. But she didn't want to raise student fees at a time when the economy made paying for college a bigger challenge than ever for students and their families.

Kutchner identified the following revenue streams that made up for the funding gap without costing students more money:

➤ **Charging a fee for degree verification.** Temple uses the National Student Clearinghouse for degree verification.

The NSC charges a small fee to the employers and insurance companies that request the degree verifications. Kutchner learned that Temple could add its own fee to that amount.

A year ago, the institution began collecting money for each degree verified. Given Temple's size — the institution enrolls about 39,000 students — that charge resulted in significant income. The office has raised \$100,000, Kutchner said.

And since students can still get degrees verified for free, none of that amount came from them, she added.

"We're really proud to tap a revenue source that already existed and didn't impact students," Kutchner said.

➤ **Offering "desktop diplomas" to graduates through a partnership with a vendor.** The president of Paradigm, the company that provides Temple's regular diplomas, is working with Kutchner's office to sell small replica diplomas encased in acrylic. The institution makes \$5 for each desktop diploma sold.

Since vendors often ask registrars for suggestions about products, working with them can be a good way to identify revenue sources, Kutchner said.

The Registrar's Office is marketing the replica diplomas. When they started offering them last spring, Paradigm provided fliers to mail with graduates'

diplomas. But the fliers raised the postage cost, so Kutchner determined that that strategy was not cost-effective.

Now the office advertises the desktop diplomas through its website. Ads are also included on the student and alumni portals and on the flatscreens around campus. Office staff members set up a table advertising the diplomas at the campus' Spring Fling. And they are planning to set up another table at commencement.

Besides raising money, the project has been fun for staff members, Kutchner said. They don't usually have a reason to talk about marketing strategies, so it gave them a break from their typical work. It also made them feel a more personal connection with budgeting issues, she added.

Email Wendy Kutchner at kutchner@temple.edu. For information about Temple's desktop diplomas, go to www.temple.edu/registrar/students/graduation/diplomas.asp. ■

Improve service, save money

Budget cuts don't have to mean that customer service suffers. Wendy Kutchner, university registrar at Temple University, engaged her staff in finding ways to save money. And some of their solutions improved processes for students and faculty members.

For example, staff members recognized the high cost of paper forms. The office started eliminating them by moving grade changes to an online process from a paper form that faculty members had to fill out and send in. The online solution saves time for both faculty members and office staff and eliminates the cost of paper and printing.

That endeavor was so successful that the office is now moving its other paper forms online.

Being involved in making cost-saving decisions helped staff members feel engaged in the budget process, Kutchner said.

And rethinking processes helped Kutchner and her staff discover ways to improve customer service without adding costs for students or the office. For example, the office restructured the graduation fee. Students now pay it along with other fees when they matriculate rather than paying it when they complete degrees. Students are happier because they are not charged a fee as they are leaving the institution, Kutchner said. ■