

Metropolis University

Enrollment Marketing Plan

Increasing Student Diversity on Campus



Metropolis University

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Metropolis University (MetU) Enrollment Marketing Plan is to enhance its cultural perception and increase its overall enrollment of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The defining values of MetU are academic excellence, personal growth, putting student needs first, and academic achievement through diversity. MetU's marketing efforts aim to focus on its premier education and contributions to the community, and ensure the college's growth and success. Although being located in the epicenter of a culturally dynamic city, MetU's community is not truly representative of Metropolis' cultural demographics. What is more, MetU has not effectively committed itself to reaching out to these populations recently, missing out on a growing student demographic. This plan recommends launching a marketing campaign to attract more diverse student groups, which can impact both MetU's cultural reputation and bolster student enrollment for the dawning academic years.

Background

As the only private liberal arts college in Metropolis, Metropolis University (MetU) is a very unique institution. Originally formed as a Catholic university in 1947, MetU loosened its religious affiliations in 1978 to provide a more welcoming environment to the diversifying city of Metropolis, and became completely non-denominational in 1999. Today, more than 7,200 students from across Washington and the entire country come to attend this university in one of the most exciting cities in America.

As made evident through its separation from the Catholic Church, MetU prides itself on its commitment to diversity. In 2010, MetU reached its highest students of color population (41.3%), yet it has steadily dropped over the past 4 years. Moreover, total student enrollment has dropped nearly 2% since the 2012-2013 academic year, which is detrimental to both MetU's budget and stakeholders' investment in the university's community. Being a private college, the school's operations primarily rely on tuition and private funding, making lower enrollment rates all the more alarming.

Although MetU has made respectable steps toward increasing the presence of cultural programs (Multicultural and Black History studies) and spaces dedicated to students from ethnically diverse backgrounds (Cultural Leadership Center), the ethnic diversity of MetU's student enrollment is still well below what it is capable of achieving. Investing in programs and spaces alone has not been as effective at increasing campus diversity as the university had hoped, thus MetU must do more to incorporate these programs and resources into its branding and image. MetU needs to make these programs and spaces more visible to prospective students, and make more persistent efforts to reach students who can benefit from these resources that MetU has to offer.

Situational Analysis (SWOT Analysis)

As MetU seeks to increase its students of color enrollment, it must recognize how it compares to other liberal arts colleges in Washington. Further, MetU must also be

aware of its own organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) so it can improve its image to reach its targeted prospective students.

Competition

MetU competes for students with many Washington universities. With so many options for prospective students to choose from, MetU chooses to focus its competitive efforts on the other private liberal arts universities within the western region of Washington that offer similar programs.

Stanhope College (SC) is located 30 miles south of Metropolis in neighboring Edge County. SC offers several competitive degree programs that are also offered at MetU such as, Pre-Law and Nursing Sciences, as well as various certification programs.

Blue Valley University (BVU) is located 47 miles east of Metropolis, in Blue Valley. BVU also offers similar programs such as Economics and Computer Sciences, and lower tuition fees.

MetU's Climate Comparison to SC and BVU

Since 2010, both SC and BVU have seen greater student enrollment than MetU, and higher populations of students of color (over 10% on average). Of the students enrolling at both SC and BVU, over 50% came from South and East Metropolis County. This makes both schools direct competitors for student recruitment, as 47.7% of MetU's undergraduate student body comes from Metropolis County.

Data from the 2011 - 2013 Washington Higher Education Report shows some notable differences between MetU and both SC and BVU. First, MetU has lower enrollment numbers (-3.5%) and costs significantly more to attend (over \$2000 per year), as well as a higher cost of living for its students (over \$3500 per year). MetU's graduation rate is similar to SC and BVU, yet has a significantly higher rate of students continuing to graduate education (+33%) than both. One of MetU's major differences to both SC and BVU, however, is the incoming enrollment rate of community college and non-traditional students (-68.6%), which shows that MetU should consider expanding its

horizon by recruiting non-traditional students. For this plan, though, a statistic to highlight most is the differences in enrollment of students of color, where MetU (37.8%) lags behind both SC (42.2%) and BVU (40.9%).

MetU's Strengths

MetU offers many benefits to prospective students over SC and BVU, which include:

Location. Being located in downtown Metropolis, MetU is 30 miles closer to the city than its nearest competitor—SC. Metropolis is a spotlight city in America for its industry (engineering, technology, and entertainment) and culture (music, professional sports, and food), making it full of professional opportunities and personal exploration. Metropolis is also one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse cities in America. Whereas SC and BVU advertise tranquility and solace, MetU can advertise the excitement of living in a diverse city where students from all cultural backgrounds can thrive.

Culture. MetU provides a unique culture for students to connect with the campus community through events and programs. In 2014, MetU's men's basketball team made its first appearance in the NCAA National Championship Tournament, with high hopes of returning in 2015. The MetU women's soccer team has made it to the NCAA Women's Soccer Championship every year since 2011, with one appearance in the championship final. Every year, MetU also hosts a cultural arts festival blending both the campus and the city community together to celebrate Metropolis' uniquely diverse culture.

Size. In 2010, MetU bought surrounding property in Metropolis, increasing its campus size by nearly 10%. Even though it is located in the heart of a major city, MetU provides students with an abundance of space to call home and take a break from the bustle of city life without leaving the city.

Exceptional Programs. MetU offers several programs that are nationally recognized and have produced many successful alumni. MetU's academic mission also hones in on the careers for the new economy, offering degrees in Computer Sciences,

Engineering, and Nursing Sciences, a program that has become the third highest producer of registered nurses in the state of Washington.

Continuing Education. MetU's mission also values lifelong learning, and 1 out of 13 students who receive Bachelor degrees from MetU pursue a graduate education. Additionally, U.S. News & World also ranked MetU in the Top 10 Best Graduate Schools on the west coast in 2014—with its Law School being ranked in the national Top 50 each year since 2011.

MetU's Weaknesses

Aside from its strengths, MetU faces some disadvantages for potential student enrollment, which include:

Cost. Private education has a negative stigma attached to it because of its high tuition rates. In addition to higher tuition than SC, BVU, and public liberal arts universities in Washington, MetU is located in one of America's most expensive cities where the cost of living is much higher than living in the traditional "college town".

Student Demographics. A majority of MetU students are White and come from middle- to upper middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds; creating an image that students from low socioeconomic, or ethnically diverse backgrounds, may hesitate to be engaged with.

Threats and Opportunities

While much is known about the student outcomes at MetU, information that could be used to guide decisions is lacking. First, very few students declare their reasons for attending MetU, making it difficult to discover what types of services students are intending to benefit from. This data is vital to the institution as it may indicate what programs attract various student populations (i.e. students of color). Without it, MetU could be excluding important student groups, compromising its mission values toward diversity and inclusiveness. What is of even more concern is that MetU does not request information from students who choose to leave the college. Are they unhappy

with campus culture, not receiving needed support services, or financially unable to continue their education at MetU? Responses from these types of questionnaires can help make the administration and faculty more aware of the possible threats that students are facing on campus, which may result in premature departure from the institution. In addition to collecting better data on current students, gathering data from MetU graduates could also provide beneficial data that can be used in future marketing plans.

Beyond data collection, leadership is a hot-button issue at the moment as MetU is undergoing a transition in leadership. After multiple high profile administrative changes in the past few years, MetU's involvement in the community has declined and the administration's morale is suboptimal. However, this threat to MetU's image can also be seen as an opportunity for MetU to reinvigorate its brand and image through this new leadership transition.

Targeted Prospective Students

The primary audience for this plan is prospective students from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Primarily, these are high school students, or non-traditional community college transfer students between the ages of 18-25 who are looking to receive a liberal arts degree. Within Washington, most of MetU's prospective students come from Metropolis County and the surrounding communities. A special emphasis should be placed on recruiting students from the surrounding communities, as they are more likely to be students from ethnically diverse backgrounds. According to the 2010 US Census, 40.7% of surrounding Metropolis communities (estimated population 1.2 million) is people of color, making these communities far more diverse than the city of Metropolis (30.5%).

Key Goals, Objectives, and Processes

1. Increase data available for future marketing efforts

- Issue routine student climate surveys
- Collect data from students departing MetU before graduating
- Invest in web analytics software that helps MetU assess the needs for its website and get an idea of who is visiting MetU online

Position Statement

"For students of all cultural backgrounds, Metropolis University is committed to supporting the global community and empowering emerging leaders from all backgrounds because we want you to have the foundations for success."

2. Increase public perception of MetU as an institution that promotes diversity

- Collect baseline data from climate surveys about what MetU attributes are most reflective of diversity and culture
- Use data to help guide new pamphlet and brochure design decisions

3. Increase visibility of MetU in surrounding Metropolis County communities

- Create relationships with high schools and businesses in target communities
- Assure MetU presence at community events (i.e. college fairs)
- Measure how many pamphlets and brochures are handed out at community events or through college advisors

4. Increase direct marketing to prospective students and educational leaders in target communities.

- Mail pamphlets to high school and community colleges' advising offices
- Invest in social media research and purchasing strategic ad space
- Radio and TV advertisements on stations that cater to target audiences

MetU is a one of a kind university where culture and academia combine to create a vibrant, knowledge-driven atmosphere. These goals are for the long term and meant to help MetU achieve a culturally sustainable campus for the future. By staying true to these goals and objectives, MetU will become *the* premier liberal arts college for students of any background to feel welcomed and supported by their community.

References

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