

CISS & Admissions Collegial Conversation Agenda

January 29, 2021 | 2:00pm

Welcome & Introductions – Kathryn Gaylord-Miles

Conversation Starters

Brett Reichert, Director, International Student Admissions and Programs (UWG)

Peace Li, Associate Director, International Admissions (GSU)

Open Discussion & Sharing

Minutes

Brett and Peace talked about the structure of their admissions offices. GSU has an established team dedicated to working with applicants with international credentials that includes multiple recruiters and processors, although they have lost staff this year for various reasons. Prior to COVID, they used a variety of methods to recruit students including school visits, fairs and lead providers. UWG's International Student Admissions and Programs (ISAP) office is only 4 years old and was just starting to build and implement a recruitment strategy when COVID hit.

Both offices pivoted to more virtual opportunities last spring. At GSU, fairs and high school visits were moved online and the team created a YouTube channel with videos that reflected most of their standard presentations. Both GSU & UWG focused on yield efforts for Fall 2020 and beyond. Even if students couldn't come for Fall 2020, perhaps they would defer and come in a future semester.

Over the past year, GSU has noticed that its application numbers have remained stable but the admit rate went up. It's easier for students to have a complete application because of the flexibility with test requirements that the USG has offered during COVID. They've noticed more geographic diversity in their applicants and more students who choose to enroll in online programs from home, although students have been withdrawing because of issues with technology, etc. The cohorts coming from pathway programs (language centers and 2+2) have survived and thrived. They have also implemented new social media and communication campaigns.

At UWG, they've noticed more students choosing to study online from home to reduce fees, which has become a budget issue for ISAP. However, a shift to virtual recruiting means that they can do more for the same amount of money and that the turnaround time from meeting a student to follow-up communication with them is shorter. There's also more of an interest in budget-friendly education and a willingness to consider schools that don't have a big brand overseas.

Thinking ahead, how do schools brand and market their experience for a post-COVID world? What transfer market exists and how do schools tap into it? Could schools recruit as a group, either by splitting costs for a specific event or banding together and taking inspiration from the now-defunct *Study Georgia* initiative?

Questions & Open Discussion

What options do schools have for recruitment incentives? Testing flexibility is ending with Fall 2021 but some schools use waivers.

What are good sources for buying leads and advertising? Varies by market. UWG has received permission to contract with agents but questions remain about where initial funding will come from. A couple people noted that agents have become more comprehensive in their services in recent years. They help with admissions but also offer concierge services and helped with booking flights home in the pandemic & navigating American higher ed.

How are IEP numbers doing? Generally down, feedback is that students want in-person classes.

Food for thought—how do we think creatively about programs to which we're recruiting students? Rather than focusing on individual students, do we build and leverage institutional/organizational partnerships, build special programs, etc? Do we build a practice around serving international students who are studying online?

- Brett & Peace
 - Diff USG institutions have different approaches to recruitment
- Pre-COVID
 - GSU
 - Team of 8 (4 processors, includes USC with intl credentials, 3 counselors/recruiters--cover 18 territories)
 - School visit, fairs, EdUSA, lead provider
 - UWG
 - Brett's office only 4 yrs old, Brett there ~2yrs (no long trad of best practices, momentum)
 - 1st year built plan, then COVID
 - Advising in place, started to build recruitment from the ground up
 - Advertise, esp to lead aggregators
 - Apps, etc were going well before COVID
 - Travel is higher cost, was mixed bag
- COVID
 - GSU
 - In-person recruitment/travel canceled
 - Moved online w/i 1 wk, daily meetings with staff & leadership
 - Fairs & presentations moved online—created videos & YouTube channel
 - Communications with HS guidance counselors
 - Lost 2 staff for diff reasons
 - Travel restrictions, visa closures, closed schools
 - Student/parent concerns about civil unrest, COVID, being stuck
 - FA20 had already been planned, so focus was initially on yield events
 - Long staff days, esp with time differences
 - UWG
 - Team of 4 for recruiting, admissions, advising & programming

- Staff member was on a recruitment tour when things shut down
 - Pivot to online
 - Vendors started to reach out about online opportunities
 - Defer applicants, hope to stay in touch
- Going forward (pent up demand?--students who couldn't come, change in administration)
 - GSU
 - Numbers similar, admit rate went up (in part because of test-optional USG policies)
 - Perimeter has 100% online program (tuition ~in-state)--promoted
 - 78 online intl (much larger than usual)
 - Challenges with tech & comm (VPN, etc)--high W rate
 - More geographic diversity, incl places where they haven't been/haven't invested in
 - Cohorts from 2+2 programs & lang centers for pathway programs—they survived & thrived
 - GSU cares—social media campaign with links to message of encouragement & tips
 - Slate—was using before COVID, very useful in setting up template responses that helped manage emails
 - Communication
 - Weekly email campaign
 - Better collab with other offices on campus
 - UWG
 - SP21—more students studying from home to save \$\$, budget issue for Brett
 - Marketing—no big name but lower cost & nice community
 - In the past, families equated cost & quality, now more interest from Asia in considering lower cost
 - Virtual advantage
 - Can do more for the same cost
 - Faster turn-around for leads, can engage quickly
 - We've learned how to fine-tune messages, helpful to work with university's comm dept on video geared to intl pop
 - Partnerships were mostly in China but they were most affected, resurgence now
 - How to brand & market the university's post-COVID experience for FA21 & beyond?
 - Looking at transfer student market, esp for schools with grad programs
 - Look for partners w/i USG—maybe buy into event as a group (ex: Study Georgia)
- Questions
 - Options for recruitment incentives beyond admissions reqs flexibility (test-optional, duolingo, etc), waivers
 - Duolingo
 - Looking for different advertising opportunities
 - Varies by market, local a good option esp in Asia—does vendor have a local staff person?

- Agents are no longer commission-based, transforming into ed organization
 - Agents have offered a concierge ed provider
 - Other regions have larger orgs that can be successful
 - Recruiting is about forming relationships & trust, needs to be a longer-term commitment
 - UWG has gotten approval to use agents but where does initial infusion of \$\$ come from
- Q's re IEP programs—enrollment down
- How do we expand options/think creatively about programs to which we're recruiting (partnerships, special programs, etc)
- Do we built a practice around serving intl students online?