Case Study #2

Two Year Institution
Annual Recruitment
Budget: $60,000

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The institution is a medium-sized community college situated in Florida with an overall enrollment of approximately 6,000 students. The college has historically only focused on domestic recruitment and therefore, currently, only 1% of the college’s enrollment is from international students. The institution’s leadership has set a goal to increase that enrollment to 3% in the next five years with continual incremental increases thereafter. They have invested in hiring two recruitment staff dedicated specifically toward international recruitment efforts. The institution already has a robust customer relationship management (CRM) system, uses Unibuddy, and due to the pandemic created a virtual campus tour and viewbook.

They also have established an intensive English language program that will allow international students who do not satisfy English proficiency requirements to be conditionally admitted on completion of the intensive program.

The team has been given a $60,000 annual international recruitment budget and has identified the following six strategies to help launch the international recruitment efforts at the college:

1) Participation in education fairs;
2) Contracting with third-party vendors;
3) Developing an international ambassador program;
4) Establishing dedicated scholarships;
5) Participation in at least one conference; and
6) Flying in EducationUSA advisors from the conference to visit the college.
Through the use of these six strategies within the established budget and an institutional commitment to the success of the initiative, the community college can expect to see an overall increase in international student enrollment and will be able to meet their goal within five years. In the first year of implementation, the college should not expect to see dramatic increases, as return on investment for such initiatives is never immediate and prospective international students typically begin researching schools several years in advance of actual enrollment.

### BUDGET SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment Initiative</th>
<th>Projected Cost</th>
<th>Projected Activity</th>
<th>Anticipated Outcomes (KPIs)</th>
<th>ROI</th>
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</table>
| Education Fairs        | $15,000        | Participate in all available free fairs Budget allocated to cover fair fees (virtual & in-person), travel, materials, shipping | Number of prospects/leads generated  
Number of conversions (applications/enrollments) | Track source codes to see yield (continue tracking source codes for each fair for at least 3 years following participation) |
| Third-party vendors    | $15,000        | Set up profile on third-party vendor sites to collect leads | Number of leads imported into CRM  
Number of conversions (applications/enrollments) | Track source codes to see conversion rates - evaluate annually |
| International Ambassador Program | $10,000 | Grant scholarships to ambassadors - they chat with future students, participate in webinars, social media | Incoming student sense of belonging and connection to institution (survey students to measure impact)  
Number of student contacts per week  
Number of social media posts/activity | Track source codes/interactions to see yield |

For more information on these services, please visit https://gatewayinternational.org/gateway-leadership-institute-s2022/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study #2</th>
<th>Annual Recruitment Budget: $60,000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>Award 8-10 recipients, use images of recipients with award certificates for exposure/validation of scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>Scholarship deadline - encourage students to apply/enroll earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>Each staff member attends at least 1 conference (i.e. NAFSA)</td>
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<td>Conferences</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdUSA Fly-in visit</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdUSA Fly-in visit</td>
<td>Send targeted invitations to EducationUSA advisors from growing regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdUSA Fly-in visit</td>
<td>Plan visit around NAFSA - budget allocated to cover domestic flights and accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdUSA Fly-in visit</td>
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</tbody>
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During the 2020-21 academic year, international student enrollment in the United States decreased by 15% from the prior year (IIE, n.d.). This decrease in international student enrollment in the U.S. is largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the decrease, the U.S. remains a top destination for international students who want to study abroad. According to the “Emerging Futures” survey of more than 10,000 international students conducted by IDP, Canada was the top first-choice destination with 26% of the responses, with the U.S. being in second place with 20% (IDP Connect, 2022). Post-pandemic, international students may measure the cost and quality of U.S. higher education on a new scale. International students who were financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic may be particularly attracted to community colleges, which are a lower-cost higher education option in the United States.

RATIONALES

Proposed Recruitment Modalities

Education Fairs

Connecting with students both virtually and in-person is critical to a successful recruitment plan. To maximize opportunities to connect with prospective students, the college would attend all free virtual education fairs. With a budget of $15,000 for education fairs, the college would be able to travel to attend a few in-person fairs as well as participate in some low-cost virtual fairs. This budget would cover fair fees, transportation, accommodations, materials, and shipping costs.

Third-Party Vendors

Top of funnel marketing is an important aspect of the recruitment plan for this community college being that recruiting international students is a new initiative. Using third-party vendors is generally an affordable way to reach many prospective students and generate leads. A budget of $15,000 would allow the college to partner with 2-3 vendors. They could also work with additional vendors on a commission basis that would be paid from enrollment fees/tuition (similar to agent payments).

International Ambassador Program

Student life is an important factor in recruitment, and peer-to-peer contact is a vital element of this. For community colleges, an international ambassador program is an important tool to validate both the transferability of an associate degree as well as the student experience. A budget of $10,000 would allow the ambassadors to receive a scholarship, which would also be a useful retention tool for continuing students.

International Scholarships

Scholarships can be overlooked at community colleges being that they offer a relatively low cost of attendance. Offering a small, non-renewable scholarship for international students demonstrates that the college is committed to supporting international students and allows the students a chance to receive an award, which can aid their visa application. A budget of $10,000 would allow the college to offer 10 $1,000 scholarships to incoming international students.

Conference Participation

Participation in professional organization conferences such as NAFSA is important, particularly as the college is just starting their internationalization efforts. $5,000 has been allocated for NAFSA conference participation for both team members with airfare, lodging, meals, and transportation.

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This is a good opportunity for the four-year colleges to recruit in-country international applicants, and an opportunity for the community college to partner with these four-year institutions to create transfer pathways for international students.

Rejected Alternatives

Several alternatives were discussed but ultimately ruled out. These include, active in-country representation, in-country advertising, marketing material translations, prospect name buys, and SMS messaging campaigns.

In-Country Representative

Hiring a country representative would be expensive and not feasible given the budget and the small recruitment team. Perhaps as international enrollment grows, the college can reconsider this solution, but as the internationalization efforts are so new, the proposed solutions will provide broader reach and larger returns on investment.

In-Country Advertising

Likewise, with such a small international presence, it is a bit premature to conduct in-country advertising which can be costly, will be difficult to determine return on investment, and other proposed solutions will provide larger returns.

Marketing Materials Translation

Translating marketing materials can be costly, is difficult to do well, and is a service that can be provided by many third-party vendors. While internationalization efforts are relatively new at the college, they should rely on services provided by third-party vendors.

In the long run, they can revisit this solution and may consider translating strategic recruitment pieces into a few key languages.

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For example, as the majority of their current international enrollment is from Caribbean and Latin American countries, they may want to consider Spanish and Portuguese translated pieces as a starting point. They can also work to split these costs with the Intensive English Program on campus, as many students who would need translated materials would likely start their studies in the Intensive English Program.

**Prospect Name Buys**

Prospect name buys for the community college does not make much sense as they do not require admissions test scores for community college admissions, and they should instead rely on the third-party vendors to provide leads.

**SMS Messaging Campaigns**

While text messaging/SMS campaigns can be effective, they currently do not have enough international leads in their CRM to make the cost of setup or the potential returns worthwhile. If messaging is something they are very interested in pursuing, they should rely on services provided through the third-party vendors initially.

**Third-Party Vendors**

Leads from third-party vendors would receive communications as part of the international communication plan after being entered in the CRM. Using a CRM makes it easy to track how many students from each vendor apply, are admitted, and enroll. When reassessing vendors each year, the college would consider lead conversions in addition to overall student reach from each platform.

**International Ambassador Program**

An international ambassador program can benefit a college by not only engaging international students on campus, but also fostering a sense of belonging with prospective students. One way to track ROI is to track the yield of students who chat via Unibuddy. Additionally, social media engagement from the ambassadors content can be tracked.

**International Scholarships**

An advantage of international scholarships is the exposure that the college could receive by marketing the scholarship and sharing images of scholarship recipients to validate the award. If posting on social media, ROI could be measured from the engagement on the posts.

**Conference Participation**

The advantages of conference participation are that staff will be better equipped to satisfy the institutional goals of international enrollment, learn best practices, improve visibility of the institution, and make connections with potential partners. The disadvantage of conference participation is that returns on this investment are difficult, if not impossible to quantify and measure.

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Regardless, conference participation in the international education space is critical, as information sharing, industry best practices are important to an institution just launching its internationalization efforts.

**EducationUSA Campus Hosting**

As with conference participation, key performance indicators and return on the investment of hosting EducationUSA advisors can be difficult, if not impossible, to quantify. However, the college’s reputation within the community of EducationUSA advisors and the increased visibility with the advisors are valuable. Within the application for admission, the college should be sure to add an EducationUSA advisor to the question of how the applicant heard about the college so the institution can track whether any applicants apply due to meetings with EducationUSA advisors.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Education Fairs**

When selecting education fairs to participate in, the college should start by focusing on markets where their current students are from. To expand their reach, they should also participate in at least one fair in a new market each year. The college should work with their marketing department to create market-specific marketing materials for each fair.

**Third-Party Vendors**

In addition to considering cost when selecting third-party vendors to work with, the college should consider the territories covered by each vendor, and the time commitment required to successfully partner with each vendor.

It is also important that the college designs an international communication plan so that the leads receive consistent, relevant follow-up.

**International Ambassador Program**

By developing an International Ambassador Program, the college will be able to connect students in the second-year of their program with prospective students. The ambassadors would participate in recruitment events, create content for social media, and chat directly with students via Unibuddy. It is important to also provide value to the ambassadors by giving them access to networking and professional development opportunities. The International Recruitment team should operate the International Ambassador program so that they can stay connected with current students to be able to provide realistic expectations to prospective students. Additionally, these ambassadors can be a great resource for alumni engagement in the future.

**International Scholarships**

When awarding international scholarships, it is important to consider differences in opportunities for students in different markets. Education systems and extracurricular activities can vary significantly, which means a holistic review of scholarship applicants is required. It is also important to recognize scholarship recipients with a small ceremony and certificate as part of their welcome activities to give the award a level of prestige.

**Conference Participation**

Conference participation will allow team members to obtain market research, learn industry best practices, connect with potential third-party vendors, international agents, and help to advance the college’s internationalization goals.
Regular, annual participation is recommended as the international educational landscape is ever changing.

**EducationUSA Campus Hosting**

Under the EducationUSA Campus Hosting program, the college would be responsible for “lodging, meals, domestic airfare or ground transportation, and local transportation, including travel to/from the campus for arrival and departures” (EducationUSA, n.d.).

The college can use this opportunity to increase visibility, put their institution at the top of mind for these advisors, and help to encourage them to promote the college to the students they meet with.

A campus visit should be facilitated by the international team and include a tour of the campus, meetings and/or meals with current international students, meetings with faculty, staff, and campus leaders who support the internationalization efforts on campus, and visits to regional landmarks or points of interest.

**REFERENCES**


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