

Program Review Presented to Cal Poly Pomona
regarding the International and Out-of State Enrollment
for 2011/12-2020/21

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I. INTRODUCTION

In June of this past summer Ms. Traci Lew contacted me to conduct a preliminary review of the non-resident or international student recruitment strategy at Cal Poly Pomona. This review essentially included an examination of (i) the University's current approaches in international recruitment and admissions; and (ii) the current and future implementation of a strategic plan to achieve a 10% non-resident student body by the year 2020. After a careful initial period of preparation learning about the University, and several calls with Ms. Lew, I spent a day on campus (August 5, 2013), meeting with a range of administrators and faculty to discuss these matters.

The materials provided prior to my visit included a document entitled the *Cal Poly Pomona International and Out-of-State Enrollment Draft Proposal for 2011/12-2020-21* and it was upon this document that I based the strategic direction and program. I sincerely noted that this was one of the finest strategic proposals I have seen regarding international student mobility, recruitment and admissions. It is clear and concise in its mission to:

- Enhance the diversity of our student body and the educational experience of both international and domestic students;
- Increase external revenue to the campus to offset the ongoing decline in state funding.

Additionally, it addresses the major areas of impact with such an understanding, especially those areas that similar enrollment proposals often fail to include.

The general situation I discovered at Cal Poly Pomona is that faculty and staff pursue their respective international responsibilities and the overall strategic proposal which was embraced as a welcome indication that the University's senior management has become genuinely committed to comprehensive strategic planning for international enrollment. So these actions by the University's senior leadership have served to raise campus expectations regarding future progress in international enrollment and it is within this general context for considering this review that the following findings and recommendations have emerged.

I have thought long about the situation and carefully considered the materials provided, the information gained during my visit and reflected up my own experience with international admissions. As a result, my review contains both an evaluative response to the strategic enrollment proposal and its implementation but also some outside recommendations.

Cal Poly Pomona is a unique institution poised to accomplish its goal to significantly increase its non-resident enrollment by 2020. The learning by doing approach to education, the beautiful and alluring location and perhaps most evident during my visit, the love of teaching and serving students at all levels that permeates from the campus, are all unique characteristics that will support the proposal.

The question in the end, however, remains the feasibility or probability of the current proposal. There is no doubt that Cal Poly Pomona can and will increase their non-resident enrollment. My overall conclusion is that given the current situation, the proposal is too ambitious. That said,

I will provide my review of the proposal, the current situation from my perspective and provide some recommendations. Additionally, it should be noted that while the projected increase draws from the following four specific student populations:

- International students attending U.S. community colleges/universities;
- Intentional students living in other countries;
- Out-of-state students attending colleges/universities in the western region of the U.S.; and,
- Out-of-state students from states in which in state fees equal or exceed CPP non-resident fees,

the focus of this review will be international students in the first two categories. In fact, it is a recommendation that the two not be combined as the responsibility of the international or non-residential admission staff but rather the out-of-state students be the focus and responsibility of the domestic, non-international admission staff. This is based upon a separation of cultural differences and sensitivities as opposed to a financial model, in other words, separating populations based upon tuition differences, currently employed at CPP.

International student recruitment and enrollment is as much a science as an art and my experience has demonstrated that those who do so must have the global skills and understandings to serve a myriad of populations. Asking them to also serve domestic students that will have the different questions or concerns diffuses their focus and area of specialization. As a result, I strongly recommend that an international admissions enrollment team be established to recruit, admit and retain only international students, outside and within the United States, while the domestic team which I assume now focuses now on California, be given the charge to include non-residential US students as well.

II. INTERNATIONAL AND NON-RESIDENT STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSION

FINDINGS:

A. International Recruitment and Admission

Cal Poly Pomona has a very competent and dedicated international admissions staff, but, the staff is small and certainly not large enough at this cycle in the enrollment plan for attracting, retaining, and providing needed services to larger numbers of international students. This was my main concern prior to visiting whereby the increase in staff is a reaction or reward for an increase in the number of applications of enrolled students. Conversely it is my recommendation, especially when looking at annual enrollment increases averaging approximately 300 students, that the staff increase exponentially by one every year for the next four years. In other words, by 2017-18, there should be at least four new full-time international admission staff dedicated to specific duties and roles. It should also be noted that if by Fall 2016-17 the projected increase is to go from 1,391 to 1,723, an increase of 332 students, the overall intake for the staff must be

beyond the projected enrollment increase when one considers that four years into the strategic project, four year and 2 year transfer students have started to matriculated and decrease the overall number. As a result the staff' responsibility is to increase to add new numbers for the increase and annually replace matriculating numbers.

Even this number of staff, with a projected non-resident enrollment between 1,723-2,056 for the 2017-18 AY, is far below national standards or best practice at similar sized institutions¹ with the same number of students. This also does not address the issue of general international student services, both graduate and undergraduate, that are necessary for retention as well as have an impact on continuing future recruitment and alumni satisfaction. This issue will be address in the next section.

Also, an area of concern, certainly among CPP faculty and staff is the first-year persistence rate which is currently 62% for undergraduates and 55% for graduates and is considerably lower than the persistence rate of resident students is a concern. While an extensive study could be implemented to address and correct this issue such studies are time consuming and an immediate plan must rely upon some gut-instincts to say that an improvement in overall international student services will have some positive impact.

Although I did not address this issue so I am not aware of the existence at Cal Poly Pomona but I do know that at most US colleges and universities there are few formal MOUs regarding international student enrollment such as fully developed “2 + 2” programs. Such agreements require the negotiations between senior University officials, faculty and the international admissions staff, but most importantly the articulation of courses between institutions to create a seamless dual degree or bridge degree program. Once established the implementation needs complete and timely knowledge of such arrangements in order to evaluate and process international applicants in the most professional way. But, such programs, especially with cohort formations, have been very successful during the last four years at several US institutions. I also have seen this type of a program parlayed into successful “3+1+1” programs that are not dual degree at the undergraduate level but do lead to masters’ degrees.²

In addition while there is in place a systematic approaches to analyzing the results of various international recruitment approaches and presenting the results of such analyses in formal reports to senior administration, during my visit several individuals noted these challenges, calling for greater campus collaboration in recruitment, more effective use of faculty and alumni connections, close partnerships with identified California community colleges, and more effective promotional materials. These would all constitute welcome improvements.

B. The Question of Campus Readiness for A Larger and More Diverse International Community

¹ In comparing CPP to two similarly sized institutions with equally ambitious international student enrollment plans, I found fulltime staff numbers of six and eight.

² MTSU has spent the last two years designing and implementing department specific 3+1+1 programs and I would be happy to share the template we designed for each program.

Another important consideration is whether Cal Poly Pomona is truly ready to welcome and support substantial new numbers of international students, even were it to improve its capacity to admit and recruit them; I am concerned that in several respects, considerably more needs to be done to prepare the campus for a larger international population, and to plan and implement the many steps required to truly internationalize campus life.

First of all, while my visit did not encompass a full review of the provision of services to international students, my initial impression is that CPP may not be fully staffed and organized to provide a full array of needed services to such a large number of students with such a vast array of needs. I do understand that the enrollment recruitment strategy calls for and supports an increase in the staff and services to address the increase; similar to the recruitment and admission component it is somewhat a question of when to address the needs. To borrow upon a phrase, the “Build it and they will come” approach is in my opinion always the best strategy. In other words, the investment of staff for the increase, especially considering the time involved in recruiting and hiring qualified individuals, it is best to start hiring now for the anticipated increase in two years. To stay ahead of the arrival as opposed to address the issue once the students arrive is paramount to the overall strategic success of the plan.

The significance of such support is that international students typically are victim to a process of failure to not properly “handing these students off” to appropriate advisors and student service personnel once the admissions process is concluded, i.e., once students are notified of admission, confirm their acceptance, and then require assistance regarding a diversity of new needs: planning their travel, pre-registering for courses, addressing immigration requirements, arranging for housing, and so on, and then finally are physically present on campus and begin their student careers. While I have no reason to believe the contrary it is essential that CPP communicate to accepted international students in a timely and ambiguous way that their acceptance of CPP’s offer of admission begins a new chapter in their relationship with the University, such that they should discontinue relying on the admissions staff for advice and assistance, and turn instead to other members of the University’s staff, in different offices, depending on the issue or need to be addressed. Many universities have started adopting a “one stop shopping” approach to providing services for international students as opposed to the more commonly found fractured approach.

Another issue is that that there may not be a comprehensive vision within the various divisions about the needs and consequences that are part of becoming a truly internationalized campus with significant numbers of student from other countries, and that the University may be underestimating the scope and complexity of the tasks it would need to undertake, and the “infrastructure” it would need to build, in order for CPP to become a genuinely welcoming and supportive international institution that ensures international student success. Concern with the fundamental “nuts and bolts” issues of providing health services, housing, and appropriate dining services to a potentially larger international population, while crucial, form only one part of the challenge: more attention also needs to be paid both to the educational, cultural, and social needs of a larger and more diverse international student population, and to assuring that the majority, domestic population derives all the value it should from studying, living, and socializing with peers from all over the world.

In such a context there is no “plan” for what can be referred to as “the transition,” i.e., converting newly arrived international students into fully orientated and initially advised members of the CPP community. While this is surely one need, and a critical one, as we have discussed above, there are many other issues to be addressed as well, of at least equal complexity and importance. I did not encounter, however, in my visit, in speaking with staff or with faculty that an ongoing system of collaboration exists in which the two work together to identify and address international student needs—academic, social, personal, or otherwise. This kind of partnership between staff and faculty is crucial on most campuses that have succeeded in creating communities in which international diversity is considered an institutional strength and a learning opportunity for all.

The question of “vision” and “infrastructure” may be something of a “chicken and egg” challenge at CPP. Has the University failed to develop a comprehensive vision of what a true international community might be like because once the 2020 or 10% vision is achieved because it lacks the organization that would facilitate focusing properly on such questions, or has CPP neglected to develop the kind of international affairs organization and infrastructure increasingly found at other universities because the institution has not yet assigned a true priority to creating a comprehensive international vision?

The international enrollment goal and the overall internationalization of CPP are intertwined and complementary. Thus, the consolidation of several key international functions under one key authority and their physical relocation in one place, are necessary and vital steps in developing both the vision and the international organization which CPP will require, both to achieve real academic excellence in an increasingly globalized society, and to fulfill even the several international goals that the University has thus far established (e.g., substantially increasing international enrollments). The University’s leadership deserves real credit for taking these steps.

So I believe the University merits genuine kudos for the steps it has already taken regarding internationalization and the initiated strategic enrollment plan. In addition, though, I wish to emphasize that there are institution-wide implications to the process of internationalization that the University would do well to consider more fully than it has perhaps done thus far.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. International Recruitment and Admissions

1. Every effort should be made to create a more collaborative and institution-wide international student recruitment strategy and approach. There is a need to coordinate and leverage undergraduate and graduate recruitment efforts, and to make more strategic use of current international students, international alumni, and faculty for recruitment purposes, and to define and regularly assess progress toward international enrollment goals and to adjust if necessary.

2. As noted previously, the responsibility for international and domestic non-resident recruitment and enrollment should be divided between international admission staff and domestic admission staff. This will allow the international admission staff to focus upon an already culturally and physically located group of students without having to “switch gears” and recruit domestically.
3. The institution should commit itself to creating a formal program of written, periodic reports evaluating the success of various international recruitment strategies and approaches. Such analyses should be regularly shared with senior administration. Strategies and methodologies that do not produce satisfactory results should be modified or discontinued, and successful approaches expanded upon and replicated.
4. I believe the University would be well-served by commissioning an institution-wide task force to examine the question of campus readiness for accommodating substantially larger numbers of international students. Such a task force should include faculty, administrators, and undergraduate and graduate students as members. It should review the full range of organizational, staffing, and service issues which I have discussed in this review, and doubtless other matters that will arise in the process of deliberation. But, it should be pro-active and deliberate in its assessment of the needs of international students in the fall/winter of this academic year with the desired implementation beginning the 2014-15 academic year.
5. As immediately as practicable, the institution should develop a better comprehensive approach for managing “the transition” of international students from applicant to matriculate status. This includes but is not limited to a commitment to straight away improving international student retention rates and improving the graduation or exit examination success rate which students need a minimum of 90 credits to sit for. In most cases this will include additional staff and resources for International Student Services
6. Consistent with expanding its international vision, Student Affairs may also wish to consider taking a more pro-active approach to promoting and supporting the international dimensions of a CPP education. For example, regarding housing, considerably more could be done to create themed living-learning communities focusing on various international concerns, and the Division could also become actively engaged in helping to place international students in various kinds of private housing in the surrounding communities.
7. As CPP commits itself to the development of a bona fide, institution-wide strategic plan for becoming a truly international university, study abroad should be included as an integral component of such a plan, as should attention to international internships, international service learning, and international volunteer programs. Study abroad leadership should participate in any international education strategic planning effort.
8. Consider establishing an ESL-Bridge Program whereby ESL students with (for example students with a TOEFL score of 65-70 cbt, 500-524 paper, or IELTS 5.0-5.5) are allowed to enroll in 1-2 courses per semester that count toward their degrees while simultaneously

taking a lighter load of ESL courses. At the end of each semester an institutional TOEFL, IELTS, or institutionally approved examination is administered to the students. Essentially the students are conditionally admitted for a maximum of two semesters and can matriculate to the degree program to which they were provisionally accepted. Similar bridge programs have proven to improve both matriculation rates, over non-bridge affiliated ESL programs, and overall retention rates once the students matriculate.

9. Consider adding the iBET score for English proficiency requirement or other equivalent options.
10. Strongly consider not requiring the ACT or SAT for international applicants, especially for those applying directly from abroad. Universities and colleges are increasingly scrutinizing both exams as indicators of readiness for university-level study. The trend, both because of the lack of any conclusive study supporting proof that they are valid indicators of success for international applicants and the increasing difficulty in gaining access to the exam internationally, has been to no longer require the exam but to recommend it if available.³ In lieu of the examination, other factors such as advanced courses, AP and math, are tested indicators of success.⁴
11. Establish non-contractual relationships with agents or agencies (especially in strategic locations that are not currently included in the CPP recruitment itinerary and are identified as potentially rewarding). Start with just one agent or agencies per country that is authorized to represent Cal Poly Pomona but maintains no contractual agreement for payment for referred students. Any payment agreements that exist are between agent and student. While the use of agents has been controversial for the past decade, it is imperative that the institution define the parameters of a relationship. In specific areas that offer potential yield for enrollment and yet are culturally difficult to navigate or penetrate for a myriad of reasons, representation, a term I prefer to agent, is a beneficial solution if a defined and trusted relationship is established and tested. Such relationships should be close and kept to a minimum and one of the recent policies regarding such relationships is that the agent or agency visit the institution it represents to get a clear and sincere understanding of specifics regarding the University.⁵
12. Consider establishing strong connections with specific consulates and embassies that provide government sponsored students. I would recommend first and foremost Saudi Arabia, followed by Kuwait, Oman and Vietnam.
13. Create a strong international recruitment campaign that emphasizes location and the Learning-by-Doing model. In two locations in particular, Kuwait and Vietnam, I think there will be significant dividends.

³ Most recently University of Oregon has moved away from the ACT and SAT requirement; <http://admissions.uoregon.edu/international/int-faq.html>

⁴ <http://205.222.0.20/info/keys/documents/research.pdf>

⁵ Some interesting articles discussing the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing agent representation are available at: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/03/06/commission-considers-arguments-about-international-recruiting-agents>; <http://chronicle.com/article/International-Student/127931/>

14. Consider creating a pilot Conditional Acceptance and a Bridge program with Chinese applications that can address the issue that despite 341 apps has only a 7 enrolled rate.
15. Focus on some key areas of past application success and potential such as the following from Fall 2012
 - a. (Hong Kong 50 apps/31 admits, India 36 apps/13 admit, Indonesia 46 apps/32, Japan 37apps/24, South Korea 108 apps/60, Malaysia 25 apps/20, China 341 apps/174, Taiwan 89 apps/47, and Vietnam 75 apps/51. One area of concern: One major area of concern which can perhaps be addressed as well similar to the proposed Conditional Admit Bridge program mentioned in recommendation 13 is Saudi Arabia applications with 93 applications and a mere 18 admits.

While the above recommendations should be seen as merely that, recommendations and I fully understand that some of these strategies unbeknownst to e, may very well be imitated or set to be implement, I understand as well that a myriad of other factors which can have a negative or positive impact upon the enrollment strategy such as:

- Impacted programs; this will be perhaps the most important factor in limited the number of international students interested in applying to CPP who actually enroll;
- Advising issues endemic to most universities and colleges; and,
- The future of the CSU System and the issue of more autonomy for individual institutions.

III. CONCLUSION

Cal Poly Pomona has taken a number of very important steps in beginning a new process of significantly increasing its international and non-residential enrollment which can lead to campus internationalization. Campus expectations regarding the development of an institution-wide strategy and related goals have been increased. There is a growing recognition that the pockets of excellence which exist on campus in international matters do not yet cohere into a guiding strategy and plan, and that the University has much more to do to define priority goals, leverage existing strengths, and most importantly I believe, develop needed infrastructure. There are many faculty and staff who stand ready to support the institution's senior leadership in advancing this effort.

Because everything can be done at once, especially since the institution, in my opinion, still lacks some elements of the infrastructure that will be required, I believe the current enrollment projections are overly ambitious and while I do hope they will be achieved, my professional assessment is that they cannot be given the current institutional structure and the ever-increasing competitive landscape globally. Particular needs include strengthening the international recruitment, international student and scholar services; reassessing the role of the English as a Second Language program, and considering the adoption of a new University-administered or "pathway" program; developing a distinguishing vision of what kind of "global university" Cal Poly Pomona would like to be, in the contexts of student and stakeholder needs, faculty intellectual interests, and the expectation of the CSU System; and broadening the campus vision in helping to create and support a more diverse international population.

We live in times of financial constraint. While few public universities have experienced the severe budget shortfalls like those recently in California, CPP is still poised to recruit, enroll and retain a large international student body because most significantly of its location and its unique approach to "learning by doing." This approach to academic excellence in serving its students is the foundation of the recruitment effort. The University's leadership is especially to be commended for making a larger commitment to international enrollment in light of the recent financial situation. At the same time, CPP, like other universities, has no real choice but to deepen its international commitments if it wishes to achieve genuine academic excellence and to prepare its students as usefully as possible for the globalized professions and workplaces awaiting them. And it is also true that if planned and managed prudently, a greater commitment to international enrollment can result in substantial new revenue streams, and make a significant new contribution to a university's financial position. Integrating international education more fully into the University's approaches to fund raising or development is another matter meriting priority attention.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have visited Cal Poly Pomona and to offer this contribution to the University's achieving its international ambitions with respect to international student enrollment.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David A. Schmidt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

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