

# OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS & OUTREACH PROGRAM REVIEW/S RESPONSE

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## INTRODUCTION

The Office of Admissions and Outreach underwent two Program Reviews, August 2009 by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and in response, a second program Review in January 2010 by Cambria Solutions. The final reports of each of the Program Reviews provided the Office of Admissions and Outreach with a clear, concise, and objective review of its current organizational structure, business practices, budgetary and personnel needs, technology tools, as well as a review and documentation of its admissions business processes. The review teams provided great insight into the office's current strengths and highlighted critical areas that, if addressed appropriately, would position the office to assist the campus in its quest to be a cutting edge top-notch Masters university and the top choice for high achieving and diverse undergraduate and graduate students. This report includes the department's plan for moving forward in the post-review period and outlines short and long term goals for the department, and serves in some instances as a blueprint for future enhancement.

## INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

The review teams in their meetings with several campus constituents and review of pertinent documents, including annual reports and departmental and divisional strategic plans, fiscal and human resources emerged with the following themes:

1. The Office of Admissions and Outreach has been successful in helping the campus achieve its enrollment goals and to shape an undergraduate student body that addresses the campuses' priorities.
2. The Campus Enrollment Planning Component parts are somewhat disconnected and communication across organizational lines is lacking and inhibits progress.
3. The Executive leadership of the campus has decided to broaden the campus market and serve the entire State of California, the region, and beyond in the future.  
The Office of Admissions and Outreach has successfully documented several of its business processes and has flow charts that describe these processes with a focus on PeopleSoft.
4. The perception of the Office of Admissions and Outreach across campus is mixed. While the office experiences high levels of respect and confidence, it is also coupled with perceptions of the office being "rigid", "inefficient" and "not forward thinking".

5. The office does not maximize its use of technology in ways that increase efficiencies and streamline processes.
6. The need for our admissions business processes to move beyond the PeopleSoft system and provide the “big picture” including the rationale for many of our business processes.
7. The need for higher-level analysis of our business processes to enhance the effectiveness of the organization.

The analysis of these themes, coupled with the departmental, cluster and divisional strategic plans, the emerging campus academic plan, and the current and future economic stability and vitality of the state and the campus, will be critical to the Office of Admissions and Outreach’s short and long terms plans for the future development of an office that is not only forward in its thinking, but also forward in its designs, planning, use of technology, collaborations, and communications both internally and externally to its multi-dimensional constituents.

## FINDINGS

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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- The Campus tours and information center should be moved into the same location as the rest of the office of Admissions and Outreach to enable the organization to be more effective and efficient and to maximize its fiscal and human resources.
- The centralization of technical support is a viable and worthwhile decision given declining resources and the need to enhance efficiencies and streamline processes as well as the use of technology to better serve our constituents and conduct admissions processing.
- The office needs to develop a marketing and communications team that includes a writer, a webmaster and a marketing coordinator.
- The office needs to develop a research component to assist with data collection and analysis, report development and market analysis.
- There is a need for a liaison with several campus offices to facilitate communication, recruitment and admissions processing of key campus constituents

### RESPONSE

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The Office of Admissions and Outreach is mindful of the need to bring Campus tours and the Information Center into the same location as the rest of the office and is working with campus leadership to facilitate this move to not only become more efficient, but also to continue to build knowledge, share expertise and utilize new technologies in the marketing and conducting of campus tours to include virtual tours and GPS self-guided tours.

The office has experienced a great deal of success with the centralization of its technical support as new ideas and modes of operation as well as collaborative initiatives have resulted from this change in organizational structure. In addition, this organizational structure has enhanced the resources that are available to the office to set new directions and build upon our technological successes and address our challenges.

The development of a marketing and communications team is in its infancy, yet clearly an emerging strong and necessary component of the office as we strive to develop cutting edge marketing and communication tools for the next generation of students.

The need for a research component to assist with the data collection and analysis , report development, etc., will be instrumental for the office as we move forward in our quest to help the campus shape its entering classes as well as expand our market share of high achieving and diverse undergraduate and graduate students. The recent collaboration with the Division of Instructional and Informational Technology on online dashboard development for the campus has accelerated our communication of critical application and admission trends with the campus.

The hiring of the currently vacant Director of Student Outreach and School Relations will facilitate the liaison activities that need to occur with our office and other offices on campus. In addition, we will begin to explore on-going training and meetings with divisional and academic affairs personnel.

## BUSINESS PRACTICES

- Improved business practices including process tracking and re-design may enable office management to shift resources to new programs while accomplishing the goals established by the campus.
- The office should continue to explore design and implement new ways of outreaching, recruiting and admitting students, including web-cast advising; utilization of the latest technologies, expanding e-communications and doing more focused name searches and targeted recruitment.
- The office needs to review its current business practices to find ways to enhance efficiencies streamline and eliminate manual processes and better utilize and develop technologically based solutions.
- Develop and implement on-going strategic communications and reports for key campus constituents to facilitate decision making, communication, support, training and -in for the current and future departmental needs.
- Consider adopting the CSU international application

## RESPONSE

The need for developing and re-designing many of our business practices will be key to

our future success and vitality. Moreover, we must move our business processes in-line with the technological advances that have been occurring at a rapid pace both internal and external to the campus if we expect to be competitive and secure our fair share of high achieving and diverse students.

Timely, strategic communication and reports to campus personnel is vital to the on-going success of our office and must be a centerpiece of all of our efforts. This type of communication is beginning to emerge and will become stronger as we develop a full marketing and communications component within the department.

Efficiencies and streamlining of processes must continue to move to the forefront of all of management's thinking and actions if we are to not only survive, but thrive in difficult economic times. Additionally, as we move towards more program impaction we must develop new process for where we are going, not where we have been.

The office has looked into the adoption of the CSU international application, yet we have encountered several challenges with it, the least of which is the double entry of information. We will continue to explore ways to integrate the features of this application within CSU Mentor.

## BUDGETARY & PERSONNEL NEEDS

- Explore new and innovative ways to engage Cal Poly Pomona students in the recruitment and enrollment of future students, i.e. , service credit units, a one unit credit course
- Develop new ways of utilizing technology to address some of the staffing realities that are expected in tight fiscal times
- Adjust and modify various programs and services to recognize the budget realities of the campus and the state as well as better utilize current staff to achieve the departmental, cluster, divisional and campus goals
- In order to determine if current staffing is sufficient, adopt and evaluate changed processes must first be adopted
- Increase collaboration with other campus offices to assist in facilitating the recruitment of future students statewide.

## RESPONSE

The areas mentioned in this section are critical if we are to sustain and even enhance our efforts in times of fiscal hardship. Moreover, these findings provide us with an opportunity to think and act beyond the box and challenge us to develop new ways to engage Cal Poly Pomona students in our efforts. The coordination of one of the James Bell interns with student organizations to assist with our fall 2010 recruitment efforts was a step in the right direction and we will need to build upon these efforts for all aspects of our departments operations.

We will continue to allocate and re-allocate resources within the office to address our cyclic departmental needs.

The Office of Admissions and Outreach believes that it is currently collaborating with several offices and will need to build upon the relationships it has developed to engage more campus personnel in its recruitment efforts by attending more departmental and cluster meetings as well as Associate Deans and department chair meetings.

## TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

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- The office needs to build a more robust electronic outreach and communication program.
- There is a strong need to enhance the office's Web presence and responsiveness utilizing and building upon many of the current tools, Hobson's Connect II and your VIP process.
- Develop better use of technology to improve and expand upon current business practices for both admissions and recruitment
- Work with other CSU campuses to aggressively seek opportunities to enhance the features of PeopleSoft to become more user-friendly and efficient.

## RESPONSE

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The Office of Admissions and Outreach is mindful of the benefits of technological tools to enhance its current electronic and communication programs and has begun to test the capabilities of its Hobson's Connect II system to meet its evolving needs. We have worked hard this year to update our communications to facilitate more timely, clear, concise and engaging communications to prospects, applicants and admits.

Admissions and Outreach has been working and will continue to work to better use technology in all aspects of its operations. Examples: UDirect, electronic transcripts, other??

Admissions and Outreach believes that if we collaborate with other CSU campuses we can achieve some enhancements and changes within the current CMS system and we will work to achieve this goal.

## ADMISSIONS BUSINESS PROCESSES

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The Program Review by AACRAO recommended that we conduct a Program Review of our admissions process and that we go further than reviewing our admissions processes to actually documenting our business process. This documentation would provide us with a benchmark for the beginning of a new era in the admissions processing at Cal Poly Pomona focused on consistency, efficiency, accuracy and

clarity. Towards that end, the Office of Admissions and Outreach underwent a program review focused on the documentation of its admissions process in January 2010. This second program review focused primarily on the organizational and process issues and limited aspects of the technology related to processing of undergraduate and graduate applications. The findings of this program reviewed encompassed:

- The Office of Admissions and Outreach will need to incorporate and employ business concepts that have helped private business succeed, such as project management and planning, standard policies and procedures, documentation, performance metrics and leveraging available technology and human resources.
- There is a need for project planning and scheduling to facilitate the identification and awareness of key processing milestones, allow for the re-allocation of resources tracking and monitoring ensuring on-time completion of milestones.
- The office needs to develop standard policies and procedures that guide staff, provide for consistent decision-making, communication and processing.
- On-going and proper documentation and communication of interactions among staff and with student applicants is key for a student-friendly, efficient and forward thinking office.
- The seeking out of new technologies and an increased use of technology in all aspects of admissions processing will enhance processing timelines as well as the timely development of and reporting to key campus personnel and decision makers.
- Identifying and tracking of performance metrics will be critical to the office's ability to demonstrate a return on investments.
- The continuous training of all staff within the office on all aspects of application processing is critical to the office achieving its cyclic goals and ensuring consistency and accuracy as well as a broad understanding of all aspects of the admissions process.

## RESPONSE

The need to incorporate and employ business concepts that have helped private business succeed, such as project management and planning, standard policies and procedures, documentation, performance metrics and leveraging available technology and human resources into the business processes of the office is a concept that appears to hold great promise and one that we will explore further as we strive to incorporate accountability and benchmarks in various aspects of our admissions processing. We will be mindful that we are a student-centered university whose business is in developing educated and civic minded citizens for a global world and economy and not a for profit business as we explore these concepts.

Admissions and Outreach has begun to develop a project plan and schedule to outline key processing and reporting deadlines and milestones. This is an evolving area and one that we will continue to work on and through during this upcoming cycle.

The issue of developing standard operating policies and procedures as well as documenting our processes has been raised in the past and is one that a team within the office will delve into in greater detail over the next year. This is an area that we need to work on as well as forward

thinking as technological tools have removed some steps and will continue to challenge us to update our processes.

We are and will continue to explore new technologies to enhance and streamline our processes to maximize our resources.

The identifying and tracking of performance metrics and continuous training will go hand-in-hand with our quest to ensure accuracy and consistency in the processing of undergraduate and graduate applications. This is an area that we will develop a more systematic schedule and training rubric for in the upcoming cycles.

## C ONCLUSION

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The undertaking of two program reviews by the Office of Admissions and Outreach has challenged us to look critically at where we are, and in conjunction with our departmental and divisional strategic plans, where we want and need to go to be a premier office with comprehensive, technologically-advanced forward thinking and innovative actions. We had the opportunity to be objectively and independently assessed and challenged to re-think how and why we do what we do and if there is another and perhaps a better way to operate to maximize efficiency. We have both enjoyed and been humbled by these reviews with the knowledge that we will continue to build and grow to help assist the campus achieve its enrollment, retention and graduation goals to recruit, admit, enroll, and graduate high achieving and diverse educated, civic-minded global citizens prepared to lead in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

We have already begun to implement many of the recommendations and expect to fully implement the appropriate recommendations within the next two years.