

Serial number 0289
Title Converging voices and synergies for student success: strategic enrolment management development at a research intensive Canadian university
Submitter Prof. Sylvie Lamoureux, Mr. Alain Malette

Research domain:

International contexts and perspectives

Title:

Converging voices and synergies for student success: strategic enrolment management development at a research intensive Canadian university

Context

In Canada, strategic enrolment management (SEM) is a fairly recent concept and few universities have developed a formal SEM plan. Leaders include, among others, McGill University and the University of Manitoba. In January 2016, the University of Ottawa obtained approval from its Board to establish a Steering Committee to define the scope, develop and implement the institution's first SEM plan. This higher education institution is a large research intensive university, situated in the nation's capital. It is also the largest bilingual university in North America.

Although the University of Ottawa has had scorecard indicators since 2010 as part of its strategic plans, recent enrollment and retention challenges presented an opportunity to ensure synergy between institutional and faculty plans. Since 2010, the Institution had been moving to a research/data informed model of policy and planning development, ensuring that new initiatives were evaluated from implementation forward, allowing for discussion, feedback, adjustments and alignments. These approaches laid the foundation for the work that began in the Spring of 2016.

Theoretical Perspectives

Usher (2011) states that "truly strategic SEM isn't about putting bums in seats. It's about deciding what kind of university you want to have: what kinds of students and what kinds of programs. . . . SEM [has] to be about setting long-term revenue goals and finding the right mix of domestic and foreign students to deliver that amount of net income. In a future where government support seems set to decline, SEM needs to be more strategic than ever. Making it just about tactics is a recipe for failure."

SEM relies on research evidence and is data driven to nourish discussions regarding student success, bringing them “from the margins to the mainstream” (Thomas et al., 2005 in Thomas 2015, p. 79). It also distributes and shares responsibility for student access and success across an institution, to all actors, from academics, to staff, to administrators. While SEM has been the object of research from a management perspective, it remains a relatively new field of research for academic researchers of student transition and success.

We build on Snowden’s (2013) view of “enrollment management as an institutional construct composed of “social structures that involve more strongly held rules supported by stronger relations and more entrenched resources” (Scott 2008, p. 77)”. This constructivist framework allows us to go beyond the focus of most SEM research – student choice, recruitment, retention (Black 2003) to bring to light the experiences of the collective individuals advancing enrollment management contexts, rather than the contexts (Snowden, 2012), methods (Dennis, 2012) and theories (Kaslbeek and Hossler, 2009) themselves. Snowden’s (2013) enrollment knowledge framework, with enrollment discourse as a social constructed concept, brings saliency to our research program focused on the lived experiences of those charged with leading and participating in this institutional process. As with Gottheil (2015), we approach SEM as a tool to enhance communication, collaboration, and partnerships. Our study looks at participants’ discourse (van Dijk, 1997) around these three key seminal foundations of SEM.

Methodology

This qualitative case study (Yin, 2013) builds on individual and collective auto-ethnographic data (Chang, 2013) from two participants in the Institution’s SEM strategy, as well as semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from Faculties, Services and Central administration serving on the SEM steering committee or one of its two constituent subcommittees. Our focus is on enrollment discourse and the experience of this wide-ranging institutional turn. Following ethics approval, participants will be recruited in September 2017. Initial interview will occur in Fall 2017. Data will be analyzed using thematic discourse analysis (Titscher, 2000), to tease out the reflexive moments of this institutional turn.

Presentation

Our paper presents the contextual analysis that led to the development and implementation of a SEM strategy at the University of Ottawa. We will share the structure and logic behind the implementation process, highlighting our experiences in the launching and initial work of the Steering Committee, and its sub-committees on retention and recruitment. Our focus is on the communication, collaboration and partnerships created and strengthened through the development process. Particular attention will be drawn to the importance of the wide-ranging representation of committee members, and of knowledge sharing to ensure collective buy-in to

the aims and goals. Our presentation of this work in progress is supported by data drawn from individual and collaborative auto-ethnographies, as well as discursive data gleaned from interviews with members from the steering and standing committees, highlighting the benefits and challenges of converging inter-sectorial voices and synergies.

Implications

This study is innovative in that it pushes the boundary of knowledge regarding the development and implementation of a SEM plan from the perspective of the constituents called to develop and enact it. It adds to new research on SEM, while also providing other types of research data to inform the institution's own plan, ensuring that synergies are converging to ensure student success for all.

Finally, Henderson (2017) notes that despite the inherent unicity of each postsecondary institution, "one campus' s experience can be instructive and open new thought channels that can help other campuses to find their own ways". Hence, it is our hope that by sharing the University of Ottawa's experience of the development and implementation of their inaugural SEM strategy, thus far, we can enter into dialogue with other institutions regarding their own journeys and perhaps inform other institutions.

References

Black, J. (2010). Strategic enrolment issues facing higher education leaders. In J. Black (Ed) S

Black, J. 2003. The enrollment management framework (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC. Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text (Publication No. AAT 3113329)

Chang, H. (2013). Individual and collaborative autoethnography as method. *Handbook of autoethnography*, 107-122.

Dennis, M. 2012. Anticipatory enrollment management. *College and University Journal*. **88**(1):10–16.

Dolence, M. G. (1993). Strategic enrollment management: A primer for campus administrators. Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Gottheil, S. (2015). Walking the walk together: Implementing SEM to enhance the student experience. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, 2(4), 250-258.

Henderson, S. E. (2017). SEM and the Student Journey: The Role of Strategic Enrollment Management in Student Engagement. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, 4(4), 144-155.

Henderson, S. E. (2012). The community of SEM. In B. Bontrager, D. Ingersoll, & R. Ingersoll (Eds.), *Strategic enrollment management: Transforming higher education* (pp. 97 – 109). Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Kalsbeek, D., and D. Hossler. 2009. Enrollment management: A market-centered perspective. *College and University Journal*. 84(3):2–11.

Scott, R. W. 2008a. *Institutions and organizations: Ideas and interests*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Snowden, M. L. 2012. SEM in the postbaccalaureate context. In B. Bontrager, D. Ingersoll, and R. Ingersoll (Eds.), *Strategic enrollment management: Transforming higher education* (pp. 175–197). Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Snowden, M. L. (2013). Enrollment Logics and Discourses: Toward Developing an Enrollment Knowledge Framework. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, 1(1), 26-51.

Spittle, B. (2011). Chapter 5.2 Balancing Mission and Market in Chicago: An Enrollment Management Perspective. In *Institutional Transformation to Engage a Diverse Student Body* (pp. 179-186). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Taylor, J., Brites, R., Correia, F., Farhangmehr, M., Ferreira, B., de Lourdes Machado, M., & Sá, M. J. (2008). Strategic Enrollment Management. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 20(1), 1-17.

Thomas, L. (2015), "Chapter 3 Institutional Transformation to Mainstream Diversity" In *Institutional Transformation to Engage a Diverse Student Body*. Published online: 09 Mar 2015; 77-96. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628\(2011\)0000006009](https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628(2011)0000006009)

Titscher, S. (2000). *Methods of text and discourse analysis: In search of meaning*. Sage.

Usher, A. (2011). *One Thought to Start Your Day*, 8 Nov 2011

van Dijk, T. A. 1997. The study of discourse. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as structure and process* (pp. 1–34). London, UK: Sage

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage publications.