

Enrollment Services

Analysis of Enrollment: Fall 2008

We have reviewed data for Fall 2008, along with comparative historical data, in order to understand the observed enrollment changes. We will summarize the results of our review, identifying the factors affecting enrollment, along with their causes and relative impact. In so doing, we will assess the effectiveness of recent recruitment and retention strategies, and identify implications for additional or refined interventions.

Recruitment Results

The enrollment of new traditional freshman students (head count) on the Mountain campus increased by 198 over last fall to a total of 1,868. Nonresidents increased by 152, while WUEs fell by 72 and residents increased by 118 (*See A1 and A2*). For purposes of this discussion, “yield” refers to the ratio of enrolled students to those whose applications are accepted for admission.

Residents

Overall resident yield improved from 63 to 65 percent. Middle income students enrolled at a significantly higher yield. Those students who did not report family income also improved. Yield for upper income students fell from 59 to 56 percent (*See B1a and B1b*). Although a decline in the resident applicant pool was anticipated, the actual number of Montana applicants *and the number who actually enrolled* increased significantly, suggesting that The University of Montana captured a larger share of a shrinking market.

Non-residents

Overall non-resident yield improved from 24 to 26 percent, with a notable increase of 421 in the number of qualified applicants. Yield particularly improved from among students from middle and high income families. Of particular note, we experienced dramatic increases in yield among the most academically prepared students (*See B2a and B2b*).

WUEs

Overall WUE yield declined from 49 to 31 percent, with applications decreasing slightly from 380 last fall to 366 (*See B3a and B3b*).

Transfer volume improved after several years of decline, increasing from 809 to 880 (*A1 and A2*).

Recruitment Issues

Consistent with strategic enrollment initiatives, we have continued to focus on the Montana market in an attempt to offset a declining number of applications based upon a declining number of high school graduates. In order to mitigate this trend, we launched or expanded efforts on several fronts, including:

- Increasing the frequency of Montana high school visits
- Increasing the number of Open Houses and sent direct invitations to Montana students
- Increasing the number of receptions across Montana for prospective students and their families
- Modifying the procedure by which Montana students get direct mail from our purchased lists to increase volume
- Purchasing Montana names much earlier than previous years by 2.5 years

- Completely revising the Financial Aid webpage to include more explanations, improved navigation, a tool to compare lenders and benefits, and greater access to online forms for efficient processing

Non-residents continue to be a priority market, and in an effort to meet/exceed projections and identify students who can afford to attend UM, the following strategies were executed:

- Continued effort to expand markets in North Carolina, Tennessee, Michigan, Hawaii, Texas, Maryland, Arizona, Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, Missouri, and Hawaii
- Purchased an additional 30,000 names who met a specified annual household income in accordance with the recent strategic enrollment initiative
- Added five college fairs in markets that demonstrated solid potential
- Automated the non-resident scholarship program, providing a more efficient award process
- Implemented the next phase of the LAS initiative which was incorporated into the current non-resident scholarship program
- Hosted 13 (expanded by four) Open Houses for prospective students and their families, where students toured campus, visited with academic departments and attended presentations from Financial Aid, Residence Life, Career Services, Disability Student Services, Dining Services and Admissions
- Increased mailings to include two additional mailings late last spring and early fall and increased postcard series by one postcard announcing the UM Facebook™ page:
 - Dorm Shot
 - Wilderness & Civilization
 - Triathlon
 - Undergraduate Research Opportunities
 - Scholarship Deadline
 - Rugby
 - Lacrosse
 - Join us on Facebook™
 - Welcome to Missoula
- Hosted 19 receptions (increase of six) in key cities throughout the U.S
- Implemented an online Orientation registration system with College Net
- Launched the University's first Facebook™ page
- Completed a re-design of the Admissions website, providing better organization and improved navigation
- Developed an additional set of prospective student videos in collaboration with UM RTV adjunct instructor Kagan Yochim that have been placed on the newly redesigned Enrollment Services website.
 - Fly-fishing and Academics
 - Roommates
 - PEAS Project
 - College Athlete-Football
 - Diversity
 - Internship Opportunities
 - Family Weekend

Student Credit Hour (SCH) Loads

The growth of online courses continues to prove to be highly successful. Online enrollment alone increased by 52 percent over last fall. This continues to contribute to overall enrollment growth, while also increasing tuition revenue. Not only did total fall enrollment exceed projected levels by 223 FTE, but far more credit hours were added below the flat spot (3,476) than above the flat spot (170) (*See E*), producing positive revenue variances in several key categories.

In addition, the number of students grew on both the COT and Mountain campuses grew, in both full-time and part-time categories:

	Fall 2007 Headcount		Fall 2008 Headcount	
	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time
COT	491	1,041	519	1,122
Mountain Undergraduate	1,543	8,922	1,740	9,040
Graduate	638	1,223	626	1,160
Total	2,672	11,186	2,885	11,322

Retention Results

The attrition of traditional undergraduate students on the Mountain campus declined (improved) by 59 over last year, losing 35 fewer residents, and 41 fewer nonresidents, and unfortunately 17 more WUE students (*See A1 and A2 and D1 and D2*); however, traditional resident freshman retention declined from 72.5 to 71.9 percent, while traditional nonresident freshmen retention fell from 67.8 percent last year to 64.9 percent.

Lower Division

Retention among lower division resident students improved from 73.0 to 73.4 percent. As we have seen in earlier studies, high school GPA is not a good predictor of retention, as the average non-returning resident had an entering GPA of 3.11. Moreover, 58 percent of the 1,177 lower division students who failed to return left in good academic standing. Overwhelmingly though, while income levels in this group have improved – narrowing the gap – they still have a significantly lower family income than their counterparts who persist.

Upper Division

The picture of upper division retention is quite distinct from lower division. Unfortunately, like lower division, attrition is highly, though we retained a larger number (2547 compared to 2442) than last year. Still, more than 500 traditional undergraduate upper division students failed to return, and 80 percent of them left in good academic standing. As seen last year, the financial factor for resident students still appears to be significant, with non-returning students having an average of just 60 percent of the financial resources of persisting students.

Retention Issues

Retention efforts appear to be bearing fruit, as overall persistence has continued to improve. A total of 16 more traditional students returned (as compared to last year).

The percentage of lower division students who did not return improved from 26.8 to 25.9 percent. The attrition rate among upper division students remained stable at 14 percent. The improvements in retention are encouraging, although there is still room for continued improvement.

Of concern, however, is a significant shift in out-of-state freshman retention, where 39 fewer nonresident students returned. The continuation of this negative outcome appears in sharp contrast to other recent results, and bears further attention.

Implications for Interventions

Although there is significant reason for encouragement related to better-than-expected resident and nonresident recruitment and overall retention, this analysis still yields significant implications related to the need for continued development of interventions and enhancement of current practices in order to address issues critical to enrollment management:

The need to continue to mitigate the declining pool of Montana residents

- Through implementation of tuition assistance mechanisms such as MPACT, community and media-based programs aimed at increasing awareness, concurrent enrollment programs, as well as programs conducted on K-12 campuses, increase the percentage of high school graduates choosing to participate in higher education in Montana
- Increase non-traditional participation (See Access and Affordability below)

The need to continue to increase non-resident enrollment

- Fully implement the recently approved strategy to increase and improve competitiveness of focused recruitment efforts related to academically qualified out-of-state students, and continue to enhance incentive packages for these students
- Implement an effective, participative campus-wide yield strategy for highly desirable students

The need to continue to improve access and affordability for Montana Residents

- Continue to identify cultural and other non-financial barriers, and create an effective communication plan to change paradigms related to the costs / benefits of higher education, beginning in early K-12
- Continue to explore, implement, and refine programs such as MPACT to minimize debt burden as a barrier to participation
- Continue to manage tuition and fee increases with awareness of affordability issues
- Continue to build a compelling case for increased State funding in ways specifically designed to make higher education more affordable

The need to improve retention and progression

- Continue to improve our understanding of factors leading to attrition of academically qualified students, and implement focused efforts to mitigate their impact
- Continue to assess effectiveness of current retention programs
- Leverage initial progress made with retention consultant to implement proposals to create a campus-wide culture of shared responsibility for and critical importance of retention-focused behavior in all faculty and staff activity
- Identify factors leading to higher attrition of nonresident freshman students, and implement targeted interventions, particularly related to engagement
- Analyze the factors leading to this year's overall retention improvement, and attempt to refine and build on this success

The need to continue to improve participation rates of non-traditional students

- Expand course offerings and scheduling options in order to address educational needs of adult (non-traditional) learners, and to provide working people more opportunity to fully participate in higher education: alternative scheduling options (additional evening and new Saturday classes) are already being implemented at the College of Technology