

## A TALE OF TWO SYSTEMS

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Enrollment management strategies at the University System of New Hampshire and the California State University System reflect starkly different geographic realities. While USNH projects a dwindling market, CSU is struggling to serve a growing population. Despite the contrasts, each can learn from the other.

**By Cynthia Teniente-Matson**

**Editor's Note:** Part One of this conversation between University System of New Hampshire Chancellor Edward R. MacKay and California State University-Fresno Chief Financial Officer Cynthia Teniente-Matson appears in the [September 2009 Business Officer "Insights"](#) column. Here, MacKay and Matson continue their discussion of specific approaches their university systems are taking to stay ahead of current and looming enrollment management challenges.

**MATSON:** How do you think the fall semester's true enrollment numbers will impact planning for the coming year?

**MACKAY:** At least for the public and independent institutions in the Northeast, the bigger question will come in the fall of 2010, if the economic slowdown persists and as families exhaust whatever reserves they had for students to make an initial enrollment decision or continue through the current academic year. From our standpoint, University System of New Hampshire institutions have been extraordinarily responsive with regard to financial aid. We make a commitment to put together a financial aid package for our in-state students for which—after inserting the expected family contribution, standard student work-study component, and the maximum federal subsidized loans amount—the balance of the direct cost of education is offset with governmental or institutional grants. At this point our patterns are holding up well, but we can't afford to be complacent, and the provision of adequate aid will be a major discussion topic for 2010.

**MATSON:** We've found that with all the forms of student aid available to California students, our pricing structure has remained a good value. However, for this upcoming year our board of trustees voted to increase fees by 10 percent. And within the CSU system, an additional budget cut of \$584 million hit us this summer. There is no way we can incorporate that level of reduction for the upcoming year without either an increase in additional fees or a significant cut in programs. While we've always been very affordable, we're now having internal discussions about the possibility of differential pricing.

For example, we have "super seniors"—students who have earned significantly more than the 120 units necessary to achieve a degree. We think a way to help them move on after meeting their career or academic goals would be to introduce some differential pricing for these students to encourage them to graduate so that we can bring in additional students who can't get into the system right now because of our enrollment limitations.

If our economic situation does not improve by fall 2010, we may also face constriction and contraction of our classes. For instance, we may not be able to keep students who need remediation but who don't meet their academic goals within the stated timeline—not because we're unable to support them, but because we won't have the capacity, and we'll have to select from those most ready to move through the pipeline. Finally, we're concerned that because of budget constraints we won't be able to offer all the courses students need to move them through the system in a timely manner. These are all worst-case scenarios that are a direct impact of the economy.

**MACKAY:** Some of your solutions are similar to approaches we've been considering as well. We have limited differential tuition pricing for programs such as engineering and computer science. However, these are the more expensive programs, and that raises philosophical concerns about pricing some programs to a point at which they may become unaffordable to certain students. We're currently engaged in a healthy debate with our trustees about pricing issues and other strategies to maintain or increase revenue streams.

Another example is that of our relationships and articulation agreements with our community colleges. We've worked hard to facilitate those arrangements, although the overall impact to date is less than we had hoped. While increased numbers of transfer students enable us to use existing capacity in upper-division classes with only marginal cost, having fewer students attend for the full four years results in lost efficiencies that are often available through teaching lower-division courses.

Finally, we know we also must be more attentive to recapturing economies of scale through better use of technology. We're beginning to push harder to provide more students with at least a "hybrid" experience in which some courses or portions of courses are available online as a way to give students the flexibility to maintain their full schedules of work and school.

**MATSON: Beyond domestic students, what do you see shaping up with regard to international students that could influence enrollment strategies?**

**MACKAY:** Unless you have a very strong brand name, U.S. institutions ought to focus on attracting international students and delivering internationally the programs that differentiate their institutions. For example, the University of New Hampshire has a terrific ocean mapping program that is not available at many institutions around the world. To the extent UNH can offer this coursework in other countries or have students directly engaged in the program either on-site or online, that provides a distinctive opportunity. The competition among widely available academic programs will continue to intensify, and institutions need to do a careful analysis of the full cost of entering that market.

**MATSON: What about student readiness? What strategies is your system implementing to ensure that the high school graduates who do show up are prepared to learn?**

**MACKAY:** We see as one of our responsibilities the need to help grow the pipeline of future students by increasing the number of high school graduates. We have established get-ready-for-college and mentoring efforts that include a variety of interventions to help bolster the aspirations of K–12 students. Our governor has also been instrumental in working to improve the high school graduation rate. To the extent that we can prepare more students to enter our institutions, that better serves all of us, economically and socially.

**MATSON:** As a system, we want to remain focused on serving students from traditionally underrepresented populations within our communities in California, including students for whom English is not the primary language spoken in their homes. Because we find academic preparedness to be one of our biggest challenges, we've come up with a number of ways to address this within the limited funding we have to meet remedial needs, including several programs of outreach our chancellor has implemented. One is called Super Sunday, which typically takes place in February or March. The chancellor, institution presidents, and other experts in the recruitment arena visit churches in northern and southern California to reach out to various ethnic groups and invite them to attend CSU.

Another program is our parent institute. We offer sessions to provide parents with information about how to help their young children start preparing for college. This past year we had contact with about 8,000 parents, mostly Latinos. We also place a lot of effort on helping students get into college and preparing to be good students once they arrive, through outreach materials we've developed in multiple languages—Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and a range of other languages unique to our regional communities.

The other area in which we see a continued need for resources is adaptive technology. We've put a lot of effort and energy into technologies for individuals with disabilities so that they have full access to instructional materials. We think we're ahead in this arena as far as the infrastructure we've put in place, but it has entailed a significant investment. Obviously, right now we have a very serious convergence of fiscal issues that we never experienced before. These extreme uncertainties in our budget planning are placing significant reliance on our business officers to help our institutions focus on core functions and think differently about our business models, including our enrollment management approaches.

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