

Making Connections: A Holistic View of Key Strategies

The Issue

Part of the challenge in developing and implementing enrollment-related policies is one of perspective. Specifically, on what basis is any particular policy appropriately evaluated and refined over time? Although not specifically or explicitly addressed in any meaningful way by federal court precedent, the logic of the governing federal standards applied to claims of discrimination (and the actual scope of inquiry reflected in numerous U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights investigations¹) strongly indicates that each relevant strand of enrollment policy (e.g., recruitment, admission, financial aid, retention) should be assessed holistically—not in isolation. Such an approach can result in a more integrated, educationally sound, sustainable, and efficient system that supports access and diversity goals.

The Policy Context

Examining the institutional investment in and effectiveness of the array of policies designed to principally affect the enrollment of students is a critical step toward success, irrespective of whether the law is implicated in those policies. With legal issues typically implicated in a number of access and diversity policies, this practice becomes even more critical. Often referred to as “enrollment management,” this holistic approach typically involves:

- An integrated process pursuant to which relevant recruitment, admission, financial aid, and student support policies are coordinated and aligned in their development and implementation.
- A multidisciplinary process that brings together key policymakers (and “doers”) from relevant disciplines/offices to ensure the development of:
 - ♦ Clear goals and objectives reflecting agreement regarding the desired size and composition of the student body, as a foundation for meeting mission-driven education goals;

- ♦ An ongoing assessment of successes and challenges in achieving those goals, with a focus on key points of influence that are likely to advance progress toward goals over time;
- ♦ An understanding of the role and expected action of each department/individual to achieve success, and their relationship to others that are also essential to success; and
- ♦ A more informed basis for evaluating the investment and cost (e.g., time, money) associated with particular policies and their relative impact over time (in light of institutional goals).

Graph 2: Multidisciplinary process example



Educationally sound and legally defensible race- /ethnicity-conscious practices must be the product of a well-designed, institutionally aligned, and integrated process.

Key Points of Inquiry

Consider the following questions regarding the array of potential strategies pursued:²

- 1** Recruitment—Is your institution investing in vigorous and effectively targeted outreach and recruitment, and attracting a sufficient diversity of applicants consistent with institutional aims?
- 2** Admission—Is your institution selecting students who are likely to be successful at your institution and meaningfully contribute to teaching and learning, based on their particular backgrounds and experiences?
- 3** Financial aid—Is your institution providing sufficient financial support for qualified students with diverse backgrounds and experiences who need that support?
- 4** Retention—Is your institution providing students, once enrolled, the necessary support they need that will help ensure their success?
- 5** Overall—Have you assessed the big picture with respect to policy design, implementation, and impact, so that you're taking advantage of synergies and not working inefficiently—or worse, at cross-purposes?

SELECTED RESOURCES

1. Don Hossler, *Creating Effective Enrollment Management Systems* (The College Board, 1986).
2. *Roadmap to Diversity: Effective, Efficient and Sustainable Enrollment Management Policies that Promote Mission-Related Goals*, Chapter 1 (Association of American Medical Colleges, manuscript).
3. Jim Black, *The Strategic Enrollment Management Revolution* (AACRO, 2001).

CITATIONS

1. See, e.g., Appendix D: Sample OCR Data/Information Request in *Federal Law and Financial Aid: A Framework for Evaluating Diversity-Related Programs* (The College Board, 2005).
2. Adapted from *Roadmap to Diversity: Effective, Efficient and Sustainable Enrollment Management Policies that Promote Mission-Related Goals*, Chapter 1 (Association of American Medical Colleges, in press).