Kellogg Community College

Overcoming Enrollment Decline with a Smart Strategy

Kellogg Community College in Michigan recently found itself in a bind. After a marked enrollment decline spanning a decade and a 50% loss of its student population, the Higher Learning Commission stepped in, requiring the college to submit a comprehensive enrollment management plan to turn the tides. While KCC had engaged in many enrollment activities, it did not have a strategic, overarching, and coordinated structure to find the gaps in its outreach and implement innovative solutions. It was time to give enrollment a real shot in the arm.

The college called on Interact for:

- **comprehensive research** to pinpoint exactly where KCC was losing students …

- **consultation and facilitation for alignment** and agreement in meetings and between departments …

- and help **crafting a data-informed strategic enrollment management (SEM) plan** to break down silos and bring students back to campus.

KCC immediately realized gains in an improved student experience, making research-informed decisions to focus efforts and increase enrollment effectively.

A Solid Foundation Built on Research and Teamwork

The team began with Interact facilitating two large-group "pain-point" scans with KCC personnel. They also conducted listening sessions with college departments, faculty, and students. The sessions assessed KCC's issues and opportunities in outreach, onboarding, and retention processes in attracting and converting new students, recapturing stop-outs, and helping current students persist.

By analyzing the pain-point research along with KCC's enrollment data, and then having Interact conduct further targeted research, *KCC could define its core pillars for the SEM plan to rally the entire college.* The study enabled a focused approach and much-needed framework for cross-departmental teams to develop measurable, strategic initiatives to positively impact enrollment.

Interact was the "guide on the side," offering ongoing coaching of the SEM work teams and KCC's enrollment management cabinet throughout the plan development, giving the college a leg up in coordinating efforts across departments, building momentum, and securing leadership support to move forward.

Improving Outreach & Helping the Most Vulnerable Students

Through diving deeply into failure-to-appear, failure-to-return, and student-onboarding research, KCC discovered that its communication and outreach needed a boost to help students enroll and persist. With a detailed map of its strengths and where it fell short, KCC made a plan to tackle communication roadblocks, garnering better engagement immediately.

Deep-funnel enrollment research also revealed that adult learners were the college's most vulnerable student population. It became clear that this demographic needed a custom-built curriculum with more flexibility and support in order to enroll and succeed in college. Through collaboration, KCC kick-started new part-time, cohort-based programs targeted to the adult learner population.

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Right out of the gate, the new offerings had a powerful impact on enrollment. In the new part-time nursing program alone, the college received 55 applications for 24 spots, the first time the courses have had a waiting list instead of empty seats for some time. With the nursing program's burgeoning popularity, leadership is now considering adding new sections.

KELLOGG COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

april 2023

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PLANNING PROCESS & METHODOLOGY

Data-Driven Change

Addressing Onboarding Challenges Became Easy

With fresh data, it was easy for KCC to see the big picture and spot simple fixes. For example, clearing up complicated academic jargon in the class registration process instantly decreased confused student calls and streamlined the onboarding process. And optimizing the college's phone tree according to student preferences helped learners get the support they needed quickly. Simple changes added up to greater student satisfaction and a better experience.

Removing Class Registration Hurdles Strengthens Persistence

Previously, if students had debts, they could not register for classes, resulting in those learners stopping out. That's why another initiative of the enrollment plan was making the college's temporary COVID-19 student indebtedness program permanent. Now, even if a student owes money to the college, they can still register. Because of the change, these learners are signing up for classes and paying off their balances, making the smart initiative a win-win.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

KCC enrollment is up more +12% for the Fall 2023 semester.

With a strategic enrollment management plan built to last, KCC looks forward to more enrollment successes to come.

"Interact has been a blessing to work with. Mary and Diane have been great meeting facilitators.
"This is an organization that knows community colleges inside out and backward!"

— **Eric Greene,**
Vice President for Communications and Advancement

"We were able to have some quick wins right away, and that helped us to see momentum right from the beginning. …
The research that Interact did for us allowed us to make informed decisions.

"It was having that third party come in and listening so that people felt heard that made a difference."

— **Jenni Kotowski,**
Director of Admissions

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