

# REDUCING THE COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION

## Dr. J.T. (Tom) Snell

### Introduction

The following list of items identifies some of the approaches an institution of higher education may utilize to reduce its costs of operation while maintaining educational quality.

### 1.0 Management Practices

In order to graduate knowledgeable and skilled students who are valued by industry, an institution must employ a highly experienced and skilled management team with considerable formal education in management and business administration. They must also possess a passion for education and a strong commitment to learner success. Management should:

- 1.1 Set annual short and midterm goals using the SMART technique.
- 1.2 Focus more on outcomes (achieving measurable results) and less on process.
- 1.3 Assess the changing needs of industry and modify educational programs as needed to ensure graduates have the knowledge and skills employers require.
- 1.4 Use bottom up techniques in decision making that involves department team members and other affected stakeholders.
- 1.5 Measure and monitor multiple educational quality factors both inside and outside the classroom on a constant basis throughout the year.
- 1.6 Constantly measure student, employer, and employee satisfaction (i.e., customer satisfaction) constantly and commit to change through continuous improvement.
- 1.7 Measure student success at their educational practicum sites (employer sites) on a regular basis.
- 1.8 Reduce multiple levels of senior administrators and flatten the organizational structure.
- 1.9 Expect more people to create their own documents, schedules, appointments which reduces the need for Administrative Assistants.
- 1.10 Hire more people on part-time contracts.
- 1.11 Hire more people to complete special one time projects.
- 1.12 Review systems, methods, and procedures on a regular basis to ensure each team member gets the support they need to delivery quality results in the most productive and effective manner.
- 1.13 Institution leaders should also employ other advanced management and business practices. This includes such management approaches as: innovative solutions, constant attention to efficiency and effectiveness, SWOT market analysis, ISO quality principles, Q12 employee focus, and relationship marketing that focus on student and employer changing needs.
- 1.14 A more effectively managed institution helps keep administrative costs lower and allows more money to be shifted to the classroom where it will reduce class size and thereby help increase the quality of education.

### 2.0 Program Delivery

- 2.1 Educational programs should be delivered year round as opposed to 8 or 9 months of the year (e.g., move from primarily two semesters per year (of 13 weeks each) up to four).
- 2.2 Year round program delivery makes more efficient and effective use of manpower and space.
- 2.3 The number of weeks of class breaks should be reduced throughout the year (e.g., reduce long Christmas break, eliminate reading weeks, etc.).
- 2.4 The accelerated delivery of a program will enable students to complete it sooner. This means: 1) they can get into the workforce sooner; 2) they need to borrow less money to cover living costs.

### **3.0 Facilities**

- 3.1 As a result of programs being delivered year round, facilities are better utilized.
- 3.2 Classes should be scheduled throughout the day, evening and weekend (most institutions have much lower occupancy in the afternoon, evening, etc.).
- 3.3 Additional space should be rented, when needed, in the community rather than having buildings that are under utilized and cost unnecessary expense.
- 3.4 Large foyer and large common gathering spaces should be reduced in size.
- 3.5 Facility space should be shared among programs and departments rather than being assigned to them.
- 3.6 Facility space should be designed for multiple uses.
- 3.7 A number of rooms should be designed with dividers so they can expand or contract as needed.
- 3.8 It should be understood that an institution such as a university that primarily delivers instruction for two semesters of 13 weeks in a year, is only really operating 26 weeks of the year, yet they are paying for year round costs such as facility operation, faculty, administration, and staff.
- 3.9 As a result of better utilization of facilities throughout the day and around the year, fewer buildings are actually needed. This also means less parking is needed. Overall, this reduces the cost of maintenance, lighting, heating, cleaning, and security costs. It also significantly reduces capital costs to government.

### **4.0 Faculty**

- 4.1 Hiring fewer full-time faculty.
- 4.2 Hire full-time faculty that work year round (vacation time off between 4 weeks and 8 weeks per year).
- 4.3 Surround a smaller number of full-time faculty with a larger number of part-time faculty that are highly educated.
- 4.4 Pay part-time faculty wages that are very competitive in the marketplace.
- 4.5 Hire part-time faculty that are primarily from industry so students can learn both theory as well as how it is applied in today's world (this further improved the quality of education).
- 4.6 Schedule part-time faculty to teach only when they are needed throughout the year.
- 4.7 Match the competencies and skills of part-time faculty with the requirements of each specific course. (This improves student learning and therefore educational quality.)
- 4.8 Provide instructional training to faculty, monitor their effectiveness in the classroom, provide feedback on performance, and replace faculty not demonstrating effective instructional skills and commitment to learner success.

### **5.0 Campus Size**

- 5.1 Build smaller campuses with less green space which reduces maintenance, upkeep, and taxes.
- 5.2 Design buildings that are simpler, more functional and can be better utilized. (A three story building can be built more cost effective than a one story building spread out).

### **6.0 Future Changes**

- 6.1 With leadership from the government, it is hoped, that in the future a wide range of comparative outcome measures for each college/university from across the region will be posted on a public website. This will enable future learners to make more informed, objective decisions about which school they wish to attend based more on facts and less on emotions. This will also encourage management and faculty to focus on student results and therefore improve the quality of education.
- 6.2 It is also hoped that in the future the government stops funding public institutions and starts funding learners. It will achieve this by creating a student grant type system. This is a method of operation that follows a premise that where the student goes the money

should go. In this type of system, if a program is less effective and attracts less students it will receive less money. This approach to funding will help educational administrators, faculty, and staff to realize their future is based on the changing needs of students as well as the quality of education their students are receiving. This will strongly encourage them to pay greater attention to what and how students are learning or face the possibility of being unemployed. Focusing more attention on the learners causes the quality of education to increase.