HOW TO BECOME A WIZARD OF UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE ADMISSIONS FOR NURSING

Five Best Practices for Admissions Officers and Enrollment Management Professionals

American Association *of* Colleges *of* Nursing

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Opportunities For Improving the Admissions and Enrollment Process For Undergraduate and Graduate Nursing Programs

Centralized data provides valuable information and meaningful analysis that drives decision-making at both the nursing program and university level.

All nursing admissions and enrollment professionals have a common goal: make informed decisions to admit the best-fit applicants to their graduate and undergraduate nursing programs. However, admissions and enrollment professionals face several challenges in meeting that goal. Given the specialized nature of the nursing field, programs often struggle with issues related to the accessibility, consistency, and standardization of data. Centralized data provides valuable information and meaningful analysis that drives decision-making at both the program and university level. Further, standardized data is useful to the nursing profession as a whole, as it enables the reporting of accurate applicant counts that can be used to better gauge future workforce levels and ultimately leverage federal and state support to address our country's current nursing shortage.

Since the turn of the century, our country has experienced cyclical nursing workforce shortages. Today, nursing faces an unprecedented challenge as fewer people are entering the profession. X stat shows that in 2014 X% percent fewer nurses were entering the professions. At the same time there is an increase in demand for nursing professionals, accelerated by population growth and the urgent need to improve the quality of our country's healthcare system.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the need for 525,000 new nurses bringing the total number of job openings due to growth and replacement to 1.05 million by 2022. Further, survey data from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) from its 740 public and private member institutions shows that 75,000 qualified applicants are turned away from nursing schools annually, even though 14,000 seats go unfilled.

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Given these dynamics, nursing admissions officers and university leaders continue to strive to understand critical information about the nursing profession as a whole as well as their own undergraduate and graduate applicant pool and the pool cycle-over-cycle. This information provides leaders with benchmarks vis-a-vis competitive programs, and provides a view of current trends and forecasts to support the mission of their nursing programs. Absent of hard data, admissions professionals rely upon assumptions for their decision-making. Having the right tools and the ability to analyze in real-time allows these professionals to save valuable staff time, resources, and plan strategically across their nursing schools and programs and ultimately target, select, and admit the best-fit applicants.

Savvy nursing enrollment professionals also have an opportunity to engage prospective students and build valuable relationships by delivering an exceptional applicant experience. Having the flexibility to customize the application, incorporate unique brand into each touch point, and provide an easy and intuitive interface goes a long way to building loyalty and trust with applicants. Prospective nursing students expect to have a seamless experience and consume information in a variety of ways, including mobile, and want real-time access to the status of their application.

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In the back office, admissions management professionals need to be spending more of their time focusing on building important relationships with prospective nursing students and familiarizing themselves with the strategic initiatives of understanding nursing enrollment trends. Verifying prerequisites, calculating GPAs, authenticating transcripts, opening mail and digitizing documents are all key areas where automation and outsourcing can drive significant efficiencies in nursing programs while allowing admissions professionals to focus on the more strategic areas of their work.

Each of these opportunities provides admissions and enrollment professionals more effective ways to evaluate, select, and retain the best-fit nursing applicants. How can admissions offices maintain a competitive advantage in enrolling qualified nursing applicants? Here are five best practices that define best-in-class admissions offices and can ultimately help you become a wizard of graduate admissions for nursing.

Five Best Practices for Nursing Admissions and Enrollment Professionals

Innovative nursing programs are leveraging tools that help them understand admissions cycles, applicant profiles, forecasts, and benchmark data.

1. ANALYZE YOUR APPLICANT POOL TO TARGET BEST-FIT APPLICANTS

Having access to the right data helps you to better understand your applicant funnel, forecast with greater accuracy, conduct outcome assessments, and benchmark programs within your campus and against competitive nursing programs. This market intelligence is critical to helping you understand and assess trends in real-time, as well as plan and allocate resources accordingly to target, select, and admit best-fit applicants.

Are you on track to meet your enrollment targets this year? Are you attracting the right applicants for your nursing program? What is your applicant profile? Are you meeting your diversity goals? Are you conducting evidence-based admissions to assess whether components used to select applicants impacted retention and academic performance? And if you make a recruiting investment in a new region, what is your return on that investment?

These are questions that the right data and analytics can help you answer. Innovative nursing programs are leveraging tools that help them understand admissions cycles, applicant profiles, forecasts, and benchmark data that ultimately allow them to evaluate, select and retain the best applicants for their programs. Studies using applicant data, including a recent study by Michigan State University, show that both traditional academic and non-academic components can predict academic performance. The use of metrics in enrollment management such as enrollment numbers, tuition revenue, retention, and graduation rates are important to track on an ongoing basis. These data facilitate analysis to meet the needs of institution leaders, accrediting agencies and other key stakeholders

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2. DELIVER AN EXCEPTIONAL APPLICANT EXPERIENCE

Applicants to both undergraduate and graduate nursing programs expect a convenient and efficient application process via a single online resource. An easy and intuitive interface provides clear guidance on each nursing program's unique requirements in terms of transcript needs, coursework/pre-requisites, supporting documents, personal statements, references, and custom questions. Additionally, showing the prospective nursing students their progress (via a progress bar) throughout the application process is another small, but helpful way to improve the applicant experience.

3. BE A BRAND AMBASSADOR

Are you making a lasting impression with your nursing applicants? The application process is one of the most important 'brand' touch points that you have with prospective nursing students. It's important to have personalized communications that present your brand in a way that builds trust and loyalty with current and perspective applicants. Personalizing the look and feel of each applicant touch point allows you to maintain your nursing program's independent identity and engage the applicant from the point of first interest all the way until their first day on campus.

4. REACH YOUR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

It's all about communicating with prospective nursing students in the manner in which they want to consume information. Today's applicants expect to receive information through a variety of handheld devices, via text messages, and emails. Additionally, they expect information to be available in real-time. Proactive communications are important to students on the issues that worry them the most—as their transcript is received, as letters of reference come in, as due dates approach, and as their application moves through key status points. Delivering communications via mobile and in a proactive way results in quicker response times and more compelling interactions.

5. CREATE A PAPERLESS OFFICE

Today, more and more nursing programs are realizing the inefficiencies of managing paper trails and are fully digitizing the admissions process while leveraging the ability to make better admissions decisions. Spending time on activities like opening mail, transcript verification, and GPA calculations takes valuable time away from more strategic initiatives like attracting and ultimately selecting the right applicants to grow and optimize your nursing program. Going paperless can improve transparency, facilitate information sharing and help support remote staff to be as productive as possible. Becoming a wizard of nursing admissions means shifting away from the burden of costly administrative tasks and moving toward a digital dashboard that can support key admissions decisions and reduce overhead costs.

HOW DO YOU STACK UP ON THESE FIVE BEST PRACTICES?

Since 2010, innovative nursing programs across the country have been leveraging best practices in nursing admissions and enrollment through NursingCAS – a centralized application service for nursing programs. NursingCAS is available for free through membership with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and offers prospective students a convenient way to apply to nursing programs at participating schools nationwide. NursingCAS provides a centralized online application for students, powerful software for admissions officers and staff to manage and analyze their applicant pool to select best-fit applicants, and integrated administrative services that include the processing and management of transcripts, grade point verification, as well as applicant service and support.

NursingCAS has three overarching goals: to guide qualified students to nursing programs with open seats, to provide excellent data to schools and other stakeholders about nursing admissions and applicant trends, and to streamline entry into nursing education programs for schools and students. NursingCAS is a solution that can help admissions and enrollment professionals advance the nursing profession.

Talk to a NursingCAS expert today about how to evaluate your current admissions and enrollment processes, as well as how to become a wizard of nursing admissions.

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Nursing CAS
The Centralized Application Service for Nursing Programs

American Association *of* **Colleges** *of* **Nursing**

ABOUT THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES OF NURSING

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) is the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education. AACN works to establish quality standards for nursing education; assists schools in implementing those standards; influences the nursing profession to improve health care; and promotes public support for professional nursing education, research, and practice.

In 2010, AACN partnered with Liaison International to launch NursingCAS. In addition to serving as a technology partner to AACN, Liaison is a leader in providing centralized application services for the health professions and currently serves 25 other disciplines.

ABOUT LIAISON INTERNATIONAL

Liaison International provides admissions management solutions to more than 4,500 higher education programs. Over the last 20+ years, we have built strong relationships with educational associations and we power some of the most admired admissions offices in the country with our Centralized Application Service (CAS™) and UniCAS™ solutions. Our comprehensive software, integrated services, and data analytics platform are proven to remove administrative burdens, facilitate more powerful analysis of a program's applicant pool, and enable experienced admissions staff to focus on the core responsibilities of recruitment and enrollment, to ultimately admit the best-fit applicants to their programs.