



Developing a Recruitment Plan & Strategy

NursingCAS is the centralized application service for nursing administered by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and Liaison International

Developing a Recruitment Plan & Strategy

Current Environment:

The United States is experiencing a nursing shortage and there is a growing need for professionals to meet healthcare workforce demands. The Department of Labor projects that the number of registered nurses (RNs) needed will grow to 3.45 million by 2020, an increase of 712,000 RNs or 26%. With almost 500,000 RNs expected to retire within the next 10 years, the total number of job openings for nurses due to the growth and replacements is 1.2 million by 2020. The need to admit and graduate qualified applicants to become nurses places demands on colleges of nursing to meet those workforce needs through enrollment management.

Role of Enrollment Management:

Enrollment management is defined as well-planned strategies and tactics to shape the student body of an institution and meet established goals. Maguire and Associates defines enrollment management as “a process that integrates functions having to do with recruiting, funding, tracking, retaining, and replacing students as they move toward, within, and away from a school.” Enrollment management professionals typically provide direction and coordination of efforts with multiple offices such as admissions, financial aid, registrar, student services, IT and others.

Typical goals of enrollment management include improving yields at inquiry, increasing applications, enrollment, diversity, net revenue, and retention. For most institutions it is necessary to meet goals for number of students enrolled in order to meet an operating budget. An effective means to meet enrollment goals is by following the admissions funnel theory.



Purpose of this Exercise:

Institutions create and implement recruitment plans to meet enrollment goals. Some schools do not have the resources to create strategies and execute the plan. This template is provided as a tool to help you create a recruitment plan or improve upon your program’s existing plan.

Framework for the Recruitment Plan:

1. Define your goals
2. Establish a budget
3. Feed the pipeline
4. Leverage data
5. Establish partnerships
6. Evaluate your progress

Step 1: Define your Goals

Determine your nursing program's goals for enrollment at both the undergraduate and graduate level (if applicable). This will also entail determining the number of times you will admit applicants into the program or how many terms of entry your program(s) offer. Also, consider which types of students you wish to recruit into your program. The recruitment strategy should support your goals for makeup of the student body population.

- Consider the demographics of your community, your school, and the mission and vision of the institution.
 - ◆ For example, are you located in a rural area, if so what implications does that have for your recruitment plan?
- How will your recruitment plan align with your school's mission?
 - ◆ For example, does your school have a mission to serve underrepresented groups? If so, how can you reach students that share that goal or can relate to that mission?
- How will you focus your efforts?
 - ◆ Determine the actions you need to take in order to reach the enrollment target for each program.
- Which staff will execute the plan? Choose staff wisely, keep customer service in mind.

Fill in the Blanks:

| Program Name | Term of Entry | Enrollment Target |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Example:

| Program Name | Term of Entry | Enrollment Target |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| BSN | Fall | 100 |
| BSN | Spring | 40 |
| Accelerated BSN | Summer | 75 |
| MSN | Fall | 30 |
| DNP | Fall | 10 |

Step 2: Establish a Budget (or work within your budget)

Determine opportunities to engage in events and activities that will support your goals. Consider who will staff these events and project potential expenses.

- Create a calendar of events of all past activities and events to help determine what you'll do this year. Create a timeline to establish a calendar annually based on your program's admissions cycle.
- Create a master list of all opportunities then make final selections based on what's financially and logistically feasible and determine which activities will yield the best results.
- For each potential activity, consider how will it help us to reach our goals? For all potential activities you can use the charts below to help you make decisions about potential activities you should engage in and track results and actual activities.

Fill in the Blanks:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Name and Type of Strategy | |
| Cost and Funding Source | |
| Attendance and Reach | |
| Description and Details | |
| Impact on Targets | |
| Evaluation | |

Example:

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Name and Type of Strategy | Exhibiting at National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN) Conference |
| Cost and Funding Source | \$1500 exhibit charge, cost to travel to event, staff to cover event, printing costs for materials to distribute, shipping of materials (annual exhibiting budget is \$2500 – weigh against all exhibiting opportunities) |
| Attendance and Reach | 500 – nurses, administrators, clinicians, students, members of NAHN |
| Description and Details | On July 15 in Miami, FL – attended last year, high traffic at table |
| Impact on Targets | Aligns with mission to recruit underrepresented groups or those that want to work with underrepresented groups |
| Evaluation | Attend and record # of prospects and applications that are generated |

Create an Activities Report:

| Activity/Event | Location | Date/Time | Who Attended | Staffing | Notes | Other |
|----------------|----------|-----------|--------------|----------|-------|-------|
| | | | | | | |

Example:

| Activity/Event | Location | Date/Time | Who Attended | Staffing | Notes | Other |
|---|-------------|------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Exhibiting at National Association of Hispanic Nurses | Miami Hyatt | July 12–15 | 50 prospects came to the table, resulted in 20 applications | Sally (admissions advisor) and Dr. Trask (faculty) | Follow up with email to prospects | Attend again next year |

Create a Timeline for your Action Plan:

| Planned Action | Owner(s) | Timeline |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| | | |
| | | |

Example:

| Planned Action | Owner(s) | Timeline |
|---|--|---|
| Design new promotional or “search” piece for graduate recruitment. Mail piece two months in advance of deadline using GRE data. | Nursing Enrollment Management Team and Publications Office | November for Fall Admission and February for Spring Admission |

Step 3: Feed the Pipeline

Cultivating and nurturing relationships with prospective students and sources for prospects (such as college counselors, advisors at community colleges, staff at feeder schools, etc.) is critical to success.

- Collect the prospect’s contact information.
- When communicating with prospects ask questions to determine the reasons for their interest in pursuing nursing or a particular program and why they are interested in your school’s offerings. This will also help you start to determine if they might be a good fit for your program and to identify if they are a top prospect.
- Help prospects understand their options for nursing programs. In order to do this successfully you need to have a strong understanding of your school’s own program offerings and the nursing profession.
 - Be prepared to present information to prospects about how your program might meet their interests. And how your program differentiates from their other choices (that’s why it’s important to know your competition and peer institutions).
- Keep notes on your prospects. You may want to use WebAdMIT, the admissions software for NursingCAS, to keep track of your notes or another mechanism. That way at the end of the cycle you can check to see which recruitment activity yielded that applicant.
- Promote academic progression by reaching out to your school’s alumni to inform them of opportunities to apply to the next level of program.
 - For example, if you have a new DNP program you may want to connect with the alumni office for contact information in order to reach out to past nursing students to promote and build awareness of the new doctoral program.

Examples of what to highlight for prospective students:

- NCLEX Pass Rates
- Job Placement
- Community
- Opportunities to Advance Education
- Alumni Network
- Scholarship and Financial Aid Information
- Class Size, Academic Support
- Research Opportunities
- Clinical Placements

- Follow-up and continually communicate with prospects, make sure you can point them to your Website, materials, or other areas to provide more information and continued engagement.
 - Ensure that your materials, messaging, and branding are consistent.
 - Ensure that your program’s Website and every piece of collateral are branded appropriately and up to date. You may want to check with your school’s communications or equivalent department for help.
 - Once your admissions cycle is open, communicate with prospects to inform them. Invite them to apply. Send a link to NursingCAS or your application, let them know the deadline, and other important information. This communication should occur regularly with prospects as your application opens and the deadline approaches.

Step 4: Leverage Data

You need to keep track of information about your prospective students and applicants in order to ensure that you meet your enrollment targets and to evaluate your progress at the end of the admissions cycle to inform your activities for the next admissions cycle.

- Collect prospect information at every level to populate your database. For example:
 - » Bring an iPad with you to events and collect basic contact information. Applicants can fill out an online form to populate your database. There are many tools available to achieve this such as Google Docs, Formsite, etc. Or you use an inquiry card and ask prospects to write their contact information down and have staff manually enter in that data.
 - » Encourage prospective students to create a NursingCAS account and to select your program so they appear in your prospective applicant pool in WebAdMIT and you can send them information on demand via the email template tool.
- You can review data to determine if your recruitment activities yielded positive results in terms of prospects generated, number of applications, admits, and enrolled students. Keep track of your progress as you go using the grid on the next page. Adjust the calendar dates as necessary so that it makes the most sense for your program(s). You could make a grid for each program and/or make one master grid.



- WebAdMIT helps you facilitate pipeline management because you can view the following at any time; the number of applicants “In Progress”, “Received”, “Complete”, and “Verified”. And you can further refine the tracking by creating “Local Statuses” that are tied to “Decision Codes” so you know where applicants are for particular programs and overall at all times. You also have the ability to search or query your overall pool and generate lists and emails based on searches.
- Mine the data in your existing pool to determine if there are viable candidates for your other programs.
 - For example, if you need to generate more applications for your PhD program and you notice a highly qualified BSN applicant with research interests and experience applying to one of your MSN programs; you could reach out to that applicant to present the opportunity, to learn more about their interests, and to determine if it’s a good fit.

Fill in the Blanks:

| Cycle | Prospects | | | Applicants | | | Admits | | | Enrolled* | | |
|--------------|-----------|---------|----------|------------|---------|----------|--------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|
| | Goal: | Actual: | Overall: | Goal: | Actual: | Overall: | Goal: | Actual: | Overall: | Goal: | Actual: | Overall: |
| September | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| October | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| November | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| December | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| January | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| February | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| March | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| April | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| May | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| June | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| July | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| August | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| September | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | |

*Some schools require admitted students to submit an enrollment deposit in order to secure their place in the program. Deposits are an effective mechanism to control your yield. Deposits are typically credited to a student’s tuition.

Step 5: Establish Partnerships

Be creative. Identify opportunities for partnerships that will help you achieve your targets.



- Reach out to partner with area hospitals, healthcare organizations, and pharmaceutical companies that want their staff to go on for additional education.
 - Offer to host an information session about your program offerings during the nurses' lunch break at an area hospital.
- Reach out to colleagues at other universities to collaborate.
 - See if another school would allow you to present to their current students about master's or doctoral education opportunities at your school. And allow that school to present to your soon-to-be graduates as well.
 - Target MSN-prepared faculty at local community colleges and universities to invite them to apply to your school's doctoral program.
- Look for opportunities for partnerships with community colleges for articulation agreements.
 - Host an "academic mobility" session and invite local community college students and academic advisors to learn more about your program and how to apply.
- Empower alumni to recruit for you.
 - Ask alumni to volunteer to write an email or a letter to admitted applicant(s) about their experience in the program and what they are doing professionally now.
- Leverage students, faculty, and other stakeholders to assist you with recruitment.
 - For example, you could start a student caller program and have select currently enrolled students call your admitted applicants to connect, share their experience, and see if they have any questions about the program. Create a script, train students, and designate a staff member to manage the callers.

Step 6: Evaluate your Progress

- Determine whether or not your recruitment plan has been productive by analyzing your pool of admitted and enrolled students after the deadline. It's important to be able to demonstrate how your recruitment activities have helped you reach your desired results.
- How do you measure success? Metrics demonstrate success and help you to evaluate if activities were effective. That's why it's important to track your progress.
- **Yield = # of Offers/# Enrolled**
- Did the recruiting events you attended yield results?
 - For example, I was able to yield 3 PhD students as a result of meeting them at the National Association of Hispanic Nurses conference.
- Did the partnerships you establish yield results?
 - For example, I presented, along with a faculty member to a group of 50 prospective students from Stinard Community College, and as a result we received 5 applications, made 2 offers, and yielded 1 student.
- Did the alumni you empowered yield results?

Fill in the Blanks:

| | Application | Offers | Yield |
|--------------|-------------|--------|-------|
| Program Name | | | |
| Program Name | | | |
| Program Name | | | |

| | Application | Offers | Yield |
|-----|-------------|--------|-------|
| BSN | 250 | 122 | 112 |
| MSN | 75 | 42 | 36 |
| PhD | 12 | 8 | 4 |

- Have a post admissions cycle meeting with staff to discuss results and tweak the plan for the next cycle.
- Celebrate.