Defining Enrollment Management: The Structural Frame

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According to Bolman and Deal (1991), the structural frame refers to *organizational structure*, *processes*, and *policies*—the skeleton upon which the enrollment management enterprise is built. The shape of an enrollment organization's skeletal framework often determines, or at least influences, the organization's method of operation. Enrollment strategies, student service delivery, staffing patterns, and even the culture itself are among the many facets of the operation affected by the structural frame. The father of the Total Quality Management (TQM) movement, W. Edwards Deming (1986), claimed that eighty percent of all customer dissatisfaction is caused by faulty structural systems, not employee behavior. Assuming Deming is correct, enrollment managers would be imprudent not to devote themselves to the continuous improvement of structural systems.

Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green (1982) describe the roots and early evolutionary stages of enrollment management *organizational structures* in their book, <u>Strategies for Effective Enrollment Management</u>. According to the authors, enrollment management structures are often created to address an institutional problem or crisis, yet ironically, such structures tend to produce their own inherent problems. Many enrollment management organizations function without research data to guide decisions, lack campus-wide awareness of enrollment-related issues, and fail to coordinate enrollment efforts. Within this context, structures are born. Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green identify four basic structures:

1. **The committee** (Campbell, 1980)**,** or what was a marketing committee and has evolved on many campuses to become an enrollment management committee, is designed to increase campus awareness and to a degree, involvement. The committee, however, is primarily advisory in nature. That is to say it lacks ownership and thus, the authority and frequently the will to implement, hold others accountable, garner necessary resources, or alter organizational structure.

2. **The staff coordinator** (Fram, 1975), who is perhaps a director, dean, associate provost, or vice president of enrollment management, is charged with coordinating marketing or enrollment management activities. Strengths of this model include the linkage and often the integration of previously disparate or loosely coupled enrollment functions, and the responsibility for enrollment functions assigned to a single administrator. Depending on the level of position within the institution's organizational food chain, however, the enrollment manager may lack the political wherewithal or authority to influence significant change. "Without line responsibility, fiscal autonomy, and organizational rank," the success of the model depends heavily on the goodwill of others along with the visible support of the president (Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green, 1982, p. 33).

3. **The matrix system** (Kreutner and Godfrey, 1980-81) places "enrollment-related functions under the jurisdiction of a senior administrator" (Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green, 1982, p. 33). It crosses administrative and academic organizational lines to align program functions with enrollment goals, related activities, and stages of the enrollment cycle. In doing so, the model provides a vehicle for faculty and staff involvement in recruitment and retention efforts. The matrix system does not require major reorganization, which can be a flaw in its design. Like the staff coordinator model, its success is largely dependent on the goodwill of

others. If the senior administrator leading the effort has the respect of the faculty and has made enrollment management a priority, including a significant allocation of his or her time, the probability of success is higher than in the staff coordinator model.

4. **The enrollment management division** (Caren and Kemerer, 1979) signifies an institutional commitment to reorganization. Admittedly though, many colleges and universities that have adopted this model have done so at a nominal level—typically a front-ended approach to enrollment management that links offices that have responsibility for student marketing and recruitment (e.g., admissions and financial aid). Because of this emphasis on student marketing and recruitment, Caren and Kemerer envisioned the enrollment management division reporting to the vice president of institutional advancement. Today, however, the majority of chief enrollment managers in public institutions report to the chief academic officer followed by the chief student affairs officer. At private institutions, the chief enrollment management officer most often reports directly to the president, perhaps symbolizing the tuition-dependent nature of most privates (Huddleston and Rumbough, 1997). The potential downside to this model comes when there is no institutional sense of urgency, budgets are tight, and the creation of yet another layer of administration and costs is viewed as unjustifiable. Moreover, major structural changes take time and seldom produce immediate results (Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green, 1982). Often the architects as well as the critics of a new structure expect, albeit unrealistic, a quick fix.

Garland Penn (1999, p.17) captures the four models graphically in *Table 1*. He illustrates the differences of each model in relation to degree of restructuring required and the level of authority assumed. *Table 2* reflects the thinking of Bob Bontrager (2002). He depicts the level of

institutional commitment, required expertise of the enrollment champion, and the expected enrollment results associated with each model.

Table 1: Enrollment Management Organizational Models

Model	Degree of Restructuring Necessary	Authority
Committee	Low	Influence
Coordinator	Some	Networks
Matrix	Moderate	Cooperation
Division	High	Direct

Table 2: The Enrollment Management Organizational Continuum

Model	Committee	Coordinator	Matrix	Division
Institutional commitment to change	Low Commitment	⟵⟶		High Commitment
Expertise of enrollment leader	Low Expertise	⟵⟶		High Expertise
Enrollment results	Unmet Enrollment Goals	⟵⟶		Exceeded Enrollment Goals

Of course, the profession has evolved since the writings of Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green in the early 1980s. Contemporary practitioners and theorists see the enrollment management organization as much more fluid and invasive than was the case during the infancy and growth stages of the profession. As the profession has matured, phrases like integrating within the institution; becoming imbedded in institutional planning; fusing with the academic enterprise; and blurring the boundaries between administrative and academic units are used to describe the

enrollment management organization of the 21st century (Dolence, 1993; Henderson, 2001; Huddleston, 2001). The conceptual framework of a "cradle to endowment" relationship between the student and the institution speaks to the enrollment continuum commonly used to describe the comprehensive, developmental nature of a mature enrollment management organization (Black, 2003). David Kalsbeek's (2001) introduction of the concept of "de-jobbing" to the field of enrollment management suggests a shift from rigid organizational structures and the silos they tend to produce, to a more fluid and nimble organization where employee roles and even the structures in which they reside morph to address institutional challenges and opportunities. In this environment, job responsibilities correspond to a particular project or initiative regardless of the individual's organizational affiliation.

All of this suggests that the enrollment management organization of the future will be more agile and market-responsive. Whether formally or informally, it will permeate every aspect of the campus and serve as catalyst for institutional change. To implement a "cradle to endowment" model of relationship management, integrate marketing efforts, provide seamless enrollment services, or optimize enrollment opportunities for increasingly diverse segments of the student population, enrollment management must reach farther and deeper within the institution than it has to date.

From the perspective of Bolman and Deals' (1991) structural frame, this symbiotic relationship between enrollment management and the rest of campus also must include an analysis of policies and processes. *Policies* should be reviewed on at least an annual basis to determine their value-added to the school and the student as well as the consistency and fairness of their

administration. Policies can be unnecessarily brutal to students—affecting their decisions to enroll or persist. Dissatisfaction with the institution, an enrollment office, or a staff member can often be traced to a policy that alienated or confused the student. While the notion of customer service in an academic environment is not that students are always right or immune to the consequences of their actions, it does mean enrollment staff have an obligation to ferret out bad policies, simplify them when possible, communicate them effectively, and educate students regarding their responsibilities and related consequences. Indeed, student-centered enrollment staff see themselves as teachers and enablers of a student's educational dreams, not legalistic guardians of the institution's holy grail.

Process reengineering came in vogue with the advent of Total Quality Management. Adopting this industrial model of making precise measurements of widgets on an assembly line did not prove palatable or practical for many academicians or higher education administrators. But, the notion of process reengineering did survive in many circles within academe, in part, because of a large number of information system conversions, a renewed focus on improving student services, and the migration to Web-based services and instructional delivery. And, as historically has been the case, higher education has been influenced by trends in business and industry. According to Cynthia Wheatley (2002), Disney makes a concentrated effort to engineer from beginning to end every customer experience or process. Similarly, many postsecondary institutions have reengineered processes like the campus visit, orientation, advising, or registration to ensure student success and satisfaction. Such reengineering may involve process mapping, cross-functional teams, redesigning job functions, organizational restructuring, or even the redesign or relocation of physical space. From a desire to create intuitive, seamless services and information,

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new enrollment management structures have emerged (e.g., one-stop shopping; Web-based business transactions; virtual counseling, advising, tutoring, and instruction; vertical portals; flat organizations; generalists and specialists).

Much of the evolution of the enrollment management profession is manifested in structural changes. These changes most often are tangible benchmarks that suggest enrollment managers have heeded the advice of Deming. As a profession, we have invested in structural matters, and it has paid dividends. We have reshaped the enrollment organization's skeletal framework to meet the changing needs of our institutions and our students.

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