

## Graduate Coordinators' Workshop: Recruiting Top Graduate Students

June 18, 2009 1:00-3:00 pm CUE 114

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### AGENDA

<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	All
<b>Developing Prospects &amp; Attracting Applicants</b> What are they looking for? Developing a strong pool	Lori Wiest, Associate Dean, Graduate School
<b>Strategies for Recruitment</b> Setting enrollment goals Who to involve in recruitment	Pat Sturko, Associate Dean, Graduate School
<b>Recruitment for Diversity</b>	Deidra Lockhart, Recruitment Specialist, Graduate School
<b>Websites: Tips for Good Web Development</b>	Led by Lori Wiest
<b>Campaign Mailers in Talisma</b>	Wendy Woods, Systems Analyst, Graduate School
<b>New Avenues - Social Media to Recruit, Communicate, and Release Research News</b> Resources at your Fingertips	Cindy Hollenbeck, Communications Coordinator, Graduate School
<b>New Ideas: Brainstorming</b>	Led by Cindy Hollenbeck
<b>Opportunities for Follow-up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Sign up near the door</li><li>○ Interested in a once a month or every other month meeting for ideas/brainstorming about recruiting?</li></ul>	

## Developing Prospects & Attracting Applicants

Lori Wiest, Associate Dean, Graduate School  
lwiest@wsu.edu

### WHAT ARE PROSPECTS AND APPLICANTS LOOKING FOR?

*Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions:*

What would it take for you to even consider making a life change and go to graduate school?

What would be your inspiration, your motivation?

What questions would you ask?

What steps would you go through to begin searching for your educational options?

1. Where would you go first for answers to your questions?
2. How would you prefer to receive the necessary information?
3. Who would you consider speaking with to help you through the process?
4. What would you expect to find on the Website?
5. What might be the deciding factor for you to attend a specific program?
6. How would you feel if no one personally contacted you if you asked for information?
7. If you applied?
8. Once you were accepted?

### 10 Reasons Why Students Don't Apply to Your Program, according to Tom Jackson:

1. Never heard of your program
2. Heard of your program name but nothing else
3. Don't know anything about the program (reputation)
4. Academic offerings (focus on uniqueness)
5. Funding and cost (how can the student pay for the cost of attending WSU?)
6. Location (activities, cultural and entertainment opportunities)
7. Opportunities after graduation—are there any?
8. Program size (too big? too small?)
9. Facilities and technologies
10. Climate and/or culture of program (what's it like to be a woman/minority in this program?)

WSU graduate students have indicated that some of the most important drawing points that led them to apply to WSU and come here include:

- The Website was their main point of information when searching for programs
- Faculty Contact
- Reputation of the Academic Unit
- Research of the Faculty
- Visitations to the campus and meeting the staff, faculty, and current students

**Specifically, what do prospective students want to know about your program?**

1. Admission requirements/deadlines
2. What makes your program unique?
3. Program/department information including academic offerings, time to degree, reputation/awareness of your program
4. Faculty interests/research conducted
5. Financial support
6. Facilities and technology available
7. Opportunities for growth on campus
8. Job benefits after degree
9. Contact information
10. Culture on the campus, in the community
11. Climate of acceptance on the campus
12. Life at WSU, in Pullman, the region; particularly if they have family

**We can accomplish these needs through a team approach to graduate recruitment**

1. Identifying prospects
2. Creating polished and informative materials
3. Cultivating prospects through responsive communication
4. Making thorough but expedient admissions decisions
5. Remaining in contact with admitted students to increase yield

### **DEVELOPING A STRONG POOL OF APPLICANTS**

**Some recruitment activities through the Graduate School include:**

- Maintain updated Website for the Graduate School
- Develop brand awareness/broad-based advertisements in print and internet
- Attend Recruitment Fairs/Diversity Fairs
- Diversity campus visits
- Provide new social media contacts and news releases
- Distribute personalized and consistent information to prospects through:
  - Request for Information Web page
  - Talisma contact campaigns/communication plans
  - Print materials, including fact sheets
  - Mailers-personalized and informative including e-newsletter communication, reminders

- Host and enhance, as needed, the online application with program/department info
- Communicate with the programs/departments
- Continued contact with applicants regarding materials, contingencies, acceptances, denials, orientation and some general advising

## BRAINSTORMING

### Ideas for Programs:

- Faculty/Staff contact at professional meetings, organizations, associations, recruitment events
- Personalized contact with prospects through the academic unit via e-mail, phone, letter, blogs
- Help the Graduate School in developing news stories to release
- Buy GRE names and do cold contact mailers via e-mail
- Allow recruitment materials to be student-centered
- Arrange visits to the campus for your prospects/applicants
- Announce events of interest to your prospects including invitations to events, news of faculty, students, alumni, research, etc.
- Include your graduate students in the recruitment process during on campus visits, recruitment events, professional meetings/conferences, phone calls with the prospects; they can be your best “sales” people
- Contact colleagues at colleges and universities to establish a connection for recruitment relationship
- Contact alumni for recruitment assistance
- Advertise your program to undergraduates at WSU-host an information event
- Use databases that may be available through your professional organizations for contacts
- Identify presenters at professional conferences who may be prospective students
- Be consistent with the WSU branding to establish a look to all materials
- Create an interesting, informative and navigable Website
- Invite your current students to help provide ideas for the Website and for recruitment
- Develop mailers to sent through the Talisma campaign
- Respond to inquiries and questions as soon as possible and involve faculty in maintaining that personal contact
- Maintain a recruitment log on each student (Talisma)
- Know your competition, what sets you apart-use this to help develop why you are unique
- Sell what you have to offer
- Don’t wait for applications to be complete before you make contact with applicants
- Make admissions and assistantship offers early-use the offer letter available on the Graduate School Website

- Designate one person to “track” all applications to ensure everyone receives contact
- Match the prospect with a faculty member who shares his or her interest
- Ask prospects about their educational and career goals and why they are interested in your program to ensure a good match in their pursuit of an advanced degree
- Timely response and personal attention is crucial in establishing a strong relationship with the prospective student
- Know the numbers: how many students are admitted to your program, how many receive funding, how much and for how long, how many complete the program and the average time to degree completion for the program (masters and doctorates), what is the composition of gender, race, and ethnicity of your students and faculty

### Websites: Tips for Good Web Development

#### **Identifying a Good Graduate Program’s Website**

- Primary audience is clearly identified
- The purpose of the site is clear
- Clearly defined graduate program offered, time to degree, benefits (draw from the section regarding what prospective students want to know)
- Faculty/staff are easy to locate and offers photos, contact information and research/teaching specialties; current graduate students are included
- Easy to navigate and find what the audience is looking for
- Links to home page are provided from every page
- Contact people are clearly indicated
- Site is loaded quickly
- Site is clean, simple, attractive; not too busy and not all text
- Site reinforces the image/brand
- Site is the “face” of the program and offers clear information
- Site doesn’t crash or give error messages
- Site answers questions a prospective graduate student would like to know
- Highlights of faculty, staff, and students are listed; news/events are included
- Your academic unit’s handbook is available

*According to Tom Jackson, prospective students who visit a graduate program’s website spend no more than 10 seconds deciding whether it’s exactly what they’re looking for. That’s why the FIRST FOLD is so important. That’s the point on your site where prospective graduate students must scroll down in order to read on. The first fold applies to print material as well.*

Therefore, plan to provide as many student benefits of your program above the fold on your Website, in e-mails, and consider what is in the first paragraph of your letters to prospects. Unless you really pull them in, they won't read on or scroll down.

- Content should address the needs of the prospective graduate student.
  - Include a FAQ section.
  - Talk with your current graduate students to find out what they wanted to know, where they looked, what they think of the navigation of your site.
  - Give multiple ways to contact the program: mail, phone, fax, email.
  - Material must be up to date and accurate. Check spelling.
  - Avoid creating a page of a lot of text (break up into manageable sections with live links flowing to the next page); likewise, avoid too many visuals/images.
  - Provide a link to the Graduate School for application and for request for information buttons.
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## Recruitment Strategy: Set clear recruitment goals

**Pat Sturko, Associate Dean of the Graduate School**

**Quantity of New Students**—Set clear and realistic goals for recruiting the number of new students.

- Know the number of current graduate students in your program.
- Consider other factors such as the program's graduation rate, available funded positions, potential grants, faculty participation, etc.
- Identify the number of new graduate students you want to recruit.
- Look at your yield rates (number of students enrolled/number of applicants admitted) over the past five years and use this rate to plan.

NOTE: Use data from past years and be realistic in setting goals. Potential data sources: Graduate School's Planning and Assessment website: [gradschool.wsu.edu/faculty-staff/assessment](http://gradschool.wsu.edu/faculty-staff/assessment) and/or contact Tori Byington.

**Quality of New Students**—Set goals for academic quality.

- Graduate School minimums: 3.0 GPA and 550 TOEFLs (80 computer-based)
- Your program? 3.5 GPA? Average GRE or GMATS? Higher TOEFLs?

Your recruitment plan must take into account these goals for quality.

**Mix of New Students**—Set gender, race/ethnicity, and international/ domestic student goals.

- Does your program have enough diversity?
- Do you want more international or domestic students in your program?

Your recruitment plan (where and how you market your program; how you increase your prospect pool) will be affected by your goals in this area.

*Write down goals and share them with the program faculty and administration, so there are no ambiguities or uncertainties about the quantity, quality, and mix of graduate students you are trying to recruit.*

*Use the weekly Applicant Status Report from Talisma to track your progress on your goals. Data about the number of international/domestic applicants, academic quality, and gender, race/ethnicity is available in this report.*

## **Recruitment Strategy: Involve Program Faculty, Current Students, and Alumni in the Recruitment Process**

Recruiting students should not fall solely on one committee, or the staff /administration of a program. Prospects and applicants want to hear credible information about the program from the following individuals:

1. **Current Students**—information about the program, the region, the faculty, what it's like to be a student in this program at this university.
2. **Program Faculty**—information about the quality and uniqueness of the program, the research going on in the program, what sets the program apart from others around the country, the academic requirements.
3. **Alumni**—information about what the graduate program meant to them, how it prepared them for their current career, what was great about the program.

*Have students and faculty make and take phone calls, send and return email, participate in campus visits and group events, and provide referrals as part of the recruitment process.*

## **Graduate School Initiatives to Recruit and Retain Underrepresented Students Enhancing Inquiries and Applications**

**Deidra Lockhart, Recruitment Coordinator, Graduate School**

- *-Recruitment should be done throughout the year.*
- *-Departmental web sites and printed material should reflect the participation of minority students in their program, or at WSU.*
- *-Contact Multicultural Student Services*

- *-Meet periodically with undergraduate minority students and student groups*
- *-Invite minority speakers, visiting professors, and present and former minority graduate students to speak to undergraduate students.*
- *-Provide opportunities for minority undergraduate students from WSU and elsewhere to pursue*
- *-Target specific institutions with high minority enrollments for mailings, personal contacts, or possible exchange programs.*
- *-Make use of minority locator services.*

### **Enhancing Admissions and Enrollments**

- *-Use a variety of criteria to evaluate prospective minority students.*
- *-Be especially attentive to minority applicants throughout the admissions process.*
- *-Provide an opportunity to visit WSU.*
- *-Upon admission inform the student as soon as possible of an offer of financial assistance and cost of living estimates.*

### **Enhancing Retention**

- *-Encourage involvement of students in the mainstream of the academic and social activities of the department.*
- *-Identify a faculty mentor early in the student's graduate career.*
- *-If problems occur, act quickly to resolve them.*
- *-Encourage students to take a reasonable course load during the first semester.*

## **Talisma**

*\*See other PDFs on [Grad Coordinators' Resources webpage](#)  
[Wendy Woods, Systems Analyst for Graduate School](#)*

#### **Request for Mailer (a.k.a. "E-Mail")**

Requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Graphics: \_\_\_\_\_

Content (include fields to insert from database along with text)

#### **Request for Canned Responded**

Requested by: \_\_\_\_\_

Shortcut: \_\_\_\_\_ (keyboard shortcut)

*This value must not contain special characters and blank spaces.*

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Content (include fields to insert from database along with text):

Coming soon:

New Media concepts for recruitment, including Facebook, Twitter, and Digg

By [Cindy Hollenbeck](#), Communications Coordinator, Graduate School