



STUDENT PROFILES:

CHANGING THE WAY WE LOOK AT PROSPECTS, STUDENTS, PROGRAMS AND GROWTH

► Christopher Roswell | Staff Writer

Career college enrollments are skyrocketing. Enrollment at for-profit colleges is growing at an estimated rate of 5 percent to 10 percent. As a result, for-profit colleges are expected to reach about 14 percent market share in less than 10 years (*Barrons*, August 2009).

There are a lot of prospects to reach, and there is even more student information to manage. So, how does a career college make the best possible use of data in order to reach more prospects and better support students?

I recently spoke with Justin McMorrow, co-founder of TopSchool, which helps schools manage and report on information throughout the student lifecycle. McMorrow has presented on the topic of student profiles and the importance of helping schools understand and streamline data management, and specifically, organizing data in such a way that it profiles successful students.

Given the huge amount of information available, career colleges are in a position to differentiate themselves through their effective use of data. The way they collect it, manage it and, most importantly, act on it can make the difference in both their success and their students' success.

McMorrow strongly believes that student profiles are of absolute importance when it comes to delivering a unique and productive educational experience. "The most effective profiles are those that include information from across the student lifecycle," he said.

Student profiles are a great way to leverage the large quantity of available data. These profiles can include information from initial inquiry through graduation, and according to McMorrow, they can serve as the basis for decision making around prospects, students, programs and growth.

- Prospects: Schools that use profiles can analyze prospect potential and make more informed decisions regarding who

is most likely to succeed at their school.

- Students: Profiles can help schools ensure that students who enroll in the program actually start and stay by identifying red flags for risk and proactively reaching out to the students who might need it.
- Programs: Profiles can help schools determine program direction based on demand, giving schools a basis for deciding on the addition of new programs or fields, course frequency, delivery model preferences, or even which programs need to be eliminated.
- Growth: Student profiles enable schools to predict and plan for shifts in enrollments, the addition of more faculty and facilities, and increases in offerings.

“Building student profiles doesn’t have to be a daunting task,” McMorrow said. “The key is centralization – having all student information in one database so it is easy to access and analyze.”

When building student profiles, career colleges should include demographic, behavioral and psychographic information. McMorrow says schools should create profile categories based on information or characteristics to determine a prospect’s or student’s risk level, and from there, determine what actions, if any, the school needs to

take to help that individual succeed.

Student profiles can help career colleges better understand their students, analyze their changing needs, create models and programs that will meet their needs, and finally, more effectively communicate with them. The result is the ability to make informed decisions based on data, leading to increased enrollments, stronger retention and a better overall student experience.

“It’s dynamic,” said McMorrow said “Student profiles will enable you to constantly adapt to stay aligned to your student’s needs.”

Schools looking to leverage the power of student profiles should keep two things in mind: 1) Student lifecycle data is easier to access when it is centrally managed in a single database; and 2) A simple, custom reporting tool makes it easier to pull the specific information a school needs – information that will help that school make informed decisions.

“Career colleges that use information to build student profiles and understand student drivers will have a competitive advantage in meeting the demands and supporting the success of today’s students,” McMorrow said. ■

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