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The Dean Needs to Have the "Big Picture"

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Theological schools are complex institutional systems with many interlocking "moving parts." In most schools, the curriculum is the engine that drives the institution, influencing all aspects of the seminary, from the makeup of the student body, recruitment, faculty hires and workload, to finances. While deans are primarily educational leaders with oversight of academic programs and activities, deans cannot do an effective job if they do not have the big picture of the institutions they serve.

Deans lead from the middle. As such, they need to be systemic thinkers, and that requires knowing what is going on throughout the institution. Academic deans need to not only understand curricular scope and sequence, accreditation standards, and program schedules. They also need to understand the way recruitment impacts matriculation, how matriculation impacts enrollment, how enrollment informs the student body profile, how the student body profile impacts degree programs and schedules, how degree program profiles impact faculty profile and teaching activity.

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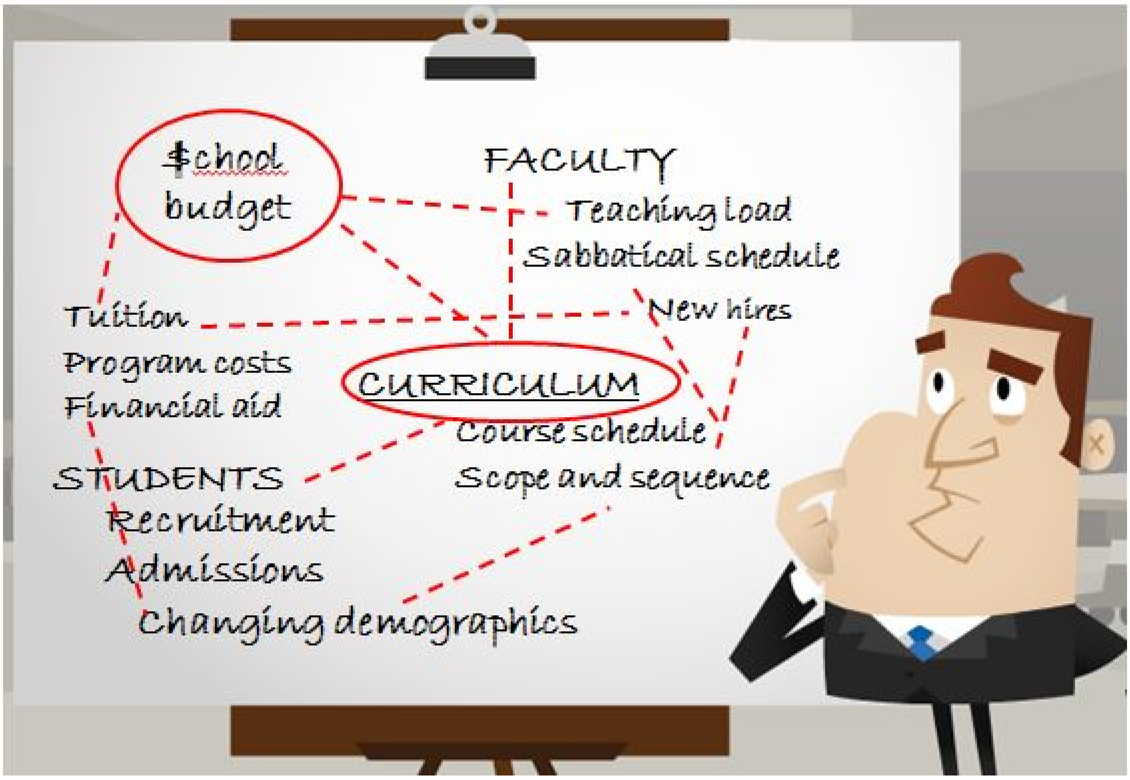

One liability for deans is that the information they need to gain the big picture is in the form of data that is siloed in disparate parts of the institution. Additionally, there likely are no processes and structures in place that gather and integrate this vital information. In fact, if data is gathered at all, it tends to remain un-used, un-analyzed, and un-reported. The result is those in key decision-making positions rarely have the information they need to make strategic and informed decisions. This is a liability for deans, who make strategic decisions almost daily.

Below is a tool designed by the mythic Central Generic Theological Seminary (CGTS) to gather and aggregate key institutional data. This comprehensive profile tracking worksheet is updated periodically and used by administrative officers, program directors, and Trustees to analyze and interpret the state of affairs at the school. With current data and information at hand, the staff and officers have been able to better understand the issues and dynamics that impact the seminary, and, have been able to make better decisions about metrics, goals, and strategic planning.

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CENTRAL GENERIC THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Academic, Enrollment and Matriculation Profile Tracking Worksheet

	HISTORICAL EVENTS																										
	Financial crisis Presidential transition			Recession President Wilson appointed			MAPT launch Dual degree launch Dean French appointed			ATS/SACS accreditation completed MDiv review begun			New Associate Dean Advanced Degrees ThM review DMin review			New Associate Dean Basic Degrees New Associate Dean for Library MDiv revision			Presidential transition Online MDiv Faculty hires: church history, theology MDiv revision implemented			Transition in Recruitment and Admissions office DMin revision start					
	2008-09			2009-10			2010-11			2011-12			2012-13			2013-14			2014-15			2015-16			2016-17		
Headcount (all programs)																											
FTE																											
ADMISSIONS TRACKING	App	Acc	Mat	App	Acc	Mat	App	Acc	Mat	App	Acc	Mat	App	Acc	Mat	App	Acc	Mat	App	Acc	Mat	App	Acc	Mat	App	Acc	Mat
MDiv																											
MATS																											
MAPT																											
MDiv/MAPT																											
DMin																											
ThM																											
DEdMin																											
ThD																											
TOTAL MATRICULATION																											
RECRUITMENT (TOTAL)																											
Inquiries																											
Applications																											
Completed applica																											
Conversion rate																											
Denied																											
Accepted																											
Percent Accepted																											
Enrolled																											
Yield																											
ENROLLMENT BY PROGRAMS																											
MDiv																											
MATS																											
MAPT																											
MDiv/MAPT																											
DMin																											
ThM																											
DEdMin																											
ThD																											

This sample profile tracking worksheet identifies the following ten key elements by sections:

1. Admissions tracking for each degree program with total matriculation
2. Recruitment activity
3. Enrollment by academic programs
4. Student body profile data
5. Graduation rates by class
6. Course format enrollment profile
7. Number of credit hours taken
8. Course enrollment profile
9. Faculty profile
10. Financials

In addition, the profile tracking worksheet identifies three global items at the top: (1) historical events, (2) total student headcount, and (3) the student full time equivalence (FTE) from all programs. You can download a hard copy of the sample worksheet here.

Download CGTS Enrollment and Matriculation profile worksheet

Using the Profile Tracking Worksheet

The purpose of the tracking worksheet is to provide one place to publish key institutional data.

The data, however, needs to be analyzed and interpreted. To do so the dean and administration of CGTS rely on established institutional metrics which provide the basis for assessing trends, effectiveness, and growth or decline. The staff of CGTS updates and distributes this comprehensive worksheet three times a year: during the fall and spring Board of Trustee meetings, and at the end of the academic year during the summer months to share at fall Faculty Workshop. The dean maintains the worksheet more frequently by semesters and often asks for updates from other offices when doing academic planning. Maintaining this schedule allows for coordinating formative assessment strategies among several offices.

Below are sample interpretive factors the staff of CGTS uses when analyzing and interpreting data for decision-making or reporting:

- Identify significant historical events that impact educational programming, shifts, or transitions in the institution.
- Provide explanation or interpretation for significant head count, FTE, or percentages decline in enrollment in one year to the next, or, in a three-year period based on established metrics and goals.
- Provide explanation or interpretation of significant head count, FTE, or percentages increases in enrollment in one year to the next, or, in a three-year period based on established metrics and goals.
- Provide interpretation on recruitment data, especially, the number of applications started, the number of applications completed, conversion rate, and yield in light of established goals and metrics.
- Assess enrollment by degree programs based on matriculation goals and program metrics related to selected co-factors: financial aid, faculty teaching load (all activities, not just course instruction), and movement between degree programs. Co-factor graduation rates and time to completion for each degree program.
- Track student body profiles to identify needed changes in student services, course and community life schedules, and curricular foci. This metric can reveal the impact of students on several programmatic and campus life factors.
- Track retention rates and time-to-completion (graduation rates) and compare that data to established metrics of educational effectiveness.
- Track the impact of various learning and course formats (classroom, hybrid, online, tutorials) and their impact on enrollment and the student population profile. Adjust to reduce low impact options or offer new options for study. Co-factor with academic student learning outcome assessments and with faculty work load.
- Track enrollment activity by degree program credit hours, professor-student ratios (e.g., in classroom vs. online options), cross registrations with partner institutions. Compare with established metrics, estimated tuition revenue, faculty FTE workload, etc.
- Track the number of courses cancelled to more accurately interpret curricular impact and activity. Adjust planned number of courses to align with established metrics. Analyze impact of canceled courses on faculty FTE workload.
- Track faculty teaching profile to assess and evaluate impact on curriculum, programs, and to assess alignment of faculty work load with curricular needs. Co-factor with

budgets and metrics related to faculty FTE work load, adjunct faculty activity, etc.
- Track and assess the financial impact of curricular programs on institutional economics: budget, budget development goals, tuition impact, financial aid impact, risk, capacity for program and personnel expansion, etc.

You can add additional data items to your own worksheet, like tracking social media and/or Google analytic data related to fund-raising or campaign initiatives. Gathering key data in one place with a similar tool will help the dean, and other key personnel, gain the big picture and will help in fostering formative conversations, making informed interpretation, and in strategic planning and decision making.

https://wabash.center/2015/02/the-dean-needs-to-have-the-big-picture/

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