

11-3-2008

## Scholastic minutes 11/03/2008

Scholastic Committee

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University of Minnesota, Morris  
Scholastic Committee  
Minutes #7, 11/3/2008

The Scholastic Committee met on 11/3/2008, in IH 202. Members present:

C. Cole, D. DeJager, D. Magner, B. McQuarrie (Chr), L. Meek (Secy), J. Nellis, J. Pelletier, A. Raymond, J. Schryver, J. Wencl.

Guests: B. Herrmann (Sr. Assoc. Director of Admissions, J. Morales (Assoc. Vice Chancellor for Enrollment).

The discussion centered around the practices and procedures of finding, attracting and converting applicants. Admissions thinks of their work as a funnel, with the top of the funnel being as many inquiries or leads as possible, and the outcome at the bottom of the funnel being the best class in terms of academic quality and diversity it is possible to attract. Admissions staff do presentations at high schools to students who have been previously contacted by college callers, and they buy the names of students who have taken the ACT, PSAT and SAT and do direct mailing to them. They also contact students beginning their sophomore year by mailing them postcards offering them more information about UMM. They attend regional and national college fairs and this year expanded into Montana, Texas and Arizona. They noted that online applications are increasing rapidly, as opposed to paper applications. Also, applications from students we had not previously contacted (stealth applicants) but who found us online are increasing. Our competitors are also doing all the same thing and now a response rate to direct mailings of 1% is good (previously 10% was considered good).

Before an application is considered complete it must contain 1) application form; 2) official high school transcript with test scores such as ACT on it; 3) if the student wishes or is asked for, an essay detailing extenuating circumstances that may explain poor grades; and 4) an indicator of whether or not the student has ever been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor. If this question is answered yes, details must be given and a group composed of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Counseling, Police and the U of MN General Counsel consider the impact of the potential impact of this student on the student body, depending on the severity of the incident.

A question was asked about the amount of loss between initial application and final review. Admissions said it is increasing, but had no hard numbers. They noted that with online applications, students can indicate interest in a college with relatively little effort, so it is a national trend for students to contact many colleges.

A question was asked about the timeline from first application to being notified of acceptance. Admissions noted that letters indicating something is missing from the application go out with 2 days, although as the Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> scholarship deadline approaches, volume also increases and things can slow down. Admission cannot occur before September 15<sup>th</sup>, but after that date, students are admitted as they apply.

Once an application is complete, the following steps occur:

- A. The admissions counselor responsible for recruiting the student puts their notes and recommendation in the file
- B. All admissions counselors have access to the files and can comment. Two counselors must look at each application. If they disagree on their assessment, they may ask for an essay to clarify an issue. If there is still disagreement, then it goes to all three directors (J. Morales, B. Herrmann, J. Z. Herrmann) for a decision.

The question was asked "What is a good student?" Admissions replied that this is the \$64,000.00 question and can range from a student with high 20s-30s ACT, top 1/5 of their class, involved in extracurricular activities, shows leadership and is interested in us for the right reasons to a student who has a 22 ACT, is not in the top 1/5 of their high school class, but can show evidence of overcoming challenging circumstances, comes from a rural high school with no chance to take AP or IB classes. They note that admission to college

is a holistic process for each student and each student is evaluated on a variety of characteristics that vary greatly from student to student.

The question was asked about how counselors are trained in this holistic process so that they can identify students who fit UMM. Admissions said that there is a handbook, that new staff are trained by senior admissions counselors on scenarios that range from easy to difficult and that following initial training, there is one-on-one coaching and training that continues and that the directors are constantly monitoring for consistency in decision making. For example, if the decision of a junior counselor is reversed by the directors, they sit down and discuss why that decision was reversed.

A question was asked about the high numbers of conditional admits that occurred this year. Admissions stated that they put more students on conditions this year so that they would be confined to taking only 14 credits their first semester to aid them in their success. They stated that in subsequent years, they would put only the 14 credit limitation on many students, instead of telling them to take Learning to Learn. They also stated that 15 – 20 of those student admitted conditionally could probably simply have been admitted without conditions, but there was something in their application that indicated they would benefit from taking only 14 credits their first semester at UMM. The decision to call a student a conditional admit is based on: 1) if they have not done well in some classes; 2) an ACT sub-score is substandard; 3) information shared in an essay; 4) extenuating circumstances shares with a counselor.

The question was asked about quantitative vs. qualitative criteria for admission to UMM, since we have heard that ACT, HSR, AAR, essays are not used as extensively as before. Admissions replied that we do use those quantitative measures, but there is also an art to admitting students and that quantitative vs. qualitative measures stack up differently for each student.

The question was raised about our electronic back office systems. Admissions stated that for a college our size, we had one of the best systems possible, and that it enabled the directors to keep an eye all applications, so that they review the queues daily to make sure responses are happening in a timely manner.

A question was asked about the timeliness of financial aid decisions and it was noted that they are constrained by federal deadlines and the timeliness of parents having their income tax return completed. Students receiving an automatic scholarship get that letter at the same time as they receive their acceptance. For competitive scholarships, they find out within one week.

Admissions noted that there is pressure from campus to maintain our quality of student, but there are very few students in that top tier and everyone is competing for them. It may make more sense to target the next tier down, since those students can be successful here and the number of available high school students is going to flatten out from now until 2015. If we get more students from the middle tiers and not from the lower or higher tiers, we can still maintain our average composite ACT of 25. Admissions is asking themselves how many of those middle tier students we attracted but did not convert. Many of those students are good students who simply did not do well on the ACT but have many strengths that could make them successful at UMM.

Admissions will bring information on the pool of available NHS students to our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be on Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, at noon, in IH 202.