

Top 10 Auxiliary Services Trends for 2008

Campus Administrators & Consultants Offer Valuable Insights

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Campus auxiliary services operate in a constantly changing environment. By their very nature, auxiliary enterprises are defined by change, often anticipating campus needs by scanning societal trends and striving to meet needs even before they are expressed. And, in turn, the campus marketplace offers direct feedback on the value of a particular auxiliary service by its level of use, allowing the professional auxiliary manager an opportunity to revise or curtail various offerings. This continuous offering and feedback cycle depends on the capacity of an auxiliary professional to regularly scan the horizon and discern underlying patterns of consumer behavior that apply to the post-secondary environment.

To that end, this article identifies ten trends that appear relevant for 2008. Because auxiliary services are broadly impacted by the full range of societal, consumer, economic, policy and educational matters, these trends reflect that same range. Finally, though technology itself could easily serve as an example of a changing trend, its persistently changing nature and ubiquitous presence in all other trends suggests that it is better viewed as a part of each trend rather than one unto itself.

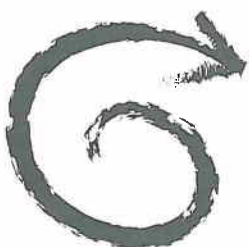
1 ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

Americans increasingly see post-secondary education as a pathway to economic and personal success. Mounting national focus on affordability, and the current scrutiny of tuition and fees, including those charged for college services and activities, is causing auxiliary services administrators to look carefully at priorities and strategies for generating revenue and providing programs and services. Indeed, admittance to college does not ensure that the entering student is able to afford the range of programs and services that make up the full college experience. Most auxiliary services are self-sustaining enterprises and must generate net revenue to support campus priorities. As elected officials and governing boards seek increased institutional transparency and accountability to keep higher education

affordable, there is a rising expectation that the total cost of education will be at or below the annual rate of inflation. Moreover, some congressional proposals mandate a legislated curb on tuition and other costs (e.g. textbooks) on the nation's campuses. Consequently, institutional leaders seek to implement tuition strategies that are more closely aligned with public sentiment, and campuses are placing increasing pressure on ancillary fees and auxiliary revenues to help make up anticipated revenue gaps. The result is an auxiliary challenge: meeting student needs and generating more revenues but not increasing fees beyond a student's ability to pay.

as much attention as it does today. In fact, the College Board projects a decline in white students on the nation's campuses and an increase in students of color, as percentages of total enrollment. Add to this the increasing diversity among the professoriate and increasing sophistication among students resulting from their life experiences and it is clear campus auxiliary leaders must pay greater attention to the types of goods and services needed on today's campus. Changes in campus demographics will challenge auxiliary leaders in a number of ways including facility ambiance and landscaping, food service recipes, health and beauty aid selections in stores, cus-

the institution. Strategies that provide evidence of collaborations between enrollment managers, student life and auxiliary leaders, and academic leaders are more likely to contribute to the institution's diversity goals while achieving successful auxiliary performance.



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2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

Demographic changes on campus are causing campus auxiliary leaders to consider carefully the types of goods and services they offer to an increasingly diverse campus. Not since the Kerner Commission report in 1968 has the issue of student diversity received

tomter service approaches expected by students, and the types and locations of various services provided across campus. The savvy auxiliary leader will understand the importance of being agile and data driven in learning about student demographic trends. Student loyalty will be earned from interactions that promote a welcoming and caring connection with

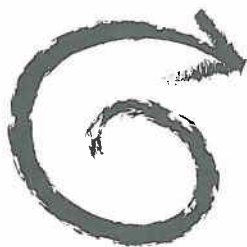
3 CUSTOMIZATION

The diversity of students' life experiences is revealed most visibly in the nature of their expectations, which manifest themselves in highly tailored requests. The pre-college customized experience (e.g. ordering a double grande skinny latte with a shot of hazelnut) that students bring to campus forms the basis for what they expect from auxiliary services. Students are increasingly unaccustomed to limits on their freedom of choice. This behavior conflicts drastically with the traditional institutional method of offering services that are calibrated more for mass delivery of standardized services. Students expect specific made-to-order offerings, such as gluten free vending machines, organic Halal-style meals, self-selected residence hall roommate matching, 24-hour internet-based service transactions, and personal answers reflecting the immediacy of an instant messaging world responsiveness. As the downward pressure on prices meets the upward pressure on demand, customization will be more difficult to

offer and the potential for dissatisfaction with campus services has the potential to grow.

4 SAFETY & SECURITY

Though campuses have long been relative havens for safe and communal activity, the frequency and complexity of mental health problems in the nation, and the recent fatal tragedies on America's campuses, have caused both alarm about and pressure upon institutional leaders to more actively protect students, faculty, and staff. This pressure is particularly acute upon auxiliary facilities like campus centers, residence halls, and recreation centers, as well as upon campus services designed to serve a very public marketplace. As anxiety grows, so do efforts to restrict public movement, question others' mental stability, seek changes to laws that protect those with health issues, and even allow the carrying of concealed weapons for personal protection. Because of their public nature, auxiliary facilities could be both safe refuges for a troubled campus or specific targets. Indelicate solutions to this challenge threaten to do more than lessen revenue production since auxiliary services do much to build community and build feelings of common commitment throughout the campus.



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5 ALTERNATIVE INSTRUCTION METHODS

Auxiliary enterprises succeed or fail based on consumer utilization. People must use the institution's unions, recreation centers, residence halls, dining areas, bookstores and other auxiliary offerings for them to be successful. If, however, consumers (particularly students) never set foot on campus due to changing instructional delivery methods, the effect within the current campus

model is easy to predict: less traffic, less income, and resulting revenue and funding problems. Alternative methods of instruction have been developing for years, but the increasing appeal, availability and effectiveness of on-line, weekend, and international programs may accelerate more quickly with the result being that many students may not utilize traditional auxiliary operations. Moreover, an increasing number of students are bypassing the established university altogether, opting instead to enroll in for-profit institutions that do not replicate conventional services that are available on a traditional campus. Finally, institutional collaboration will extend into auxiliary areas, requiring income to be shared among schools or captured by a third party.

6 CHANGING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ACADEMY

While still provider driven, most universities are responding to consumer demands on everything from tuition pricing to textbook commissions in ways unimagined only a few years ago. Stakeholders, ranging from state legislatures to helicopter parents, are driving these changes with a similar level of public scrutiny as other industries, such as health care or manufacturing. Every

teacher since Socrates has lamented how students have changed but today's educational environment is more challenging. Students and their families are sophisticated and often impatient consumers who expect market-comparable services at market-comparable prices or even below market because of a sense of entitlement stemming from the high cost of their college education. Parents expect appropriate institutional performance, as defined by them, and are often uninter-

ested in settling for a differing metric of accomplishment. Donors request more in exchange for a gift, governing boards seek greater transparency, and state legislatures demand more while funding less. When combined with the diversity of opinion and experiences inherent in contemporary college life, it is evident the academy is changing in profound ways.

7 FUSION FACILITIES

As campus space becomes scarce and the cost to develop and maintain buildings climbs rapidly, the development of mixed use ("fusion" facilities) will rise. Living/learning facilities have long been in existence as a means of creating a closer connection between residential life and academic affairs. Fusion facilities advance this idea by combining campus functions that were previously considered separate spaces including housing, recreation, dining, classrooms and social spaces. Current examples include an activities and recreation center that combines fitness, student organization, conference, and other informal gathering spaces; a campus center that fuses recreation space with residence hall beds, classrooms, food court, convenience stores and a restaurant; and a multipurpose complex that combines residence hall beds, food court, spirit shop, classrooms / meeting rooms, and a computing center. Although the development of fusion facilities provides opportunities to build space faster and at lower cost, auxiliary challenges introduced by this approach include questions about the need for traditional gathering places, such as the student union, and raises new operating challenges like noise isolation and functional separation.

8 SERVICE PROLIFERATION

Popular convention suggests the proliferation of campus services started with the availability of coffee in mega-bookstores, thus leading to the permissibility of coffee in campus libraries. Now more than permissible, the availability of coffee in campus libraries seems expected. Long the domain of the campus center, coffee and food have now

been elevated to the status of necessary components to fostering social interaction in non-traditional locations throughout the campus. Though some justify service proliferation by pointing to broader societal trends that imply an unwillingness of students to travel farther than a three- or five-minute walk, the trend has very real implications for auxiliary services. Most campuses initially developed services such as dining, retail and recreation (as well as highly social community gathering spaces) in very efficient centralized formats, but recent trends suggest a shift toward a more distributed approach. These decisions are often made by numerous disparate areas of the institution with minimal planning or coordination. The unintended result is sometimes an oversupply of service capacity, duplication of space, and increases in operating costs that are not always coupled with a corresponding growth in revenues or improvement in service.

lessening. Campus efficiencies will be found in less traditional ways including working with office supply companies to deliver to multiple campus locations rather than a central stores location. While such an agreement may not produce significant financial savings, it will help produce practical solutions with substantial cumulative efficiencies if combined with several initiatives.

10 SUSTAINABILITY & ECO-FRIENDLINESS

An increasing number of students are arriving on campus with greater awareness about and commitment to earth-friendly practices, policies and decision making. Student expectations about appropriate institutional behavior are growing rapidly in areas of LEED design and construction, locally grown produce in dining areas, green practices for equipping, cleaning and maintaining facilities, clean burning energies to power the campus, and community involvement that values good corporate citizenship. Often,

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9 OUTSOURCING, RESOURCING & UNSOURCING

As state support and other funding sources grow tighter, campuses will increasingly need to focus institutional resources on the core mission of teaching and learning. Consequently, outsourcing auxiliary functions to save effort and money will become a more frequent campus conversation. This trend occurs at a time when the national economy and private enterprise seem less stable, with various businesses facing significant change, and the likelihood of negotiating the financially favorable agreements of years past

however, these expectations are not rooted in understanding the complexities of such efforts, and students are often not willing to pay the premiums associated with emerging or simply more expensive practices. Delicate challenges for auxiliary professionals include identifying appropriate suppliers and educating students about their own less-than-earth-friendly behaviors, such as washing partial loads of laundry in the residence hall using soaps and detergents that could be harmful to the environment. ↻



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