

Comments: A Strategic Plan for Iowa State University

Overview – the plan should address:

- Emphasize Marketing the University; increase public awareness of Iowa State University. Link the reputation and name recognition of CEO's, US Senators as ISU graduates with success at ISD. Public image and recognition is key to funding and enrollments.

- Improve ISU Web site: add link for "scholarships and financial assistance" on main page (www.iastate.edu/). Develop a database of scholarships by category; for example, under "Music-Choral" one should be able to find the "Robert McCowan Scholarship for non music –majors"...under "ROTCINROTC" there should be links to the appropriate ROTC departments, etc.

- Add to graduation requirements: one course in Financial Peace University (see www.daveramsev.com): how to reduce/avoid debt, manage budgets, saving for retirement. This simple graduation requirement will ensure your good will with parents and future graduates for generations to come.

- Increase emphasis on Distant Learning opportunities. Explore the Apollo Group business model. Develop markets for pre/post retiree educational programs. Establish/emphasize linkage between Distant Learning and traditional on campus programs.

- Develop courses that broaden awareness and understanding of entrepreneurial opportunities. Nationwide, students are showing less interest in IT/Computer Sciences because of declining employment potential, while accounting course enrollments Me up. Entrepreneur Magazine states that 825 colleges currently offer classes in Entrepreneurship. As you know, the hometowns of many ISU graduates lack solid employment opportunities. Offering such a course of study should be viewed as "strategic" to the economic well being ISU graduates and of the economy itself.

Examine graduation requirements; incent diversity of student course work. Increase opportunities to broaden and explore areas of interest outside the traditional "required courses". Reduce the "risk of GP A failure" by increasing Audit only/No Credit classes.

Detail comments

Marketing and Public Relations

- Emphasize Marketing the University; increase public awareness of Iowa State University. Link the reputation and name recognition of CEO's, US Senators as ISU graduates with success at ISD. Improve ISU Web site

Comment:

(1) Increase Public Relations Awareness of Iowa State University.

(a) Hire an agency to study the effectiveness of ISU communications and marketing. Examine the relationship and effectiveness of traditional marketing methods (drawing interest and attention to ISU) and the design of the ISU web site (see comments on next page). There may be opportunities for students pursuing degrees in marketing and communications to participate in this process. ISU graduates with expertise in this area should be given the opportunity to assist. See my comments on Web site improvements.

(b) Employ "Marketing Teams" to visit major high schools in the ISU market area. Does ISU have an "Outward reaching" marketing program to introduce ISU to prospective students? Does ISU have a direct mail program to reach guidance counselors in all schools within the ISU market area? Does ISU use print advertising focused on degree or major? For example, if I am interested in pursuing a degree in Engineering, there should be at least a one or two page brochure (and web page) dedicated to answering the question: "Why should I attend ISU to obtain an engineering degree".

(c) Advertise/link reputation and name recognition of famous graduates (CEO's, US Senators, etc) with success at ISU. Does ISU have a program of testimonials, maintain a library of video interviews, emphasizing on campus visits by its famous alumni? Ensure that the ISU web site and promotional materials include liberal references to its famous graduates.

(2) Improve Web Site

Comment and Observations: The present ISU web site provides a reasonably clear, but somewhat unexciting view of Iowa State. The first page (www.iastate.edu) does not provide a direct linkage to scholarships, or provide access to a campus virtual tour. Both are very important aspects of the web site.

Recommendations: ISU should consider

(a) Utilize and outside, unbiased agency to interview prospective students:
– How did the prospective student find the ISU web link? School guidance counselor, or how? How did the student find out about ISU?
– What information elements do prospective students consider most valuable?

What information elements need to be added or changed?

– Immediately convey the values and benefits of an education at ISU?
– SELL why attend ISU?
– Establish/exploit name recognition and reputation of famous alumni (CEO's, US Senators, etc)?

– Provide easy to use search engine and well-organized database of scholarship opportunities?

(b) Prospective Student follow up: Does the current web site link a "student follow up database" within the overall objectives of the web site? How does the University maintain contact and follow up with prospective students? Does it maintain a central database for this purpose? Is this information made available to all interested parties, including local alumni or designated alumni student recruiters?

Marketing and Public Relations – cont'd

(2) Improve Web Site

(c) Scholarships. I perused the web pages relating to scholarships and found them interesting but very confusing and difficult to use. There should be:

A centralized structured topic index by scholarship interest category, in addition to scholarship title. For example, if I am interested in music, the "Bob McCowan Scholarship for non-music majors" should show up (it does not). If I enter "McCowan" as a search criterion, I am able to locate the Iowa State Choral Music Association web page, but have to dig to find out about the McCowan scholarship (on page 7). Another example: if I was searching for information about an NROTC scholarship, I have to specifically enter the search criteria "NROTC Scholarship" to find out how to apply for this scholarship.

Corporate "work-share" programs and corporate sponsorships should be included in the centralized topic index. .

There should be search capabilities for identifying specialized needs. For example, if my family income is less than \$20,000 per year, is there any specialized financial assistance programs available? Same for sons and daughters of Vietnam Veterans, DAR, etc (some of this overlaps with commercial services that are used by school guidance counselors).

In general, there appear to be many "ease of use" factors that should be considered for addition to the current site.

(d) Virtual Campus Tours. I found the pictures of the campus to be wonderfully fascinating – many wonderful memories of days gone by, and so many changes! Unfortunately, the web link is buried under the caption "Sites to See", which then requires one to think about what choice of options will lead to a virtual campus tour. .

The virtual tour itself needs to be re-organized to provide a "one page/ two page snapshot" of campus highlights: Campanile, Lake Laverne, Memorial Union, etc followed by a subject index. For example, if I am interested in Agriculture,

there should be a list of photos of buildings (Marston Hall, etc) associated with the Ag program. The "Campus Virtual Tour" link should be on the first page of the ISU web site. I would be in favor of combining the "personal interest" side of campus life (pictures of students at football games, Veishea, etc) with the current "beautiful buildings" views.

Distant Learning.

– Increase emphasis on Distant Learning opportunities. Explore the Apollo Group business model. Develop markets for pre/post retiree educational programs. Establish/emphasize linkage between Distant Learning and traditional on campus programs.

Comment: Clearly, ISU has taken the lead in developing coursework, and delivery technology to support a Distant Learning program. The enormous success of nontraditional for profit businesses, such as the Apollo Group/University of Phoenix On Line, and others, suggest there is (a) a critical need (economic factors), and (b) inherent demand/revenue opportunities for this form of education.

There are two interesting changes occurring in this market that need to be considered:

(1) First, the reputation of many of the non-traditional for profit educational providers has been sullied in the stock market (SEC/DOJ investigations)... The problems in this segment of the stock market are likely to continue for some time, providing an opportunity for prestigious institutions such as ISU. In short, now is the time to take a fresh look to this market.

(2) Secondly, the technology involved in delivery of video signals to the home is changing rapidly. PC and TV display technologies are merging, making it possible to deliver the signal to a PC, and display the image at the PC or in the TV in the living room. Traditional telephone companies. (Verizon being a key example) are making massive investments in delivering "fiber to the home", making it possible in the near future to deliver "live classroom instruction" to the average home.

Recommendations:

(1) Determine Market and Revenue opportunities: Is there significant revenue growth opportunities for ISU in the future in this market?

(2) Examine changing information delivery technology trends: What technologies are likely to change in the future, when will these technologies become viable, and how will this affect ISU's needs?

(3) Initiate/explore co-marketing/partnership opportunities: Are there

opportunities to lower ISU's implementation costs while generate revenues by entering into partnership arrangements with the telephone, Cable TV, and Satellite companies (DISH Network, etc). Can ISU lower the cost of course development/technology implementation/information delivery cost by partnering with other educational institutions or businesses?

(4) Increase coursework available for Distant Learning: The current portfolio of courses available needs to be expanded. There should be direct relationship between day to day traditional on campus classroom presentations and home delivery of the same classes.

Entrepreneurial Focus

- Develop courses that broaden awareness and understanding of entrepreneurial opportunities. Re examine graduation requirements; incent diversity of student coursework to broaden and explore areas of interest outside the traditional "required courses". Reduce the "risk of GPA failure" by increasing Audit only/No Credit classes. On site campus visits of key industry executives.

Comment: Clearly, the continued growth of this country depends on the success of . the entrepreneur. Iowa State should take a leadership role in supporting tomorrow's entrepreneurs.

Recommendations:

(1) Solicit Individual and Key industry executive campus visits: Campus' and Distant Learning students should have the opportunity to have "face to face" meetings with key business leaders) preferably ISU graduates. Attendees should have the opportunity to establish a dialog with such leaders:

- "What life event motivated me to become an Entrepreneur"?
- "What major pitfalls did I face? How did I solve these problems"?
- "Specialized issues: corporate governance, theft, compensation... and how I solved these issues"

For example, on a recent Amtrak vacation, my wife and I met an ISU grad and the fanner VP of Technology at 3M Corporation (I think that was his title)~ over lunch. It was a fascinating discussion, and one that hopefully will be brought to ISU students.

(2) Introduce Harvard Business School Case Study style of course work.

(3) Provide courses that broaden the awareness and understanding entrepreneurial opportunities.

Affordability

- Improve the Affordability of an education at Iowa State

Comment: Clearly the cost of obtaining an education is a major decision point for almost all students, except for the very well to do.

Recommendations:

(1) Scholarships: See my comments on the ISU Web site. This is an area that needs improvement from an "ease of use)" perspective.

(2) Books: Does ISU provide for:

- Availability of Used books at a discount?
- Provide Rental books as an option?
- Provide Single Use Electronic Copies! and rental of Electronic Book readers good for a fixed period of time?

(3) Computers: Does ISU Directly provide (via student pre-registration information packages and University owned bookstore): I

- Sale of Low cost computers (Dell, or Emachines)
- Rental of computers (my former employer CIT, provides the financing for Dell computers, via a partnership)

(4) Study the relationships and trends between non-traditional. off campus distant learning and the traditional on campus education.