

APPLYING CRM IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The market for higher education in the U.S. is changing. According to *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Wall Street Journal*, as quoted in *The Ivy Jungle Network's Campus Ministry Update*, August 2000 (IvyJungle@aol.com), "The coming decade will see a significant increase in the number of nontraditional students (i.e., only 1/6 of the nation's 15 million college students fits the typical 18-22 years old stereotype)." These nontraditional students are looking for convenient and tailored programs resulting in an influx of new entrants (e.g., University of Phoenix, notHarvard.com) with creative offerings (e.g. online). *The Wall Street Journal* excerpt continues, "With an increasing amount of money flowing into online education, conventional universities have gone on the offensive, hoping to protect their share in the \$250 billion market of higher education ... at a time when there has been a steady decline within the past 3 years of students enrolling in MBA programs in the U.S." (*BusinessWeek* 2005).

Given the competitive landscape and demographic trends in higher education, the challenge for traditional universities is how to meet and exceed buyers' expectations of education/learning. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has been a major cornerstone strategy applied by Corporate America to exceed buyers' expectations when acquiring, growing, and retaining customers. In addition, these same buyer/customer-centric strategies have been applied by Corporate America to their employees for the purpose of: employee acquisition, employee performance growth, and employee retention. In a higher education environment, the company/employer-to-employee relationship comes closest to the university/teacher-to-student relationship. Hence, CRM, as applied by employers, can also be adopted by universities to their buyers. A key early step in developing a customer-centric strategy is to listen to the customer (Peppers and Rodgers 1997) in order to understand their perceptions and preferences. This understanding will serve as guiding principles that will contribute to the success of CRM and the university itself.

This special session will be staffed with a diverse panel of full-time, tenure track, and part-time faculty

members in varying stages of their academic careers who teach a cross-section of classes to varying demographic segments of college students. They will discuss students' perceptions and preferences for service, process, resources, and personnel (e.g., faculty, administrators) based on early findings from marketing student surveys and propose approaches that can be applied by faculty members to start treating their students as buyers/customers.

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