

INFORMATION ITEM II. B. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION UPDATES

Good afternoon. I am John Fraire, Interim Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services. As I reported to the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment and Technology Committee last month, before the pandemic, we were working with a goal of increasing new freshmen headcount by 5%, keeping transfers flat, and increasing graduate headcount by 5%. And I believed we were on target for that before COVID-19.

Given the pandemic, we had to change most of our practices, such as we could not conduct on campus, proctored placement tests for entering freshmen, and had to come up with alternative ways of placing incoming freshmen. I would like to thank the Math and English departments for developing those alternative methods.

We now have processes in place and academic advisors are registering students for fall classes, but I am not ready to make any projections on new enrollment for the fall. Last year we did not begin enrolling freshmen until June. So, in a few weeks, we can start making yearly comparisons, and be in a better position to make projections for the fall.

What I can share with you is the following:

- Our greatest challenge for our new enrollment is our transfer population, and it was a challenge prior to the pandemic, and it is a challenge to many other public institutions in Illinois as well. In mid-April, transfer enrollment started very slowly, initially 40% behind in headcount from last year. Not one to say there is a silver lining, but that gap has been consistently closing, and our messaging continues to be strong and targeted. Also, summer enrollment often foreshadows fall enrollment, and transfer summer enrollment is up over last year.
- To date, 405 freshmen have told us they intend to enroll at NEIU. We call them "ITE's." What is significant about that number is that over 300 of those students made their commitment to attend NEIU after the stay at home decree was issued. They are choosing NEIU in the middle of the pandemic. It is also those 405 that are being registered by the academic advisors.
- For entering graduate students, we are about 41 students behind our 2019 headcount, but I think that will improve. Graduate admissions processing is much more labor intensive than freshmen and transfer enrollment and requires significant communications between admissions processing and the academic departments. Some of the decrease reflects the slower processing caused by working remotely. I think new graduate registration will improve as the summer progresses.
- There are some other interesting trends such as some of our special outreach plans are doing well. We already have 11 students from ASPIRA committed to NEIU, and we will get more. As well, our dual enrollment programs based out of Roberto Clemente we may enroll up 4 or 5 students.

Finally, during COVID-19, there are all sorts of discussion on what students will do. Will they stay local? Will they not attend at all? We will know that soon, but in anticipation of your questions, Yes, we are aggressively messaging students who may have changed their mind about their college plans and may decide to stay in Chicago.

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What our critical focus right now, though, is moving our already admitted students along the path to enrollment. NEIU has a good base of interest, a good number of admitted students. So, it is not so much messaging or reaching out that will strengthen our enrollment. We need to do a better job of taking care of those students who are already interested in NEIU, already admitted and wanting to attend. We need to do a better job at yield production – that is helping those students already admitted and committed to us.

As you know from my past presentations, I have emphasized that NEIU needed to improve its enrollment infrastructure and processing. Infrastructure is critical in improving yield. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has negatively impacted NEIU is that we had to put on hold the purchase and implementation of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) program. That is the most important tool in any enrollment operation, it is how we communicate with students. What we are using right now is inadequate and inefficient. We will work around it, and manage, but we will not be able to be as creative and targeted as we would like.