Why Customer Service is Important to Higher Education

- Teri Yanovitch  Speaker, Author, Consultant

Higher education is now being scrutinized as lower graduation rates, lower retention rates and budget constraints are effecting its reputation and success.

With graduation rates around 50% for four year institutions, families, state legislators and governors are looking for greater efficiency and return on investment from higher education.

Research shows that while GPA and SAT scores are good predictors of academic success, they are poor predictors of graduation rates. Non-academic factors are a much better predictor for graduation rates. Studies show that less than 25% of dropouts leave an institution for grades, personal emergency, or finances. This leaves over 75% of dropouts leaving for controllable factors such as level of service, appreciation, and cultural issues.

Customer Service or Service Excellence as I like to call it, is not fluff. It is an essential management practice that is the new battlefield in the competitive higher education environment.

Three reasons why customer service is important to higher education:  1. prestige and image 2. social, moral and ethical responsibility  3. financial viability

First. Prestige is relevant to alumni, community support, and donor giving. Everybody wants to be affiliated with the college/university that provides a sense of pride and prestige for being associated with them. The college brand is also directly related to the level of service the institution provides. Does the institution have processes and systems in place that allow them to consistently deliver on excellent service or is it just an advertising campaign and ploy?

Second. There is a social, moral and ethical responsibility that higher education has to their students, parents of students and society at large for the investment everyone is making. Students are now graduating with debt levels of up to $200,000. What return on this investment are students, families, and the public receiving? A key purpose of higher education is to produce future leaders for society and productive citizens for the workplace – how can this be accomplished when students dropout at such an alarming rate?
Third. The financial viability of educational institutions is directly related to the perceived value in the tuition and the ability to graduate with a degree and get a JOB. Low retention and graduation rates cost institutions millions of dollars in lost revenue and unnecessary high costs. It costs 3 to 5 times more to get a new student than keep the one we already have.

So, what can be done? Higher education must create a culture of customer service that will define their brand and image. The following leadership actions will ingrain it into the fabric of the institution:

- Continuous communication and awareness
- Recruiting right fit employees
- Orientation and training
- Measurement and goal setting
- Recognition
- Accountability

How to Keep Your Students from Leaving. Teri Yanovitch, speaker, author, and former Disney trainer, teaches the keys to upgrading higher education customer service. If your institution wants to stay on the leading edge of student choice, her firm will help you identify opportunities to enhance the student experience.

T.A.Yanovitch, Inc. will work with your institution to instill this culture into your organization so it can compete in today’s world. Contact Teri at ty@retainloyalcustomers.com or 407.788.7765.

- See more at: http://www.retainloyalcustomers.com/uncategorized/why-customer-service-is-important-to-higher-education#sthash.XIPNR6At.dpuf