

MINUTES
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
March 6, 2025

The Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee of the University of Southern Indiana Board of Trustees met on Thursday, March 6, 2025, in the Griffin Center on campus. Present were Trustees Fouad L. Hamami '24 M'25; Timothy M. Hollander; Christine H. Keck; and Christina M. Ryan. Committee Chair Ronald D. Romain '73 was absent. Board Chair Christine H. Keck served as committee chair. Also in attendance were Interim President Steven J. Bridges '89 M'95; Provost Shelly B. Blunt; Interim Vice President for Student Affairs Pamela F. Hopson D'23; and Vice President for Marketing and Communication Kindra L. Strupp M'22.

Chair Keck called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

Chair Keck began by welcoming everyone and noted she is acting on behalf of Committee Chair Romain, who could not attend.

1. MARKET ANALYSIS TO RECRUITMENT STRATEGY REPORT

Chair Keck called on Provost Blunt, who introduced Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Admissions Rashad E. Smith for a report. In today's rapidly evolving higher education environment, understanding the data that shapes the undergraduate recruitment landscape is essential for developing effective strategies. Mr. Smith's report examined how the data tells the broader story of challenges and emerging opportunities and shapes our strategic approach to traditional undergraduate new student enrollment.

Assistant Vice President Smith began by citing the Spring 2025 census report. The combined total enrollment for undergraduate and graduate students is 6,737 (without CAP). New undergraduate student enrollment targets for Fall 2025 are 1,350 freshmen and 400 transfer students, totaling 1,750 new undergraduate students, an increase of 2.2% or 39 students from last year. Mr. Smith shared new freshmen enrollment trends comparing applications to enrollments from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 and Fall 2023 to Fall 2024. Applications from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 increased 3.8% from 4,227 to 4,391, and enrollment for the same period increased 2.6% from 1,251 to 1,283. There was an increase of 4.2% in applications from Fall 2023 (4,391) to Fall 2024 (4,574); whereas enrollment showed a 3% increase from 1,283 to 1,321 for the same period. Currently, the University has received 717 net deposits compared to 576 net deposits received in February 2024, an increase of 141 net deposits.

In addition, Mr. Smith shared the new transfer enrollment trends with the committee, comparing applications to enrollments from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 and Fall 2023 to Fall 2024. The number of transfer applications from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 increased by 1.3% from 623 to 631, and enrollment for the same period decreased by 1.1% from 370 to 366. Transfer applications from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024 decreased by 2.7% from 631 to 614; however, enrollment from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024 increased by 6.6% from 366 to 390. Regarding transfer deposits, the University has received 70 net deposits compared to 58 net deposits received in February 2024, an increase of 12 net deposits.

Assistant Vice President Smith stressed the importance of understanding the undergraduate recruitment landscape. The nation is facing an enrollment cliff, meaning the number of college-age students is declining. An enrollment peak will occur this year, and for the next 10 years, there will be a decline in enrollment, as much as 15% in the Midwest. Thus, data-informed decisions are being made by information provided by the Indiana Department of Education, Indiana Commission for Higher Education, National Center for Education Statistics, and FAFSA submission tracking.

In 2017, the Indiana college-going rate was 63%, and over the years, this number has decreased. Today, the Indiana college-going rate has leveled off at 53%, where it has remained constant since 2022. According to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, the number of high school graduates in Indiana is 75,091. Of the 75,091 high school graduates, 39,620 or 52.8% enroll in college. Of these Indiana high school graduates, 36.7% enroll at public institutions and 7.7% enroll at private institutions. Breaking out southwest Indiana, 5,185 students graduate from high school, and 2,917 or 56.3% of the 5,185 enroll in college. Out of the 2,917 students enrolling in college, 41.1% enroll at public institutions and 6% enroll at private institutions. Lastly, roughly 70% of college students enroll in colleges approximately 100 miles or less, equivalent to 1 to 2 hours, from their homes. Consequently, Mr. Smith noted the University of Southern Indiana is the only public university main campus not in a 100-mile radius of Indianapolis, the greatest growth area in Indiana. This poses a couple of challenges for USI -- the University's proximity to Indianapolis and the higher education competition close to Indianapolis.

Primary target markets for the University are 13 counties in southwest Indiana, western Kentucky, and southern Illinois. The Indianapolis metro is a secondary market, with the tertiary market being all other counties in Indiana, with an opportunity to expand to the Middle Tennessee region. Assistant Vice President Smith noted the university's transition to Division I athletics and membership in the Ohio Valley Conference has opened more market areas for USI. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education states Vanderburgh County has 1,753 high school graduates, with 59.4% enrolled in college, the highest number of high school graduates in southwest Indiana. In addition, 22.6% of high school graduates attending college from southwest Indiana enrolled at USI, and 2.4% of Indiana high school graduates attending college enrolled at USI. From data provided by the Indiana Department of Education, USI can track high school senior class observations by county in southwest Indiana and adjust recruitment efforts. For example, the counties showing the largest growth are Warrick, Dubois, and Vanderburgh. The counties showing the most significant declines are Posey, Crawford, and Lawrence.

Mr. Smith discussed the programs of interest to students from southwest Indiana attending public Indiana institutions. A little over 26% of students are enrolling in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs. Breaking down the region by counties, STEM remains the most popular area of study. This information allows USI to shape the messaging accordingly to prospective students.

In addition to knowing the major areas of study, the University is also able to track enrollment yield by Student Aid Index (SAI) range. The Student Aid Index numbers are calculated by the federal government based on FAFSA information. These data show how much financial aid students are receiving by category -- non-aid applicants, SAI of \$27,000 or more; SAI of \$6,657 - \$26,999; SAI of \$1 - \$6,656; and SAI of (\$1,500) - \$0.

In closing, Assistant Vice President Smith shared key strategies for the coming year. He said there are opportunities for people to be on campus for the College Fair later this month. Mr. Smith noted the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation is busing students to campus for this fair. In addition, over 170,000 outreach touchpoints have been completed through virtual meetings with faculty, a texting opt-in campaign, and video automated out of Slate. Also, Mr. Smith informed the Committee that USI cannot text undergraduate students without permission.

2. REPORT ON SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES ENROLLMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION EFFORTS

Chair Keck called on Provost Blunt, who introduced Dean of the School of Graduate Studies Michael D. Dixon for a report. Dr. Dixon's presentation included the final Spring 2025 Graduate Studies enrollment as of the spring census, as well as current enrollment numbers for Summer 2025 and Fall 2025.

Dean Dixon began his presentation by stating that the last time he presented to the committee was five years ago, when he discussed the need for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software. He has now been using the CRM for 18 months and will discuss how he uses it later in the presentation.

Regarding Spring 2025 enrollment, 589 applications were received compared to 599 received last year, a decrease of 1.6%. However, 476 graduate students were admitted compared to 460 admitted students in Spring 2024, an increase of 3.4%. Graduate enrollment increased by almost 1%, with 329 students compared to 326 students last spring. The Spring 2025 census, February 7, 2025, reported graduate enrollment at 1,916 compared to the Spring 2024 census total of 1,908. On March 3, 2025, the graduate headcount was 1,965, but

as of this morning, the total graduate headcount increased to 1,983 due to the six different enrollment periods/start dates of August, October, January, March, May, and June. The multiple enrollment dates are due to accelerated formats in almost all graduate programs. In addition, the census findings report 1,576 continuing students, 11,852 credit hours generated, and 182 out of 1,683 students eligible to enroll. Graduate enrollment makes up 28.4% of USI's total enrollment.

Dr. Dixon shared the current graduate enrollment for summer II and II 2025 compared to summer I and II 2024. At census for summer I 2024, the total headcount was 1,536 with a total credit hour production of 6,377. Currently, for summer I, 923 are enrolled with 4,145 credit hours generated. At census for summer II 2024, total headcount was 1,214, with a credit hour production of 4,524. Thus far, 484 students are enrolled for summer II with a credit hour production of 1,813. Graduate enrollment for summer is on pace to meet or exceed last summer's headcount.

Dean Dixon informed the committee that, effective Fall 2025, there will no longer be a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy (MSOT). It will be replaced with a Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD). With this new program, the accrediting body has stated for the first two years, only 18 students a year will be admitted into the program. In addition, 10-20 high school teachers have been participating in a dual credit grant-funded program covering tuition costs for graduate courses. This program is scheduled to end in 2025. With these two changes happening simultaneously, there could be a drop in graduate enrollment. However, Dean Dixon is optimistic that the artificial intelligence concentration in the MBA program and the microcredentials coming on board in Fall 2025 will subsidize the loss of enrollment in the other two areas. To further explain the microcredentials, four are graduate-level and three are undergraduate-level. All are housed in the College of Liberal Arts.

Over 90% of graduate students do not come to campus. Thus, Slate, the CRM, allows USI to make connections and continue the connections with these students. Dr. Dixon discussed the Graduate Prospect Drip Email Campaign. The first email sent from the program director of the program of interest to a prospective student thanks them for their interest in a specific program and explains when classes begin -- every January, March, May, June, August, and October. Another email, sent again by the program director of the program of interest, discusses application tips and ends with a "looking forward to reviewing your application."

The Slate portal allows prospective graduate students to review their status and any missing items and specify if they are interested in scholarships or assistantships. Students also receive an email notifying them of the missing materials. An application checklist allows the applicant to upload the needed materials directly to the portal. Once the application has been reviewed and approved, the student receives a notice in the portal stating an update has been made to their account. They can then view the letter. When the letter is opened, confetti appears on the screen with a letter behind it that reads Congratulations, you have been admitted into the graduate program.

Post-admission, a video from Dean Dixon, along with application details and registration information, is provided. In addition, a support specialist creates a unique plan of study for the student based on the student's preferred program completion date. To maintain the connection with these students who are never on campus, email birthday messages are sent from the USI School of Graduate Studies Team, as well as other email correspondence.

There being no further business, Trustee Keck called the Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee adjourned at 10:32 a.m.