To date, EIU has received more applications than ever before in its history. But now our task is to convert these applicants into enrolled students. That’s why this edition of the EIU Enrollment Newsletter focuses on improving yield.

“Yield” refers to the percentage of applicants or admits who actually enroll at the university. In the final analysis, it’s the number that counts.

How can we increase yield? By convincing our prospective students that EIU is their best choice, based on the combination of factors they consider most important. These vary from student to student, but typically they include quality, opportunity, reputation, personal attention, customer service, support, community, and cost.

What Are We Doing to Increase Yield?

A great deal!

We have redesigned our primary yield event, the Admitted Student Day, so that it includes more robust pre-event communications, our amazing new EIU video, student-centered presentations, mini classes delivered by our best teachers, and personal assistance to help students complete the enrollment process. Our February 16th event was a great success, bringing 280 students to EIU’s beautiful (snowy) campus; to date, 55% of them have paid their enrollment deposit. EIU also held its annual Access Granted program in February, a weekend-long event for students of color that traditionally yields at least 65% of participants.

February also was a busy month for the Pine Honors College, which held Presidential Scholar interviews. Twenty-five faculty members volunteered to interview the 82 candidates, and more than 20 current Presidential Scholars met with them and their families to answer questions and share personal stories about why they chose EIU.

A second Admitted Student Day is scheduled for March 7. Students unable to attend still can get to know EIU during our new Panther Friday Visits, which will be held each Friday in April. See our visit schedule at http://www.eiu.edu/admissions/discover.php for more information.
Recently, we began calling students from a local number rather than an 800 number. This has led to a 6% increase in successful calls—that is, calls answered by a student or parent. To date, admissions staff members have made more than 10,000 calls to prospective students. Last week, the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships began packaging prospective students’ financial aid. This also is a yield strategy, since it reduces students’ costs and clarifies how competitively priced EIU is in comparison to other institutions. Housing and Dining Services participates in yield strategies too, encouraging students to commit to EIU by using Room Sync, a roommate-matching Facebook app that connects them to other incoming students. Later this spring, members of our staff and faculty again will attend area high schools’ award days to personally present EIU scholarships. Reminding local communities that EIU provides their students with many thousands of dollars of institutional aid over their four years is another great yield strategy!

**New Local Initiatives**

Beginning this past fall, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions has focused on strengthening relationships with students, families, and schools in the local area. Admissions Director Chris Dearth visited many of these schools personally to make connections with area high school counselors and to volunteer to participate in workshops, presentations, and parent panels. The office also coordinated the “Future Panther Tail Great” event, which included a pre-game barbeque and tickets to the EIU football game for 65 area students and their families. During the fall, admission counselors made over 100 visits to local schools. As a result of this renewed outreach, high schools have begun sending us their junior class lists (including students’ contact information), which has enabled us to mail our View Book to all juniors and seniors in Charleston, Mattoon, Effingham, and Mt. Zion. It also resulted in Effingham High School officials bringing the entire senior class for a campus visit and admissions presentation.

Staff also conducted new “onsite admissions programs” at several local high schools. These events allow prospective students to speak one-on-one with admissions counselors who review their academic records and deliver their admissions decision on the spot. “Onsites” simplify the admissions process for students, so they are well received and very successful. The most striking examples? EIU admitted 20 students from Effingham High School during a single onsite event this past fall; in 2014, we admitted only 7 students from Effingham the whole year. The onsite held at our fall Open House resulted in a new record: We received the most applications ever completed in a single day -- 219!

The Office of Marketing and Creative Services also participates in the new local initiatives project. Staff have purchased local radio ads designed to help us improve our visibility and reputation during sporting events that involve multiple schools in one location. They also have developed EIU information sheets for local school boards that identify the number of current EIU students and alums from their community and contain marketing points pertinent to the audience. This kind of segmentation is proving to be successful at connecting and engaging our audiences.

These local initiatives are an important example of our outreach. But altogether, counselors from the Office of Admissions travel to about 430 high schools, 74 community colleges, and more than 240 college fairs in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, and Wisconsin.
New initiatives from the Graduate School help support both recruitment and yield:

**Online Graduate Program Applications**

Thanks to assistance from the Center for Academic Technology Support (CATS), the Graduate School is implementing online admission applications for all graduate programs. A modern, all-inclusive application has the power to demonstrate EIU’s relevancy, competency, and innovation. With this in mind, CATS developed a graduate application system within MyEIU, our Prospect Relationship Management system. Students will be able to manage their entire application through their MyEIU account; graduate coordinators and committees who make admission decisions will be able to access and view all application materials in MyEIU, too. Customization is extensive: Faculty can determine which applicants they want to be notified about based on research interest, scholarly background, etc. This has tremendous potential to aid us in managing graduate applications, recruiting prospects, and tracking the progress of these efforts. Staff currently are beta-testing the first online application with the graduate program in Biological Sciences.

**Graduate Network for Undergraduates** [http://www.eiu.edu/graduate/IGSI.php](http://www.eiu.edu/graduate/IGSI.php)

In addition to connecting EIU undergraduates with current EIU graduate students, the Graduate Network for Undergraduates (GN4U) also offers an online incentive program that continues participants’ education about the benefits of graduate study and prepares them for the graduate school application process. Students who successfully complete assigned activities earn an application fee waiver as well as tuition and fee waivers for 3, 6, and 9 hours. This interaction gives the Graduate School an opportunity to begin to recruit prospective graduate students early in their EIU careers, provides the students with incentives to do their graduate work at EIU, and develops the personal relationships that lead to enrollment.

**Graduate Recruitment Networks**

At the graduate level, building alumni and professional networks assists with both recruitment and yield. The Graduate Alumni Advisory Board, for example, advises EIU about the needs of the profession/discipline, which leads to program revisions and ensures that graduates are prepared to meet those needs. A strong alumni network benefits students through internships, mentoring, philanthropy, and hiring; it benefits the institution through increased enrollment. The number one reason a student inquires about and enrolls in an EIU graduate program is an alumni recommendation. Thus, the Graduate School recommends that all graduate programs develop and cultivate an alumni advisory board. Staff are available to provide assistance to departments that need it.

The Graduate School also recommends that departments pursue recruitment opportunities through disciplinary and professional networks. Organizations like the National Science Teachers Association, the Illinois Science Teachers Association, and the Illinois Principals Association will sell or give email lists or will send email blasts on the program’s behalf. Working with these organizations opens doors through which we can reach prospective graduate students and develop new partnerships to help ensure they will enroll.

**A Note About Improving the Yield of Adult Students**

When we talk about yield, we tend to focus on traditional-aged new freshmen, transfers, and graduate students. But a growing percentage of college-goers are adult students who haven’t set foot in a classroom for many years. Because our adult students may be apprehensive about returning to school, providing them with opportunities to preview the face-to-face or online classroom environment is an especially effective yield strategy. So is sharing testimonials from nontraditional alums and their faculty mentors. Adult students want to hear other adult students and EIU staff members tell their stories about how returning to college and earning a degree has helped them today.
Recent Yield Efforts from Our Academic Departments

- History faculty traveled to Mount Zion High School (where two of our History alumni teach) to present in classes in U.S. and Ancient History. Teachers and students alike were so enthusiastic that one class booked a bus and came to EIU in November on a special visit. They sat in on classes here, met with the chair, were taken on a campus tour, and left with folders of handouts on both EIU and the History Department. This semester, both of the cooperating teachers at Mount Zion are planning on bringing their classes to EIU. History faculty also were invited by alumni to present in classes at Moraine Valley Community College, part of a larger effort to explore the possibility of a partnership between the honors programs at the two institutions.

- Through the Journalism Department’s Shadow Program, prospective students attend classes with an appointed student media leader, eat lunch at the food court with members of our Society for Collegiate Journalists, and then stay for the production of either News Watch or The Daily Eastern News. The department also arranges overnight accommodations on campus as needed.

- Faculty and staff from the Organizational and Professional Development program hold departmental open houses at community colleges that enable students to meet with academic advisors and/or department chairs.

- The School of Technology strategically developed an international market for the MS in Technology by advertising in international publications and cultivating current international students to serve as ambassadors/advocates in their home locations.

- The Department of Counseling and Student Development arranges for desired candidates in each program to attend Counseling Interview Days or College Student Affairs Days. Each program provides the top candidates with opportunities to meet the faculty, to meet current graduate students, to tour facilities, to identify a research topic, and to secure additional funding opportunities. These programs create the connections required to match desired candidates with faculty research interests and secure admission.

- Professor Steve Mullin in the Department of Biological Sciences identifies best candidates for studies in herpetology during undergraduate research presentations at national meetings. He then invites these candidates to his lab to meet his current graduate students, to discuss potential research interests, and to meet the faculty. This highly personal visit is an extremely successful way to attract competitive students to campus. These candidates frequently make early career contributions to the discipline and are admitted to some of the most prestigious doctoral programs in the country.

- EIU’s Physics Department has a comprehensive recruitment and enrollment plan that includes emailing high achieving students in Illinois and border states; sending flyers to public and Catholic high schools in Illinois and in the local Indiana and St. Louis region; writing congratulatory letters to admitted students; creating a wall of scholarship plaques to demonstrate its financial commitment to students; participating in EIU Open Houses and Admitted Student Days by, for example, holding a facilities tour and showcasing the laser laboratory; keeping the department’s web site updated and engaging; and providing scholarships to students participating in the Worldwide Youth in Science and Engineering (WYSE) sectional competition.

One of the reasons students choose EIU is that our faculty members take an active interest in them. They travel to high schools, colleges, college fairs, and professional conferences to recruit students. They communicate with prospective majors regularly, writing them emails, postcards, and personalized notes and letters to congratulate them on being admitted, describe the strengths of their respective departments, and invite them to visit campus. They teach mini-classes, host departmental visits, and share meals with prospective students during Open Houses and Admitted Student Days. And they follow up with the students they meet. At right are a few examples of their recent efforts.
As partners in recruitment and yield, we all have a role to play. Here are some key ways that all EIU employees can help:

- Know and be able to tell prospective students what sets EIU apart from other colleges and universities. Take a look at the “EIU Facts Worth Knowing, Worth Sharing” on the next page. Visit the EIU webpage (http://www.eiu.edu) often for news about EIU and its students’ recent successes.

- Join us wherever prospective students gather—at Open Houses, Admitted Student Days, camps and conferences, college fairs, scholastic competitions, etc. Let our visitors know that the EIU community welcomes and values them. At the undergraduate level, the campus visit is our most proven yield strategy.

- Use your existing connections to help EIU recruit students off campus. Do you sit on an area school board? Are you best friends with a high school teacher in a nearby town? Do you belong to a club or organization whose members have children or grandchildren who should be Future Panthers? Spread the good word about EIU wherever you go. If you need an EIU brochure or fact sheet to share, contact our admissions offices. To recommend a Future Panther, fill out the form at https://www.eiu.edu/recommend.php.

- Provide excellent customer service. Be friendly, positive, and helpful when you interact with potential new students and their families. Return phone calls and emails promptly. When you don’t know an answer, promise to find it and get back to the student as quickly as possible.

- Know the facts about EIU and dispel myths when you hear them. See EIU’s “Publications Facts” at https://www.eiu.edu/ir/Publication%20Facts%20-%201-7-14.pdf.
EIU Facts Worth Knowing/Worth Sharing

- EIU is ranked the No. 4 public regional university in the Midwest by *US News and World Report*.

- Our study abroad program is ranked one of the 50 best programs in America by *Best College Reviews*.

- EIU has been named twice to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the highest honor a college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service-learning, and civic engagement. Each year, the campus community devotes more than 10,000 hours to service; more than 75% of Eastern students participate in some form of volunteer civic engagement.

- EIU has been designated as a Military Friendly School by *GI Jobs Magazine* every year since the inception of the award in 2010. Our commitment to supporting veterans, military service members, and military family members also is recognized by EIU being awarded the Illinois Governor’s Award for Excellence in Veteran Education for 2012.

- Eastern twice has been ranked one of the most environmentally responsible colleges by The Princeton Review.

- EIU faculty members were named Illinois Teachers of the Year in 2013 and 2011.

- Thanks to the support and close personal attention we provide our students, EIU’s retention rate, which reflects the percentage of new freshmen who return to EIU for a second year, is 7 percentage points higher than the national average.

- EIU students graduate at rates that are 15 percentage points higher than the national average.

- EIU’s Class of 2014 obtained full-time positions or enrolled in graduate school at rates that are nearly 8 percentage points higher than the national average.

- EIU’s tuition and fees are 10% lower than the average at Illinois public universities. We helped make college affordable for our students and their families by awarding more than $122 million in financial aid last year.

- Charleston, IL was named one of the safest cities in Illinois by safewise.com.

- In recognition of these outcomes (and many more), the Higher Learning Commission—our chief accrediting body—recently reaffirmed EIU’s accreditation for another 10 years.