



SOUTHEASTERN
LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY

The Sound of Success: Building a Thriving Music Program Through Recruitment and Retention

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Our Mission:

Recruiting can be hard! It is hard to get students into your program, and it is just as hard to keep them. An insight on some successful techniques that have been found to recruit students, and more importantly, retain them. Students are seeking a personal connection and trust when they commit to a program, whether it is joining a high school ensemble or declaring a music major. Presenting different approaches to recruiting students through communication, performance, clinics, and personal connections and presenting research from current students who have given us insight on why they chose to be in music and what they were looking for will be the focus of this presentation. These techniques can be used for musicians from the public schools, colleges, and the community.

Why does Recruitment and Retention Matter?

- **Build Program Strength:**
 - Consistent recruitment ensures a vibrant, balanced ensemble.
- **Enhance Student Experience:**
 - Greater participation fosters richer musical experiences and leadership growth.
- **Support School & Community:**
 - Strong programs enhance school spirit and community engagement.
- **Ensure Program Longevity:**
 - Retention sustains tradition, continuity, and future opportunities.

What are the challenges of Recruitment and Retention?

- **Lack of Access to Funding**
 - What are creative ways to deal with this issue
- **Competing Interests and Time Conflicts**
 - How do you compete with the many choices students are offered?
- **Perception and Awareness**
 - What is the perception to others and are you aware of how your program is perceived?
- **Limited Program Diversity**
 - How can one overcome this struggle with the surroundings they have?
- **Social and Emotional Challenges**
 - What are the social and emotional challenges your students are facing in their lives?
 - Are you aware of what those challenges are?
- **Student Feedback**
 - Do you assess the student feedback that you are given and make appropriate changes to adapt to their needs?

What are the Best Practices for Recruitment:

- Create a welcoming and inclusive culture in your program that represents your musicianship and pedagogical beliefs
- Engage with feeder schools and provide opportunities to see the end results to your program
- Establish a Showcase Program Success for all to recognize the values of music and what you can offer
- Offer a program that tenders diverse musical experiences that relate to all
- Communicate music academically and incorporate insights on how it can help you in other aspects of your life
- Express your musical beliefs in what you teach
- Reduce financial barriers so that all can be involved
- Involve the community in your program

What are the Best Practices for Retention:

- Build a welcoming and inclusive environment for all
- Provide opportunities to explore various genres and styles
- Develop meaningful relationships with students, parents, administrators, directors, and community members
- Enhance extracurricular opportunities to create a well-rounded student
- Reward student efforts
- Find ways for your program to support the Whole Student
- Continue to create opportunities for community engagement

What do we do to help retention and recruitment?

- Work to achieve a culture that is welcoming and nurturing to the students that we have, as well as striving to create a culture for the students we want
- Evoke outreach concerts and events to engage with high schools and middle schools, thus showing interest in the students we are trying to connect with
- Show personal interest and build a relationship and foundation with current and prospective students
- Provide outstanding events for the students involved so that they have a great musical and social experience
- Offer diverse musings that will connect with students in musical and personal ways
- Communicate the values of music and the benefits that one will take away from being involved
- Eliminate as much of the financial burden as possible, allowing all students to be involved
- Collaborate with the community through ensemble and individual performances to incorporate a communal value for all

Final Thoughts:

- We don't have all the answers, but hope that there is an insight into different methods and tactics for recruiting and retaining students
- Create a spark that allows you to connect with students and directors to nurture a relationship that is fruitful for everyone involved

- Recognize that all students have unique backgrounds and are looking into your program for specific reasons. It is up to you to build on those reasons.

We would love to hear from you if you have any insights to successful recruiting techniques that have been successful for you and your program. Please feel free to reach out to us:

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