Head-Royce School Is Breaking Barriers in Enrollment Management
5 Ways to Create Schoolwide Collaboration

It has always been challenging to break through the invisible silos in a school’s professional community, but the isolation and social distancing of the COVID-19 pandemic have made collaboration even more difficult—especially for enrollment professionals seeking the support of colleagues in different departments.

“Enrollment management requires a number of people to help us with our work, but it’s work we cannot formally require of others,” said Christian Donovan, Assistant Head of School and Director of Strategic Research, Head-Royce School in Oakland, California. “Convincing individuals in different departments to take part often involves first having created a relationship with them."

So how do you begin to create these relationships? How do you get your entire community to feel involved and invested in your school’s enrollment management work? Donovan believes the key to meaningful community collaboration is having both formal and informal processes in place. This ensures collaboration is embedded into the fabric of the school and is not left completely to individual efforts.

“Formal procedures are important because they solidify rules and standards. However, it’s the informal processes that often make more of an impact,” said Donovan.

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Here are five formal and informal ways that enrollment management professionals can work to create collaboration across departments, even when working in socially distanced isolation:

1. **Give faculty a voice.**

One of the ways collaboration is formalized and encouraged at Head-Royce is within its admissions committees, which are largely made up of faculty members. With up to 10 faculty members on each school division committee, the school not only allows faculty to play an authentic role in admissions decisions but also showcases the admissions team at work.

"When faculty are invested in the process, it allows us to be reflective about our admissions practices in general and to retool pieces if needed," said Kathrina Weekes, Head-Royce’s Director of Admissions. "This work cannot be insular. If we are all like-minded, we just keep doing the same thing year after year."

2. **Offer to help outside of your department.**

Collaboration never works in one direction. In order to create mutually beneficial professional partnerships, enrollment team members must also step outside of their own roles.

"Offer to help your faculty in the work they’re doing, whether that be chaperoning a field trip, watching their class so they can take a quick break, or showing up for the cool thing they’re doing at assembly—even if that assembly is virtual," said Donovan. "Showing that you care about their work goes a long way toward building belonging."

3. **Tell a compelling enrollment story.**

It’s important to educate your school’s professional community on why enrollment work is critical to their own work and why their involvement is necessary and needed in the process. "The reason I love enrollment work is that it’s all of our work," said Weekes. "We are all enrolling the school together—we all have a stake in the work that we do."

"It’s important that faculty understand why and how we make our enrollment decisions," said Donovan. "By engaging faculty and other departments in the decision-making process, and ensuring they understand the criteria, they can see how we get to our end results."

4. **Stay curious about your school.**

One way Weekes is able to continue building relationships across school departments is because she is truly interested in what’s happening at Head-Royce.

"I set up informational interviews with different community members to find out exactly what they do and how they spend their time," she said. "It’s important for two reasons: I want to be able to articulate how their roles work, and I also want to show that I’m sincerely invested in their work."

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Breaking Barriers (continued)
Build a strong professional support network.

This time of isolation, Zoom meetings, and school closings and reopenings have shown many enrollment professionals how critical it is to create ongoing connections. Weekes suggests nurturing these networks both within your school walls and among a broader professional community.

“I didn’t know how much I needed it until I was in it,” she said about a networking group of admissions directors she meets with on a biweekly basis. “I’m able to ask questions and brainstorm outside of our school.”

“Our team at Head-Royce is also very accessible,” said Donovan. “At the beginning of quarantine, we got into the habit of meeting every single day on Zoom to stay connected and share our thoughts. It’s been incredibly beneficial.”

“We were so used to peeking outside of our office doors to chat together as a team. When we could no longer do that, we knew it was important to continue to check in on each other,” said Weekes. “We keep our lines of communication open, and we have access to one another.”

By incorporating both formal and informal collaboration-building techniques into your enrollment management processes, you can continue to strengthen your practices and tell a stronger, more unified school story to prospective and current families.

On staying curious about your school:
“By collaborating with different departments, we become story collectors. These relationships allow us to constantly tell a new and updated story about Head-Royce, which helps us share that story with both current and prospective families.”

- Christian Donovan, Assistant Head of School and Director of Strategic Research, Head-Royce School

Thank you to Christian Donovan and Kathrina Weekes from Head-Royce School for sharing their school’s practices for building a coalition around enrollment management.

Christian Donovan is the Assistant Head of School and Director of Strategic Research at Head-Royce. Prior to this, he served as the school’s Director of Enrollment Management for six years.

Kathrina Weekes has been a member of the Head-Royce School community for the last 12 years and is the Director of Admissions. She also serves on the board of POCIS (People of Color in Independent Schools of Northern California).