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Using Data to Inform Decision-Making: A Focus on Department & Program Enrollments

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1. **Presentation Title:** Using Data to Inform Decision-Making: A Focus on Department & Program Enrollments
2. **Presenter Information/BIO:**

Craig Hlavac is the Associate Dean of the Liberal Arts (Arts, Humanities, Social & Behavioral Sciences) at Southern Connecticut State University. Prior to his current position, Dr. Hlavac served as the interim Associate Dean for the School of Arts and Sciences for two years, and before that was Associate Professor and Chair of the Music Department. He received Bachelor of Arts in Music and Bachelor of Science in Music Education degrees from the University of Connecticut, a Master of Music degree from Yale University, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Hartford. A frequent educational leadership clinician and presenter, Dr. Hlavac has delivered presentations throughout the country. Dr. Hlavac is also an advisory board member for *The Department Chair*, the premier academic department chair journal. Dr. Hlavac's research interests focus on the impacts of the organizational mission on the decision-making of educational leaders, the use of organizational and departmental missions to prioritize decision-making, and the utility of mission-based management in the administration of the contemporary university.

3. **Disciplines:** Education, Leadership, Management, Higher Education Administration
4. **Presentation Theme:** Leadership & Management; Operating the Department; Enrollment/Budget Management
5. **Presentation Type:** Interactive Workshop (105 minutes)
6. **Abstract:**

Department chairs are frequently required to make decisions on behalf of their department. Most significant decisions require input from department stakeholders (e.g. faculty, staff, students) yet the responsibility for guiding this process – including gathering and presenting relevant data – generally resides with the chairperson. Determining what data is needed for each situation can be challenging, especially when considering enrollments. This session will provide current and prospective chairpersons with practical suggestions for seeking relevant data points to assess and guide department initiatives with a specific focus on enrollments. Simple, measurable recruitment and retention strategies will also be discussed. Participants will have opportunities to share experiences and collectively develop strategies for immediate consideration. Institutional teams are especially encouraged to attend.

7. **Keywords:** Data, enrollments, decision-making, strategic planning, data trends
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9. **Presentation Information:**

Decision-making in higher education is fraught with complexity; decision-makers are often required to make difficult decisions with limited information, insufficient resources, and inadequate time to fully-consider all possible outcomes. Buller (2012) noted that people make decisions in higher education based on "... academic area, core values, the stage we've reached in our careers, and our personal expectations" (p. 115). Chu (2012) stated that effective communication and shared governance "... requires solid information on which to make decisions or to defer responsibility for decision making to others" (p. 87). However, how does a department chairperson gather the information needed for decisions to be informed? What data is needed? From what timeframe should these data be considered? Data is essential, yet acquiring and analyzing data can be a daunting task for both new and experienced chairpersons. This session will provide participants with specific, concrete data points to consider as well as suggested methods for how these data might inform departmental discussions and decision-making.

The workshop will be delivered in the following manner:

- **Welcome and introductions** (5 min). Participants will be led through a series of immediate-feedback surveys to determine specific attributes of the audience (e.g. institution type, years of chair experience, comfort in analyzing enrollment data).
- **Presentation of data related to department enrollments** (30 min). Several different data points will be presented and discussed; each will be viewed through the lens of the chair and department. Specific metrics will include:
 - # of majors (current, trailing 5 years, % trends YOY)

- # of minors (current, trailing 3-5 years, % trend YOY, trend of associated majors)
- # of students in each class (FR/SO/JR/SR/GR) and status (FT/PT)
- Student demographic characteristics (gender, race, home state, athlete/non-athlete, age, % Pell eligible, etc.)
- # of students served by department in service to general education requirements (% change YOY, ratio of major/service courses)
- Previous academic institution (Feeder high school, college, military, etc.)
- Retention/Persistence
 - FYFT – Fall-to-Fall; Fall-to-Spring; Sophomore Fall-Junior Fall – both number and % based on cohort
 - Retention based on demographics: Above factors plus resident/commuter & other groupings
- # of sections offered in each program and/or area
- How many taught by FT faculty; Adjuncts; GA's
- Average fill rates for each section
- FTE per section
- **Guided small-group discussion** (15 min). Participants will be randomly broken out into small groups and asked to discuss a specific scenario provided by the presenter. Outcome: Each group will be tasked with determining a set of simple strategies related to the scenario.
 - After the 15-min discussion, groups will have an opportunity to share their strategies (10 min).
- **Data discussion** (20 min). Participants will be given a series of actual data points from academic departments and asked to collaboratively develop ways to address any perceived data trends. Participants will be encouraged to select their own groups (based on the scenario) for this exercise. Participants attending from the same institution will be encouraged to group together so real-life, post-conference applications can be considered.
- **Group Share** (15 min). Groups will have an opportunity to share any insights or thoughts with the entire group.
- **Final questions** (10 min).