

Strategies Worksheet

Goal 5 – Strategy 2: Formulate a tuition and fee structure that is both strategic and competitive

A. Introduction and Background

The financial conditions in public higher education are under heavy scrutiny and criticism across the US. The primary stakeholders are students and their families, but their perceptions are heavily influenced by their own experiences, the experiences of those around them, political debates, and media scrutiny. The Vision of ECU is to become “First Choice” because of who we are. We believe that accomplishing our Vision calls for evaluating the ECU tuition and fee structure. We believe a first step in this process is trying to provide solutions to answer for questions like:

1. Do students perceive ECU as a good value?
2. Is the current structure for tuition and fees meeting the needs of students?
3. Is the current structure for tuition and fees meeting the needs of the university?
4. Are students confused and frustrated when they receive their bursar statement?
5. Are our problems in the processes associated with tuition and fees and not necessarily the rates?

Some of these questions are not always explicitly asked by universities and even when asked, are difficult to get a clear grasp on the meaning of those answers. Student concerns ease with consistency and predictability. Unfortunately, our current system appears to possibly confuse and overwhelm students at times. Our bursar office has recently adopted changes, such as a payment plan system to help alleviate some of the already identified concerns. This also provides a mutually beneficial way for students to pay their balances and remain on track at ECU. We believe by answering the above questions, we can further explore restructuring tuition and fees to not only improve student satisfaction and retention, but also increase revenue for the university. What we currently know is that:

- ECU tuition rates are competitive within the state of Oklahoma
- ECU fees have increased over the past several years and need to be simplified and consolidated to avoid “hidden costs” to students once they begin an ECU program
- Payment plans are effective in helping students handle their financial burdens in a manageable way
- Students graduate from ECU with low levels of student loan debt

The tuition and fee restructure will focus on tuition rates, the fee schedule and installment plan options, and creating a debt free payment system. In order to become a “First Choice” university, we believe this strategy to be critical to our success.

B. Contribution to Other Goals

This strategy will contribute to the following other goals:

Goal 1: Achieve academic excellence through innovative programming, outstanding faculty, continual assessment, a flexible learning environment and community engagement.

Goal 2: Maintain strong undergraduate and graduate enrollment and high retention, graduation, and job placement rates.

Goal 3: Create and nurture an inclusive, dynamic, and engaging experience for all stakeholders.

Goal 4: Create a culture of effective communication.

Goal 5: Acquire, manage and leverage resources to achieve ECU’s mission, vision, and goals.

C. Specific Actions, Elements, Steps and Timelines

1. ECU will implement a mandatory payment plan and no debt payment system

2. Students may not enroll in classes if they have a debt to the university and/or they are not enrolled in the university's payment plan.
3. ECU will form a committee composed of representatives from student services departments including IT and department deans, to investigate a viable tuition and fee restructure
4. ECU will investigate the advantages and disadvantages of flat tuition rates compared with varying rates by degree programs
5. ECU will consider the financial and technological aspects of these restructures for implementation prior to making a decision that is best for students and the university
6. ECU will closely examine fee structures specifically to determine the advantages and disadvantages of flat fee rates, per credit hour rates, per course rates, etc with the goal of creating clarity for students and the university

D. Potential Models

<https://www.universitybusiness.com/article/strategic-tuition-pricing-discounting>

<https://registrar.ku.edu/sites/registrar.ku.edu/files/docs/KBOR%20Summary%20Tuition%20Schedule%20Outline.pdf>

<https://www.purdue.edu/bursar/tuition/index.html>