The Road to Centralization: A Real-Time Experience

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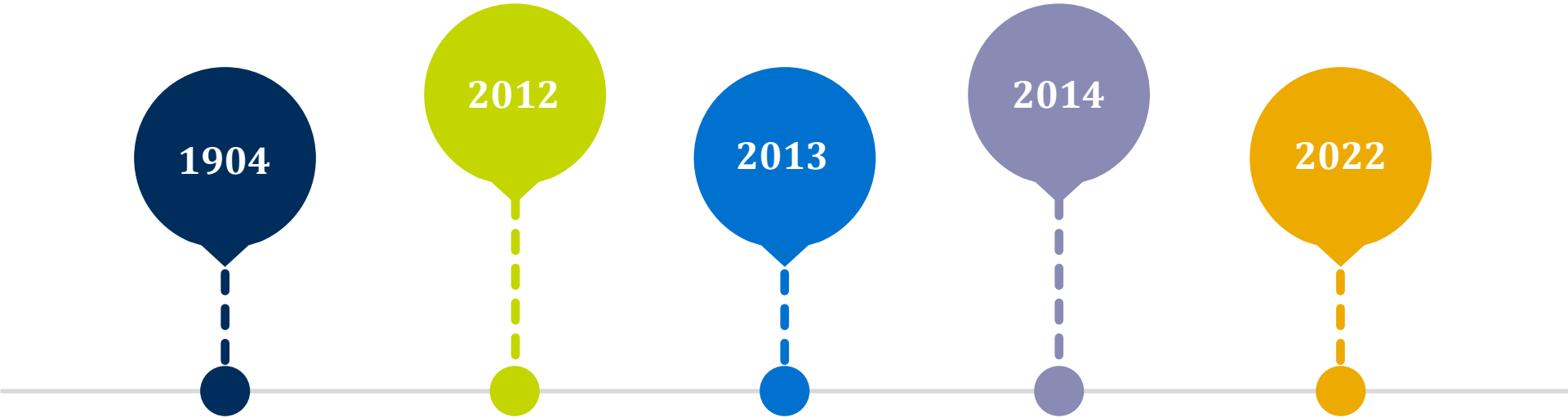
Background

Marshall B. Ketchum University



1904

Founded as the Southern California College of Optometry (SCCO)

2012

The School of Physician Assistants was established

2013

The institution formally changed from SCCO to Marshall B. Ketchum University

2014

The College of Pharmacy was established

2022

MBKU contracts with RNL to do Annual Marketing & Recruitment Planning (6 visits)

When we realized we needed RNL

- Program admissions director resigned mid-cycle amid an enrollment downturn
- No transition plan
- Hired an enthusiastic but inexperienced faculty member to lead admissions
- Realized we needed help in establishing best practices
  - Began with the single program but soon realizes all could benefit
- Goal - produce an Annual Marketing and Recruiting Plan (AMRP)
- Midway through planning, individuals realized they couldn't do it alone
  - Shifted to consultation to plan for centralization

Annual Marketing & Recruitment Planning

The First Three Visits

And then...

So, we had to...

From AMRP to Organizational Review

Three overarching reasons for centralizing came to light

1) to gain more capacity and flexibility as it comes to the recruitment function of admissions
2) work towards more standardization in the operational functions associated with admission reviews to enable a better user- and student-experience
3) to better position the institution to manage technology-enabled functions, such as onboarding a customer relationship management (CRM) platform and supporting API efforts

Decentralized Experience

The Upside

- Valuable for new programs/colleges
- Allows for the thoughtful establishment of the academic side of admissions
  - Determining requirements and indices
  - Establishing the culture and how to demonstrate it to the applicants
- Currently well-established and working well

Decentralized Experience

The Downside

- Each admissions unit worked in a silo
- No common language being used or shared best practices
- Oversight, mentorship, and professional development opportunities varied widely

Now we have a way to do all that.

The Road To Centralization

Three Phases

Phase 1

- One direct report
- Team meetings
- Process improvements
- Potential recruitment related opportunities
- New hires
- Audit application review and processing
- Provide team building
- Provide professional development

Phase 2

- API integration project
- Establish cycle-planning
- ARMP for new cycle
- Train new hires
- CRM review process
- Physical office space review/transition
- Continuing to develop a healthy and cohesive team environment

Phase 3

- Onboard a new data and CRM coordinator
- Launch a new CRM
- Operate with a distinct recruiting strategy due to organization changes making it more feasible with requisite resources and time spent in areas of need and that align with MBKU enrollment goals

RNL

Another Case for Centralization

A perspective from someone who has been through it

- Challenges experienced before and during transition...
  - **Initial Issue >** Recruitment
    - A revolving door of recruitment talent in individual departments started impacting enrollment
  - **Biggest Challenge >** Juggling four different types of admission procedures
    - 1) undergrad high-demand major, 2) professional PharmD, 3) grad program direct-admit, and 4) grad program umbrella admissions
  - **Biggest Surprise >** Navigating onboarding structures
    - Which department handles post-admission communication, and who is responsible for what pieces of onboarding?

Another Case for Centralization (Cont.)

Positive outcomes

We saw a 22% increase in PharmD applications, 17% increase in BS enrollment, and our graduate programs leaped from the bottom quartile to Top 5 in popularity on campus.

- **Improved Consistency:** Enabled the development of standardized recruitment collateral and other decision-making processes. Doing so also ushered in more brand consistency.
- **Resource Optimization:** By centralizing admissions, resources were allocated more effectively. Sharing assets such as staff expertise, technology infrastructure, and financial pools led to cost savings and improved resource utilization.
- **Cross-Program Collaboration:** Centralization encouraged collaboration and knowledge sharing among different programs. Program staff from various departments now work together, exchange best practices, and leverage their collective expertise to enhance the overall process.
- **Outcomes Reporting:** With multiple programs housed under one office, effective communication among various stakeholders became simpler, especially with assessment.

Lessons Learned

In the midst of change

- Go slow
- Day-by-day experience
- Dealing with turnover and change AND general change management
- Need for oversight (data in particular)
- Flexible leadership style required
- The art of proactively planning and simultaneously executing
- The value of neutral (RNL Consultant) in the process to allow Ketchum to look honestly at the situation when trying to develop the annual plan
  - The critical importance of humility, leadership, and culture

Thank You!

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