



2013 Conference

Working with Student Recruitment Agents

Welcome to ... Working with Student
Recruitment Agents to Increase International
Student Enrollments

February/19/2013



2013 Conference

Presenters

- John Demer
Director – Americas
ICEF
- David Anderson
Vice President
ELS Language Centers
- Ronald Cushing
Director – International Services
University of Cincinnati

Some facts ...

- Currently over 3 million students studying abroad
- Exponential growth of 50% since 2000
- 7 million international students expected by 2025
- Recent figures suggest that 60% of international students are sent by agents
- 80% of students in Australia are referred by agents, **compared to just ??% in the USA**

Working with Agents - Legal ? Ethical ?

Using agents is **legal** ...

- **US Federal law** does not prohibit payment to international counsellors
- **NACAC Commission** is revising its Statement of Principles of Good Practice
- **NAFSA** supports the use of agents & provides much insight into the practice

Using agents is **not unethical** ...

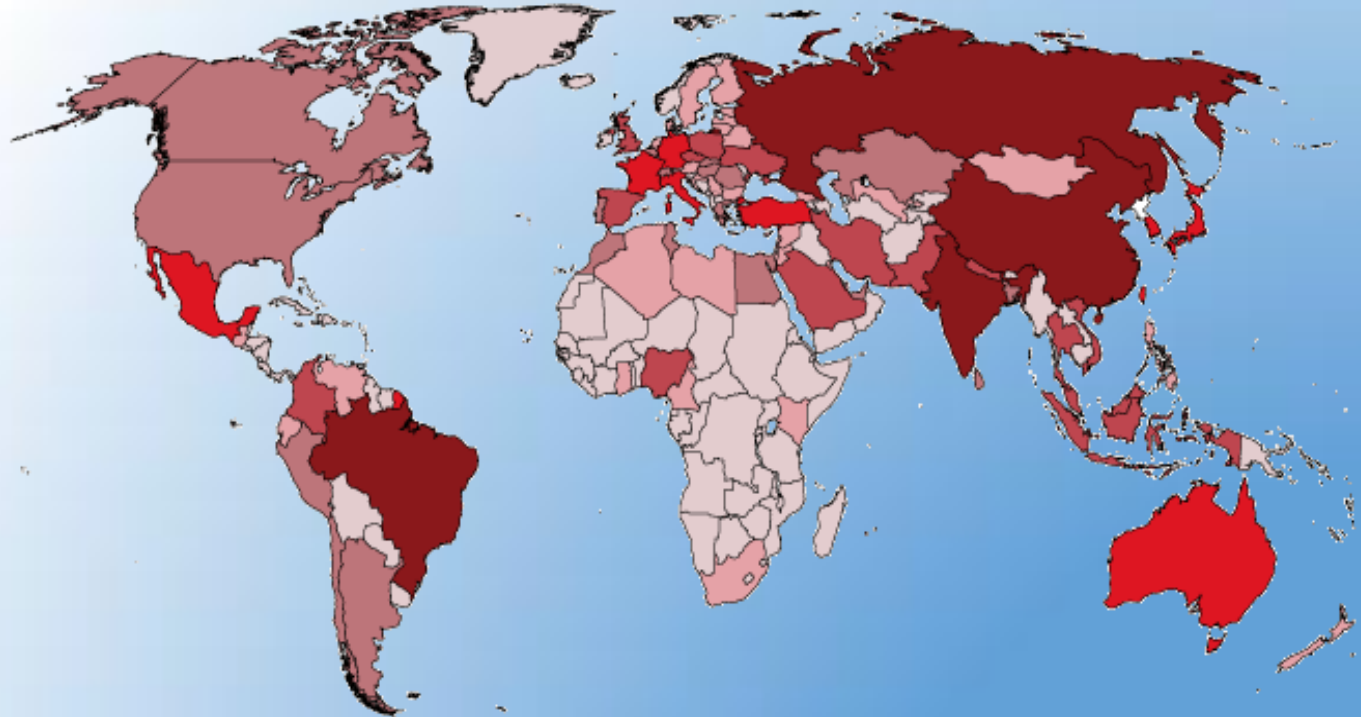
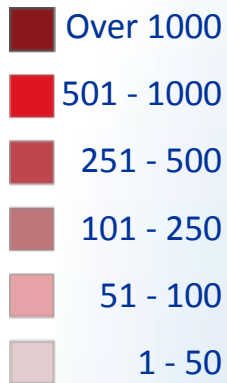
- British Council - „Education agents are a student lead demand ... used globally and are resources that have become a global industry and phenomenon”
- It is the educator’s responsibility to be selective and choose the right agents

Change is afoot ..

- **AIRC** certifies agencies, 172 educator institutional members in 3 years
- North American educator **ICEF Workshop bookings** have grown from **209** in 2007 to **532** in 2012, representing growth of 155% in 5 years

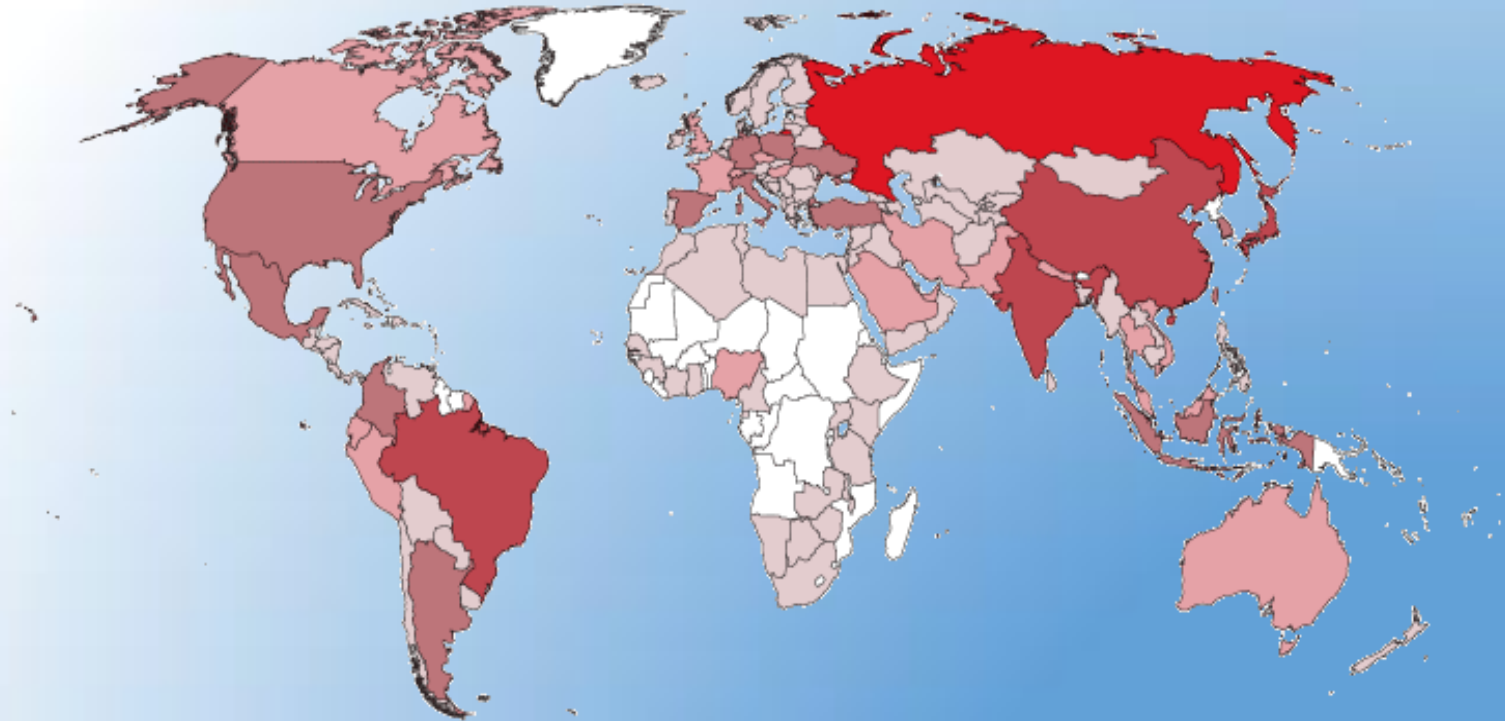
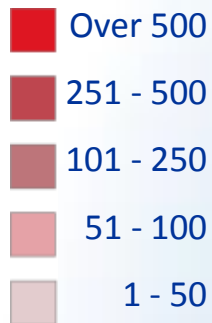
Recruitment agencies worldwide – 24 000 in 189 countries

Legend



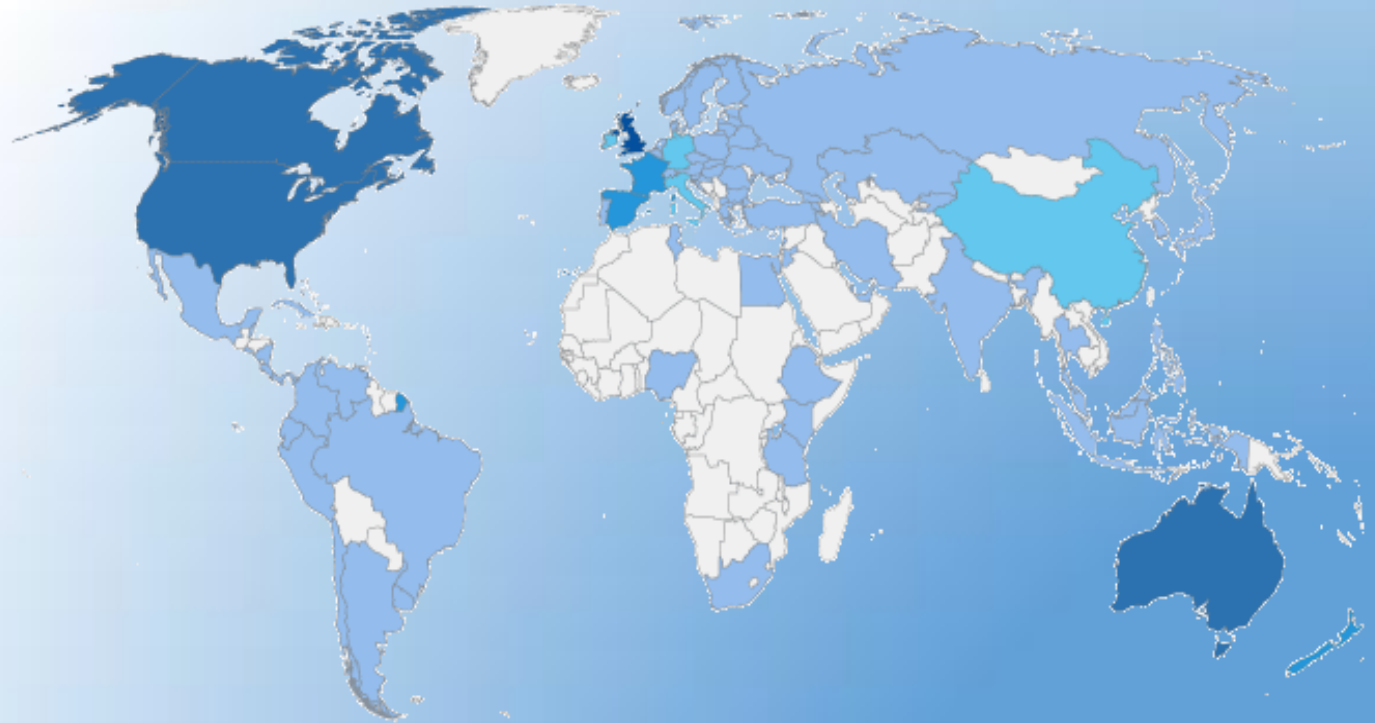
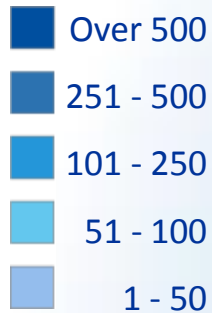
Qualified recruitment agencies – 7 000 in 148 countries

Legend

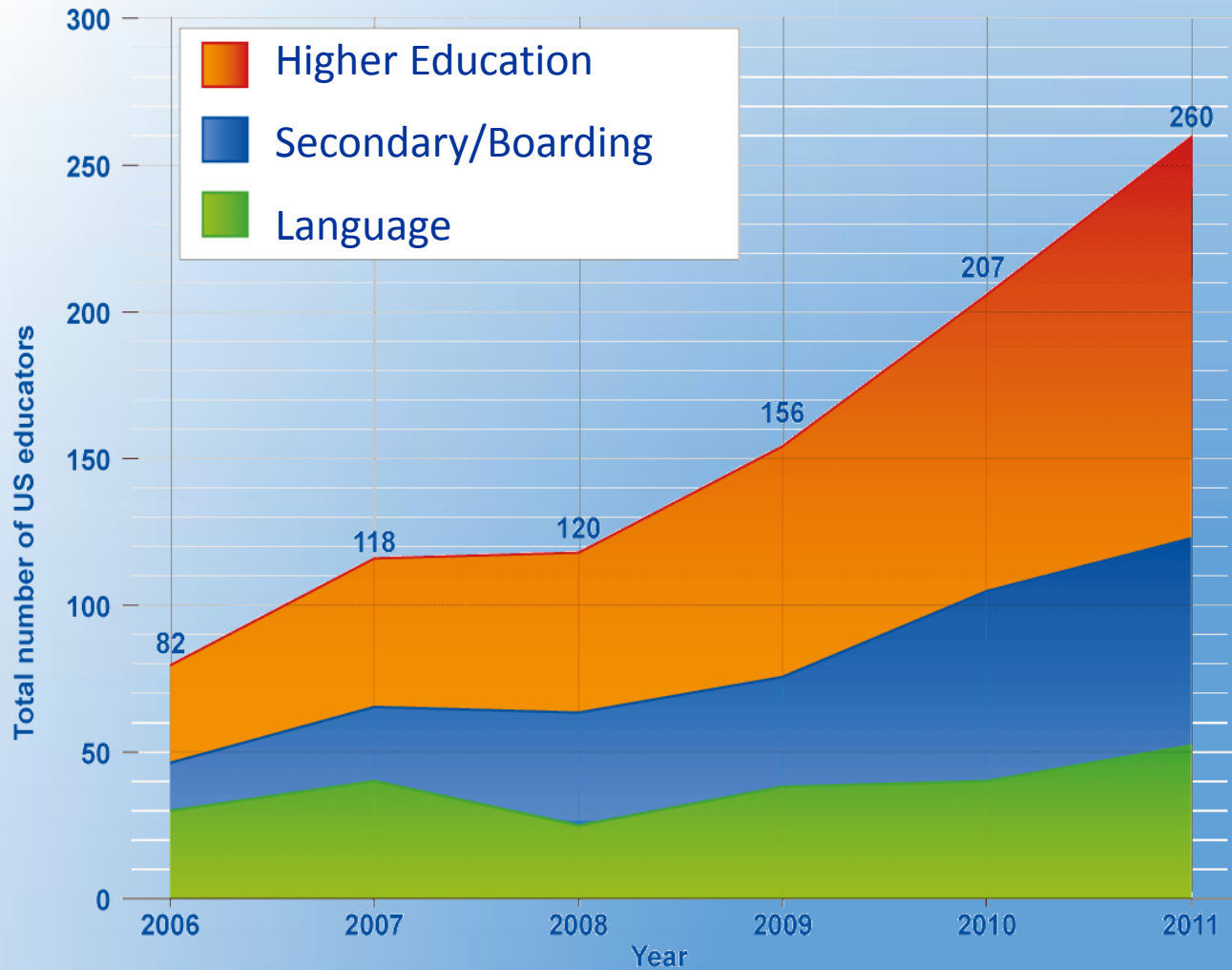


Educators working with recruitment agencies – 3 550 in 89 countries

Legend



US educators working with agents (ICEF customer base 2006-2011)



What is an education agent ?

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- Individual, company or institution that provides educational advice, support & placement to students
- Person or organization abroad that markets / represents your institution, generating applicants
- There are different types of agents:
 - Partners & representatives
 - Study abroad advisors
 - Travel agents with an educational division
 - Alumni, former colleague, etc.

Why agents are important

- Agents are a low risk, low cost way of recruiting international students
- They provide fast, direct access to local markets, using local languages and business customs
- In some countries, as many as 80% of international students go through agents
- They provide not just quantity, but also student quality
- Agents save work & time for admissions departments

What agents can do for you

- Represent you on a year round basis
 - Improve your “application -> admission” conversion rates
 - Provide you with reliable local market information
- Distribute your promotional material on a continual basis
 - Advertise in targeted local media and handle translations
 - Represent you at local fairs and college days
 - Manage enquiries received by your international office
 - Arrange student appointments & presentation opportunities
- Pass on post-study feedback (positive/negative)

What agents do for students

- A trustworthy and accountable local contact
- Give advice to students, and parents !!
- Communicate with students in their native language, bearing in mind local sensitivities
- Suggest an optimal institution / student match
- Provide valuable counseling services in a timely manner
- Deliver useful added-value services (visa, flight, insurance)
- Provide ongoing support

How to select agents

- What geographical area do they cover ?
- Company history, company structure & number of staff ?
- How many students do they handle each year ?
- How many and what other schools do they represent (#, type, location) ?
- Can they provide references ?
- Are they members of associations, do they follow professional standards ?
- Have they completed any agency testing ?
- What is their promotional and marketing strategy ?

Creating an agent contract

- Define respective roles & responsibilities
 - Give key performance indicators (quantity / quality)
- Outline exact compensation model
 - Exclusivity if and when
- Dispute resolution guidelines
- Duration of contract including termination clauses
 - Examples and samples – just ask

How to support your agents

- Provide comprehensive information via an agent manual
- Marketing assistance (hardcopy, CD, web)
- Conduct agent training sessions giving regular updates
- Stay in touch – phone calls, letters, newsletters, emails
- Integrate agents into your overseas marketing plan
- Monitor results and review procedures
- Ensure a rapid response time to agents queries
- Organize agent familiarization trips – increases agent's knowledge, and enhances personal relationships

Some words on compensation

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- Commission on tuition fee
- Set fee per head, volume bonus, targets etc.
- Annual retainer (marketing) fee - paid in advance
- Student is charged (advising / handling / service fee)
- Payment procedures should be stipulated and followed
- Student's fees should be received before the student arrives

In summary

- As recruitment becomes increasingly competitive, agents are now an integral component of any international strategy
- Select agents carefully, ensure that they are of quality
 - Only appoint agents suitable to your institution, be selective
- Ensure agents are part of an integrated marketing plan
- Leverage agents in other marketing activities (fairs, internet, alumni, advertising)
- Invest sufficient time and resources from the start
- Communicate regularly and support agents effectively
- Review your requirements and contracts periodically



ELS Language Centers – quick overview

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- Intensive English centers at more than 60 locations in USA
- Centers on campus / in association with 55+ American universities and colleges
- Preparing students through English for Academic Purposes since 1961
- Appointed agencies in 92 countries; more than 1700 points of contact
- We use agents/agencies for both degree-seeking students and English-only placements
- www.els.edu

First step: Self-assessment – what can your school “sell” overseas?

- Brand name
- Ranking / Prestige
- Unique / in-demand programs
- Location
- “Price” – low tuition, “discounting”, scholarships
- Speed & flexibility in admissions
- Employment prospects upon completion

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- All aggressive approaches have an “acquisition cost”
- Agents generally cost only when they deliver (variable cost)
- More of a defensive position than “parachute” recruiting
- Follow-ups in native language with local sensitivities
- Multiplier effect
- Market intelligence



What agents can't / won't / shouldn't do for your institution

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- Make admissions decisions (They can be effective pre-screeners, however)
- Be your entire international recruitment strategy
- Know everything about your school and its admissions without attention and training
- Control your brand name in that country
- Overwhelm your team with unqualified applicants

Finding potential agents – Approaches

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- ICEF workshops (North America, Dubai, Beijing etc.)
- American International Recruitment Council
- NAFSA conference
- Recruiting tours / overseas student fairs
- Via inquiries
- Referrals from colleagues
- Alumni



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American International Recruitment Council

- Standards of best practices for agencies
- Agents undergo certification process
- Current institutional members (US higher education) – more than 150
- www.airc-education.org

Vetting agencies: How to assure that you have the right agents for your institution?

- Ask for and check references
- AIRC certification
- ICEF – conference participants & ITAC credential
- Association memberships
- Personal interaction / questionnaires
- Proof of licensing in own country
- Referrals from colleagues
- Close monitoring early in a relationship

Questions while considering agents to represent your institution

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- Does the agency know US higher education?
- Does the agency know US visa regulations?
- What other similar/peer schools does the agency represent?
- How important is the USA in their product mix?
- How do they work with their other institutional clients?
- Is the agency asking for up-front marketing expenses?



Questions while considering agents to represent your institution

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- How do students tend to find this agency?
- How many years has it existed?
- What is the agency's fee structure?
- Does it or its counselors have certifications / endorsements / memberships to professional organizations (with stated standards)

Counseling concerns – university's perspective

- Quality applicants (ready to succeed)
- Volume of applicants
- Appropriateness of applicants – good match for university
- Transparency and ethics in the recruiting process
- Accuracy of information – management of expectations
- Proper image of university is conveyed



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Admissions concerns – agent's perspective

- Clarity on admissions policies, procedures, targets and profile
- Quantified selectivity of the university (GPA, test scores etc.)
- Fast turnaround for applications
- Consistent turnaround for applications
- Programs / degrees that are effectively “off-limits”
- Programs / degrees with flexibility and interest in growth

After decision to appoint an agency

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- Not-too-scary agreement
- Annual plan to define expectations
- “Product knowledge” - visit to campus?
- Training – counseling points on your school
- Support and appropriate marketing materials
- Open and timely communication/correspondence

Joint efforts at promotion of institution

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- What are key selling points?
- Marketing materials – high standard, professional, unambiguous and culturally appropriate (consult with agents)
- Referral of appropriate candidates; prompt application processing; student services
- Forwarding of inquiries to agent

Ideas to utilize agents on visits to countries

- Co-represent university at student fairs
- Interviews with pre-screened candidates
- Arranged public presentations
- Training of counseling staff for “product knowledge”
- School and other institutional visits

“Two-way” Accountability – some suggestions

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- Written agreement / contract
- Put expectations in writing – targets for enrolling qualified students, turnaround times for applications
- Annual review of performance on both side
- Visit agents, train and observe

“Two-way” Accountability – some suggestions

- Surveying students who attend your institution
- Tracking GPA of students referred
- Review use of your logo and name in all marketing collateral and websites

- Fees only from the student (university pays nothing)
- Marketing contribution / Subscription model -- only (No “per-head” compensation)
- Marketing contribution plus plateau bonus
- Commission based on percent of tuition (first year)
- Fixed commission per semester (or academic year)
- Commission based on percent of tuition (length of stay)



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Agent Network – University of Cincinnati

UC International Services, in conjunction with the International Admissions Office, is responsible for developing and managing a network of overseas representatives. UC was the first major research university in the US to openly adopt agency-based international student recruiting, and it did so while simultaneously leading a national movement for industry standards. In July 2008, the ***American International Recruitment Council (AIRC)*** was formed by UC to develop standards for international student recruitment and a certification process for international student recruiting agencies.

UC Philosophy: Agents as Partners

- Student treatment is top priority
 - Students should not be misled by agent or university
- Agent network size depends on the amount of support we can give; not number of students we want
- Implementing an Agent Management system (UCosmic) was a priority
- Tracking results is critical
 - Commission process
 - Student satisfaction
 - Student academic progress
 - Return on investment from agents

Agents as Partners

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- Agent-University relationship is promoted (university website, marketing materials, etc.).
- University sees agents as instrumental to marketing and admissions efforts (and provides necessary training, site visits, etc.).
- Agents are accountable to University-University is accountable to Agents.



Where UC Is Now:

Representative Network

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- UC utilizes 56 recruiting agencies on a commission/success basis in 35 countries including:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Australia | 11. India | 20. Norway | 30. Thailand |
| 2. Bahrain | 12. Jordan | 21. Oman | 31. Turkey |
| 3. Bhutan | 13. Korea, Republic of (South) | 22. Pakistan | 32. United Arab Emirates |
| 4. Burma (Myanmar) | 14. Kuwait | 23. Qatar | 33. UK |
| 5. Canada | 15. Macau | 24. Saudi Arabia | 34. Vietnam |
| 6. China | 16. Mexico | 25. Singapore | 35. Zimbabwe |
| 7. Colombia | 17. Nepal | 26. South Africa | |
| 8. Denmark | 18. Netherlands | 27. Sri Lanka | |
| 9. Finland | 19. New Zealand | 28. Sweden | |
| 10. Hong Kong | | 29. Taiwan | |



Who We Work With

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- Now work with a wider range of agents, some have US-only focus; some work with US and other countries
 - Main concern is having a US lead person or team
 - Want to see success with US placements before signing with UC
 - Need to be in markets that support UC international strategy and match our resources
 - Emphasis on AIRC certified agencies



Standards and Best Practices

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- If your institution uses agents you should be an institutional member of the American International Recruitment Council (AIRC)
- Moving forward institutions, with few exceptions, should only contract with properly screened / certified agencies.

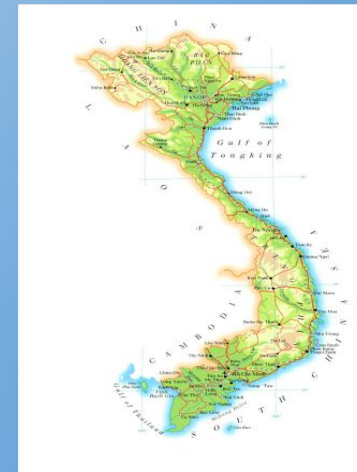
Contract Details

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- Agencies receive 9% commission on paid tuition (per head) for the first year of study (2 semester payments).
- Paid tuition is tuition and non-resident surcharge minus any scholarships.
- Agencies receive a flat fee of \$500 (\$250 per semester) for fully funded students.
- UC chose the per head model for commission over flat fees or marketing fees.

Regional Staff to Provide Support for Agency Network

- UC uses dedicated representatives in China (2), India (1) and Vietnam (1). We have hired full-time representatives (country coordinators) who train staff in the other representative offices and function as an extension of our admissions office.





Dedicated Staff for Working with Recruiting Agencies

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- Director of International Admissions
- Director of International Services
- Asst. Director – Agent Network
- Asst. Director – Marketing
- Asst. Director – Processing
- Business Manager (Commission Payments)
- Four regional staff (2 China, 1 India, 1 Vietnam)
 - Will increase foreign-based staff soon



Changes UC has made in support of our agent network

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- Created standard contract and commission rate.
- Implemented new Application Fee structure.
- Developed our first International Student Prospectus – currently on fifth version.
- Developed a comprehensive Representative Manual – requires frequent updating.
- Conduct regular site visits for training and recruiting at agent offices and host country coordinators for
 - on-campus training
- Engage the entire university in the recruitment
 - strategy – taking advantage of opportunities from
 - student and faculty travel



Upcoming Support for Agents

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- Developing on-line training modules for agents
- Expanding marketing resources for agent network
 - Set of tools (videos, graphics, etc.) that all can use
 - Creating agency-specific marketing plans
- Goal of holding an annual on-campus training for representatives.
- Developing communication plan to keep agents updated and motivated



Agent Management System (UCosmic)

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- UCosmic is a comprehensive and dynamic data –management system that allows the university to track the breadth of our international activities and agreements. Windows of activity include:

Agency Management Module

Activity by Foreign Institution

Feeder Institutions

Faculty International Activity

Faculty Degrees Earned Abroad

Education Abroad
Programs/Destinations

Corporate International Activity

International Student Organizations

- The University of Cincinnati and SUNY launched the UCosmic Consortium in January 2011. It is an international open –source software consortium open to institutions, foundations, government agencies and independent consultants worldwide.



Agent Management Module for UCosmic

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- The Agent Management Module in Ucosmic helps UC manage our relationships with agents. Key functionality include:

Application Management

Agreement Management

Commission Management

Relationship Management – communications, trainings, student histories, etc.

UCosmic Demo: <https://www.uc.edu/webapps/ucosmic/>



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Agents Are Not The Only Answer

- Need a balanced approach to recruitment
 - Work with commission-based agents
 - Institutional Partnerships, such as ELS, foreign universities and community colleges
 - Direct high school outreach
 - EducationUSA
 - Alumni and traveling students

Tracking Results

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- Need a tracking mechanism for commission payments
- Interview/survey newly arrived students for agent feedback
- Track academic progress of students by agent office



Student Success

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- At the start of fall semester 2012 UC International Services worked with our office of Institutional Research to prepare an assessment of the success/retention of students who matriculated at UC and were recruited by agency representatives.

Key Findings

- There is no statistical significance in in the average of GPAs of most agencies. However, some agencies are recruiting more and better students than others.
- There was a statistically significant difference between the average First-Year GPAs and Cumulative GPAs of Agency-Recruited and Non-Agency Recruited students (non-agency students performed slightly better).
- There is a statistically significant difference between Agency-Recruited students and Non-Agency Recruited students in regard to likelihood of success. (Agency-recruited students perform better).



ISB Entry 2010 Agent Summary Findings

i-graduate

19th April 2011



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How did you apply to your current course at this university?

(choose one only)

- Direct online application
- Direct paper application
- Via an education agent
- Via another university
- Via a supervisor/tutor
- University Placement Service (including U.S. or foreign government sponsoring agency or organization)
- University representative office overseas
- Other



her Education in a Global Context

Please rate the service you received from the agent/representative office.

- Very poor
- Poor
- Good
- Very good

Please tell us the name of your agent:

Please tell us the city your agent is based in:

(This information will be useful for your university to see where these services are working best)

Would you recommend the agent/overseas representative that you used to other students thinking of applying?

- I would actively recommend people to use my agent/representative
- If asked, I would encourage people to use my agent/representative
- I would neither encourage nor discourage people to use my agent/representative
- If asked, I would discourage people from using my agent/representative
- I would actively discourage people from using my agent/representative

Which of the following factors helped you choose your agent?

(check all that apply)

- Agent was member of national organization (such as AAERI, JAOS, etc.)
- Agent was certified or recognized by international standards (such as being a "Trusted Partner", certified through AIRC, a Hobsons agent, etc.)
- Agent was recommended by others (friends, teachers, family etc.)
- Agent was recommended by the university
- Reputation of the agent
- Other, please specify

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Agree	Agree strongly
I would not have applied to this university without the help of my agent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you been contacted by your agent/ representative after arriving at the University?

- Yes
- No

If you wish to add comments on your agent/representative office, please do so here:

- Things to Keep in Mind:
 - Agent management requires a serious commitment and hidden expenses
 - University generally gets out what it puts in
 - Have realistic expectations from agents
 - Have realistic expectation of ourselves
 - Size of the network
 - Diversity of our agent portfolio
 - Balance between quality vs. quantity



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Questions & Discussion

Thank you ...

John Demer
Director – Americas
ICEF
jdemer@icef.com

David Anderson
Vice President
ELS Language Centers
danderson@els.edu

Ronald Cushing
Director – International Services
University of Cincinnati
cushinrb@ucmail.uc.edu

Re-imagining Higher Education in a Global Context