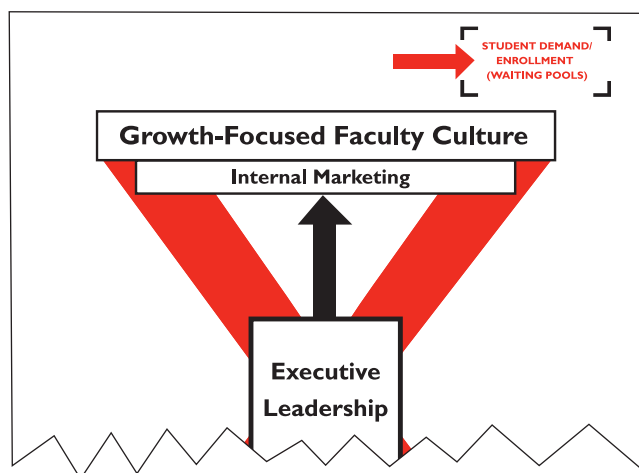


# THE ROLE OF FACULTY IN ADMISSION

by Independent School Management

In the strategic roles given to various functions within a private-independent school, teachers are not left out. The Board provides the resources (money, facility, and management structure) to support the school head and management team, and the school head/management team provides a predictable and supportive environment within which exceptional faculty can thrive. The faculty's strategic role is to *be aware of and drive successful student re-recruitment and new student recruitment*. During these uncertain economic times, teachers **must** understand how critical their roles are in the admission process.

ISM would go so far as to say that a growth-oriented faculty culture is a precondition for healthy enrollment numbers, and that the internal marketing that teachers do is essential as they demonstrate the value of the education they provide. (We can see this illustrated in the ISM X™, particularly in the strategic outcome variables [student demand, enrollment, waiting pools] on the top right-hand side of X.<sup>1</sup>)



The admission office can often have a poor relationship with faculty. This is usually due to the admission director's assumption that faculty should be supporting him/her in the admission process. This is often associated with frustration as materials (stories and photos) are asked for to inform the web site and the marketing materials distributed by the school. This is, in and of itself, a worthwhile endeavor. There

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is nothing more apt to sell your school than up-to-date testimonials, current-event narratives, and arresting images of the school's mission being delivered in the lives of students. The admission director in this scenario, however, has the whole thing backwards. As your school's admission director, your role is to support the faculty culture and recognize that the relationship between the admission office and the faculty is a service relationship. The teachers' task is so all-embracing that they actually don't have time to find the stories and photos that you seek. Consider therefore doing the following.

- Make a habit of spending time at least every two weeks in visiting classrooms—not as part of campus tours, but out of genuine interest in what teachers do, in the interest of building relationships with the faculty, and to be better able to verbalize to prospective parents the powerful relationships between teachers and students that enhance educational outcomes. Over the course of every semester, visit each classroom at least once.
- Talk with faculty, students, and those parents with whom you established a strong relationship during the admission process. Collect those stories and create a photo journal to accompany them; ask teachers, parents, and students to help you edit and select stories and photos for publication, both electronically and in print.
- Once a year, ask the division directors and the school head for time to talk with the faculty about the admission profile—the basis on which you and your department make admission decisions. Encourage your teachers to supply feedback on students from the past, both good (fit the profile) and questionable (did not fit) attributes.
- Encourage teachers to invite you to special classroom events—the first grade poetry recitation;

the seventh grade presentation of its original drama written in English/history; the chemistry lab started, run, and finished by the students themselves.

The interesting thing is that, once teachers perceive and believe that your attitude is one of service, they will do those things they didn't "have time for" before. They will become your partners in the job of recruiting new students, and they will be more focused on internal marketing to retain current students (making your job as easy as it can possibly be).

So what should faculty do in their strategic retention role (at the top of the ISM X)? Let's go back to the beginning. Faculty must do two things and you have a role in each.

1. Faculty must commit to their own growth and renewal—you don't have any influence over whether they do or not. However, your role is to publicize, celebrate, and affirm those who make that commitment by profiling those teachers and highlighting their professional excellence.
2. Faculty must know the "30-second speech" that sells to parents the daily value of what is happening in their classrooms. Your role is to coach the faculty and model the proper use of this critical communication.

Teachers have an important role to play in admission. As admission director, you have a responsibility to engender the appropriate relationship with them. When you do that, you expand your own power to fill your school with mission-appropriate students, and make allies in every classroom who will support you.

## NOTES

1. For a full description of the ISM X, see "The Private-Independent School Headship: A Management and Leadership Xcellence Formulation," *Ideas & Perspectives*, vol. 32, no. 1, <https://isminc.com/pdf/unsorted/ISM-Theory-for-Consortium.pdf>.