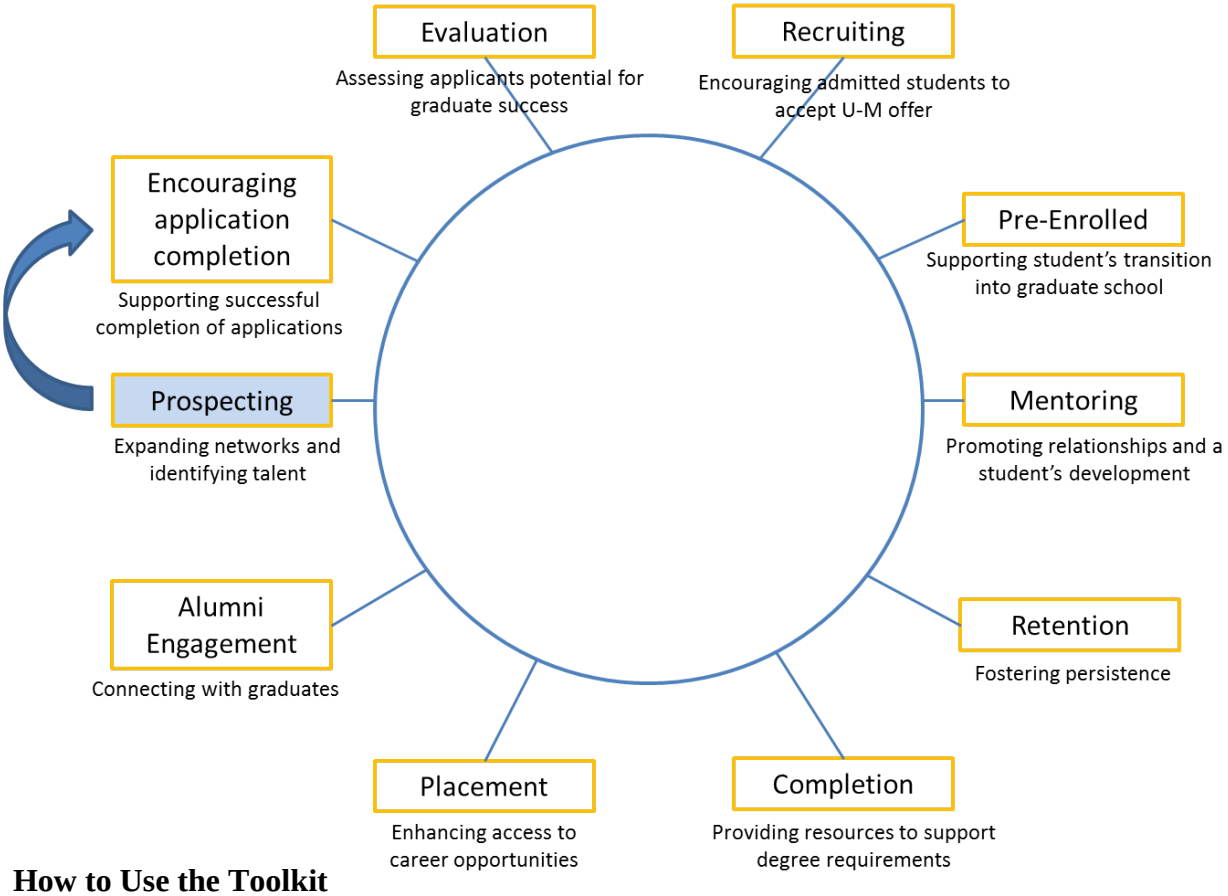
RACKHAM CIRCLE OF RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT OF PROMISING PRACTICES



How to Use the Toolkit

This toolkit is modified from the original document which supplements the Rackham Recruitment Workshop, the goal of which is to support programs in establishing a recruitment strategy and plan, including setting realistic short-term and long-term goals. Developing such a plan involves:

- examining program strengths and weakness, barriers and opportunities;
- collecting and using data on student / program outcomes for decision making;
- including perspectives of students (present & past);
- periodically evaluating progress toward recruitment goals and making adjustments as needed;
- recognizing that effective recruiting requires continual action and attention and a collective, department-wide effort!

Creating and sustaining improvements in recruitment and enrollment is possible. The paths leading to your desired changes may vary, and in each case there are differences in the ways that views of and needs related to diversity are infused with the program's identity and mission.

What is constant, however, is the key role of faculty – in collaboration with a team of staff, students, and alumni – as a motivating and critical source of change. The "**Circle of Recruitment**" is a representation of multiple dimensions or phases related to effective recruitment. The circle includes stages that both precede and follow the actual admissions decision.

PROSPECTING PHASE

Involves efforts to identify individuals who should be in your application pool, i.e., those with attributes and interests that complement the scholarly foci and training goals of your program and who have strong potential for success in graduate study. Key to this stage is expanding networks of prospective students and becoming more aware of places where talented students from diverse backgrounds are being developed.

Outreach

- Summer emersion / research programs (Research Experiences for Undergraduates & McNair Scholars, Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) U-STAR, etc.).
- Some disciplines have activities for underrepresented minority (URM) undergraduate students in their national organizations.
- A program's website is often the first point of contact a prospective student has with your program. Having an accurate informative and an updated website is essential.
- Consult with your current students about how they found out about graduate programs to learn more ways to market your program.
- Optimize the use of social media and encourage an online community. Post blogs of student experiences and current faculty research. Hold virtual visit weekends for international students.

Exposure

- Hold a prospective student day / open house; make sure prospects have opportunities to interact with a broad range of faculty and students.
- Create program-specific materials to share your narrative: Who are you? What is this field? What do you do? What are some career options? Why U-M?
- Have current students and faculty recruit together.

Collaborate

- Send current students back to share their positive experiences with undergraduates from their alma mater, and surrounding institutions.
- Develop relationships with faculty from other institutions to create potential feeder schools.
- When faculty from other institutions visit U-M, ask them to bring along undergraduates with strong potential for graduate study.
- Ask alumni in academic institutions to identify potential applicants and have them encourage their best students to apply to U-M for summer research experiences and / or graduate school.

For information about the recruitment resources available to the Rackham Graduate School community, please contact Emma Flores-Scott, Ph.D. (emxf@umich.edu).

ENCOURAGING APPLICATION COMPLETION PHASE

Encouraging Application Completion involves efforts to maximize the number of prospective students identified in the prospecting stage to apply to your program.

Communication

- Survey prospective students to learn how they heard of U-M. Ask them why they applied? Why did they select U-M (or not)?
- Encourage applicants to ask questions and provide answers.

EVALUATION PHASE

Evaluation focuses on the admissions decision process, and it includes the procedures and criteria used to select students with best "fit" with your program. Key to this phase are programs efforts and skill in assessing applicant talent and potential for graduate success, including use of holistic approaches.

Review Considerations

- Take a holistic review approach to evaluating applications by considering the range of characteristics that are required for graduate success in your department / program discipline, rather than relying on single indicators of talent / potential. To support the use of holistic approach, review the following website: http://www.rackham.umich.edu/faculty-staff/information-for-programs/resources-for-recruiters/holistic-review-of-applications
- Enlist your faculty – especially those involved in admissions in your program – to distinguish key attributes relevant to graduate success in your particular discipline.
- Assessing a student's potential (sometimes referred to as "grit" or "fire in the belly") is about measuring a student's persistence in the face of adversity or challenge. This has been found to be a better predictor of academic success than traditional measures like the standardized tests.
- Consider diversity in prospective students' background in creating cohorts of students with a range of backgrounds and prior experiences that can enrich the current student community.
- Send a message to the prospective students to let them know when all the application materials have been received.

Communication

- Approach interviews as an opportunity for you to learn about prospective students and for prospective students to learn about your program in order to consider fit between the prospects' interests and goals with the foci / training capacity of the program.
- Make sure that prospective student visitors have opportunities to meet with a range of faculty and students from diverse demographic and scholarly backgrounds.
- Consider using phone or video conference interviews with applicants who cannot attend on-campus events.

RECRUITING PHASE

Post-Admissions Recruiting includes efforts to encourage admitted applicants to accept U-M admissions offer over those of competitors.

Outreach & Recruiting

- Involve current students in recruitment efforts throughout this post-admissions recruitment stage.
- Contact applicants' undergraduate advisors (recommendation letter writers) via e-mail to thank them for encouraging their advisees to apply.
- Create and manage a student waitlist.
- Optimize your use of social media.
- Survey those prospective students who don't accept admission to learn how to improve your recruiting efforts.
- Some programs find that on-campus visits following applicant admissions (recruitment weekends) can be an effective mechanism for yielding students.
- Offer letters should detail funding commitment, including years and summer funding as well as Rackham resources.
- Offer financial supports when possible such as flexible professional development funds.
- Use endowment / block grant to top off offers and / or to compete with offers from other institutions.
- Rackham Merit Fellow (RMF) offer letters written by faculty are more impactful than a form letter.

PRE-ENROLLED PHASE

The Pre-Enrolled phase is the period between students' acceptance of admission and their enrollment in the program. Key to this phase are efforts to support all incoming students as they begin to make physical and psychological transitions into graduate school.

Outreach

- Stay in touch over the summer with incoming students through phone calls, e-mails, and / or other communications.
    - Create a Facebook page for the incoming class to help build community.
    - Consider using a summer reading list and have students blog their reactions.
    - Hold Google Hangouts before students arrive to educate them on different aspects of starting graduate school, Ann Arbor, moving, etc.
- Include admitted students on department newsletter mailings.
- Have faculty mentors send students a few example readings from the faculty's scholarly area to review over the summer to support incoming students in getting a sense of the field / subfield and faculty mentors' projects / work.
- Hold a Boot Camp around core / foundational academic areas relevant to your program.

Welcoming

- If advisors are not assigned during the post admissions recruiting phase, consider advisor matching prior to Fall enrollment.
- Provide a Welcome Letter in which you identify a student's advisor (with contact information); provide orientation information and other useful information.
- Assign current students as ambassadors to help orient each incoming student.

MENTORING PHASE

Mentoring is strongly related to student retention. It is distinguished here as its own phase, because of increasing evidence of the central role of positive student-faculty mentoring relationships in decreasing attrition, and in promoting student completion and placement outcomes.

- Understand that quality mentoring is a program-level responsibility, and programs can play important roles in setting norms and high expectations around mentoring.
- Develop procedures for choosing advisors / mentors and then provide mentors with guidelines on how to communicate expectations for tenure in the department.
- When possible and appropriate, allow students to be exposed to multiple possible mentors in the first year of graduate study.
- Encourage faculty and students to develop Individualized Development Plans together and to use these plans as the basis for assessing student progress to learning and professional goals.
- Provide new and junior faculty with information about any mentoring supports made available to them either by the department, the college or the university.

RETENTION & COMPLETION PHASE

The ***Retention*** **and** ***Completion*** phases include program-level policies, procedures, practices and norms that influence the academic development of students, prevent attrition, and encourage persistence and completion. Programs' academic and social climates are key influences on retention and completion.

Provide Resources

- Orientation programs customized for each stage of your program (i.e., pre-candidacy, candidacy, pre and post defense).
- Provide appropriate resources (faculty, facilities and funding), to allow students to complete their education and research in a timely and productive manner.
- Provide knowledge of available funds for unexpected emergency situations through the graduate program, dean's offices, the Office of Financial Aid, Center for the Education of Women and Rackham.

Facilitate Progress

- Host dissertation "Boot Camps," seminars, or workshops to assist students' progress and provide practical strategies for completing their dissertation.
- Require each first-year student to have an advisor or advisory structure.
- Offer academic support programs to help students stay on track.
- The office of Graduate Student Success puts on a series of core skills workshops available to all Rackham students.
- Provide workshops for students to help them get the most out of the dissertation advising process, including selecting a dissertation advisor, configuring a committee, and related topics.
- Host writing retreats or dedicated writing events where students can write in a quiet distraction free zone for a set period of time in department conference rooms, other places on campus or selected venues.
- Expand advisory groups that deal with general issues and issues specific to dissertation completion.
- Enhance writing consultancy through additional writing workshops and one-on-one support.

Set Expectations

- Have yearly meetings with all the students in your program to check their academic and professional development.
- Discuss characteristics of outstanding dissertations to inform students about what is expected and required.

Award Accomplishments

- Acknowledge faculty (through announcements, mentoring awards, etc.) with demonstrated record of supporting students in completing their degrees, including those that finished in a timely manner (based on ideals of program).
- Recognize success and reward the achievements of programs and individuals in your program.

Gather Information

- Conduct exit interviews with graduating students to solicit feedback on their graduate experience.

PLACEMENT PHASE

Includes the career / job options that students are able to access following degree completion from their programs. Strong and complete placement records can be a powerful recruitment tool.

Provide Information

- Advertise on-campus resources: Career Center, Professional Development at Rackham.
- Take the time to explain options in and out of academia, and help them explore options that make sense for them.
- Promote internships or assistantships that will help them develop job search and presentation skills.
- Network with alumni, employers, organizations, and other groups that offer potential professional opportunities.

Facilitate Student Action

- Encourage students to attend conferences and / or events that will allow them to network.
- Focus assignments and work on skills the students can use (e.g., teaching, administrative works, leadership, etc.).
- Encourage participation in mock interviews, career fairs, resume review, etc.
- Encourage students to start thinking about life after graduate school right after achieving candidacy.

ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT PHASE

Alumni Engagement is an often overlooked but useful resource for recruitment. This phase includes developing programmatic strategies to learn from alumni, and to engage alumni in creating "feeder" pipelines and in supporting on-campus and off-campus recruitment activities.

Encourage Involvement

- Create an alumni component in your recruitment strategy to help alumni get involved in the recruitment process.
- Send newsletters to help inform alumni about upcoming recruitment activities for prospective students as well as special happenings on campus.
- Identify advocates or online ambassadors among alumni.
- Give opportunities for feedback and engagement.
- Create a diverse Alumni Board representing your field and engage them with your current students and around curriculum changes.
- Ask alumni to keep a strong relationship with the students they refer and mentor them though the admissions process.

Reward

- Acknowledge and show your appreciation for those who have helped out in the past and present, including volunteers and venue partners.
- Publicize the accomplishments of your alumni including job placement and publication on your webpage and / or other social media tool.

Create Opportunities

- Invite alumni to a course or workshop giving their perspective on their particular job market (industry, education, etc.).
- Use your national conference to connect alumni with current and prospective students.
- Foster a culture where current students are part of a community including the program graduates who become the leaders in your discipline.