



## APROPOS OF

**W**ELCOME TO INTERNATIONAL EDUCATOR'S FORUM, "Apropos of..." where readers have the opportunity to continue the dialogue of a given forum topic by submitting their own essays. Each essay will be considered but not all submissions will be published. In this issue, Cheryl Darrup-Boychuck responds to Chris Deegan's article, "On the Backs of Turtles," which launched the forum in the summer 2004 issue of *IE*. Darrup-Boychuck offers additional perspectives on the role of technology in recruiting students as well as insights on how educators can use technology effectively...or not. In a new topic, Jacqueline McLaughlin discusses the benefits of experiential education combined with study abroad. Students, in her experience as a biology professor, come away with a deeper understanding of the host culture and become more passionate about their chosen field of study. To contribute to the forum, contact *IE*'s managing editor, Eric Kronenwetter, by e-mail ([erick@nafsa.org](mailto:erick@nafsa.org)) or telephone (202.737.3699, ext. 237), or visit *IE* on the Web at [www.nafsa.org/IE](http://www.nafsa.org/IE).

Apropos of...

## e-Recruitment

*By Cheryl Darrup-Boychuck*

**U**.S. JOURNAL OF ACADEMICS, which has been studying and presenting sessions on e-recruitment trends and techniques since [usjournal.com](http://usjournal.com) went online in 1996, has in recent months noticed a distinct frustration among more than a few colleagues involved in international student recruitment/marketing: "e-recruitment doesn't work for us..."

Our response can be borrowed from Katherine Yngve's "Not Taking the Plunge?" article from the summer 2004 edition of *International Educator*: "After more than a decade of discussion, the time is long overdue for international educators to reassess the complex interplay between telecommunications technology and intercultural learning—in effect, to cease complaining about how the educational culture has shifted and learn how to adapt to it."

In our case, we're addressing "intercultural learning" in its incubation—when a globally minded student initially decides to study abroad (to focus even further, when a non-U.S. student decides to study in the United States).



PUNCHSTOCK



**We are digital immigrants, trying desperately to deal with digital natives who are growing up in the digital age.**

As the Institute of International Education's (IIE) Todd Davis notes in the *Atlas of Student Mobility* (IIE p. 57): "Education = Shopping." Increasingly, this generation of tech-savvy students shops online.

The Internet has become as valuable as the local phonebook used to be. A new freshman on campus invariably wonders, "Where can I get the best/cheapest pizza?" He'll likely ask a friend, or see a flyer on the dorm's (cork-backed) bulletin board, or use a well-placed coupon found in his orientation packet. Will the owner of the local pizza place know definitively how each order originated? No. Tracking the results is messy, at best; most orders probably occurred because of a combination of promotional factors, with the heaviest weight allocated to word-of-mouth.

And so it is with e-recruitment. We now have the luxury of history (albeit a brief one), so we can get a sense of what works and what doesn't. Marketing by interruption (i.e., pop-up ads or unsolicited e-messages) works only when the message has the distinct capacity to complement current content online. For example, *Harvard Business Review* noted in its November-December 2000 issue that Johnson and Johnson orchestrated a campaign where banner ads for Tylenol headache reliever unfurled on e-brokers' sites whenever the stock market fell by more than 100 points. It's a matter of breaking into the "dialogue" of the Internet user at the moment when a message/opportunity is most likely to be helpful.

For our purposes in e-recruitment, the most successful campaigns are those that fully integrate all of a campus' marketing activities, from using the Internet to generate initial inquiries, to building a database from which counselors extract student names based on the geographic regions they intend to visit, and then sending special invitations to those selected students.

Will the counselor know definitively how each enrollee first learned about the campus? No. Like the pizza analogy, tracking the results is messy, at best, with most enrollees probably landing there after sampling a cocktail of promotional offerings, with word-of-mouth (WOM) as the strongest ingredient.

Here's a primary example of how to blend "the old and the new" when it comes to WOM and technology: Always remind prospective students to forward the message or URL to a friend who may also be interested in studying in the United States. WOM meets "word-of-mouse."

Still, it's naïve to base an entire marketing strategy on hoping that people within certain spheres of influence will recommend a particular campus. Lost opportunities abound if a campus is not easily found when and where these demanding, globally minded students look for it (primarily online). And lost opportunities are impossible to calculate.

With regard to technology, there must be a fundamental shift in all campus' thought processes. To borrow a bit of wisdom from Stephen Downes, the author of [www.downes.ca](http://www.downes.ca), a digital research laboratory for innovation in the use of online media in education: "New technology plus old practice equals old practice plus a pile of useless junk."

It isn't easy. But international student recruiters and counselors can find comfort in the familiar terms of our trade: We are digital immigrants, trying desperately to deal with digital natives who are growing up in the digital age.

Just as we don't need to know how to use a slide rule these days, we don't need to know the mechanics behind the latest mobile digital campus tours—where GPS (Global Positioning System) determines the location of a prospective student, then tells the student about that particular place.

International student recruiters and counselors must, however, respect (and yes, embrace) this new, ever-evolving techie medium and how students relate to it. It's an exciting time—when the scope of creative opportunities parallel those of the Renaissance, according to digital arts professionals (defined as those at the heart of the creative, technical, and professional progress of the Internet and evolving forms of interactive media).

International student recruiters and counselors must accept the fact that, as Martin Ryder (University of Colorado) is quoted in the Deegan's "Turtles" article that appeared in the summer 2004 issue of *International Educator*: "The proliferation of information technology is leading to the creation of entirely new sets of spatial, cultural, and social relations. Virtual communities have emerged from the intersection of humanity and technology..."

As with many of our tasks, we must serve as facilitators and "bring in the experts" to take care of the details.

**IE**

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