



Husson University

Innovating Programs as a Community

A small, private university located in Maine, Husson University stands apart as the only New England institution focused primarily on professional careers and driven to “educate students for the jobs that do not yet exist.” With a mission to drive purpose and opportunity to its student body, Husson serves as an institution that excels in both affordability and outcomes for undergraduates and graduates.

Dr. Lynne Coy-Ogan, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost of Husson University, explained that one of the strongest attractions for potential students is the experiential learning opportunities offered through simulation labs and experiential classrooms across every program on campus. The institution has a strong focus on student outcomes and offers 98% of its students some level of financial assistance. As the state’s largest College of Business, Husson also graduates more MBA students than any other institution in Maine.

Setting a Strong Foundation

Husson’s commitment to accessibility is a leading factor in its program decisions, which regularly leads the university to thoughtfully review current and new academic programs. Dr. Coy-Ogan explained that this was the reason they reached out to partner with Encoura’s research division, Eduventures, for program research, assessment, and recommendations.

“We didn’t previously have a consistent vetting process for new degree programs at the institutional level, so often the individual academic departments themselves were charged to complete the market analysis work. In the Office of the Provost, I saw great variance in how that was being handled and wanted to ensure credibility of our data,” Dr. Coy-Ogan shared.

Challenge

- Complete a review of current bachelor’s degree programming
- Leverage data to make current programmatic decisions and/or adjustments
- Gather data to inform conversations for potential new programming in the future

Solution

- Eduventures Program Strength Assessment

Benefits

- Developed a consistent institutional review process for any new program
- Strategically reinvested resources into new research-supported initiatives and programs
- Unified campus stakeholders behind promising new initiatives with national data
- Gained new understanding of competitors and the university’s competitive advantage

In addition to having solid data-supported decisions for each of the university's academic programs, Dr. Coy-Ogan found competitor analysis information to be the largest benefit from the Eduventures partnership. "For a decade, we had double digit enrollment growth which stemmed from a combination of professional programs, price points, and the visibility of some of our new degrees and facility investments. Many times we were scrambling to

Rallying Behind the Data

When a university partners with Eduventures for program assessment, the institution receives a Scorecard from the organization that displays a matrix of each program's external metric (market demand, competitive landscape, and regional labor market) and internal metric (program performance) ratings. Dr. Coy-Ogan described the quick impact that this data had



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keep up with the enrollment demand and ensure our infrastructure could respond to the interest in Husson. During this process we found that we did not have a lot of benchmark or comparative competitor analysis. That was a real value that Eduventures added to our program review structure and implementation."

Dr. Coy-Ogan described how the regional market change was also a large factor in pushing the university to be even more intentional with its program portfolio. "When New England as a whole started to experience an enrollment decline, it became prudent that we balance our program portfolio and become very purposeful with cost analysis, program implementation, and ROI. It was equally as important that we were pruning out underperforming elements so that we could make room for new opportunities in the marketplace and shifts that would exist. COVID has only accelerated and magnified the importance of this process."

on her university's programs. "The Program Strength Assessment Scorecard was incredibly powerful for us. We spoke about it at the deans' level, and it led us to remove certain programs, to reinvest positions and allocations into other new initiatives, and to work with our marketing team—implementing many of the recommendations by Eduventures. In other areas, the research helped us to better understand our top performing programs and how we can keep them dominant in the market."

Since receiving the institution-specific program research from Eduventures, Dr. Coy-Ogan shared that Husson University has set up a consistent review system for any new program which involves a vetting process, marketing, timeline, and recruiting initiative considerations.

Dr. Coy-Ogan explained one specific initiative that has specifically developed from the program research. "One of the areas Eduventures suggested that we evaluate was Environmental Science. We weren't necessarily surprised to see that there were places where our science programs were competing with themselves. Given the

fact that our campus community was still interested in green initiatives, we decided that while the data was showing we could probably remove it as a major, we would leave it as a concentration with a 2-year monitoring process to review enrollment. If future enrollments are not favorable, we could instead create broader green initiatives across campus and not necessarily in the curriculum. The research from Eduventures gave us a palatable way to take something that could be a potentially polarizing decision across campus and have more time to think it through purposefully to create additional options for the larger community.”

Uniting the Campus Community

The objectivity that the Eduventures data provides has been foundational to uniting the campus community behind academic program decisions. Dr. Coy-Ogan continued, “It provides objective data points which support the need to reinvest in new opportunities - and not just options that have historically been available.

making program decisions internally, they can experience challenging reactions to eliminating programs on campus. We were very careful to try to create plans that would not just answer initial questions, but also would be able to stand before the types of concerns that any institution may face from students, alumni and faculty.”

In addition to helping communicate with students and faculty, Dr. Coy-Ogan explained that the university also appreciates having an internal program process with the level of national due diligence that Eduventures provides when making program recommendations to its trustees.

“The objective competitive lens has been the most valuable part of the partnership process with Eduventures,” Dr. Coy-Ogan revealed. “Given the trustees’ significant commitments to a multi-million dollar building and for new cutting edge technology, they wanted to make sure we were planning strategically in terms of our academic portfolio offerings. This included assuring that historical elements had received a current face-lift, that new competitor opportunities were being fully vetted so that necessary resources could be prioritized, and



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There are often complicated implementational considerations when making changes within departments and that’s why we sought the opportunity to partner with Eduventures and maximize the data sources available to the University. Having the data mined externally, received from multiple sources, cross-analyzed amongst competitor institutions, and highlighting state, regional, and national trends lends credibility and thoughtfulness to the decision-making process. When institutions are

that future strategic moves would come from best practice recommendations by researchers who were seeing this emergence out in the field on a national level and could provide guidance to maximize our strategy. We hadn’t historically required comprehensive feasibility reviews prior to implementing program portfolio revisions, but this national data and support has uniquely equipped us to move forward more strategically.”

The internal and external program data produced for Husson by Eduventures provided the institution with a realistic picture of its current standing in the New England higher education market, as well as pointed out recommendations on how to strengthen its presence. Since receiving this research, Husson has already implemented a consistent review process for all programs, gained insight into its competitors, and established credibility among campus stakeholders. Husson is now more equipped than ever to move forward making knowledgeable and united program decisions that empower it to confidently continue “educating students for the jobs that do not yet exist.”