

Session 4.2

Chair- Kelsey

Reporter- Becci

HELOA National Conference- Teacher & Advisor panel

- Shelley Brown- SB - DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM & PERFORMANCE, Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group
- Stephanie Hall - SH - Head of Careers, St George's School, Edinburgh
- Anthony Moore - AM - Careers Lead, Whitburn Church of England Academy
- Gemma Haynes- Logan- GHL

Choices/Decision making process & current concerns with applicants

- How are your applications going, are students focused on the equal consideration deadline?
 - SH- 850 applied just before Dec and 300 pending. Finding that still go over Christmas deadline, have to take in account exams, so will be hitting the end of Jan deadline. Got good infrastructure in the college to support students. The biggest change for them is that they have appointed specialist tutors. For new tutors coming in they have embraced, but for the existing tutors they are finding that more difficult to adjust
 - GHL- still on track for 850 applicants. Seen more Alumni putting applications in, mature students, from a variety of ages.
 - SB- applications are so much slower compared to 10 years ago, students need so much more help. Internal deadlines mean nothing. So many don't know what they want to do, so it is very last minute. Parental expectations are unrealistic, it's trying to give them realistic with 1 aspirational Uni in their application that is difficult. A lot of students really struggling with Personal statements.
 -
- Have you seen a change in the number of students applying to university this year?
 - AM- still got the same numbers applying, it has just pushed it back a fair bit.
 - SB- a lot of students going but then dropping out and not continuing. Part of the issue is the pressure that they feel that they have to go to university.
 - More students are staying local, cost of living? More are wanting to apply for DA but there aren't that many out there. Also a lot more commuting, affecting the dropout rates.
 - GHL- DA a lot more work needs to be done around them, a lot of misconceptions. The timings of the DA are difficult and that doesn't work with students' application cycles.
 - Kelsey- DAs a lot of us feel that there are more conversations that we are having to talk about more.

What are the barriers to HE that you're finding:

- SH Cost of living is a massive factor to their students. The idea of taking on a lot of debt is a hard barrier to overcome. Temptation to up their hours in the part time job. Mental health is also on the rise with students thinking they aren't ready to take on Uni right now
- AM- a lot of their students are struggling with that mental health, struggling to feel ready. Dept of uni, especially when they haven't got a set idea of what they want to know.
- GHL- students understand the value of the degree, Not having the right information that is there to show them the point of going to university. Some focus on the skills and this is what the students want to see. A lot of the careers pages are too traditional, whereas you can do lots of jobs with those degrees, keeping up with the times and keeping students clear with what they can do at the end of that university degree. Mental health and welfare isn't always obvious at

some universities and this does put students off when they are lacking in confidence about going to university, especially when they are worried about moving away from home etc.

- SB- mental health- you can almost always predict who is going to drop out. School is a much smaller environment, with lots of support whereas university is very isolating. Mental health is really challenging and is massively on the rise. The new references takes a lot of time and has revealed a lot of context that the school wasn't aware of before.

Do you use UCAS/UK uni/open days etc? And what can we do to make sure the students are getting what they need out of it?

- SH- they do a lot internally to help prepare. Open day perspectives- timing of those always fall in a short window and they fall on the same days, puts a lot of pressure on families and students. When students go to open days, it's a very generic message- big lectures don't provide personal touch which goes a long way. Outreach work is really important, taster days are so useful and schools love having those things with universities for these.
- SB- most useful thing is that their friends go to these days, you might know that those students might not get those grades, but speaking with subject specific staff or taster sessions really give them an insight into the course- gives them a reality check

How do you deal with the exhibitions and how do you go about supporting students to get there:

- AM dot take students to these due to the pressures on the timetable, but they do run their own HE fair with talks etc to allow students to talk to university representatives.
- SH- authorising absence to go out to these days- so many students to get off campus they cant physically get students off campus, but they do run their own HE fair. Have universities coming in to talk through the UCAS cycle and myth busting around universities which they find very critical to getting students and their parents involved.
- SB- Edinburgh UCAs, useful for 20% of students who have a specific idea of where they want to go, otherwise the rest of them are just a bit lost in their journeys. Every second year a HE fair- but really struggling to get UK universities to the fair. The cap on Scottish students is really frustrating, so this makes them look into UK institutions.

How do we break through the noise of all the different institutions reaching out to you? AND is funding for these visits difficult and what can we do to help?

- GHL- its always helpful to have a face to the name- meeting that person or having someone at the end of the email is vital. If people move and change then its really important that schools know this.
- SH- If I have an email that is forwarded to us, then they will be asked to be put on a mailing list to make it more personal.
- SB- What are the barriers to universities working with schools/colleges?- college contacts change much more frequently that schools. Change of provision, subject specific requests are more frequently coming through, for us is how do we work through this to make sure the best for the students. Offices aren't always passing on the info to the right students, this is very difficult when it is specific subject things. Its knowing how each college works and making that clear to us as a university.
- SB- want universities to come in, very receptive of this and want to work with a variety of universities.

Are there any sessions that you find most beneficial and is there anything that you want us to do more of?

- AM- Personal statement support is the most beneficial. This can be a big barrier to students applying to uni and so having people coming in to give insight into these can be very useful.
- SB- Personal Statements critical, but there needs to be more of a level information field on this, can be contradictory. We can only prepare them so much for HE, but doing sessions on how to fend for yourself and survive at uni could be more useful. A lot of their staff have been out of HE for a while, Uni's going in gives staff the CPD about the choices that students are making. Q&A and myth busting is useful and taster sessions very useful.

Do you find students are more receptive to uni staff and/or student ambassadors?

- SB- definitely both, they love having different people in
- GHL- love having the variety of people in where both students and parents can chat to university staff and students.
- SH- we have lots of people wanting to talk, but definitely the best ones are the ones where you give them things to do, interactive.
- SB- students who have done taster days in health have found that very useful

How can we better engage with schools and students in Scotland and what are biggest challenges faced by students who are thinking of applying to UK universities?

- SH- physical presents in Scotland is worthwhile. Get kids who are applying to the names they know, but being there will broaden that. Biggest challenges is the costs and some institutions aren't up to date with Scottish qualifications, this is a big barrier. Many UK universities have tariff points and this is difficult for Scottish students to work out as they don't have point systems. No consistency and not always clear.

One final comment/advice/something to take away- what would it be?

- AM- One of the issues our students asked about it the WP schemes, a lot of the students can access these schemes, can anything be done with the eligibility criteria. This can negatively impact some of these students.
- GHL- Opposite to the above, lots of WP students, better advertising of these WP activities.
- SB- collaborate and communicate- works well when this is done regularly.
- SH- Relationships, if you have good one then you can ask questions and create good work. Hard to actually speak with a person, speaking on the phone or whatever it might be rather than the website is the most important thing.