

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Basics: Tools and Tactics for Admissions Professionals at All Levels



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SEM Audit



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Heidi Buffington

Director of Admissions
Strategic Enrollment Management Officer



CliftonStrengths:

Learner | Arranger | Ideation | Achiever | Input



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Who are you?

Menti.com: Code



SEM is not just for upper leadership.

We all play a part.



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What is SEM?



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BERMUDA TRIANGLE



SEM is a comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain the optimum recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of students, where “optimum” is defined within the academic context of the institution. ... SEM is an institution-wide process that embraces virtually every aspect of an institution’s function and culture.

Michael Dolence

Strategic Enrollment Management





MAY THE PEACE
BE WITH YOU

SANTO

HELP

Camino
de
Santiago

Itinerario Cultural

citeh

ZYX

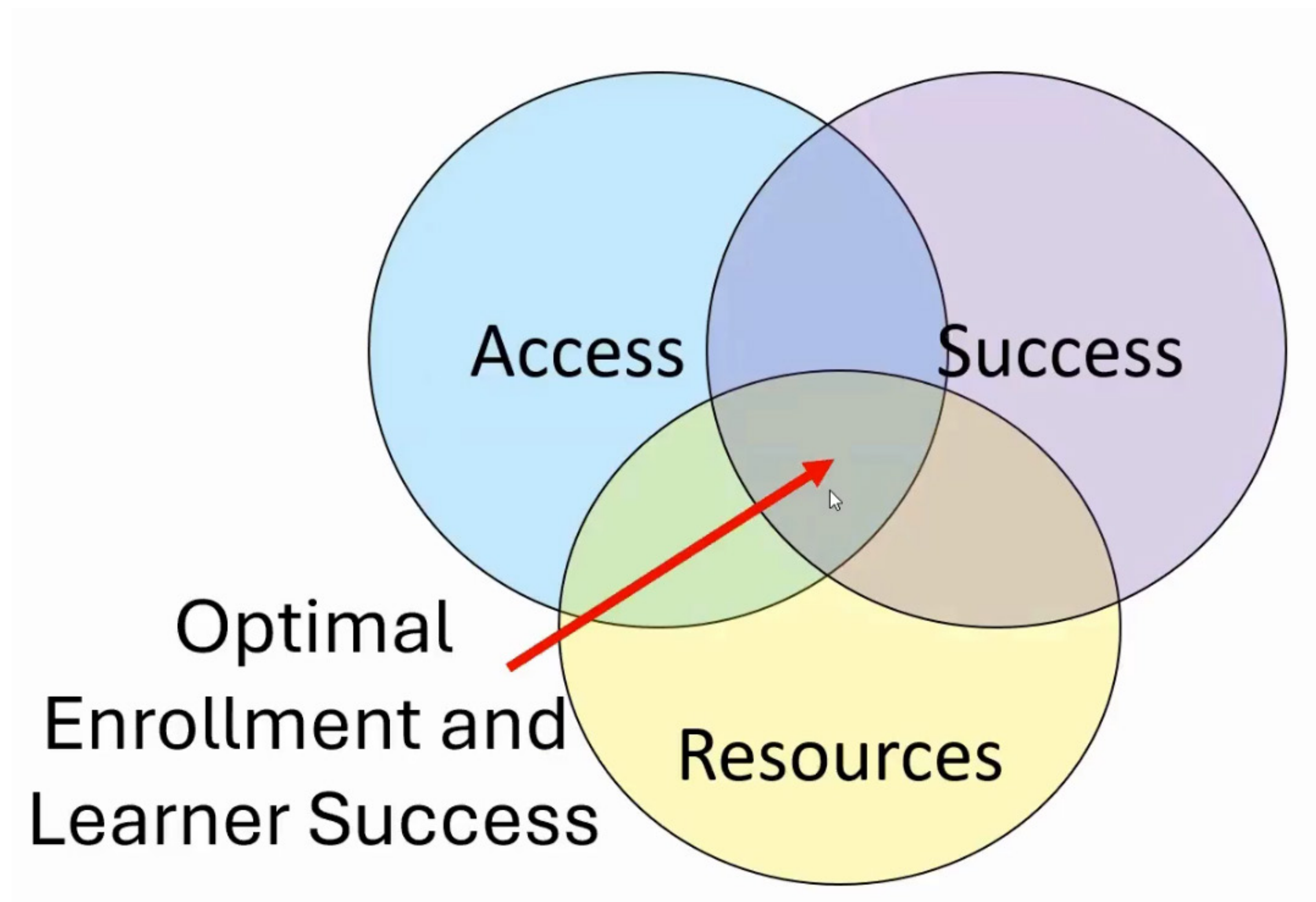
3 R's of SEM

1. Research
2. Recruitment
3. Retention



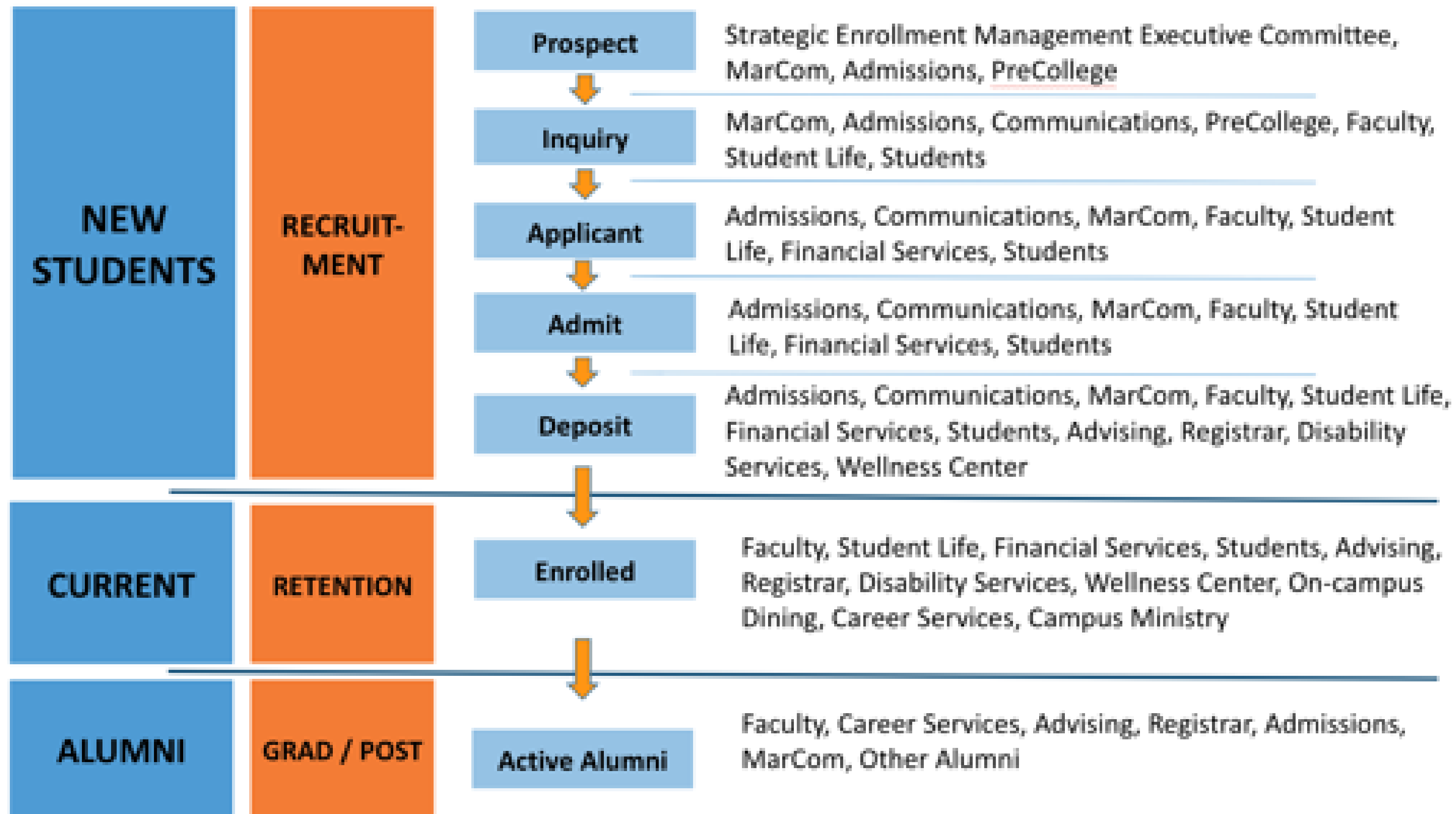
SEM is about student success

(and institutional success).



Henderson, 2024

Who is involved in Marketing, Recruiting and Retaining Students?



What is included in a SEM Plan?

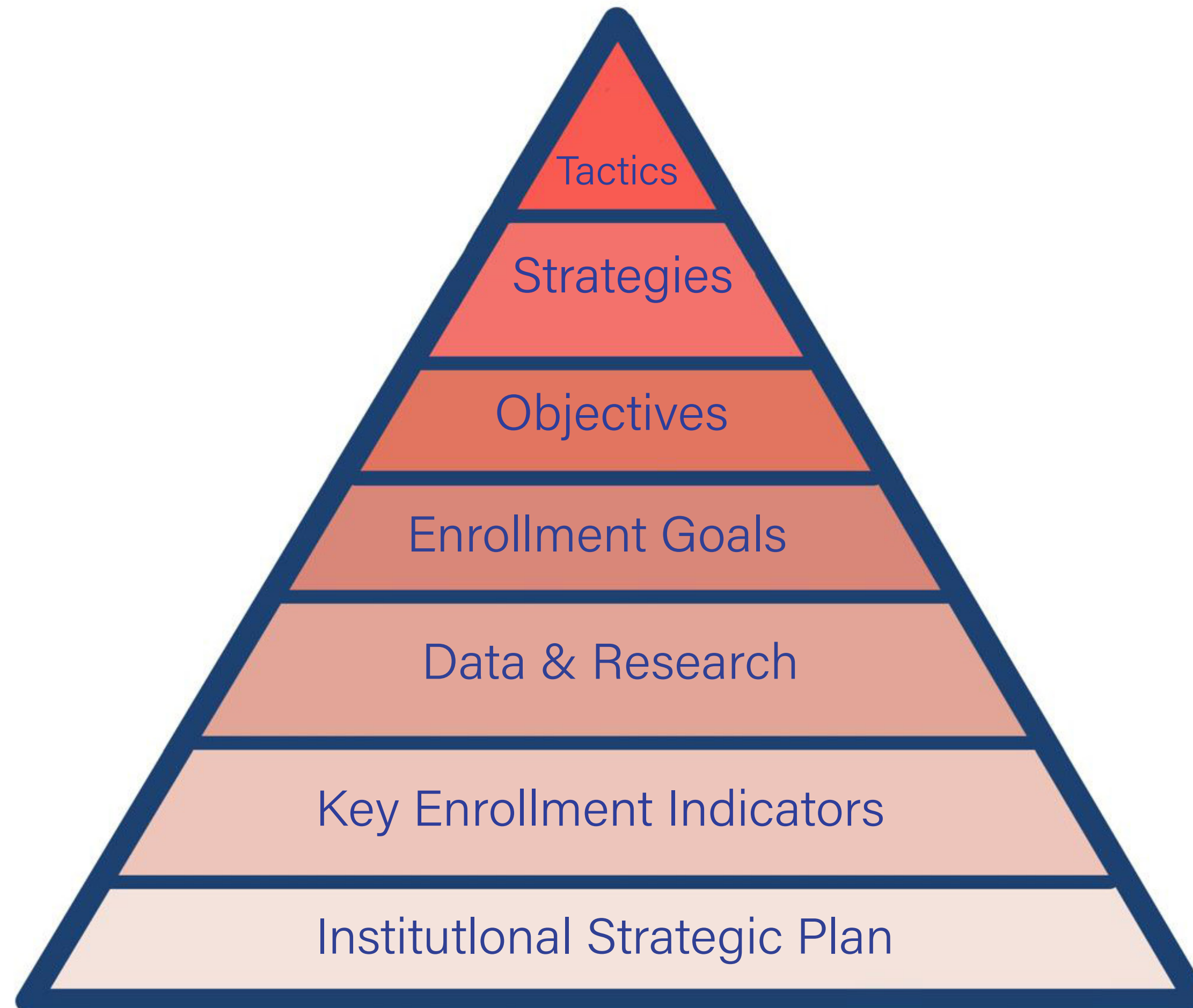
- Strategic Framework: Mission, Values, Vision
- Overview of Strategic Plan Goals & Institutional Capacity
- Environmental Scan: Market Trends & Competition Analysis
- Evaluation and Assessment of Position in Market
- Enrollment Goals, Objectives, & Assessment Criteria
- Marketing and Communication Plan
- Recruitment Plan
- Retention & Student Success Plan
- Pre-College Outreach and Pipeline Development Plan
- Student Aid and Scholarship Funding
- Staff Development and Training
- Process Improvements and Technology System Enhancements

What does SEM look like?

(And, how do you use it?)



SEM Planning Framework



SEM Essentials

- 1. Mission-aligned strategy**
- 2. Data-rich environment**
- 3. Student-centered approach**
- 4. Campus-wide collaboration**
- 5. Continual assessment**

Mission-aligned

- Must be informed by the university's strategic plan.
- Goals: Increase enrollment by X%
- SEM planning => Strategies and tactics (shiny objects)



Data-informed

Strategic plan informs the KEIs, but how do you achieve those goals?

Data, data, data



Data-informed

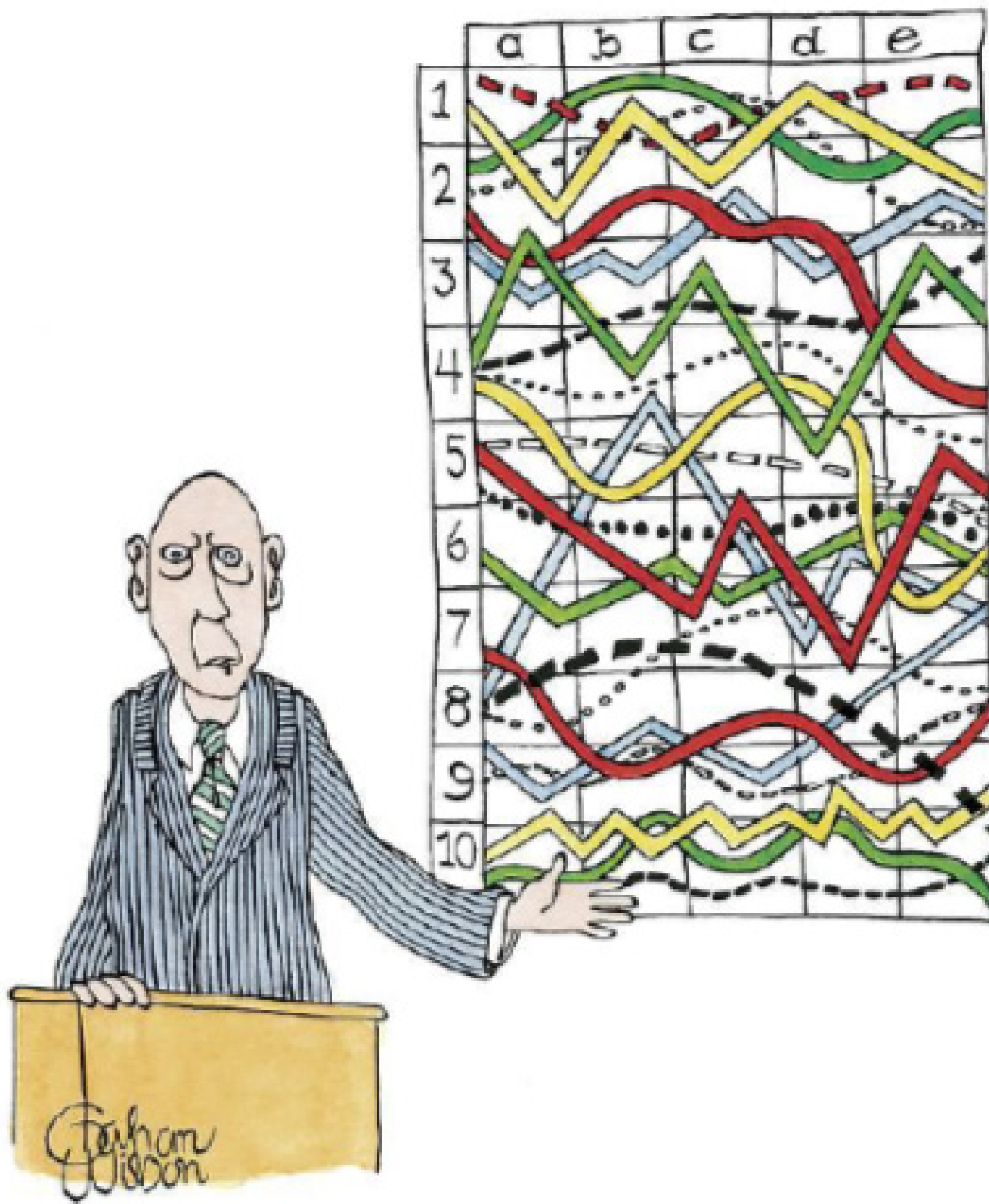
The sum of anecdotes = data

Henderson, 2024



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Be a data storyteller.



"I'll pause for a moment so you can let this information sink in."

Stories don't inform the data, data inform the stories.

**“You cannot connect all
the dots until you collect
all the dots.”**

- J Gordon, in AACRAO Connect, August 2020



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Data



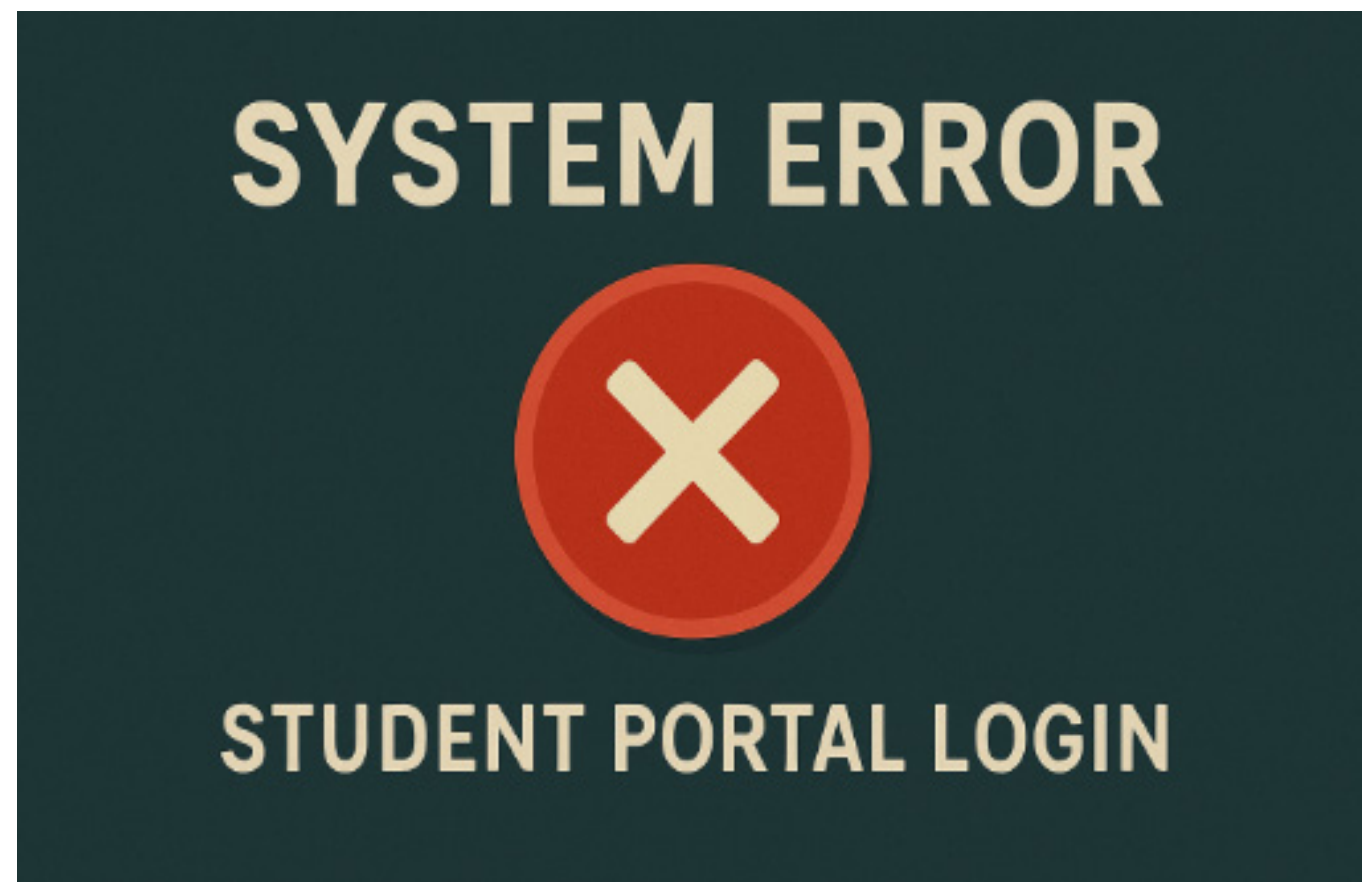
Data

WHEN PRODUCED	REPORT TYPE	WHO PULLS/COLLECTS?	WHERE STORED	WHAT does it contain?
June	Annual Admissions Report	Director of Admissions	SEM OneDrive folder	All statistical information regarding applications, admits, deposits, for degree-seekers and study abroad students.
September	Lead source	Admissions; Research team	SEM OneDrive folder	Data on lead sources of enrolled students
July	Admitted student survey	Admissions; Research team	SEM OneDrive folder	Data from admitted students
September	National Student Clearinghouse non-matrices enrolled data	Admissions; Research team	SEM OneDrive folder	Data about where non-matriculated students enrolled (U.S. applicants)
Monthly	Webpage visits (top pages)	Marketing	SEM OneDrive folder	Top clicked web pages
May/June	Retention/graduation report	Advising	Advising	Percentages of students who graduate
January and September	Orientation attendance	Director of Student Life	Student Life	Percentages of students who attend orientation
Monthly	Google search statistics	Marketing	SEM OneDrive folder	



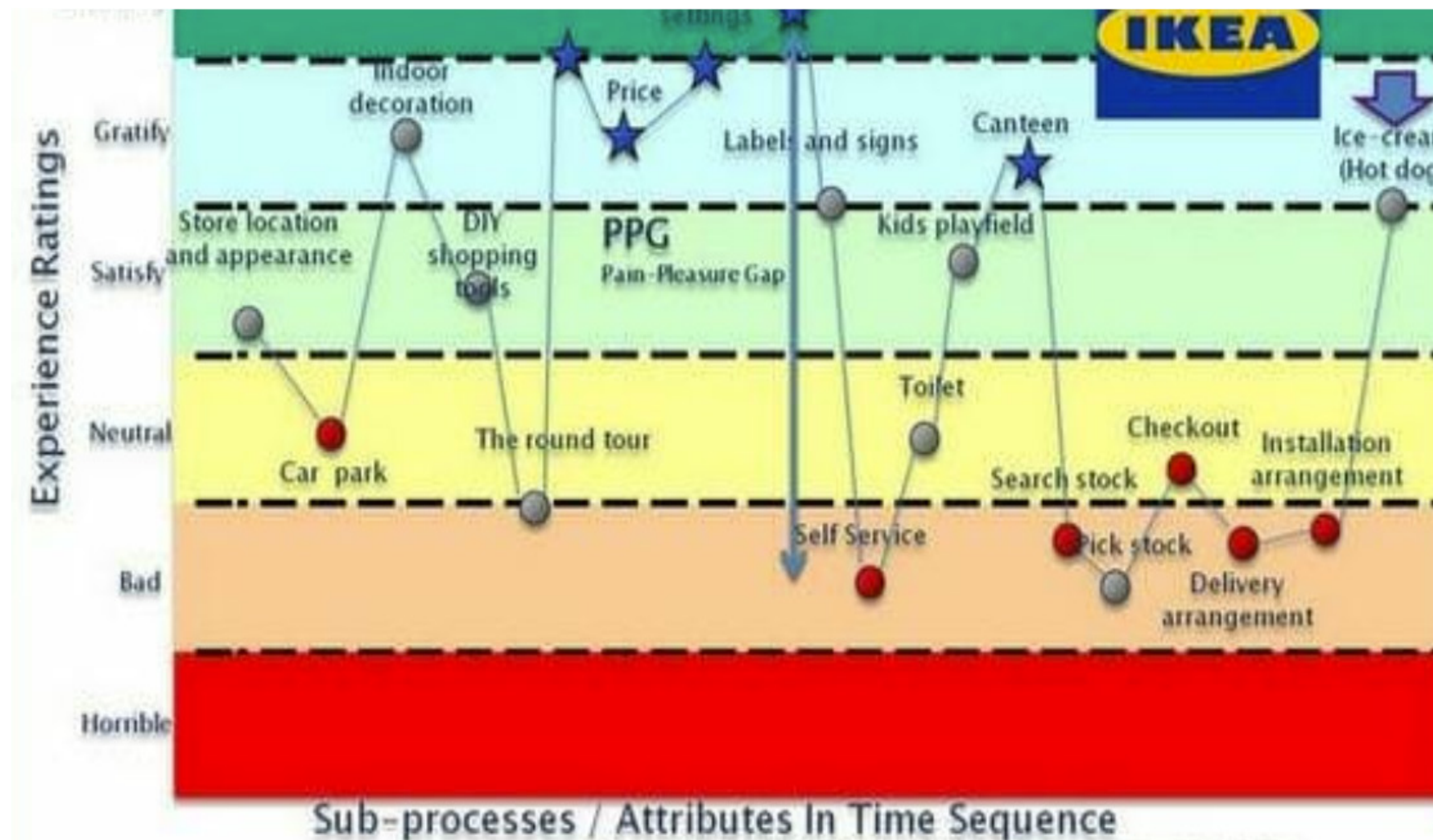
Student-centered

- Student success (graduation, semester abroad, etc.)
- Think like a marketer. Customer UX



Customer Experience Map

Combine a customer experience map with a process map



Campus-wide Collaboration

“None of us is as smart as all of us.”

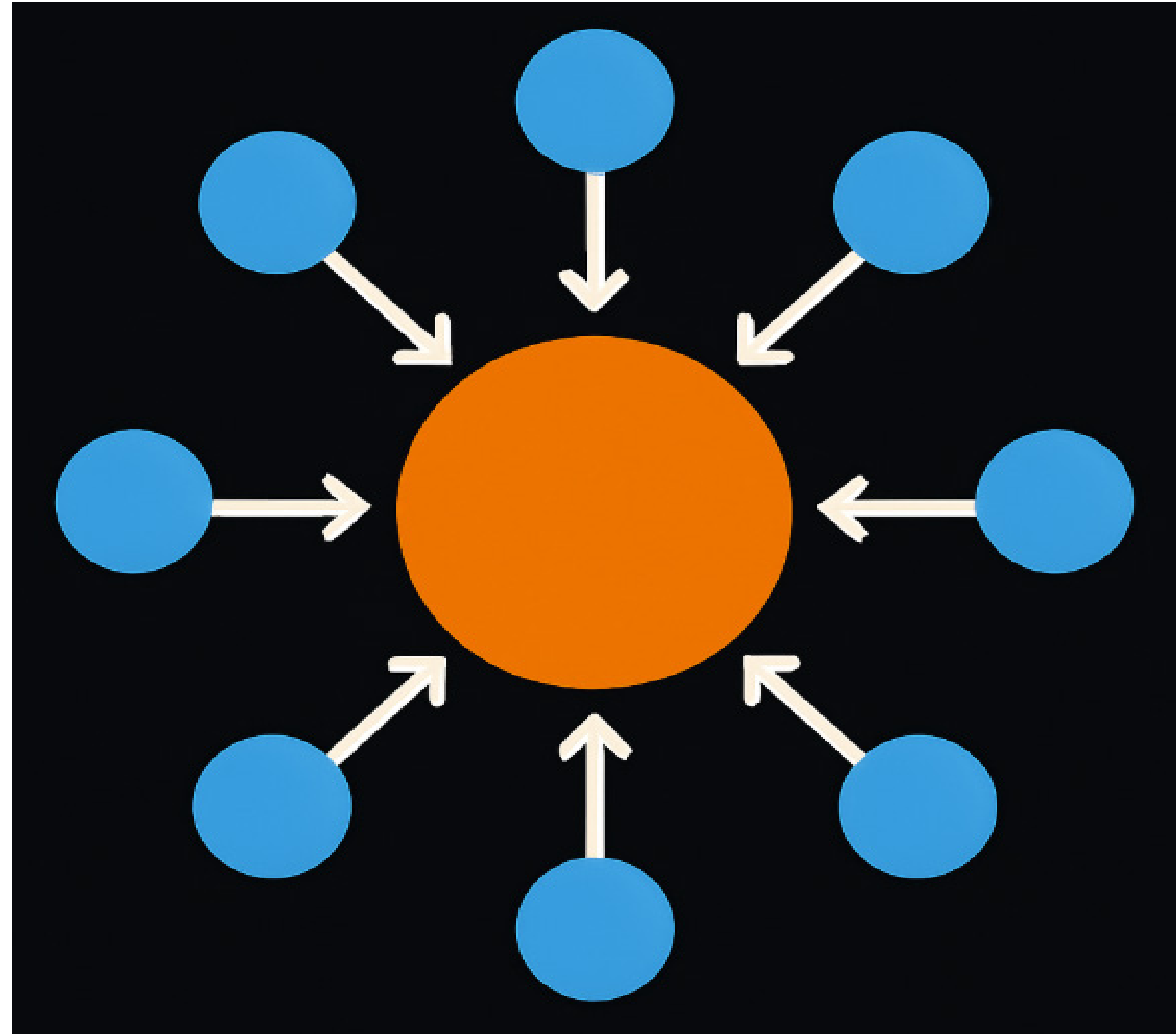
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SEM Collaboration Map





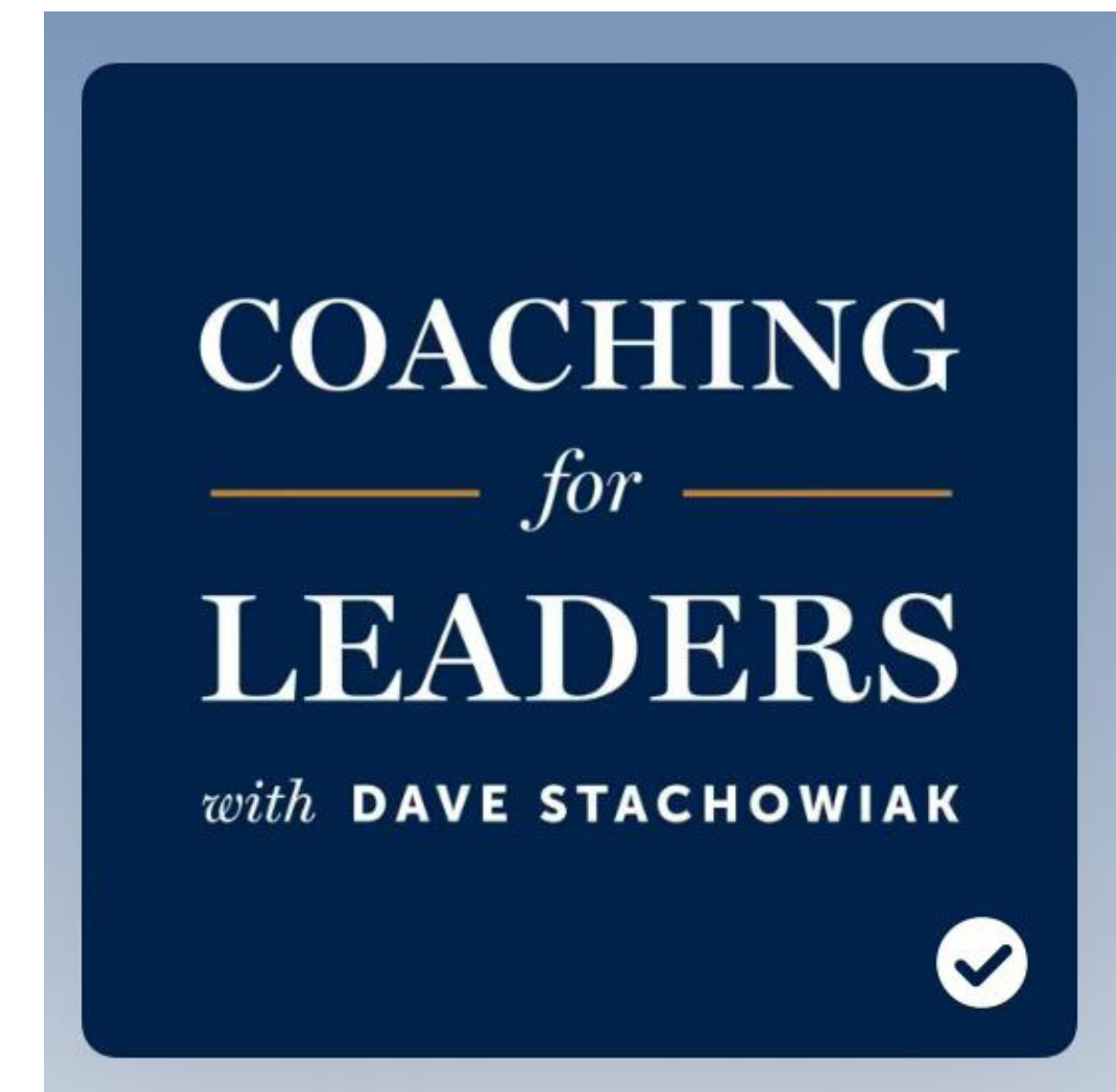
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DRID



“Pocket Update”

3-Step pocket update

1. Project
2. Detail
3. Result



- Marketing: material needs
- Orientation staff: pre-arrival FAQs
- Student life: belonging questions
- Housing: worries about living
- Academics: generational change
- Advising: class registration concerns

Example 1

Student Life Roadshow

Problems:

- Low orientation participation
- Lack of understanding of SL dept.



Example 2

Marketing Collateral

Problems:

- Underenrolled majors
- Prospective student 1 major mindset



Continual Assessment

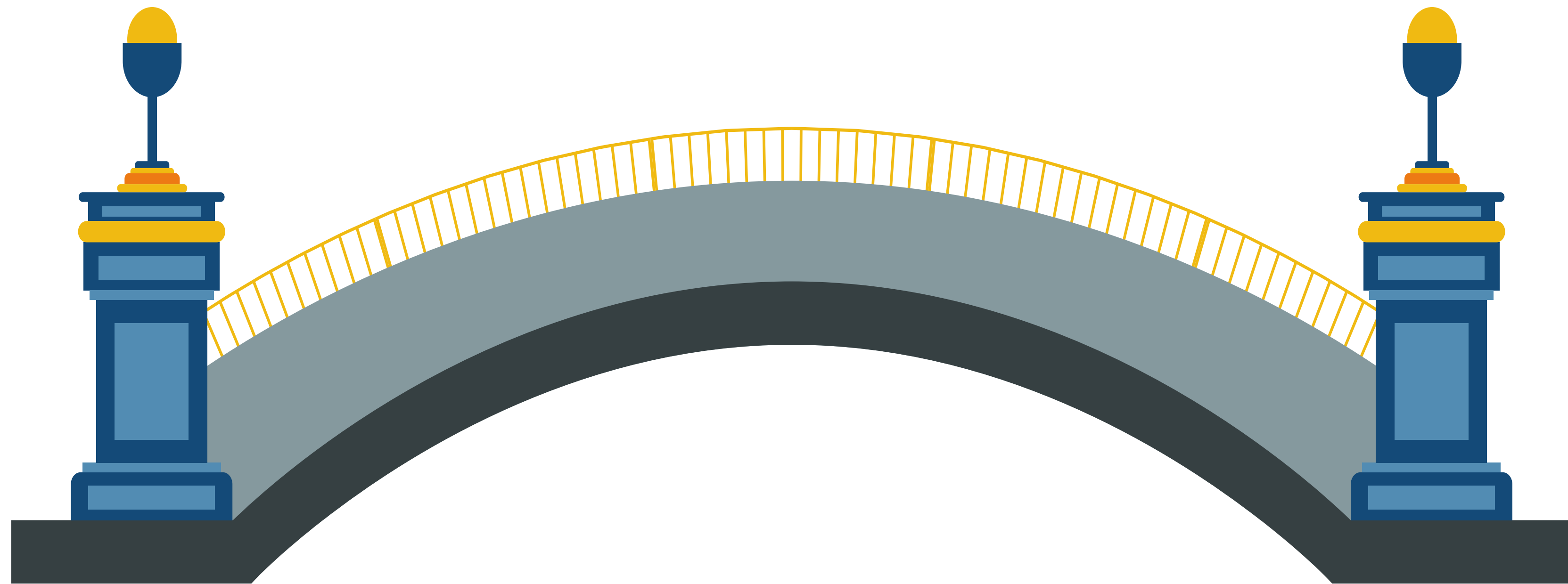
Change is certain.

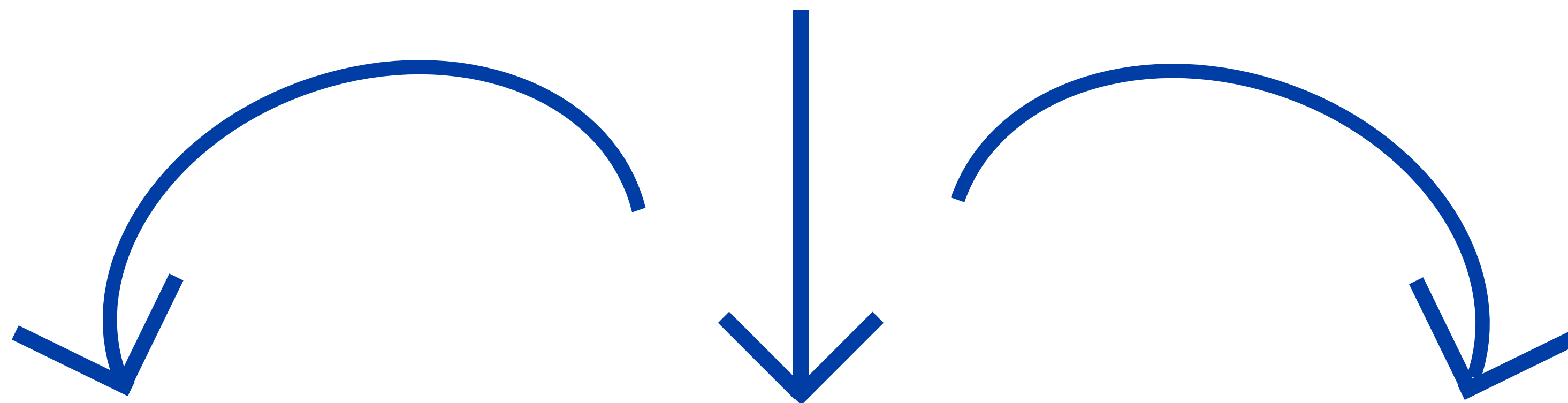
- SEM is not an “on the shelf” document
- Needs to be reviewed, updated, adapted





Where do you fit in?

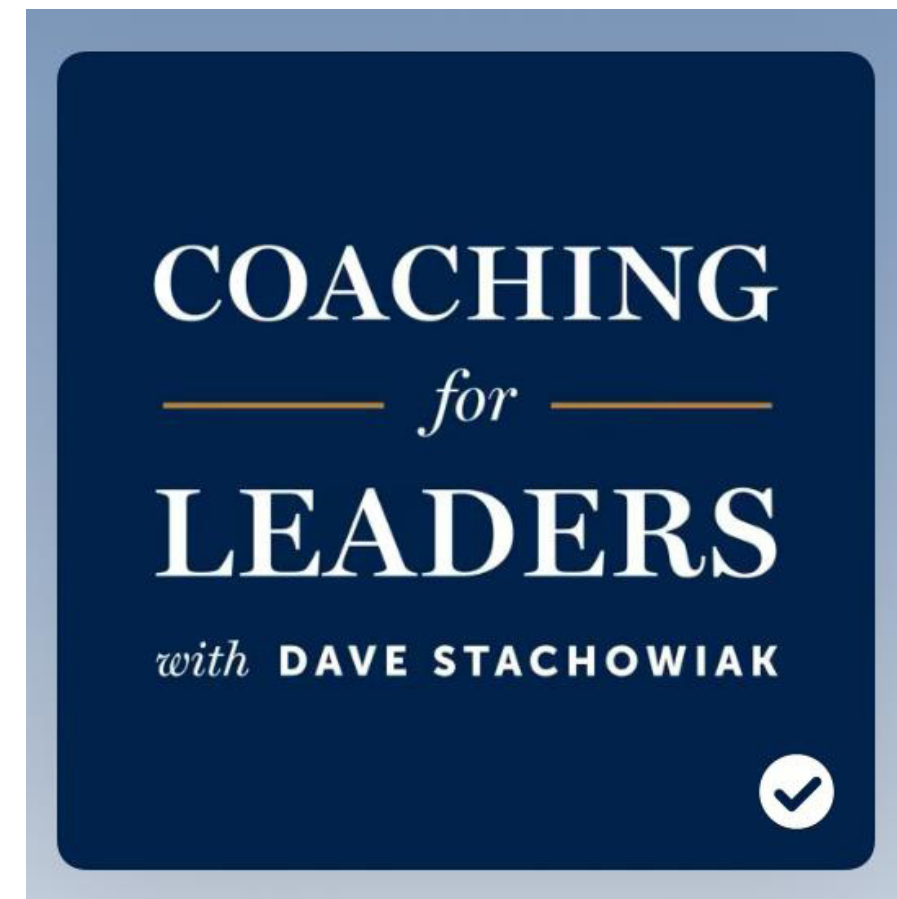
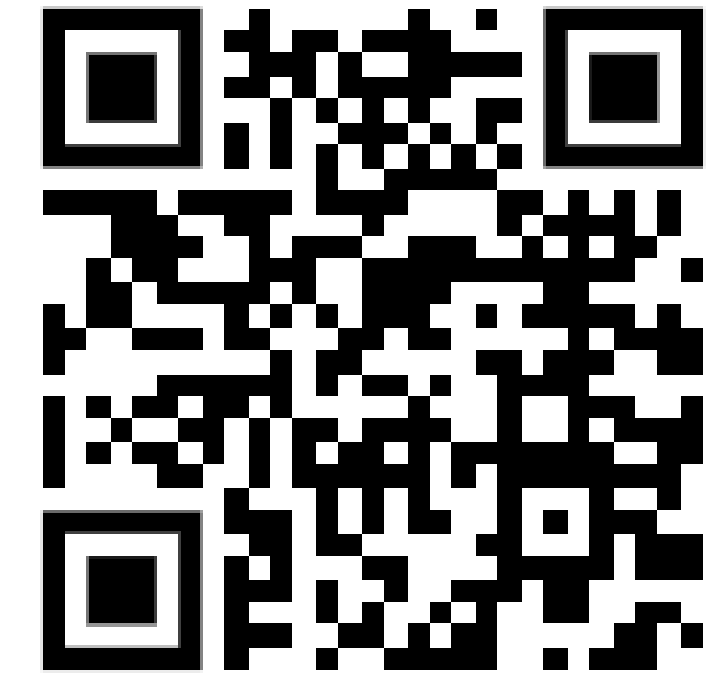




Characteristics of SEM Thinking

1. Change-maker
2. Marketing mindset
3. Data curious
4. Collaborator /Influencer

Further Learning



Thoughts, Sharings, Q&A



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