

# Marketing Student Services to Enhance Enrollment & Retention

Presented by  
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LOGAN UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS  
COLLEGE OF CHIROPRACTIC



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## Resources



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## Resources

- **Services Marketing: Concepts, Strategies, & Cases**; K. Douglas Hoffman, John E.G. Bateson. Thompson-South Western, 2006.
- **Millennials Go to College, second edition**; Neil Howe and William Strauss; LifeCourse Associates, 2007.
- **EM = C squared**; John Maguire and Lawrence Butler. Trafford Publishing, 2008.

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## The Millennials Have Arrived

The Millennials have arrived, but so have their helicopter parents. (Most of these are Boomer parents.)



But wait, there's more—stealth fighter parents from the Gen X ranks are beginning to arrive.



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## “Customer Service” is not a four-letter word.



*Embrace the Oxymoron. Customer Service in Higher Education*, by Neal Raisman, Ph.D.; LRP Publications, 2002



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- Students should be given courteous and concerned attention to their needs and valued as people.
- Students should come before personal or college-focused goals. Students really are more important than we are.
- Students can never be an inconvenience.
- Students deserve an environment that is neat, bright, welcoming, and safe.



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- The customer (student) is not always right. But then again, neither am I.
- To every problem there is more than one solution.
- Not everyone is capable of providing customer service. Move them away from students and/or out of the college.

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### *Embrace the Oxymoron*

- Raisman's 12% Rule
- Cheers University
- Can your service unit help a student believe "I am a part of a larger community that will be there for me and know who I am.?"

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### Strategic Marketing Plan—Step 1

**Mission:** We meet individual student financial needs by providing the resources to students who would otherwise be unable to pursue a college education.

Marketing Plans:

- *Meeting Your Needs, Exceeding Your Dreams*
- *Creating Leaders*
- *Powering Minds*




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## Strategic Marketing Plan—Step 2

A **competitive strategy** is also developed so that a company (institution) can create advantages over the competition.



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## Strategic Marketing Plan—Step 3

**Differentiation** involves changing the product so it is perceived as unique. Change can be based on: technical superiority, quality, customer support services, and the appeal of more value for the money.

**How do we do this in the Financial Aid Office?**

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## Types of Promotions

**Types of Promotions:** includes all activities designed to inform, persuade, and influence people when they are making the decision to buy.

- Advertising: non-personal mass communication through media
- Publicity: free promotion through news stories
- Sales Promotion: direct mail, face-to-face

**How do we use these in Financial Aid?**

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## Student Feedback

**Student Feedback:** general information from students will provide general results, and detailed information will allow for more detailed analysis and more accurate results.

**How are you obtaining feedback?**



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## Summary of Marketing

Creating a marketing plan takes hard work. The benefits of doing this work before you start to market your product are immeasurable. A well-developed marketing plan demonstrating knowledge of production, how much capital will be required, cost of production, specific market location and an understanding of consumer purchasing activities will be beneficial in creating a dynamic marketing plan and thus dynamic university.

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## Consumer Purchases

- When a consumer purchases a service, she/he purchases an experience. (ie. Private Escapes)
- When a student attends our university, she/he purchases an experience. Hopefully, the experience will have two positive outcomes: a pleasurable college-experience and a high-quality degree. When this occurs, the word-of-mouth marketing from the satisfied customer is immense.

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## Self-Service Technologies (1)

- Self-Service Technologies: despite the apparent advantages (faster, reliable, and more convenient service at a lower price); many students and parents question the true motivation of institutions that utilize self-service technologies. Is the primary goal to provide improved customer service or simply to lower operating costs?



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## Self-Service Technologies (2)

- Hewlett-Packard believes that e-services could easily become the dominant entity on the Net—what the internet can do for the customer.
- We must view technology as a source of innovation as opposed to a “necessary evil.”  
Improvements in technology lead to improved services that permit more customer involvement in the processes that are necessary for enrollment.



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## Superior Delivery of Services (1)

- In enrollment services the purpose of our units is to serve the customer. So logic suggests that we organize ourselves in a manner that supports the people who serve the customer. Service then becomes the focus of our system and the overall differential advantage we gain in terms of competitive strategy. If we have equality in our product (higher ed programs) with other universities, then our superior delivery of services can separate us from the others.

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## Superior Delivery of Services (2)

Since higher education is often an intangible service, many prospects will evaluate our “product” based upon physical evidence or tangible clues....

- welcoming, bright, caring admissions office
- the quality of furniture and furnishings in the financial aid office
- the appearance of the recruiters on the road
- the quality of our printed materials and our website
- the efficiency of the Registrar’s Office

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## Superior Delivery of Services (3)



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## Superior Delivery of Services (4)



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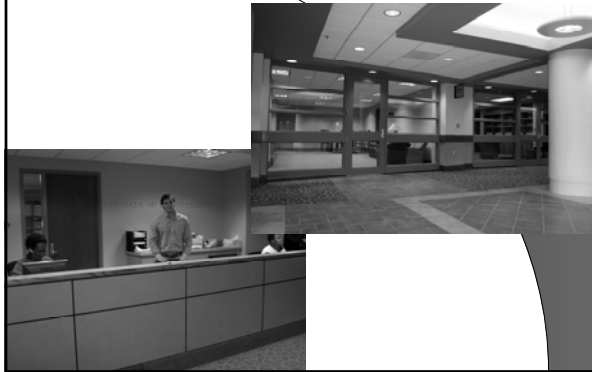
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## Superior Delivery of Services (5)



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## Communications Strategy (1)

The primary role of a service firm's communications strategy is to inform, persuade, or remind consumers about the service being offered. Consumers cannot be expected to use a service they do not know about. Even when awareness of the service product exists, consumers may need additional encouragement to try it and information about how to obtain and use the service. Just because they have been told something once does not mean that they will necessarily remember it over the course of time. For example:

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## Communications Strategy (2)

- FAFSA renewal
- Online MPN
- Checking your student account online
- Privately funded scholarship application
- 150 letters sent directly to "parent of" Valley View students inviting them to a Sunday afternoon program in late February because the week-night program only had 14 people attend. Around 50 people attended the Sunday afternoon event, including at least four families that I personally knew desperately needed to file the FAFSA early. The 150 letters at \$.42 per letter only cost ASU \$63 in postage and some labor. But think if we assisted one student with filing her/his FAFSA in time to get the \$1000 Arkansas Go Grant from the state.

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### Retention..Retention...Retention (1)

A major key to success for a university is an understanding of the value of student success—focusing the university’s attention toward our current students and their successful completion of the first year to second year, second year to third year, etc. Current students are less expensive to retain, because they need less “maintenance” performing normal functions such as add/drop, fin aid, library services.

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### Retention...Retention..Retention (2)

Customer retention refers to focusing the firm’s marketing efforts toward its existing customer base. Hence, in contrast to seeking new customers, firms engaged in customer retention efforts work to satisfy existing customers in hope of further developing the customer-provider relationship. The Financial Aid office is key to student retention. Also, upper class students demand less “orientation” to the services provided, thus less staff time per student.

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### Servuction

- Servicescape (visible)—physical evidence of the service environment
- Contact personnel/service providers (visible)
- Other customers (visible)
- Organizations and systems (invisible)



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Operating a service firm at peak efficiency would be an ideal situation. J.D. Thompson's perfect-world model provides us the direction needed to achieve this ultimate goal. However, in reality, peak efficiency is often unattainable.

- Thompson introduced the idea of a technical core – the place within the organization where its primary operations are conducted.
- By isolating the technical core, such as not letting customers into a restaurant's kitchen, the efficiency of the operation increases.
- Uncertainty creates inefficiency. In the ideal situation, the technical core is able to operate without uncertainty .

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### Predicting the Unpredictable

- Customers arrive at the service firm at unpredictable rates, making smoothing and anticipation of incoming demand difficult. One minute a restaurant can be empty, and in the next few minutes, it can be full.
- One solution: Oklahoma State University system of Fin Aid Advisers and Fin Aid Counselors.



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### Isolating the Technical Core

“Clients...pose problems for organizations...by disrupting their routines, ignoring their offers for service, failing to comply with their procedures, making exaggerated demands, and so forth.” Operating efficiency is thus reduced by the uncertainty introduced into the system by the customer. Isolating the technical core argues for minimizing the amount of customer contact with the system to improve efficiency.

**How about your student loan processing unit?**

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### Why don't you have more people working at the front desk?

A customer waiting to be served can see a closed teller window and observe staff that apparently do not care because they sit at their desks without offering to assist the customer. However, the reality is that these tellers may be very busy, but the nature of the administrative work is such that they may not give this impression to customers.

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### You want me to wait in that line?

- Providers such as Disney, provide finite waiting times stated on signage that are strategically placed at certain points along the line (e.g. 20 minutes from this point). Can we do this in Financial Aid?
- Customers want to know why they have to wait, and the earlier the information is provided, the more understanding the consumer becomes, and the shorter the perception of the wait. (Explain the triage center used at ASU in August of 2008 to handle the customer traffic anticipated due to new mpn's being required for B of A students and delay of funds from one of our primary lenders.)

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Firms that fail to alter their positioning strategy to reflect environmental changes in order to differentiate themselves from competitors often falter in the long run.

- Failure to build dorms that students desire
- Failure to diversify class schedule and delivery types
- Failure to deliver financial aid processing with the latest technological advances
- Recruiting efforts that lack "trendy" methods

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Ya know, some "student" services just can't be provided, no matter how hard we try.



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## Customer Expectations 1

When a customer enters a high-contact service operation, that customer expects the facility to look like something other than a dusty, musty, old warehouse. A facility suited for friends and families are among consumers' expectations (ASU admissions). Low contact facility layouts should be designed to maximize employee expectations and production requirements (Finaid Office).

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## Customer Expectations 2

Consumers will have one set of expectations for a restaurant with dimly lit dining rooms, soft music, and linen tablecloths and napkins and a different set of expectations for a restaurant that has cement floors, picnic tables, and peanut shells strewn about the floor. The same can be said of the appearance of our financial aid office and staff members. The initial impression sets the tone of the expectation of the quality of services.

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## Managing “Unfair” Service

A classic example of unfair service is the priority that telephone calls receive over customers who are physically standing in line. The person on the telephone usually takes priority. This is the equivalent of that person walking up to the front of the line and bypassing all the other customers who have been patiently waiting their turn.

Management needs to consider the costs of having employees returning phone calls at a more appropriate time versus cost of alienating existing customers and placing employees in an awkward and often indefensible position.



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## Solo Waits are Longer than Group Waits

It is amusing to consider the amount of customer interaction typically displayed in a grocery store line. Generally, there is none at all, even though we are standing within inches of one another. However, note what happens when a delay occurs, such as a price check on an item or a customer who takes too long to fill out a check...the rest of the line quickly bonds together like old friends! Group waits serve the function of occupying customers' time and reduce the perceived wait. When managing consumer waits, the practicality of actively encouraging customers to interact may be considered.

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## Service Failure and Service Recovery (1)

- When a failure occurs, the customer generally provides the business with an opportunity to make amends.
- Customers will remember a service encounter favorably if the contact personnel respond in a positive manner. Hence, even though the service encounter included a service failure, the customer recalls the encounter as a positive event. This phenomenon has been termed the service recovery paradox.
- When a service failure does occur, the faster the company responds, the more likely that the recovery effort will result in a successful outcome.
- Expecting employees to be naturals at service recovery is unrealistic.

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## Service Failure and Service Recovery (2)

- When a service failure does occur, the faster the company responds, the more likely that the recovery effort will result in a successful outcome. (Explain Kentucky licensing problem for Logan graduates and our “service recovery” efforts.)
- Expecting employees to be naturals at service recovery is unrealistic.

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## Do You Have Any Poor Service Providers?

- What do we do with poor service providers in our units?
- Do we have staff who just don't get it?
- Do we have staff who don't give a flip?
- Remember three rules:  
location, location, location.



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## Contacting customers between service encounters (1)

This is a useful approach in building relationships with the service firm. The key is in making customer contact sincere and personal. Typical approaches include sending birthday, get-well, and /or anniversary cards; writing personal notes congratulating customers for their personal successes; and keeping in touch with customers concerning the performance of past services rendered and offering assistance if necessary. The goal of this tactic is to communicate to customers that the firm genuinely cares for their well-being.

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## Contacting customers between service encounters (2)

Can we do this in Financial Aid? Yes, we can.

- Blast emails concerning renewal FAFSA's, scholarship apps, excess aid disbursing announcements.
- Others?
- Student Recruitment and Student Life have lots of opportunities here also.



U.S. Department of Education **FREE** Application for Federal Student Aid Web Site

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## Generations

- 1950's      Silent students, G.I. parents
- 1960's      Boomer students arrived
- 1970's      Silent parents arrived
- 1980's      Gen-X students arrived
- 1990's      Boomer parents arrived
- 2000's      Millennial students arrived
- 2010's      Gen-X parents will arrive

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## Boomers: Born 1943 to 1960

- Too young to remember World War II, but old enough to remember black and white television.
- Nearly all remember President Kennedy's assassination.
- Remember their experience with K-12 and higher education with positive memories.
- Generally wanted their children to experience those same positive feelings.
- Boomer parents will co-purchase a college choice with their Millennial son or daughter.

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## Gen X'ers: Born '61 to '81 (1)

- Many born in the 60's, but don't feel much kinship to that era.
- Gen Xers remember their school days more guardedly, cynically, even negatively.
- Going to college was a good thing, but not absolutely essential.
- As college officials, we have to balance the desires of the parents with those of their children.

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## Gen X'ers: Born '61 to '81 (2)



- Rebellion was commonplace and there was no fear of "blotches"
- Believe that college is essential. Thus you see them filling out their kids' college entrance applications for admissions and financial aid and likely touching up admissions essays. And I'm sure a few Gen X parents have supplied a few appeal letters for readmission and financial aid reinstatement.
- Students often defer to the parent's choice of college.

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## Gen X'ers: Born '61 to '81 (3)

- Gen-X parents of special-needs children will be even more vigilant than Boomer helicopter parents have been —truly earning those stealth-fighter wings. Many will expect to remain (and expect back-home physicians and other advisors to remain) just as involved in their child's "support team" as they were in high school.
- Whatever counseling or other support services your school promises, you had better deliver on that promise. Also, maybe you want to encourage FERPA waivers for special need students and their parents.
- If any student has unexpected health problems with bad results, stealth-fighter parents—and their lawyers—will not be calmed by any suggestion that the student's privacy rights had to be respected and protected.

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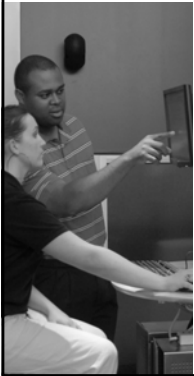
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## Millennials: born 1982 forward



- Millennials are the least Caucasian and most racially and ethnically diverse generation in US history. Generation X was the most immigrant generation born in the Twentieth Century.
- As issues of race and ethnicity become less divisive on campus, issues of income and wealth are becoming more so.
- Financial aid counselors should attempt to monitor the year-to-year financial circumstance of lower-income students to make sure that no student suffers a crushing work or debt load.

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## Millennials: born 1982 forward



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## Learning Communities

- More colleges are encouraging students, and with freshmen—many are requiring students to enroll in “learning communities,” where two or more courses are linked and possibly team-taught with coordinated curricula and some student collaboration.
- Millennials are especially attracted to “living-learning communities,” in which both the enrolled students and faculty live in the same residence hall and can conveniently schedule intensive group study and discussion.

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## Implications for Recruiting and Admissions



- Millennials tend to go with big brands
- Students now carefully look at the various campus communities and evaluate how well they—and their values—will fit in.
- Millennials can often be portrayed effectively in collective images. Photos of energized teams engaging in a campus-wide activity will work better than images of a lone scholar lost in thought, studying in the library or on the campus green.

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## Seven Core Traits of the Millennial Generation

- Special                      Sheltered
- Confident                  Team-Oriented
- Conventional              Pressured
- Achieving
- According to a Bayer/Gallup “Facts of Science” survey, 84% of today’s teenagers believe someone in their own generation will become the next Bill Gates, 66 percent believe they personally know such a person, and one-quarter believe they actually are that person. Whatever problems are facing their world, Millennials assume they can be fixed.

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## Millennial Students Birds of a Feather (1)



- No tolerance for waiting. Outdoor dining in Washington DC
- Current research indicates that Millennial students have an aversion towards Honors programs and Honors courses. Millennial students tend to not seek risks and Honors courses pose more of a risk than regular courses.
- Let’s talk FERPA for just a moment. Can we keep parents informed?

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## Millennial Students Birds of a Feather (2)



- Remember the continuing students. Sophomore-level millennial students are going to expect the same “love and attention” they received as first-year students during their second, third, and fourth school-years.
- Gen X parents are likely to wonder why they should purchase a whole college experience.
- To the extent Millennials feel trapped by divisive money-class issues on campus, they may also assume a collective responsibility for solving it.

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## Millennial Students Birds of a Feather (3)

- It's not my fault.
- You didn't tell me about that.
- Well, I didn't read it.



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## Millennials Reveal Respect

- Millennials Reveal Respect. Millennials reveal a higher level of respect for institutions than college students of the Boomer and Gen X student eras, but with that respect comes high expectations. Millennials expect adults to practice what they teach. A professor, administrator, of staff member who fails to live up those expectations will lose their trust and may find it very difficult to earn it back.



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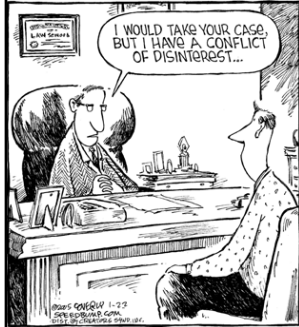
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## Possible Treatments Students Could Receive



Coldness—indifference by the service provider

Condescension—you must be a poor student because you need financial aid and stupid because you need something from me instead of using the online self-service products we offer.

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## Possible Treatments Students Could Receive

Robotism—student is treated as an input into the system that must be processed

Rulebook—provides rules of the organization regardless of the situation

Runaround—passing the student to someone else and then someone else



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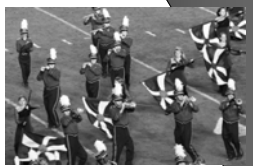
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## In Conclusion (part 1)

- A college education can be exactly what Millennials need: the opportunity to break away from a constantly scrutinized, heavily protected childhood and to enter into a more self-directed adulthood.



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## In Conclusion (part 2)



We in financial aid can be critically important players in this developmental process for Millennials. Financial aid professionals can have a huge impact on enrollment and retention by carefully, professionally providing the blue-print to the destination.

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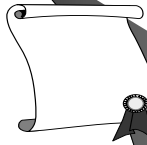
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