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Editor's Note

Christopher Tremblay

Editor-in-Chief

I am probably not supposed to have "favorite" issues, but this one is definitely one of them. Why? There are several reasons. First, we are featuring an article with higher education guru and legend John Gardner, all thanks to Dawn Aubry. Second, we are featuring the first in a series on financial aid. Third, we are featuring commentary that supports investment in college admissions.

This issue contains three unique features. First, Blake, Jindal, and Keleekai-Brapoh share research from a literature review focusing on persistence with nontraditional students. Their work highlights the need for the use of early alerts, enhancing student engagement, implementing advising/coaching, introducing new technologies, and other tools that will support student persistence.

Then, McDowell is presenting a multi-part series on financial aid, which will be helpful for our readers who may work primarily in college admissions or registrar-land. McDowell's contributions derive from his most recent AACRAO publication, *A Guide to Financial Aid*. This first part introduces financial aid eligibility.

Our final feature is an interview with John Gardner, best known for his 1982 coining of "the freshman year experience," which later became "the first-year experience." Our colleague Dawn Aubry conducted an in-depth discussion with Gardner. And then we decided to re-print his 1986 article "The Freshman Year Experience." You're in for a treat with both of these pieces.

This issue's thought piece focuses on admissions staffs. Nicola and Butt offer perspectives on the imperative of colleges and universities investing in their admissions team members.

We include two research-in-brief articles in this issue. Based on a qualitative survey of AACRAO member experiences, Kamen and Apple explore how meaningful engagement between AACRAO and its members creates value, as well as how volunteerism amplifies professional development and creates meaningful impact. AACRAO member Newsoul Deus covers the topic of college bridge programs, focusing in particular on cultural knowledge and cultural manifestations using a case study approach. Deus' research contributes to our understanding of "cultural capital."

In our viewpoints, Cloud and Leturmy discuss the difference between being a manager and a leader. Their article will benefit all of us who have to both simultaneously lead and manage. In addition, Kruzona writes about the reduction of student barriers through processes implemented at Grand Rapids Community College. She offers four specific steps on how to start this approach at your own institution. In addition, I discuss the new artificial intelligence tool, ChatGPT, and its impact on our work.

We conclude this issue with reflections on three newer publications. Handel shares his feedback about *The Great Upheaval*. He thoughtfully and thoroughly reviews this 2021 book, including referencing the "wild west" and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*; you'll have to read his review to find out more about those metaphors. Tanner reviewed *The Future of American Higher Education* and recommends it for all of us working in the higher education profession. Finally, Buster-Williams shares her thoughts on *The State Must Provide,* with a well-articulated synopsis of each chapter in the book. She recommends it for those who wish to learn more about the history of American higher education.

I am confident that after reading this issue, you'll have your "favorite" piece as you cozy up to a fire reading, sipping on your morning tea, or reading on your morning train commute.

Supporting Nontraditional Student Persistence in Practitioner-Based Programs:
A Literature Review

Marlene Blake,
Sushil Jindal, and
Nowai Keleekai-Brapoh

The continued growth of nontraditional students highlights an increasingly important need for higher education leaders to identify evidence-based strategies to support learners enrolled in institutions with practitioner-based programs. The use of early alerts, student engagement, advising/ coaching, technology, and finance provide opportunities for establishing and enhancing structures to support student persistence.

A growing trend in higher education is the increasing number of nontraditional students enrolling in colleges. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2002), nontraditional students are classified as those who: delay enrollment into postsecondary education; attend college part-time; work full time; are financially independent for financial aid purposes; have dependents other than a spouse; are single parents; or do not have a high school diploma. Nontraditional students comprise 74 percent of undergraduate enrollment (NCES 2015). Moreover, shifts in the workforce have resulted in 10 percent of college students being more than 40 years old and 25 percent earning less than $20,000 annually, highlighting the unique challenges these students face (Bernhard 2020; Postsecondary National Policy Institute 2021).

Many nontraditional students specifically enroll in online degree programs for the scheduling flexibility they afford, given that these students are often balancing work, family, and other obligations (Osam, Bergman, and Cumberland 2017; Shank 2017). Nevertheless, obligations beyond the classroom are often prioritized when compared to traditional students. Lack of resources and a general inability to navigate the complex university administrative structure can lead to attrition despite the ability to succeed academically. Additional considerations for nontraditional learners include enrollment status, limited support, lack of preparation or academic skills, first-generation status, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Kasworm 2014). Beyond the general factors faced by nontraditional learners, student persistence challenges are even more pronounced in online courses and programs (Sorensen and Donovan 2017).

Every year a significant number of students across the country leave college and fail to complete their degree. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2019), nearly 29 percent of students who entered college at four-year public institutions in the fall of 2017 did not return to their institutions for a second year. Rovai (2003) proposed a conceptual framework that offered a comprehensive approach to the persistence issue, focusing on students who are enrolled in online courses, of which many are nontraditional students. He identified two categories, factors prior to and factors after admission, that affect a student's persistence. These factors include internal motivation, social support, prior academic performance, and family/work obligations, among others.

Due to the myriad financial, occupational, and familial challenges faced by nontraditional students, academic success rates are suboptimal. A study by the American Council on Education found that the degree completion rate among non-first-time students

was only 33.7 percent compared with 54.1 percent for first-time students (Insidetrack 2015). Shapiro and colleagues (2014) found similarly discouraging completion rates among part-time students using national data. After six years, 68.5 percent of exclusively part-time students were no longer enrolled and only 21 percent had completed their degree compared to analogous rates of 19.6 percent and 77.2 percent among exclusively full-time students.

About 19.7 million students were enrolled in undergraduate and graduate colleges and universities in 2019 (NCES 2021a), with future enrollment projected to reach 22.6 million by 2026 (Hussar and Bailey 2018). Decreased traditional college student enrollment is expected after 2025 due to the declining U.S. fertility rates following the recession of 2008, which will produce fewer high school graduates than would typically enter college in the mid-2020s. However, an increase in enrollment of nontraditional students could offset the decline in traditional student enrollment (Grawe 2019). In fact, Fishman *et al*. (2017) estimated that students above the age of 25 represented 44 percent of total enrollment in American colleges and universities. Given the growing number of nontraditional students set to outpace traditional students, it is imperative that evidence-based strategies to improve overall academic success, including persistence and graduation rates, are implemented. Nontraditional students are an incredibly diverse group with unique backgrounds and needs, and their motivations to enroll, persist, and graduate vary depending on factors internal and external to the college and are often dissimilar to their traditional-aged counterparts.

Until somewhat recently, student persistence had been treated more like an afterthought than a priority in higher education, but the emerging practice of dedication to persistence and student retention is now growing into a major institutional force. As such, higher education leaders are focusing more intently on what it takes to keep nontraditional students effective, engaged, and—ultimately—enrolled. What has been born from this effort has since gone on to help influence institutional approaches to persistence.

Problem Statement

Many nontraditional students struggle to persist and remain in college until they attain their degrees (New 2014). While some may leave school with the intention of returning to complete their degrees in the near future (Scobey 2017), at least 21 percent of nontraditional students in America completely drop out without attaining their degree (Schatzel, *et al*. 2011). Fishman, *et al*. (2017) noted that nontraditional college students are at a high risk of attrition irrespective of when they are on their academic journey, *i.e.*, newly enrolled or returning to school. Consequently, defining persistence in this population that may routinely enter and exit school over extended periods of time can be complicated and obscure true persistence and attrition data. The aim of this study was to define and identify evidence-based strategies to enhance the persistence of nontraditional students enrolled in institutions with practitioner-based programs. Specific research questions were as follows: 1) How is persistence defined at practitioner-based programs for nontraditional students? 2) What are the most effective evidence-based strategies to support persistence for nontraditional students in practitioner-based programs?

Methods

A narrative literature review was undertaken to identify strategies to support persistence for nontraditional students in practitioner-based programs. Strategies that support persistence in non-practitioner-based programs were also explored as they provide valuable information that can be applied to the study population. This approach allowed the researchers to capture a wide range of literature for synthesis.

EBSCOhost and ProQuest databases were searched using the keywords persistence, retention, doctoral, master's, baccalaureate, and nontraditional students. Included articles addressed educational experience, empirical evidence, and effective evidence-based strategies to support persistence. Articles were excluded if they were not available in English. The initial search was limited to 2017-2021 but was expanded to allow for a more comprehensive yield of studies.

Findings

The preliminary findings of the literature review contributed to defining persistence and retention while identifying common support strategies.

Persistence and Retention Definitions

Persistence is defined as continued enrollment (or degree completion) at any higher education institution—including one different from the institution of initial enrollment—in the fall semesters of a student's first or second years (NCES 2021b) or the enrollment headcount of any cohort compared to its headcount on its initial official census date (Voigt and Hundrieser 2008). Retention is defined as the percentage of first-time students who return to the same institution the following fall (NCES 2021b). No definition specific to nontraditional students was identified.

General Retention Strategies

The literature reviewed offered a range of strategies to support persistence across various academic levels (undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral), including providing effective academic advising, an environment for social connectedness, approachable faculty and staff, a satisfying learning experience, and student support services. Other strategies include providing socialization with other students and faculty from the university and academic program, targeting known barriers to persistence (*e.g.*, isolation, financial, time management), offering ongoing individual and group academic coaching, and creating personalized early alert/early intervention systems (Aversa and MacCall 2013; Lehan and Babcock 2020; Lehan, Shriner, and Shriner 2020). Additional retention strategies focused on: encouraging students to embrace support from family, friends, fellow peers, and faculty; providing collaboration opportunities; and providing resources while creating consistent support to clarify program requirements and create connections (Boone, *et al.* 2020; Studebaker and Curtis 2021).

A descriptive case study described the characteristics of one graduate master's program that was able to achieve a retention rate of more than 90 percent over five years (Aversa and MacCall 2013). While this study describes a synchronous online program with a relatively small number of students, easily adaptable strategies to support retention in other formats were identified. These include: a one credit hour orientation course to socialize students to the university, academic program, and members of the profession; combating isolation through use of group work, guest speakers, faculty job candidate presentation, and encouraging use of unofficial networks; combating financial barriers through scholarships and work-study opportunities; and utilizing creative course drop options to allow student scheduling flexibility during times of personal challenges.

Gazza, *et al*. (2014) conducted a literature review to identify research-based best practices for promoting retention in working, professional nursing students enrolled in online programs. Strategies were placed into three broad categories of social presence, program/course quality, and individual student characteristics. While several internal factors related to students' motivations, abilities, and experiences were identified, some key institutional factors to support retention were outlined and included mandatory orientation, well-designed courses (instructional design and technology), access to trained academic advisors, prioritizing faculty and staff building connections with students, and faculty responsiveness to student needs. Interestingly, one study in the review found that collaboration with other students was the least important contributor to retention (Herbert 2006).

Socialization

Wyatt (2011) explored how a university successfully engaged nontraditional students. The research investigated student engagement on college and university campuses. The author recommended institutions develop initiatives and strategies that serve to engage students who are representative of the large population of their students. The college should gain insight into what nontraditional students desire, need, and want from their college experience.

Webster and Showers (2011) found that out of eight potential determinants of attrition at one institution, student/teacher ratio and the amount of dollar

aid offered to the students were critical factors influencing persistence. They also suggested that student persistence is influenced by the personal attention they receive to meet their individual needs.

Retention and success rates for college and university students at two- and four-year institutions positively relate to the level of student engagement in their academic environment. Cultivating on-campus services and activities can lead to engagement and participation for the nontraditional student body and subsequently improve retention rates. Gonclaves and Trunk (2014) stressed the importance of students' interaction with professors, which can be a more collaborative experience than with traditional students. Improved advising and orientation as well as mentorship programs are recommended strategies to help facilitate this positive interaction.

Pearson (2019) recommended building supports that specifically address the challenges that may prevent adult (nontraditional) students from completing their degree. Employing an engaging and well-designed online environment and providing orientation and entry courses are recommended options to support persistence. Both the orientation and entry course have overarching goals of building connection between the students and the institution, which is a known predictor of persistence.

Technology

In the last decade, the rapid growth of online courses has promoted a more focused view on this type of learning especially among nontraditional students. Students enrolled in these programs experience unique challenges related to persistence. To help retain online students and ensure that their experiences are aligned with their expectations, it is important to understand students' perceptions of quality in their online courses (Hixon, *et al.* 2016). Hixon and colleagues (2016) suggest that nontraditional students differ from traditional students in their perceptions of quality in online courses. Clear evaluation guidelines are critical for these students as school competes with many other commitments for their time. In essence, students want to know what they need to do to maxi-

mize their grade. The study also suggests that nontraditional students may have a better sense of qualities a course needs to ensure that they have a streamlined and efficient path to success.

Academic Advising and Coaching

Berdanier and colleagues (2020) developed the GRaD model, which is a complex interplay of six themes that impact the graduate engineering student's decision to persist or leave their program. These themes include advisor role and relationship; support network; quality of life and work; cost (time and money); perception by others; and goals. This model suggests that there is no single area of intervention that would prove successful and that all areas must be addressed, the degree to which varies by individual student. One important revelation in this article was the dependence on anonymous online communities for support rather than traditional social networks of family, friends, or campus colleagues. This suggests that there are benefits to online support forums that could be university-supported. Organizations must have an arsenal of support methodologies that can be rapidly customized and deployed to meet the needs of individual students. This begins with a strong academic advisement structure that proactively engages students in addressing the areas that are most likely to lead to attrition for each individual student. Interestingly, they note that, particularly in circumstances where an individual's goals have shifted, attrition is the best decision and students should be supported in this area.

A study by Lehan and Babcock (2020) emphasized the importance of proactive early intervention for students with academic struggles in preventing attrition among online graduate students. The institution found that few students were utilizing early academic coaching despite this being associated with attrition prevention as 80 percent of students who failed the first assignment of their first course were no longer active 20 weeks later. A three-tier academic assistance program offered through the university learning center was developed. Results of the study revealed that students who failed their first assignment in their first course (a known predictor of subsequent course fail-

ure and attrition) and were enrolled to participate in the early academic assistance program using one-on-one coaching ultimately had similar performance in the course and persistence rates 20 weeks later compared to a matched sample. While these findings suggest that targeted early advisement can be an effective strategy to prevent attrition, later research by the same group seem to temper these findings. When evaluating the impact of the coaching over a longer period, the researchers found that there was no statistically significant difference in degree completion between those who did and did not participate in the coaching (Lehan, Shriner, and Shriner 2020). These two studies highlight the complexities of implementing effective retention strategies among very diverse student bodies.

Recommendations

Educational institutions have a responsibility to create learning environments that promote success for all enrolled students. Given the diversity of current college and university student bodies, it is incumbent on institutional administrators to be equally diverse in their approach to student retention. Based upon the review of the literature, the authors recommend several specific retention practices.

Early Alert

Lehan and Babcock (2020) noted that early student intervention may prevent attrition. The Early Alert System is a tool used to monitor student progress in a course and alert academic advisors and faculty to possible performance problems. The tool can also be used to communicate those warnings to students. The additional engagement and communication from faculty can address both the academic and socialization/engagement needs of nontraditional students (Gazza and Hunker 2014; Gonclaves and Trunk 2014; Wyatt 2011). Most online classroom platforms provide this functionality, and it should be used early and frequently in a course as needed.

Social Media/Texting

Wyatt (2011) noted that to be successful in college, nontraditional students must be able to interact and engage with warm, friendly, supportive faculty and staff. As students regularly use texting and other free messaging services, universities should also use these modes of communication to engage students. Encouraging faculty to be accessible on approved social media platforms can create both connection and open communication in a more relaxed environment.

Feedback

Students desire clear course expectations as well as guidance on how to succeed (Hixon, *et al*. 2016). Faculty must provide feedback that is clear, timely, constructive, and that identifies specific areas for improvement. Institutions have to set expectations and monitor faculty performance in these areas.

Motivation and Engagement

All the literature reviewed reinforced the critical role of student engagement and social integration in retention. Faculty play a crucial role in supporting university efforts for engagement and connectedness among nontraditional students. These students may not participate in traditional activities that support student engagement, but still seek that connection which can only come from faculty. Posting encouraging announcements that are sensitive to challenges that may be faced outside of the classroom can help foster a trusting classroom environment where students feel valued and motivated.

Implications

Nontraditional students are becoming the majority in higher education (McCall, Western, and Petrakis 2020). Insights from this study can inform administrative decision-making as institutions seek evidence-based strategies to increase persistence rates of nontraditional students.

The review also elucidated several areas that warrant further research and consideration. As enrollment in nontraditional programs increases, there is a critical need to create and apply more appropriate definitions of persistence and attrition for these programs to more accurately capture and benchmark for these important metrics, particularly in practitioner-based schools.

Additionally, higher education institutions must make intentional efforts to support and engage faculty members. Most faculty at practitioner-based institutions serve in an adjunct role with similar time and availability constraints as students due to their full-time employment responsibilities. Students greatly benefit from the real-world expertise of these faculty; however, opportunities exist to apply creative training for faculty to develop their skills in engaging students, which is a known predictor of student persistence.

Conclusion

This literature review reinforced the value of several strategies to support persistence among nontraditional students in higher education. The use of early alerts, student engagement, advising/coaching, technology, and finance provide opportunities for establishing and improving structures to support student persistence. Moreover, fundamental changes to society and education precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic will likely necessitate even more creative retention strategies. To ensure that these efforts are effective, institutions should systematically attempt to ascertain the reasons for specific student attrition to identify local trends and develop targeted interventions.

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Marlene Blake, Ph.D., has more than eighteen years of career experience in online higher education focusing on faculty training, development, mentoring, and holistic support. She also has extensive expertise in student support resource development, academic operations, and student services. Dr. Blake enjoys teaching doctoral level leadership and research classes while serving on dissertation committees. She has fourteen years of experience motivating, empowering, and teaching undergraduate student success along with critical thinking courses, workshops, and orientations. Dr. Blake is currently a Fellow in Residence for the Center for Educational and Instructional Technology Research (CEITR) in which her research interests include faculty/student connectedness, leadership, and learner centeredness.

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Financial Aid Eligibility:
Fundamental Concepts for College Administrators

Steven J. McDowell

This article is the first of a three-part series based on the book, *Basic Guide to Financial Aid*. The contents within are abridged from the publication, with additional emphasis on the impact federal student aid administration has on non-financial aid professionals in higher education today. It should be noted that this information is not all-encompassing, but is accurate at the time of publication.

Billions of dollars in financial aid are distributed nationally in the form of grants, loans, and student employment from federal, state, and institutional sources for students to pursue postsecondary education. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) alone awards more than $120 billion in federal student aid annually to approximately $13 million students (ED 2021). Financial aid administrators, as one of their jobs, help students achieve their educational potential by helping award and disburse monetary resources from federal, state, and institutional sources. A typical financial aid administrator wears many hats and serves as a rich resource for a school. Often, institutional leaders and other offices on campus can be unclear on what exactly financial aid administrators and the financial aid office can do for students and other offices on campus (NASFAA n.d.). This can lead to both an underutilization of financial aid administrators, and perhaps exacerbate otherwise unknown compliance issues.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) is the only application required for a student to access the federal financial aid programs, as well as many state-funded financial aid programs (institutions retain the ability to require the CSS Profile™ to determine institutional aid eligibility). But the FAFSA is only a part of the financial aid equation. This article discusses what else must be considered for students in higher education to receive financial aid

funds. To better understand some of the foundational aspects of financial aid administration, it may be helpful for non-aid professionals to become familiar with the basics of financial aid eligibility. Very simply put, this article discusses Title IV eligibility related specifically to institutions, programs, and students.

Institutional Eligibility

Institutions of higher education must meet certain criteria to be eligible to participate in the Title IV financial aid programs. While not all encompassing, some examples include that an institution: must be legally authorized by a state as a postsecondary institution, be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency, and provide at least one eligible program while admitting students with a high school diploma (or equivalent). Generally, an institution must be physically located in a state, determined through the location of an instructional site. Campuses, satellites, corporate training facilities where programs are offered, and others all meet this definition. It is vital to underscore the importance of knowing where an academic program is being taught, as academic units often decide to start teaching in an alternate space without understanding the institution's obligation to apprise the ED of such an update (locations must be reported to the ED, states, and accreditors if it offers 50 percent or more of a program at that location). A

state must legally authorize an institution by name to provide postsecondary educational programs and must have a process to review and act on complaints related to an institution. The ED provides a listing of recognized institutional accrediting agencies, which also provides a determination of those accreditors that may be used to establish an institution's eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs.[1]

Relative to institutional eligibility, there are three key documents that financial aid administrators must maintain for their institution to award federal financial aid to qualifying students and contribute to their academic and life goals. These documents are the Program Participation Agreement, the Application for Approval to Participate in the Federal Student Financial Aid Programs, and the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report.

The Program Participation Agreement

The Program Participation Agreement (PPA) is a contract between an institution and the ED, which outlines the requirements for participation in the federal student aid programs. A school's PPA is signed by the president or chief executive officer and a representative from the office of the U.S. Secretary of Education. The PPA determines the type of certification under which a school can provide federal student aid. All schools participating in the Title IV programs must go through recertification, similar to when a school is due for reaccreditation with its respective agency.

There are two types of certifications: full certification and provisional certification. Full certification may last anywhere from four to six years in duration. There are benefits for institutions that are fully certified, which include a self-certification of certain changes. Alternatively, provisional certification lasts anywhere from one to three years. This certification requires the institution to meet certain conditions, and/or seek ED approval on any key changes about the institution. This may include the review and approval of new programs seeking Title IV eligibility. Existing schools may be placed on provisional status as the con-

sequential result of an adverse federal program review or failure to meet certain standards of compliance. Subsequent reviews of the institution may provide for the provisional status to be lifted and the school returned to full certification. In essence, this means that a school that is fully certified may be downgraded, per se, if certain aspects of compliance are not met.

Of note, the ED may request additional information during the recertification process. This includes but is not limited to information about an institution's licensure from state authorizing agencies, accreditation status, admissions policy, consumer information policies, satisfactory academic progress policy, and Return of Title IV Funds policy. The financial aid office's policies and procedures will also be subject to review. The ED also reserves the right to utilize prior information from on-site reviews of the student aid programs, as well as findings from annual compliance audits and annual financial statements in its assessment of the school. Thus, it is important to demonstrate compliance with any prior audit findings.

The Application for Approval to Participate in the Federal Student Financial Aid Programs

The Application for Approval to Participate in the Federal Student Financial Aid Programs (E-App) is utilized by an institution to apply for certification or recertification with the ED, as well as report various eligibility-related changes. Two of the most important pieces reported through the E-App are an institution's locations and programs (discussed in more detail later). Financial aid that is paid to ineligible or non-disclosed locations or programs run the risk of having to return ineligible federal aid payments to the ED.

The Eligibility and Certification Approval Report

The Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR) documents the most up to date information about an institution's Title IV eligibility. This itemized report provides a snapshot of an institution's approved locations, lead officials, eligible programs, third-party

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[1] For more information, refer to <ed.gov/accreditation> or your institutional accreditor's website.

servicers, state authorizing agency, and accreditation information.

Administrative Capability

Beneath many of the eligibility requirements housed within Title IV, the core lies within a regulation known as administrative capability. For a school to participate in the federal student aid programs, it must demonstrate to the ED that it is "administratively capable" of providing the education it promises and must prove that it is able to adequately manage their federal student aid portfolio as outlined in the PPA. While these and other points are more technically spelled out in regulation, the following represents some of the highlights held within the scope of administrative capability. The school must:

- Administer the federal student aid programs in accordance with all laws, regulations, provisions, and/or other arrangements made with the institution;
- Designate a capable lead financial aid official that is responsible for administering each of the federal student aid programs, and coordinating those funds with other non-federal sources of financial aid for students;
- Staff the financial aid office and other areas responsible for Title IV administration appropriately;
- Provide for an adequate system of checks and balances between financial aid and the business office, to be certain the functions of awarding and disbursing student aid are not performed by the same party;
- Create and follow a record retention plan that meets the requirements under Title IV, as well as any policies established by the state.[2]
- Establish, publish, and apply reasonable standards to a Satisfactory Academic Progress policy to students to determine eligibility;
- Develop and apply an adequate system of identifying and rectifying any conflicting

information the institution receives with respect to a student's FAFSA;
- Refer instances of Title IV fraud and abuse to the Office of the Inspector General;
- Provide adequate financial aid counseling to student aid applicants;
- Provide all program and fiscal reports as required; and
- Maintain a cohort default rate less than 30 percent for the three consecutive preceding fiscal years, and less than 40 percent for any single preceding fiscal year.

Determining an adequate number of financial aid officers can be difficult because financial aid offices come in all shapes and sizes. For example, offices may provide for some form of centralized or decentralized administration, may operate in a traditional or enrollment management-centric environment, or may employ a one-stop model. There is no set value of staff by which a measurement may be made. It is important to establish a baseline valuation of financial aid staff volume as a means to document that the college is in-tune to the administrative capability regulation, and review annually against like institutions.

Program Eligibility

It is important to understand what goes into making an academic program eligible for federal financial aid, as not all programs may be eligible for federal funds. Likewise, it is possible for a program to be eligible for a federal fund, but not a state-sponsored fund. The school is required to establish and publish a normal time for completing a program. These published lengths are required to be reported by the financial aid office to the ED and the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS). The phrase "normal time" may sound familiar, as graduation rates are typically identified within the bounds of 150 percent of normal time. The length of time for a program will differ, depending on if it is a degree or non-degree program. The amount of time is required to be published in years, months, or weeks. In addition, a determination must be made as to whether the program is offered in clock or credit

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[2] Retention advice for student financial aid records is available in AACRAO's *Student Records Management: Retention, Disposal, and Archive of Student Records.* Visit <aacrao.org/bookstore> for more information.

hours. This is used to assist in the determination of an eligible program, as well as how much financial aid a student may be awarded.

Clock hours are measured as hours of time, defined as a period of time consisting of a 50-to-60-minute class, lecture, or recitation in a 60-minute period; a 50-to-60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory, shop training or internship; or 60 minutes of preparation in a correspondence course.

Credit hours are measured on two hours of homework for each hour of class attendance. Credit hours are defined as an amount of work that reasonably approximates not less than 60 minutes of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of work done outside of the class each week. It is expected that there will be approximately fifteen weeks of instruction for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit; or at least an equivalent amount of work as previously described for other academic activities established by a school, including but not limited to lab work, internships, or studio work.

Program Eligibility Considerations

It is important to recognize that some programs at an institution may not be Title IV-eligible programs. This information should be known by admissions, registration, advising, and financial aid staff so that they may be able to field questions from both current and prospective students. Academic deans and other related faculty, including program coordinators, should also be aware of this information as they have direct interaction with students on campus. This may or may not have a direct impact, to some degree, on the enrollment at an institution. Anecdotally, if programs are eligible for financial aid, they may attract more students. However, being prepared with funding alternatives for ineligible programs may assist both enrollment numbers in these programs and the overall satisfaction of those students engaged in them.

When determining eligible Title IV programs, it is important for an institution to be certain there is symmetry in reporting the program name and Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code. Matches

should exist with the ECAR, the state approving agency, and the institution's accreditor. At reaccreditation, or at any other point of examination by ED, an incongruence between these three areas could call into question the eligibility of a program for which an institution is paying federal funds.

Title IV-eligible programs that do not lead to a degree are required to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation, thus they are also known as Gainful Employment (GE) programs. A recognized occupation is one that is identified by a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code established by the Office of Management and Budget, or an Occupational Information Network (O*NET-SOC) code established by the Department of Labor. The code must be available within O*NET's resources.[3] Alternatively, the occupation may be considered by the ED, in consultation with the Department of Labor, in a determination to be a recognized occupation.

Standard Term Programs

While the academic and/or workforce side of an institution may have specific thoughts about when a program will be offered, it is important to recognize that this has a direct impact on financial aid. More specifically, is important to know whether the programs are offered as standard, non-standard, or non-term programs.

Standard terms are traditionally those offered within semesters, trimesters, or quarters. Semesters and trimesters must contain between fourteen and 21 weeks of instructional time, and quarters must contain between nine and thirteen weeks of instructional time. Summer terms are allowed in these instances and may be offered at less than the minimum threshold of weeks of instructional time and still be considered within a program's standard term of operation. For standard term credit hour programs, the following table illustrates the thresholds required for Title IV purposes.

Nonstandard Term Programs

Nonstandard terms are those that are not semesters, trimesters, or quarters. Since no standard term may

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[3] To locate O*NET codes and resources, visit <onetonline.org>, or successor site.

Table 1

Enrollment Status for Standard Term, Credit Hour Programs

Enrollment Status	Credit Hours (Semesters, Trimesters, Quarters)
Full Time	Greater than or Equal to 12 Credits
Three Quarter Time	7 to 9 Credits
Half Time	6−8 Credits
Less than Half Time	Less than 6 Credits

be fewer than nine weeks or greater than 21 weeks, an example of a nonstandard term could be a seven-week term or a 22-week term. Nonstandard terms do not need to be equal in length, and a program may be offered with a combination of both standard and nonstandard terms. But beware, this mixture classifies such a program as one that is offered in nonstandard terms for Title IV administration purposes. Often, colleges offer coursework in a modular format, which consists of shorter nonstandard periods of time. Schools may combine these shorter modules and treat them as a standard term within a semester, trimester, or quarter. However, session start or end dates that exist outside the confines of the standard term dates incur nonstandard term status.

For nonstandard terms, identifying a student's enrollment status is a two-part calculation. The enrollment status requires the number of credit hours in the academic year be multiplied by the number of weeks of instructional time in the nonstandard term. That figure must then be divided by the amount of instructional time in the academic year (and rounded up, if applicable).

Non-Term Programs

Non-term programs are generally associated with clock hour programs. However, credit hour programs may be non-term if coursework does not begin and end within a set period of time, has coursework that overlaps terms, is self-paced or is an independent study course that overlaps terms, or has sequential courses that do not begin and end within a term. There are also shorter periods of coursework; one example is a winter intersession that may be combined with a standard term to ensure that the program continues to be offered in standard terms. Should a college choose to treat an intersession as a standalone term, the program is considered a non-term program that has ramifications for how the financial aid office must award Direct Loans, Pell Grants, and TEACH Grants.

For clock hour and non-term credit hour programs, schools must always utilize a student's full-time payment schedule to determine their enrollment status, even if the student is enrolled at a less than full-time rate. For clock hour programs, full time is defined as 24 clock hours per week. For non-term credit hour programs, full time is defined as 24 semester or trimester hours, 36 quarter hours, or the prorated equivalent for programs that may be shorter than one academic year.

Student Eligibility

To be an eligible recipient of federal financial aid, student aid applicants must meet various criteria. Many of these criteria are validated by way of completing a FAFSA, while others are assessed by the financial aid office when a FAFSA is reviewed at the school level. The financial aid office is responsible for checking a student's full list of eligibility for federal aid, from

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both a program and student perspective, prior to making a financial aid award. While it may be true in many instances that both state and institutional types of financial aid follow suit in meeting these eligibility requirements, it is best to check with the financial aid office on specific non-federal awards.

Eligibility Determinations through the FAFSA

When a student completes a FAFSA, the information is relayed to the Central Processing System (CPS). The CPS performs a series of database checks regarding a student's citizenship, financial aid history, social security number, and selective service registration status. The results of these database matches are presented to both the student through the Student Aid Report (SAR), and to any institutions the student identified on their FAFSA through an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR).

Citizenship

There are various types of eligible citizenship statuses, including being a U.S. citizen/national or U.S. permanent resident/eligible noncitizen. There are also less common eligible citizenship statuses that the financial aid office may provide more detail on, as needed. When a FAFSA is submitted, the information is matched with the Social Security Administration for U.S. citizenship. If the FAFSA contains an Alien Registration Number, the information is also matched with the Department of Homeland Security.

Financial Aid History

A student's financial aid history is reviewed when a FAFSA is completed. To be eligible for federal student aid, students may not have an unresolved defaulted loan or overpayment; may not have inadvertently borrowed beyond annual or aggregate loan limits; may not have been convicted, pled no contest, or found guilty of a crime involving fraudulently obtaining Title IV funding; and may not be in possession of any property subject to a judgment or lien for a debt owed to the United States.

Social Security Administration

Student (and parent, if applicable) social security numbers are sent to the Social Security Administration for validation, along with their name and date of birth. The ISIR will then indicate to the financial aid office a successful match, no match, or no match on a name or date of birth. The ISIR may also indicate if there is missing information, or if there is a date of death associated with the information provided.

Eligibility Determinations through the School

In addition to eligibility determinations made through the FAFSA, schools are required to: make certain the student is a regular student in an eligible program, validate that the student is not enrolled in elementary or secondary school, acknowledge the student meets certain academic qualifications, make certain the student is meeting the college's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy, ensure the student has met a defined enrollment status for financial aid disbursement, ensure the student has no outstanding drug convictions or is incarcerated, and confirm that the student has not presented any conflicting information pertaining to their record. The school must also affirm there have been no changes in eligibility status leading up to federal aid disbursement.

Regular Students

A regular student is defined as one who is enrolled, or accepted for enrollment, for the purpose of obtaining a degree or certificate. All Title IV-eligible institutions are required to admit regular students. Of note, the ED does not define an institution's acceptance policy. As such, schools may include conditional acceptances, such as admitting students into an eligible program but only providing for remedial coursework. Students may only receive federal aid for those courses that are defined within their program of study.

High School Completion Status and Validity of a High School Diploma

Schools must confirm that the student is no longer enrolled in elementary or secondary school, even if

they are enrolled in college coursework at the same time. A student is considered enrolled in elementary or secondary school if they are pursuing a high school diploma or have not yet received their diploma, and the student's high school still considers them enrolled, or the student is taking college coursework for which the high school provides credit. Thus, the safest determination of meeting this requirement is when a student's high school completion status has been confirmed by way of receiving a diploma.

However, a school may accept documented equivalencies to a high school diploma to ensure the student meets the academic qualifications to receive financial aid. These include a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, a state certificate, or other documentation that demonstrates the student has passed an equivalency program in their state. An associate degree is also an acceptable determination for confirming academic qualifications. Students may also meet this qualification if they have completed 60 credit hours that have not resulted in the awarding of an associate degree but are acceptable for full credit toward a bachelor's degree at any college.

Schools are required to develop and adhere to procedures that evaluate the validity of a student's high school completion if there is reason to believe the diploma is not valid or was not obtained from an entity that provides secondary school education. A school's procedures must include documentation from the secondary school that the credential is indeed valid and documentation from a relevant agency in the state from which the school is located that it is recognized as that which provides secondary school education.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

All Title IV students are required to meet the requirements of a school's SAP policy. SAP monitors academic progress for students and may be differentiated within defined categories such as undergraduate versus graduate, or full-time versus part-time. SAP is evaluated using components that measure a student's GPA and pace of completion within a designated timeframe at the college. While the ED extends many flexibilities in designing and implementing an official SAP policy, schools must define the evaluation points, as well as how the evaluation components are affected by course incompletes, withdrawals, repetitions, and transfer credits. However, one commonality that all SAP policies share is that the policy must be at least as strict as or stricter than the academic policy for those students who are not receiving Title IV funds from the school. SAP can be complex, especially if the academic thresholds of the SAP policy differ from those of a school's academic policy.

Confirmation of Enrollment Status

Institutions are required to determine the enrollment status of a student for the purposes of disbursing federal aid. The definition of a full-time student is required to be used for all students in the program, and it must be the same for all matters related to Title IV. For undergraduate, full-time status, schools are required to meet the definition as defined by the ED. For graduate students, the school may determine the number of credits that designate a full-time status. Enrollment status is conveyed to the ED through the National Student Loan Database System (NSLDS). Schools may report directly to the NSLDS, or may utilize services through a third-party that will report to the NSLDS on the school's behalf.

Incarceration

An incarcerated student is defined as one that is serving a criminal sentence in a federal, state, or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, or similar correctional institution. No student who is incarcerated in a federal or state penal institution may receive a Federal Pell Grant. However, an incarcerated student may be eligible for non-loan Title IV funds if they are incarcerated in a juvenile justice facility, a local or county jail, or a local or county penitentiary or correctional facility (ED 2021a). The exception to this limitation is if the institution is participating in the Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative, where select schools are exempt from the statutory limitations of this facet of eligibility. However, a recent update to the law has provided for incarcerated students to access Federal Pell Grants no later than the 2023–2024 award year.

Conflicting Information

Conflicting Information is one of the most important requirements of financial aid administration for a school in terms of compliance since it appears within both the administrative capability and student eligibility requirements. A school be cognizant of what pieces of information are used to determine a student's eligibility for federal aid, and where a student may supply that information within the institution. For any information provided to a school that may also play a factor in the awarding and disbursement of federal financial aid, the financial aid office is required to be aware and determine any conflicts that have been presented to the institution. This is a challenge when the same pieces of information flow into a school through various offices but not one that is impossible to manage. Part of developing controls for identifying and resolving conflicting information could be to leverage the student information system to outline discrepant information.

Changes in Student Eligibility

Students may either gain or lose eligibility during an award year, which in turn may affect whether they continue to be eligible for federal funding in future award years. When a student is determined to be eligible, that determination is made for the duration of the award year, or the year that corresponds to the applicable FAFSA.

In Summary

While financial aid administration is inherently a complex area to fully comprehend and manage, a baseline understanding of some of the fundamental points of what goes into eligibility determinations at the institution, program, and student levels can provide a helpful context for higher education administrators to relate to the responsibilities of the financial aid office at their institutions. While many requirements related to Title IV administration are filtered through the financial aid office, the institution as a whole is responsible for remaining compliant with various federal laws. While this article is not all encompassing, and is accurate at the time of publication, financial aid regulations tend to change regularly and through defined processes by the ED. It is always in the best interest of higher education administrators to have a sound relationship with their financial aid office; their federal funding depends on it.

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About the Author

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Interview with John Gardner

Dawn Aubry

John N. Gardner is Executive Chair and Founder of the Gardner Institute. Gardner is universally regarded throughout the national and international higher education community as the initiator and leader of an educational reform movement, spanning more than four decades, to improve the retention and graduation rates of college and university students.

His work has focused especially on two critical student transitions during the undergraduate years: the first-year experience and the senior-year experience. Gardner is the founder of two higher education research and professional development educational centers, the University of South Carolina's National Resource Center on The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition and the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education.

Gardner is also Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Library and Information Science and Senior Fellow at the University of South Carolina. He is a widely published author and scholar whose work has been recognized with numerous awards including twelve honorary doctoral degrees.

Aubry: I feel so privileged for the opportunity to have a conversation with you, Dr. Gardner. Many know you're credited with founding some of the essential tools and frameworks higher education professionals use today. Your particular area of expertise in higher education for almost three decades has been creating programs to enhance the learning, success, retention, and graduation of students in transition, especially first-year students through first-year seminar courses. But since 2003, your efforts have been directed almost exclusively to working with institutions to look beyond this long-standing programmatic approach to improving the first year and, instead, focus on the entire experience of first-year and transfer students. Please share why and how you decided to shift the focus of your work and why you founded the Gardner Institute?

Gardner: I had several important catalysts. I was the founder of the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina. We founded that in 1986 with authorization from the state of South Carolina to set up an official resource center and advocate for improving the attention paid to first-year college students. AACRAO's *College and University* actually played a key role in that because the journal was the first major publication to publish a statement of my philosophy on what was called

"the first-year experience," and that article[1] was widely used. In fact, it was picked up and connected ultimately to *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* decision to do a major story on this the following year in 1987. That work originally began around an exclusive focus on the beginning college experience in 1982. I had just been promoted to a full professor and was one of the youngest at the University of South Carolina. I just thought, what am I going to do now that I'm supposed to be grown up, and where can I take this work? There was no literature on this topic, no publications devoted to it, and no conference that educators could go to focused on this specifically. More broadly, for undergraduate and even graduate education, AACRAO had a specific set of professional roles that it was targeting. My original vision was to try to create some kind of convening for all types of postsecondary educators in all sectors, two- and four-year, public and private as well as faculty, academic administrators, student affairs administrators, and enrollment management professionals. That led us to establish the first of what now is a 40-year series of conferences on the first-year experience.

As this evolved, I noticed that a number of the educators who came had interest in other "transitions" in undergraduate education, one of them being the transition out. (I don't mean dropping out but, rather, graduating). I met Betty Siegel, president of Kennesaw State University at the time, who inspired me to look at this. During her presidency, she was also teaching a seminar for students on the senior transition. She's a psychologist, and she began doing this out of her own interest. Betty had developed a first-year seminar at Kennesaw but wanted to kind of book-end that experience, and she appointed a faculty member to develop a course to look at the needs of departing students. And I thought that was a fantastic idea so I got together with Betty, and we planned the first national conference on what we called the senior-year experience. We hosted that in 1990 in Atlanta as well as three more. I found that to

try to focus attention on other student transitions other than the first year was a harder sell because institutions could not immediately see, sorry to say, the revenue implications of this. What we found was that it was very hard to finance this, so I decided to morph the first-year and the senior-year transition into a more expansive and inclusive concept, which we called "students in transition." We started doing a series of conferences in 1995. We've done, I think, almost 30 of them since, and that led us to change the name of the center from the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience to the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

Up until that point, my work had focused on the first-year as well as the senior-year experience. I published a book in 1998 with Jossey-Bass on the senior-year experience, and at that same time, very serendipitously, I was approached by a foundation officer Russ Edgerton, who was the senior program officer for the Pew Charitable Trust for higher education investments. And he literally sat me down at the annual conference of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) and said, John, if you had one to five years, and one million to five million dollars to do anything you wanted to do to improve the first year in American higher education, what would you do? I knew he had the one million to five million dollars, and I thought this was an extraordinary opportunity. I was so stunned by his question that I really didn't know what to say to him, and I'm not normally at a loss for words. He said, why don't we get together in another couple of months, and you think that through and give me an answer. And he added, bring Betsy Barefoot with you. Betsy was a very smart, able colleague of mine, and we got together with Russ a couple months later. We brainstormed this, and he decided to give us a planning grant to plan the answer to that question. Ultimately, that led to the Pew Charitable Trust giving us a grant to launch a new national organization. Russ wanted me to do new work; he didn't want me to duplicate what I had done for the University of South Carolina. It seemed that what was needed was new strategies to get American colleges

and universities to look differently at the first year—particularly, to look at how we assess and measure it as well as how we take what we learn from the assessment and decide how to improve it. And so the focus of this initial Pew grant was to develop what could be called New Tools for Assessment of the First College Year. And, in Edgerton's words, what he wanted to do was to find a group of thinkers around the country who were active in undergraduate education and raise a fundamental question: how can we get institutions like Oakland University, where you are based, for example, to take more responsibility for student learning?

Now this idea was the antithesis of what we historically had done in the academy, which is to say we've got all this information and knowledge we're going to give you, but you, the student, are responsible for everything, and you have to take responsibility for your own learning. But what if we as an institution took a different turn; what if we took more responsibility for student learning? What would an institution that takes more responsibility for student learning do? Oakland University is an example. Oakland's participation in the Foundations of Excellence around 2005–2006 under the leadership of Susan Awbrey, OU's senior associate provost, is an example of one of the projects made possible by Russ Edgerton and this new organization.

As part of the comprehensive assessment process, institutions were asked to consider, what does excellence look like in the first college year? We did not mean the Harvard kind of excellence, but excellence that's driven by an institution's mission statement. And also, who are your students, and what does excellence mean for them?

It was a challenge to do new work beyond what I had been doing for the previous almost 30 years, to focus much more on data and evidence-driven assessment strategies. Russ gave us this opportunity, and he would have awarded the grant to the University of South Carolina. The problem was that Betsy and I had decided to get married. And as a future married couple, we could not work together in a unit at the USC, as it would violate a state statute.

So I made a huge life decision, which was to leave USC after more than 32 years.

The grant enabled us to set up an autonomous, independent institute to do this work right. I didn't completely sever my ties from USC; I have an appointment there as a senior fellow, a distinguished professor emeritus. I still have a lot of interaction with the work I did at USC, but I don't manage anything going on there. I'm so proud of what they've done in the 22 years since I moved on.

Ultimately, I decided that to evolve as a scholar and thinker, you need to keep questioning your work and how it can be improved and the new ways you can take a look at a subject you thought you knew well and bring in other new partners.

I didn't start doing anything around transfers until 1995—thirteen years after I had launched the original first-year experience series. (And I regret that in 1986 when I wrote that piece for the AACRAO journal that I did not include transfer students). And now I'm trying to make up for lost time because here we are, after the Black Lives Matters movement and then the 2020 election results, and we're rethinking so many things that focus on the inequitable design of the basic structures of American higher education. One of the grossest inequities is how we treat transfer students. So they are now being embraced in this FYE overview focus.

Aubry: I appreciate this information. I enjoy learning about the history, how your career evolved, and the center's formation. Please share your focus over the last few years and, in particular, your recent book, *The Transfer Experience: A Handbook for Creating a More Equitable and Successful Postsecondary System*. Why would admissions officers and registrars find it relevant to their work?

Gardner: The organization that Betsy and I founded is designated as a not-for-profit, 501C3. We are a public charity, and we try to do as much of the work that we can on a pro bono basis. We have other things in place to recover the cost, but in this case, we worked with my colleague Drew Koch, president and chief operating officer. Drew and I went to the Gates Foundation back in 2016 seeking their support for

undertaking a comprehensive review of the current status of transfer in American higher education and the opportunity to make some recommendations as to how we might improve it. They gave us a nine-month, $300,000 grant to basically collect as many thinkers, practitioners, and researchers from different perspectives on the transfer experience as we could and put together this handbook. And we got Stylus Publishing to agree to take this on. We found 53 thinkers whose ideas are in this book.

We know from the history of American education that we designed a system to keep certain people, in effect, in their place and to keep people out of baccalaureate-level institutions and to put them in an extension of high school. Community colleges evolved as extensions of K–12 systems, and the educational opportunities that were designed there were greatly needed, particularly after World War II for veterans and adult learners. But the degrees were terminal; they were never designed to transfer. These colleges were not designed primarily as access portals to baccalaureate institutions. Now there were some old junior colleges who we worked with, such as San Antonio College, which is part of the Alamo Community College District. Back in the 1920s, that college was founded as a theater to the University of Texas at Austin, but that was highly unusual. So the current structure of American higher education is a legacy system. If we were starting this from scratch now, we would do a lot of things differently, but you have a situation where, give or take, 80 percent of the students who enter America's community colleges indicate some level of interest in transferring.

And yet, the reality is that six years later only 15 percent have earned a degree. It's an appallingly low level of attainment. We are failing transfer 101. There are lots of questions about why and lots of hypotheses. But, fundamentally, what we're arguing in this book is that we have to come up with a focus on transfer. It isn't solving the problem or really even addressing the root of the problem, but the focus is that transfer is a stage of development. It's a period within the larger undergraduate experience, and it's a period that is primarily characterized by deciding to enroll at another institution. It's a focus that looks at the mechanics of applying, having your transcript evaluated and credits awarded, and making a decision about a major you're going to pursue at a baccalaureate level or at another associate degree-granting institution.

What I discuss in the book is that there are two types of students in American higher education. There's a transfer student and a non-transfer student. And the majority of students now in the United States are transfer students. When you look at the total experience of those students—all of it, from start to whenever they either drop out or get a credential—the transfer student experience is fundamentally different than the non-transfer experience.

The transfer student experience really is the entirety of the undergraduate experience. It is everything a student does before deciding to move to another institution, applies, and has credits reviewed. And it is everything that happens after a student is admitted, registers, and begins coursework at another institution. And it describes the experience up until a student receives a degree.

We don't organize colleges and universities primarily to focus on the totality. We did a survey as part of our study for the Gates Foundation and asked a very simple question: What units on college campuses were primarily responsible for transfer? We disproportionately received enrollment management as a response.

Okay, yes, it's true enrollment management units are responsible for the way we define transfer, which is the mechanics of moving from one institution to another. However, enrollment management units are not responsible for the academic experience from the beginning to the receiving period. Enrollment management has very little to say, if anything, about what happens to transfer students after they're embedded in a business major at Oakland University, for example. After that, it's the dean of the business school and his or her faculty that is responsible for that student. But that's not how we designed the ecosystem. The way it's designed, is that

the role of the enrollment management officer typically is the principal spokesperson and advocate for transfer students. Thank goodness, because unlike the first year, transfer students don't have a range of advocates or cheerleaders. They don't evoke the attention, the sympathy, or the response from the general public. They're less visible.

What this book is trying to say is that if you want to ultimately produce a successful transfer student, you have to get them through some kind of beginning where they have enough credits to transfer. The whole assumption behind transfer is that you've accumulated credits to apply anywhere else, but huge numbers of students don't even make it to that point. You have to look at the pipeline of educational experience, which is in community colleges. And then you have to look at what happens to them after they come to the university. How are they oriented? How are they advised? What's the difference between being a transfer student in arts and sciences versus in business or education? In arts and sciences, it is further complicated by the fact that they're not a major in arts and science but their major is in history, English, or political science.

And in business, they are majoring in marketing, finance, or accounting. You've got all these cottage industries that are not owning responsibility for these students, and the only one that is taking any responsibility is enrollment management. We're investing in enrollment management with the power and the authority to have anything to say about the academic experience and, in some cases, even about the non-academic experience. The question is: who owns the transfer students? Who owns transfer students at Oakland University? I'll tell you, you surely don't have the level of ownership for transfers that you do for first-year students.

Aubry: Exactly, right.

Gardner: At most institutions, the chief academic officer is not the principal advocate for transfer students, and we're arguing that's a mistake. We won't get more transfer graduates unless the chief academic officer of the whole structure has more accountability, attention, and advocacy for transfer

students. Fundamentally, we're asking in so many areas of life in this country, how does the American system work? And who is it working well for and who is it not working well for? What we're saying about transfers is there are a lot of elements that are inequitable here.

Aubry: I appreciate this. I understand that you and Janet Marling, executive director of the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students, have worked together recently on the Socially Just Design in Postsecondary Education: A Series. Will you share your message on the transfer moment advancing equity and challenging the status quo?

Gardner: Yes, I certainly can. Janet is an example of an educational innovator who I really admire. She was initially partnered with the institute's founder, Dr. Bonita Jacobs, who was at the time the chief student affairs officer at the University of North Texas, where Janet was also a staff member. Dr Jacobs ultimately left the University of North Texas and became the president of the University of North Georgia and brought Janet and the institute with her, and Janet has stayed with this. I see this as a wonderful outgrowth of work that had been underway for some time, which was trying to call attention to subpopulations within undergraduate education that were getting the short end of a stick, transfer students being one of them.

My colleagues and I at the Gardner Institute are interested in all subpopulations of undergraduate education and all types of undergraduate institutions, and it's natural for us to want to have a partnership with the national organization that has this exclusive focus on transfer students.

Since 2007-08, we've had a process that we sell to colleges and universities to help them rethink and transform. And that idea wasn't mine; it was inspired by the president of University of Texas El Paso at the time, Diana Natalicio. She came to us and asked if we could do the project we did with Oakland, which focused on first-year students, and said, could you do this and look at transfer students at the University of Texas El Paso and El Paso Community College? So for the first time we got a big

community college and five campuses and a major system campus with University of Texas system together to look at the two-year and four-year span of the undergraduate experience.

Since that project, we've worked with about 70 institutions in what we call the Foundations of Excellence transfer process. The goal of that is to assist a campus for the first time in creating an action plan to improve the totality of the transfer experience. So the question is, if you want to be an institution that had an excellent transfer culture, what would you have to do? What could you aspire to? We provide a set of nine standards of excellence that any institution can use for free and customize for a given institution.

But to answer your question, there is a natural affinity. Between the work of the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students and the work of the Gardner Institute, there's a professional affinity and a personal affinity. When you stay focused on something for a long time, as I did on the first-year experiences, you can really learn a lot, and I am so glad she stayed with this work.

Now you mentioned a specific event that Janet and I were involved in. What we did was design a series that's offered by the Gardner Institute for Excellence and Undergraduate Education. The series was conceived by my colleague, and it's designed like a book with chapters. This is a set of video experiences, along with readings that are a video book. There are different authors and chapters. Janet and I authored the chapter on transfer. This was in a video professional development book about unjust design in American higher education, and we were using transfer as an example of a system that is not designed to create just, equitable outcomes for both transfers and non-transfers. Janet opened by giving the kind of national overview—how we are performing as a country and how we advocate for an improvement of status. Then I come in with some specific recommendations that an individual campus could pursue. They're very tangible, very applied. Many of them don't cost any money. It's a matter of your values, your priorities, your beliefs, and how you organize yourselves. If we simply change the culture so that we have greater advocacy from academic leadership for the success of transfer students, there's no money attached to that at all. It's about how we functionally design the academy, which would mean that enrollment management would finally not be in a total vacuum. There would be shared advocacy along with enrollment management.

Aubry: I appreciate you sharing more about your work with Janet. I am definitely looking forward to reading your book. This leads me to the next question. As a higher education professional, what do you feel are the most pressing problems today after living through COVID-19 over the last couple of years, and how do we move forward?

Gardner: Where do I begin? I've mentioned the fact that the system is unjust. The transfer question is a great example of that, but there are many others. I think we are in a period in public life now where we, as a country, are going to have to decide if we are going to support a new vision that's emerging. It's not entirely new; it's really an extension of the philosophy that began with the New Deal in the 1930s, but it has to do with the role of government and what taxpayers want to authorize our government to do in terms of investments. You know there's this focus on infrastructure, and I think we're going to have to rethink the educational component of the infrastructure. I think that we've got to see America well to the point where everyone has not only access to higher education but access to a higher education system that is designed for who our students really are. And, by in large, our students increasingly are members of a shrinking middle class. And as long as we have such massive unequal distribution of the wealth in this country, higher education is going to be severely constrained. Our future is inextricably tied with the future of the rest of the country, and what American voters are going to subscribe to.

In Michigan, you have a shrinking population base, namely aging white men like me, many of whom are holding on to a view of the way we think America was and we don't want that to change. But I see that kind of change here. I often say to people

that I'm a participant in the unfinished civil rights movement; I see this as a part of a 200-year evolutionary drama in our country, where we advance for a while, and then we regress. We regressed tremendously in the previous four years. Until we get more people like you and me, Dawn, who are supporting more opportunities for people who don't look like us, we are going to be in a bad spot. And a lot of this calls into question, how does the public perceive the value of higher education? We're under attack in a lot of states, because conservative legislators don't like what they think we stand for. And, really, I think we stand mostly for what these legislators would want, which is greater prosperity and greater success for all students. But we also stand for some things that some of those legislators don't approve of.

During the pandemic, we've learned a lot about how to adapt. As a faculty member I hate to say this, but in March 2020, we put 1,000 years of the tradition of faculty autonomy out the window. Administrators literally took over American colleges and universities and demanded us to make changes. This is a principle of sociology, that groups always try to do what they need to do to survive, and the academy survived. Some of what we had to do was to survive, but did we do it in a manner where there was equitable treatment? Not entirely, but I think there is definitely some upside here. I think more of us now in the academy are interested in innovation. I think we are willing to look at things that we hadn't before. For example, policy for incomplete grades got more attention last year than it had in 100 years.

Aubry: Yes, absolutely.

Gardner: The majority of institutions have modified their incomplete grading policy. Why did that happen? It happened because of the disruption of COVID-19. But people before COVID-19 were having their lives disrupted for all sorts of other reasons, but it wasn't affecting affluent white people.

The voters are going to sort this out. I think we will see how voters react to the policies of the Biden administration over the next two years and how they get to Congress. But right now, in spite of and because of the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, there is growth and recognition across more sectors in American society about the level of injustice. And this has given us a teachable moment, a willingness to participate, and momentum that I've not seen in my 54 years in professional American higher education. I saw some elements of this in the 60s, when I was just getting started, that was driven by the women's rights movement, the civil rights movement, the student rights movement, and the anti-war movement. But that wasn't sustained significantly in the 70s. But now we've got an opportunity. Tenured full professors, especially, have the autonomy, the freedom of speech, and the ability to get the attention of our administrators like no other constituency. I hope we use it, and if we don't, shame on us. I'm thankful, in my case, that I have a board that wants me to be outspoken about these issues. Can I be as effective as some people who don't look like me? Probably not, but I have a contribution.

Aubry: You absolutely do. I really appreciate you sharing your perspective, and I share your optimism. I do hope other tenured faculty will use their positions to support students and do the right thing. Thank you.

Gardner: We all have our own sphere of influence.

Aubry: Can you share advice for higher education professionals entering the later stages of their careers before they leave higher education?

Gardner: Well, I would ask a version of the question that was asked to me. I've been a full professor for nearly 20 years, and I've been at a university for about 30 years and this guy asked me, if you had one to five years, and one to five million dollars, what would you do now? Let's take the one to five million out and just say one to five years, or however you define a concluding period of your career. (And assume that by this time you have some ability to influence institutional resources and have a budget you manage). So now, what other uses could you put to that? What could be your capstone? What do you want to be remembered for? Who could you get to join you in a kind of legacy effort?

Within my own sphere of influence and without getting grandiose about it, I think that people need to think more intentionally about legacy building. I like this metaphor of the jury, that the jury is in. I think a lot of us in our careers are trying to find out what we can do. We're testing ourselves; there's a lot we want to accomplish just for intrinsic satisfaction, for affirmation, for the sense of professional accomplishment. But once you get to a point where you know, in my case, when I did this book with my colleagues, I don't need to publish another thing? I'm never looking for a job. So when the jury's in, what else do you want to do? I think if you're fairly well along in your career and haven't answered that question, you better get on it and answer that. You should be spending the last period of your career on what matters most.

A lot of what I think I do, and want to do more of, is mentor others, but I also haven't outgrown the need for mentoring, and I'm 77. A mentor of mine, John Whiteley, 81, said to me about 35 years ago, "You need to find a way to develop your career where 'you stay out of other people's meetings.'" John is a professor of social ecology at the University of California Irvine and has done a lot of work in the higher education human development area on moral and character development in college students. What he was arguing was that many of us in our careers spend a disproportionate amount of time reacting to memos that others send us that either tell us what to do or give us a problem that they want us to solve. Instead, we can create something where we have a greater ability to shape how we spend our time. I took his advice and literally said, I am going to create a lot of meetings that I can plan, like the first-year experience conferences and now the work I'm doing at the Gardner Institute. We have the series on socially just design, which is offered at an affordable price, and we have hundreds of people coming.

Dawn: That's incredible.

Gardner: And I don't really think it is only important for late career people; it's important for people, to the extent that they can, at any time. For example, you mentioned that you have a transfer action group. I suspect the Oakland University president didn't say, Vice President Aubry I want you to do this; you must do this; and you must report to me twice a year on what you're doing. I suspect you decided to do this.

Aubry: Yes I did.

Garnder: The ideas that come out of that, what you do with those ideas, and how you put them into policy formulation channels, is important because you are advocates for transfer students. You will likely turn some of them over to the chief academic officer or chief student affairs officer. That is the kind of activity we need to encourage more of. You are coming together, and you're going to brainstorm with your colleagues and say, let's put it all out on the table and use the privilege of our academic freedom. This is why we don't work in a bank. We work at Oakland University. We have the privilege to do this. What a waste it would be not to use that.

I think when you convene with thinkers like this, you have to have some ground rules, such as eliminating the conversation stoppers that groups often experience. For example, "We tried that five years ago and it didn't work so we don't need to talk about that again." Well that is nonsense; five years ago was pre-pandemic and this is a totally different era. Another example is "We could never do that because so and so would never approve it." Well, you don't know that because it depends on how you coach the idea. And the most common example is "Oh well, we don't have the money to do that" or "That would cost too much." Your response could be, "We're here to brainstorm what can we do where we don't immediately have to have a resource allocation to facilitate." You have to frame things.

Aubry: That is so true. What advice would you like to give to new higher education professionals and specifically those working in enrollment management?

Gardner: I would suggest that you learn something about the evolution of your field. Where did this come from? Where are you now in a historical evolutionary process? That is very important, particularly post-World War II because you have to understand how enrollment management was shaped by a lot

of the other changes in American higher education and, particularly, the way the territorial administrative landscape was contextually designed and who assumes responsibility for what. A fundamental question is, what are the student needs that may or may not be the same as the institutional needs, and what are the needs that enrollment management can best serve? We know now that we can do better if we collaborate and have strategic partnerships with other areas. A lot of the evolution of American hybrid administrative structures has been based on taking territory from others through competition rather than collaboration. Competition is so inherently American.

If I were in enrollment management, I would look at the lessons to be learned from the recent evolution of student success. "Student success" is increasingly a label and a categorization from educators in higher education who engage in certain types of practices. And the questions are: What does this mean? What do they do? And where do they come from? Are they faculty or former academic administrators? Are they former student affairs administrators? Are they former enrollment management professionals? The way we previously compartmentalized the territory, the administrative landscape between academic affairs, student affairs, and enrollment management wasn't getting the job done—the job being increasing the number of college students who we admit and who are successful. And increasingly college presidents have been getting more and more impatient with our lack of progress, as are legislators. And to credit agencies and some of our presidents (I don't know about yours), they have performance metrics they must achieve.

Aubry: Oh yes, they do.

Gardner: The organizational structure is one of the few areas that college presidents have the greatest degree of flexibility and control over. Nothing is ever easy, but I think that what happened was that a lot of this territory between academic affairs and student affairs has been reshuffled over the decades. And we're seeing this evolution of student success,

and if I were in enrollment management, I'd be watching that very carefully and trying to get beyond our own cultural blinders. About a year ago, a faculty member at Elon University, Peter Felton, and I took steps to organize what we're calling a global forum. We've got people from a number of nations, all over the world who we're meeting with to create a global forum on student success. One of the starting places is what do we mean by student success, and how is this culturally defined in the United States, as opposed to other nations, and even then, defined differently at different institutions and by different members of any given institution? And I will tell you that there are other countries in the world looking at student success in ways that we here in the United States are not.

The enrollment management profession is dynamic. I have a pet peeve about the structure of enrollment management, which I'll share because I see it all over the country. What a lot of colleges do is they hire brand new bachelor's degree recipients to be admissions recruiters, pay them a paltry sum, and then wonder why they leave after a couple of years. Now, of course, you could say nobody early in their career stays anywhere very long, and maybe that's the case. However, the main structural consideration I want to get at here is that many students who are recruited by colleges and universities establish some rapport with an admissions officer they've met at a college fair, visiting their high school, or through correspondence. But once they get to campus, they never see that person again. I think there's a disconnect between enrollment management offices and what happens to the people they have recruited. What did they learn from them, and what kind of feedback did they get? I think that needs to be fixed. I also think that enrollment management would be more sustainable if it built more loyalty and affinity with a lot of these new hires. The career trajectory for that role is not one that practices principles of sustainability whereas in the faculty profession (the profession I was in), I had people who wanted to invest in keeping me around, and it worked for years.

Aubry: You bring up some very good points. I believe many enrollment managers talk about how they can encourage new professionals to stay in the enrollment management profession. We need to ask ourselves if we are creating environments that are welcoming, and can we show them pathways, so they want to stay in enrollment management? As you said, many of us attract our alums, and sometimes they move to other positions within the university, which I don't mind as long as they're staying at the institution and committed to student success. But you absolutely want to invest time, energy, and resources to grow wonderful leaders in your profession, so we definitely need to be more intentional about that.

Gardner: You know I was just thinking about my own work with the senior year. I work with a group on the senior year transition seminar to help students as they leave the university. It's a course at the University of South Carolina that any department can offer for its majors, and it looks at the challenges that graduating seniors are facing and decisions they have to make (such as whether they are going into the workforce, to graduate school, travel, or the military services). And this raises the question we talked about earlier about what have you not yet done? Enrollment management spends a lot of time bringing first-year students into the institution, but what about helping to plot the educational trajectories of their graduates, particularly in the case where you have a thriving graduate school? So what's the role of enrollment management in relation to this?

Aubry: Well, I believe we're starting to have more conversations like that. We have a new graduate school dean, and we're talking more about the pipeline and the student life cycle. If we want students to continue their education throughout life, how do we help support each other in a more formal and intentional way? So I think it's very interesting that you brought that up. There's not much literature on that, I think, so it is something that we need to be working and collaborating on.

I wanted to ask you what remains to be accomplished for you and your career. You've answered that in some of the other questions, but is there a specific legacy you hope to leave behind?

Gardner: In addition to the Gardner Institute, my wife and I have some hobbies and interests (she has far more than I do), but I'm very active, and I plan to keep working. I don't have any specific retirement plans yet, but there's a number of things that I am working on. One is that I launched a podcast. I'm also really hard at work on this global forum that I'm doing with Peter Felten. I'm doing some other writing and then as I mentioned earlier, I want to see us develop an initiative focusing on graduate student retention. There are always things that keep pushing me to try and refresh the work, but mainly I want to advance my colleagues and be a sounding board for them, a mentor for them.

This work we're doing is really a blast, and it's needed by our country. I see this as a mission, something I didn't understand when I was in college. I was a successful student, but nobody ever taught me about the concept of mission. It wasn't until I was drafted for the Vietnam War that I had to learn the concept of mission. I was a psychiatric social worker and in a mental health clinic on an Air Force base, and I had to learn that there was something a lot bigger than me that I needed to contribute to. That's when I began to understand the mission, and I was committed to it. It was also during that time that my Air Force commander wanted me to do some teaching at night because I had a day shift job, so I started teaching for the University of South Carolina at night. I realized that there were so many students with a lot of potential and great intelligence who were vastly underserved in their public school education.

As I mentioned earlier, I see myself as a part of the continuing civil rights movement in the United States, and that's really what I want to be part of more than anything else. And to the extent that I—a mature white man and leader in my profession—can help, I want to do that while also recognizing my limitations. I want to be invited to participate in meaningful meetings with others. So in some ways, it will be more of the same, but we're a 22-year-old

organization that is evolving dynamically, and I want to continue being part of it.

Aubry: Well, thank you so much for the honest, thoughtful, and engaging conversation.

Gardner: It has been, really.

Aubry: I've really enjoyed it, and I know readers are going to enjoy reading our interview today, but I especially appreciate the advice and wisdom you shared about working with students, especially transfer students. And particularly about the future of higher education and what enrollment management professionals can do. It's great to know that higher education scholars like yourself are committed to making time for those who are the future of our profession.

Gardner: I really believe in the importance of your work.

About the Author

Dawn Aubry is Vice President for Enrollment Management at Oakland University. Aubry previously served as the university's director of undergraduate admissions and has held positions in enrollment management, admissions, housing and residence life, student conduct, student orientation, and student programming during her career. Prior to joining OU in 1998, Aubry gained valuable career experience working at Kent State University and the University of Cincinnati.

Active on campus as a chairperson or member of more than 70 university committees, Aubry has made dozens of presentations at professional conferences and belongs to several professional organizations. They include the Michigan and Detroit College Access Network groups; the National and Michigan Associations for College Admissions Counseling; the American and Michigan Associations of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers; the Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association (CIVSA); the NAFSA Association of International Educators; the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators; and the Detroit Economic Club. In addition, Aubry has been a member of the College Board Enrollment Management Leadership Academy, the Oakland University Leadership Academy and a Harvard Summer Institute on College Admissions participant. She has been honored as a Timothy G. Larrabee SOGI Equity and Inclusion Award winner and chosen as the Outstanding Oakland University Administrative Professional of the year award recipient during her career.

Aubry received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Oakland University, her Master of Education in Higher Education Administration & College Student Personnel from Kent State University, and is currently a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at OU's School of Education and Human Services.

The Freshman Year Experience

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John N. Gardner

A movement is taking place in American higher education to change the way colleges and universities treat, welcome, assimilate, support, and most importantly, inform their freshman students in this new dawning age of information. That movement is something which has come to be known as the "freshman year experience" phenomena, and it portends changed opportunities for collegiate registrars and admissions officers to influence the future form and substance of the first year college and university experience.

A basic purpose of this article is to elaborate on this freshman year experience enhancement movement and to suggest that collegiate registrars and admissions officers have not only a major stake in this movement, but much to offer toward its outcome. One example of the freshman year experience concept, the freshman seminar, is examined in some detail to illustrate a number of the characteristics of this broader movement.

It can be said that the 1984-85 academic year was the year of the report. Following the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in April of 1983, the next academic year saw the release of a number of reports which included scathing indictments of the current condition of undergraduate education in America. These reports were produced by such prestigious organizations as The National Institute for Education (*Involvement in Learning*), The National Endowment for the Humanities (*To Reclaim A Legacy*), and The Association of American Colleges (*Integrity in The College Curriculum*). Many of the recommendations of the reports have fueled a parallel movement in American higher education which is suggesting that much greater attention must be placed on the freshman and sophomore years. It is being argued that a new kind of "front-loading" is in order with a shift of resources, attention and effort from the esoteric specialties in the upper divisions to teaching the fundamentals of the college curriculum

in the first and second years of the collegiate experience. This parallel movement is now being found not only in the United States but in nations such as Canada, Great Britain, and Australia to enhance the first year of the college and university experience, and has come to be known in American higher education as "The Freshman Year Experience."

This term was coined and promoted by organizers of the University of South Carolina's first National Conference on the Freshman Year Experience which was hosted in February 1983 as an immediate outgrowth of a conference held the previous year entitled A National Conference on the Freshman Seminar/ Freshman Orientation Course Concept. Some words about the evolution of this movement and its relationship to readers of this journal are in order here.

Since 1972, the University of South Carolina at Columbia has had in place a unique course for freshmen entitled University 101, The Student in the University.

The University 101 course (which will be described at greater length below) is one of a genre entitled The Freshman Seminar or Freshman Orientation Course (a brief history of the evolution of this type of course will also be presented below). As the decade of the seventies wore on, the University of South Carolina received literally hundreds of calls and letters from colleagues throughout the country and Canada requesting information on how to develop a freshman seminar/ freshman orientation course which would, hopefully, enhance freshman retention. Thus, in February 1982, 175 educators came to the University of South Carolina at Columbia campus to discuss the history, organization, administration, politics and content of freshman seminars/ freshman orientation courses. Participants at this conference gave conference organizers extensive feedback that not only should such meetings be continued, but that the focus should be expanded to consider instead the much broader questions involved in the entire freshman year and related efforts in addition to freshman seminar/ freshman orientation courses to enhance the freshman year. In the following year, the first National Conference on the Freshman Year Experience was held.

By 1985, interest and awareness of the freshman year as a cornerstone of the college experience had grown lo mammoth proportions as evidenced by the 700 participants who attended that Conference on the Freshman Year Experience. They came from across the United States, from Canada, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and they presented and heard more than 130 programs and exchanged ideas for strengthening and broadening freshman programs in public and private institutions at senior and junior colleges on large and small campuses.

For the 1986 meeting, over 175 presentations were scheduled and conference participants were anticipated to exceed 1000 in number.

A strong bias emanating from the kinds of educators that have participated in such conference activities is that the freshman year experience can only be enhanced by developing partnership of faculty, academic administrators, and student personnel administrators. In turn, this will model a partnership for the improvement of the freshman year and for the host of support services that are necessary to accomplish the successful assimilation of college freshman.

This freshman year experience movement has its roots in a number of factors including:

- Altruism—there are still many in the profession of academe who genuinely care for freshmen for the sake of caring.
- Financial exigencies: the decline of traditional age enrollments, increasing competition for the available pool of students, concerns for job security, all have produced an equation which has led more leaders and more institutions to care more about freshmen.
- Increased attention is being paid to the poor quality of high school graduates and hence the greater need to remedy these deficiencies in the first year of the college experience. The President's National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983–84 was particularly successful in focusing attention on this factor.
- The professoriate in American higher education is aging and hence there is increasing need for faculty development. Many of the freshman year experience enhancement programs have strong faculty development components. The fact that the faculty are now advancing in years also means that more of them are tenured and full professors and hence can now afford politically to take more risks on behalf of freshmen.
- The decline of enrollment in the liberal arts and Education has had particular impact on the affected faculty who are looking for new markets, ventures and enrollments, for example, such as those that seem abundantly available in freshman seminar courses.
- Increased attention is being paid nationally to the rights of all consumers and freshmen are being now treated more as consumers who need to be taught their options, rights, obligations, privileges and responsibilities (if only to prevent institutions from being litigated for failing to meet the rights of their consumers). A natural vehicle for providing this kind of instruction is the freshman seminar.

- A revival of sorts is taking place as a result of some scholarly academic revivalists, such as Lee Noel, formerly or The American College Testing Service, John Whiteley of the University or California at Irvine, Alexander Astin, University of California, Los Angeles, and John Gardner of the University of South Carolina.

- Because the competition for students has been increasing, more attention and focus has been directed towards their needs. There is now more study of students and more efforts to attempt to understand them better.

- Declining revenues have led some institutions to reduce freshman enrollment by raising standards and, therefore, the overall quality of the freshman class at many institutions has increased. Concomitantly, institutions want that much more to keep the freshmen they worked that much harder to recruit. Such recruiting is also very expensive.

- A number of states are under federal desegregation compliance agreements and it is now a matter of the law that institutions must do a better job of understanding, recruiting, and retaining certain types of students.

- There has been a dramatic change in the nature of "freshman." Now more are nontraditional, older, wiser, working, married, assertive, part-time, demanding, and less like much of the professoriate when they were freshmen.

All of the above factors have led to a variety of types of efforts being made to improve the freshman year. These efforts include such approaches as:

- The reform/modification of the entire undergraduate experience with special attention being paid to the curriculum. Critics and cynics, however, allege that merely tinkering with the specific courses that freshmen must take may not at all change the

way we go about teaching freshmen and providing them the information and content which they so desperately need.

- The enhancement of academic advisement.
- Freshman seminar/freshman orientation courses.
- Efforts to train faculty to perform academic advising and other special support tasks for freshmen, which are duties that clearly faculty were not trained in graduate school to perform.
- Efforts to implement a reward system for caring about freshmen and for doing a better job teaching and advising them (through such mechanisms as release time, extra compensation, tenure and promotion credit, merit pay credit, etc.)
- Greater efforts to put more faculty into the classroom teaching freshmen (as opposed to graduate students) and more of the best teaching faculty.
- Improved orientation through the concept of what is now called extended or continuing orientation. It has been realized by most colleges that their traditional mechanisms for introducing students to higher education, that of the one day or one week summer orientation program, no longer suffice to meet the students' complex needs for information. As reported in *The New York Times*, "Orientation is no longer a three day run" (Friedland 1984).
- The improvement of undergraduate housing so as to promote what has become known as living/learning environments and to ameliorate what are in many cases extremely depressing institutional ambiances as found in residence halls.
- Providing expanded extracurricular and co-curricular activities so as to heighten the investment of time, involvement, and interest by students in the life of the institution.
- Peer counseling and peer advising programs—realizing that much of what students report that they learn the most from in college are those activities involving extensive interaction with their peers.
- Special administrative units for freshmen such as freshman centers, freshman advising units, etc.
- Career counseling for freshman, especially focusing on the needs of undecided students.

- Tutoring and study skills programs provided either by faculty, professional tutors and study skills specialists, and for peers.
- Early warning intervention systems to identify early in any given semester students who are yielding signs of potential problems and referring these students for special kinds of counseling and support.
- So-called "mentoring" programs to encourage and teach faculty to practice mentoring behaviors so that students will develop special bonding relationships with them and thus be more likely to persist.
- Special programs for unique populations of students: the mature, nontraditional, minority, commuter, international, etc.
- Special programs for parents of freshmen which are particularly important for the first generation college students for whom the college experience is as much of an education for their parents as it is for the students. To support the parent(s) is often critical for the eventual success of the student, if only because so many of these students continue to reside with their parents.
- Efforts to improve instruction in uniquely freshmen disciplines (such as English composition).
- To improve library orientation and information retrieval skills.

What are the commonalities in these freshman year experience type programs? First of all, they all represent a deliberately designed attempt to provide a rite of passage in which students are supported, welcomed, celebrated, and ultimately (hopefully) assimilated. These programs are analogous to the kind of "basic training" that has been provided by the United States armed forces for decades and most of America's major corporations for an equal amount of time. Secondly, these types of programs reveal a great concern about freshmen per se in which there is a deliberate process or mechanism developed which attempts to guarantee for each freshman a mentor (a "significant other"), *i.e.* some caring adult employee of the institution.

The freshman year experience is also something that institutions are marketing in advance when they

attempt to sell the institution. Subsequently, the freshman year experience is a deliberate series or experiences which are provided for the students after they have arrived during the time when they are making that second critical decision as to whether or not to stay or leave the institution they chose originally.

In marketing terms, this is the concept of the "second sale" in which institutions are trying to help students overcome "buyers' remorse" and instead make a commitment to remain at the institution. This kind of intervention and reselling of the institution appears to be particularly important during the first six weeks or so of the first semester of the freshman year, the time frame when the majority of students who decide to drop out during or after the freshman year appear to make this decision.

Freshman year experience programs recognize that not all freshmen are the same and that they, therefore, have a variety of special needs for orientation due the heterogeneity of their backgrounds. The freshman year experience concept is based on the recognition that the freshman year is the foundation on which the rest of the college experience is based, and that there needs to be a shift of attention and resources from the last two to the first two years. This movement also has required acknowledging that concern for freshmen and the achievement of professional status need not necessarily be incompatible.

In turn, this requires either the modification or the rejection of the graduate school model which most faculty have learned whereby status is measured in terms of one's direct distance from freshmen. Institutions with strong freshman year experience programs in place have had to make an effort to develop a reward system to sanction positively those who care for freshmen and to make a concomitant commitment to put some of their best people forward on behalf of freshmen.

The freshman year experience efforts are manifested by their deliberateness, their effort to make things happen by design, not by accident or spontaneity, *i.e.* those things that must happen if students are more likely to be successful. The freshman year experience movement also includes a deliberate effort

to provide for impressionable entering students role models who hopefully will be worthy of emulation. This is based on the notion that even though students may protest to the contrary, they are really hungry for people they can respect, heroes, if you will.

One example of the freshman year experience enhancement movement which is a primary focus of this article is the freshman seminar/freshman orientation course concept. A freshman seminar is a new, yet not so new, discipline, a course for and about freshmen (women and persons). The course includes the concepts of studying the student, having the student study himself/herself, other freshmen, studying the institution, and studying higher education. The freshman seminar concept is neither new nor novel, yet it's increased attention and proliferation makes it appear new and novel. That the Freshman seminar is a growing national phenomena is indisputable, as is evidenced by the 1984 American Council on Education Survey, *Campus Trends*. Of 2,623 institutions which were asked whether or not they offered a course in "coping with college," 77.8 percent surveyed indicated that they did offer courses in "coping with college" (El-Khawas 1984, 9). These data would suggest that this practice is no longer the exception, but rather something approaching the rule. This growing national phenomena is due especially to the financial exigencies of the times as well as some of the reasons suggested previously in this article for increasing interest on behalf of freshmen.

The first freshman orientation course began in New England at Boston University in 1888, followed by Iowa State in 1900 because both of these institutions recognized the need before the turn of the century for providing special guidance for entering college students. More recently in 1959 under the leadership of the noted American scholar, David Riesman, Harvard's contemporary freshman seminar was founded.

The first orientation course for credit, however, was offered at Reed College in Portland, Oregon in 1911. The course was described as "the development of higher education, the purpose of college, the college curriculum, individual plan of study, the thought factors of study, and a variety of other topics relating to college life including health, college spirit, student

government, intercollegiate activities, fraternities and sororities and college religion." The course was taught for a year for two hours per week, and men and women were taught separately.

As early as 1911, the Carnegie Foundation suggested that colleges and universities "do something to help freshmen find themselves." Amherst College responded initiating a freshman seminar in 1913. Brown initiated one in 1915 entitled "Orientation Lectures," a course which gave advice and information about the University and counsel concerning "the freshman's personal habits and methods of reading and study" (Gordon 1982).

The freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina entitled University 101, the Student in the University, began in 1972. It was founded in reaction to the large student riots which racked that institution in 1970 and was an effort to try to change student attitudes towards the University in terms of those attitudes becoming more positive and less hostile. It was also an effort to have in place by the early 1980s a significant retention vehicle to combat the decline of traditional age high school graduates which would begin in the year 1981.

Since its founding, over 17,000 students have taken the University 101 course on the Columbia campus, the flagship campus of the University of South Carolina nine campus System, and thousands of other students have taken the course on the other eight campuses. University 101 is a program for both students and faculty/staff. The course includes a three credit hour freshman seminar, elective, pass/fail graded courses.

In fall 1984, the largest percentage of the freshman class ever to take this course did so, 45.8 percent, even though that class was the best qualified academically in the University's modern history. University 101 also includes a mandatory 5 day/40 hour faculty training workshop, a prerequisite for all those faculty and staff who teach the course.

Some of the goals of the University 101 course are to promote retention as a byproduct of accomplishing the following:

- An extended orientation...what colleges and universities call "continuing orientation,"
- Introduction to higher education as a discipline per se,
- The teaching of academic survival skills,
- Improving attitude towards faculty and the teaching/ learning process,
- Providing a support group and a sense of community,
- Providing a mentor/significant other,
- Teaching and requiring the use of the institution's support services,
- Making friends,
- Providing career counseling and assistance in making decisions about majors, especially for undecided students,
- Gelling involved in the life at the University outside the classroom,
- Improving compliance with desegregation mandates by promoting persistence of minority students,
- Making freshmen feel significant,
- Generating enthusiasm for the institution,
- Exploring the cultural life of the University, and
- Making students more informed consumers of the opportunities and requirements of their education in their institution.

"USC freshmen know the best reason in the world for taking University 101. It helps turn them into... sophomores." So claims a brochure developed by University 101 co-director, Professor A. Jerome Jewler, at the University of South Carolina. What is the evidence to support such a claim? The answers to that question have been so positive that without question the relationship of the freshman seminar/freshman orientation course to enhanced retention has been the most important motivating factor leading to the initiation of such courses at so many post-secondary institutions.

Empirical evidence as to the positive relationship between the freshmen who take freshman seminars and subsequent enhanced retention has been reported consistently at the National Conference on the Freshman Year Experience in 1983, 1984, and 1985 and published in the *Proceedings* of these meetings. Such

findings have been produced at a wide variety of institutions—public, private, large, small, urban, rural, open admissions, selective admissions, examples of which are: Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Drew University, Indiana University-South Bend, Lincoln University, University of Central Arkansas, University of Pittsburgh, University of Southern Maine, and University of Wisconsin-Green Bay (Gardner, *et al.* 1983); Jefferson Community College/University of Kentucky, Mt. Vernon College, University of South Carolina at Lancaster (Gardner, *et al.* 1984); Eastern Michigan University, Francis Marion College, Heidelberg College, Kingsboro Community College, and the University or Massachusetts at Amherst (Gardner, *et al.* 1985).

At the University or South Carolina-Columbia, an ongoing research project has been conducted since 1974 (two years after the program began) to measure the outcomes or the University 101 freshman seminar course, particularly with respect to its impact on freshman persistence to the sophomore year. This research has been conducted by a highly respected researcher who has no official relationship to or responsibility for the program being studied. For the 12 years in which retention has been measured it has been found that freshmen who take the University 101 have attained higher survival rates than students who do not take a course, and in all but two years this difference has been statistically significant.

What has been most interesting about this finding is that each year the population of the students as a whole who voluntarily take the University 101 course have a lower predicted potential for survival as measured by predicted grade point ratio. Thus, based on consistent findings of retention research over the past several decades, it could have been reasonably expected that those students also would have had a lower survival rate. Instead, the opposite has been found, namely, students with a lower predicted potential for survival are surviving at a higher rate than students who did not take the course even though the students who did not take the University 101 course had an initially higher predicted grade point ratio as a group.

The course has also promoted higher retention rates in such high risk student populations as unde-

cided students, two-year associate degree majors, and students in a new high risk program begun in 1983, the Provisional Year Program. These studies or University 101 have also demonstrated that students who participate in this course are more likely than their peers, who do not participate in University 101, to be more knowledgeable of the helping student services and resources, to make more use of those resources, to participate more in the co-curricular activities of the University, and to be more likely to report that they received a good orientation to the University. Significant retention differences have also been reported by sex and race with the conclusion that the course has been extremely supportive of the University's overall efforts in promoting enhanced retention of minority students (the University is found in a state which is under obligation to comply with a desegregation agreement negotiated with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights).

Overall the retention rates have varied from year to year, always in favor of the freshmen who have taken the University 101 course, with differences between survival rates of University 101 freshmen running from a low of 1.9 percent to a high of 7.2 percent with the average over twelve years being a difference of 5.1 percent (Fidler 1985, 1–12). There is not a registrar or admissions officer in the land who cannot calculate the financial consequences for his or her institution of a seven percent enhanced freshman retention rate.

Even larger differences in survival rates have been obtained from other campuses of the University of South Carolina System where the University 101 course is taught. For example, at the University of South Carolina at Lancaster, a commuter institution offering associate degrees and some upper division course work for an enrollment of slightly less than 1000 students, extensive research has been conducted to measure the impact of the University 101 course on freshman survival rates. The vast majority of the students who have taken the University 101 course at this Campus have been so-called "branch students"—a classification used by USC-Lancaster to denote those students not meeting regular admission requirements.

Over the last four years, retention rates for branch students enrolling in University 101 have been 15 to

25 percent higher than those branch students not enrolling in University 101. Further more, branch students enrolling in University 101 show an 8–12 percent higher retention rate than students meeting regular admission standards and not taking University 101 (*i.e.*, an even more striking finding and one that is also similar to data reported above for the University of South Carolina at Columbia).

University 101 students are given pre- and post-testing of the Survey of Student Habits and Attitudes (SSHA) instrument. Scores on the post-SSHA are significant on all scales, indicating that University 101 does contribute to a favorable change in students' study habits and attitudes (Rice 1984, 1–2).

The authors of another study of the feasibility of developing a freshman seminar/freshman orientation course, reported data collected at two University of Georgia system institutions indicating similar results reported to that above for the freshman seminar courses at the University of South Carolina. For example, Valdosta State College data collected on students in developmental studies showed a 13 percent difference in the retention rate of students who participated in the Valdosta State College (VSC) 101 Freshman Orientation Course as compared to those who did not take the course. Similarly, a year-long study at West Georgia College (WGC) found that the retention rate for all freshman who took the WGC 101 Freshman Orientation course was 10 percent higher than the retention rate for freshmen who did not take the WGC 101 course (May 1985).

In conclusion, it would appear that there is abundant empirical evidence to support the University of South Carolina publicity claim directed toward students that "USC freshmen know the best reason in the world for taking University 101. It helps turn them into...sophomores."

It is clear that collegiate registrars and admissions officers have a vital stake in the freshman year experience. The enrollment management, let alone maintenance of most of their institutions, is heavily dependent on first year students and on the effectiveness especially of admission officers.

It is also practically a matter of legend on many campuses about how knowledgeable most registrars are about the nature of the freshman year experience. After all, it is ultimately to the registrar's office that students come to complain and/or drop courses which do not comprise a satisfactory freshman experience. Registrars' office personnel have extensive contact with freshman students and many other students who often comprise many of academe's least satisfied customers.

As for admissions office personnel, they are as in touch with what the prospective college freshmen and women want out of their college experience, as any professional sector of the higher education community. After all, it is to the admission officers that rising college freshmen share their hopes, aspirations, dreams, fears, questions, concerns prior to matriculation and that first college registration. It could be argued that none has a more clear picture as to the collective abilities, aspirations, and concerns of each entering class of college freshmen than the competent and informed admissions officer.

At this point in the development, promotion, and replication of the freshman year movement, it is the consensus of the staff of the University of South Carolina National Conference on the Freshman Year Experience that admissions officers and collegiate registrars have been underrepresented as spokespersons for their institutions' freshman year programs. A fundamental premise or the philosophy behind the conference activity has been that the freshman year can be improved only by a partnership of senior academic administrators, faculty, and student personnel administrators. This kind of a partnership does and must include collegiate registrars and admissions officers.

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It's Time that Colleges Invest in their Undergraduate Admissions Staff

Tara P. Nicola and **Mark E. Butt**

America's colleges have not escaped the deleterious effects of the "Great Resignation." Overworked, underpaid, and burned out, higher education professionals are increasingly fleeing academia in search of alternative careers (*e.g.*, Ellis 2021; Seltzer 2022). Included in this exodus have been undergraduate admissions professionals (Cakuls 2022). Given their critical role selecting each incoming class, admissions officers are instrumental in defining the legacy of their institutions. But high turnover rates and low morale among admissions professionals—perennial issues that the Great Resignation has now further exacerbated—raise serious concerns about the ability of admissions offices to undertake this important work. It is for this reason that now, perhaps more than ever before, university leaders and senior admissions offi-

cers must intentionally invest in their undergraduate admissions staff.

Admissions work is not for the faint of heart. Each fall, admissions professionals kick off the admissions cycle by conducting high school visits in small towns and big cities across the country, traversing the road for weeks on end. As the winter approaches, this dizzying travel season dissolves into a mad dash to process, read, and discuss hundreds, if not thousands, of deeply personal applications each week. Selection deadlines are non-negotiable, and as such, working up to sixteen hours a day plus weekends is not uncommon. Immediately after admissions decisions are made in the spring, the officers then turn their attention to orchestrating campus open houses and other events for admitted students. By the time summer arrives, staff are

already scheduling their fall programming and gearing up for yet another admissions season.

The relentless nature of this never-ending cycle has led to high staff turnover within the admissions profession. A national survey of admissions officers sponsored the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) found that more than half (55%) planned to look for a new job within three years, with the vast majority considering roles outside of the admissions field (Phair 2014). Heavy travel schedules and concerns about work-life balance were frequently cited as reasons for pursuing alternative careers.

Low pay is also a major contributing factor. According to CUPA-HR, admissions roles are some of the lowest paid across all professional higher education positions. The median salary nationally for entry-level admissions counselors—who are usually tasked with the bulk of the travel and reading responsibilities—is only $42,000, meaning that half of counselors receive even smaller paychecks (Bichsel, *et al*. 2020). These low wages coupled with the lack of a defined career path, limited access to professional development, and an untenable work-life balance make admissions work far from an appealing career for young and experienced professionals alike.

The pandemic has only exacerbated the typical staffing challenges that admissions offices face. Given many institutions imposed hiring freezes and widespread budget cuts over the past few years, admissions staffing shortages are not uncommon. Notably, Occidental College entered last year's application reading season with a quarter of its 27 undergraduate admissions positions unfilled (Finnerty, Lin, and Berke 2021). At the same time, many colleges have seen significant increases in application volume (Jaschik 2022), driven in part by the burgeoning test-optional movement (Bennett 2021), that are only further straining already understaffed offices.

The growth in applications at a time when institutions lack sufficient admissions support staff is especially concerning at selective colleges, which rely on labor intensive systems to review applicants. Through their holistic review process, these colleges strive to consider each applicant within the context of their secondary school. In practice, this means methodologically reviewing each component of the application file, including academic transcripts/credentials, school profiles, multiple student writing samples, letters of recommendation, and other information such as interview narratives. The shift away from considering test scores has only increased the scrutiny of these documents. Because this evaluation process requires the careful attention of admissions officers in reviewing the myriad application components, limited staff capacity is fundamentally at odds with the nature of holistic review.

These rising application numbers, marginal wages, and a robust marketplace outside of higher education have created a near perfect storm in the higher education admissions landscape, threatening the ability of admissions offices to perform their jobs effectively and equitably. We believe, however, that university leaders—both within and outside of the admissions office—can help their admissions team emerge from this storm stronger than they were before through intentionally investing in their admissions staff. We offer the following recommendations to help them do so:

- Create mechanisms for feedback from admissions staff at all levels. Learning about staff needs is the first step in building a healthy admissions office culture that promotes staff success rather than burnout. Through distributing a survey, conducting structured individual interviews, or implementing a combination of both, admissions leaders can begin to understand the experiences and needs of their staff. Especially at larger, more complex institutions, senior leaders can be far removed from the processes they oversee and thus lack awareness of staff needs. Feedback mechanisms can close those knowledge gaps. At institutions that have experienced turnover, this feedback process not only can shed light on why staff have resigned but also can affirm to current team members that senior leadership is committed to supporting them.

- Provide growth opportunities and train junior admissions officers for future responsibilities. Research has shown that employees highly value professional development opportunities and are

less likely to leave organizations that promote their continued learning (Farrow, Kitto, and Knudsen 2021). To retain staff, admissions leaders should create opportunities to connect the marketplace of professional development with the interests of their employees. For example, admissions leaders can cover the cost of staff membership in professional associations, or sponsor their attendance at conferences, seminars, and workshops. In the post-COVID era, virtual programming offered by NACAC and other education organizations is ubiquitous, convenient for staff, and also cost effective. Providing these opportunities to junior staff is especially critical—remember that they are the future leaders of your institution. Invest in them accordingly.

- Conduct an expertise assessment to guide staffing decisions. Building a strong team requires understanding its current strengths and weaknesses. Inventory the skill set of your admissions staff, and identify areas where the office would benefit from additional support or specialized skills. Internal team members are often the best solutions to in-house needs given the deep institutional knowledge they possess; consequently, promoting from within should always be considered. But when the hiring of new staff is necessary, carefully identify who should occupy these roles. Think about what experiences are, and are not, currently in the room of admissions decision-makers. Young alumni, former attorneys, Ph.D.s side-stepping off the faculty track, musicians, statisticians, poets, ex-professional athletes, chemists, former high school teachers, and CBO instructors can all find a niche in this field and offer valuable insight into cultivating the leaders of tomorrow. The best admissions committees are those that harmonize a wide range of lived experiences and bring deep knowledge of and appreciation for the institution they serve.

- Explore how to ethically leverage technology to support the work of admissions staff. Over the
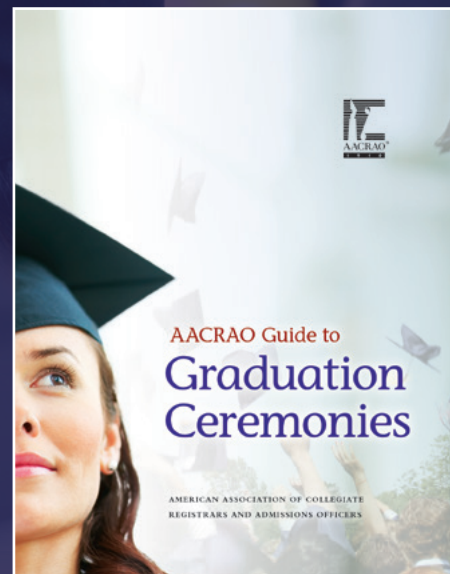
past 20 years, countless new tools, algorithms, and platforms have emerged in the college admissions landscape (Kelliher 2021). But leaders must tread carefully as they consider whether this technology can and should bridge gaps they cannot meet with human capital. For example, colleges are increasingly incorporating complex, AI predictive enrollment models into their selection processes. While this technology can improve the working conditions of admissions staff by reducing the number of applications they read or the amount of time they devote to each file, it also raises significant questions about equity and the overall integrity of the admissions process itself. Understanding the limitations of this technology and any of its potential negative implications for staff and for students is essential.

Admissions officers impact nearly every facet of university life. Making sure that the championship football team has talented incoming recruits, that the pep band has enough trombone players, and that the classics department has a critical mass of students falls on the shoulders of enrollment managers. Through overseeing the selection of applicants, they have a heavy hand in defining an institution's legacy and the values and priorities associated with it. If admissions officers do their jobs right, residence halls are filled, university coffers are overflowing, and the football team is set for another successful season. If they don't, chaos can unfold as institutions try to stem the widespread damage to their finances and to students' academic and extracurricular experiences that can result from failing to meet enrollment targets.

The insufficient compensation and professional support that admissions officers have received is at odds with the critical roles they play supporting a university's bottom line and enacting its strategic priorities. It is finally time undergraduate admissions professionals receive the institutional support they need and deserve.

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Meet ChatGPT

Christopher W. Tremblay

In November 2022, the artificial intelligence tool, ChatGPT, entered our world. ChatGPT stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) and was developed by OpenAI, which is an artificial intelligence (AI) research laboratory in San Francisco. Essentially, this tool is a more a powerful Google Search Engine. It is so popular that it surpassed ten million daily users in just 40 days.

There are many speculations as to how this will impact our work and our world. To demonstrate how ChatGPT works and to introduce it to our readers, I asked it to generate content related to our work. Below are those ten outputs. All of these responses were generated by ChatGPT in a matter of seconds using the January 9th version of the tool. This is designed to give readers a taste of the power of this tool.

- What is Strategic Enrollment Management?

    Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is a holistic approach to managing and optimizing the enrollment of students in a higher education institution. It involves the coordination of various functions, such as admissions, financial aid, retention, and graduation, in order to achieve the institution's enrollment goals and objectives. SEM also involves the use of data and research to inform decision-making, as well as the development and implementation of plans and programs to meet the institution's enrollment needs. SEM can help institutions to increase enrollment, improve student retention, and achieve a more diverse and academically prepared student body.

- Describe retention in higher education.

    Retention in higher education refers to the ability of an institution to keep students enrolled and on track to graduate. It is a measure of how well the institution supports and engages its students, and is typically measured by the percent-

age of first-year students who return for their sophomore year, and the overall graduation rate.

Retention efforts in higher education aim to improve students' experiences and help them stay on track to graduation. This can include providing academic support and advising, offering co-curricular activities and programs, and addressing non-academic issues that may affect students' ability to persist, such as mental health and financial concerns. Retention also includes identifying early warning signs that a student may be at risk of leaving and intervening with support services to help the student stay enrolled.

Retention is a critical issue in higher education, as it is costly for institutions to recruit and enroll new students, and it is beneficial for students to complete their degrees. Retention also plays a role in the reputation of the institution and can impact the funding and resources available to the institution.

● What is admissions yield?

Admissions yield refers to the percentage of admitted students who choose to enroll in a college or university. It is a measure of the institution's ability to attract and retain admitted students, and is calculated by dividing the number of students who enroll by the number of students who were admitted.

For example, if a college admits 10,000 students and 4,000 of them enroll, the admissions yield would be 40 percent. Admissions yield can be used to compare the relative popularity of different colleges or universities, and is also a measure of an institution's competitiveness and desirability among prospective students.

Institutions usually use admissions yield as part of their enrollment management strategy, and it can affect the number of students to admit, the level of financial aid to offer, and the recruitment efforts. A high yield rate can indicate that an institution has a strong reputation and

is seen as desirable by students, while a low yield rate may indicate that the institution is struggling to attract and retain students.

● What is holistic admissions review?

Holistic admissions review is an evaluation process used by colleges and universities to assess applicants based on their complete profile, including academics, extracurricular activities, and personal characteristics. The goal is to gain a comprehensive understanding of each applicant and to admit students who are well-rounded and likely to thrive at the institution.

● What is territory management?

Territory management is a strategy used by businesses, sales organizations, and other entities to optimize their resources and maximize their revenue by dividing their market into specific geographic or demographic areas, and then assigning a dedicated sales representative, or team, to each area.

The goal of territory management is to increase efficiency and effectiveness by focusing sales efforts on specific areas and customer segments. This can be done by analyzing data on customer demographics, buying patterns, and competition to determine which areas are most likely to generate the most sales. Once the territories are defined, sales representatives can be assigned to specific areas and given specific sales targets and objectives.

Territory management can help organizations to better understand their market, identify new opportunities, and target the most profitable customers. It also enables sales representatives to become experts in specific areas and build stronger relationships with customers. However, it can also create challenges such as balancing the needs of different territories, and ensuring that the right resources are allocated to the right territories.

● Why is college admissions so competitive?

One reason is that the number of high school graduates has been increasing, while the number of spots available at colleges and universities has not kept pace. This has led to more students competing for a limited number of spots, making the admissions process more competitive.

Another reason is that colleges and universities have become more selective in the students they admit. Many institutions are trying to improve their reputation and rankings by admitting students with high test scores and grades, as well as a strong extracurricular and leadership background. This has made it more difficult for students to stand out in the admissions process.

Additionally, the increasing cost of higher education has made it more important for students to get into a selective institution, as they often provide more financial aid and job opportunities.

Finally, the number of students applying to colleges and universities from around the world has increased, making the pool of applicants more diverse and competitive.

All of these factors have contributed to a more competitive college admissions process, making it harder for students to gain acceptance to their desired institution.

● What is the CLR?

The Comprehensive Learner Record (CLR) is a document that provides a comprehensive summary of a student's educational history, achievements, and progress. It is intended to be a more complete and accurate representation of a student's learning journey than traditional academic transcripts.

A CLR typically includes information such as:
* *Traditional academic data such as grades, test scores, and coursework*
* *Non-traditional learning experiences such as internships, service learning, and extracurricular activities*
* *Skills and competencies developed through various learning experiences*
* *Personal and demographic information about the student*
* *Additional information such as disciplinary history and career readiness data*

The CLR is intended to be a living document that is updated throughout a student's educational journey, including after graduation. This allows for the CLR to more accurately reflect the student's current skills, experiences and achievements, and to be more useful for future employers and educational institutions.

The CLR is being developed by AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers) and it's a way to better serve student's needs, employers and educational institutions by providing a more complete and accurate representation of student's learning journey.

● Why is FERPA so complicated?

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) is a federal law that provides certain rights to students and their families regarding the confidentiality of their education records. While the law is meant to protect student privacy and ensure that their personal information is not shared without their consent, it can be complicated because it is a detailed legal document that contains specific rules and requirements.

Some of the reasons why FERPA can be complicated include:
* *The definitions of certain terms, such as "education records" and "directory information," can be vague and open to interpretation.*
* *The law applies to a wide range of educational institutions, including primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities, and the rules can vary depending on the type of institution.*
* *FERPA requires institutions to obtain written consent before sharing certain information,*

but there are certain exceptions to this rule, such as when the disclosure is required by law or for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of the student or other individuals.

* *FERPA also requires institutions to provide students with access to their education records, but they can also place certain limits on this access.*

* *The law also requires institutions to have policies and procedures in place to protect student privacy, and to notify students of their rights under* FERPA.

Overall, FERPA *is a complex law that requires institutions to navigate a number of rules and regulations to ensure that they are in compliance. This can be challenging for institutions, especially when it comes to interpreting the law, and ensuring that students' rights are protected.*

● Are college rankings a good source of information to select a college?

College rankings can be a useful source of information for students and their families when selecting a college, but it's important to understand the limitations of these rankings and to use them in conjunction with other sources of information.

One advantage of college rankings is that they provide a quick and easy way to compare different colleges and universities based on a variety of factors such as academic reputation, graduation rate, and student satisfaction. Additionally, it can also provide a sense of a college's overall prestige and reputation.

However, it's important to remember that college rankings are not a perfect measure of a college's quality. They are based on a limited set of criteria and may not take into account important factors such as a college's mission, values, or culture. Additionally, they don't take into account the student's personal preferences, goals, or needs.

It's important to do further research and gather more information about a college before making a decision. It's important to visit the col-
leges, talk to current students and faculty, and consider factors such as location, cost, size, and campus culture. It's also important to consider the academic programs offered and the resources available for students.*

In conclusion, College rankings can provide a useful starting point for researching colleges, but should not be the sole factor in making a decision. It's important to gather more information and consider other factors to determine the best fit for you.

● Write a 150-word essay suitable for college admission. (This response included commentary before and after providing me with a 150-word essay):

College admissions are becoming increasingly competitive, and it's important to make sure that your application stands out. One way to do this is by writing a thoughtful and well-written essay. In 150 words, it's difficult to convey all of your strengths, achievements, and experiences, but it's possible to give a glimpse of who you are and why you are a great fit for the college you are applying to.

Here's an example of a 150-word essay suitable for college admission:

"*As a child, I was always fascinated by the world of science and technology. I spent countless hours tinkering with electronics and building robots, and I knew from a young age that I wanted to pursue a career in engineering. As I grew older, I took every opportunity to deepen my understanding of the field, from taking advanced math and science classes to interning at a local engineering firm.*

At the same time, I was also passionate about giving back to my community. I volunteered as a mentor for underprivileged youth, and I helped to organize a number of community service projects. Through these experiences, I learned the importance of teamwork, leadership, and the power of making a positive impact on others.

I believe that my passion for engineering and my dedication to community service make me an ideal candidate for XYZ College. The college's renowned engineering program, coupled with its focus on service-learning and community engagement, aligns perfectly with my own goals and values. I am confident that I will thrive in this environment, and I look forward to contributing to the college community."

In this essay, the writer has been able to convey their passion for their field of study, their achievements, and their dedication to community service, they also express their desire to join the college they applied to, and how it aligns with their goals and values.

Reflections on ChatGPT

Whether readers agree with these responses or not, this is content that has been collected from the internet. Readers must admit, these responses are pretty succinct and spot on. Essentially, I could create a college planning handbook for students and simply have it be a compilation of advice given by ChatGPT.

However, one major drawback to ChatGPT-generated content is the lack of references or citations. First, I have no way to verify the accuracy of this content (unless this was common knowledge to me). Second, if I wanted to learn more about any aspect of the response, I have no connection to the original of the content.

Reactions to ChatGPT

Reactions to ChatGPT are all over the board. Some are worried it will be the end of writing for high school students. In fact, ChatGPT has been banned in New York Schools (Elsen-Rooney 2023). Some see it as a way to easily and quickly synthesize information as a starting foundation for essays.

Citing ChatGPT

Citing AI output has not been finalized by organizations that offer advice and perspective on citing sources. However, academic publisher Springer Nature recently announced that tools like ChatGPT cannot be credited as an author in published journal articles (Vincent 2023).

Questions That Will Impact Our Work

How will ChatGPT change the college admissions essay landscape? Will colleges run essays through ChatGPT plagiarism checkers? Tools like GPTzero.me can detect AI-generated text, for example. Also, all of the Common Application essay prompts require a personalized response, one that a ChatGPT cannot generate or replicate.

However, I could see some disclaimers being added to college admissions websites to indicate that ChatGPT should not be the sole source of content contained in college application materials and then asking the student to sign off on that indicating that they did not plagiarize directly from ChatGPT. (In full disclosure, I did directly plagiarize ChatGPT to showcase its direct responses, and I am also not claiming them as my own).

Just like every other technology tool that has impacted our work in higher education, we will figure out a way to navigate the implications of ChatGPT as we continue to discover its pros and cons. In the meantime, I asked ChatGPT one final question: What is the future of artificial intelligence? The response:

The future of artificial intelligence is expected to bring significant advancements and impact across industries and societies. Some potential developments include:

* *More widespread and sophisticated AI applications in areas like healthcare, finance, transportation, and education.*
* *Increased human-AI collaboration and integration in the workplace.*
* *Development of advanced AI systems capable of autonomous decision-making and problem-solving.*
* *Advancements in AI ethics and regulation to address issues of bias, accountability, and privacy.*
* *Further research and development in areas like reinforcement learning, generative models, and explainability.*

However, it's important to note that the future of AI is uncertain and can be influenced by factors such as technological progress, public opinion, and government policies.

In other words, this is just the beginning!

Learn More About ChatGPT

To create your own account and give it a test run, visit: <chat.openai.com/chat>.

To read more on ChatGPT, visit the following two *Inside Higher Ed* articles:

- <insidehighered.com/news/2023/01/12/academic-experts-offer-advice-chatgpt>
- <insidehighered.com/admissions/views/2023/01/09/what-impact-will-chatgpt-have-college-essay-opinion>

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About the Author

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Establishing the Value of AACRAO: Exploring Member Experiences and Engagement Opportunities

Seth Marc Kamen and **Christine Apple**

AACRAO is a nonprofit, voluntary, professional association that relies on its membership to provide content, leadership, feedback, and financial support. The association promotes the well-being and advancement of professionals in the higher education community by engaging members in the collaborative pursuit of excellence in admissions, registration, and enrollment services. The association provides relevant programs, professional development tools, and information resources necessary to chart the course for professional success (AACRAO n.d.).

AACRAO's updated vision, mission, and goals (AACRAO 2020) included a goal to reimagine engagement and community. The organization's first manager of community and volunteers was hired to support that goal.

During a conversation about member engagement, the co-authors asked a relevant and pertinent question, "What does the member experience look like, and how successful has AACRAO been in supporting and engaging its membership?" This train of thought, coupled with the inherent need to rethink engagement in a post-Covid-19 environment led to this research and exploration.

Background and Reasoning

Why an exploration of membership, readers may ask? For AACRAO, member engagement is the lifeblood of the association, as almost 45 percent of the association's revenue is tied to dues, registrations, and publication sales (Cohn 2022). As institutional budgets change, and organizational membership dues may be

seen as non-essential, AACRAO needs to provide an experience that retains existing members while growing membership.

Additionally, the higher education community is experiencing a growth in competition for enrollment-related services. Multiple consulting organizations are entering the space, and technology companies are expanding their product lines and services to offer more tailored and integrated services. Likewise, new organizations are offering events, conferences, research, and publications like, or overlapping with, AACRAO's current output.

There is also an expected, substantial turnover in membership as current higher educational professionals reach retirement age. The new, younger generation of professionals will expect different services, modalities, and content. The process of engaging these members will need to be drastically different than in the past. This engagement will rely on crafted and personalized communications, technological advances, competitive insight, and more. It will also need to consider constant changes to the understanding of, acceptance of, and beliefs in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

In summary, for AACRAO to stay relevant, members must remain happily engaged.

Guiding Theory and Research

To guide the evaluation of the data, the authors turned to employee engagement theory. William Kahn formulated the theory in his article, "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement." The theory stipulates that individuals bring varying levels of physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement to their work, but those levels affect their work experiences and, therefore, their performance (Kahn 1990). Physical engagement is the use of efforts and energy within their workplace; if they move about, engage with others, and participate in actions and meetings, they are more likely to be satisfied. Cognitive engagement is the understanding of the goal and vision of the company and how employees use this knowledge to motivate their engagement. The emotional connection is the relationship between employee and employer,

focusing on a sense of belonging and leadership support. These three engagements influence an employee's psychological commitment to being a part of the team and succeeding at the job (Kahn 1990; Kahn and Heaphy 2014; Saks and Gruman 2014).

The guiding explanation of the interaction between members and engagement comes from research conducted by Dr. Brian Dominguez (2021). He identifies multiple themes and findings that articulate member wants, needs, and desires. Engagement shows a level of personal motivation for the organization and manifests in the use of benefits and events. He also claimed that members are looking to save time and energy by joining an association to gain relevant information. Membership, he said, is driven by the need and want for participation, arguing that "members want to see value from their membership in tangible and quantified ways as a customer," meaning the need to find a reason to pay the membership fee, attend events, learn from experiences, and become a stronger, in this case, higher education professional. Dominguez also argues that, "overall satisfaction affects the decision as individuals to maintain interest in membership regardless of age, tenure, or benefit."

The authors determined that research was needed to apply this same concept to AACRAO and determine if the association was engaging its members in a meaningful way. Their research sought to understand how people got involved, the entry point to engagement with the association, and the level of engagement.

Methodology and Research Limitations

The research question was twofold; how did you get involved with AACRAO, and what did you get out of the involvement? The authors chose an informal, voluntary qualitative study as their research method. An open-response survey consisting of seven open-ended questions and seven demographic or administrative questions was designed for dissemination. The questions included:

- How did you first get involved in AACRAO?
- What has since been your engagement and involvement in AACRAO?

Figure 1

Employment Areas of Respondents

Figure 1: Employment Areas of Respondents

Bar chart showing Affirmative Responses by Employment Area:

- Records/Registrar: 55.6%
- Admissions: 50.0%
- Enrollment Management: 44.4%
- Transfer: 44.4%
- International Students: 27.8%
- Graduate/Professional Programs: 22.2%
- Enrollment Technology: 22.2%
- Financial Aid: 16.7%
- Administration: 5.6%
- Student Affairs: 5.6%
- Nontraditional Programs: 5.6%
- Accreditation: 5.6%
- Curriculum Review: 5.6%
- Institutional Reporting: 5.6%
- Academic Policy: 5.6%

- What have you learned from your AACRAO experience?
- What three things do you value most from your involvement?
- What do you wish you had known when you started your involvement with AACRAO?
- What advice would you give to someone just starting in AACRAO?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share?

The survey was shared via social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) and emailed directly to engaged members of the AACRAO community. Because of this dissemination practice, and the ability for members to share the post within their networks, the total number of invited participants is unknown. Therefore, we cannot confidently say that research saturation was reached, nor can we predict if an appropriate sampling occurred. As such, although the findings are telling, this study can be nothing more than exploratory, and the insights gained should be foundational in designing more formal and comprehensive feedback mechanisms to evaluate the association's value proposition.

Eighteen current and former members of AACRAO responded to the survey. Respondents included twelve females and six males. Community colleges, four-year institutions, public and private, for-profit, and non-profit institutions were all listed as current or previous work locations. State representation included Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Oregon, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and others. Race, age, and other demographic information were not requested. Figure 1 shows which offices or functions respondents worked in; the question allowed multiple responses. Figure 2 (on page 59) documents the length of AACRAO engagement.

Survey responses were collected via a Google form with access limited to a single researcher. Two mem-

bers requested anonymity in their responses, and no names will be used out of respect for the entire sample. A simplified coding process was performed on the answers to identify themes and concepts. AACRAO's current and future initiatives and strategies influenced categories, and Kahn's employee engagement theory aided in triangulation.

Findings

As expected, the respondents provided a wealth of information relating to the topic of engagement and value. Four major themes emerged: The importance of a strong introduction to the organization; the role of ongoing engagement; mentorship and professional development; and influencing change. Each area provides an opportunity to showcase how AACRAO is enhancing services and resources to provide a more engaging, supportive environment while sharing respondent feedback.

Introduction to the Organization
A strong introduction and finding support for involvement are crucial to engagement.

The respondents indicated a variety of paths to involvement. One path was state and regional association engagement. This path includes attendance at a regional conference, election to the regional board, and upward movement into the national association. Nearly all respondents who took this path credit a person or persons as the reason they stayed involved and got into leadership positions, names that included known leaders within the organization.

Likewise, it was often a supervisor who urged this engagement.

For two respondents, AACRAO was an unknown entity; they'd previously engaged with NACAC before a promotion or departmental relocation. One respondent mentioned getting involved because they authored an article for AACRAO, and many indicated their first experience involved a presentation. This opportunity to share knowledge with colleagues is a staple of AACRAO culture; as a member-led organization, the business model relies on individuals to share their experiences. Indeed, AACRAO content, publi-

cations, and professional development programming is curated primarily through proposals put forth by members, many of which find that experience to be the gateway to other engagement and volunteer opportunities. Realizing the value of their lived experiences in the profession and facilitating dialogue, and sharing best practices often create for members the willingness and confidence to engage further.

As with any volunteer-led association, the value proposition of membership is directly correlated to engagement and a member's participation level in association activities. Respondent five said that "the opportunity to learn from and share with others in my profession" was one of the things they most valued about their experience. Respondent three had a similar sentiment, suggesting to new members that they "embrace the opportunity to share your experiences with others. Do *not* (emphasize not added) shy away from presenting or sitting at a lunch table with strangers. Your willingness to share your experience will pay dividends in feedback, advice, and contexts that will provide an invaluable service to you over the course of your career."

Ongoing Engagement
Levels and types of engagement differ for each person based on interests and resources.

There are multiple examples of how engaged the respondents became. Of the respondents, all but three have or currently hold an elected position on the AACRAO Board of Directors. All but two of the respondents have held a leadership position at the state and regional level, on an association committee or workgroup, or helped plan one of the association's meetings or events.

One respondent found their niche by focusing on writing for the association. Another is still on their path; they intended to stay engaged at the regional level due to funding and time commitment issues. A third respondent identified as a subject matter expert, using that to dictate their involvement with the association. More than one respondent included the breadth of their engagement, including one respondent who listed out almost all their involvements, including "a

Figure 2

Length of Time Involved With AACRAO (n=18)

11-20 years, **28%**

21+ years, **61%**

1-10 years, **11%**
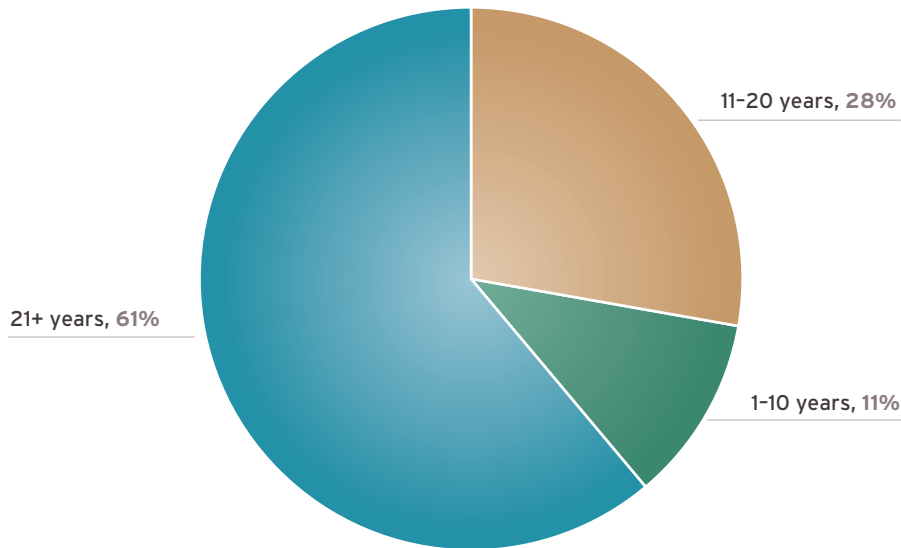
member of a few committees, member of the Nominations and Elections Committee, chaired a couple of committees, member of Local Arrangements Committee, AACRAO consultant, AACRAO session presenter, coordinator and presenter at Reg101 workshops" (respondent 1).

AACRAO engagement opportunities are intentionally varied to accommodate the availability and resources of all members. Contributions to the organizations can be as simple as developing a 500-word piece *Connect* article or leading a one-hour peer collective session, or as dimensional as full publication development, committee leadership, or committing to organizational leadership on the board of directors.

Engagements seem to be layered; one opportunity leads to another.

One respondent documented how engagement at one level opened the door for further advancement, "I…worked my way through several positions--newsletter editor, webmaster, and then on the board, eventually becoming [p]resident. Attending the [national] [l]ead-

ership meeting…helped me meet people, and I got involved in committee work, then became a committee chair. I filled in on a vacancy as a [p]rogram [c]oordinator and then served my own term. That led to several rounds of nominations for N&E, and then eventually I ended up on the [b]oard" (respondent 7).

Since not all respondents are seasoned members, one responded as having gone to "one transfer event" (respondent 9). This member represents an opportunity for the association; they are eager to get more involved if given a chance.

This opportunity is central to AACRAO's strategic plan, which includes reimagining engagement and community within AACRAO and ensuring that member experiences lead to layered engagement that contributes to members' professional development and amplifies the value of membership. Additionally, this goal within the strategic plan seeks to ensure that all members have a sense of place within the organization to create a foundation to catalyze all engagement opportunities.

Mentors and Professional Development

Find a mentor to support your engagement and professional development.

Many of the respondents credit a mentor as helping them navigate both the profession and the association. Respondent ten said, "The opportunity provided and the mentorship I personally received early in my career, and…that I provided that same exceptional support to others as I always encouraged new professionals to get involved." Respondent two had a similar response: "Helping to mentor and train others within our profession" was one of their most valuable experiences.

The value of peer-to-peer mentorship has long been central to developing new volunteer leaders for the organization, and is why AACRAO is embracing the mentorship model. Engaged volunteer leaders are frequently asked to share their experiences and to encourage emerging leaders to get involved in various ways. This has historically been curated through the organic peer connections developed during meetings and other association activities. While these will remain key to connecting members, AACRAO is also investing in a tool that will facilitate mentor/mentee relationships, allowing members to connect and engage in these relationships on an intentional and ongoing basis.

Respondent nine notes that mentors are not just those in leadership, saying, "Most importantly, the people that influenced me directly are those who attended the conferences and sessions to learn how to do their job better; these are not necessarily the leaders, but the real doers of our profession." AACRAO is an association of doers; members work directly with students, influence policy and processes that influence and define success, implement technologies to support access, and so much more. Professionals can often find knowledge and guidance from those in similar positions, not only those in leadership or administration.

In addition to the in-person opportunities, AACRAO hosts various virtual engagements attended by members at all professional levels and from multiple institution types. These are supportive examples of how surfacing shared challenges can lead to meaningful knowledge-sharing conversations that bring best practices to the forefront. Virtual engagements also take place around dedicated topics, such as transfer and articulation, the CLR/LER (an AACRAO Signature Initiative), and several more. For example, the Collective Gathering allows members to propose topics that are particularly relevant to them and explore peer experiences, seeking guidance and insights and sharing best practices. Webinar opportunities also provide immense learning among the AACRAO community, and dedicated spaces allow members to engage in threaded, asynchronous discussions to learn from each other. These various learning opportunities are a crucial commitment AACRAO makes to facilitate peer learning and capture the vast knowledge held among the AACRAO community.

A feedback survey to inform program changes to the AACRAO Collective Gathering documented this approach; respondent remarks indicate the value of these peer learning opportunities, sharing comments such as "[t]his is a wonderful group that offers a collaborative approach to learning from peers. I value this opportunity, and the small groups also allow individuals to be an expert to support others or be a learner by other subject matter experts in our field. It is great!" and "I value the collaboration with colleagues and appreciate real-time access to emerging issues and also gaining insight into other institutions that may be "like" mine, so I can identify colleagues to reach out to individually about topics subsequent to the call."

Networking and professional experience seem to be the most significant outcome of member engagement.

The opportunity to meet new people and grow as a professional was referenced throughout the responses. It was best summarized by respondent thirteen, who said, "I never felt that I had all the answers but was pretty confident that I knew the people who did thanks to the expertise of AACRAO members." In agreement, respondent four articulates, "The best lesson probably has been in how small of a community we really are as registrars and admissions officers and that we can be such great resources to one another."

The association's multiple meetings were mentioned as an opportunity to learn and engage. Respon-

dent two thought about the power of peer engagement at association meetings, stating that they "recognized the power of the program was in bringing the presenters and speakers within a space where I could speak with them. The sessions were great but tapping the expertise and experience (both good and bad) of these colleagues was the true value of the [a]ssociation. Even better if I was able to establish a connection that enabled a professional dialog beyond the conference." Respondent six reflected on how overwhelmed they were to attend a meeting and speak with presenters, not realizing that those same people would soon "become my lifelong friends and colleagues within a few years."

These networks are not limited to AACRAO. The organization intentionally develops collaborative partnerships with sister associations working toward shared objectives. An example is the recently announced Convergence Conference jointly presented by AACRAO and UPCEA (the University Professional and Continuing Education Association). This program is just one example of networking and learning experiences available to AACRAO members in an extended network of strategic partners held by the organization.

The importance of engagement is articulated by respondent six, who wrote, "*do not* assume you are just a cog without agency. *Extend* yourself, *volunteer* for committees, *seek* opportunities, *talk* to people, *network*" [emphasis not added]. Respondent thirteen stressed the importance of engagement in "being able to contribute my expertise through writing and participation in various activities." Likewise, respondent ten shared that they were "willing to engage with others who had similar experiences … which proved beneficial in my personal and professional development."

A primary way to get engaged, said respondents four, eleven, and fourteen, is through the caucuses. Almost all of the respondents currently or previously participated in caucuses. AACRAO Caucus Groups are networking and affinity groups that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the association. These groups also significantly contribute to a member's sense of place within the organization, providing access to peer members of shared identities and creating a space for allies to support these critical voices.

Current caucus groups include the Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (AAPI), the Black Caucus, the LatinX Caucus, the LGBTQIA+ Caucus, the Native American Caucus, and the Women's Caucus. These groups facilitate programming at AACRAO meetings and host webinars and peer connection opportunities on various topics critical to ensuring diverse voices.

In summary, as respondent three said, "It truly filled a niche for me to be connected to those in the profession who were engaged, wanted to advance the support to our institutions and to our students and shared the same aspirations, faced similar issues and could provide good contextual, rationale ear for my professional needs."

State and Regional Associations are a large part of the AACRAO experience.

With more than 30 state and regional associations, it was no surprise that almost all of the respondents mentioned being involved in these associations. Involvement varied; some attended conferences and events, while others held leadership positions. Local involvement was the stepping stone for future national engagement in most cases. Interestingly, some mentioned being unable to stay active in both; it was either local or national involvement, and one wished that wasn't the case.

Acknowledging the connectedness between AACRAO and the state and regional associations, AACRAO leadership and staff have renewed efforts to support efforts, learning, and shared opportunities among the various state and regional groups. Collaborative opportunities exist in multiple programs and committees to support the state and regional associations and advance collaborative opportunities across them.

Give back as much or more than you take.

As with any association, membership value directly correlates to member engagement. As the higher education landscape evolves and faces a rapidly changing future, engagement and connection among AACRAO members will be more important than ever to support registrar and admissions professionals. As leaders and

engaged members of the association, the respondents had many thoughts and words of advice on giving back:

I now consider AACRAO to be a key element in my professional development as well as a way to give back to the profession.

⇛ **RESPONDENT FIVE**

The more you give to the organization, the more you get out of the [a]ssociation. Engagement is powerful, and advocacy shapes the future!

⇛ **RESPONDENT TWELVE**

AACRAO gave me the opportunities to build a career I could never have dreamed of having—never, ever—and gave me the experiences of a lifetime. I hope I have discharged the obligation I had, in turn, to give back to the [a]ssociation.

⇛ **RESPONDENT SIX**

Keep trying; you aren't always picked the first time around, but that shouldn't dissuade you from staying involved.

⇛ **RESPONDENT THIRTEEN**

I learned that we all share similar struggles and that connecting with colleagues who understand your work is both therapy and might actually help you solve a challenge. I have learned that putting yourself out there authentically pays off personally and professionally.

⇛ **RESPONDENT SEVEN**

Influencing Change
AACRAO's resources are a game changer.

The respondents shared various resources; almost all mentioned access to or the importance of using the resources available to members. These include 60-Second Surveys, publications, webinars and presentations, meetings, FERPA interpretations and recommendations, AACRAO consulting, professional competencies, and more.

One respondent suggested that AACRAO has the best resources of any higher education professional association; another recommended just going onto the AACRAO website and exploring. Another wished there was a comprehensive list of resources to find resources easier; another said the website does not help get members engaged in activities because it does not include contact information or easy requests for more information.

As meaningful member resources are the lifeblood of an association, AACRAO is actively working toward improving upon the gap between member awareness and available resources. Notably, AACRAO has invested in a member engagement platform that will streamline member experiences, providing one central location for asynchronous connection and promotion of resources. This forthcoming community tool, the AACRAO Exchange, will allow members to engage in threaded discussions, share documents, connect with like-minded peers, and create profiles that will help AACRAO engage members in volunteer opportunities in a more meaningful and impactful way. This is also the same tool previously referenced that will support mentor/mentee relationships.

Respondent five stated that the AACRAO office staff "have devoted themselves to the important work of this organization daily." Said another, "the team works diligently to provide resources, programming, and opportunity. If you have a chance, thank and support the staff." This includes AACRAO consultants; this group employs many respondents and one author of this article.

AACRAO consultants are active members of the higher education community bringing vast experience to the institutions they serve. AACRAO Consulting provides services to colleges and universities of all sizes. Drawing from an extensive knowledge base, AACRAO consultants craft proactive, strategic solutions to improve enrollment results, foster student success, improve institutional operations and services, use enrollment technologies to maximize them, and drive net revenue outcomes for higher education institutions.

Engagement expands the profession and the Association.

Multiple respondents commented on how their engagement led to higher education advances. Advocacy was a common theme; respondents shared stories of participating in AACRAO's annual Hill Day, when members meet with congressional leaders. Respondent four validated the comments, saying that their involvement in AACRAO has "taught me how important it is to get involved and to give back to the profession and that speaking as one voice, we can certainly influence federal legislation." Others mentioned the Public Policy Advisory Group, which provides an essential practitioner perspective on emerging legislation and public policy matters. It also serves as a practical resource to AACRAO's executive director and government relations staff as they craft responses to proposed legislation or regulation. Likewise, members talked about their research as authors or presenters; that knowledge helped influence new guidebooks and policies. Of note was AACRAO's expertise on FERPA, which multiple respondents mentioned.

With a focus on diversity, equity and inclusiveness, respondents repeatedly mentioned their roles and what they learned from their engagement with the association. One respondent served as the vice president for access and equity, and others were involved in the various cultural and demographic caucuses. While one respondent said the association should do more to promote and educate on DEI issues at institutions, another shared their appreciation, saying, "the involvement in the association also brought the incredible experiences of learning cultural differences across the country, different perspectives, building alliances, politics, strategic planning, new approaches. Coming from an essentially white culture, the ability to support and benefit from increasing diversity and inclusion in AACRAO has been among my greatest experiences and growth."

In summary, respondent eighteen said, "There are many professionals looking to make an impact within their profession, and AACRAO does a nice job of providing a place and a space for us all to come together (either in person or through collaboration on projects).

I have also learned the value and importance of networking. A community of professionals helping other professionals in our field!"

In Addition

Additional ideas and thoughts fell outside of these groupings. Worthy of being shared, here are a few final pieces of advice from the research participants:

- Enjoy the journey, and realize you will benefit tremendously from your AACRAO experiences
- Plan ahead, it isn't always cheap to participate, but it is worth it. Consider making an investment in yourself!
- Always be open to new ideas and carry a blank notebook!
- [Remember] how important it is for representation from all sectors of AACRAO to participate.

Potential Follow Up

The authors have already addressed the unintended reality that this study is exploratory and that additional research is needed to both validate and expand the findings. When appropriate, they strongly suggest that AACRAO undertake a methodological and strategic analysis of the member experience through the lens of long- and short-term members. This can be done via the more formal 60-Second Survey, through virtual focus groups or interviews at events, or a combination of methods. Existing AACRAO research on this topic could also be relevant; an exploration of past, current, and future thoughts could identify trends that will influence future opportunities.

The impact of engagement of various identifiers is an ongoing question for AACRAO, and these findings validate the need to expand research in this area. As such, further research should explore engagement by demographic; recommendations would be by race, gender, institution type (community college, four-year, etc.), location, and professional discipline (admissions, registrar, transfer, enrollment management, etc.) These granular results could document gaps in programming, state and regional representation, and

more. Ongoing research could provide new methods of engagement.
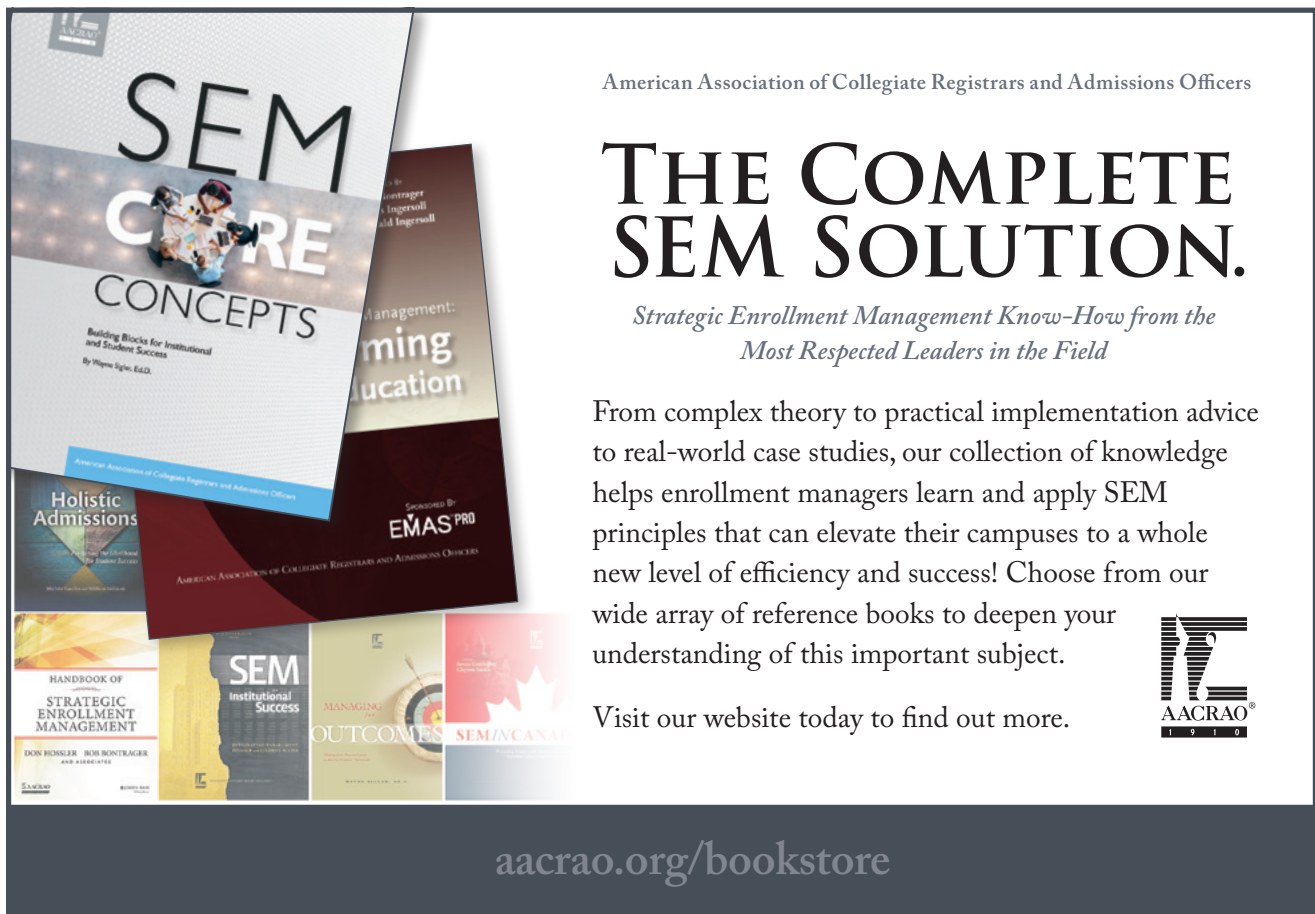
At the beginning of this article, the authors referenced Dominquez's research on membership satisfaction. However, this measurement was not explored as part of this research, since it would likely require, at the very least, a quantitative response and analysis. It could be beneficial, however, to conduct a survey on membership satisfaction as it relates to specific areas such as communications, price for product, breadth of content, or membership/customer service.

Conclusion

It is a transformational time for AACRAO and the higher education community. As AACRAO focuses on becoming a stronger and more relevant organization, as outlined in the current strategic plan, leadership is dedicated to expanding the networking and opportunities available to members. Fueled by past experiences and member feedback, changes will continue to engage members and provide their needed services. Funding and other resources are allocated to ensure that the findings from the survey respondents, as a sample, are open and felt by all association members.

The AACRAO community is a leading voice positioned to ensure diverse and equitable chances for all students. The membership serves as experts, influencers, and workers who will continue to advocate for higher education access and student success.

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Seth Marc Kamen has more than 20 years of experience in higher education, holding leadership positions in undergraduate admissions, transfer, articulation, community college relations, military student engagement, adult students, prior learning assessment, retention, and curriculum alignment and new program development. He is also experienced in enrollment-related technologies, strategic enrollment planning, implementing process improvements, and providing training and development.

With a special focus on transfer and the nontraditional student, he often writes for and presents for national organizations, including AACRAO, NISTS, TransferNation, CollegeBoard, and CollegeSource. Additionally, he coordinated the AACRAO workgroups that published A Guide to Best Practices: Awarding Transfer and Prior Learning Credit, the Transfer Student and Transfer Institution Bill of Rights, and the Guide to Best Practices: Articulation Agreements. He has been part of planning the AACRAO Annual Meeting and the Technology/Transfer Summit. He is a past president of the Chesapeake and Potomac Association of Collegiate Registrar and Admissions Officers (CAPACRAO).

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She also spent several years with AACSB International supporting global professional development programs, as well as the member engagement initiatives of the association, including facilitation of the organizational affinity groups and oversight of their member community.

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Cultural Integrity in College Bridge Programs: A Cultural Analysis

Newsoul Deus

A Cultural Studies Analysis: The Issue

I'm no mathematical genius. Actually, I'd like to think my strengths are more of the literary element. I know that in no way validates why I didn't pass the course. In fact, there was absolutely nothing wrong with the class. It had everything to do with what was going [on] with me internally.

⇒ KAREN

Her name is Karen. The above quote is a snippet from a three-page plea for reinstatement that she wrote to the Golden Scholars bridge program committee. Her letter was submitted after she was dismissed from the program for failing to successfully complete one of her summer courses. Successfully completing the semester was one of the stipulations to remain in the program and to fully matriculate in the university as a Golden Scholar the following semester.

The Golden Scholars bridge program is "a college admissions program for selected under-represented students from socioeconomically challenged communities who will be the first generation in their households to attend college" (Florida International University, n.d.). This program assists disadvantaged students in two ways. First, the program provides access. Conditional admittance is granted for these students although they do not fully meet the admissions requirement. These students are excellent and determined high school graduates, but they are either deficient in a section or two of the SAT or ACT, or their GPAs do not meet the university's standards.

Secondly, the program is designed to foster success. During this six-week summer program, disad-

vantaged students are uniformly provided resources and support, which are critical for success in college. In most cases, disadvantaged students struggle with the cost of tuition, books, housing, supplies, and other expenses. Golden Scholars, however, are not burdened with such issues. These students receive assistance in completing financial aid applications and are awarded aid among priority groups. In addition to financial support, these bridge program participants are provided an array of academic support: peer mentors, individual tours, and program coordinators. Additionally, many systems have been devised to monitor and facilitate their progress: workshops, check-ins with their college professors, and weekly meetings with program staff to gauge needs and challenges, to name a few.

These provisions of the program make it unique. The Golden Scholars program is unlike any other student outreach program in the student access and success department at Florida International University. Research addressing the needs of disadvantaged students to allow for access and success supports the focus and components of the Golden Scholars bridge program. Strayhorn (2011) indicates that there are two factors needed for success, continuous enrollment and academic resources (143). These factors focus on transition and retention efforts specific to disadvantaged students. In addressing retention and preparedness issues, Garcia (1991) found that summer bridge programs are the oldest strategies and are included among the list of highly recommended practices used to improve academic persistence and retention (91). In studying the effects of participating in summer bridge programs, Strayhorn (2011) also found that college outreach programs effectively provide the differing support structures that mirrored those of the advantaged students (153).

How then do we explain Karen's academic shortcomings? The structure of the program is seemingly ideal. *FIU News* cited the summer bridge program's director, who spoke encouragingly to the new cohort of students in 2011. She said: "You are the perfect student for us. You're hungry, you want to learn and succeed. And you want to make sure you grow and excel in life" (Delgado 2013). However, nested within a structure that seeks to provide a unique and much needed opportunity for a disadvantaged student, it begs the question, why are some students successful and others are not? Aside from the academic and financial support, what else is needed to foster sustained success? After extensive research of more than 100 intervention programs for minority students across the United States, Shirley McBay, dean of student affairs at MIT and director of the Quality Education for Minorities program found that it is important "to make curricula more responsive to the needs of minority children" (1995, 38). In other words, minority students are unique, and their needs vary.

When assessing the needs of disadvantaged students, more definitive issues such as financial circumstances, standardized college entry examinations, and academic preparation often take precedence. However, Tierney (1999) cites that cultural background and family is relevant to the success of the collegians (82). Culturally responsive programming is necessary to reach minority students beyond more obvious needs like finances and academic support. Tierney developed the cultural-studies framework of cultural integrity. Cultural integrity involves engaging students' racial/ethnic backgrounds in a positive manner toward the development of more relevant pedagogies and learning activities (Tierney 1999, 84). Culture in many cases can be overlooked when aiding disadvantaged student success.

To this end, this article looks at the effects of culture on the success of disadvantaged students in higher education, and in turn, the success or effectiveness of college bridge programs. McBay (1995) contends that there is no program that completely addresses the needs of disadvantaged students, but there are lessons to be learned (37). With this in mind, Karen's experience in the Golden Scholars bridge program will be analyzed. The lens by which her experience will be examined is informed by Tierney's cultural-studies framework—cultural integrity. According to Elam, *et al*. (2007), universities, faculty, and administrations, needs to "continually rethink strategies to recruit students from disadvantaged backgrounds" (25). The re-

sults of this analysis can provide cultural insight for bridge program administrators, staff, government, and education forces alike.

The Cultural Studies Framework

Tierney's "Models of Minority College-Going and Retention: Cultural Integrity versus Cultural Suicide" provides a theoretical framework for approaching programs serving disadvantaged students—that is, cultural integrity. Cultural integrity was developed for a context that is similar to contemporary America. This is a context where government policies and initiatives like affirmative action, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and federal funding are not sufficient, where minority students persistently lag in academic achievement, and where low-income students are grossly underrepresented in higher education. Tierney (1999) argues that even if policies like the aforementioned were firmly in place, "low-income and minority youth would still lag behind their counterparts in college participation" (81).

Tierney makes an instructive argument for using cultural integrity as basis for designing and developing college preparation programs for minority students. Whereas cultural suicide promotes abandoning self or losing racial consciousness to assimilate into the dominant culture, cultural integrity is the owning and use of cultural background and experience to affirm one's identity and sense of self. Such affirmation and strong sense of self, tethered with cultural capital, is proven for "latter's success in college" (Tierney 1999, 84). Within the depressing context of higher education, programs serving disadvantaged students should "transfer the problem of educational inequity from the student to the institution and identify cultural background as an essential element for academic success" (85). Similarly, minority students' cultural backgrounds and experiences should be examined and taken into consideration when college bridge programs are developed and when students from diverse cultural backgrounds are being served.

Cultural integrity was originally captured in the dual work of Tierney and Alexander Jan. In their original work, "At-Risk Urban Students and College Success: A Framework for Effective College Preparation Programs in Urban Environments, "culturally integrity in regards to schooling is defined as "those school-based programs and teaching strategies that engage students' racial/ethnic backgrounds in positive manner toward the development of more relevant pedagogies and learning activities" (Tierney 1999, 84). Cultural integrity fosters success for minority students because cultural integrity enhances the theory of cultural capital.

The underlying theoretical assumption that influences this framework for effective college preparation programs is that of Pierre Bourdieu in 1986. Bourdieu conceptualized cultural capital as something that is inherent to privileged and advantaged students. There are three major principles of cultural capital that are captured in cultural integrity. In summary they are: high culture (exposure to art, museum, fine dining, and culture, etc.), the ability to capitalize on financial opportunity and enjoy "ownership of material goods like artwork," and credentials as in a diploma (Tierney 1999, 83).

Tierney's cultural integrity approach has three strategies: (1) developing local contexts, (2) affirming local definition of identity, and (3) creating academic capital. Developing local context involves including parents in the learning and college experience. It should not to be assumed that students can be disconnected from their parents or community. The student's family should not be viewed as "irrelevant or harmful, but essential" (Tierney 1999, 86).

Affirming local identity involves acknowledging students' talents rather than looking at them as "at risk." Finally, creating academic capital requires a strong academic foundation and setting high academic expectations.

In the final section of this article, the strategies of the cultural integrity framework are used to analyze Karen's needs, and to provide recommendations for enhancing the Golden Scholars bridge programs' support systems to better facilitate success with respect to cultural sensitivity.

Methodology

The purpose of the analysis is to provide the program with cultural knowledge about their participants, which could potentially enhance the program's ability to yield success stories. This study conducted a document analysis to collect original data on the issue discussed in this article. It used a document from a participant because their individual voice and individual needs are often marginalized in scholarly work. Greater emphasis is often placed on conventional methods of collecting data, such as large longitudinal surveys and questionnaires as well as on government-funded reports like "A Nation at Risk." This article was approached as a case study.

Thus, one document was examined to highlight the voice of those who are often left behind. Document analysis is not usually a stand-alone method; however, in cultural studies and social research it is commonly used as such (Bogdan and Biklen 2007, p. 64; Brown 2009, 29). Document types according to Bowen (2009) can take many forms: advertisements; agendas, attendance registers, and minutes of meetings; manuals; background papers; books and brochures; diaries and journals; and event programs, to name a few (27-28). With regards to this analysis, the research instrument is the personal statement from a minority student who was dismissed from the Golden Scholars bridge program. The personal statement used for this analysis is a Haitian-American, female. She voluntarily provided her personal statement. She was eighteen when she started the Golden Scholars program in the summer of 2014. She had a high school GPA of 3.8, and she far exceeded the scores needed in the writing and reading section of ACT. However, she scored a 15 on the math section of the ACT, which made her inadmissible through traditional merit-based metrics.

Primary sources like the journals that cover cultural-studies frameworks were collected directly from the work of the theorist. The secondary sources, however, were collected from various outlets. Traditional scholarly research was derived from higher education journals.

Key words and phrases were used to facilitate the research, such as: college-bridge programs, college preparation program, and effectiveness. The study included empirical and theoretical scholarly work. The search was not limited solely to students referred to as "disadvantaged;" articles that discussed minority student, low-income students, and first generation college students, to name a few, were reviewed. Non-traditional materials, such as websites and electronic newsletters, were used.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this analysis. An analysis of a personal statement is not an entirely reliable method to make generalizing assumptions and recommendations.

Understandably, one can argue that insufficient details would be provided. The ideal research method, after reviewing the documentation and flushing themes, would be to examine the phenomenon in depth. According to Merriam (2002), member checking would be a good technique to validate and refine the themes and flush out the substantive matters (20). However, this was not used in this case study. For future analysis, the aforementioned limitations can be areas to refine the current study.

Researcher bias or selectivity can also pose a limitation. However, transparency is used to diminish possible biases. On this note, the author openly acknowledges a personal relationship with Karen. Moreover, the author admits to being a proponent of the program and quite familiar with its intricacies.

It's also important to note that Karen was recently dismissed when her statement was produced. It must be taken into consideration that she could have exaggerated or omitted valuable details that could have highlighted other cultural norms that influenced her underperformance in the program. It is in regard to this methodological flaw that follow-up interviews would be useful to flush out substantive details that may have not been mentioned due to the urgency of the situation, or the degree to which she thought that including additional details would assist her being reinstated into the bridge program. Nevertheless, document analysis is time-friendly. Such a qualitative de-

sign was appropriately aligned with the purpose and needed data for this analysis.

An Analysis

Although there were many important factors and consequences that could have been extrapolated from Karen's statement, which could have assisted in making more effective college bridge programs, the study focused specifically on cultural manifestations (*e.g.* norms, habits, symbols, values, etc.). It's important to note that in reviewing her document, terminology was key. There were many references to a collective "we." She wrote, "We don't talk about it outside of the family. We're not supposed to." When coding her document, 29 different codes were derived. After refining and collapsing themes, the list was narrowed to five, and three are referenced in this article. However, it is especially important to note that in Karen's case, the impact of her family's dynamic and her upbringing were the overarching influences. They informed her identity, character, relationships, and behavior; and, subsequently this impacted her academic performance. The three major themes analyzed in this article are: communication, expectations, and façades.

Communication

I know how that works through experience. It doesn't. Trying to explain, to open their eyes to the truth just backfires and lands me in the hot seat. We don't talk about it outside of the family. We're not supposed to. It stays within the family and nowhere else. That's how it's always been. My father bottles things up and the gravity of the situation only hits when everything is crumbling.

...I'm not one to share my feelings or discomfort easily and acclimating to a new environment was much more difficult than I anticipated.

⇒ KAREN

A major component of the Golden Scholars bridge program is communication. However, although Karen is a strong written communicator, she is not verbally inclined. This is particularly true when she has yet to familiarize, or form a connection, with a person. It cannot be assumed, even in written form, that all students have the capacity to express themselves without being prompted.

And not all such participants are able to articulate themselves like Karen. Her statement was expressive and filled with rich detail that was eloquently and reflectively written. It is important that campuses meet the participants half way. This is especially important for freshman who are often not fully mature or possess the capacity to really figure out their issues let alone verbalize them directly. Karen was prompted by the program to attend varies mentorship sessions at which point she could voice her concerns, but she was silenced by culture norms.

Expectations

I honestly had the notion that college was supposed to be a fresh start. An oasis away from the stifling, controlling chaos of my home.

...The two most important people in my life, as chaotic as their relationship with each other is, are my parents. Every day I'm reminded somehow that I'm not like someone else's delinquent child or my siblings.

...My parents called morning, afternoon, night. I specifically told them when my classes were and my father let up. My mother, on the other hand, didn't. It got to the point where I would ignore her phone calls. And still, she'd call at least six times back-to-back. The only thing that spared my sanity was when the minutes ran out on her phone. With zero minutes to call me and my dad at work, she couldn't call until she put more minutes on her phone.

⇒ KAREN

There are definitely divergent expectations among the three major parties involved: parent, student, and bridge program. Karen is expecting a complete disconnect from her family dynamic, an oasis. She was in for a rude awakening when that was not the case. Her expectation of the program to systematically filter her family dynamics was faulty. Karen expected the

cultural reasonability of limited social interactions to persist in college, thus her relational interactions were limited. Her family expected everything to stay normal. Karen's absence from them definitely was a new and perplexing event. The program expected Karen to be vocal about her issues. The bridge program assumed that given a conventional venue, Karen would open up when she was in need. The fact that she completely failed her course and spoke nothing of it to anyone should be an indicator that she would have benefited by a preliminary consultation regarding her comfort levels, environment, and any support systems required to transition her into the program and encourage her success within it.

Façade

For the whole summer, I literally spoke when spoken to and on good days, I'd make an effort to at least act "normal." It seemed like there weren't enough hours in my days.

…In fact, there was absolutely nothing wrong with the class. It had everything to do with what was going with me internally.

…I've never done anything so grave that they were ever ashamed I am their daughter. The way they describe me to other people is in such high esteem that I sometimes doubt myself.

⇒ KAREN

Karen's academic failure came as a shock to many, including the author. Many of the program officials would call to inquire about her academic issues and emotional struggles and the reason she was not more forthcoming. They said they saw her three times a week, if not more, and she never informed them of anything. She smiled and carried on meaningful conversations. It was all a façade. She was raised to present a pleasant face to the world and hide her challenges. The battles that she faced were internal, and she had to maintain the good daughter image for her parents.

Drawing from cultural-studies framework of this article, the Golden Scholars program was not mindful of local context. Parents should be part of the learning and college experience. It can be a cultural shock when their children are out of their reach for an extended period of time. Tierney (1999) states that a student's family should not be viewed as "irrelevant or harmful, but essential" (86). Affirming local identity involves acknowledging students' talents rather than viewing them as "at risk". In order to maintain an open line of communication, the college bridge program would benefit from assessing individual talents and using this as a means to better understand the internal and subtle issues that can derail a student's academic progress. For instance, if a student can draw, instead of meeting up and talking to a counselor, time can be allotted to draw out the dilemmas of the week. Finally, when considering academic capital, the Golden Scholars program excelled at academic enrichment. Their challenge is in getting students to respond well to academic engagements.

The issues presented in Karen's statement are not without cultural implications that may be carried over to the workplace, the family dynamic, and to parenting styles—as was her case of the generational cultural norms of "facades" and poor "communication. This cultural impact persists among minority students and may bleed into family units causing the generational impact of academic underperformance.

Conclusion

According to McBay (1995), in a few years, minorities will make up "one-third of our population and a higher proportion of our workforce" (36). However, minority students are disproportionately cited as racially/ethnically unprepared for college, requiring remedial or developmental work, and having attended low-resource high schools (Strayhorn 2011, 143).

Across the cultural spectrum, disadvantaged students face barriers to access and success in college. These students are those of at-risk and underrepresented minority groups, of low-income households, and of first-generation in college families. Research has consistently recommended and supported the development of programs at the collegiate level and the investment of resources that would build disadvantaged students' social and cultural capital—all

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essential to their development and competitiveness (Strayhorn 2011, 142; Goldrick-Rab and Mazzeo 2005, 108).

Cultural differences make serving minority students complex. The minority students' educational context will change over time and, as a result, minority students will come with unique weaknesses and strengths that need to be attended to. Tierney (1999) rejected the idea that financial assistance determines success and failure. He stated that in restructuring, "Not only must students fit into the academic culture, but educational organizations must also accommodate for and honor students' cultural differ-ences" (83). From this cultural analysis, the following is added on the list of suggestions and recommendations made in the literature on success and disadvantaged students in higher education. A conscious effort must be made to assist minority students as they transition from high school to college and persist through college. Cultural influences impact the success of disadvantaged students who participate in college bridge programs, as in the case of Karen. It's important that college bridge program curriculum be responsive to the needs of the family, as well as the cultural backgrounds and experiences of students.

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Management vs. Leadership: Would You Rather?

Katie Cloud and **Aimee Leturmy**

Over the past year we have both transitioned to new roles at new institutions that are incredibly different from where we were previously. We both moved from large, public state institutions to private institutions with very different size staffing in the registrar's office and different campus cultures from what we were accustomed. These transitions have continued to challenge our previously-held concepts of leadership and management. Is one "better?" When hiring team members, what should you look for in candidates?

Spoiler alert: we strongly believe that, no, one is not better. In fact, you need both on your team in order to have a healthy and successful organization. In this article, we will explore leadership, management, how both approach various scenarios or case studies, and, most importantly, why both are necessary.

What is Management?

According to Merriam-Webster (1983, 722), management is defined as "judicious use of means to accomplish an end." While there are many definitions of what management is and how to implement it in the workplace, we will focus on the following definitions:

* *"Management is the coordination and administration of tasks to achieve a goal"* (Indeed Editorial Team 2019).
* *"[M]anagement is a discipline that consists of a set of five general functions: planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling"* (Davis and Reilly 2021).

With these definitions, we start to really see the intersection of leadership and management. Davis

and Reilly articulate leadership as an integral piece of management. While they are related, we argue that they are distinct concepts. A member of your staff may be a great manager, while their leadership qualities are lacking. And some of the strongest leaders on a team may not have any supervisory responsibilities.

We examined these definitions and determined the key tasks on which an effective manager focuses and the skills they exhibit.

- **Focus:** Planning, Organizing, Resource Usage, Coordinating, Time Management
- **Skills:** Resolves Problems, Effective Communicator, Takes Control, Executes a Plan, Minimizes Risk, Process Drive, and Embraces Stability

What is Leadership?

Leadership might sound a lot like management, that is until we really dig into it. Turning to the same dictionary, leadership is defined as "capacity to lead" (Merriam-Webster 1983, 679). This was not quite as helpful this time, so we turned to an online dictionary, which defined leadership as guidance and direction (Collins English Dictionary 2012). Now we are getting somewhere in defining leadership.

Lao Tzu said that "a leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves" (Bouchard 2018). In a *Forbes* article, leadership was defined as "a process of social influence which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal." The article continues with a quote from Warren Bennis: "Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality" (Kruse 2013). These quotes really make us think about how a leader is not always someone in the limelight. It is someone who will roll up their sleeves helping to not only do the work but seeking to improve it for all. They are here to help in any way possible to achieve a goal as well as to motivate people and see the possibilities and opportunities from achieving the goal.

The Girl Scout Research Institute has done a wide variety of research on leadership. One such report states leadership "is defined not only by the qualities and skills one has, but also by how those qualities and skills are used to make a difference in our world" (Girl Scout Research Institute 2009, 4). This definition really shows how management and leadership differ. Leadership is not just about impacting the individual, organization, or task at hand but about the big picture and making positive changes in a global perspective.

Using the same process that we utilized for our analysis of management, we used these definitions and quotes on leadership to identify the focus and skills of a strong and effective leader.

- **Focus:** Providing Vision/Goal Setting, Providing Motivation, Listening, Mentoring/Coaching/ Teaching, Teamwork and Building Relationships, Opportunities (Not Problems)
- **Skills:** Persuasive, Accountable, Challenges the Norm, Proactive, Embraces Change, Creative/Innovative, Takes Risks

Management versus Leadership

We have defined management and leadership as well as what the focus and skills are to be effective in both of these areas. These definitions alone really begin to highlight that one is not better than the other, but rather that both effective managers and effective leaders have their own unique and necessary set of qualities to be able to guide an organization to the next level. They are *not* mutually exclusive; successful administrators, especially in enrollment management, need to develop both skills. We may ourselves be, or have on our team, someone who is a natural leader, a natural manager, or even lucky enough to have both. However, we need to have the ability to look intrinsically, identify our own strengths, and ensure there is a well-balanced team to move the entire organization forward. For example, if you are a natural manager, make sure that you know who on your team is a natural leader. This will help within your organization and team and help you to manage *and* lead upward and outward.

It is important to note that effective leadership is not driven by someone's title within an organization. You can easily be a leader by rolling up your sleeves, getting involved, and guiding others toward the common goal. Leaders help in areas other than their own (Kruse 2013). Currently, we have a team member who

previously was a registrar at another institution. That staff member no longer wanted the pressures of being a manager and thus took a position at a new institution that did not directly supervise anyone. He wanted out of the management world, but it is clear that he is a natural leader. He consistently encourages a team atmosphere, helps out anywhere in the office when needed, and identifies potential opportunities for improvements in long-term system functionality. He can see the vision and is looked at by others in the office as a leader.

Now that we know leadership and management are two distinct, but necessary, qualities in a successful organization, let's take a look at both in action.

A Common Scenario: The Great Resignation

Let's imagine (or perhaps not imagine, as we have all been living this reality as of late) that in the last six months you have three staff members take new jobs, another verbally offered a position in a field outside of higher education, and you're pretty positive that there are others on your team actively looking to leave. Then your human resources department alerts you that because of all the position movement across campus, including in their office, there is a backlog with posting positions, approving offers, and the hiring process in general. Once you finally get a position posted, and you leave it advertised for two to three weeks you have fewer than fifteen applicants, and the pool is quite weak. Salaries may also be below market value, and of course the timing is terrible because it's the beginning of the fall semester, or end of spring semester, or just about any time. Guiding a team through this can be a pretty terrifying challenge to face and one that we know all too well right now. An effective manager and an effective leader looks at this scenario a little differently.

An effective *manager* would determine where there are process gaps, what portion of work could fall through the cracks with these open positions, and how to mitigate that. For example, the vacant positions could include individuals that process, print, and send out various certification letters and transcripts. In this case, it would be important to de-termine who else in the office is not as busy, based on timing in the semester, and can assist with those tasks with a reallocation of the work. An effective manager would also prioritize tasks based on importance. For example, during the first week of classes, an individual working on a project that won't go live for six months could help during that week to process course drops/add that needed additional approvals so students can start their course on time. Other examples of what an effective manager might do include optimizing the HR process by doing everything that they possibly can to make the hiring process smooth and quick or working nights and weekends to ensure deadlines are met. It is easy to see why all of these things are important and necessary to have an effective manager handle in this situation.

An effective *leader* would speak with staff members who are departing the team in the form of an exit interview to see if there are opportunities for change in order to mitigate departures in the future. They would seek to understand why staff leaving and what it would have taken to get them to stay. They roll up their sleeves and do some of the work that needs to be done. In the process, they will often identify inefficiencies and ways to improve processes for the future. At our prior institution, we all used to joke that someone only had to ask Aimee to do something three times before she started trying to find a better way to do it. A leader will also start to explore other structures to support staff. For example, can new opportunities for learning, development, and growth be provided? How do we ensure a work/life balance and get everything done? Working nights and weekends constantly and expecting that of others is not sustainable and will only feed the great resignation. These responses are critical to ensuring history doesn't repeat itself and that the organization as a whole can improve.

It's Five o'clock Somewhere...or 4:30?

Say you have a large team spread across multiple campus locations—one fully remote, two fully in person, and the remainder hybrid. One of your new staff members (not a direct report) at one of your two campuses approaches you to ask for an adjusted work schedule.

The staff member indicates that they had an adjusted schedule in their previous position at the institution in a different department and different campus location. The normal schedule is 8:00am-5:00pm with a one-hour lunch break. This staff member is asking to have a 30-minute lunch break and work 8:30am-5:00pm instead. In thinking through the request, you note that there are staff members on another campus location that have adjusted schedules to help facilitate an easier commute to the office.

At first, you take this request to the member of your management team who supervises the area this staff member is part of and learn that they have some hesitations. Through a productive conversation, you are able to discern that their hesitations are primarily about opening the door for others to also have an adjusted schedule, specifically a staff member with a performance concern. Institutional policy does allow for lunches to be at standard lengths of either 30 minutes, 45 minutes, or one hour. In thinking about that in a larger context, it comes up that the hours of 8:00am-5:00pm have been in place for so long that people do not know where it originated. In addition, the campus has shifted to a one-stop shop model, and your staff are no longer the front lines of service. Perhaps there is more flexibility than initially realized, and you decide to take the flexible schedule idea forward to the entire management team.

Effective managers in this scenario will look for ways to mitigate any potential risks. For example, they will ensure that no staff member is scheduled to be in the office alone for personal safety. They will ensure adequate coverage in all areas of the office and that during the hours that the one stop shop is open that one member of each team is available to answer questions. They will work to determine what human resource processes or forms are necessary if the management team makes the choice to move forward with this model. They will also address any potential performance issues that arise in light of this suggestion. Perhaps there are performance issues with someone who is not a direct report that need to be addressed in other ways. If someone has performance concerns, a manager knows that those concerns will likely exist regardless of their hours and need to be handled appropriately per institutional policy.

Effective leaders, on the other hand, will look to ensure that the entire team is being treated equitably across campuses. One campus may be more difficult to get to than another, which may influence an employee's start and end time. But that should not prohibit those who work at other campuses from being eligible to request and obtain an adjusted schedule. The conversation about permitting adjusted schedules will happen with the entire management team in an effort to get buy-in from all supervisors on the concept and to adequately hear and address all concerns. Effective leaders will help guide supervisors to make decisions that make sense for the entire team, not simply one staff member. As discussed previously, leaders are people who look at the big picture. In this scenario, that means looking at not only the one request for an adjusted schedule but also whether we should scale this concept, and how, to the entire office. What are the office hours as a whole? Effective leaders will recognize the potential this has to provide some work/life balance. With that increased work/life balance, there might be the opportunity to retain staff members who have dependent care drop off or pick up needs and those with long commutes. Approving an adjusted schedule that is still within all institutional policies but could have an impact on someone's work/life balance seems like an easy way to help retain staff with little budgetary impact.

Case Study: Office of Financial Aid

In late 2018, the office of financial aid became part of the enrollment management unit at Florida State University. While this change seems like the obvious choice to make, it also presented challenges. It meant merging two very different office cultures with differing hiring practices and management styles. The enrollment management unit had a tiered management approach with opportunities for supervisor experience and middle management. The office of financial aid, on the other hand, had a large number of processing staff and upper management. One of the first

Figure 1

Desired Attributes for Effective Leadership

Not A Boss Compassionate
Has Integrity
Receptive **Respectful** Accountability
Open Doesn't Place Blame Clear Expectations **Responsive**
Promotes Development • Understanding Approachable
Leader **Communicates** **Direct**
Cares Visionary
Leads by Example
Values Contributions Respectful **Transparent**
Empathetic Consistent
Challenges Staff **Trust Listens Fair**
Accessible Knowledgeable
Treats People the Same
Doesn't Micromanage Structure
Supportive

steps taken was to look at reorganizing the financial aid office to better match the registrar and admissions offices, but of course this wasn't without challenges. Low morale and a high number of vacancies due to staff attrition and retirements were apparent. However, it was also seen as an opportunity to learn what the financial aid staff thought and wanted.

Informative meetings were held with supervisors, and they were asked three questions:

- What are the qualities of a "good" supervisor?
- How do you exhibit these qualities with your direct reports? How might you improve?
- How do you like to be supervised?

In the first question, the word "good" is very subjective. We all have different beliefs on what a good supervisor is. But over and over again the same descriptions started to appear, and within them we also saw the qualities mentioned above for both effective managers and effective leaders. Using the responses, a word cloud (*see* Figure 1) was created that clearly depicted that the most common responses were respectful, communicates, and listens. The second two

questions really helped the supervisors to look inward and think about how they perform as supervisors. It was an exercise to inform not only leadership within enrollment management about the financial aid supervisors but also themselves.

Leadership or Management?

Now that we have defined management and leadership as well as examined some scenarios and a case study, let's think about our own organizations and how this can apply. We believe very strongly that both effective management and leadership are needed to have a successful and thriving organization. Thinking about the three questions asked of supervisors in the case study above, how would you answer? Do you come up with qualities not in the word cloud above? Try and think about the supervisor qualities you would try and emulate versus what you would do differently.

Every organization is different, but we know for certain that we need leadership to see the big picture and vision, to think creatively and outside the box, to focus on work/life balance of staff, and to roll up their sleeves and help when needed. But we also need

management to ensure tasks get done in a timely fashion, to provide regular oversight and direction, to minimize risk, and to resolve problems. Are you an effective leader, manager, or both? In our first-hand observations, people tended to lean more heavily toward one or the other. It is important to know which is your strength so that you can ensure your team is well balanced and includes your weaker tendencies. Ultimately, this will ensure you and your team are successful.

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Bringing Services to the Student by Building Institutional Relationships

Amanda Kruzona

Imagine a student at your institution has experienced a death of a close relative that resulted in housing insecurity during their enrollment. This unfortunate circumstance has impacted their academic performance and they have come to you to get some help turning things around. Would you know what to do? Would you know where to direct the student? You may be surprised that most individuals would not know where to start, nor would they know of all resources available to support students in this, or a similarly bleak, circumstance. This is a problem that we are starting to address at Grand Rapids Community College in order to give students the support that is so very needed.

The Processes

At Grand Rapids Community College, a team of staff from various student services focused efforts on student-initiated processes that are appeal- or re-

quest-based in our student affairs division: the academic suspension appeal, the financial aid suspension appeal, the tuition and fee refund appeal, the late semester hardship withdrawal request, and the academic forgiveness appeal. These are distinct processes that are managed by the student records office, financial aid office, student financials office, and student success and retention office. Some brief notes about each process are below:

● **Academic Suspension Appeal:** This occurs when students receive a semester GPA of less than 2.0 while on academic probation. Students submit the academic suspension appeal form and required documentation for our academic suspension appeal committee to review. If the appeal is approved, the student returns to academic probation and is allowed to continue in the subsequent semester.

- **Financial Aid Suspension Appeal:** This occurs when students fail to maintain satisfactory academic progress. Students submit documentation of the financial aid suspension appeal form and required documentation for our financial aid suspension appeal committee to review. If the appeal is approved, the student will be allowed to use financial aid.

- **Tuition and Fee Refund Appeal:** This occurs when students wish to submit documentation and an appeal form when the student believes he or she should be refunded for a class or classes with a student-initiated withdrawal. If the appeal is approved, the student will receive the appropriate refund, which could be used toward future enrollment.

- **Late Semester Hardship Withdrawal Request:** This is the process for submitting documentation and a request form when a student missed the drop deadline (70 percent of class) and would like an administrative withdrawal. If the request is approved, the student will have the grade(s) changed from something punitive to an administrative withdrawal, which will not cause harm to the cumulative GPA.

- **Academic Forgiveness Appeal:** This is the process for submitting documentation and an appeal form when a student would like to have up to twelve credits from their academic history excluded from GPA. If the appeal is approved, the student can have certain grades excluded from the cumulative GPA.

Each process has a distinct submission form with different required information, reviewed by separate entities. Due to a myriad of factors outside of our purview (*i.e.* technology, compliance, oversight, etc.), we realized that merging these processes was not going to be a feasible approach. Instead, we laid the foundation necessary to create a team that would work together to help a student by bringing the processes to them, the GRCC way.

Why

As with any motivated effort, there is always something that spurred individuals to action. The "why" for bringing this team together was simple. We wanted to reduce barriers to student success. As evidenced by the short description of each appeal or request and the article introduction, students may qualify for more than one process based on their circumstance. What is common for our students is that they are unaware that duplication of their effort is required to have each committee review their case. In other words, a student submits an appeal, but is unaware that it only applies to one component of their situation. We wanted students to have their effort achieve multiple ends, thus making students eligible to continue their education. We also found ways to better educate our campus at large around the possible overlaps and what staff can do to best help students.

We wanted to simplify processes. It is no secret that this complicated infrastructure has caused confusion and stress for students as well as our faculty and staff. By initiating the work behind the scenes, we reduced the time needed for our respective offices to explain how these processes work on the student end, and we can help more students in the tight timeframes our committees have available to review a student's case. This portion of our work is iterative since we are working with important processes for our institution.

We wanted to gather more meaningful feedback about how these processes work for our institution. By having more eyes look on processes, more questions can be asked and insights collected for informed improvements. If we don't practice vulnerability, we lose the opportunity to have fresh, innovative ideas shared.

We wanted to better showcase the resources available to aid in student success. We were aware that students might not find resources unless they are strategically brought to their attention or they are specifically sought out. We knew that collaborating on this work provided an ideal platform for broadcasting these resources to the population who may need them most.

We wanted to create open lines of communication. One of the toughest hurdles to overcome is building teamwork where it did not previously exist. Allowing us to be comfortable enough to ask questions is an achievement in and of itself. Building these institutional relationships was arguably the most important piece of this puzzle.

Where We Started

This is not the first time that a group attempted this work. The confusion and frustration caused by these processes has motivated individuals to draft a solution that would merge all processes to create a unified submission process. When it was our group's turn, the same directive was given to us: merge these processes to reduce student confusion.

Iteration One

We did not get far in our first few meetings because our proposed solutions to merge the processes excluded one or another for reasons such as compliance, technology, and limitations. Instead of spinning our wheels, we recognized then that we needed to take a step back and simply get training on each other's processes. Not only is this a worthwhile exercise in presenting your work, it is an opportunity to have someone ask the tough questions that you are unable to answer. We each spent time presenting to the others and found that we needed to discuss them more than once. This taught us how to practice grace with others, including students, who are not able to understand how to initiate our processes. Being vulnerable was a pivotal point in building our relationships because we could identify with each other. We highly recommend doing self-reflection work with your own processes. Even though there wasn't a product created here, we qualify this as an iteration because it served as the foundation to make this work strong and sustainable.

Iteration Two

Once we understood the basics of each other's processes as well as the level of overlap that existed, we moved on to our idea of bringing the services together on our website. A critical component to collaborating in this way was understanding the timeline of improvements to the distinct processes, such as planned enhancements or new technology. For this work, we

learned that our financial aid office was moving to Campus Logic digital forms and that the printable form for the late semester hardship withdrawal request was moving to a webform. These may seem like minor details, but it was important to understand how students access these forms so we could think through our phased solutions.

Once those updates were made to their individual websites, we brought in the director of web content and digital strategy to see how we could leverage our institutional website to bring these processes together. With their help, we created our appeal requests webpage. This was a means to give students a clearer starting point where all appeal and request processes could be viewed collectively.

Iteration Three

We assessed the impact of the webpage created and were disappointed with the lack of traffic on this new page. At this time, we were also in the season of institutional initiatives and projects so we did not have the same level of motivation or time to plan something new. We perceived this iteration to be the least important, but it was the most impactful.

First and foremost, we found as many other places as we could to highlight the appeal requests webpage. After some high-level analysis on heatmaps of website traffic, we added the appeal requests webpage as a link on our Get Help webpage, designed to highlight different resources for our students.

Secondly, we embedded the appeal requests webpage link into student communications, as applicable. We wanted to make sure that we were bringing this information to students' attention, specifically those caught in these processes.

Lastly, and by far the most effective, we started a chat group so we could discuss student scenarios with each other to determine which processes were applicable for the student being helped. We were able to bring the feedback to another level, by providing practical, real-time examples of the students and their confusion, as well as our own. We were able to set aside the need to protect our processes and in the purest way troubleshoot for the students without

them needing to do so on their own behalf. This was the point where we brought the service to the student via institutional relationships.

Starting This Work at Your Institution

Did this information strike a chord? Do you identify with the struggles of Grand Rapids Community College around these student experiences? Our team has some recommendations for starting this work on your home turf.

- *Make connections.* Building relationships with the people doing the work is the most direct line to knowledge because communication is easier, and informal conversations are more often committed to memory. It is also the best way to learn about work in other areas and learn how your work intersects with others to best serve students. Even better, it helps make work a fun place to be!

- *Be honest about potential areas for improvement.* We are all human, and admitting imperfection is not easy. However, if you fail to leave room for facing mistakes or wrong steps in the work currently being done, there is no hope for change. There is no perfect process, and our communities are constantly changing. There will most likely come a time when others are offering feedback about the work you have personally been involved in, and it may not be positive. Keep perspective - this is of course not a personal attack. It is valuable information to focus efforts for improving the student experience.

- *Make yourself available for questions.* In order to sustain relationships, you must keep lines of communication open. It is common for people learning about processes to forget or misunderstand information presented about work not under their direct workload, so questions and clarifications will happen. For that reason, let your colleagues be able to bring those questions to the source. It is also a great way to learn what may be confusing people, whether it is a document or website content. On the flip side, make sure you ask questions too.

- *Don't plan for immediate large-scale change.* One expectation with projects like this is that there will

be some grand debut of process improvement in a very short timeframe. When so many moving parts are working together, making significant changes can instead cause large-scale issues when we rush to produce something. We would recommend scaling your iterations for what you can control and practice being comfortable with that. Rome wasn't built in a day, after all.

The Future

Beyond regularly assessing the effectiveness of the work done thus far, we have plans to determine the feasibility of utilizing our EAB Navigate platform to help loop individuals in when needed. We also plan on working on a student-facing form that replicates the appeals request webpage, but with more conditional statements to drill down to what the student actually needs. These wish list items will be long-term goals.

The lower hanging fruit of this work is fostering a culture of collaboration for other shared processes in a cross-campus setting. We hope to be the example of what teamwork can accomplish. We want our peers to be brave enough to be vulnerable. Constructive feedback does not have to be scary or devalue our worth as entities of the institution. We also want to build a foundation for more documentation sharing. We want to develop a means for truly connecting the processes from a repository perspective.

As with any endeavor, the future is uncertain but we have faith that the value of it is acknowledged and continues, full steam ahead.

About the Author

Amanda Kruzona, M.S.E., is the Interim Director of Institutional Research at Grand Rapids Community College in Grand Rapids, MI. She spent the last eight years in the registrar's office at the same institution creating and revising student policies to reduce barriers and be more efficient. She earned her master's of science in engineering degree through Western Michigan University, where she focused graduate work on the retention and success of students participating in the College of Engineering's STEP (STEM Talent Expansion Program) grant. She is a natural problem-solver and strives to use that passion to make institutions of higher education a better experience for students and staff alike.

The Great Upheaval: Higher Education's Past, Present, and Uncertain Future

Reviewed by **Stephen Handel**

In *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), two aging train robbers (played by Paul Newman and Robert Redford) are trapped on a high rocky ledge overlooking a fast-moving river below, as a sheriff's posse surrounds them. Facing certain death if they try to shoot it out, Butch recommends that they jump. "They'll never follow us."

Sundance: "I can't swim!"

Butch laughs: "What are you, crazy? The *fall* will probably kill you."

I think about Sundance whenever I hear leaders of U.S. colleges and universities defend their traditional practices despite the transformative pressures on their institutions. Believing they can't swim with the competition in the post-pandemic higher education ecosystem, they remain on their lonely ledge, preferring, it would seem, to be picked off one by one.

Looking for lessons in Hollywood movies is itself anachronistic, but no more so than those who re-flexively defend traditional colleges and universities from a whirlwind of post-pandemic criticism. These loyalists feel—justifiably—beleaguered as their institutions are called out-of-step with student basic needs, unresponsive to the demands of business and industry, and complicit in a student-loan-debt bubble. The natural reaction—Sundance's too—is to use the armaments and arguments of the past to defend their future. Fighting it out will work for a while, I suspect, but not forever. As Kevin Carey says in his 2015 book, *The End of College*, "The newspaper industry went from its most profitable year ever to widespread Armageddon in less time than it takes an undergraduate to earn a bachelor's degree" (231).

It seems implausible that the U.S. system of higher education—the envy of the world not too long ago—has lost its revered standing. But if you believe (as they do in Hollywood) that there is no such thing as bad publicity, this critical drubbing may be ultimately

beneficial. If we are authentically committed to serving students more effectively, the challenges we faced prior to the pandemic—the digital divide, the cost of going to college, the connection between degrees and careers, among others—have only gained greater urgency. Second chances only come around once.

So, how should we proceed? One blueprint is *The Great Upheaval: Higher Education's Past, Present, and Uncertain Future* by Arthur Levine and Scott Van Pelt. (Full disclosure: The authors mention ECMC Foundation, of which I am an employee, briefly but positively). Unlike so many other books predicting an unsettled higher education future, the book is written by a couple of authentic higher education insiders, experts who know how the B.A. degree sausage is manufactured. Their recipe for the future is no less unsavory than the predictions I've read in other books, but it is anchored in a deeper appreciation of the way higher education works—*when* it works.

The Great Upheaval is perhaps the first book to tackle the post-pandemic future of higher education. That alone is of value, especially as higher education gingerly attempts to return to "normal" after two years of virtual quarantine (which is part of the problem, but more about that in a minute). It is a remarkably assured effort, yet not in the least doctrinaire. It is infused with an intellectual equanimity and historical resonance that makes it less quarrelsome than similar treatments of this topic. The authors celebrate higher education's past even as they dispassionately dissect what may well go wrong in the future. Their formidable grasp of how colleges and universities operate allows them to make a compelling case that the choices higher education leaders make now need not be shots in the dark, but reasonable responses in turbulent times.

The book has three main sections: "Looking Backward," represents one of the best short histories of U.S. higher education I have ever read. In about 100 pages, the authors cover just about anything one might want to know about how higher education ended up the way it has today. This description of earlier challenges is not intended to provide lock-step insights for the future (if you want *that,* I can recommend several moderately priced psychics on Hollywood Blvd.). Rather,

Levine and Van Pelt stress that higher education has never been static, even if it is one of the most conservative of U.S. institutions. Since the nation's beginnings, colleges and universities have had to address enrollment fluctuations, budget limitations, and the vagaries of political intrusion or inaction. What Levine and Van Pelt make clear is that ignoring challenges have inevitable consequences, even if those consequences can only be documented in retrospect. The act of doing nothing—staying on that perch and waiting for your enemy to surrender *to you*—is the definition of folly (or, alas, the human condition).

In the second section, "Looking Forward," the authors delineate three broad forces in the national and global economies that will influence both the content and delivery of postsecondary education. The first of these forces concerns demography. The number and background of the individuals who will seek postsecondary degrees and credentials is changing significantly. Traditional colleges and universities, which have relied primarily on eighteen-year-old high school graduates to fill their classrooms, will find it more difficult to recruit these students at least through the end of this decade owning to a declining birth rate recorded during and immediately after The Great Recession.

The authors' second point is that the knowledge economy will reshape how students engage higher education. "The requirements for getting a job [will] fundamentally change" (138). In the knowledge economy, Levine and Van Pelt argue that 99 percent of the jobs will require at least some college (138)—a celebratory statement for those of us who make our living in higher education but an extraordinary challenge for a nation whose college completion rates remain relentlessly disappointing.

The final area is a technological revolution which, according to Levine and Van Pelt, is the most transformative of the three. The dominance of the internet and ubiquity of digital devices is only the start of a transformation that will include artificial intelligence and virtual and augmented reality. It does not take a science fiction writer to speculate how such incursions of technology will reshape the way in which higher education is delivered and experienced.

If there is a weakness of this book, it is the third section, "Looking Sideways." Here the authors derive lessons for higher education from disruptions that have occurred in the music, film, and newspaper industries. The attraction to these industries is understandable and worthy of inquiry, but I always get queasy when writers start drawing parallels from industries that are still in transition. I recall the best-selling business book, *Good to Great* (2001), which rigorously analyzed the retail practices of a number of companies looking for themes and lessons that could be applied to higher education. Alas, some of the businesses highlighted as exceptional in that book disappeared within a few years of its publication (Remember Circuit City?). I get the same feeling here. To be sure, all of us consume music, movies, and newspapers in different ways today than when we did even a decade ago. And the big lesson—change is the only constant—surely applies to higher education as it does everywhere else. But that's as far it goes for me. Anything more seems a stretch when vinyl records are making a comeback, more visual content than ever is being produced worldwide, and newspapers are showing renewed signs of life, as digital platforms or not-for-profit entities.

Despite the weakness of the aforementioned section, the authors' speculations prepare readers well for the final portion of the book where they offer essential guideposts for higher education leaders:

- "Don't plan for business as usual" (260): This sounds like pablum, but Levine and Van Pelt have a deeper warning in mind:

    Most [colleges and universities] viewed the pandemic as they would a natural disaster...They wanted to get back to business as soon as possible, clean up the damage, and restore what had been lost. [This] is the most misunderstood nature of the pandemic. They viewed it as an interruption in doing business as usual rather than as an accelerator of things to come (260).

    Levine and Van Pelt argue that the danger of the current moment is higher education's unwillingness to recognize the pandemic as a pivotal turning point, an opportunity for at least some se-

rious reflection on the part of presidents, trustees, and faculty.

- "Recognize that higher education is in the education business, not the campus, degree, or credit business" (262): If higher education insists that current degree structures, delivery, and timing are the only way to educate students in the 21st century, they are likely to be overtaken by competitors. Granted, these competitors may not do all things as well as our best colleges and universities, but they can (and *are*) doing it cheaper and faster.

- "Restore the connection with the street" (266): The authors insist that traditional higher education's disengagement with regular folks is best characterized by its insistence on not talking about the connection of degrees and careers, putting forth the argument that:

    ...the oft-held belief in the academy that practical and vocational education are a debasement of higher education's commitment to pursue knowledge for knowledge's sake [is] a misreading of history, which documents unambiguously that, since the earliest universities, students have come to college to prepare for jobs.... The dichotomy between education for personal enrichment and education for participation in society, including the labor market, has always been a false one (267).

Toward the end of the book, Levine and Van Pelt conclude that:

...in the end the industry of higher education will be disrupted. Though every college and university will change, they will get to that end by different routes, over time frames, and by varying means (257).

The pandemic's broadest impact may be in its establishment of a new baseline for higher education. Before the pandemic every enrollment leader was concerned about enrollment declines. Today that concern is magnified. The incorporation of online flexibility into the curriculum is now an unreturnable commodity, despite concerns that it disproportionately favors those with the resources. Higher education's finan-

cial model is more fragile than ever. And there is the re-emergence of vocational education—now synchronized with "career and technical education"—that is portrayed as a strategy for bolstering the national economy, a consumerist drumbeat with political heft on both sides of the aisle that wants higher education to value job training as something at least as important as molding minds.

Are we in a new higher education "wild west?" A place in which survival of the (institutional) fittest will create a series of haves and have-nots? Candidly, that's what we have now. The wealthiest colleges and universities are vaccinated against (pardon the analogy) the economic and demographic forces that bear upon higher education today. The least well-resourced institutions—community colleges, non-selective four-year institutions, second-tier liberal arts institutions—will likely suffer the greatest hits from whatever the post-pandemic future holds unless they respond strategically and well. Still, even if higher education's future as portrayed in *The Great Upheaval* is no more accurate than that offered by a cheap fortune teller, Levine and Van Pelt's overarching message is as urgent as Butch Cassidy's to Sundance: jump or die.

The Future of American Higher Education: How Today's Public Intellectuals Frame the Debate

DEVITIS, J. L. 2022. STERLING, VA: STYLUS PUBLISHING. 300 PP.

Reviewed by **Patrick Tanner**

Framing the future of American higher education as a debate speaks volumes; there are multiple aspects to consider at individual institutions and as a sector, a variety of stakeholders, many kinds of institutions that serve both broad and unique populations, and a lack of consensus on the basic purpose of the industry. The debate rages from the halls of Congress to traditional and social media outlets to dining room tables. Even one edited volume with authors from around the country faces a high bar in attempting to provide an outline for this undulating landscape. However, *The Future of American Higher Education: How Today's Public Intellectuals Frame the Debate*, edited by Jospeh L. DeVitis, has largely risen to this formidable task. Chapter authors take great care to articulate the historical perspective and impact of neoliberalism, changes in mindsets about teaching and learning, as well as critiques and points of advocacy relative to everything from elitism in admissions, isomorphism, social justice in the academy, the value of the liberal arts, and how academia needs to get out of its own way.

All of these topics are relevant, current, and address the palpable zeitgeist that seems to be a thread in and through publications, presentations, and interviews alike. One could easily argue that the volume should have been twice as long and still wouldn't have had space to fully capture the nuances that are bandied about the cafeteria, quad, and conference room.

The book is divided into three parts: *On Liberal Education*, *On Labor and Learning*, and *On Education and Social Change*. The benefits are simple and easily understood while at the same time creating a lack of integration. An author(s) discusses an intellectual's work, then another, then another. One gets used to this rhythm, but without a concluding chapter to synthesize the entirety of the information presented, which would have been extremely beneficial, one is also left wanting at the finale. As topics of diversity and social justice are also segmented out, they are not substantially addressed through the first two-thirds of the reading.

The debate that is referenced in the title is appropriate as readers begin with five chapters about the liberal

arts. Politicians, students, parents of college students, and industry leaders alike have been debating the liberal arts for many decades; newer professionals sometimes fail to realize that such headlines are not new. Readers may feel a funnel effect as the first two parts of the book use a wide-angle lens followed by focused attention on more finite functional issues.

While each chapter contains strong material, the most illuminating presentations about liberal education were based on the thoughts of Amy Gutmann and Stanley Fish. The authors, Spoma Jovanovic and Dan Sarofian-Butin, respectively, used inspirational verbiage to immediately connect the reader to the relevance of the subject matter in ways that cut across disciplines. Gutmann's focus over the years has been to intentionally connect concepts of morality, justice, and community to the essential role of education in democracy. Jovanovic strategically utilizes quotes from Gutmann on lofty topics such as structure, equality, learning, and freedom, helping the reader to contextualize some of the challenges that Dr. Gutmann was facing and elucidating.

Stanley Fish is framed as a broad thinker who is entirely frustrated with the fact that higher education cannot see the forest for the trees. He is presented as someone who has wonderfully legitimate critiques of teaching and learning as they stand in the academy, and he also provides options for choosing an alternative pathway. His passion for the success of students, faculty, and institutions is refreshing, especially as Dr. Sarofian-Butin outlines his arguments that we need to struggle with and redefine what it means to engage with the life of the mind in the lab and the classroom. Do not be fooled by the seeming simplicity and almost casual analogies; his is a depth that needs to be studied and chewed on for full satisfaction.

The next section is a study in neoliberalism from a number of vantage points. Christopher Newfield is introduced as one of the founding pillars of critical university studies. His voice is essential as he connects the dots between neoliberalism and decreased public funding as well as the need for incremental and positive change. The fast capitalism and reductionism that has produced the milieu around contract faculty drips from every page in this section, but the authors are not repetitive as they highlight the civic republicanism theories of David Kirp; Michael Bérubé's thoughts on tenure and the purpose of the professoriate; Marc Bousquet's connections regarding English composition; Stanley Aranowitz's push for the classics, and learning for democracy and critical thinking; and the deliberations surrounding the public versus the private good from David F. Larabee. These intellectuals have a mix of praise for higher education along with a firm disdain for the simplification of the curriculum and, therefore, the meaning of a degree.

The final section, which addresses a number of diversity issues in our field, exposes the reader to public intellectuals whose identities stray from the heavily white and male contingency in the first two sections. Included are topics as diverse as financial aid, food and housing insecurity, intersectionality and the performance of justice work, HBCUs, and affirmative action. The last chapter by Dana Morrison on Henry Giroux and the promises and limits of critical pedagogy is a fantastic way to encourage readers to continue the discussion.

Not that the prior eleven chapters didn't mention students, but the book concludes with the work of intellectuals that almost exclusively explores the impact of the structure of higher education on a variety of students and particular demographics. These chapters provide rich possibilities for reflection and discussion, precisely because their content is sometimes seen to be divisive. Coming from someone who grew up in the field on the enrollment and student services side of the operation, I value the perspectives of both the public intellectuals and the authors a great deal. It is because of the training, development, and education that I have been afforded in my career that I see a concentration of abundant complexity in these chapters as I can remember both individual students and institutions as I account for the stories, research, and theories shared by the authors. I believe that we will all connect to these chapters, even if there are parts that we may want to challenge; this is indeed the mark of a participatory text. Readers will find themselves not only excited to keep reading, but to talk with others about it.

Many have said over time that it is every employee's responsibility to recruit and retain students in higher education. Further, there is a notion that we cannot serve and educate our students if we do not understand them. If we believe these axioms, then this book should have great meaning to us because it encapsulates much of the philosophical and practical struggles of our past and present colleagues. It hits hard with lifetimes of research and commitment. It disaggregates data that confront flaws in our work. Whether you consider yourself and enrollment manager or not (you should!), this volume will develop in you a deeper appreciation for how our profession is articulating the germane topics that continue to drive us into the future.

This text will be valuable in graduate programs across the spectrum of training for those desiring a career in higher education, from enrollment and student services areas to faculty of all disciplines. Passers-by may conjecture that the ideas presented might be relegated to the instructional portion of the industry, but I believe that students who work in areas from Old Main to the Admissions House to classrooms and labs to Greek Life and beyond would contribute to deep and passionate discussions about the information contained in less than 300 pages. The chapters are concise as they quickly dive into not only the major themes that the public intellectual has published, but also critiques of their canon. Each also ends with a well-crafted summary and often a call to action. This could also serve well as a common read for faculty and/or staff teams; chapters can be read and discussed in any order if needed.

To tackle all of these concepts requires careful selection of both the public intellectuals who are referenced in the title of the publication, as well as those who reflect on their work. While these are not exclusively homogenous groups, I believe that there could have been much more diversity relative to visible social identities. The harshest of critics might decry the work as biased, skewed, or even irrelevant based on a perceived lack of diversity among the authors.

Additionally, if a book title is going to reference the entirety of American higher education, care should be taken to address the beauty, diversity, and comprehensive nature of institutions, from faith-based to public, small to large, community college to R1 status, and everywhere in between. Unfortunately for the reader, this breadth was only minimally addressed by a small portion of the contributing authors.

The State Must Provide: Why America's Colleges Have Always Been Unequal— and How to Set Them Right

HARRIS, A. 2021. NY: HARPERCOLLINS, 256 PP.

Reviewed by **Kimberley Buster-Williams**

The State Must Provide chronicles formative events in the history of American higher education. As an African American Generation Xer whose great aunt Alida P. Banks, maternal grandparents, and parents graduated from a historical black college or university (HBCU), I was curious to see what this author would share regarding the history of college access in the early 19th century in the United States.

Alida P. Banks was my great-grandmother's sister. She graduated from Hampton Institute in 1909, just 46 years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863. My aunt Alida had three phases of her administrative career: an early phase where she opened normal schools following Reconstruction, a middle phase where she served as dean of women at two institutions, and a final phase where she concluded her higher edu-

cation career serving as the Household Manager of the five residence halls at Howard University.

With this family background, I was delighted when asked to review *The State Must Provide*. In this book review, I will share a few highlights from each chapter. Hopefully the information shared will pique your curiosity and will prompt you to add this book to your professional reading list.

Generational Context

As noted in the literature, people belong to a particular generation based on the year they were born, yet this alone does not fully represent who they are, what they believe, or why they act the way they do. Formative events are defined as "distinct historical events that shape a generational identity through collective memories" (Gearhart, *et al.* 2021, 25). For example, the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 affected every generation. Still, depending on the life stage, it impacted them differently for school-aged children and college-aged young adults. It meant unprecedented weeks off from school and immersion in remote learning. For many Millennials, Gen Xers and some Baby Boomers, it meant an overnight transition to remote workplaces (Gearhart, *et al.* 2021). My grandparents and their generation experienced a reality of college admissions that I could hardly imagine. My oldest daughter, a college graduate who attended a predominately white university (PWI), and her sister, a sophomore at a PWI, likely cannot truly appreciate it. This book provides an opportunity for today's generation to reflect on this truly unbelievable history.

The book's author, Adam Harris, a staff writer for *The Atlantic,* does a masterful job of sharing with readers events that occurred before, during, and after the Civil War relative to African American college admissions and matriculation in the United States. From a college admissions perspective, one cannot understand today's affirmative action discussion without understanding how fiercely leaders at the federal, state, and local level fought to keep colleges segregated, and the laws (federal and state) that supported the idea that one race was dominant. This book provides an amazing historical look at college access and the role the federal government played, and continues to play, in higher education although there is not a single mention of education in the U.S. constitution. Adams provides a subtle clue of the historical journey he was launching when he opened the book with this quote:

> *The State must provide such education for her in conformity with the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and provide it as soon as it does for applicants of any other group.*
>
> ⇒ SIPUEL V. BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA (1948)

As I read the book, I thought of the Dr. Seuss book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go*, in particular, the quote from the book: "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go" (Seuss 1990). For African Americans, it would be years before this simple quote would be realized—and even then, considerable damage had already been done in many ways.

Oh, The Places You'll Go!

While reading this book, the reader will take a journey from *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) *to Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) to *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013). Readers will be reacquainted with names, places, institutions, etc., and, in some cases, will be introduced to unsung heroes, little-known facts, Supreme Court Justice dissents, and more. The book is divided into three parts: *Built*, *Defended*, and *Failed*. Each part has three chapters. The first part, *Built*, lays the critical groundwork with the first chapter aptly titled *The Roots.*

In many ways, the struggle over affirmative action in the United States goes back to slavery and the invention of the white race as an autonomous, privileged social caste and social control mechanism (Rubio 2001). This was evident in the 7–1 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision.

As shared in the book, Justice John Marshall Harlan was the lone dissent in this decision. In the act of great courage, Harlan stated:

The judgement this day rendered, will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott case. The law and its application should be color-blind, the white race deems itself to be the dominant race in the county, that has no bearing on the Constitution (67).

Harlan also registered memorable dissents in 1883, when the court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional. In 1908, the court upheld Kentucky's infamous Day Law, which banned integrated education in private schools (Thompson 1996). The Day Law was aimed at Berea College, which had been integrated since its opening in 1866. Adams' storytelling regarding Berea is captivating.

Chapter 1: Built

Chapter one begins with the reader being introduced to the educator John Fee. The year was 1844—sixteen years before South Carolina succeeded from the Union. A Confederate troop bombardment at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, launched the U.S. Civil War. Following the Civil War, Congress submitted to the states three amendments as part of its Reconstruction program to guarantee equal civil and legal rights to Black citizens. A major provision of the Fourteenth Amendment was to grant citizenship to "All persons born or naturalized in the United States," thereby granting citizenship to formerly enslaved people.

In chapter one, the reader is reminded of Oberlin College in Ohio's trailblazing policy of admissions "irrespective of color" in 1835, 33 years *before* the Fourteenth Amendment was passed. Adams notes that Oberlin was the first college to admit students regardless of race. Adams also introduces the reader to John Fee's vision for Berea College—an interracial college.

The Morrill Act of 1862—A Key Historical Moment in Chapter 1

Adams reminds readers that five years *before* the Fourteenth Amendment was passed, the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 was passed. Unlike the second Morrill Act, the 1862 Morrill Act did not mention Black stu-

dents. Adams shares that the 1862 Act only required that states create a college that taught agricultural and mechanic arts. Adams also shares that Lyman Trumbull from Illinois was an ardent advocate for this bill after Jonathan Baldwin Turner of the common school movement popularized the idea. Trumbull asked a legislator from Vermont, Justin Morrill, to sponsor the bill for political reasons. Again, Adams does a superb job telling the backstory of how the 1862 Morrill Act came to be. He provides the right amount of information to sustain the reader's attention. This "Goldilocks" approach—not too much, not too little- was one of the best features of this book.

Chapter one concludes with Adams sharing that President James Buchanan did not sign the 1862 Morrill Act as an appeasement to southern legislators. Instead, Buchanan vetoed the bill as the election of 1860 fast approached. In the end, Abraham Lincoln was elected president. He signed the bill that passed the House and Senate while southern legislators were expelled from Congress for treason.

Chapter 2: A Compromise

Like chapter one, chapter two is chocked full of great historical information. Chapter two starts on page 33. At this point, Adams had shared with the reader a somewhat optimistic view of higher education—Jonathan Turner's dream had been realized—land-grant colleges supported by the government were in full swing. This all comes to an abrupt halt as the reader learns that while liberal agricultural education was being supported at the federal level, at the state level.... slave codes were the law of the land in many southern states (*i.e.*, laws making it illegal for Black people to learn to read). As in true Adams fashion, he shares various historical nuggets in measured doses. Nuggets included but were not limited to which state was the first to accept the land grant (Answer- Iowa) and how many acres were doled out in the first Morrill Act. He importantly notes that of the 17,430,000 acres gifted to states, more than ten million acres were expropriated—stolen—from nearly 250 Indigenous tribes.

While Adams mentions laudable efforts by luminaries such as Booker T. Washington to provide

a "practical education" to newly freed slaves, he also reminded readers that as former Confederate states were readmitted to the union, they began to create their own land-grant institutions, "ones that explicitly segregated Black and white students" (41). The intense desire to separate Black and white students became a sticking point for the 2nd Morrill Act.

While many were desirous of more federal funding, some did not support new language, which stated that "No state was to receive funds under the bill for support of a college where a distinction of race and color was made in the admissions of students;" however this same group *did* support the caveat to this rule (53). The caveat was that a state could operate separate colleges for Black students—separate but equal.

This caveat represented a "compromise," and on Aug. 20, 1890, President Benjamin Harrison signed the Second Morrill Act into law. This comprise codified the separate but equal doctrine *before* the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case was litigated in response to New Orleans Separate Car Act.

Chapter 3: The Fall of Integrated Education

Chapter three continued with the somber tone set in chapter two. Adams takes great pains to share stories to bring to light what was happening on the ground during this period. He shares the experience of George Washington Carver and of others who attended predominantly white institutions during this time. He tells the story of Homer Plessey, an octoroon Black person selected to test the Fourteenth Amendment clause. And while most readers know how the Plessey case ends, the background information reminded of the prejudices that Blacks faced and the ardent desire to fight against the education and upward mobility of Black people. The idea of races mixing via interracial education, such as what was being offered at Berea College, was too much for some to fathom. As a result, laws like the Day Law in Kentucky were passed. Chapter three reminds readers that it would take four decades to reverse the separate but equal laws passed during this era.

Chapter 4: The Tragedy of Lloyd Gains

In this chapter, Adams shares the tragic story of Lloyd Gaines and the case *Gaines v. Canada*. While his story was familiar to me, Adam adds details often left out of history books. In particular, Adams shares that the state of Missouri paid to send 32 Black students out of state for graduate or professional education in 1935 (88). Paying for Black students to enroll out of state instead of allowing races to mix in the college classroom was the practice at many schools in the south at this time.

The student at the center of this lawsuit was Lloyd Gaines. Gaines was seeking admission into law school, and no school was available to him in Missouri. As with many of the stories shared, his legal case took years to wind through the court system. Adams gives heart-wrenching accounts of his struggles. He struggled financially, relying on family members to supplement his income while he waited for his day in court. Sadly, as his day in court approached, he went missing. As a somber end to this chapter, Adams notes that Lloyd Gaines's last communication with his family was a distress letter he wrote to his mother where he said, "I am just a man" (98).

Chapter 5: A New Guinea Pig

Chapter five takes the reader back to the opening page of the book and the *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma (1948)* quote. In this chapter, the "scene of the crime" was different, Oklahoma vs. Missouri, but the story was still too familiar. A highly accomplished Black student was seeking admission to a program where there was no separate but equal option available in the state. In this chapter, Adams actually shares the admissions denial letter, which I found fascinating. The denial letter read as follows:

> *Dr. Roy Gittinger, dean of admissions, has examined your transcript from Langston University and finds that you are scholastically qualified for admission to the University of Oklahoma law school. However, I must deny you admission for the following reason:*

Title 70, sections 452 to 464 prohibit colored students from attending schools of Oklahoma.

The Board of Regents has specifically instructed the president of the University of Oklahoma to refuse admission to Negros, giving as a basis of their decision, the Statues of Oklahoma. (108)

As this chapter ended, Adams shares with the reader important historical moments including the *Truman Commission* commissioned by President Harry Truman in 1946. The Truman report marked the "first time in the nation's history that the president ordered the nation's educational infrastructure be analyzed" (113). Findings from the report included that "nowhere in the area, except the District of Columbia, did there appear a single (Black) institution that approximated the undergraduate, graduate, and professional offerings characteristic of a first-class State university" (114). This was stunning, especially given that during this time, 85 percent of Blacks attended an HBCU (113).

On the final pages of this chapter, we learn that Sipuel was invited to attend a law school that was quickly started thus "technically" meeting the Fourteenth Amendment requirement. Unfortunately, this "law school" was a farce, and she did not enroll. Despite her personal setback, others were gaining access to PWIs. While Sipuel awaited her opportunity in Oklahoma, the University of Arkansas became the first public, all-white institution in the South to admit a Black student (117).

Chapter 6: "Segregated as Conditions Allow"

In chapter six, Adams continues to highlight the great lengths states were going to prevent integration. Despite the long odds, Black students were encouraged and won. Adams shares the story of yet another student fighting for equality—George McLaurin. In McLarin's case, the state of Oklahoma met its constitutional requirements to provide McLaurin with an equal education by having him attend classes separated from his graduate school classmates. Adam shares the various tricks that administrators played to adhere to the law while still keeping students separate—even

if it was by erecting partitions. Many southern states soon faced the challenge that Black students were applying in increasing numbers, and the various tricks they had devised could not be scaled up. More PWIs in the South slowly began to admit and enroll Black students. Adams does an excellent job discussing how important the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was during this tumultuous time. As Adams notes toward the end of this chapter, "each of the higher education cases- *Gaines, Sipuel, McLaurin, and Sweatt,* were bricks, laying the foundation for a broader challenge" (133).

Chapter 7: This Whole Façade

Chapter seven was the first chapter in part three of the book titled *Failed.* As shared in previous chapters, the courts had been ruling that states "had to provide the same courses for Black students as soon as they did for white ones in cases like Sipuel, McLaurin, and Sweatt" (137). Many states acquiesced and began to reverse segregation laws, such as the Day Law in Kentucky. The state featured in this chapter was Mississippi, as they were one of the lone holdouts. James Meredith was the brave student who tested how Mississippi addressed the Fourteenth Amendment. He applied to the University of Mississippi in 1961.

Again, like students in other states, he went through the application process, understanding that he would likely be denied because of his race and not his academic qualifications. However, unlike other students, Meredith has served in the Air Force and was eligible for the GI Bill. As part of the application process at Ole Miss, students had to provide alumni references. As part of his application, Meredith said, "I am an American-Mississippi- Negro citizen. This is why I cannot provide references" (143). Four days later, he received his denial letter. As shared by Adams, around this time, President Kennedy signed Executive Order 10925 requiring government contractors to take affirmative action in hiring practices marking the first time that the words "affirmative action" appeared in federal regulation.

As I read this chapter, the sentence that appealed to me was, "integration at Ole Miss was like higher

education's Gettysburg" (147). This chapter details the battle between Governor Barnett and the federal government. Adams' detailed descriptions of the many attempts to break the gridlock were engrossing. He shares a little-known fact that Paul Giuhard, a reporter for the *Agence France- Presse*, was shot and killed during this episode marking the only known report to be killed during the civil rights era (159). The fight in Mississippi was the last chapter in this painful part of our history.

Chapter 8: Thirteen Years a Remedy, 30 Years a Fight, Two Centuries a Struggle

This chapter continued Adams' theme of introducing the reader to Civil Rights legislation and to the people at the center of the case. First, he discusses Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits "discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance" (169). He then introduces the reader to Allan Bakke, a white student who claimed he was discriminated against by being denied admission to law school based on his race.

Adams spends a great deal of time providing background information on Bakke and on the Supreme Court ruling. He also brings the reader up to speed on more recent affirmative action cases such as the *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), *and Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013). He concludes this chapter by sharing with the reader claims against states who continue to maintain *de jure* segregated systems.

Chapter 9: What Hath We Wrought

This last chapter opens with the character featured in chapter one- John Fee. Adams brings the book full circle by updating the reader on what happened at Berea College during these transitory years. Adams shares that in 2020, Black students made up 6 percent of the student body at Berea College (198). He compares and contrasts predominantly white institutions (PWI) in the south with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), noting the lasting impact of segregation. The data were not terribly surprising.

In this concluding chapter, Adams reflects on his college experience as a Millennial and how this generation, his generation, faces souring higher education costs that previous generations did not. He points out the challenges Black students face regarding affordability and how that impacts decisions regarding where to attend and/or if to attend.

Adams then pivots to the coronavirus and how that impacted already vulnerable HBCUs. He also mentioned one vulnerable HBCU, Bennett College, and that this college had to seek a new accreditor to remain viable. The last few pages of this book were captivating as Adams highlights several current issues in higher education, including the trend of colleges examining their legacies relative to slavery and recent settlements such as the $577 million award to Maryland's four Black colleges.

In Conclusion

This was a fantastic book, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in college access and/or the history of American higher education. I would also recommend this to anyone who teaches the History of American Higher Education. I think this would be a terrific book to require along with other books such as John Thelins' *History of American Higher Education*, second edition.

As Adams alludes to, Bakke presented a dilemma for the nation as attempts were undertaken to equalize opportunities for all citizens by correcting injustices caused by past discrimination without violating the rights of others (Tucker 2000). In Bakke, Justice Brennan devised a three-pronged test to gauge the validity of race-conscious admissions programs under Title VI and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Tucker 2000). This test continues to be challenged, and one day may end. When/if it does, the U.S. government will have emerged have not fully atoned for the damage done, leaving future generations to press forward with whatever recompense received and to marvel at the courage and tenacity of their ancestors.

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About the Authors

Kimberley Buster-Williams is a nationally respected enrollment management practitioner, author, and speaker with expertise in enrollment management, data analytics, marketing, recruitment, diversity and inclusion, and the history of higher education. Buster-Williams currently serves as assistant director of AACRAO's Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement Program (SEM-EP) and is a Senior AACRAO Consultant. She has had a noteworthy impact on the enrollment management profession as it relates to researching and chronicling the history of higher education from a strategic enrollment management (SEM) perspective. She is the author of the 2021 book *History of American Higher Education A to Z—A Primer for Enrollment Managers*. In addition, Kimberley is the author of *Lollie's Leadership Quips*. This book highlights 25 of Buster-Williams' grandmother's famous quips. In this book, she shares how each quip can be used by leaders as they traverse challenging environments. Buster-Williams earned an Ed.S. in higher education administration, a master's in education administration, and a bachelor's in English, all from Old Dominion University. She is slated to complete her Ed.D. in June 2023. Her dissertation research examines employment engagement and succession planning in the context of retaining enrollment middle managers in the American "Big Quit," "Great Reshuffle, and/or "Great Resignation" era.

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