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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

Registrars have always been guardians of the integrity of an institution's records and degrees. In recent years, registrars and records professionals have increasingly faced the need to reconcile two competing demands: the need to provide accurate information promptly to various constituencies, and the need to safeguard privacy.

In addition, the use of student information systems, Internet, email and document imaging have complicated both of those considerations: it is now easier both to disseminate information promptly upon authorized request and, deliberately or through inadvertence, to disseminate information to unauthorized parties.

In *The AACRAO 2011 Academic Record and Transcript Guide*, we have tried to combine the best of the old—such as a thorough discussion of Database and Transcript Components—with practical guidance for new or evolving situations.

Among such situations are three current issues that have been the subject of widespread discussion in the profession: Notation on the transcript of academic or disciplinary ineligibility to re-enroll; use of social security numbers both in the database and on official transcripts; and documentation of name and gender changes.

In order to facilitate easy use of this *Guide*, we here present a brief overview of each chapter.

In the following chapter—Chapter 2—we discuss the terms "database," "academic record," and "transcript," and make some distinctions based on the historical evolution of those concepts. In essence, we emphasize the distinction between the full database and the transcript, remembering that a database can contain many items which are either optional, or not recommended, for inclusion on the transcript.

In Chapter 3, "Database and Academic Transcript Components," we present 54 data elements, and make recommendations as to whether their use is Essential, Recommended, Optional, or Not Recommended—regarding both the database and the transcript. Note that in Appendix B, we present a "Self-Audit" exercise concerning what should, and should not be, included on transcripts.

In Chapter 4, we present a concise guide to the "Transcript Key." We list 19 items that are essential to be included in the key, and nine optional items.

Chapter 5 addresses "Current Issues" which continue to be worthy of discussion based upon practical concerns and/or changes in our culture; this despite having been addressed in the last edition of the *Guide.* Each issue is reviewed as a sub-section of the chapter:

- Recording Academic and Disciplinary Actions on Transcripts;

- Use of Social Security Numbers: In the Student Database; on the Academic Transcript; as a Student ID; and for Financial Aid Programs; and
- Name and Gender Change Recommendations

Note that, in Appendix A, we also present and explain the highlights of a survey that AACRAO conducted in the winter of 2009–10, concerning current institutional practice (Appendix A, Survey A) and registrars' opinions as to what they considered to be best practice for an institution of their type (Appendix A, Survey B).

Chapter 6 is entitled "FERPA, USA PATRIOT Act, and Their Impact on Release of Student Education Records." It briefly discusses FERPA; refers the reader to *The AACRAO 2010 FERPA Guide*; and succinctly discusses the PATRIOT Act. Since FERPA and the PATRIOT Act are inevitably subject to change, we refer users of this *Guide* to the AACRAO Web site, specifically its Compliance page, for timely ongoing updates.

Chapter 7 updates the discussion of "Transcript Services." In the section on "issuing transcripts," there is a new sub-section on how to proceed when your institution is the custodian of record for an institution that has closed.

Chapter 8 is devoted to "Fraudulent Transcripts." In this chapter you will find a succinct summary of best practices to use when safeguarding the authenticity of a transcript or identifying a fraudulent document. In Appendix D, we present a one-page set of "Guidelines for Fighting Fraud."

Chapter 9 is an expanded and updated discussion of "Transcription of Nontraditional Work." It draws a distinction between identifying the origin of the coursework (recommended) and identifying the mode of delivery (not recommended). It discusses the transcription of nine types of nontraditional learning: Experiential Learning; Credit by Examination; Distance Learning; Independent Study; Study Abroad; Military Education; Corporate Education; External Degree Programs; and Continuing Education. "Examples of Nontraditional Transcript Entries" are presented in Appendix C and in Appendix E, we present a "Sample Transcript and Key."

Chapter 10 updates the discussion of Continuing Education Unit (CEU) Records, and references the Web sites of both the American Council on Education (its Center for Adult Learning) and the International Association for Continuing Education and Training.

Chapter 11, "Security of Records," the discussion of physical security and also electronic data storage, security training for staff, and additional safeguards and challenges, has been modernized.

Chapter 12 clarifies the two existing standards—the earlier (EDI) and the newer (XML)—for "Secure Electronic Exchange of Student Transcripts." The latest innovation in the secure electronic exchange of student transcripts, Adobe's PDF, is introduced.

We also include six Appendices. In addition to the five that have already been mentioned, we conclude with Appendix F, which describes the "Evolution of the AACRAO Academic Record and Transcript Guide." AACRAO first addressed the subject one year after its founding in 1910.

Finally, we also include an expanded Glossary; an updated, and annotated list of "References and Resources," which points the records professional to further sources of information; and an Index.

We hope that this work will be of immediate and continuing use to registrars and information professionals at all stages of their careers, and in a variety of settings.