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Editor’s Note

Readers will notice in this issue of C&U the two articles on sphere of influence for students selecting a college or university. Several recent presentations at professional meetings have focused on the latest generation of students, their values, ambitions, and influences in their lives. As our society becomes more and more complicated, it is important that we understand the perspective, pressures, and uncertainties that surround the youth of today. Given the rapidity of change, this is an ever-increasing challenge not only in student assessment, but also in technology, regulation, and economic fluctuation. The challenges never cease!

![Signature]

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References should be formatted in the author-date style and follow guidelines provided on page 526 of The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th edition. A list of references should appear at the end of the article. Text citations also follow the author-date format; examples may be found on page 641 of the Manual. For more information or for samples, please contact the C&U editor.

In addition to being placed in the manuscript, the data for essential tables and charts should also be included in a separate Microsoft Excel (spreadsheet) file.

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Authors whose manuscripts are selected for publication will be asked to submit a short biographical statement and an abstract of their article, each no more than thirty-five words.
The number of students with learning disabilities attending postsecondary institutions increases, the dilemma as to how to arrange appropriate and meaningful services continues to accelerate. Postsecondary officials struggle to understand methods for both determining appropriate accommodations and ensuring that these accommodations are successfully and legally provided to students with learning disabilities (Yocum and Coll 1995). While secondary schools have grown accustomed to meeting the mandates set forth in the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997, postsecondary institutions are just beginning to feel the impact of large numbers of students with learning disabilities on campus. In an effort to aid postsecondary institutions in determining individual student needs as well as meeting legal mandates, new tools and strategies must be developed.

Postsecondary Prevalence of Learning Disabilities

According to the HEATH Resource Center’s report, 1999 Freshmen with Disabilities Profile (Henderson 1999), 3.5 percent of full-time college freshmen self-reported a learning disability in 1998. Overall, 9.4 percent of all first-time, full-time college students reported some type of disabling condition and fully two-fifths of those students indicated a learning disability. In fact, the HEATH report states that the category of ‘learning disability’ is the fastest growing for disabled students entering college. Considering the population of students with disabilities, the percentage of students with learning disabilities has grown from 15 percent in 1988, to 41 percent in 1998. This explosive growth has created substantial accommodation issues for postsecondary institutions.

Issues in the Provision of Accommodation Services

Students with learning disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations as set forth in The Vocational Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. While widespread acceptance of the necessity for accommodations has developed, issues that impact success abound. The first issue concerns the tendency of postsecondary institutions to routinely use non-specific, global accommodations that may not prove successful for the individual learner (Thomas 2000). A second concern involves a lack of student understanding regarding personal accommodation needs and responsibilities as well as an inability to articulate those needs to professors (Lehmann, Davies, and Laurin 2000). A third point revolves around professors’ considerable resistance to providing accommodations or professors’ lack of training concerning implementation (Thomas 2000).

The fourth and final consideration is the need for efficient and effective methods to determine accommodation needs and to explore the relationship of these accommodations to student success (Levinson and Ohler 1998). In other words, postsecondary institutions must not only provide specific accommodations, but are obligated to explore critical alternatives that may improve student success. This study examined the reliability of The Learning Disabilities Diagnostic Inventory (LDDI) (Hammill and Bryant 1998) in identifying learning disabilities in terms of postsecondary students’ intrinsic processing profiles. The use of this standardized tool for meeting litigation mandates and increasing institutional commitment to investigating appropriate accommodation is promising.

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Why Would the LDDI Work?

There are several reasons for selecting the LDDI as one tool to provide efficient and effective data to academic advisors and postsecondary students with learning disabilities. First, the LDDI was designed to identify patterns of behaviors that point to underlying intrinsic processing disorders (Hammill and Bryant 1998). This knowledge concerning the specific manifestations of a student’s disability should lead to better self-advocacy and more dynamic accommodations (Lehmann, Davies, and Laurin 2000). Secondly, while the instrument does not purport to singularly diagnose learning disabilities, it is standardized and technically sound. Third, the items on the survey are presented in common language, and easily understood by incoming postsecondary students. Therefore, the information gained from the instrument is usable and provides the student and academic advisor with a clear picture of the student’s processing strengths and weaknesses. By using the LDDI to analyze intrinsic processing strengths and weaknesses, students may feel empowered to explain accommodations on a personal level rather than relying solely on institutionally generated reports.

This study examined the ability of the LDDI to differentiate postsecondary students with learning disabilities from non-disabled peers. It is hoped that by identifying an easy, efficient, and standardized tool to explore student learning needs, more comprehensive accommodations may be provided. Utilizing such a method may improve the student’s opportunity to obtain a degree in postsecondary education as well as develop documentation concerning the institution’s attempt to explore possible accommodation strategies. Two hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis One: Students who identify themselves as non-learning disabled will not be identified by the LDDI as having a possible learning disability.

Hypothesis Two: Students who identify themselves as having a documented learning disability will be classified by the LDDI as having a possible learning disability.

Methodology

Subjects

The subject pool consisted of 131 first-time, full-time college freshmen at an urban university. All students were eighteen years of age. One hundred seventeen of these students were randomly selected from a freshman orientation seminar to complete the LDDI through self-report. Additionally, fourteen subjects participating in a fee-for-service disability assistance program were identified through documentation as disabled. None of the freshman orientation seminar subjects reported a documented disability. Four of these students were designated as having Attention Deficit Disorder and the other ten were labeled as Learning Disabled.

In terms of gender, subjects from the freshman seminar were evenly distributed. The distribution of gender in the subjects with documented disabilities was 20 percent female and 80 percent male. The ethnicity of subjects from the freshman seminar was 80 percent Anglo descent, 12 percent Hispanic descent, 7 percent African American descent, and 1 percent Other, including Native and Asian Americans. The subjects with documented disabilities were represented by the following breakdown: 94 percent Anglo descent, 4 percent Hispanic descent, and 2 percent Other, including African American, Asian, and Native American students. Socioeconomic status as well as geographic origin was not surveyed. However, the cost of the fee-for-service disability assistance program was significant and, at the time of this study, there was no provision for scholarships.

Instrument

The LDDI consists of six scales including Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Reasoning. Each scale is comprised of fifteen items specifically observed in the classroom and identified by experts as “typical” of students with learning disabilities. The LDDI identifies potential learning disabilities in an individual by examining the profile of stanine scores. Raw scores, converted to stanines and percentiles, enable an examiner to look for intrinsic processing weaknesses indicative of a learning disability. LDDI stanines are standard scores with a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 1.96. Percentiles in the LDDI represent the distribution of scores within the representative norming sample.

The LDDI has documented reliability and validity as discussed in the examiner’s manual. Reliability was established for LDDI in the following areas: content sampling, time sampling, and inter-rater reliability. Consistently, the results report reliability coefficients that meet or exceed .80 in magnitude with many of the coefficients at the .90 level. Validity is documented through content, criterion-related, and construct methods. In each case, analyses indicated that the LDDI is an “efficient and effective method for identifying intrinsic processing disorders” (Hammill and Bryant 1998).

Normative data concerning the LDDI indicated that the standardization sample consisted of 2,552 students. The sample represented a fairly characteristic sampling of the United States population with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, special education placement, geographic region, and family income. Subjects included students from ages 8 years, 0 months through 18 years, 11 months.

Procedure

All 131 of the subjects voluntarily completed the LDDI in a twenty-minute administration. Extended time was allowed for subjects experiencing difficulty in completing the task. Subjects in the freshman orientation seminar program filled out surveys during a class session. Subjects with documented disabilities completed the survey during a regularly scheduled, weekly disability assistance tutoring session. The students were instructed to complete the survey by rating personal behaviors. They circled numerical indicators from 1-9 on a Likert-like scale to indicate performance on the stimulus behaviors. Finally, subjects were asked to indicate on the protocol if they had ever been diagnosed with a specific disability.

The examiners numerically coded the protocols. The LDDI protocols were scored with a 100 percent inter-rater reliability. Every subject was identified as potentially nondisabled or potentially learning disabled as reported on the LDDI.
DATA ANALYSIS

After the scoring procedure, each profile was placed in one of the following categories according to the student's self-report information. The six categories included:

1. no reported disability/not identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI;
2. no reported disability/identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI;
3. no reported disability/uncorable LDDI protocol;
4. reported a learning disability/not identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI;
5. reported a learning disability/identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI; and
6. reported another disability/not identified by the LDDI as having a possible learning disability.

Initially, frequency statistics were calculated and the mode and the range of scores were analyzed. Secondly, a frequency distribution analysis was then calculated for the sample. Finally, a chi-square analysis was performed in order to investigate the differences between the scores in the six categories.

Results

This study attempted to examine the ability of the LDDI to identify possible learning disabilities in 18-year-old postsecondary students. Results from the analyses indicated the following findings. The mode or the category most frequently reported was Category 1 (no reported disability/not identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI). The range of scores was 5 indicating that one condition, Category 4, (reported a learning disability/not identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI) did not occur.

The frequency distribution analysis (see Table 2) revealed that some 84 percent of the postsecondary students fell into Category 1 (no reported disability/not identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI). Secondly, 7.6 percent of the sample fit into Category 5 (reported a learning disability/identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI) and 2.3 percent were identified as belonging in Category 2 (no reported disability/identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI).

A chi-square was calculated for the sample to examine the differences between the expected frequencies in the six categories and the observed frequencies. Table 2 presents the contingency table indicating the category frequencies and the results of the chi-square analysis. The analysis indicates a chi-square of 336.214 with 4 degrees of freedom and significance below the .01 level. The chi-square results indicate that hypothesis one (students who identify themselves as non-learning disabled will not be identified by the LDDI as having a possible learning disability) is accepted. Additionally, hypothesis two (students who identify themselves as having a documented learning disability will be classified by the LDDI as having a possible learning disability) is also accepted.

Discussion

The significance of the chi-square analysis indicated that the LDDI is a reliable method for identifying the possibility of a learning disability in postsecondary students. The instrument was not used to obtain a diagnosis of a learning disability, but to verify the presence of a disabling condition in the postsecondary subjects with disability certification from the university. The purpose of establishing the validity of using the LDDI with postsecondary students was to identify a standardized and easily usable instrument that would provide the student and academic advisor with practical information about the student's day-to-day academic functioning.

After establishing the LDDI as an accurate self-report tool, it is important to note that it can highlight specific, descriptive information such as deficit characteristics commonly displayed within the classroom. This pragmatic information allows the student and advisor to pinpoint intrinsic processing learning needs, which can then be accommodated in the postsecondary classroom. For example, one LDDI item relates to the student's ability to retell what has been read. An indication of frequent failure in this area points to the need for the student to receive accommodations such as the use of taped texts to reinforce more highly developed auditory memory skills as opposed to relying on poor visual memory processing skills. Using an instrument such as the LDDI allows the institution to document attempts to explore possible accommodations as mandated by the results of current litigation.

Three additional issues also merit discussion. First, a few students (2.3 percent, n of 3) were identified as possibly having a learning disability even though they did not indicate a previous diagnosis. There are several plausible explanations for this occurrence. First, as noted in the health report (Henderson 1999), more students with disabilities are attending college. This increase may translate into additional occurrences of learning disabilities, both diagnosed and undiagnosed, in the student population. Secondly, some of these students may not have attended public school and therefore, were never officially identified. Third, students with learning disabilities can be served through various federal laws such as The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and may not be categorically identified. Fourth, some students may have been identified in the early
grades and been unaware of the diagnosis of a learning disability. Finally, these students may have chosen to report a disability status inaccurately so as not to register for on-campus disability programs.

Secondly, if both Category 2 (no reported disability/identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI) and Category 5 (reported a learning disability/identified as possibly having a learning disability by the LDDI) are combined, 9.89 percent of the sample would be identified by the LDDI as possibly having a learning disability. This would appear to be inflated when compared to the 3.5 percent of full-time college freshmen reporting learning disabilities in the 1999 Heath Report (Henderson 1999). However, the sample consisted of ten subjects who were enrolled in a fee-for-service program for postsecondary students with learning disabilities. These students were included to ensure the ability of the LDDI to differentiate between groups. However, inclusion of these students skews the percentage of students with possible learning disabilities in the sample. If these students were removed from the pool, 2.5 percent of the sample would be identified by the LDDI as possibly having a learning disability, which coincides with the Heath report.

Finally, 100 percent of the postsecondary students who initially reported documented learning disabilities were re-identified by the LDDI as having possible learning disabilities (n of 10). Even while administering the LDDI in a self-report format, it was absolutely accurate in differentiating these students from the rest of the sample. Furthermore, the results of the LDDI did not identify students previously diagnosed with only Attention Deficit Disorder or Emotional Disturbance (n of 4) as having a possible learning disability.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
Four limitations of the study must be considering in interpreting these results. First, one-to-one interviews concerning past educational history for each student were not conducted. Therefore, it was not possible to determine why three students without documented learning disabilities were pinpointed by the LDDI as possibly disabled. Through personal interviews, more information might have enlightened the investigators as to the actual disability status of these individuals. Without this information, it is difficult to know whether the LDDI was picking up on learning disabilities that had previously gone undetected or if the student had simply failed to accurately report past educational history.

Secondly, the reliance on self-report as opposed to formal documentation leaves open the possibility that the student’s report of a learning disability was inaccurate. However, each of the students who reported a learning disability was enrolled in a fee-for-service program that required formal disability documentation prior to admittance. It would appear that this knowledge of the student’s participation validates self-report.

Next, the possibility that a certain percentage of the postsecondary students failed to accurately complete the LDDI survey is documented in Category 3 (n of 4). These students invalidated the LDDI results by circling the same answer throughout the survey (answer #1). According to the LDDI manual, this type of score would indicate mental retardation; however, as evidenced by successful enrollment in higher education, this would be unlikely. This particular institution of higher education required a minimum Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score of 1140 for admittance.

Finally, the number of students with learning disabilities (n of 10) included in the sample is rather restricted. Even if the additional students in Category 2 (n of 3), who did not report a learning disability but were identified by the LDDI as having a possible learning disability were included, the number remains limited (n of 13). The number of students identified by the LDDI as having a possible learning disability does, nevertheless, coincide with the incidence previously reported nationally.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE
Postsecondary academic advisors report a need for more in-depth information about students with learning disabilities including specific academic and social needs (Lehmann, Davies, and Laurin 2000). While the LDDI is not designed to independently diagnose specific learning disabilities, it could be a useful tool in aiding students and academic advisors in constructing successful learning environments. Enabling postsecondary students and academic advisors to utilize accurate, efficient, cost-effective, and standardized methods for identifying specific intrinsic processing needs creates the opportunity for successful transitions to the postsecondary environment. Furthermore, the use of such an instrument provides postsecondary institutions with a vehicle for documenting attempts to investigate possible accommodations. Using the LDDI as a standardized method for identifying postsecondary students’ intrinsic processing strengths and weaknesses and then translating that information into accommodation practices promises to be a viable method for improving the transition from high school to postsecondary education for students with learning disabilities.

Summary
Students with learning disabilities continue to enroll in postsecondary institutions in record numbers. Officials at these institutions of higher learning struggle to determine effective and efficient methods for selecting appropriate accommodations. Additionally, results of current litigation seem to suggest that the institution is to be accountable for exploring the range of possible accommodation alternatives. This study examined one standardized instrument that purports to identify possible learning disabilities in students through examination of intrinsic processing skills. The results indicate that the LDDI was successful in differentiating between postsecondary students with and without documented learning disabilities. Establishing the LDDI as a reliable mechanism in the search for methods to develop and document specific accommodations would appear to have positive ramifications for postsecondary education. Postsecondary institutions utilizing this information for pre-admission advisement can enhance their ability to recruit qualified students with learning disabilities.
References
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Assessment of the Utility of Parents as Sources of Information About the College Decisions of Their Children

This study sought to determine how useful the information provided by parents might be about why their children enrolled at other schools. Parents and matriculating students responded to identical survey items about the college selection process. Analysis of paired responses indicated that parent and student perceptions of the college selection process were too inconsistent to conclude that parents’ information would be useful in understanding their children’s decision to attend other schools.

As our institution has considered strategies to improve its yield (the proportion of students whom are accepted for admission who actually enroll), we thought it would be useful to determine why students we accept for admission choose to attend elsewhere. For years we had obtained survey data from new freshmen matriculating at our institution about why they selected our school. But we have had almost no information from students whom we accepted who did not enroll. Unfortunately, our surveys of ‘no-shows’ typically have resulted in very low response rates (in the vicinity of 10 to 12 percent). We speculated there were two reasons. First, obtaining the new school addresses of these students was very difficult. Mailed surveys sent to their homes were probably not always forwarded to the students by their parents. Second, we guessed that the motivation of such students to complete a questionnaire coming from a ‘rejected institution,’ if they did receive it, was low.

However, we reasoned that contacting the parents of students whom our institution accepted for admission, but who chose to attend elsewhere, would be relatively easy. We speculated further that parents of these students likely would have the information we sought concerning their child’s decision to attend another institution and that they would be more willing than their son or daughter to complete a mailed survey (or to answer questions in a telephone interview).

One question remained: To what extent were parents reliable sources of information about their children’s decision to select a school other than ours? The research literature concerning the value of contacting parents to assess the reasons for their children selecting one institution versus others did not provide a clear answer.

Bowers and Pugh (1973) offered early insight into the congruence between parents’ and students’ placement of importance on various institutional attributes that affect college choice. The authors wanted to find out the various reasons parents and students chose a large public university in Indiana.

Additionally, the authors sought information concerning the degree of importance students and parents placed on the cited institutional attributes. The authors had parents and students in their freshman year of college complete the same questionnaire containing 22 reasons likely to be considered in the college selection process, and asked participants to rate institutional attributes using a scale of “no importance,” “minor consideration,” and “major consideration.” Usable responses were obtained from approximately 80 percent of the 4,841 entering freshmen, totaling 4,215 acceptable responses. Usable responses were obtained from approximately 50 percent of 6,365 parents, totaling 2,941 acceptable responses. Significant similarities ($p < .01$) were found among parents and students for attributes that required major consideration. These included academic reputation, specific department reputation, and tuition cost.

Murphy (1981) demonstrated similar findings when students ranked academic reputation as the primary attribute affecting college choice. Additionally, Bowers and Pugh (1973) found significant similarities among parents and students for attributes that involved no importance. These included geographic location of the institution, advice from alumni, and financial assistance.

The findings of the study conducted by MacDermott, Conn, and Owen (1987) contrasted with the findings of Bowers and Pugh (1973) in terms of attributes that were of major importance in college selection among parents and students. MacDermott, Conn, and Owen (1987) sampled 1,500 first- and second-generation college-attending high school seniors and their respective parents in northeast Ohio and obtained a 35

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percent response rate. Parents placed more importance on academic reputation, academic quality, faculty credentials, and strong classroom attention than did students. Students placed more importance on available social activities, varied extracurricular activities, and strong athletic programs than did parents.

Researchers have found that parents are very involved in the college selection process (e.g., Buford, 1987; Murphy, 1981; Stage and Hossler 1989). Buford (1987) found that parents are involved both in the decision for their child to go to college and in the final decision to attend a specific college over another. Murphy (1981) examined the roles parents and students play in the college selection process. The author specifically wanted to determine student and parent views concerning the level of involvement in the initiation of the idea to go to college, what/who influenced the decision to go to college, and who was involved in the final college selection. The author sampled six Milwaukee high schools including one all Male school, one coed parochial school, two urban schools, and two suburban schools. High schools were selected by a judgment sampling method and all geographic and socioeconomic sections of the area were represented.

Questionnaires were randomly given to 240 seniors among the six high schools and 186 usable surveys were included in the analysis. Students who were not planning on attending college were not used in the analysis.

The parent sample was randomly drawn from a list of parents whose children had applied to a nearby university, but had not yet indicated an intention to enroll. Eighty parents were surveyed using a telephone interview and 73 interviews could be used in the analysis.

The decision to attend college appears to be made at an early age; however, significant differences were found between students and parents as to at which grade level the decision occurred. Overall, students indicated that they felt they made the decision to attend college at a much earlier age than indicated by the parents. Murphy (1981) found that 52.8 percent of students indicated making the decision to attend college in grade school, versus 59.6 percent of parents thinking that their child’s decision to attend college occurred in grade school. These data suggest that influences to attend college begin early in the academic life of students, and that parents might be unaware of indirect influences made upon students in grade school or that parents might not realize the student’s intent to go to college until formal discussions about college arise.

In addition, when students in Murphy’s (1981) study were asked who influenced their idea to go to college, students saw the influence of their friends to be significantly greater than what parents saw as the influence of the students’ friends. Further, parents tended to view themselves as more influential than how students viewed their parents. Significant differences were found when 68.8 percent of parents viewed themselves to be an important influence on their child’s decision to attend college as opposed to 42.4 percent of students who viewed their parents to be important influences. When making the final decision as to where to attend college, there was significant agreement among both students and parents that students ultimately made the final decision.

A study by Stage and Hossler (1989) indicated that various socioeconomic characteristics of families were strongly associated with college planning factors, such as the student’s degree aspiration, expected degree attainment, parental college savings, and talking about college. More recently, Flint (1992) also studied family background characteristics as related to the college planning process. The author examined the relationship of family background to institutional characteristics. The author sent 3,475 questionnaires to parents of children at 50 elementary schools in the Chicago area and obtained 1,332 acceptable responses. The author noted the sample was not random, although respondents displayed similar demographics in terms of race and ethnicity to the U.S. Census in 1986 and 1987. Multiple regression analysis was computed to estimate the contribution of independent variables made to the set of institutional characteristics.

Flint’s (1992) findings suggested that the education level of the parents, particularly the father, the family’s income level, number of colleges to which the child applied, and the child’s degree aspiration affect the institutional characteristics sought by the student and parent. Further, it appears that higher degree aspirations of the parents are positively associated with their children’s tendency to apply to schools that are more prestigious, competitive, expensive, and farther from home.

Little of this earlier research directly addressed our concerns. How reliable a source of information are parents in describing their children’s decisions in selecting specific postsecondary institutions? The purpose of this study was to assess the consistency between students’ and their parents’ responses to questions about parental involvement in the college selection process and to determine how knowledgeable parents were about their children’s reasons for selecting this institution.

Method
For the past several years our institution has mailed a two-page survey to each new freshman in the summer prior to matriculating in the fall. Questions about why they selected the institution, the kinds of concerns they have as they begin their college experience, as well as the expectations they have for that experience, comprise the questionnaire. The survey also asks students to provide their name and student identification number so that their responses to the questions might be passed on to their advisors (if the student chooses). Student responses also become part of a student tracking database to provide some context within which to examine student outcomes following matriculation of a cohort. For the Fall 2000 survey, students were asked several additional questions about their parents’ involvement in the student’s college decision-making process, as well as questions about their parents’ degree of understanding their reasons for selecting our institution.

From the 80 percent of new freshmen completing the survey, we selected a random sample of 400 and sent a questionnaire to their parents to complete. The parent questionnaire contained the same items and response schemes that we had asked the students. Additionally, we asked that parents identify their child on their survey so that we could match parent and student
responses. Approximately 50 percent of our random sample of parents returned completed surveys.

Specific questions asked of both students and their parents were:

- the extent of parental involvement in identifying an initial list of schools to consider, visiting school campuses, weighing the pros and cons of each school, and making the final decision about which school to attend (a five-point Likert scale was used for responses).
- if this institution was the first choice (a 'yes or no' scale was used for responses).
- how concerned parents were about the schools' location, their reputation, their programs and services, the schools' cost, and the schools' facilities (a five-point Likert scale was used for responses).
- how concerned students were about various characteristics of the schools, including location, cost, reputation, quality of various programs and services, reputation, financial aid, job/grad school placement, campus atmosphere, and influence of friends (a selection of three characteristics (most important, second most important, and third most important) was used for responses).
- the extent to which the parents understood their son's/daughter's reasons for selecting this institution.

In addition, the parent survey asked if the mother, the father, or both parents completed the survey.

**Results**

An examination of the aggregated student and parent responses suggests substantial parental involvement in the college selection process of their children, as well as considerable agreement between student and parent responses (see Table 1). Nearly two-thirds of parents (63 percent) reported being "very involved" or "involved" in identifying the initial list of schools (as compared to 54 percent of responding students). Not surprisingly, about 60 percent of parents said they were "very involved" in visiting the schools, as compared to 49 percent of the students. Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of parents reported being "very involved" or "involved" in weighing the pros and cons of the schools; a substantially smaller proportion of students (58 percent) said that their parents were involved. Interestingly, it appeared from these data that a much smaller proportion of parents were involved in the students' final school selection: 50 percent of parents reported being "very involved" or "involved," as compared to 45 percent of responding students. More than three in four parents (77 percent) reported "completely understanding" their child's reasons for selecting this institution; 81 percent of students reported that their parents "completely understood" their reasons for selecting this institution (see Table 2).

Further examination of the aggregated parent and student responses to the questionnaire indicated that there was also moderate consistency in identifying "the most important reasons for parents selecting this institution" (see Table 3). "Availability of a specific program" was the most important reason selected by 23 percent of the students; it was also the reason

| Table 1: Comparison of Parent and Student Responses to Parental Involvement Survey Items |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Percent Responding:             | Extent to Which Parents Were Involved In: | Identifying Initial List of Schools | Visiting the Schools | Weighing Pros and Cons of the Schools | Making the Final School Section |
| Very Involved                   | Parents: 40.1%                     | 59.9%                       | 45.6%                       | 25.5%                       |
|                                  | Students: 31.4%                     | 48.1%                       | 32.5%                       | 26.8%                       |
| Involved                        | Parents: 22.7%                     | 14.1%                       | 26.9%                       | 25.0%                       |
|                                  | Students: 22.7%                     | 18.7%                       | 25.3%                       | 18.0%                       |
| Somewhat Involved               | Parents: 28.9%                     | 13.0%                       | 21.8%                       | 29.2%                       |
|                                  | Students: 25.3%                     | 17.6%                       | 28.9%                       | 27.3%                       |
| Minimally Involved              | Parents: 4.1%                      | 42.0%                       | 4.1%                        | 7.3%                        |
|                                  | Students: 10.8%                     | 5.2%                        | 6.2%                        | 10.8%                       |
| Not Involved                    | Parents: 3.6%                      | 8.9%                        | 1.6%                        | 13.0%                       |
|                                  | Students: 9.8%                      | 9.8%                        | 7.2%                        | 17.0%                       |

(Chi-sq=32.4, p=0.009) (Chi-sq=44.1, p=0.000) (Chi-sq=32.4, p=0.009)

| Table 2: Extent to Which Parents Understand Student’s Final School Choice |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Parents Responding (%):                          | 76.6%           | 23.4%           | 0.0%            |
| Students Responding (%):                         | 81.3%           | 18.1%           | 0.5%            |

(Chi-sq=14.4, p=0.007)

| Table 3: Student-Parent Agreement on Student’s Most Important Reason For Selecting This Institution |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Reason for Selecting This Institution                                                          | Students Indicating “Most Important” | Parents Indicating “Most Important to Their Child” |
| Geographic Location                                                                           | 17.8%           | 13.8%           |
| Availability of Program                                                                      | 23.0%           | 36.0%           |
| Cost                                                                                            | 21.5%           | 11.1%           |
| Academic Reputation                                                                          | 12.6%           | 15.3%           |
| Facilities                                                                                    | 1.0%            | 1.1%            |
| Friends Going to This School                                                                  | 1.0%            | 3.2%            |
| Quality of Faculty                                                                            | 0.5%            | 0.5%            |
| Quality of Social Life                                                                        | 1.0%            | 0.0%            |
| Financial Aid Package                                                                        | 8.9%            | 7.4%            |
| Job Placement of Graduates                                                                    | 1.0%            | 0.0%            |
| Residence Hall Quality                                                                       | 3.1%            | 0.0%            |
| Athletic Teams/Programs                                                                      | 0.5%            | 3.7%            |
| Campus Atmosphere                                                                            | 5.8%            | 4.2%            |
| Other                                                                                         | 2.1%            | 3.7%            |
selected most often by parents (36 percent). The most next most frequent “most important student reasons” was “cost” (selected by 21 percent of students and 11 percent of parents), “geographic location” (selected by 18 percent of students and 14 percent of parents), and “academic reputation” (selected by 13 percent of students and 15 percent of parents).

Examination of responses of individual students paired with their responding parent provided a somewhat different view of the extent to which parents might be reliable sources of information about their child’s reasons for selecting this institution (see Table 4). For example, only 37 percent of paired students and parents selected the same “student’s most important reason for selecting this institution.” When Spearman Rho Correlation Coefficients were calculated between each student and parent response, coefficients ranged only between .23 (parental involvement in making the final school selection) and .52 (parental involvement in visiting the schools) (see Table 3). Additionally, there was only minor variation in most of these coefficients when considering which parent completed the questionnaire (mother, father, or both parents). Two noteworthy exceptions to this were the coefficient of .76 (weighing the pros and cons) and the coefficient of .48 (understanding the student’s final choice) obtained by the 24 student-parent pairs where both parents completed the survey.

### Discussion

The findings of our study led us to the conclusion that parents of students whom were admitted to this institution but who chose to attend elsewhere likely would not be useful sources of information about the students’ reasons for not attending this school. First, the relatively low correlation coefficients between paired student and parent responses to the survey items indicated varying amounts of inconsistency between students’ and parents’ perceptions of the college selection process as it involved our school. Further, we were concerned that nearly two-thirds of the paired students and parents did not agree on the students’ “most important reason” for selecting this institution.

There could be a variety of reasons for this finding of inconsistency between students’ and parents’ perceptions of why students selected this institution. An important reason might involve the final non-random character of our sample. Although we began with a random sample of 400 parents of the 80 percent of new freshmen matriculating at our institution in Fall 2000, only half of them were willing to complete and return the survey. We speculated that perhaps the ‘most involved’ parents completed our questionnaire (i.e., continuing their involvement in their child’s transition from high school to college). Had the entire sample returned the survey, perhaps we might have found even smaller correlation coefficients.

Another possible explanation for our findings of inconsistency between students’ and parents’ perceptions of the college selection process might have involved the retrospective character of our data collection. Had we collected data while both the student and parent were experiencing the process in an on-going, immediate way, we might have found greater commonality in their responses. That the student had made a commitment to our institution and that we were asking student and parent to recall reasons and levels of involvement several months after that fact might have resulted in a growing disparity in their recollections.

Differences in parent and student perceptions of the elements of the college choice processes that were included on our survey also might have accounted for some of the inconsistencies found in our data. For example, parents and students likely have very different reactions when asked about the “academic reputation” of an institution or its “quality of social life.” Similarly, we think it very possible that parental involvement in “weighing the pros and cons of each school” have different meanings to parents as compared to their children. Perhaps using more concrete behavioral descriptors involving parental involvement and student choice of college might have led to greater consistency in their responses.

Much of this, of course, is speculation. Since the original goal of our research was to determine the feasibility of using parents as sources of information about why students we admitted chose to attend school elsewhere, our conclusion about the data we were able to collect convinced us of the dubious utility of using parents as sources of information to understand the reasons of their “no-show” students.

### References


Thousands of international students attend American universities and colleges to reach their educational goals. To do so they, like their American peers, must be evaluated by admissions offices, a task complicated even more by the differences in educational systems worldwide. Proficiency in English is one of the criteria for this process, and it is crucial for success at North American universities. Xu’s (1991, p.567) findings “strongly suggest that English language proficiency is the single most important factor influencing international graduate students’ academic coping ability” (a factor that is just as significant for undergraduate students).

As important as it is, assessing an individual’s command of English is not a simple procedure. The most widely used instrument is the TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language, required at over 4,200 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. In 2000-2001, more than half a million examinees registered to take the computer-based TOEFL at test centers from Albania to Zimbabwe (ETS 2000). Despite its widespread acceptance, the TOEFL may not be an accurate measure of English language proficiency. An alternative to the TOEFL is the APIEL, Advanced Placement in International English Language, which may be a more accurate measure of proficiency in English.

TOEFL
The TOEFL measures English proficiency of a non-native speaker (ETS 2000c). Presently there are two versions of the test: paper-based and computer-based. As of January 2000, all TOEFL examinations in North America have been computerized, and students have been required to take the TWE, Test of Written English. And since October 2000, the computer-based test has been administered in most test centers abroad.

The TOEFL is computer-adaptive, meaning that if the examinees’ responses are correct, they will next be presented with more difficult questions, but if their responses are incorrect, the next questions will be of lesser or equal difficulty.

There are four sections to the TOEFL. Section 1, Listening Comprehension, measures the students’ ability to comprehend spoken American English. It includes vocabulary and idioms that are commonly used in spoken language. This section contains two parts, both of which present video clips: short conversations between two speakers and mini-lectures. In the first, the students hear a short dialogue and a question about the dialogue. From the four possible answers on the screen, the students choose the best one to the question they have heard. In the second section, the students hear brief lectures of less than two minutes, after which they answer several questions, spoken one time only. The topics of the conversations and talks are varied, but tend to be academic in nature (ETS 2000).

Section 2 of the TOEFL, Structure, measures recognition of formal grammar points in English. It contains two parts. In the first, the students are tested on their ability to choose the correct word or phrase to complete a sentence. Below is an example from an actual TOEFL test (ETS 2001a).

The columbine flower, __________, to nearly all of the United States, can be raised from seed in almost any garden.

a. native
b. how native is
c. how native is it
d. is native

In the second part, they have to recognize the portion of the sentence that is grammatically incorrect. This section is also multiple choice.

In Section 3, Reading Comprehension, the students read brief passages that are comparable in subject and difficulty to what is required reading at North American colleges and universities.

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The multiple-choice questions relate to the information from the text, inferences that can be made from the text, and the meaning of vocabulary used in the text (ETS 1997).

In addition to being a computer-adaptive test in the Listening and Structure sections, the more recent computer-based TOEFL has a fourth section, the Test of Written English, an essay that can be composed using the computer keyboard or with paper and pencil. The students have thirty minutes to compose an essay on a given topic. Sample topics include (ETS 2000):

It has been said, "Not everything that is learned is contained in books." Compare and contrast knowledge gained from experience with knowledge gained from books. In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?

You must select a person to teach others to do a job. Which one of the following is the most important for you to consider in making your selection?

- the person's education
- the person's work experience
- the quality of the person's previous work

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

To summarize, both versions of the TOEFL are multiple-choice exams of grammar and the skills of listening and reading. The computer-based TOEFL evaluates the additional skill of writing. According to ETS, the Educational Testing Service (1997), it is "a measure of general English proficiency."

APIEL, pronounced appeal, the Advanced Placement International English Language exam, measures a non-native speaker's ability to use academic English at the university level (The College Board 2001). Given in nine countries (Austria, Belgium, Ecuador, France, Germany, India, Spain, Switzerland, and Turkey) in 2001, the test will be offered in several more countries in 2002 (Diyanni 2001).

The APIEL is a three-hour exam which tests the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Section 1, Multiple Choice, tests the receptive skills of listening and reading. In the listening part, the students hear dialogues based on school situations and brief talks on topics of general educational interest. They then hear questions about what they have listened to and answer multiple-choice questions in the test booklet. In the reading subsection, the students read a variety of passages and answer questions on literal comprehension, inferences, grammatical structures, and rhetorical development (The College Board 2001).

Section 2, Free Response, consists of the productive skills of writing and speaking. In the writing part, the students are expected to compose two essays, forty minutes each, on issues that require them to explain their opinions and give reasons or examples from personal experience or knowledge. In the speaking subsection, the students are tested on their ability both to conceptualize and to speak. Some tasks involve graphics, and the students provide an oral description, narration, or explanation. Other tasks call for the students to respond to an intellectual theme orally, for one minute. The students' responses are recorded on cassettes, and the responses are evaluated on the criteria of appropriateness, grammatical correctness, fluency, and pronunciation (The College Board 2001).

In summary, the APIEL is a language-proficiency exam that is half multiple-choice and half free-response. It assesses listening and reading comprehension, speaking, and writing. The College Board (1997) states that "the Advanced Placement International English Language examination measures a non-native speaker's readiness to do university-level work conducted in English" (p. 3).

Scoring

TOEFL
Because some sections of the new TOEFL are computer-adaptive, the students receive more points for correct answers of more difficult questions. In other words, the more questions they answer, the higher the score. In addition to a total score, the students and admissions offices receive a break-down of each of the four test sections: Listening, Structure, and Reading, along with a separate TWE (essay) score ranging from 0 to 6 (ETS 2000b). Each of the four sections is not, however, given equal weight. The scores for Section 2, Structure, and the last section, the essay, or Test of Written English, are combined for a scaled Structure/Writing score.

Converted scores on the paper-based TOEFL range from 310 to 677, with a new scale on the computer-based TOEFL, 40 to 300, that corresponds to this range. For the Test of Written English, an essay will receive a final rating from 0 to 6, based on scores by at least two expert readers (ETS 2000). The score of this essay is incorporated into the section score of Structure/Writing (ETS 2000b). See Table 1 for a comparison of TOEFL and APIEL scoring.

APIEL
Scoring for the AP exam in International English, or APIEL, is computed from answers to the multiple-choice section and faculty consultants' evaluations of the writing and speaking samples. The essay score for Question 1 is based on the same scoring guide as the TWE, Test of Written English, with a range of 0 to 6. The essay score for Question 2 is computed from the evaluations of at least two expert readers, who base their judgments on a scoring guide of 0 to 9. These two essay scores are then averaged. The speaking scores, also an average from two raters, range from 0 to 5, and all of the results are converted into a final composite score: 5—Extremely well qualified, 4—Well qualified, 3—Qualified, 2—Possibly qualified, and 1—No recommendation (The College Board 1997).

Table 1 compares the scoring of the TOEFL and the APIEL, revealing that 83 percent of the total score for the TOEFL is based on multiple-choice questions, whereas 50 percent of the APIEL score is derived from the same. Viewed in another light, 16.55 percent of students' TOEFL scores reflects their actual use of the language (in this case, writing an essay), while 50 percent of the APIEL score reflects their ability to speak and write in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1—No recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2—Possibly qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3—Qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4—Well qualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5—Extremely well qualified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Comparison of TOEFL and APIEL scoring.
In the case of language-proficiency testing, a complete description of knowledge of a second language has proven to be difficult by virtue of the complexity of language competence (McNamara 2000). However, if language is used for communication, and individuals communicate by speaking and writing, it can be inferred that a language test would include speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In other words, people who are proficient in a language could demonstrate that proficiency by expressing themselves orally and in writing, as well as understanding the spoken and written language. Without considering the content of the discourse, i.e., academic vs. conversational, the required tasks of the TOEFL and the APIEL will be examined to determine the verbal skills that are included.

As seen from the previous description of the new computer-based TOEFL, all three of the multiple-choice sections require the skill of reading, due to the response format: Section 1, Listening Comprehension; Section 2, Structure & Written Expression; and Section 3, Reading Comprehension. Section 1 is designed to test the skill of listening, and Section 3 specifically measures reading comprehension. Section 4, the Test of Written English, assesses writing. The language used in Sections 1-3 is typical of what one might hear and read as a student on a North American college campus.

Section 1 of the APIEL, Multiple Choice, tests listening and reading comprehension, and Section 2, Free Response, asks the students both to speak on several topics and to write two essays. The language of these tasks is academic in nature.

Table 2 shows the results of this comparison. If, in these two proficiency tests, solely the language skills are examined, it is clear that both include listening, reading, and writing (although the scoring of this section is very different); however, only the APIEL evaluates the examinee’s speaking ability.

It should be mentioned that TOEFL has a separate exam, the TSE, or Test of Spoken English, which includes an assessment of spoken, academic English. Many universities use the TSE as a criterion for international teaching assistants. However, it is not commonly required for general undergraduate admissions (perhaps due to the additional $125 financial burden it would place on the applicants).

**Validity Criteria**

Validation is an on-going process, during which experts evaluate a test by examining its validity. Three basic types of validity criteria are content, construct, and criterion-related; these will be used for examination of the TOEFL and the APIEL.

**WHAT IS VALIDITY?**

Simply put, validity is the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure. In the language of measurement theory, a test is valid if the inferences made from it are “appropriate, meaningful, and useful” (APA 1985). In other words, a test itself is not considered valid, but we are looking at the test as it relates to how we use it. Nevertheless, experts in testing often describe a test as not having content validity, or not being valid.

**CONTENT VALIDITY**

For a test to be valid, it must meet several validity criteria, one of which is content validity. To examine the content validity of a test, it is necessary to ask, “Do the test items represent the domain of tasks that they claim to represent?” Cronbach (1970) proposes examining the test items and comparing them with a complete description of the universe the test is designed to represent (p. 124).

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Table 1: Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>16.55%</td>
<td>16.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APIEL</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 multiple choice
N/A Not Applicable

Table 2: Content Validity

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APIEL</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 multiple choice
2 half of this score is multiple choice

Table 3: Construct Validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>authentic?</th>
<th>direct?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL (Computer-based)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1, Listening</td>
<td>somewhat</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2, Structure/Writing</td>
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<td>no/yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3, Reading</td>
<td>somewhat</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APIEL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1, Multiple Choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>somewhat</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>somewhat</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2, Free Response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing (2 essays)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking (5 tasks)</td>
<td>somewhat</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tive criteria. These include the notions of authenticity and directness, which are required to represent the construct completely. A test is judged “authentic” if the examinee performs tasks that approximate those of the real world. It is considered “direct” if the examinee’s performance is judged directly, and he/she is unrestrained in demonstrating his/her skill performance (Messick 1994). In other words, directness demands that a task be open-ended (not limited, such as the multiple-choice format). A test meets the criterion of construct validity if it is both authentic and direct.

In assessing the authenticity and directness of the two English-language tests under consideration (see Table 3), three ratings were used: no, somewhat, and yes. If it was clear, for example, that a test section was not authentic or direct, the rating was no. If, however, a section was judged to be somewhat authentic or direct, it was rated somewhat. And if a section was seen as unequivocally authentic or direct, it was designated as yes. After each rating, the rationale behind the assessment is explained.

One way to determine whether the TOEFL meets the criterion of authenticity is to compare the test tasks with the language tasks required of students on college campuses. In doing so, the author rated the TOEFL as somewhat authentic in the Listening and Reading sections. It was presumed that students would have to understand English as it is spoken in a typical conversation on a North American university campus. However, the test does not require oral participation in such a conversation. With the use of video, it is more authentic than the IELTS, which uses an audiocassette with a taped recording of conversations. The added visual element increases the authenticity. The Reading Section of the TOEFL is also considered somewhat authentic due to its similarity to reading requirements of university courses. As for Section 2, Structure & Written Expression, the multiple-choice part is not authentic, while the Test of Written English, a writing task similar to that of a freshman composition course, is rated as authentic.

In the evaluation of the directness of the TOEFL, Table 3 shows that only one part of the test, the essay or Test of Written English, is considered direct. This is because the task of writing a composition is open-ended, whereas the multiple-choice format, which is found in all three sections of the test, is limited.

Turning to the IELTS exam, the first section, Multiple Choice, fails to meet the criterion of construct validity for the same reasons as the TOEFL. The Listening and Reading sections are somewhat authentic in their similarity to university reading and listening requirements, but because they are multiple choice, they are not direct. The second section, however, Free Response, does fulfill the requirement of both authenticity and directness. The writing tasks are much like the Test of Written English, and the speaking tasks are somewhat authentic. The topics of the tasks are academic in nature, but the one-sided characteristic of speaking into a microphone makes them rather artificial.

Following Messick’s (1994) view of construct validity, that a test must be both authentic and direct in order to meet the criterion, it appears that the TOEFL fails in all three sections, and the IELTS fails in one of its two sections.

This tendency in both the TOEFL and the IELTS to use the multiple-choice format confirms Wiggins’s (1989) contention that we have been too attentive to efficiency and cost in performance assessments, and as a consequence, have ignored authenticity in favor of the convenience of multiple-choice tests.

CRITERION-RELATED VALIDITY

The third type of validity examined is criterion-related validity. It is also called predictive validity because it comes under consideration when a test is used to predict some future behavior, which is the criterion. In the case of the TOEFL, there have been numerous studies examining the predictability of the test as it relates to academic success.

Ayers and Quattlebaum (1992) studied Asian students majoring in engineering and found that their TOEFL scores were not an effective predictor of academic success. Light, Xu, and Mossop (1987) conducted a similar study of 376 graduate students and came to the same conclusion. Johnson (1988) had remarkably similar results in a more limited study with undergraduate students. And according to Yule and Hoffman (1990), “The pattern found by Light, Xu, and Mossop (1987) for international graduate students regarding TOEFL and GPA after a single semester was thus confirmed and extended through four academic semesters by our study” (p. 239).

Graham (1987) cites a number of studies showing weak correlations between TOEFL scores and academic success as defined by GPA, and concludes that English-language proficiency is but one of several factors contributing to academic success. Additionally, she targets one problem as being the definition of proficiency, seriously questioning scores on standardized tests such as the TOEFL, in light of recent attention to communicative competence. Communicative competence, a term used in second-language pedagogy, refers to a student’s ability to use the foreign language appropriately in the culture. In the past, students learned about the second language, its grammar and literature in particular, but could not function in the society of the language being studied.

A need exists for similar studies on criterion-related validity to be conducted investigating the IELTS. It is a fairly new test, and time is needed to conduct such studies.

This comparison of TOEFL with the relatively new IELTS reveals that the Advanced Placement in International English Language is a more valid test, but it has its limitations. As compared with TOEFL, it is offered in fewer countries, it is given only once a year, and not as much research has been done on the test. For university administrators, the TOEFL is familiar and convenient; however, it is not as valid as most admissions officers assume it is. For the applicants, it is also more expensive than the IELTS: the fee charged is $125 U.S., whereas the IELTS is $70.
Recommendations to Admissions Officers

As outlined in this paper, the TOEFL has serious limitations, and admissions officers should be aware of them. Students who can speak and understand English well (but are not well versed in formal grammar) often score low on the test, while those who cannot speak or understand spoken English (but have studied grammar and vocabulary) may receive higher scores. Knowledge of these limitations can aid admissions officers in using the test scores wisely.

Secondly, admissions directors should heed ETS concerning the use of cut-off scores. Despite direct cautionary statements from ETS (1997), universities misuse the test scores. ETS clearly states not to use rigid cut-off scores, yet as a general practice, institutions publish required TOEFL scores in their promotional brochures. It is easy to look at a single number and make a quick decision, but assessing language proficiency is much more complicated than that.

And finally, admissions officers should consider other, more valid methods of assessing the English-language proficiency of international applicants. By consulting English as a Second Language faculty on their campuses and looking into tests such as the APIEL, they will improve the selection process and avoid potential problems. We want our students to be successful and have a positive experience while they are with us.

Conclusion

Educational Testing Service, The College Board, and their exams have become part of the American academic culture, with SAT, GRE, GMAT, and TOEFL familiar initials and acronyms. These are high-stakes exams affecting many students’ lives, and as such deserve careful scrutiny. The TOEFL has an enormous impact on international students, who sacrifice a great deal by leaving their homes, families, and familiar surroundings to study in the United States. The events of September 11, 2001, have caused a tightening of the student-visa requirements by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, making the stakes of the results of a single test even higher.

More than 200 American colleges and universities accept the APIEL as evidence of English proficiency. (The College Board 2001) The decisions on accepting or rejecting students at colleges and universities are most often made by admissions officers who bear a heavy responsibility, for “In the final analysis, responsibility for valid use of a test rests on the person who interprets it” (Cronbach 1969, p. 51).

References


Diwan, R. November 6, 2001. E-mail to author.


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For more information, contact Mike Tressel
925.798.1790 or mtressel@xap.com.
As state funding for colleges and universities is increasingly being tied to enrollment levels, higher education institutions across the United States are feeling economic pressures to maintain or increase their student enrollments or face the unpleasant task of making large budget cuts (Breneman and Finney 1997; Dennis 1998). Attracting students has also become increasingly competitive with the emergence of for-profit institutions offering more flexible degree programs and programs via new technological media (Swensen 1998; Winston 1999).

In response to these pressures, there have been expanded efforts by higher education institutions to understand and influence the college choice process among prospective students. Efforts include more targeted advertisement and promotional materials, telemarketing initiatives, increased visits to local high schools, as well as general efforts to position the institution with respect to competitors in the minds of prospective students and their parents. Institutions have also attempted to court the support of high school counselors with the expectation that this constituency can exert a critical influence on the college choice decision. While the opinions of these constituents may not be influential to all prospective students, these educational professionals are uniquely positioned in high schools to shape the early perceptions of students about their higher education options, particularly in-state ones. Thus, it is imperative that institutions of higher education are aware of the attitudes of this group and are prepared to court their support in the long-term interests of enrollment management. This study provides insight into the attitudes and perspectives of high school counselors who influence prospective students during the search phase of their college selection process.

The College Choice Process
In recent years, researchers have devoted considerable attention to the issue of college choice (Braxton 1990). Building on the work of Jackson (1982), Litten (1982) and others, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) created a three-stage model to describe the college decision-making process. This conceptual framework proposes that there are three stages during which students make their college choice. These stages include a predisposition stage, a search stage, and a choice stage.

In the predisposition stage, students determine whether they will continue their formal education beyond high school. According to this model, the predisposition to attend college is influenced by student characteristics, the attitudes of significant others, and a student’s educational activities. Many students enter the search stage of the college decision-making process during their junior year of high school. In this stage, students begin to consider their various options in terms of colleges and universities, as well as vocational and non-traditional college options. There is evidence that students narrow their options geographically first, then consider specific academic programs among the colleges remaining in their choice set (Hossler and Gallagher 1987).

Students enter the choice stage when they submit applications to a small set of colleges. During the choice stage, which for most students occurs during the senior year, students consider factors such as academic reputation, costs, and location,
and ultimately decide what college they will attend (Hossler and Gallagher 1987).

This study focuses on the search stage of the college choice process. During this stage, high school counselors are well-positioned to exert an important influence on the attitudes of students and parents. This study will examine the factors high school counselors consider most important in selecting a college, as well as their attitudes toward a Carnegie Research I institution with regard to these factors.

The Influence of High School Counselors on College Selection

The research regarding the extent to which high school counselors influence college choice is mixed. While there is evidence that some high school counselors are overburdened with “administrivia” and others are not sufficiently informed to support students during the search process (Matthay 1989), most studies report that at least some prospective students seek information about colleges from their high school counselors. Estimates regarding the number of students who seek information and advice from this group range from 16 percent to 92 percent (Chapman, DeMasi, and O’Brien 1987; Gilmour, Spiro, and Dolich 1981; Johnson, Stewart, and Eberly 1991; Martin 1996; Martin and Dixon 1991; Matthay 1989).

Chapman, DeMasi, and O’Brien (1987) report that on average, students have at least three to five contacts with their high school counselor during their junior and senior years. Similarly, Johnson, Stewart, and Eberly (1991) state that approximately 70 percent of surveyed college students used their high school counselor as a source of information, and 60 percent attained the information they sought. Surveyed students report that when meeting with their high school counselor they seek college advising, financial aid information, and academic counseling (Chapman, DeMasi, and O’Brien 1987). In one study, surveyed high school counselors and their principals described the college advising offered at their schools as very effective (Chapman and DeMasi 1984).

While there is no consensus on the magnitude of the influence that high school counselors have on the opinions of prospective students on college choice, it is clear that a significant number of counselors do have some influence in this area. This warrants further inquiry into their attitudes with regard to these issues.

Research Questions

This study focuses on the attitudes of high school counselors toward one flagship university in a western state. The emphasis of this study is to acquire an understanding of the attitudes of high school counselors in this region with respect to this Carnegie Research I institution in order to gain insight into the possible messages communicated to students and parents. The assumption was that while high school counselors are obviously not the only source of information, their perspectives have some influence on the opinions of prospective students and their parents. Specifically, this study seeks to answer two questions:

1. What factors do counselors weigh most heavily during college choice advisement?
2. How do they rate this flagship university on these factors relative to other colleges and universities in the state?

Methods

Sample

In the winter of 1997, anonymous surveys were mailed to 332 high school counselors representing 124 high schools in one western state. The response rate was 41 percent, which resulted from 138 surveys being completed and returned. Among the survey respondents, 57 percent were female and 43 percent were male. Approximately 63 percent of the respondents were from high schools located within a 50-mile radius of the campus. Nearly all of the respondents (95 percent) reported providing regular counseling services to juniors and seniors. These counselors reported providing college advising to an average of 163 students each year. In addition, 20 percent of the counselors reported receiving their undergraduate degree from the campus studied in this survey, whereas 22 percent reported earning a graduate degree at this campus. Approximately 64 percent of the respondents reported visiting the campus for professional reasons at least annually.

The demographics of the respondents are consistent with those of all counselors in the state in that the majority of counselors are female and are concentrated in large schools located in suburban/urban settings near the university campus. The similarity in demographics supports the population validity of the sample.

Variables and Measures

The survey instrument was developed by reviewing the literature to identify those factors most often cited as important by prospective college students when making their college choice decision. The first set of 22 questions asked counselors to rate the importance of various college choice factors they advised students to consider when selecting a college using a five-point Likert scale (1=not important, 3=somewhat important, 5=very important). The second portion of the survey included 21 questions asking counselors to rate the flagship university with regard to these college choice factors as compared to other colleges and universities in the state. That is, they were asked to indicate how well the university compared on these college choice factors relative to other in-state higher educational institutions. Once again, a five-point Likert scale was utilized for the ratings (1=less appealing, 3=about the same, 5=more appealing). In this study, the Carnegie Research I institution was being compared to ten other colleges and universities in the state.

With the first set of questions, the 22 questions asking counselors to rate the importance of various factors they advised students to consider when selecting a college, a principal component factor analysis with a varimax rotation was run. The following five factors resulted:

1. Quality and responsiveness of personnel (four items, e.g., accessibility and helpfulness of faculty);
2. Research I indicators (six items, e.g., undergraduate research opportunities, national reputation);
Extracurricular/social opportunities (four items, e.g., social life, athletic programs);
- Economic considerations (three items, e.g., tuition, work opportunities in school); and
- Size (two items, e.g., campus and classes).

Please refer to Appendix A for a complete list of the individual items comprising each variable.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were calculated on all individual items as well as the above five factors to identify what issues counselors consider to be the most important when they advise students in the college selection process and how they rate the Research I institution in this study relative to ten other in-state colleges on the same college choice factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Choice Factors</th>
<th>Mean Importance of Individual Choice Factors</th>
<th>Research I Ratings Compared to Other Campuses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Undergraduate Education</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Faculty</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility and Helpfulness of Faculty</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility and Helpfulness of Staff</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Size</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of Majors</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.28 (1st)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Opportunities</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/Professional School Preparation</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.27 (2nd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Standards</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-state v. Out-of-state</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Opportunities While in School</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reputation</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>4.02 (3rd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in Leadership Opportunities</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large v. Small Campus</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige of the Degree</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.94 (4th)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Life</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity of Students</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Programs</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Research Opportunities</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.83 (5th)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Mean Importance Rating of College Choice Factors</th>
<th>Mean Rating of Research I Campus Compared to Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality and Responsiveness of Personnel</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Considerations</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research I Indicators</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular/ Social Opportunities</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Rank ordered means of the individual items indicated that counselors considered quality of undergraduate education, quality of faculty, tuition, accessibility and helpfulness of faculty, accessibility and helpfulness of staff, and class size to be the most important college choice factors, respectively. The least important college choice factors included undergraduate research opportunities, athletic programs, diversity of students, extracurricular activities, social life, and prestige of the degree (see Table 1).

The mean ratings of the five college choice factors were: (1) quality and responsiveness of personnel, 4.42; (2) economic considerations, 4.03; (3) size, 3.85; (4) Research I indicators, 3.60; and (5) extracurricular/social opportunities, 3.27 (see Table 2). The factor considered most important by high school counselors, the quality and responsiveness of personnel, was comprised of the individual items of quality of undergraduate education, quality of faculty, and the accessibility and helpfulness of faculty and staff. The factor labeled economic considerations was rated nearly as important and included work opportunities while in school, location of the campus, and tuition. The factor labeled size included questions centered on class size and counselor preference for large versus small campuses. Rated less important by high school counselors were choice factors related to Research I indicators. This factor included variety of majors, national reputation of the campus, undergraduate research opportunities, diversity of students, and prestige of the degree. Finally, rated least important was the factor associated with extracurricular/social opportunities, which included involvement in leadership opportunities, extracurricular activities, social life and athletic programs.

The mean ratings of the flagship compared to other campuses with regard to the five factors were: (1) Research I indicators, 3.81; (2) economic considerations, 3.33; (3) extracurricular/social opportunities, 3.24; (4) quality and responsiveness of personnel, 3.24; and (5) size, 2.51. Thus, the state’s flagship university, relative to other in-state colleges and universities, was ranked highest on the factor related to Research I indicators. The second highest rating included choice factors related to the economic considerations of college attendance, while choice factors related to extracurricular/social opportunities were rated third. As highlighted in Table 2, these high school counselors tended to rate the flagship university higher on those college choice factors they consider less important, and lower on those factors they deem most important.

When comparing ratings on the five factors, the state’s flagship was rated relatively low on the quality and responsiveness of personnel (quality of undergraduate education, quality of faculty,
accessibility and helpfulness of faculty and staff). A closer examination of the specific ratings of items within this factor revealed that most counselors rated the campus about the same as other campuses on all measures except the accessibility and helpfulness of faculty. Specifically, 20 percent of all counselors in the sample rated the flagship less appealing than other campuses on this item. Thus, the relatively low rating of the quality and responsiveness of personnel was due almost exclusively to counselor perceptions of the extent to which faculty provided support to the learning experiences of undergraduate students. Among those counselors who rated this factor low (n=27), 21 percent attended the flagship as undergraduates, and 24 percent attended as graduates, most likely to attain their degree in Counseling. In the mean ratings of counselors who had earned undergraduate degrees at the flagship with respect to the factors were: (1) Research I indicators, 3.90; (2) economic considerations, 3.47; (3) extracurricular/social opportunities, 3.37; (4) quality and responsiveness of personnel, 3.36; and, (5) size, 2.52. Similarly, high school counselors who earned graduate degrees at the flagship also rated the flagship significantly higher than other campuses on all factors except size (a small group of counselors earned both their undergraduate and graduate degrees at the flagship).

On factors related to campus size (class size and the counselor’s preference for large versus small campuses), the flagship received the lowest ratings. It is clear that in general, counselors in this sample viewed the large size of the flagship campus as detrimental to the undergraduate experience of students who attend. This rating was also apt to be lower the farther counselors’ high schools were located from the flagship campus. This is an important finding in that counselors in general rated class size the sixth most important individual college choice factor. It is of further significance because a greater distance from the campus is indicative of a rural setting. Thus, counselors working in rural areas see a large campus as more problematic for their students.

Discussion
The results of this study reveal an interesting interplay between the mission of a Carnegie Research I institution and the expectations of high school counselors. It is clear from the attitudes reported by high school counselors that the strengths of the Research I mission are at odds with what counselors value. The findings of this study raise concerns for this state’s Research I university, concerns that likely apply to other Research I universities given their nature.

Carnegie Research I institutions are defined as those that award doctoral degrees, give a high priority to research, and receive large amounts of federal aid to support their research agendas. While most institutions can claim to have strong scholars within their departments, research institutions are defined by the caliber and productivity of their faculty. These institutions reward faculty primarily through the quality and volume of their research. While teaching undergraduates is important in the evaluation of faculty at these institutions, it is of less importance to promotion and tenure than their research activities. In addition, faculty who generate external funding based on their research are particularly valued at these types of campuses. The recognition and prestige that the institution enjoys based on extramural grants, in addition to the additional funding, help position the institution favorably with respect to other similar institutions nationally. This, in turn, helps the campus attract more prolific faculty and more prestigious grants.

In addition, Carnegie Research I institutions often attract a more diverse student body than other types of campuses. They are attractive to international graduate students and often are more proactive in their communities in attempting to attract more domestic students from racial and ethnic minority groups. Many Carnegie Research I institutions enroll large numbers of working students who commute to campus. Moreover, public research universities tend to have larger campuses than other types of institutions. Their enrollments typically include proportionately larger numbers of undergraduate students who help support smaller graduate and professional classes.

Ironically, while the focus of these universities is centered on scholarly excellence and entrepreneurial research, they may simultaneously project an image of an institutional culture that does not value and nurture undergraduate students. This image is often magnified when campuses are large, when undergraduate teaching is conducted in part by graduate teaching assistants, and when undergraduate student populations are comprised of large numbers of commuter students who are disconnected from the student life of the campus. This negative image is important in that public Research I institutions are increasingly funded based on the numbers of students they enroll. This reality, coupled with the fact that students are becoming more selective about what schools they will attend and are more willing to attend non-traditional college campuses, poses a critical challenge for Research I campuses. The findings of this study show clearly that the respondent high school counselors, while rating the flagship high on factors related to its research excellence, were not convinced that these same faculty provided adequate support to the learning experiences of undergraduate students.

The finding that counselors rated undergraduate research opportunities, athletic programs, diversity of students, extracurricular activities, social life, and prestige of the degree as least important in college selection reveals a critical bias in their attitude toward this flagship institution. These college choice factors represent broad areas in which Carnegie Research I institutions are generally viewed to excel (Boyer 1998). In fact, many Research I institutions across the nation view themselves as offering undergraduates a “value added” education based on
These and other similar factors. Yet, the findings of this study show that these high school counselors view personal service to students and economic considerations to be more important than the "value added" opportunities inherent in attending a Research I institution.

These rankings are of particular concern in that a large proportion of the counselors who rated this institution low on the helpfulness and accessibility of faculty appeared to be very familiar with the campus. A large majority of them (86 percent) work at high schools located within a short distance of the campus and more than half (64 percent) report visiting the campus for professional reasons fairly frequently. In addition, the farther counselors’ high schools were located from the flagship campus, the lower they ranked factors related to campus size. In short, these findings suggest that a group of these high school counselors may well be steering students away from attending this flagship campus because they believe it is too large and unresponsive to undergraduate student needs. While the ratings of high school counselors with personal experience attending the flagship are somewhat higher than those who graduated from other schools, the difference was not as great as might be expected from fully satisfied alumni. This should be of concern to this campus not only because of the individual educational experience of these alumni, but also because of the potential impact these alumni now have regarding the opinions of prospective students and their parents. The results of this study demonstrate that this campus may be challenged to balance competing internal priorities to ensure an enriching experience for undergraduate students. In addition, however, it must increasingly be concerned about the perceptions of that student experience among external constituents. These are challenges that this institution likely shares with other Research I campuses.

Collectively, these findings highlight the need for Research I institutions to think about their image in two markets with conflicting values. On one hand, Research I institutions must be concerned with a scholarly market which involves attracting prolific faculty, generating research grant dollars, and building endowments. On the other hand, however, they must also regard prospective undergraduate students and the groups which influence them as an equally important market. What remains to be seen is whether Research I institutions to think about their market.

References


Appendix A: Individual Survey Items Comprising Each Factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Label</th>
<th>Loadings From Rotated Component Matrix</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1: Quality and Responsiveness of Personnel</td>
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<td>Quality of Undergraduate Education</td>
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<td>Quality of Faculty</td>
<td>.851</td>
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<td>Accessibility and Helpfulness of Faculty</td>
<td>.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility and Helpfulness of Staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2: Research I Indicators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of Majors</td>
<td>.393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Reputation</td>
<td>.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Research Opportunities</td>
<td>.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Students</td>
<td>.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige of the Degree</td>
<td>.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3: Extracurricular/Social Opportunities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement and Leadership Opportunities</td>
<td>.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>.805</td>
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<td>Social Life</td>
<td>.776</td>
</tr>
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<td>Athletic Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Factor 4: Economic Considerations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Opportunities in School</td>
<td>.658</td>
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<td>Location of Campus</td>
<td>.838</td>
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<td>Tuition</td>
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<td>Factor 5: Size</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Size</td>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Campus versus Small Campus</td>
<td>.703</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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Higher education benefits individuals through increased earnings and expanded employment opportunities, as well as promoting individual achievement. College has been a traditional path for many students immediately after completing high school. However, many Americans are deciding to forgo this option for some period of time. This report contains information about the proportion of American youth choosing to attend college during this “traditional” time frame, while they are 18 to 21 years old.

Enrollment of American Youth
What decisions do 18- and 19-year-olds make about their education? Current population survey data show enrollment decisions of the nation’s youth. In October 2000, 16 percent of 18- and 19-year-olds were still enrolled in secondary schools, while 45 percent were enrolled in college. For those not enrolled, 13 percent of the total had dropped out of high school while 26 percent had graduated from high school, but did not continue on to college.

Are the education decisions of 20- and 21-year-olds different from their younger counterparts? Fewer 20- and 21-year-olds were enrolled, either in secondary school or college, than their younger counterparts in October 2000. Only 2 percent of 20- and 21-year-olds were still in secondary schools while 42 percent of 20-and 21-year-olds were enrolled in college in October 2000. A similar proportion of 20- and 21-year-olds (33 percent) had dropped out of high school as compared to 18- and 19-year-olds, and more had graduated from high school but were not enrolled in college (43 percent). It is not known from the data whether any of these individuals had earned an advanced degree or certificate before discontinuing their enrollment. (See Figure 1.)

Differences in Enrollment, by Gender
Men and women made different education choices during 2000. Considering only 18- to 21-year-olds, a smaller proportion of women were enrolled in secondary schools, and a higher proportion of women were enrolled in college. Almost half of 18- to 21-year-old women attended college in October 2000 and only 39 percent of 18- to 21-year-old men attended college. Likewise, a smaller proportion of women than men had dropped out of high school (11 percent compared to 14 percent), and a smaller proportion of women who had completed high school were not enrolled in college (32 percent compared to 36 percent). Note that data only show which individuals are currently enrolled. Some individuals, especially older ones, may have already earned a postsecondary degree or certificate. (See Figure 2 on the following page.)
Differences in Enrollment, by Race/Ethnicity

Considering differences in education participation by race/ethnicity, Asian 18- to 21-year-olds are more likely to be enrolled in college than 18- to 21-year-olds of any other race/ethnicity. Almost 65 percent of Asian 18- to 21-year-olds were enrolled in college in October 2000. Almost half of White 18- to 21-year-olds attended college, while only one-third of Black 18- to 21-year-olds and one-fourth of Hispanic 18- to 21-year-olds were enrolled in college during October 2000.

Likewise, Asians were least likely to drop out of high school. Less than 5 percent of Asian 18- to 21-year-olds had dropped out of high school and were not currently enrolled. Much higher percentages of White, Black, and Hispanic 18- to 21-year-olds had left high school without graduating and were not enrolled in October 2000—9 percent, 16 percent, and 30 percent, respectively.

These data are consistent with a longitudinal survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and reported in Factors Related to College Enrollment (Akerhielm et. al 1998). Starting in Spring 1988, a group of eighth graders was followed for several years. By 1994, 63 percent attended some type of postsecondary institution. When examined by race/ethnicity, Asian students were most likely to attend college, while Black and Hispanic students were least likely to attend. By 1994, 79 percent of the Asian eighth graders attended a postsecondary institution. As for White students, by 1994, 66 percent of the eighth graders received some postsecondary education. Conversely, only 53 percent of Hispanic and 52 percent of Black eighth graders in the Spring 1988 cohort attended postsecondary institutions by 1994. Thus, similar attendance patterns hold over time when considering students by race/ethnicity. (See Figure 3.)

First-Year College Students Who Finished High School in 2000, by Gender

Considering only those 18- and 19-year-olds who graduated from high school in 2000, 65 percent continued on to college and 35 percent were not enrolled in October 2000. Considering men and women separately, 58 percent of men who graduated from high school in 2000 were enrolled in college in October 2000, while 72 percent of women who graduated high school in 2000 were enrolled in college in October 2000.

Conversely, 42 percent of men who graduated from high school in 2000 chose not to continue their education while only 28 percent of women who graduated from high school in 2000 did not attend college by October 2000.

This pattern is consistent over time. Mortensen (2001) uses four decades of Current Population Survey (CPS) data to illustrate that prior to 1976, men were more likely than women to continue directly to college after graduating from high school. However, between 1976 and 1987, the likelihood of college attendance was roughly equal for men and women. Since 1988, women have been more likely than men to attend college immediately after graduating from high school. (See Figure 4.)

Note that these percentages do not consider individuals who dropped out of high school in a prior year, those who dropped out of high school this year, or those still enrolled in high school.
First-Year College Students Who Finished High School in 2000, by Race/Ethnicity

Considering only those 18- to 19-year-olds who graduated from high school in 2000 by race/ethnicity, Asian youth were most likely to be enrolled in college in October 2000. Over two-thirds of all Asian 18- to 19-year-olds who graduated from high school in 2000 were enrolled in college in October 2000. However, White and Black recent high school graduates were similarly likely to enroll in college immediately after graduating from high school. Hispanic students who graduated from high school in 2000 were least likely to have enrolled in college by October 2000.

These findings differ somewhat from the earlier distribution of enrollment of all 18- to 21-year-olds by race/ethnicity. There it was found that Black enrollment, like Hispanic enrollment, was lower than White and Asian enrollment. However, when considering only 18- and 19-year-olds who graduated from high school during 2000, similar proportions of Black and White 18- and 19-year-olds were enrolled in October 2000. Hispanic enrollment remained lower than that of other races. (See Figure 5.)

Enrollment Patterns of 18- to 21-Year-Olds

Individuals aged 18 to 21 who were enrolled in college during October 2000 were most likely to be enrolled in public four-year institutions and least likely to be enrolled in private two-year institutions. About 3.5 million individuals, over half of all college-attending 18- to 21-year-olds, were enrolled in public four-year institutions during October 2000. About 1.8 million individuals, just over one-fourth of college-attending 18- to 21-year-olds, were enrolled in public two-year institutions and 1.3 million individuals, 19 percent of college-attending 18- to 21-year-olds, were enrolled in private four-year institutions. Private two-year institutions enrolled just over 100,000 18- to 21-year-olds, less than 2 percent of all college-attending 18- to 21-year-olds in October 2000. (See Figure 6.)

Considering attendance status of college-attending 18- to 21-year-olds, most attended college full-time. About 88 percent of college-attending 18-to 21-year-olds attended college full-time and only 12 percent attended college part-time in October 2000. (See Figure 7.)

Enrollment Patterns of 18- to 21-Year-Olds, by Gender

Women comprised just over half, 55 percent, of all individuals aged 18 to 21 who were enrolled in college during October 2000. About 3.7 million women and 3.0 million men were enrolled in college at this time.

The type of institution attended by men and women in October 2000 was virtually identical. Although more women than men attended each institution type, the proportion of men and women attending each institution type was quite similar.

Over half of men and women, 53 percent of each, attended public four-year institutions during October 2000. Likewise, approximately one-fourth of men and one-fourth of women attended public two-year institutions, 26.3 percent and 26.4 percent, respectively. About 18 percent of men and 19 percent of women attended private four-year institutions, while 1.6 percent...
of men and 2.2 percent of women attended private two-year institutions. (See Figure 8 on the previous page.)

Men and women were also similarly likely to attend college full time. About 87 percent of men aged 18 to 21 attended college full time while 89 percent of women aged 18 to 21 attended college full time in October 2000. (See Figure 9.)

**Enrollment Patterns of 18- to 21-Year-Olds, by Race/Ethnicity**

White students comprised almost three-fourths, 73 percent, of all individuals aged 18 to 21 who were enrolled in college during October 2000. About 12 percent of all students were Black, 9 percent were Hispanic, and 6 percent of students enrolled in college during October 2000, were Asian.

The type of institution attended differed somewhat among students from different racial/ethnic groups. A larger proportion of White students attended private four-year institutions than students from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. A larger proportion of Asian students attended public four-year institutions than students from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. And a much larger proportion of Hispanic students attended public two-year institutions than students of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. (See Figure 10.)

Regarding attendance status, Asian students were most likely to attend college full time. About 93 percent of Asian students, aged 18 to 21, enrolled in college during October 2000, attended college full time. Likewise, 89 percent of White students and 88 percent of Black students attended college full time. Hispanics, at 83 percent, were the least likely to attend college full time. (See Figure 11.)

**Conclusion**

In October, 2000, just under half of our nation’s youth attended college. Considering all 18- to 21-year-olds, women were more likely to be enrolled in college than men and Asian and White youth were more likely to be enrolled in college than Blacks or Hispanics. Youth were most likely to be enrolled in public four-year institutions and least likely to be enrolled in private two-year institutions. Most 18- to 21-year-olds attended college full-time.

**References**


It is perhaps an understatement to say that the economic and social stock of higher education in the United States has risen substantially over the past generation. Just two decades ago, it would have been virtually unthinkable for observers such as Patrick Callan to assert that a postsecondary credential has become the sine qua non of participation in the middle class life of the nation. By the mid-1990s, however, President Clinton’s call to make the 13th and 14th years of education universal firmly underscored the ascendance of higher education in American society.

This rise in stock can be traced to two factors: 1) a shift in the structure of the economy, away from goods production and toward service and information/knowledge production; and 2) a concomitant change in public expectations regarding the availability of higher education. A wealth of data documents this rise:

- The gap in average annual income between high school and college graduates (in constant 1999 dollars) has more than doubled since the late 1970s (Mortenson 2000b).
- Enrollment of recent high school graduates in college averaged 63 percent in the 1990s, compared with 50 percent in the 1970s (Mortenson 2000a).

These points clearly indicate that higher education in America is a growth industry, one that is making its way up on the policy agenda. On the surface, these data should be harbingers of a bright future for the nation’s postsecondary education system.

Any optimism about future prospects, however, must be tempered by recognition of the challenges that stand in the way of greater access to, and success in, higher education. Currently, there are troubling disparities among various populations with respect to access and success, as well as a nagging disconnect between access and success for all groups. Looking ahead, these difficulties are likely to be compounded by demographic change that will bring more demand to the system, especially among groups that have historically been underrepresented in college attendance and completion. Overshadowing all of this is a public policy thrust that increasingly casts higher education as a private benefit rather than a public good at the same time that public expectations of colleges and universities are on the rise.

In sum, higher education has become an increasingly important part of the promise of the American Dream. Several forces, however, will severely test the ability of policymakers and education leaders to deliver on that promise.

Potential Obstacles to Expanding College Access and Success

While the emerging economic structure and public sentiment clearly favor increased college attendance and completion, these factors alone will not boost participation and attainment. Over the years, scholars and analysts have amassed a mind-numbing array of data about postsecondary opportunity and achievement, and debate continues to rage about what does—and does not—contribute to meaningful access and success in higher education. Some conclusions draw little argument, such as the calls for improved high school preparation, more early intervention and mentoring, and the like. Others, such as proposals to expand affirmative action in admissions and financial aid, spark more controversy. Whatever the path(s) chosen to enhance access and success, those responsible for the choice will have to take into account three distinct challenges:

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EXISTING PERFORMANCE GAPS

Any attempt to bring a large number of additional students successfully through the nation’s colleges and universities must start by addressing the disparities in enrollment, persistence, and completion—rooted in gender, race/ethnicity, and economic standing—that already plague the higher education system. These gaps fall into three basic categories: access gaps among various populations, persistence gaps among these populations, and success gaps among these populations.

Access Gaps—It is a widely known fact that the opportunity to enroll in a postsecondary program in the United States is unevenly distributed, and this unevenness can be observed in several dimensions.

In October 2000, 38.7 percent of White, non-Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in college. By comparison, the participation rate for Black, non-Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds was 30.5 percent, 55.9 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 21.7 percent for Hispanics (Mortenson 2001b).

Similar disparities are seen with regards to family income. According to 1999 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the college participation rate for 18- to 24-year-olds in the bottom quartile of family income was 38.3 percent, compared with 18- to 24-year-olds in the top quartile of family income (Mortenson 2001a). [See Figure 1.] While participation rates have improved for all income quartiles over the past 20 years, the growth has been most significant for those in the top quartile (Mortenson 2001a).

The patterns documented above largely repeat themselves when examining the college continuation rate, which gauges the enrollment of recent high school graduates. In 2000, the college continuation rate for White, non-Hispanic male high school graduates was 41.9 percent, and 46.4 percent for females. This compares with 33.8 percent for Black, non-Hispanic males and 43.9 percent for Black, non-Hispanic females; 64.7 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander males and 58.5 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander females; and 34.8 percent for Hispanic males and 38.2 percent for Hispanic females (Mortenson 2001b).

The story is similar with respect to family income. In 1999, the college continuation rate for high school graduates in the bottom quartile of family income was 56.7 percent, compared with 85.8 percent for graduates in the top quartile of family income (Mortenson 2001a).

Persistence Gaps—Equally as vexing as the opportunity gaps are the staggering rates of attrition among students on the path to a degree or certificate. While the equation of credential and success in higher education is in some measure an oversimplification (one too seldom challenged in the policy community), the growing concern about the large number of students failing to complete their intended postsecondary path is legitimate. Retention, persistence, and timely college completion are topics that have long been on research and policymaking agendas, and will only become more prominent as the economic and social premiums of higher education rise. As the following points suggest, the quest to keep students on the path to completion will be a long one indeed.

Among students beginning their postsecondary education in four-year institutions in 1989–90, 24.4 percent of White, non-Hispanic students had not completed a degree and were not enrolled in Spring 1994. This compares with 27.9 percent for Black students, 28.1 percent for Hispanic students, and 13.9 percent for Asian/Pacific Islander students. Moreover, the five-year dropout rate for dependent students with family income less than $20,000 was more than double that for dependent students with family income above $60,000 (U.S. Department of Education 1996).

More recent data underscore this pattern. Among students who began their higher education in a four-year institution in 1995–96, 18.4 percent were not enrolled and had no degree in Spring 1998. Viewed by race/ethnicity, the gaps emerge: 18.5 percent for White, non-Hispanic
students, 11.3 percent for Asian/Pacific Islanders, 13.9 percent for American Indian/Alaska Natives, 17.9 percent for Hispanics, and 24.7 percent for African Americans (U.S. Department of Education 2000).

With respect to income, dependent students with family income less than $25,000 per year posted a three-year dropout rate of 21.1 percent, while dependent students with family income of $70,000 per year or more experienced a dropout rate nearly half that (11.5 percent) (U.S. Department of Education 2000). [See Figure 2.]

The gaps are even more pronounced when controlling for parental education. Students at four-year institutions whose parents attained a high school diploma or less posted a three-year dropout rate of 27.2 percent, while students whose parents hold advanced degrees had a dropout rate of just 9.1 percent (U.S. Department of Education 2000). [See Figure 3.]

Success Gaps—Statistics such as those offered above lead to the inescapable conclusion that access and persistence gaps result in significant achievement gaps. Though noticeable progress has been made in the educational attainment of the population as a whole, continuing differences in attainment rates among various groups will adversely affect the nation’s competitive position in the Information Age.

From 1980 to 2000, the percentage of adults 25 and older completing four years of college or more rose from 17 percent to 25.6 percent. Over this period, however, Whites posted significantly greater gains in this area than did Blacks or Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). [See Figure 4.]

These gaps are expected to persist, with a growing chasm between the attainment of males and females. U.S. Census Bureau projections to 2028 show that the educational attainment of adults 25 and older is expected to climb to 30.8 percent; however, disparities across racial and ethnic groups are expected to continue. Additionally, females are expected to outperform males in all racial/ethnic groups in the achievement of at least a bachelor’s degree (Day and Bauman 2000).

Thus, while there is evidence to suggest that while the nation is making some progress toward a necessary improvement of higher education opportunity and attainment, the unevenness of that progress is keeping the nation short of its economic and social potential.

Demographic Trends

Troubling as they are, the present disparities may only be exacerbated by emerging demographic trends. In the near term, significant growth in the 18- to 24-year-old population will test the capacity of higher education providers nationwide. At the same time, some of the populations that have historically lagged in higher education access and success are the very populations that will experience the most dramatic growth in the years ahead. On still another level, the continued aging of the nation’s population is likely to further strain the social safety net and thus add to the fiscal pressures already facing local, state, and federal policymakers. At their intersection, these expected changes will strain a system already struggling to satisfy rising expectations of educational opportunity.

From 2001–02 to 2011–12, the number of public high school graduates is projected to increase 8.2 percent nationwide. By race/ethnicity, however, the expected change varies considerably. The number of White graduates will actually fall over this period, while the number of Hispanic graduates is projected to nearly double. Similar patterns can be observed at the regional and state levels (The College Board and WICHE 1998). [See Figure 5.]

From 2000 to 2050, the share of the U.S. population comprised of Whites will fall 7.3 percentage points, while all other major racial/ethnic groups will gain population share. The most dramatic gains will be among Hispanics, whose population share will more than double over the period from 11.4 percent to 24.5 percent (Day 1996).

From 2000 to 2050, the number of Americans 18 to 24 years old is expected to increase 38.4 percent, to 36.3 million. By contrast, the number of Americans 65 and older is projected...
to more than double over the same period, from 34.7 million to 78.9 million. Additionally, the share of the population 65 and older will grow during this period from 12.6 percent to 20 percent (Day 1996).

PUBLIC POLICY, PUBLIC OPINION
Enveloping the entire discussion of educational access and success are contradictory strains of public opinion and public policy. The contradiction? At the very time that the economic and social premiums of higher education are on the rise (via increased earnings and the perceived necessity of a college education), the public’s stake in the enterprise is on a gradual decline. While a certain amount of the benefit derived from a college degree does inure to the individual, the society as a whole unquestionably benefits from greater attainment of postsecondary education. The increasing “privatization” of higher education in the United States—represented by lagging grant/appropriation financing and rising tuition/loan financing—poses a number of difficult policy questions, including:

- How do we preserve access to a college education for those least able to afford it? Additionally, how do we avoid establishing a bifurcated system—one portion for the haves, the other for the have-nots?

- What is the future of the push for greater accountability in higher education, particularly for public institutions? In other words, to which stakeholders will higher education institutions find themselves most accountable, particularly if the public sector’s share of total funding continues to fall and the financing role of students and benefactors continues to rise?

The seeming disconnect between public sentiment and public policy, as described by the following indicators, further raises the bar for policymakers and institutions seeking to improve and enrich higher education opportunity for all.

Nearly two-thirds of high school parents surveyed in 1999 (62 percent) characterized a college education as “absolutely necessary” for their children. In terms of race/ethnicity, White parents voiced this view least often (57 percent), while Hispanic parents articulated it most often (78 percent) (Immerwahr and Foleno 2000).

At the same time, however, public and private sector leaders are divided on the extent to which higher education is a public good. According to a 1998 survey conducted by Public Agenda, nearly two-thirds of responding business leaders agreed with the statement that “Since students reap the benefits of going to college, they and their families should be responsible for paying most of its costs.” Fewer than half of the academic and government leaders participating in the survey agreed with that statement (Immerwahr 1999).

From 1988–89 to 1998–99, the share of current funds revenue at four-year public institutions comprised by appropriations fell from 39.9 percent to 31.5 percent, while the share represented by student tuition rose from 14.7 percent to 18.4 percent (Brower and Reindl 2001).

From Fiscal Year 1981 to Fiscal Year 2001, state appropriations for higher education per $1,000 of disposable personal income has fallen approximately 18 percent (AASCU 2001).

From 1989–90 to 1999–2000, grants as a share of total student financial aid in the United States has fallen from 48 percent to 40 percent. Over the same period, the share represented by loans has increased from 49 percent to 59 percent (The College Board 2000).

Conclusion
Throughout its history, our nation has been propelled forward at critical points by improvements in its infrastructure. In the 19th Century, the construction of a transcontinental railroad joined the east and west coasts, paving the way for the rise of the United States as an industrial power. In the 20th Century, the completion of interstate highway and civilian air transport systems ushered in a new era of mobility to meet the demands of the Cold War and a Space Age economy.

As the 21st Century unfolds and an Information Age takes shape, the question emerges—what will be the defining infrastructure advance of this age? What investment will propel our economy and society forward in a world that moves in seconds, one marked by technological triumph as well as unspeakable terror? More than in any previous age, the advance of the 21st Century will be in human capital, namely education. Just as networks of rail lines, highways, and airports have formed and continue to form the core of the nation’s economic and social life, networks of data and information form the underpinnings of the emerging society. As a result, the ability to access, assess, and apply that data and information—competencies offered by postsecondary education—will serve as the firm foundation of this infrastructure.

But how do we as a nation ensure that this foundation can support the weight of the economic and social expectations that will be placed on it? As the preceding analysis indicates, the opportunity to access the education needed to survive and thrive is unevenly distributed, and may be even more so unless present trends are reversed.

Disparities in educational access and success will not be remedied in the immediate term, nor even in the near term.
Similarly, questions of how to build a lasting infrastructure for the Information Age do not envision simple solutions. What must come quickly, however, is the acknowledgement that the building of human capital through education is the *sine qua non* of such an infrastructure, and that unprecedented investments by governments, individuals, and the private sector will be required to erect and maintain it.

References


There’s always an opportunity for Change...

Jobs Online

AACRAO’s Jobs Online is the only employment site specialized for registrars, admissions, enrollment management, student service and other higher education administration professionals.

To find or post a job, visit at www.aacrao.org/jobs or e-mail us at jol@aacrao.org

www.aacrao.org/jobs
American colleges and universities often refer to their “dedication to diversity.” The truth is, some institutions really make an effort, while some only offer lip service. Even if your institution does the latter, you, as an admissions and records officer, can make a difference.

The admissions office is frequently referred to as the “front door” of an institution. Is the welcome mat out? Your institution’s message to prospective students is being established in your office. Are you interested in reaching more students? With little or no additional expense? Of course you are! So, what does your institution do to attract gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) students? Think you can do nothing? Think again, because there are many things to do that provide a more welcoming atmosphere. Consider the following: brochures, Web sites, office surroundings, and informal networks.

**Brochures and Web site**
What does your institution’s brochure, catalog, and Web site communicate to prospective GLBT students? Inclusion of the words “sexual orientation” in the non-discrimination policy carries a powerful and positive message to the GLBT community. If your institution will not include sexual orientation, or if your state still has criminal laws against GLBT individuals (as mine does), then consider including sexual orientation in the mission, values, or goals statement of your college or university. Even better, adopt a separate statement on diversity that is fully inclusive.

Beyond the formal statements, a prospective GLBT student will review listings of activities, clubs, and organizations for clues about diversity on campus. Without reverting to stereotype, do any of the pictures in your publications or on your Web site look “gay-friendly?” When reviewing photos with the publishers, ask for some to be included that will send a message, however subtle. For example, two athletes of the same sex celebrating a victory by one placing an arm around the other. Even something so far removed as same sex individuals merely looking at each other could be used. Far too many publications only show heterosexual couples; you know the picture, boy and girl walk hand in hand across the quad as the sun sets beautifully in the background. The message to the parent is “your child can find a mate here.” The message to the student is “you can have sex here.” The point is that there are subtle ways to send a message.

**Office Surroundings**
Look around your offices. What unspoken message are you sending? Does the office reflect an open and accepting environment for GLBT students? Clearly the most welcoming message is an open GLBT as a staff member, but the next best thing is to have a staff that is actively “gay-friendly.” Even if neither of these two solutions is available, you can still send a positive message with certain furnishings. Include a framed poster of an AIDS walk or fund-raiser on your office wall, or add a Keith Haring poster. If you don’t know who Keith Haring is, you aren’t as gay-friendly as you think. If you’re really inspired, include something from the Human Rights Campaign. Individual workstations for staff members that have frequent contact with students are another area to consider. If the staff member is openly GLBT, have you made it clear that “family” pictures are welcome? This recognition will be a very powerful message and will be noticed by a GLBT prospect or student. If your staff is “gay-friendly,” ask that they include some personal photos that are more diverse in the collage of their “family” photos.

What books are on the bookshelves? Are there titles that would welcome diversity? Consider adding a title from the references for this article.

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**Commentary by Frank L. Hrabe**

Is The Welcome Mat Out?

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Staff Training

If they don’t already know it, make your staff aware that they are unique...as is everyone. This will go a long way in establishing a positive mind-set when they encounter the public-at-large. Diversity training is a wonderful exercise, but if you are not blessed with someone at your institution who does this training, check with community agencies. Still no luck? Look to your faculty. Someone in the Psychology or Sociology department can help. Offer lunch, and you can probably get a session in exchange. More subtle exercises can be accomplished during staff meetings. Role-playing serves as an excellent way to illustrate a point. Asking staff members to describe a situation in which they were uncomfortable can be a starting point. Broaden the scope of the conversation to embrace diversity issues and how uncomfortable many people can be made to feel, however unintended. Strive to make your staff understand that the point is to create a welcoming atmosphere, not to change anyone’s beliefs. Basically...“Do unto others...”

Another helpful exercise is to suggest that when confronted with a situation that falls within the parameters of diversity sensitivity, staff members try to imagine themselves on a movie screen. It will give them the detachment to see the “big picture” and how what they are saying may be coming across to the other person.

If you don’t think this issue deserves your attention, please consider the following from Sharing Silent Journeys of Faith, Catholic Pastoral Committee on Sexual Minorities (1989):

Privileges of being Heterosexual: The following aspects of interpersonal relationship are taken for granted by heterosexuals. Imagine the feelings of those who are not allowed the same rights.

■ The right to kiss or show affection in public
■ The right to talk about your relationship
■ The right not to question your normalcy
■ The right to show pity when the relationship ends
■ The right to live comfortably without fear of rejection
■ The right to be open when apartment or house shopping with your significant other
■ The right to marry
■ The right to share holidays with family and partner
■ The right to not hide friends and same-sex activities
■ The right to have your partner appear in family photographs
■ The right to have friends seen with you at any place

Other items to consider include the right to have your partner included as a part of “family” events at work, the right to have your partner be a part of your medical and retirement benefits plan, and most importantly the right not to lose your job based upon your sexual orientation.

Informal Networks

Most of us in admissions have already established many informal networks. When outstanding high school scholars visit the campus, we want them to talk exclusively with certain people in financial aid and scholarship offices, see only a particular advisor or dean, and visit only certain housing facilities. We may arrange for the prospect to meet and participate in activities with selected students. It’s only one more step to identify those individuals on campus who will be supportive of GLBT students. You probably can name a few right now. Once you get started, you can use this network to expand to others and as a means to raise awareness.

There are issues that will arise for your network to consider. For example:

■ Does your housing office offer the opportunity for a student to self-identify and request a similar roommate? Most ask about a smoker or non-, early to rise, etc. Just the presence of a box to check will send a message to GLBT students and others as well.
■ Would your counseling center recognize that a student’s unhappiness might stem from a struggle with his/her own sexuality?
■ Is your retention office so attentive as to catch that a student’s withdrawal from school might be because they have been “outed” to their family and the funds have been cut off?
■ Does the career service office understand that employment or relocation of a same sex partner might be an issue in placement?
■ Would your Human Resources/Employment Office grant bereavement leave for the death of a same sex partner? As a supervisor, you might, but what is your institutional policy?

Another area to consider is the creation of a “Safe Zone.” Many college campuses have established these type of programs. Individuals are trained and are willing to identify that their personal office is a “safe zone.” This identification is usually done through a sticker, magnet, or display card. Establishing a “safe zone” for GLBTs identifies you as a person sensitive to the issues that confront these students on a daily basis and that you are willing to help. Usually, the safe zone training is a function of the diversity or student affairs area and is open to faculty, administration and staff. Most training programs consist of a half-day intensive training session followed by activities to maintain the network.

Other Opportunities

Can you see that you can make a difference? There are still other ways to do more. Consider hosting a GLBT awareness group or an event for National Coming Out Day in October. Contact the nearest chapter of PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and ask that they host an awareness session. Sponsor a Diversity Awareness Week where different cultures and groups are recognized on different days, and include GLBTs. Make sure that listings of religious groups include the nearest contact for the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), which is a national fellowship that is open to GLBT Christians.

Finally...Just Do Something

We no longer think of homosexuality as a disease, at least the enlightened among us anyway. Consider this: as a group, homosexuals are one of the only minority groups that still suffer gov-
ernment-sanctioned discrimination. Recently, laws were passed by Congress and state legislatures in response to the mere possibility of same-sex marriage to ensure that homosexuals were barred from enjoying this basic right. Plug another minority group into that equation, and think, “how far would that law have gotten?” And yet, when applied to homosexuals, it passed. We do not have to be complicit to discrimination. Remember that your silence on diversity can be interpreted as an unwillingness to provide an open and positive learning environment. We are not unwilling...prove it! Be a voice of acceptance and tolerance on your campus, show that the welcome mat is out at your institution.

References
http://www.uwadminweb.uwyo.edu/cac/szhetosexual.htm
Enable yourself to think globally.

The AACRAO International Guide: A Resource for International Education Professionals is your complete source for information on international education, comprising such core issues as policy, recruitment, technology, English proficiency, student visas and credential evaluation. As a critical part of any international reference library, it also provides a thorough look at study abroad program development and specific roles and issues for community colleges.

To order this or other AACRAO publications, go to https://web.aacrao.org/asp_lib/forms/order.asp or call (301) 490-7651.

Please contact AACRAO directly at (202) 263-0292 with questions about publications or by e-mail at pubs@aacrao.org.
As a higher education marketing consultant since the early 1990s, I have seen many things that have caused me to shake my head in disbelief: plans created without forethought, or hastily thrown together to satisfy a board; budgets decreased and expectations increased; and the feeling that it is good to be “the best kept secret.” But as I started to think about the marketing mistakes that were very consistent from campus to campus, it was clear I could identify ten main items. Having worked on many marketing plans for colleges and universities across the country, I have also placed them in rank order, with #1 being the worst of the mistakes to make. Many of you will realize your institution has committed some of these mistakes, but hopefully very few will recognize all of them on the list.

Either way, the time is right to get help. At the end of each listing, key strategies are detailed to help you avoid that particular mistake. Use them wisely!

From the home office in Cedar Rapids, Iowa:

**Promotion tactics will not save a strategically flawed institution**

Too many institutions believe that to get more students, they just need to promote more. For some this may indeed be the case. However, they are ignoring one simple fact (which will actually be addressed in full in another key mistake): that a car that is a lemon, no matter how much you polish it up, is still a lemon on the inside. When you market a poor institution, all that happens is that more people find out you’re a poor institution.

Let’s think about the four Ps of marketing. If you do not offer the right courses (Product), for the right price (Price), in the right time and place (Place), it does not matter how much you tell them (Promote)...they will not attend. All that will happen is that prospective students will find out you don’t have the right courses, at the right price, in the right place and time...and they will look elsewhere.

**KEY STRATEGY**

Get your house in order internally before you market externally. Promotion will not save a poor institution. Constantly review your marketing mix (Product, Price, and Place) to ensure this is not a problem for your institution.

**Trying to make marketing too complicated**

Given all the advances in marketing in the last ten years (such as One-to-One Marketing, Guerrilla Marketing, Branding and Image Building, etc.), the solution is simple: have something your market desires and tell the market through a mix of promotional vehicles.

There are a couple of important items to keep in mind as you think about marketing. Your audiences will not be able to grasp complex messages, so remember the KISS principle: Keep It Simple Stupid. Next, remember your audience’s favorite radio station is WII-FM, or What’s In It For Me? Make sure that as you develop marketing strategies, you make them personally relevant to the audience with which you are communicating. How will your institution benefit the target audience? Talk to them about what is important to them, not what is important to you.

**KEY STRATEGY**

Do not wait for the perfect plan. Start with a few strategies, build consensus and momentum, and adjust accordingly. If you wait for the perfect plan, it will be outdated by the time you finish it. Develop a scaled-back plan focusing on key areas first, and then move into completing a full marketing plan.

**Ignoring the 5th and 6th Ps**

The 5th and 6th Ps of marketing are Policy and Politics. Address territoriality very early, or your best marketing efforts will fail. Many times this is accomplished by enabling policy changes. Remove the barriers related to policy and politics and you will become a more marketing-oriented institution.

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Steve Kappler is Senior Client Executive at Stamats Communications Inc. He has spent more than 13 years in consulting and market research, focusing on marketing strategies and the best ways to implement them. Besides client work, Mr. Kappler is also a frequent presenter and contributing author for higher education associations and other educational trade journals. He graduated from Augustana College with a B.A. in business administration.
Addressing territoriality may be as simple as determining what is important to the internal (political) audiences. Keep in mind that product, price, and place issues are strategic and require the input and direction of stakeholders, while promotion tends to be more tactical and of less interest to stakeholders.

**KEY STRATEGY**

Don't forget about the importance of internal marketing. Good plans will fail without the support of your internal stakeholders. Your internal audiences (faculty, staff, administration, and current students) play a critical role in image development and are the best salespeople. To many external constituencies, they represent the image of the institution. Create talking points and make sure everyone is "singing off the same song sheet."

**7 Poorly crafted messages and poorly defined target markets**

Remember, who are the customers, and how do we need to reach them? The messages and the audience need to be properly defined; great messages do not matter if they do not reach the right people. Conversely, poor messages do matter if they reach the proper audience, unfortunately in a negative way.

Don't change something just because you are tired of it, and don't create a message or publication that you like. Think about it like this: 25- to 45-year-old designers create publications for 45- to 75-year-old administrators to use with 15- to 18-year-olds (this is a very big disconnect).

**KEY STRATEGY**

Understand what the target audience thinks of you (current attitude) and move to create messages that resonate with them. You must seek to differentiate your institution from your competition in ways that target audiences find meaningful, and you must communicate this differentiation aggressively. Different markets need different messages. Segment and communicate.

**6 Failure to realize the importance of the Web as a marketing tool**

In the last few years we have seen a paradigm shift from publications-based promotional strategies to Web-based marketing strategies. The way we go to market has changed. Table 1 shows the old funnel vs. the new funnel. The new funnel focuses on a more dynamic approach to reaching prospects with speed, efficiency, and effectiveness.

We have made a shift from a publications-based approach to a Web-first approach. Most prospective students' first interaction with a school will now be the Web site. So does your site fit in with the rest of the communications? If not, look to make alterations so you have a seamless flow between your print and Web-based communications.

**KEY STRATEGY**

Remember the three keys to a good Web site as you reassess your existing Web presence. The first key is graphical. Remember, looks can kill. It may not be the sole reason that a prospect looks at your site and decides to look elsewhere; however, you will be compared to other sites and your own publications from a graphic perspective. At the very least, integrate the look with your existing promotion.

Next is the level of information on your site. Do you have what they need? The key elements tend to be programs and majors, admissions requirements, “what’s new,” and the application. Make these four areas easy to find.

This leads to the most important key, which is navigation. It must be intuitive. Most schools structure the site architecturally as they are structured internally. Unfortunately, this makes no sense to the outside world. Use terms and navigational elements that your audience will understand, not what you know and understand.

**5 Not giving it time to work and making no one accountable**

The writing of a plan or moving into a marketing environment does not immediately ensure success. The goal of any venture such as this is long-term sustained growth. Remember the following:

- Good marketing plans take time
- Group accountability is no accountability
- Marketing can’t perform miracles—more money is wasted due to marketers expecting miracles than due to any other misconception of marketing
- Marketing must be sustained over a period of time to be effective, as you must assume that your market has a short-term memory

**KEY STRATEGY**

Educate the uninitiated to marketing and why it is important. Help them to understand that it takes time to build a brand (or rebuild a brand), and that brand building is a key to long-term success. Have a brand champion—someone that lives the brand and works to integrate the messages that you send out.

**4 Failure to spell commitment to marketing with $**

Many schools understand what it takes to build a brand. Few schools show that commitment with the money necessary to do this brand building correctly. At a time when institutional budgets across the country are being cut, many schools are choosing to cut in the area of marketing. This will lead to major issues down the road as brands become less identifiable and messages are lost in the clutter of other messages. Try to consider marketing as an investment, not a cost.

The commitment made must be on an annual basis, so don’t begin something you can’t sustain. Your new efforts will heat up

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<thead>
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<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Old Funnel</th>
<th>New Funnel</th>
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<td>First impression</td>
<td>Search brochure or letter</td>
<td>Web, billboard, radio, etc....</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Viewbook or catalog</td>
<td>Complete information</td>
<td>Photos, spirit, a guide to the Web</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Database</td>
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the marketplace, so make sure that you have the ability (resources, such as money and people) to sustain this effort of time.

**KEY STRATEGY**
As a rough guideline, about 1.5 to 2.5 percent of an institutional operating budget should be spent on disposable marketing activities (programs, not people). However, institutions with severe marketing and image problems will spend more.

3 **Lack of vision and mission**

Like a road map, mission and vision provide guidance and direction. Schools that don’t fully understand or articulate this are like a ship adrift at sea, with no set clear course. They will only find “brand” if they are lucky. The lack of clearly articulated mission (who we are) and vision (where are we going) is very prevalent in higher education. Much of this stems from the structure that currently exists in this marketplace. Mission and vision come from the president, yet faculty and staff pressure from below and boards push from above. Very rarely do they feel comfortable to set this direction without input from all stakeholders. Unfortunately this can be like herding cats, which is an impossible task. Also, because presidents’ tenures tend to be short-lived (four years or less), the vision is constantly changing with new people in this position.

**KEY STRATEGY**
Leadership by consensus isn’t always the answer. Pick a direction, let everyone understand that direction, and go forth and prosper.

2 **Not conducting research to guide your planning**

Using old or no research will lead to flawed marketing efforts. Most schools do not have a specific budget set aside for market research. If you are trying to influence an audience, to change or enhance a perception (reality), then you must first understand what they currently think of you. In order to get from Point A (current attitude) to Point B (desired attitude), you have to do research to understand Point A. Then you can accurately create a plan to get to the desired attitude.

Research should be used to help you define your target audiences, discover how they perceive quality, and determine what messages should be used to reach them. It can also answer which mediums should be used for which audiences, and should also be used to determine if your current product mix is appropriate. Remember, you have to have the right courses, offered at the right time, for the right price, in the right place, before you can effectively promote. Research can help you answer these critical questions.

**KEY STRATEGY**
Good research will allow you to understand a direction, create a message, and choose the “weapon” to use to get your message to the target audiences. Without research it is all a guess based on gut instinct. Most people will be right on gut instinct 80 percent of the time. It is that last 20 percent that can make the difference between a good and great enrollment year. Remember, without data, it is only opinion.

1 **Defining marketing as promotion**

Marketing is much more than promotion, yet because it is the visual side of marketing, it is seen by many as marketing. Few decisionmakers understand the difference between marketing and promotion. It is very important to assess what you have to offer (product, price, place) before you offer it (promotion). Decisionmakers, in particular faculty, almost automatically assume that the problem cannot be related to product. We have the perfect mix of programs for our target audience, “we just need to get the word out”.

It is critical to determine if the product mix is viable for your target audiences. Use research to guide the planning, but be willing to make adjustments to the product if it is not in line.

**KEY STRATEGY**
Review your first three Ps and then take it to market. Promotion is just the vehicle that brings the other three Ps to market. When people decide to sell their house, the first thing they do before listing it is fix it up and make sure they have something of value to sell. Work to get your house in order before you aggressively promote.

**Conclusion**

Here is a recap of the top ten marketing mistakes:

1. Promotion will not save a strategically flawed institution
2. Trying to make marketing to complicated
3. Ignoring the 5th and 6th Ps
4. Poorly crafted messages and poorly defined target markets
5. Failure to realize the importance of the Web as a marketing tool
6. Not giving it time to work and making no one accountable
7. Failure to spell commitment to marketing with $
8. Lack of vision and mission
9. Not conducting research to guide your planning
10. Defining marketing as promotion

Work to change some of these institutional flaws and you will become a more marketing-oriented institution. Work smart by conducting research to guide your efforts, and realizing that in order to promote, you have to fix the first three Ps of marketing (product, price, place) while not forgetting about the fifth and sixth Ps (policy and politics). Don’t forget about your Web site. It is the first opportunity many key target audiences have to interact with you; make it a positive experience and begin building relationships with them early. Finally, integrate your communications and begin to build a brand through effective and realistic communication efforts. Working to build a stronger brand makes the direct marketing efforts more effective. This effort starts with a firm commitment to assessing the four Ps at your institution. Take the first step.
With AACRAO, you can build an up-to-date library with ease.

Our publications provide practical guidance and timely information relating to the profession of registrars and admissions officers. We continue to offer a vast assortment of publications, including the AACRAO 2001 FERPA Guide, the Strategic Enrollment Management Revolution, AACRAO’s Retention of Records, AACRAO’s Professional Development Guidelines for Registrars: A Self-Audit, and the Country Guide series.
There are many reasons why an applicant with foreign educational records would submit fraudulent or misleading documents to a college or university in the United States. These range from a sincere desire to be admitted to the institution, to an attempt to obtain an institution’s official admissions documentation so that it can be altered and sold for a variety of illegal purposes. We as international admissions officers and credential evaluators must be alert to the reality that applicants do submit spurious documents. Our best protection against our institutions becoming victims of foreign educational record fraud is a solid knowledge base among our foreign document evaluators, and a strong network of information sharing about verification successes.

Best practice in the international admissions office calls for:

- training and continuing professional development for foreign record evaluators so that they are knowledgeable and up-to-date about country educational systems, documentation practices, and events that impact international education;
- clear communication to applicants about the documentation required for admission;
- careful review of the documents that are submitted;
- requests for verification of suspicious documents;
- appropriate follow-up when verification is received from the issuing institution or educational authority;
- and sharing success stories in the verification process.

This article is based on a presentation given by the authors that outlined step-by-step guidelines for admissions professionals and foreign document evaluators to implement these principles of best practice. The session also included an interactive review of a variety of spurious documents actually submitted by applicants to U.S. institutions that illustrated the concepts outlined in the guidelines. Discussion among the session participants focused on institutional policies on documentation, resources for evaluation and verification, and approaches to handling cases in which the documentation submitted was confirmed as being fraudulent.

Goal 1: To Assemble a Complete File of Authentic Records

The first goal in working with an application for admission is to assemble a complete file of authentic documents that provide all of the information needed to do an accurate evaluation.

- Learning about Documentation Practices: The Importance of Resources and Networking
  Evaluators need to consult reliable resources on country educational systems and documentation practices, and learn to identify what constitutes official and authentic documentation. It is very important for evaluators to stay abreast of country information and current events that impact on issues in international admissions—by attending professional conferences and workshops, using print and electronic sources of information and current awareness services, and networking with colleagues. The knowledge base, skills, and experience required to work with international applicants and foreign educational records effectively can only be gained and honed by an investment in reliable resources and continuing professional development.

- Use of English Translations
  In order to do an accurate assessment of applicants’ previous education, evaluators should insist on receiving official documents in the original language in which they are issued. English translations may be needed, and evaluators need to establish guidelines on how English translations will be used in the evaluation process. Evaluations should never be based on translations alone.

  English translations should be literal, complete, word-for-word representations of the language in the original documents, prepared in the same format as the original, by a person familiar with both languages. If the evaluator is not familiar with foreign languages, a professional English
**Communicating About the Consequences of Submitted Falsified Documentation**

In addition to outlining the required documents for admission, the admissions office should define clearly what happens if incomplete, untrue, or falsified information or documentation is submitted. If an applicant's file is incomplete, how is the applicant informed of what is still missing from the file? If there are gaps in the student's self-reported educational history, or self-reported data do not match the information indicated on official records, what is the follow-up procedure? The admissions office needs to determine appropriate courses of action for such cases, based on the professional judgment of evaluators, and convey this information to applicants up front.

**Action Plan**

- Identify opportunities to learn more about country educational systems, documentation issuing practices in other countries, and significant events abroad that impact on education and student mobility.

  *Tip:* Use training programs, publications and Web-based resources offered by AACRAO, NAFSA, credential evaluation services; have direct interaction with students and faculty from other countries; visit current awareness services (electronic discussion lists, news Web sites). AACRAO’s International Education Services (http://www.aacrao.org/international/index.htm) is a good starting point.

- Based on accurate information from informed and reliable sources, develop guidelines or policies on the documents required to complete a file, the time frames for applicants to submit acceptable documentation, how applicants are informed about what they must submit, and what happens if they submit incomplete or unacceptable documentation. Adjust guidelines and requirements as appropriate and according to your office’s experiences.

- Identify and implement ways to inform applicants about documentation requirements the first time you have contact with them.

- Determine the parameters of negotiability (if any) on acceptable documentation, and act judiciously within those parameters, in a manner that creates a positive situation for all sides, if possible.
Goal 2: To Establish the Authenticity of the Documentation Submitted

Most admissions offices are swamped with work, from recruiting prospects to responding to inquiries to reviewing applications to communicating admissions decisions to running orientation programs. In this atmosphere, it is sometimes difficult to take the time needed to review documentation carefully with an eye for authenticity of documentation. Establishing a standard step-by-step approach to document review can help reviewers to be thorough yet efficient.

- **Suggested Step-by-Step Approach to Documentation Review:**
  - Determine whether the documents are acceptable according to the guidelines you have established.
  - Arrange the documents in chronological order. Review the biographical data and educational history provided by the applicant and compare with the “story” told by the documents. Pay attention to detail (location, age, level of education, quality of performance, test results, military service, employment history, etc.).
  - Use reliable resources to confirm the status, type, and level of the institution or authority that issued each document.
  - Confirm that the format of each document is consistent with that of other documents from the same institution or authority, from the same era. Refer to your sample document file and standard resources.
  - Confirm the content of each document. Actually read it.
  - Double-check the biographical information.
  - Look for key words that give you vital information.
  - Identify the dates of attendance.
  - Review the content of the program or courses represented. Do the courses listed correspond to the field of study in which the student was enrolled?
  - Determine whether courses or programs were completed, and compare the assessment results (grades, marks, %, etc.) with information on the country’s/institution’s grading scale.
  - Is there any information missing from the document that should be there?
  - Is there information on the document that shouldn’t be there?
  - Are words spelled correctly in the native language?
  - If the document is in a language that you don’t understand, use key terms and phrases in the native language along with a dictionary and reliable evaluation resources to confirm the accuracy of the English translation. (Never work solely from an English translation if the document was issued in a language other than English; see above.) Check the translations of other documents from the same country or institution if you are unsure about the translation, or request that a new translation be done by a different translator. Keep a list of reliable translators handy.
  - If you find discrepancies, problems, omissions, inconsistencies, etc., have “another set of eyes” review the document and your resource materials with you. Ask colleagues who are knowledgeable about the particular country, institution, or field of study to review the document with you.
  - If the problem cannot be resolved by checking resources and with input from colleagues…

- **Get verification.** (See companion article “Why Verification of Suspicious Foreign Records is Important” on page 49.)

Goal 3: To Obtain Verification of Suspicious Documents

- **Preparing a Request for Verification**
  - In preparing to send a verification request, the evaluator must identify the office or person to whom the verification request should be sent, locate the appropriate contact information for this office or person, and consider the most effective way to send the verification request (postal service, courier service, fax, e-mail, telephone, etc.). A reliable resource network, made up of publications and newsletters, electronic resources, and trusted colleagues, can be very helpful in identifying this information.

  Next, the evaluator needs to formulate the request for verification. It is helpful to develop a standard form or letter to request verification, so as not to have to “reinvent the wheel” each time verification is needed.

  Some suggestions for preparing a verification request:
  - Determine whether the request should be written in English or another language, or both, to get a response as soon as possible. If in a language other than English, prepare the request in English first and have it translated by a reliable translator, such as a faculty or staff member. Send the request both in English and the other language.
  - Clearly state “Request for Verification” in the opening of the request letter.
  - Introduce yourself, your institution and the reason you are requesting verification (student has applied for admission at your institution; student has requested transfer credit based on these documents; etc.).
  - Outline your observations about the inconsistencies in the document. Include a copy of it, with problem areas highlighted.
  - Be clear and specific about what information you need to receive from the verifier. For example, if the document is not authentic, what further information would you want to know?
  - Specify a date by which you need a response, if you have a specific time frame, the format in which a response would be acceptable (for example, must be in writing),…
and the language in which you need to receive the response.

- Include your contact information for the response.
- Include a reference code (identifying information for you) and ask the verifier to include it in the response.
- Request confidentiality. This information is not to be shared with the student or anyone else.
- Thank the reader and offer to assist in the future or send a catalog or other informational material from your institution.
- Once you have sent the verification request, place a copy of it in the applicant’s file. Also start a “Verification Requests” file where you keep copies of request letters and the documents until you receive a response. Cross-reference the files so that you can easily retrieve the applicant’s file when the response is received.

### Communicating with Colleagues About Requests for Verification

Every admissions officer must also deal with the question of how and what to communicate to the student or applicant about the verification process. This judgment usually involves a certain amount of speculation about how, why, when and where an applicant may have altered documents or obtained falsified documents and about why suspicious documents were submitted with the application. In our role as “document detectives,” speculations about intention and mode of operation can act as a “sixth sense” in leading us in certain directions to get the information we need to “crack the case.” But until the documents have been reviewed by the issuing authority and verified as either legitimate or spurious, the evaluator’s speculations or suspicions should be kept private and should be shared only with colleagues or supervisors who can help determine how to proceed to obtain official verification from the issuing authority.

### Communicating with Applicants About Requests for Verification

Strategies for communicating with students or applicants can range from saying nothing at all to the applicant to informing the applicant that the evaluator has concerns about the documents and asking for explanations and/or assistance in getting verification or “better” documents to informing the applicant that verification has been requested and that nothing further will be done until verification has been received. Each case involving suspicious documentation needs to be reviewed on an individual basis and handled with a sensitivity to the circumstances of the particular case. Again, working with trusted resources, including experienced colleagues who have successfully navigated cases like these, helps admissions officers and evaluators to develop good professional judgment about how to handle cases involving suspicious documents.

### Goal 4: To Complete the Verification Process and Follow Up as Appropriate

The receipt of a verification letter is one of the most thrilling experiences in the international admissions office. There are many countries from which it is difficult to get verification, due to factors that we in the United States higher education community may take for granted—limited financial, human and technological resources; differences in recordkeeping systems; corruption; disruptions in civil life because of natural disasters or warfare. Despite the best intentions of our colleagues abroad, we cannot always count on their cooperation in a procedure that is part of the standard of professional practice in educational administration in the United States. Thus receiving a response to a verification request is the first step in the resolution of a tense and difficult situation involving the institution and the student.

### Assessing the Response

Once the verification is received, the evaluator needs to assess the response and determine a further course of action, if needed:

- Does the information provided adequately answer the evaluator’s concerns about the authenticity of the document? Is it conclusive?
- If the documents are verified as being spurious, how will the admissions office follow up with the student? Procedures for handling this situation, and guidelines for the consequences to applicants who submit falsified documents, should be defined and communicated to staff and applicants well before this stage of the admissions review process. Now that the documents have been verified as fraudulent, how does the evaluator follow up with the student?
- If the information provided is not conclusive, what further action needs to be taken? Will another round of correspondence be fruitful? To whom should it be addressed? What other avenues can be pursued if it seems that further contact with the verifying authority would not be productive?
- What if the verifying authority requests further information or documentation from the evaluator? There might be a request for the student’s current contact information, for example, so that the authority can contact the student directly regarding questionable or fraudulent documents. What is the receiving institution’s responsibility in responding to such a request?
- What if a verification fee is requested? Some educational authorities have begun assessing a fee for verification, particularly in areas where resources are limited, or a large number of verification requests are received. How does the evaluator handle such a situation?
Acting on Conclusive Verification that Documentation is Fraudulent
When conclusive, authoritative verification of fraudulent documentation has been received, the institution needs to follow up with the applicant or student according to the guidelines established for such cases. Policies and procedures should already be in place, so that a standard protocol is followed. Each case involving fraudulent documents has different circumstances, and as new twists and perspectives come to light, strategies for dealing with them can be incorporated into the institutional response to this scenario.

Another Valuable Resource for the Reference Collection
Every request for verification and response received represents valuable material for the evaluator’s resource collection. The “Verification Request” file should be updated with each response received. Evaluators should note who actually verified the documentation, contact information for that person or office, how long the process took, and any other information that could be useful for future verification requests. Archiving each successive case in which documents needed to be verified makes the next case easier.

Sharing Verification Success and Information with the International Education Community
Evaluators and admissions officers need to share news of their verification successes with the international education community. Word needs to “get around” whenever we receive authoritative, conclusive confirmation of fraudulent foreign documents. Electronic discussion lists, professional development venues, telephone conversations with colleagues—all are appropriate arenas for us to share our verification successes.

Resources For Information/Verification
Your very own “Resources” collection
Printed resources
  ▶ Printed materials from institutions and education authorities
  ▶ Directories of universities worldwide
  ▶ Country-/region-specific publications from AACRAO, PIER, NAFSA, private organizations
  ▶ general overviews of country educational systems
  ▶ evaluation guides published by colleagues in other countries
  ▶ Check the AACRAO Publications Catalog for useful resources in print (http://www.aacrao.org/publications/catalog.htm)
  ▶ The NAFSA ADSEC Bibliography contains bibliographic and ordering information for many publications (http://www.adsec.nafsa.org/defaultbib.asp)

Electronic resources
  ▶ AACRAO’s International Education Services (http://www.aacrao.org/international/index.htm) offers publications, training opportunities, foreign credential evaluation services, consulting services, and more.
  ▶ AACRAO’s Resource Center (http://www.aacrao.org/resource_center/index.htm), a collection of conference presentation handouts and materials downloadable in .pdf format, includes materials from several international admissions presentations.
  ▶ The NAFSA ADSEC home page provides links to many excellent online resources (http://www.adsec.nafsa.org/).
  ▶ The European Association for International Education (Admissions Officers’ and Credential Evaluators’) home page (http://www.lu.lv/ace/) is a useful tool, including links to other resources.

Electronic discussion lists and networking tools such as Inter-L (go to http://groups.yahoo.com/ and Search “Inter-L”)
U.S. Department of State Advising Centers (http://exchanges.state.gov/education/educationusa/asaecac.htm) can assist you with specific questions about education in a particular country.
OSEAS-ADSEC regional representatives (http://www.oseas.nafsa.org/howtoreach.html) have contacts throughout their geographic regions who can help you.
Country experts, authors of country and regional resource works, conference session presenters, workshop leaders, etc. may have detailed information in their research files.
Consulates/embassies in the United States. They may have contact information for institutions and/or education authorities.
Your campus or institutional contacts within the country. Your institution may already have contacts with colleagues in the country who can help you find out where to get assistance and information.
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Beginners and experts alike will increase their understanding of:

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› electronic standards;
› the “X12” format; and
› Extensible Markup Language (XML).

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After September 19, 2002

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Why Verification of Suspicious Foreign Records Is Important

There are many flags that might alert an international admissions officer to the possibility of fraudulent, altered or misleadingly-translated documents, including academic records, test results, letters of recommendation, and financial documents from countries known to have a high incidence of fraudulent documentation.

So why should an institution bother to get verification of documents? Isn’t it enough that the admissions officer can figure out what something probably means, or that surely a visa won’t be issued if the visa officer is suspicious about a document? What is the harm in admitting a student with altered documents anyway?

The answers fall into three categories: ethical, legal, and practical.

**Ethical Considerations**
The ethical imperative for verification is simple enough. If a school admits students on the basis of suspicious or incomplete documentation, and denies students admission on the basis of substandard but real documents, the result is the wholesale encouragement and reward of fraud. Simple fairness requires that a school take reasonable care to make sure that its admission and transfer credit practices reward only real achievement. Good practice demands that, insofar as possible, international students are held to the same standards as would be applied to domestic students.

On an individual level, it has become common practice in many countries to sell bogus documents, from marksheets and transcripts to complete degree dossiers. These are sold for anywhere from three hundred dollars (or less) to several thousand dollars in local equivalent currency. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) I-20 form, which is issued by U.S. institutions to admitted applicants who wish to apply for an F-1 student visa, is especially sought after. One single I-20 form from a U.S. institution that is not careful about document review and admits a student based on fraudulent documents, can be reproduced and sold indefinitely. Obviously, most people who buy these will not be granted student visas, but having purchased fake documents, they are not in a position to complain to authorities.

The visa offices of many U.S. embassies and consulates are under tremendous pressure due to volume and limitations on resources. (For example, this author was recently told by a U.S. State Department official in India that two windows in the consular office in Mumbai were responsible for 300,000 in-person interviews and decisions each year!) In such circumstances, despite the rigorous training and dedication of consular officials, it is quite possible for a mistake to be made regarding the issuance of an F-1 visa. And, again, once word gets out that a “student” obtained such an entry document with a certain institution’s I-20 form and “purchased” application support materials, that institution can shortly expect a flood of fraudulent applications.

To condone or ignore this fraudulent activity by not seeking verification of suspicious documentation is a clear violation of the partnership with the U.S. government that the institution has undertaken by applying for and receiving the right to issue I-20 forms. It is an ethical abdication that has both legal and practical consequences as discussed below.

**Legal Considerations**
The legal issue is also straightforward, particularly in the case of F-1 students. In completing an INS form I-17 to gain permission to accept international students, an institution is signing a legal document that requires it to meet INS guidelines, on penalty of losing permission to accept F-1 students should those requirements not be met. Each I-20 form that is issued states that the school has verified academic eligibility and financial sufficiency and is signed by an official designated on the 1-17 or 1-17A form. In other words, accepting F-1 students places a burden on the institution that must be taken seriously.
Practical Reasons

The practical reasons for verification are also rather clear-cut, although the interpretations may be more subtle and have long-lasting ramifications for the reputation of an individual institution’s international admissions and student services.

On a macro level, if institutions permit suspicious or incomplete documents to be the basis for admission of international students, the reputation of U.S. higher education suffers worldwide. There is a distinct degradation of interest on the part of very good students to study in an educational system which is known to be naïve; why should an honest and excellent international student want to study in the U.S. if applicants can be admitted to U.S. schools without earning their admission? Certainly Britain, Canada, Australia and other countries are eager to have those honest, excellent students, too.

The same warning applies more obviously to an individual institution. The reputation of an institution as an “easy mark” for questionable application documents is a hard one to repair. Once this reputation is public, good students will stay away. Weak ones will apply, fraudulently or not. As a single example, during the Iran hostage crisis, schools that did not seek verification suddenly had hundreds of unexpected transfer students. When the Iran cracked down, the students all disappeared or were detained. The reputation of those schools took a very long time to rebuild. Many of the international student programs involved have never completely recovered.

Additionally, once word gets out (and it now travels at the speed of light) that a school is a “patsy,” the number of fraudulent applications will skyrocket. At best, the consequences of admitting students who have misrepresented themselves—if indeed their intention is to study and they actually enroll at the institution—have to be managed using resources that the institution would rather use in much more constructive and positive ways.

Good Practice = Safe Practice

To safeguard the academic, ethical and legal authenticity of our institutions, as well as to continue to attract quality international students who contribute to the vitality, diversity, and quality of the U.S. higher education arena, it is imperative that we follow principles of best practice in the admission of international students. This means that international admissions professionals should have the training and resources they need to make sound professional judgments about the documents that applicants submit, that they receive the encouragement and support of enrollment managers to seek verification of suspicious documents, and that they share the results of the verification process with their colleagues. There is too much at stake to disregard or fall short on our responsibilities in this area.

Listen Very Loud

By Randy Mitchell
Atwood Publishing, 2001
184 pp.

Randy Mitchell’s Listen Very Loud effectively captures our attention in the Foreward, with an accurate description of a well-planned day that quickly disintegrates into a series of interruptions and projects gone awry. It is a scenario all too familiar in higher education. This is not, however, a book that addresses how to turn a day beset by distracting demands into a day of productive meetings and successful events, with ample time for planning and reflection. Randy Mitchell makes clear in his introduction that this is not a handbook or a research piece, but is “primarily a reflection on my personal experience, intended to help you reflect on your own personal experience.” His focus is on “the humanity, not the operations, of student affairs.” As the unusual title suggests, Randy Mitchell believes that those who work with students in higher education must pay careful attention to their constituents, and listen carefully before formulating plans and taking action. He directs his book at student affairs professionals, but his message can be instructive in many realms of higher education.

The book consists of short chapters in which particular themes are addressed. The author suggests that one can pick and choose from the topics and need not be bound to any sequence of chapters. Although it is useful to be able to look for specific topics or messages as one works through the book, there is no obvious structure to the topics, and some of the descriptions are difficult to decipher. The author tends to use an acronym or a popular expression as his chapter title, with an explanatory note following. In most cases, the goal of the chapter can be found in the explanatory note. However, the titles can distract rather than inform, even though they sometimes provide a humorous perspective.

One of the useful techniques the author employs is to provide three questions at the end of each chapter. The questions are designed to inspire reflection and can be used either by a
single reader to explore how the information presented in the chapter relates to that reader, or by a group of colleagues who are working on issues that are addressed in the book. The reflection questions are aggregated and organized at the end of the book by broad areas: learning and development; personal development; professional development; professional practice; and values and beliefs. This structure was useful retrospectively, and would have been helpful if the chapters had been similarly identified or grouped.

The strength of this book lies in the many useful reflections and strategies the author provides. An illustrative list includes how to improve our work with individual students; the importance of planning while still leaving room for serendipity; how to ensure that programming is supportive of student learning; and how to be a productive and successful member of the college or university community. He reminds us that we must understand what motivates our students and cautions those working in higher education to avoid the presumption that what motivated and engaged them as students is consistent with what motivates and engages students today.

In some of the chapters, the author spends more time telling a story than he does drawing the analogy to work in higher education. In “Trains of Thought” there are nearly three pages of storytelling about the author’s love of trains (an admirable passion), but only a page and a half drawing the analogy to the importance of taking time to learn. Mitchell is an engaging storyteller, but it would be helpful to the reader if the author spent more time exploring strategies after drawing the analogies. In the chapter “Collegiate Kudzu” the author chooses to overextend the analogy of computers and committees as kudzu when he could have suggested that many of the situations that provide us with challenge in higher education also provide us with opportunity.

Randy Mitchell posits that the establishment and maintenance of effective relationships is the foundation of the student affairs profession. He addresses more than once the importance of members of the academic community working collaboratively to support the goal of educating our students and speaks to the rift that sometimes exists between student affairs and academic affairs. Yet he addresses his book exclusively to members of the student affairs profession, to the extent of repeating the importance of planning while still leaving room for serendipity; how to fairly resolve the vexing questions of copyright and intellectual property? Some, however, have already drawn their conclusions and pronounced sentence on this embryonic movement. Technophiles and technophobes alike have staked out their territory in the debate and any subsequent facts will not deter them.

Digital Diploma Mills reads like a manifesto for the technophobe, whether that was author David Noble’s intention or not. For online learning, the trial was mercifully (or unmercifully) brief in Noble’s court. The verdict? Guilty on all charges—the “proletarianization” of the faculty, the commodification of the curriculum, the bastardization of learning, the corruption of university administration by corporate avarice—and the list goes on (and on reading the book’s appendices, one quickly realizes that the jury for this trial was rigged about 20 years ago). The tragedy of this book lies in the fact that it offers important cautions and “lessons learned” for the current e-learning debate, but obscures these insights with a heavy dose of anti-corporate, anti-administration spleen. In the end, the strident tone of Noble’s analysis severely limits the book’s effectiveness and weakens the position of those he is trying to help.

The book starts off helpfully enough, citing Santyana’s admonition about the fate of those foolish enough to ignore the lessons of history to introduce an analysis of the parallels between online education and the correspondence school movement of the last century. In this portion of the book, Noble draws essential lessons from American higher education’s initial foray into distance education—the demand to provide education to a large number of students while turning a profit; the placement of instruction and assessment in the hands of low-paid, low-skilled paraprofessionals; student assessment so loose it bordered on non-existence; university officials anxious to be on the leading edge of education while generating revenue for the institution—all of which can attributed to a number of current university forays into cyberspace.

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At the same time, however, Noble alerts the reader to very real differences between correspondence schools and the current rush to embrace “the next big thing” that should give educators and policymakers pause. One is the cost of technological infrastructure, which exceeds that of its correspondence predecessors by factors of ten, if not one hundred. Another is the increasing permeability of institutional boundaries, which refers to the university’s relationships with affiliated entities such as extension services. Here, Noble powerfully reminds the reader that the stakes are now much higher for those who pursue online education without the benefit of hindsight.

Noble devotes the remainder of the book to a prospective look at the academy in an online world, primarily through the case study of UCLA’s experience with The Home Education Network (THEN). The picture that Noble paints of that world is grim one, indeed. It is a world in which the bottom line trumps intellectual pursuit and academic freedom, as the university’s extension system played “fast and loose” in working with faculty and the regents in order to seal what was hoped would be a lucrative deal with politically connected media mavens. It is a world in which those hoped-for riches failed to materialize because of overly optimistic projections by project backers. Finally, it is a world in which institutions and their industry partners are left to point the finger of blame at one another and seek the financial beneficence of entities such as the federal government.

Even for institutions that have not treaded UCLA’s woeful path into cyberspace, Noble highlights common problems in the world of e-learning. At York University in Canada, faculty went on strike to protest the administration’s instructional technology initiative. In the California State University System, students and faculty joined with local companies to successfully fight a university-industry consortium to deliver CSU’s online coursework. Thus, one could safely say that in Noble’s world, stories involving cyberlearning do not end in “happily ever after.”

Noble’s chronicling of distance education run amok is a sobering reminder about the limits of technology-mediated instruction, especially given the “irrational exuberance” that many policymakers still have about the promise of cyberspace. Unfortunately for him—and for the reader—he overplays his hand, indulging in black-and-white, them vs. us, neo-Marxist rants throughout the book. While online learning certainly has its painful and increasingly obvious shortcomings, it is hard to imagine that this movement and its proponents are the “axis of evil” that Noble makes them out to be.

The book sets up a number of questionable “all or nothing” propositions. One is that online education is inherently inferior to person-to-person instruction because of the all-important nexus between instructor and student. As a veteran of freshman calculus at the University of Notre Dame (with at least 100 of my closest friends and neighbors with a teaching assistant that could not understand us, all at the bargain price of $400 per credit hour), this reviewer begs to differ with the author’s premise. By the same token, a graduate course taken by this reviewer at the University of Maryland using Web-CT (one of Noble’s targets) led to better use of instructor and student time. The reality is that there is plenty of unimaginative and unchallenging face-to-face instruction out there, just as there is online coursework that enriches teacher and student. Noble perhaps gives technology more credit than it is due by making statements such as the following: “In short, the new technology of education, like the automation of other industries, robs faculty of their knowledge and skills, their control over their working lives, the product of their labor, and ultimately, their means of livelihood” (p. 33).

Noble also takes a very apocalyptic view of higher education’s fate in the world of cyberlearning, making claims that border on rhetorical hyperventilation. One of the most notable examples of this emerges near the beginning of the book, where he proclaims that: “…a dismal new era of higher education has dawned. In future years we will look upon the wired remains of our great democratic higher education system and wonder how we let it happen” (p. 36). Similarly, his assessment of the future of the professoriate assumes an alarmed tone: “In this context, moves by faculty to resist administration appropriation of their copyright…has become essential for the preservation of their legal rights, their autonomy, their jobs, and above all, the quality and integrity of higher education” (p. 49).

Finally, Noble’s pointed observations about the failures of online education programming are embedded within a hard anti-business, anti-administration line that belies the reality of business-higher education relations and undermines the credibility of the book (and its author). For example, Noble labels online education enthusiasts as “the high-tech hijackers of higher education” (p. 51), and describes a conference in which “Participants noted that these fundamental changes in higher education were the work of a relative handful of cynical and self-seeking, but otherwise perhaps well-intentioned, administrators who in reality constitute a distinct minority in academia, as compared with faculty students and the taxpaying public who support institutions of higher education” (p. 92). After taking in a generous dose of swipes such as these throughout the book, as well as an anti-corporate diatribe from 1980 in the appendix, the reader is left to wonder whether online education ever had any chance of a fair evaluation from this author.

Overall, Digital Diploma Mills represents a tragically wasted opportunity. At a time when the higher education and policy communities are desperate for reasoned insight about the online world, this book aptly describes harsh realities but goes where too many others have gone before—using the printed page to proselytize rather than analyze. If faculty are looking for someone to help them overcome an undeserved stereotype as technophobes or Luddites, they’d be well-served to call on someone other than David Noble.

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