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A Qualitative Analysis of College Admissions Counselors' Experiences

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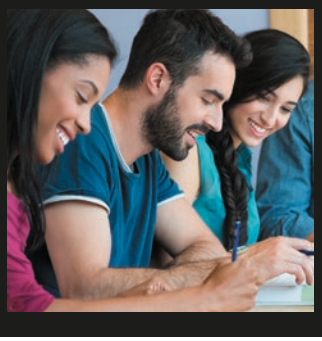
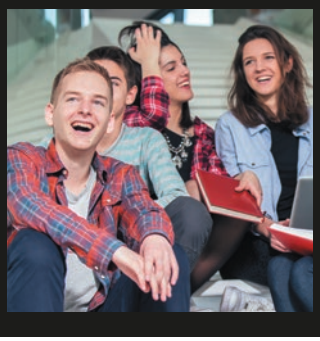
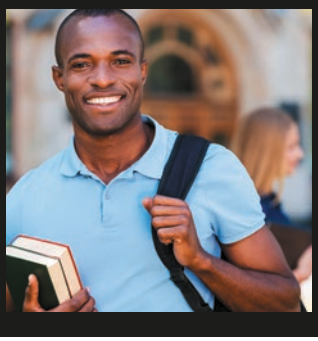
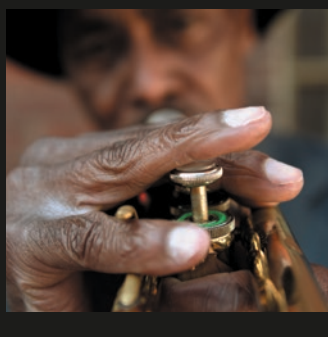

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COLLEGE *and* UNIVERSITY

Volume 92 Issue № 2

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What's the best way to share your ideas, innovations, and opinions with registrars, admissions officers, and enrollment managers nationwide? Contribute to AACRAO's prestigious *College and University (C&U)* quarterly journal.

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Editor's Note

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Members of the Editorial Board for *College & University* perform a valuable service to the journal. Along with the Editor-in-Chief and the Managing Editor, they help determine which of the feature articles that are submitted to the journal are published. Often their comments and suggestions help improve articles prior to publication. They help ensure the quality of the journal.

This edition of *C&U* reflects a change in the journal's Editorial Board. A number of wonderful, long-serving members have cycled off the Board, and several new members are joining. A number of members are continuing. First, I want to thank the outgoing Board members for their invaluable service over a number of years! I also want to welcome the new members. I look forward to working with you! Finally, thanks to all of the continuing members of the Board!

In this issue's feature section, Erwin Hesse reports on a study of the interactions between admissions counselors and undocumented students, and Matthew Chan reports on a study of new student orientation practices at 100 community colleges, including 20 with e-orientation programs.

The Mentorship series continues with articles by Marlo Waters; Heather Chermak and Julia Pomerenk; and Lynn Wild, Anne Marie Canale and Cheryl Herdklotz. Also included are two commentaries, one on college gateway programs and another on transfer pathways.

In a Campus Viewpoint article, Mark Doman describes a business process-reengineering project with graduation clearance at Oakland University. The new process reduced the processing cycle time, providing information to students with deficiencies in time for the students to resolve many of them, and created key performance indicators for continuous process improvement.

In Research-in-Brief articles, Wendy Kilgore, AACRAO's Director of Research, summarizes AACRAO's research program over the past year, and Nancy T. Artinian, *et.al.*, discuss "Holistic Admissions in the Health Professions: Strategies for Leaders." The edition also contains reviews of three recent higher education books.

I hope the variety of articles in this issue gives you, our readers, your own ideas for possible articles!

FEATURE

Recruiting Undocumented Students: A Qualitative Analysis of College Admissions Counselors' Experiences

This qualitative study explored nine admissions counselors' experiences with undocumented students at a public, four-year university in the state of Maryland. Findings suggest that admissions staff may confuse which policies apply for DACA vs DREAMers, a strategic recruitment plan does not exist to actively recruit undocumented students, and day-to-day protocols have not been established for recruiting and advising undocumented students.

By **Erwin Hesse**

There are currently 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States (Passel and Cohn 2015), and an estimated 65,000 graduate from U.S. high schools each year (Passel 2003). The topic of immigration is highly debated in political and legal contexts, and education is no exception. With a tumultuous 2016 presidential election now behind us and a new president threatening to deport millions of undocumented immigrants, community colleges and universities must understand the needs of this population more than ever before. Any undocumented immigrant in the United States who is enrolled at an education institution—K–12 or postsecondary—would be considered an undocumented student. Undocumented students live day to day in a precarious and vulnerable situation. Many experience depression and self-doubt (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco and Dedios-Sanguineti 2013) while others learn how to maneuver illegally within the United States (Gonzales 2011). Undocumented students rely on their social capital networks, primarily comprising other undocumented students, family, and friends, for insights on how to do so (Garcia and Tierney 2011). Given that this population is becoming more prevalent within the high school–to-college pipeline, college admissions counselors should alter their recruitment efforts relative to undocumented students. They should become more visible members of the social capital networks of this population that lives in the shadows. The current qualitative analysis seeks to describe college admissions counselors' experiences with undocumented students in order to clarify how admissions offices can improve their recruitment efforts specific to this population.

There is currently a dearth of literature regarding college admissions counselors and their knowledge or recruitment of undocumented students. Few researchers (Nienhusser 2014, Nienhusser and Espino 2016) have interviewed admissions staff in order to understand their interpretations of undocumented students and policies relative to in-state tuition. Only a few researchers interviewed undocumented students in order to understand their experiences growing up illegally in the United States and their interactions with higher education staff (Gonzales 2011; Nienhusser, Vega and Saavedra Carquin 2016). A review of undocumented K–12 and postsecondary students clarifies the current educational climate for this population. This article focuses on findings relative to the interviews of nine admissions counselors at a public, four-year university in Maryland. The findings are presented on the basis of Erickson's (1986) qualitative methods approach linking data to assertions. Implications and suggestions for the field of undocumented student recruitment are discussed.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to provide an opportunity for counselors to explain their current processes, their understanding of policies, and their experiences relative to the recruitment of undocumented students at their

institution. This qualitative analysis involved interviews with nine employees of a public, four-year university admissions office in the state of Maryland.

Literature Review

Federal Legislation

The United States is currently experiencing an increase in "anti-Latino nativism and restrictionist backlash, particularly aimed at the rising number of undocumented college students" (Olivas 2015, 356). Why does this sentiment currently exist toward undocumented students and toward those of Latino background in particular? A survey of legal and political action over the past three decades provides some answer to this question. *Plyler* v. *Doe* (1982) found Texas's undocumented student enrollment fees for public K–12 education unconstitutional according to the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment (Olivas 2004). This landmark Supreme Court case ensured that millions of undocumented youths in the United States have the right to a free public K–12 education; this remains the law today. However, this law addresses only K–12 education; it does not extend legal protection to students pursuing postsecondary education. In 2001, members of Congress attempted to pass the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act (Olivas 2004). The act sought to provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented students who enrolled in college or enlisted in the military and maintained a clean criminal background (Olivas 2004). Attempts to enact a federal version of the DREAM Act have failed continuously since 2001. Major immigration reform remains at a standstill.

States' Legislation

States cannot provide legal pathways to citizenship (that power is only granted through federal legislation), but they have established their own DREAM Acts to make undocumented students eligible for in-state tuition at public colleges. To date, twenty states have enacted such legislation, and five allow state financial aid packages to be provided to undocumented students (Nienhusser, Vega and Saavedra Carquin 2016). Undocumented students who are enrolled at public colleges in states that have passed DREAM Act legislation are considered *DREAMers*. In stark contrast, three states—Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina—have established legal barriers to effectively ban undocumented students from enrolling at some, if not all, of their public colleges (Banks 2013).

Maryland has an estimated 233,000 undocumented immigrants, 60,000 of whom are younger than 24 years old (Migration Policy Institute 2016). Undocumented immigrants younger than 24 years of age are the primary beneficiaries of the Maryland Dream Act of 2012. This act ensures undocumented Maryland high school graduates' eligibility for in-state tuition at public two-year and four-year colleges in Maryland (State of Maryland 2011). Maryland's Dream Act requires undocumented high school graduates to enroll first at a two-year public college, to complete 60 credits or an associate's degree, and then to transfer to a public four-year college. The Maryland Dream Act is expected to net $66 million in economic benefits at the local, state, and federal levels for each cohort of students who enroll under its provisions (Gindling and Mandell 2012). These benefits will be the result of higher incomes, higher taxable incomes, and reductions in incarceration and public welfare rates. An undocumented immigrant can only work legally in the United States if Congress changes immigration laws or if the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program remains.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Former President Obama announced his plans for DACA on the thirtieth anniversary of the *Plyler* decision, June 15, 2012. Because DACA is an executive action and not an executive order, it is not law and thus could be repealed immediately. Undocumented immigrants who receive DACA qualify for a two-year temporary protective status against deportation and are provided work permits (Gonzales, Heredia and Negron-Gonzales 2015). DACA recipients may request *advanced parole*, which allows travel outside and back to the United States for humanitarian, educational, or employment purposes (Immigrant Legal Resources Center 2015). Undocumented students with DACA advanced parole status could possibly study abroad and return to their U.S. colleges. In a growing number of states, DACA students are eligible for in-state tuition at public colleges (Migration Policy Institute 2015). An expanded version of DACA, which would have eliminated the age and arrival restrictions from the first DACA version, was deadlocked in the Supreme Court's 4-4 vote in June 2016

(*United States* v. *Texas* n.d.). DACA eligibility criteria include being 31 years of age or younger as of June 15, 2012, and having arrived in the United States prior to one's sixteenth birthday. As of September 2015, the U.S. government had already approved 787,855 applicants (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2015). Since the inauguration of the current U.S. president, hundreds of thousands of DACA recipients (many of whom are college students) live in fear of deportation. The uncertainty of DACA's future is at the forefront of immigration, labor, and higher education policy considerations for 2017. College admissions counselors should consider the following study as a baseline for discussion of how to strategically recruit this vulnerable population.

Methodology

Qualitative methods allow researchers to focus in depth on small, purposeful sampling to investigate a phenomenology (Patton 1990). Qualitative inquiry does not require a specific sample size; rather, the purpose and rationale of the study, along with time, are considered in the exploration of a phenomenon (Patton 1990). This method was selected to capture college admissions counselors' experiences relative to the recruitment of undocumented students. The following assertions are not intended to prove the phenomenon researched but to demonstrate the plausibility of the assertion (Erickson 1986).

Sample and Data Collection

The sample size for this population was strategically selected from a public, four-year university in the state of Maryland. Network sampling, defined as using the researcher's own professional network, was used to establish the basis for participation (Granovetter 1976). College admissions staff were eligible for this study if they were not senior associate directors or higher in title, if they recruited students as their primary job role, and if they were not part of other departments within admissions (*e.g.*, information technology or marketing).

A total of nineteen invitations were sent via e-mail to eligible admissions staff. Thirteen staff (68%) responded, with nine agreeing to take part in the study (*see* Table 1) and four declining. Except for one participant who was interviewed via phone, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person in April 2016. The majority of participants were female and had fewer than three years of professional experience in higher education. The duration of interviews ranged from fifteen to 45 minutes.

Table 1. **Participants' Demographics**

Name (pseudonyms)	Years in Higher Education	Gender	Race
Mason	3 to 5	M	White
Leo	< 3	M	White
Bryson	>5	M	African American
Andrea	< 3	F	White
Victoria	> 5	F	White
Jade	< 3	F	White
Angela	< 3	F	White
Madison	< 3	F	White
Stephanie	< 3	F	African American

Data Analysis

All interviews were audiorecorded and transcribed for coding purposes (Miles and Huberman 1994). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggest that there are numerous ways to validate qualitative research, which makes it difficult to adopt a standard approach. Common forms of validating qualitative research are member checking, triangulation, and intercoder agreement (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). This analysis used triangulation and intercoder agreement to validate the qualitative data in each assertion. A limitation to this data analysis was that because of the departure or role change of five of the nine interviewees after the original research was conducted, member checking was not conducted.

Initially, ten themes emerged within four broad categories. The researcher's faculty advisor then used the same transcripts to conduct her data analysis. After reviewing both sets of data analysis, the researcher and faculty advisor condensed all themes into three assertions for intercoder agreement after triangulating the data (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011).

Limitations

This study is intended to add to the growing literature related to undocumented students in higher education. While it is one of only a few that features interviews of college admissions staff about undocumented students, some limitations exist. First, because of numerous staffing changes, member checking was not conducted. Second, this study is based on interviews at one university in Maryland, so the findings are not generalizable to all admissions counselors in the state, much less throughout the country. States such as Texas and California have more advanced policies and transparency relative to undocumented students on college campuses. Third, this study is based on interviews of only nine public, four-year university admissions staff. The majority of undocumented students in Maryland are enrolled at two-year community colleges. The small sample size, which included only four-year university staff, adds to limitations related to generalizability. Finally, the researcher knew the staff members because of network sampling. This may have resulted in bias in the responses or may have influenced some to participate and others to decline to do so.

Findings

Assertions are key linkages the researcher finds in patterns of generalization within the data analysis; they are supported by sub-assertions, which are supported in turn by field notes, interview comments, site documents, and recordings (Erickson 1986). The following three assertions are discussed: *ambiguous status, day-to-day protocols are non-existent*, and *lack of strategic recruitment*. Pseudonyms are used to protect participants' identities.

Ambiguous Status

Participants were asked to define certain terms directly related to undocumented students. For example, *DACA status* is granted by the federal government, and a *DREAMer* is an undocumented student who is enrolled in accordance with Maryland's Dream Act. The difference is significant because DACA students are eligible to enroll as freshmen at public four-year universities and to pay in-state tuition all four years whereas DREAMers must complete their first two years of postsecondary education at a Maryland community college and then may transfer to a public four-year university and pay in-state tuition for the final two years of their undergraduate degree program.

Each participant was asked to define the terms *DACA* and *DREAMer*. Participants' responses provided evidence of their misunderstanding or confusion of one policy with the other. When asked to define *DREAMer,* Bryson replied, "I have heard it, but to define it, I don't know that I am able to define it… the water is a little murky." Angela said, "I confuse it a lot with DACA… I never got training." (Lack of training is mentioned again in the third assertion.) Finally, Mason said, "The Dream Act is a pathway for in-state tuition." In reply to the follow-up question, "Do you know what the criteria are?" Mason answered, "I don't." The Maryland Dream Act automatically makes undocumented students eligible for in-state (also known as in-county) tuition at local community colleges; students retain that eligibility upon transferring to any of Maryland's public four-year colleges.

The majority of respondents were unable to accurately define DACA. Stephanie confused DACA with Dream Act policies: "They have to qualify to be a DACA student…they have to be in the state of Maryland for a certain amount of years. [If they don't], they can qualify for the other policy." Madison thought that DACA as-

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sisted parents or students by providing financial aid. When asked who would provide the assistance, Madison responded, "If I had to guess, it would be the financial aid office in a school…or the government, similar to FAFSA." (The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is a federally funded/U.S. Department of Education initiative that determines applicants' eligibility for federal financial aid.) Undocumented students are not eligible to submit the FAFSA because they do not have social security numbers.

Victoria mentioned that DACA requires a GED. It can be inferred that she was confusing the Maryland Dream Act policies, which require a GED or high school diploma, with DACA, which allows participants currently enrolled in high school and thus does not require a GED. Jade was not as familiar with DACA as she was with DREAMers and said, "[I'm] not sure they have the same eligibility for in-state tuition as DREAMers." This is inaccurate given that DACA students have four years of in-state tuition eligibility at a public four-year college.

One final sub-assertion that emerged was confusion as to what label to assign undocumented students or how they should describe themselves on their college applications. Madison recounted the story of a summertime presentation at a local high school. She was reviewing the application requirements when a student asked her what he should designate as his residency status. Madison said she had never encountered an undocumented student before and was not sure how to answer. "I felt like I didn't know what to say because as far as the application goes I'm used to people just putting U.S. citizen or permanent resident and continuing…I didn't know what to say." Bryson asked, "What is their citizenship? That's at the root of it." Victoria remembered when an undocumented student had an expired visa, and she did not know whether he should apply as an international student or as an undocumented student. She transferred him to International Student Services (ISS) for further assistance. Any student with an expired F1 or other visa who remains in the United States is technically undocumented. The referral to ISS in this case was unnecessary and could have created additional stress for the student. This could have been avoided if proper day-to-day protocols had been in place.

Day-to-Day Protocols Are Non-Existent

All interviewees revealed that the admissions office neither offered nor required any training for counselors working with undocumented students. The Maryland Dream Act and DACA have been in place since 2012. Bryson had been with the university for more than five years and said that his only training was based on his social capital. "Being here as long as I have been, meeting people, and making connections has always proven to be very beneficial when I get stumped because I know that there's somebody who knows a little bit more than I do." Admissions staff members' use of their social capital in this manner is similar to undocumented students' efforts to gather information from others who are more knowledgeable about policies (Garcia and Tierney 2011). Leo provided another example of social capital as informal training. He mentioned that he "explores" resources to assist this population and "retains that experience in his mind" because he has not received any formal training. All participants agreed that a formal workshop would help, but Mason felt the lack of training had "not affected my ability to do my job."

Another sub-assertion is that counselors are not sure what to say when recruiting an undocumented student. Madison states, "I don't want to make anyone feel uncomfortable…can you say 'undocumented?'… I don't want to say anything that makes me sound insensitive." Madison felt uncomfortable on how to ask this question to the student while one study revealed that admissions counselors have stated these types of questions in forms of microaggressions by asking about papers or how they are in the country illegally (Nienhusser, Vega and Saavedra Carquin 2016). When Jade was asked what she would like to know about undocumented students to help her in her role, she replied, "How to have conversations with undocumented students and make them feel comfortable with the admissions process."

Because undocumented students have a hidden identity—in other words, one could not tell by looking at them whether they are undocumented—counselors learn a student's status when the student "comes out." This leads to the final sub-assertion: singular experiences. When counselors were interviewed, phrases such as "I did not seek them out" or "I came across one" prevailed. Bryson talked about the need to understand how to work with this population on "coming out," a process of self-disclosure similar to that many LGBT students go through. When undocumented students did come out, it seemed to have an impact on counselors. These interactions—many of them "by chance"—occurred mainly in person or via phone, and counselors remembered

them vividly. Andrea said, "I actually can't remember any e-mails where undocumented students actually came out and said they were undocumented. Most of the conversations were by phone, and they were questions about how to fill out our application and how to actually state that they were undocumented." All participants except Mason stated that they had (or believed they had) interacted with an undocumented student(s). (Mason also stated that he believed the lack of undocumented student training had not had an impact on his ability to do his job.) Counselors shared that they had interacted with as few as one and as many as "fifteen to twenty" undocumented students during their tenure in admissions. Further research is needed to understand the extent of the impact on counselors. For example, did counselors research undocumented student policies after learning that they were interacting with an undocumented student and did not know how to advise her?

Singular experiences led counselors to say they want clear steps on how to recruit and advise this population. Jade said, "Just having a clear set of steps would be helpful to walk them through and just being more familiar with the policies that they should know." Dream Act policies require well-structured implementation plans, leadership commitment to training staff, and an abundance of information on schools' websites (Nienhusser 2014). The final general assertion will cover the lack of strategic recruitment efforts that Nienhusser (2014) states are essential for institutions to address relative to undocumented students.

Lack of Strategic Recruitment

Given that all participants stated that they had never received formal training on recruiting or advising undocumented students, further questions were asked to better understand why that was so and if counselors believed that a strategic plan could exist to recruit this population. Angela expressed some frustration when she was asked why no formal training had been offered: "They don't know the subject matter. Usually, when people don't know something, there is a fear attached to it. You have people who are afraid of knowing. They will put it in the background, and they will not bother to empower themselves." When asked who "they" were, Angela stated, "Management…They don't understand how important this is because they don't have direct experience with it." Further research is needed to explore the topic of leadership and the lack of initiative to train staff to work with undocumented students in the context of current policies.

When counselors were asked if a strategic recruitment plan for undocumented students could exist, all said yes, and some suggested how one could be created. None said that they had shared these ideas with senior leadership for possible implementation. Angela suggested creating videos and inviting an undocumented student to share her story about how she navigated the college admissions process. She said, "Create materials, and test people on them because you can create trainings however you want, but if you don't test the knowledge, how do you know [it's effective]?" Stephanie and Jade suggested a lecture on the history of undocumented students and then possible role plays to help counselors become more effective. Victoria said, "It's an area people are not as familiar with…there are a lot of changes… it's important for us to understand how we can best help these students. There are times students get passed around. Having a liaison in each department would definitely be helpful…especially in financial aid, resident life, [and the] bursar's office."

Leo and Stephanie talked about the growing population of undocumented students and the need to understand them better. Stephanie said, "This has been a growing population." Leo added, "This is a group who is becoming more prominent in the country and in the admissions process, and we are only going to see more students who are applying to college under some of these different programs." He also suggested that to strategically recruit this population, admissions counselors should begin with high school counselors who know undocumented students on a more personal level. Andrea also suggested working with high school counselors but added, "High schools can set up a general information night on how to be classified as an in-state resident… and touch on DACA and Dream Act students." College admissions counselors usually partner with local high schools on these types of events, but boldly including this population in the presentation is not common. Jade also suggested that the admissions office could apply for grants so as to better serve this population, just as it did (and was awarded) for more effectively recruiting other underserved populations. Many ideas came out of these interviews, but they must become a priority for senior leadership—starting with the university president—if they are to help strategically recruit this population.

Discussion

Overall, undocumented students were perceived as a vulnerable population with unique characteristics that require special attention. The literature review suggests that progress has occurred at the federal and state levels. Yet the interviews revealed that all of that progress may not be fully understood by admissions counselors. A lack of prioritization of undocumented students in recruitment training is one possible reason for admissions staff members' confusion. Many voiced concerns about the lack of strategic recruitment of undocumented students, but none mentioned that they had brought this gap to the attention of senior leadership. Might counselors think it "taboo" to raise the topic of undocumented students during recruitment planning, particularly given the current national political climate? Participants expressed the need for clear guidelines to govern their encounters with undocumented students. It would be good for admissions offices to begin to establish protocols for recruiting this population. This could also be an opportunity for admissions leaders to initiate discussions about how to better serve this population, starting with internal training. Further research is needed to understand why some college admissions offices—and entire universities—provide more public support for undocumented students than for other incoming student populations.

Numerous admissions offices allow students to walk in and benefit from advising on how to apply to the university. Research shows that 59 percent of undocumented college students learned that they are undocumented during the college application or financial aid process (Gonzales 2011). It is remarkable that so many students should discover this potentially devastating reality at such a pivotal time in their lives. Admissions offices should consider having mental health counselors train admissions staff to properly advise students who find themselves in such circumstances. Many counselors who were interviewed said they did not know what words to use with or what questions to ask undocumented students. Admissions counselors should be provided with training not only to help them understand their own privilege but also to reduce or prevent bias or even microaggressions toward undocumented students.

Conclusion

Few studies aim to understand how college admissions counselors and undocumented students interact in the real world. Given the shift in the dominant political outlook with regard to immigration, these students feel more vulnerable than ever. Colleges are supposed to be safe havens for those who seek personal growth and intellectual stimulation. A growing movement has called for colleges to declare themselves sanctuaries for undocumented students. To date, more than 200 college presidents, including those at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and Stanford, have signed a letter urging the president of the United States to keep DACA as a "moral imperative" and "national necessity" (Pomona College 2016).

The current research indicates that admissions counselors want to do more and have thoughts about how to do so. The disconnect between having ideas yet not sharing them with leadership requires further examination. In the meantime, the question to ask is why leadership has not taken the initiative to require that a strategic recruitment plan call for increases in the enrollment of undocumented students.

College leaders, starting with the president, must do more to actively recruit undocumented students. It is no longer enough to say, "We welcome all students to our campus!"

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FEATURE

Have You Been Oriented? An Analysis of New Student Orientation and E-Orientation Programs at U.S. Community Colleges

This study provides an overview and a snapshot of new student orientation (NSO) and new student e-orientation (NSEO) programs, with a focus on the content and feature analysis of the NSEOs. It offers an overview of currently available NSO programs of 100 randomly selected community colleges from a master list of nearly 900 community colleges in the United States, as well as a detailed analysis of 20 NSEO programs, a subset of these community colleges. The author takes a systematic approach to reviewing and analyzing NSO and NSEO programs currently offered at the community college level, including subject coverage, and major design features critical to student learning. Though the majority of colleges are still offering in-person NSOs, NSEOs are being implemented and developed, with varying formats, subject coverage and features. The results of this study are expected to be beneficial to faculty and administrators in higher education who are evaluating or implementing NSOs or NSEOs. It reveals the challenges and opportunities facing community colleges in an environment with rapidly changing technology, diverse student populations, financial constraints, pressure for increased accountability, and demands to improve student retention and learning outcomes.

By **Matthew Chan**

Rapidly increasing tuition and living costs, decreasing retention and graduation rates, and domestic and global competition have all contributed to a renewed focus on accountability in higher learning by government, accrediting agencies, parents, and other funding sources (Brown 2012). The increased demand for accountability has moved the issue of underprepared entering freshmen to the forefront of all the challenges facing higher education. Rausch and Hamilton's (2006) study reveals that conditions affecting attrition include lack of preparation, adopted commitment, unmet expectations, and lack of institutional information. According to Parsad and Lewis (2004), in fall 2000, approximately 76 percent of institutions offered freshmen at least one remedial reading, writing, or mathematics course, with 98 percent of public two-year colleges and 63 percent of private two-year colleges offering remediation.

Community colleges must address increasing demands to better prepare entering freshmen. With advances in technology, many face-to-face interactions, previously limited to the classroom setting, now take place in the virtual world. College educators and administrators responsible for implementing new student orientations (NSOs) face increasing pressure to reduce budgets. According to Oliff *et al.* (2013), states spent 28 percent less per student nationwide in 2013 than they did in 2008. Utilizing technology is one cost-saving strategy.

Online learning is an important aspect of community college students' academic experience (Miller, Fishman and McCarthy 2015). As a result of curricular and pedagogical changes in higher education—including technological advances—new student orientation sessions increasingly are being offered online (Miller and Pope 2003, Stewart *et al.* 2013). What is the current state of new student orientation (NSO) programs? How are sessions being offered to freshmen? How are community colleges coping with gaps in the preparedness and academic skills of graduating high school seniors and entering freshmen? How are new student e-orientations (NSEOs) being designed and implemented in the community college setting? This study examines the ways in which community colleges throughout the United States are answering these questions.

Existing studies and scholarly communications regarding the design and implementation of NSO and NSEO programs tend to focus on individual cases. A more systematic approach is needed to provide an overview of how U.S. community colleges' NSO—particularly e-orientation—programs are meeting the needs of freshmen.

From a list of nearly 900 community colleges, the researcher randomly selected 100 and carefully reviewed their orientation programs on the basis of the information provided on the institutions' websites. Ultimately, 20 colleges offering new student e-orientation sessions (NSEOs) were invited to participate in the study. The study sought to determine whether a new student orientation program was offered, in what format it was delivered, and whether a link to the orientation program was publicly accessible via a Google search. Key design fea-

tures of each NSEO program—for example, navigation, ease of use, interactivity, segments or topics covered, and multimedia components, as well as the inclusion of assessment modules—were thoroughly examined.

The findings offer a synopsis of how U.S. community colleges are conducting orientation sessions for their new students. The results of this study are expected to be useful to faculty and administrators who are evaluating or implementing NSOs and NSEOs. The findings will also help inform the development of effective strategies for increasing student retention and success.

Literature Review

It is common practice for U.S. universities and colleges to offer orientation sessions to newly admitted freshmen (Koch and Gardner 2014). The findings of a national survey of first-year practices revealed that 96 percent of all U.S. postsecondary institutions offer some form of orientation program (Barefoot 2005). According to a study of 1,373 chief academic officers at four-year colleges and universities, of the 442 responses to the question regarding pre-term orientations, "No one checked that their institution did not have orientation" (Barefoot, Griffin and Koch 2012, 6). The history of higher learning institutions' offering of dedicated programs (for example, tutoring services) dates back to the 1600s. Harvard University offered the earliest informal orientation sessions by employing tutors to help younger students transition successfully to college life. Particularly over the past 25 years, orientation programs have flourished (Mayo 2013).

Orientation sessions have been adopted widely by institutions of higher learning as part of a concerted effort to improve student retention and academic performance. According to Ramist (1981), the orientation program is considered a necessary good start and "takes on an especially important role" to "retain students by helping them make the most of their college experience" (16). Pascarella, Terenzini, and Wolfle's (1986) study suggested that "the orientation experience impacted on freshman persistence largely by facilitating a student's initial ability to cope with a new set of social challenges in an unfamiliar environment" (170). Chickering and Hannah (1969) suggested that student orientations be expanded to include parents so they could better support their children throughout their academic journey. Coburn and Woodward (2001) also discussed the inclusion of a parent orientation in new student orientation programs.

Orientation programs have been considered essential to student retention and academic success (Tinto 1987) as they facilitate student learning in the areas of the transitioning process, academic integration, and personal and social integration (Robinson, Burns and Gaw 1996). According to Tinto (2006), the first month of college enrollment is critical to the retention rate as "the first year is the critical year in which decisions to stay or leave are most often made" (8). Increasing retention and graduation rates remains at the top of the list of institutional challenges. Government and other funding sources subject college educators and administrators to an ever-increasing number of questions regarding the effectiveness of the educational enterprise and the reality of budgetary challenges (Wild and Ebbers 2002).

The focus on accountability in higher education started in the 1980s and intensified in the 1990s so as to include productivity and measures of institutional effectiveness (Leveille 2006). Discussions of accountability also included the business or market models that centered on meeting financial goals (Leveille 2006). In 2006, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education issued a report that called for "the creation of a robust culture of accountability and transparency throughout higher education" (U.S. Department of Education 2006, 21). The emphasis on accountability and student learning outcomes attracted more attention as President Obama put higher education on notice because of its high cost and stressed in his 2012 and 2013 State of the Union addresses that he would hold colleges accountable for cost, value, and quality (The White House 2012, 2013). Carey (2007) stated that higher education "needs accountability that is real" (24).

Internal and external pressures, which include demands for greater accountability as well as increased retention and graduation rates, require faculty and administrators to join forces and collaborate more closely to utilize institutional services such as orientation sessions to support overall curriculum needs. In fact, using orientation sessions intentionally to help build a community of learners has been a primary goal of most NSO programs (Poirier, Santanello and Gupchup 2007). It is common for professional schools to offer discipline-specific orientation sessions. Poirier, Santanello and Gupchup (2007) stated that the weeklong orientation,

focused on nurturing the "three Cs" of community—communication, cooperation, and collaboration—"helped to build a foundation for the development of a community of learners" (9). In describing their retention initiatives, fourteen of 49 institutions in the Illinois Community College System created or revised student orientation processes in an effort to improve retention. The development of a three-phase orientation program customized for different segments of the student population; the provision of more in-depth information about support services; and the integration of academic advisors into the orientation team were some examples of changes the colleges implemented (Illinois Community College Board 1995).

Advances in instructional and learning technologies, particularly with an increasing number of courses being offered online—coupled with challenges such as budget cuts, staffing shortages, diverse student populations, and outcomes assessment demands—mean that faculty and administrators continue to explore ways to utilize technology to enhance the student experience and outcomes of orientation programs. Miller and Pope's (2003) research on community colleges' new student orientation programs found that the most effective ways to integrate technology were to include the provision of "email accounts to new students when they arrive at campus," to emphasize "the importance of technology," to use "virtual tours of campus online," and to have "an activity such as an online treasure hunt on the college website (19). Researchers also explored ways to utilize social media to build and broaden students' social and academic connections, to distribute information about campus, and to provide support while students are away from campus (Hottell, Martinez-Aleman and Rowan-Kenyon 2014).

Cho (2012), Jones (2013), and Garza Mitchell (2014) focused their research on orientation programs for students taking online courses, but their findings were relevant to the overall development of new student orientations delivered in an online format. Jones (2013) described the process that a rural community used to develop a mandatory NSEO that met students' needs. Students provided positive feedback and were retained at a higher rate. According to Cho (2012), little informa-

tion existed in the literature regarding how to develop an online student orientation; his research described the process of developing an online student orientation in higher education, including the analysis, design, development, and evaluation phases.

A study of more than 1,400 students in Canada revealed factors that students considered most important in helping them reach their goals: a future orientation, persistence, and executive functioning skills such as time management and organization. In contrast, "stress, inadequate academic skills, and distractions are detrimental to student success in university" (Stelnicki, Nordstokke and Saklofske 2015, 214). Hollins (2009) discussed the benefits of offering students more than one form of orientation to college. The study found a positive correlation between a combination of interventions aimed at targeted populations, grouped by pre-enrollment characteristics, and student success (Hollins 2009). In addition, Mahlberg's (2015) study of 186 first- and second-year community college students enrolled in ten formative self-assessment courses and six traditional assessment courses found a positive correlation between formative assessment and retention. Alnawas (2015) advocated a formative assessment over a reflective measure—a higher-order construct—for student orientation.

In terms of design features, the following components were included: modules or segments, interactive activities, and multimedia components utilizing video clips (Cho 2012; Garza Mitchell 2014; Jones 2013; Wozniak, Pizzica and Mahony 2012); information on a Course Management System (CMS) or Learning Management System (LMS) (Cho 2012; Garza Mitchell 2014; Jones 2013); self-paced learning environments (Cho 2012; Jones 2013); assessment (Garza Mitchell 2014; Jones 2013; Wozniak, Pizzica and Mahony 2012); and multiple attempts at assessment questions (Garza Mitchell 2014; Jones 2013). With regard to online orientation program goals, the following themes emerged: improving preparedness and easing students' transition into an academic world (Jones 2013; Wozniak, Pizzica and Mahony 2012); helping students understand the nature of college life and develop self-awareness about learning skills (Cho 2012); improving retention (Jones 2013); and familiarizing students with the LMS environment for learning (Cho 2012).

As faculty and administrators at institutions of higher learning worked to improve student orientation programs, including the development and implementation of online orientation programs, valuable lessons were learned. Student participation and feedback in the design process proved critical (Wozniak *et al.* 2009).

Community colleges now admit more students from diverse backgrounds. Some of these students are technology-savvy, but others may find online orientation sessions challenging. Transfer and non-traditional students may also find it difficult to adjust if their orientation programs are designed for traditional students.

Budget cuts, the combined result of decreased federal, state, and other funding, have contributed to reductions in faculty and staff as well as in student services (Mitchell, Leachman and Masterson 2016). It is critical that faculty and administrators continue to improve the effectiveness of NSOs and at the same time explore ways to serve students through new online or blended orientation formats.

Methodology

A listing of community colleges by state, available from the Community College Finder tool (American Association of Community Colleges 2016), was added to an Excel spreadsheet and then sorted alphabetically to create a master list of 891 community colleges. The goals of the current study were two: (1) to randomly select community colleges so their orientation programs could inform an overview of the current state of NSOs; and (2) to identify a subset of at least 20 percent of community colleges, each one of which would have an NSEO openly accessible via the Internet.

A randomizer program was used to generate multiple lists of community colleges—20 per drawing—for inclusion in this study. Selected colleges were reviewed on the basis of information gathered from Google searches of their websites to identify those with openly accessible NSEO programs.

Unsorted sampling without replacement was deployed so that the same college would not be randomly selected twice and ordering would not matter. The randomizing process was then repeated to identify a total of 100 community colleges, from which 20 with accessible NSEOs were generated as the sampling NSEO population. If the online NSEOs provided guest or public access allowing the author to review and examine their features, they were included in this study.

Results

The author analyzed information obtained from 100 institutions randomly selected from the master list of 891 community colleges as well as from a subset of 20 institutions offering an openly accessible NSEO program.

A Glance at New Student Orientation Programs

Demographics

The 100 randomly selected community colleges were located in 38 states; 50 were located in the following states: California (13), Ohio (7), New York (7), Michigan (6), Texas (5), and Washington, North Carolina, and Illinois (4 each).

The public, independent, or tribal status of the 100 community colleges was verified by referring to AACC's Community College Finder tool. Seven of the 100 randomly selected community colleges did not provide information regarding type or demographic data; the remaining 93 were public.

The community colleges in this study varied by size and population served. Enrollment at 93 of the 100 community colleges ranged from 463 to 29,999 (*see* Figure 1).

Enrollment and student demographic data for the 93 community colleges were obtained from AACC (*see* Table 1, on page 18).

Each college's orientation program was reviewed according to what information about its student orientation program was available via Google and the format in which the program was offered. If the information was available, the length of the NSO, whether it included an assessment segment, and other notable characteristics of the NSO were analyzed.

Google Search

When searching "[college name] student orientation" as the keywords via Google, the author was able to identify 78 institutions (78%) that had links that directed to web pages containing information about new student orientation on their respective institutional websites. Fourteen institutions (14%) shared no information about their NSOs on their websites. The websites of the remaining eight colleges (8%) presented partial infor-

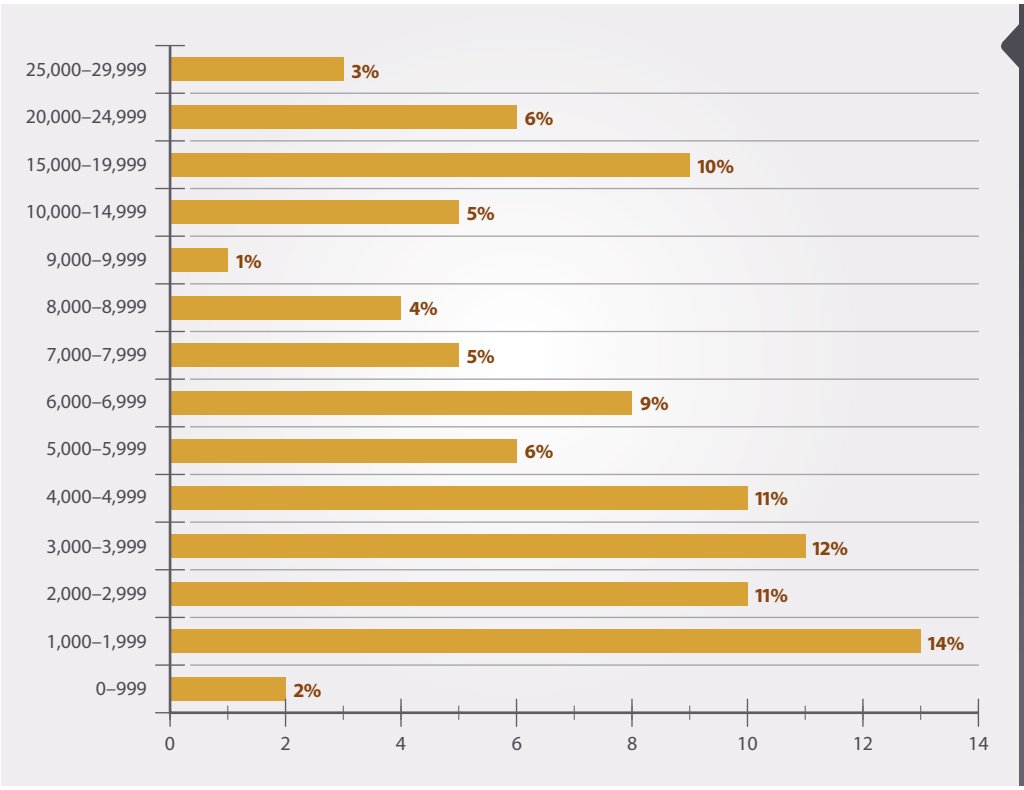

Figure 1.

Enrollments of the 93 Community Colleges

Note: Based on AACC data

Table 1. **Enrollment and Student Characteristics of the 93 Community Colleges***

	%
Enrollment (93 of 100 Community Colleges)	
Full-Time	37.36
Part-Time	62.64
Gender	
Male	39.92
Female	60.08
Race/Ethnicity	
White	68.30
Minority (e.g. Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American)	31.70

* Based on the AACC data

mation—*e.g.*, event announcements, press releases, or links to outdated web pages or error messages—about their NSOs.

In-Person, Online, or Both

Of the 100 community colleges, 46 (46%) offered only in-person NSOs, 21 (21%) offered online-only NSOs, 18 (18%) offered both in-person and online NSOs, and 15 (15%) offered limited or no information about their NSOs on their websites.

Overview of In-Person NSOs

Most websites listed dates and times of the NSO sessions but offered limited information about the topics covered or the length of the sessions. Several colleges' websites indicated that the in-person NSO would last between 90 minutes and three hours, though some specified six hours or a one-day class. One college required that new students stay overnight to attend its two-day NSO. A small portion of the colleges (fewer than 10 percent) stated specifically that the NSO was required. For the limited number of colleges that provided such information, the duration of their online NSOs was typically between 30 minutes and one hour. It was common for the college to require students to have an official student ID or account number prior to registering to attend the orientation session. Only two colleges provided tests or surveys for assessment purposes for the in-person orientation sessions.

New Student e-Orientation Programs (NSEOs)

These twenty programs were carefully examined. In addition to information about orientation gleaned from Google searches, elements such as format, requirement, length, and assessment were verified.

Demographics

The 20 randomly selected community colleges with openly accessible NSEOs were located in eleven states: California (7); Michigan, Texas, and Washington (2 each); and Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Wisconsin (1 each).

The community colleges in this study varied in size and population served: enrollments ranged from 1,968 to 29,999 (*see* Figure 2, on page 19).

Enrollment and student demographic data for the twenty community colleges were obtained from AACC (*see* Table 2, on page 19).

Google Search

For all 20 colleges in this study that offer online NSOs that allow open or guest access, 100 percent of the Google searches with "[college name] student orientation" as the search term yielded results that led to the respective colleges' orientation web pages. Only one contained an error page.

In Person, Online, or Both

Of the 20 colleges that offer online NSOs, nine (45%) offered only NSEOs, and eleven (55%) offered both online and in-person NSOs. Ten (50%) presented information on their websites indicating that the respective NSO was required.

Length

Most colleges did not specify the length of their online NSOs. For the four that did, the NSO ranged between 30

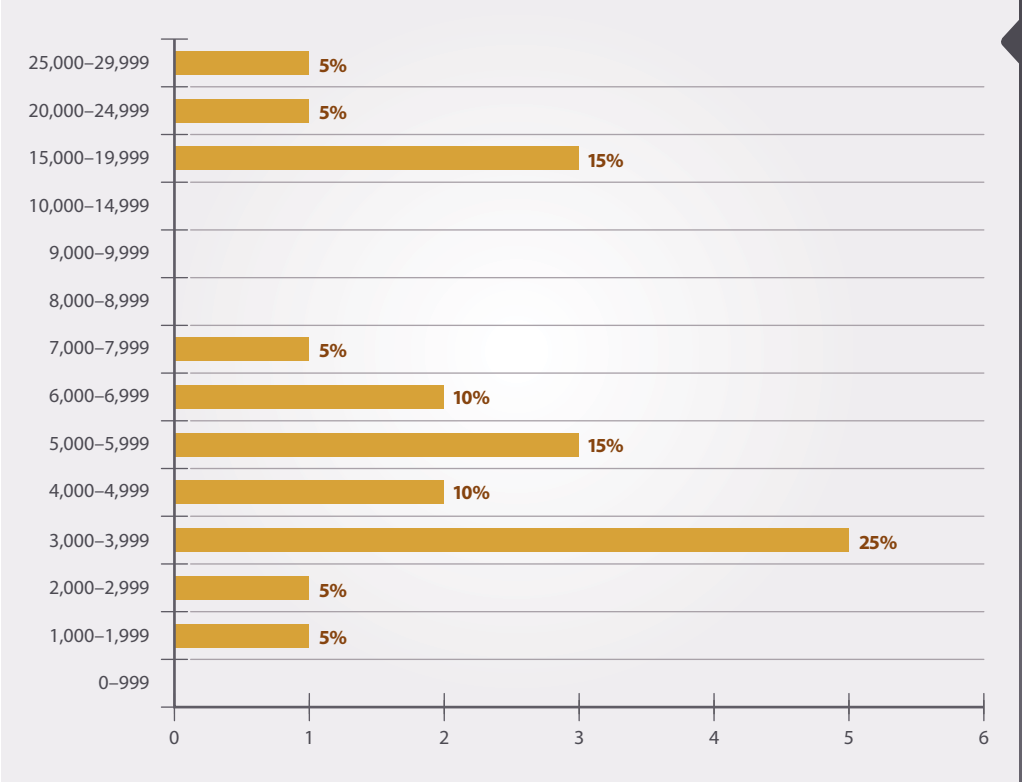

Figure 2.

Enrollment Ranges of the Twenty Community Colleges

Note: Based on AACC data

minutes and four hours. Two colleges stated specifically that students could revisit the online NSO at any time and as often as they liked.

Assessment

Of the colleges that offered an NSEO, ten (50%) included an assessment tool such as a quiz or embedded questions.

Categories

The NSEO programs were of two types: traditional and non-traditional. Traditional online programs include those that utilize text, links, pictures, and multimedia components. Non-traditional e-orientation programs utilize PDFs, PowerPoint presentations, and video. The PDF was 32 pages addressing 25 topics. Each of the two PowerPoint presentations contained more than 30 slides. The video orientation was nearly six minutes long. Because the current study sought information regarding the design of dedicated, comprehensive online orientation programs, these four NSEOs were excluded from further examination.

Table 2. **Enrollment and Student Characteristics of the Twenty Community Colleges***

	%
Enrollment (20 of 20 Community Colleges)	
Full-Time	31.34
Part-Time	68.66
Gender	
Male	44.62
Female	55.38
Race/Ethnicity	
White	47.01
Minority (e.g. Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American)	52.99

* Based on the AACC data

Table 3. Average Number of Screens Included in the Sixteen NSEOs

Average Number of Screens	Number of NSEOs
1–3 Screens	6
5–7 Screens	4
9–10 Screens	3
13–14 Screens	3

Table 4. Five Most Commonly Used Segments by the Sixteen NSEOs

Five Most Commonly Used Segment Headings or Topics	Frequency
Welcome; Welcome Message; Instructions	12
Student Life; Campus Life; Student Organizations; Events; Student Activities	11
Student Conduct; Safety; Rights and Responsibilities; Policies	11
Student Services; Resources; Student Support Services	10
College Success	9

Table 5. Categories Based on Contents Covered by the Sixteen NSEOs

Content Categories	Frequency
Programs; Enrollment; Registration; Financial Aid	51
Resources; Services	29
Quizzes; Conclusions; Certificates; Next Steps	14
Welcome and/or Instructions	12
Student Life; Campus Life; Student Activities	11
Student Conduct; Safety and/or Rights and Responsibilities; Policies	11
Technology; Student Portal; ePortfolio; Blackboard	7
College Essentials; Glossary; Tips	7
Other	5
Total	**147**

NSEO Specifics

The sixteen NSEO programs that were determined to be "traditional" were analyzed further.

Segments, Topics, and Content

The sixteen traditional NSEOs addressed an average of 9.19 segments or topics, ranging from a low of seven to a high of fifteen; the combined total number of topics addressed was 147. Among the sixteen NSEOs, seven (43.75%) included eight segments, four (25%) included nine segments, two (12.50%) had seven segments, two (12.50%) had thirteen segments, and one (6.25%) had fifteen segments. All 147 segments of these sixteen NSEOs were coded and tallied. Each topic was carefully examined to generate the unique number of modules or categories.

Screens

Among the sixteen NSEOs, the total number of screens was 854; the number of screens per NSEO ranged from eight to 125, with an average of 5.81 per segment or topic and an average of 53.38 per online orientation program. (*See* Table 3 for the average number of screens included in the NSEO programs.)

Five Most Commonly Used Segment Headings or Topics

All 147 of the sixteen NSEOs' segment headings were reviewed. (*See* Table 4 for the five most common segment headings or topics as well as the respective numbers of occurrences.)

Categories of Content Covered

Segments or topics of the sixteen NSEOs were reviewed and categorized according to their content. Similar seg-

Table 6. **Key Design Features of the Sixteen NSEOs**

	Navigation	Multimedia	Language Options	ADA / Closed Caption / Scripts	Quiz / Questions	Category*	Total Score
1	1				1	W	2
2	1	1	1			D	3
3	1	1	1	1	1	D	5
4	1					W	1
5	1	1	1	1	1	D	5
6	1					W	1
7		1		1		W	2
8	1	1	1	1	1	D	5
9	1	1	1	1	1	D	5
10	1	1	1	1	1	D	5
11	1	1				D	2
12		1				C	1
13	1	1				D	2
14	1					D	3
15	1	1		1		D	3
16		1		1	1	W	3

* **D:** Dedicated **W:** Web-based **C:** CMS/LMS Embedded

ments were merged. (*See* Table 5 for the categories of content as well as their respective numbers of occurrences.)

Other Topics

Beyond the top categories of content, "college success" was cited often by the e-orientation programs. Resources, tips for college success, glossaries, and basic academic information were offered. With regard to the 51 occurrences of topics related to programs, enrollment, registration, and financial aid, the phrase "first steps" was used four times; the phrase "getting connected" was used once. Other common phrases were "financial aid," "payment," and "payment for your education."

Key Design Features

The sixteen traditional NSEOs were examined in terms of their design, layout, segments or modules, and key features such as interactivity, ease of use, navigation, language options, and technology used. These features were selected on the basis of literature regarding user-interface design as well as analysis of web-based tutorials, including multimedia tutorials (Cho, Cheng and Lai 2009; Mackey and Ho 2008; Somoza-Fernandez and Abadal 2009). Table 6 presents a comparison of the programs' key features. (To compare the NSEOs, each category was assigned one point, and the total number of points was tallied.)

- **Navigation and ease of use:** Online orientation programs with "back/next," "backward/forward," and/or "menu" buttons were the most user friendly as the buttons tended to make it easier for students to navigate the various segments and screens. Thirteen (81.25%) of the sixteen traditional NSEOs provided such navigation tools.
- **Language options and ADA/assisted learning considerations:** Five (31.25%) of the NSEOs offered their content in two to four languages from which students could choose. In addition to English, NSEOs were offered in Spanish, Armenian, Chinese, and Korean. Four (25%) of the programs took into account ADA considerations such

as inclusion of an accessible version. Other design elements included the provision of audio, closed caption, and transcript files.

- **Assessment and quizzes:** One feature that the NSEO modules had in common was an assessment component. Of the sixteen NSEOs, eight (50%) had a quiz component or embedded questions, including five (31.25%) with a progress indicator. When an answer was presented, the correct answer, with an explanation, was displayed. The answers were color coded, with green and red texts indicating correct and incorrect answers, respectively. The "progress" section tracked the number of questions answered. When all the questions were answered, the student was presented with a "congratulations" message and directed to take the next steps.
- **Multimedia components:** Fourteen (87.5%) of the sixteen NSEOs used multimedia components such as video and audio clips along with text and pictures. Often, students were featured in these videos and sound files. They also narrated quiz segments or embedded questions.
- **Interactivity:** In terms of interactivity, all sixteen NSEOs required that students click the "back/backward," "backward/forward," or menu buttons to navigate the orientation materials. Additional components increased interactivity. For example, some programs were designed in such a way that no "next" or "back" buttons would appear until the sound file was complete. Some programs included similar features with sequential or conditional clicks.
- **Technology:** Many NSEOs included segments on technology—student portals, CMS or LMS systems such as Blackboard, as well as ePortfolio systems. They also required students to use their student ID to complete the orientation.
- **Presentation styles and delivery environments:** Even though all these NSEOs were delivered via the Web, their delivery environments and presentation styles varied. Of the sixteen online programs, ten (62.5%) were dedicated programs, five (31.25%) were similar to traditional web sites, and one (6.25%) was designed in the Moodle Course Management System (CMS).

Additional Discussion

Overall, the twenty online orientation programs can be divided into four categories: dedicated (50 percent), web-based (25 percent), CMS/LMS embedded (5 percent), and pseudo NSEOs (20 percent). They were reviewed according to the following aspects:

Presentation Style

Dedicated NSEOs shared the following characteristics: They often were unique in their presentation style, differing from other web pages on the college's website. The separation from regular websites might help students recognize the orientation program in a formal way. Web-based NSEOs had the benefit of including more content and easy linking to other sections and pages on the colleges' websites even as they risked information overload and sometimes might cause distraction and lose the viewers as they browsed other parts of the websites.

Web-based NSEOs might be relatively easier to implement. Two of the five web-based NSEOs in this study were contained in a frame and were presented in a way that differed from other web pages on the websites. These orientation programs were text heavy even though they also utilized video files, sound clips, and PowerPoint presentations.

Student-Centered Design Features

The study revealed that five of ten dedicated NSEOs—those scored "5" in Table 6—were comprehensive, well-organized, and rich in terms of the information provided. They had good design features, such as a navigation system utilizing "forward" and "backward" buttons as well as menus to permit easy navigation between segments or modules and subcategories within a segment.

Of the sixteen NSEOs, five took a more comprehensive approach in terms of language options, ADA, and assisted learning considerations such as the use of closed captions and scripts. Multimedia elements incorporating text, pictures, sound files, and background music were a prominent part of these NSEOs. In an attempt to keep students focused on the orientation content, these NSEOs minimized the use of URLs and links to external web pages. Interactivity was another primary consideration. Anchors were used to bring in additional screens

within the online orientation environment. Some programs presented tiered or conditional content based on information supplied by the student.

Quizzes or questions were designed to engage students; some NSEOs embedded questions throughout their orientation program. Students were prominently featured in the orientation programs and often narrated or asked the assessment questions. Progress bars were another feature commonly used by each of the NSEOs that scored five points (*see* Table 6). The progress bar provided prompt feedback to students and indicated how well they were answering the embedded questions. Students could view the program segments in any order they wished, though they had to review all the segments in order to complete the whole program.

All of the NSEOs that scored five points included ADA version and language options. Some community colleges are clearly ahead of their peers in their acknowledgment of the needs of the minority and part-time students who comprise a significant portion of their enrollments.

Another notable feature of the five dedicated NSEOs was a timer for each segment. Not only did the timers provide students with information about how long each segment might take, but they also offered students a sense of control of their learning process.

Rigid Navigation and Lack of Timers

The remaining dedicated NSEOs that earned two to three points had easy navigation buttons and multimedia components such as video and audio clips. However, their interactivity and ease of use were not as good as those programs that scored five points. Two of the NSEOs used a linear structure that required that students move sequentially from screen to screen and segment to segment. One NSEO required students to answer all of the questions correctly in order to proceed. This linear structure made the orientation programs rigid, which in turn affected their navigation and interactivity. According to Wozniak, Pizzica and Mahony (2012), it is essential to have clear navigation, "including prompts and supports that acknowledge non-linear pathways of student access" (908). The lack of a timer, such as a sliding bar, made it more difficult for students to gauge their learning and make necessary adjustments.

Information Overflow and Links to Non-Orientation Sites

The study revealed that web-based NSEOs were likely to incorporate too much information, though two also relied heavily on text-based content. It is important to maintain balance between the information included in the orientation and supplemental materials in the orientation environment. Designers of online orientation programs must make informed decisions about format and content, to include determining to what extent external websites should be included and resource guides or student handbooks should be added.

CMS-/LMS-Embedded NSEOs

One NSEO was developed in a Moodle CMS environment. The guest account allowed the author to gain access to the CMS site. Students had to log in with their own accounts, so it was easier to familiarize them with the CMS system. Another benefit was that individual assessment became a real possibility. A downside of the online orientation module was that its segments only included video clips. Nevertheless, with careful consideration, it can be advantageous for students to access orientation content within the CMS environment.

Pseudo NSEOs

The four pseudo NSEOs included in this study included PDF, PowerPoint, and video files. They were relatively easy to implement but lacked interactivity and flexibility. Quizzes were included to assess students' retention of information from the videos. These may represent good first steps toward more comprehensive NSEOs.

Conclusion

This study of 100 randomly selected community colleges and of 20 colleges' accessible e-orientation programs for new students revealed the following:

- Orientation sessions were available in multiple formats—in person, online, or both—but community colleges continued to rely on the traditional face-to-face format.
- New student orientations using the online format continued to be offered by community colleges.
- Presentation and delivery methods of new student e-orientations varied: Community colleges in California tended to offer the most robust NSEO

modules (defined as those with the most comprehensive design features, such as interactivity, multimedia components, language options, ADA and assisted learning considerations, navigation, and ease of use).

- Some NSEOs were delivered via CMS or LMS environment; others were hosted on the institution's website. Web-based NSEOs may be relatively easy to develop, but consideration should be given to rendering them distinct from the rest of the institution's website, particularly given their "flow" and the amount of information to be included.
- Video and sound clips were common elements in the NSEOs. Students often narrated and otherwise appeared in online modules, particularly when soliciting responses to quiz questions. Ease of use and contents are important factors that lead to continued usage, so those designing or revising NSEOs should be sure to include sufficient information to ensure student success without overwhelming them with information (Cho, Cheng and Lai 2009).
- The inclusion of audio and video files narrated by students and embedded images of students suggest that the designers of NSEOs agree that it is critical to understand the student population and to keep key stakeholders involved in the NSEO design and implementation process.

The current study revealed that although the majority of community colleges continue to offer in-person NSOs, NSEOs with varying formats, subject coverage, and features are being implemented and developed. Choosing one format over another is not easy. Additional data on the impact of orientation programs on learning outcomes, retention, and graduation rates need to be collected and analyzed. Future studies may include more in-depth comparisons of orientation programs' formats, delivery methods, and content, as well as the impact of diverse student populations and learning styles on the design of NSOs and NSEOs.

Institutions of higher education recognize the necessity and urgency of utilizing technologies to positively impact core service operations, including new student orientation sessions. This study of 100 community colleges with a focus on 20 colleges offering openly accessible NSEO programs provides a snapshot and systematic analysis of NSOs and NSEOs, including content of the programs and key features pertinent to the preparation of freshmen entering community colleges.

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Reflections on the Hard Work of Mentorship

By Marlo Waters

Many wonderful things can and should be written regarding the pleasures of mentorship. As an individual with experience as both a mentee and a mentor, I can attest to the joy that comes from a productive mentoring relationship. However, there is a reality that is discussed less frequently: Mentoring is hard work that can involve pain and disappointment. Yet it is important to discuss the challenges because our most profound growth can emerge from our deepest difficulties.

In this essay, I will explore four strategies that can be used to deepen a mentoring relationship and tap into this potential for growth: ask and answer difficult questions; seek accountability; make room for failure; and allow personal decisions. These four strategies can be painful and challenging to implement, but the payoff can be significant.

Ask and Answer Difficult Questions

As an assistant registrar, I was fortunate to work for a supervisor who began formally mentoring me in preparation for a career in the profession. As part of this process, she began taking me to certain committee meetings. This allowed me to begin viewing, understanding, and interacting with the governance structure at my institution. One day in Curriculum Committee, I got excited about an idea that was being discussed. I began inserting my ideas with a fair amount of fervor and realized only later that I had dominated the discussion for several minutes as I had gotten carried away by my enthusiasm.

During our next mentoring meeting, I hesitantly asked, "What did you think about my comments during the curriculum meeting last week?" Even though I knew I had been a bit zealous, I was surprised and a bit hurt when she gently informed me that she thought I had been overly vocal and forceful. I was devastated because I felt I had let her down by behaving badly as an invited guest at her committee meeting. I expressed my dismay, and we briefly discussed my behavior. She then chose to focus our conversation on positive methods of communication in the committee setting.

Now that I am a registrar and have served as an active committee member for many years, I can say that my participation style is different from my mentor's: I tend to be a more frequent and vociferous committee member because of my personality. Nonetheless, I needed to learn some important lessons from her that day regarding appropriate methods for interacting with a broader committee. Our discussion remains with me to this day and often reminds me to temper my words.

I frequently return to this anecdote when I think about the mentoring relationship. It took courage for me to ask my mentor for feedback on my behavior, and it took courage for her to provide an honest answer. Either one of us could have avoided a painful conversation by glossing over the topic, but I would have missed a valuable learning experience.

Heartfelt open-ended questions are powerful because they invite a genuine exchange of ideas. It takes time to develop the ability to formulate effective questions and to answer them with honesty and tact. A mentor can model both of these skills. Further, a mentor can provide encouragement and opportunities for the mentee to ask probing questions. Starting with lower-stakes questions can help build trust and confidence. Attention to these strategies can enable both the mentor and the mentee to develop a relationship in which difficult questions are asked openly and answered honestly.

Seek Accountability

After serving as a registrar for several years, I enrolled in a doctoral program in organizational leadership. Students were placed into cohorts with formal "cohort mentors" who served as leadership coaches. One of our first activities was to conduct a 360-degree leadership evaluation through the use of a survey that elicited feedback from our superiors, peers, and employees. At the end of the evaluation, I used the results to compose a detailed leadership development plan for implementation over the next year.

I could have put the plan on a shelf and forgotten it. Haven't we all had such an experience? It is far too easy to neglect a well-developed action plan of any type—personal, strategic departmental, or some other blueprint for improvement. Our best intentions give way to the realities of daily life, and the action plan falls to the bottom of the priority list.

Fortunately, the structure of the academic program did not permit such neglect. For the next year and a half, I met monthly with my mentor. We revisited my plan, discussed my progress, and set new goals. Throughout this process, my mentor gave me the freedom to set and pursue my own goals but then held me accountable for following through on my actions.

This process wasn't always easy. For example, I was disappointed when the initial evaluation revealed that I needed to improve my conflict management skills. In particular, I learned that I needed to be more effective at bringing conflict into the open and addressing unproductive behavior within my department. Over the

next several months, my mentor encouraged me as I sought information, surfaced persistent problems, and held difficult conversations with members of my staff.

During this time, the importance of accountability became clear. There were times when I desperately wanted to avoid painful yet necessary tasks. Had I been on my own, it would have been easy to simply let things slide and continue my previous *modus operandi* of avoiding conflict. Yet I knew that I had to report to my mentor at the end of each month. She gently yet firmly held me accountable for following through on the actions I had outlined, and she encouraged me to celebrate my successes and keep moving forward with my plan.

This type of accountability can be central to a productive mentoring relationship. It is wise to discuss expectations and establish guidelines for this aspect of mentoring. In general, the mentee should be responsible for selecting goals and developing the planned steps for achieving those goals. This allows for personal commitment to the plan. In return, the mentor is responsible for giving advice, encouraging action, and monitoring progress. If the mentee repeatedly fails to follow through with expected behavior, then it soon becomes time for a candid conversation regarding the format of the mentorship. It could be that the current mentoring relationship is not conducive to including accountability for growth, in which case expectations should be recalibrated. However, if both partners are prepared and willing, then mentoring accountability can become a vehicle for significant personal growth.

Make Room for Failure

When I began my first job in an academic records department, I was terrified of making a mistake. During my orientation, I expressed my fear, in reply to which the registrar said, "Don't be paralyzed by fear of mistakes. Any mistake that you make can be fixed—provided you admit your mistake and give me the opportunity to help you handle it." These two statements have guided me throughout my career. My boss was not advising me to be careless or flippant; rather, she was encouraging me to do and to be my best and to be honest when my best efforts fell short of perfection. I now share her advice as part of the orientation of every new staff member in my office.

When I make a mistake, my first instinct is to cover it up so no one else becomes aware of it. And certainly, there are times when minor blunders or oversights can be corrected without the need for intervention. However, there are other times when it is necessary to acknowledge and correct a mistake in a more communal manner given its content and gravity. As hard as it is to acknowledge failure, I have found that doing so becomes easier with practice. With time and experience, we learn that the discomfort of admitting failure is fleeting. Furthermore, it gives way to the long-term serenity that comes from making corrections, offering apologies, and developing a path forward.

A mentor can help with this growth process by offering an environment where there is room for failure. Rather than expecting perfection, a mentor can demonstrate a spirit of calm inquiry when failures come to light. This isn't meant to imply an abdication of accountability; in fact, it is the exact opposite because the mentor helps the mentee take responsibility for the failure. Helpful questions include the following: What factors led to this mistake? What needs to be done to resolve the mistake? Do any apologies need to be made? What steps can be taken in the future to avoid similar mistakes? This type of productive dialogue helps the mentee develop the skills necessary for dealing with failure.

Allow Personal Decisions

A true mentor does not seek to make clones of himself. Instead, he seeks to be of service as the mentee works to become the best possible version of herself. This is a challenging enterprise for a variety of reasons.

First, it requires the mentor to maintain a degree of humility and pay attention to the needs of the other person. A sense of pride and accomplishment often accompanies ascension to the role of "mentor." The title indicates that its bearer has wisdom and experience worthy of transmission to another. Along with this comes the temptation to focus on the mentor's knowledge and accomplishments as the foundation of the mentoring relationship. It is undeniable that a mentor has valuable perspective to share; nonetheless, the mentor's focus should be on using his experience to support the mentee's self-actualization.

Second, it requires the mentee to engage in a rigorous process of self-discovery rather than rely on straightforward answers from an external source. The mentor's experiences and suggestions can provide guidance, but they do not release the mentee from the responsibil-

ity of self-examination. It also involves acknowledging the mentor's fallibility. It is appropriate to respect and esteem one's mentor but dangerous to veer toward idolization and blind obedience.

Third, it requires both the mentor and the mentee to recognize that there will be times of disagreement and disappointment. The mentor may be disappointed by independent decisions the mentee makes; the mentee may be disheartened by the realization that the mentor is not always right. Overall, mentorship is a partnership, and as such it is subject to the failings and imperfections of the individual members. Either member can—and will—make mistakes, and either member can choose to walk away. This inherent risk is not always recognized by participants at the beginning of a mentorship, and this can result in genuine disappointment.

I remember the first time I disagreed fundamentally with a mentor's advice. It was a bit of a shock because I had such high regard for her opinions. I could not understand how my mentor could hold a viewpoint that seemed so patently flawed. And in many ways, I felt I was betraying her by choosing to not follow her advice. But I also knew that I needed to be accountable for my own decisions, so I chose to chart my own path rather than follow hers. This experience was pivotal in my formulation of a more mature viewpoint regarding mentorship and leadership. As I wrestled with my uncertainties and disenchantment, I began to more fully internalize the importance of articulating my own viewpoint on controversial issues. I also learned the value of recognizing differences of opinion and using effective interpersonal communication methods to address those differences.

Conclusion

This essay has explored a variety of ways in which the mentoring relationship can involve challenges and discomfort. Yet my intent is not to discourage participation in such a relationship. In fact, it is quite the opposite! Mentors and mentees are encouraged to incorporate the targeted strategies of asking and answering difficult questions, seeking accountability, making room for failure, and allowing personal decisions. My own experience has convinced me that significant personal growth can result when these types of strategies are incorporated into a mentoring relationship.

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Marlo J. Waters is Registrar at Pacific Union College. She has eleven years of experience in various capacities within the registrar's office, including seven years as the registrar. She holds a B.S. degree in Mathematics, an M.S. in Education with a specialization in Leadership for Higher Education, and an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership. In research, Dr. Waters has focused on exploring and expanding the leadership potential of mid-level administrators within higher education institutions.

Using Mentoring to Encourage Others (and Ourselves)

By Julia Pomerenk and Heather Chermak

At its core, mentoring relationships center on encouragement. Mentors encourage us to take heart and to take the next steps toward our goals.

Encouragement

The gift of encouragement can be presented in three "packages." It gives someone support, confidence, or hope, such as inspiring or invigorating a colleague in a generally uplifting way. We encourage our peers when we notice them and their abilities. Encouragement can be giving a colleague advice—whether in the form of coaxing or prodding—so that she will do (or continue to do) something. We encourage our peers when we prompt them to apply for a new position and when we urge them to pursue their doctoral degrees. Encouragement stimulates an activity, state, or view to develop. We encourage our peers when we champion them for roles in professional organizations and when we nurture their interest in presenting at a conference.

Encouraging Connections

Encouragement grows within connected communities in which individuals care for one another. As Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher, wrote, "The key is to keep company only with people who uplift you, whose presence calls forth your best" (https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/e/epictetus.html). Mentors and friends cheer us up and embolden us to be our best. Kouzes and Posner (1987), classic writers on leadership, promote the importance of social support networks in their classic book, *The Leadership Challenge*. We also should celebrate our supportive communities, as well. Throw a party in appreciation of all those who lend you support. Kouzes and Posner (1987) suggest that we assess and strengthen our social support networks, as necessary. To gauge your social network, answer the questions in Table 1, on page 32. Your network is as strong as a multi-strand rope that is "braided" by the number of people who help you and the number of times you give and receive hospitality and inclusion in groups.

What is a Mentor?

As members of our circles of encouragement, mentors can be defined in particular ways. Webster's New World Dictionary defines a mentor as "a wise advisor." The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a mentor as "a trusted counselor or guide." Mindtools.com defines a mentor as "a trusted adviser and role model" and suggests that the role of mentor can be encompassing, combining other often more limited (and often paid) professional relationships, such as coach, trainer, and consultant. Coaches commonly focus on a specific goal; trainers typically assist in developing a particular skill; consultants often work to help complete a project or work when a person is in transition between positions. Mentors are go-to advisors who we admire and respect. They teach us and open us up to new perspectives. In

Table 1. Assessing Your Social Support Network

With how many co-workers do you discuss job hassles?	None (or unemployed)	0	
	One or two	3	3
	Two or three	4	
	Four or more	5	
With how many neighbors do you trade favors?	None	0	
	One	1	
	Two or three	2	2
	Four or more	3	
Do you have a spouse or partner?	No	0	
	Several different partners	2	
	One steady partner	6	
	Married or living with someone	10	10
How often do friends and family visit you at home?	Rarely	0	
	About once a month	1	
	Several times a month	4	4
	Once a week or more	8	
With how many friends do you discuss personal matters?	None	0	
	One or two	6	6
	Three to five	8	
	Six or more	10	
How often do you participate in a social, community, or sports group?	Rarely	0	0
	About once a month	1	
	Several times a month	2	
	Once a week or more	4	
Total Score			**25**

Add the numbers next to each item you circled. If your score is:

- **Less than 15:** Your social support network is weak and probably does not provide much support. Consider making more social contacts.
- **15–29:** Your support network has moderate strength and is likely to provide enough support except during periods of high stress.
- **30 or more:** Your support network is strong and is likely to support your well-being even during periods of high stress.

Source: Kouzes and Posner 1987.

Mentoring without Barriers, Emelo (2013) suggests that "at its heart mentoring is learning from others' experiences" (3).

Types of Mentoring

When we think of mentoring, we usually picture individual mentoring with a wiser, older mentor and a less experienced, younger protégé. We picture this pair meeting face to face over a period of time, until all needed lessons are learned. (Think of Yoda and Luke Skywalker.) Other images of individual mentoring exist. Exercise buddies—friends who vow to meet at the gym daily at 6 a.m. to support each other's best fitness intentions—can be seen as providing mutual mentoring. Peers can provide similar mentoring, as when colleagues prompt each other to create staff development programs for their offices. Meaningful mentoring can cover different spans of time, as well. Mentors may be trusted counselors who are available "just in time" for quick consultations and/or over a longer period of time for ongoing evaluations. AACRAO colleagues may respond rapidly—in time for a 4 p.m. meeting with the provost—when we need to know what curriculum management systems they use. Long-term assessment of our strengths (and weaknesses) can be forthcoming from that mentor who knows us best and who has known us longest.

Beyond individual mentoring, groups of individuals may be mentored together by one or more mentors. If

we are supervisors or directors, we hope that we are providing some mentoring within our areas. Long-term employees often mentor newer employees with regard to office procedures and protocols. Given that newer employees may have advanced technology skills, they can teach us a lot about current practices and products through "reverse mentoring." E-mentoring is also gaining popularity; such relationships provide support and training for individuals via social media and other technological tools.

Benefits of Mentoring

Given their multifaceted roles, mentors provide many benefits. They make themselves and their experiences available to others. They share their knowledge, expertise, skills, and insights. Mentors pay attention to us, and they help us strengthen our abilities. We, in turn, pay attention to mentors and their abilities. Through their teaching and role modeling, we develop leadership, communication, and motivational skills. In the mentoring relationship, we depend upon trusted individuals who create a safe space for our ideas. We learn new perspectives from our mentors and from ourselves as we are prompted and supported to think out loud. We gain confidence in ourselves and in our knowledge and skills. Our mentors build our professional network by introducing us to their peers and colleagues.

Finding a Mentor

Mentors may be found in any group of people with whom you interact. You may be able to follow the arrows on your organizational chart to find your ideal mentor. Your supervisor may serve as your mentor, or a more experienced colleague may. Your institution may initiate professional development or leadership development opportunities with mentoring as a feature. Someone you admire within your professional organization may serve as your mentor. Some professional organizations establish mentoring connections among their members, whether short term (*e.g.*, for the length of a conference) or long term (*e.g.*, for the duration of your tenure in a certain position or mentoring program). Though less formal, it may be much more common for colleagues to form their own mentoring relationships with more experienced members who encourage the professional development of newer members of the group.

Outside work settings, mentors may be identified within community groups, volunteer organizations, or social circles. The head of the Parent Teacher Association may run really good meetings, and you may want to learn that skill from her. The coordinator of the local food bank may organize and appreciate volunteers particularly well, and you may want to model your administrative abilities on his. Your neighbors may welcome newcomers and wrap them in the rhythm of the area with great enthusiasm, and you may want to model your employee orientation program on such an approach. Look around your organization to see where opportunities are available for you. Also remember to connect with others at conferences that you attend. You never know where you might find a potential mentor!

Overcoming Mentoring's Flaws

Mentoring, marvelous as it can be, is not magical. We need to take responsibility for making a mentoring relationship successful—including overcoming common mentoring flaws. After you find a mentor, some additional elements need to be added. Rockquemore (2016), president and CEO of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, pointed out the potential flaws of mentoring in her article "Most mentoring today is based on an outdated model." Mentoring should move beyond magical thinking. You and your mentor should create some structure. Answering the following questions provided by Rockquemore can help you and your mentor build a solid foundation for your growth:

- How often will you meet?
- What skills will you work together to improve?
- How will you gauge your progress?
- What qualities about your mentor do you want to emulate?
- What qualities about yourself can your mentor encourage?
- Do you and your mentor enjoy each other's company?
- Does your mentor bring out your best?

Writing about mentoring's constraints, Rockquemore (2016) reminds us that everyone's time and energy are limited. Mentoring takes time and energy from both the mentor and the protégé. Time and energy de-

voted to the mentoring relationship will not be available for other relationships or responsibilities, so a conscious commitment must be made. Rockquemore (2016) also notes that a commitment to a mentoring relationship constitutes more than meeting for coffee and exchanging anecdotes. Mentoring is more purposeful than a pleasant social interaction.

Using Mentoring to Meet Multiple Needs

Rockquemore (2016) asks us to take responsibility for our success. Mentors cannot make us successful. They can only help us develop into more successful versions of ourselves, however we define success. Because we may need to develop many skills and abilities in order to be successful, we need to build a network of many mentors. Rockquemore (2016) lists a number of needs that may be met through mentoring (though likely not through only one mentor):

- Professional development
- Emotional support
- Intellectual community
- Role modeling
- Creation of a safe space
- Accountability
- Sponsorship
- Access to opportunities
- Substantial feedback

Using Mentoring at Many Stages

Mentoring may be helpful at any stage of our lives and careers, but it may be most meaningful after lower-level needs have been met. That is, it may be most appropriate as we reach for the top of Maslow's pyramid—toward self-actualization. Mentors may help us develop the many traits at our own "top": morality, creativity, spontaneity, acceptance, purpose, meaning, and inner potential. Mentors may encourage us to be our very best selves.

In fact, mentoring may aid us at all levels of Maslow's development theory, from physiological needs, to safety and security, to love and belonging, to self-esteem, and through self-actualization. Mentors connected with social services can help us meet physiological needs for shelter and food. Co-workers can help us remember to eat lunch and take breaks. Mentors in our profession can help us find employment and meet needs for safety and security. Once employed, orientation mentors can help us feel that we are loved and that we belong in our new work environment. Once connected to our work environment, sponsor mentors can help us develop self-esteem and build confidence. Mentors can help guide us through all of the stages of our lives and careers.

Environments That Support Mentoring

The seeds of a strong mentoring relationship need the good soil of a supportive environment if they are to thrive. The environment should encourage mentoring by including as many supportive characteristics as possible. The mentor and protégé should each have access to resources, starting with each other's time and attention and (perhaps) a structure that suggests mentoring as a needed, beneficial relationship. The mentor and protégé will work best in a work environment that supports collaboration—that encourages (and rewards) individuals to solve problems together, to take risks together, and to accept differing ideas.

Your current work environment may need to change to better support mentoring and other collaborative professional development opportunities. Consider Kotter's (1996) research regarding what leads to successful change:

- Establish a sense of urgency.
- Create the guiding coalition.
- Develop a change vision.
- Communicate the vision for buy-in.
- Empower broad-based action.
- Generate short-term wins.
- Never let up.
- Incorporate changes into the culture.

Improvisation and Mentoring

Mentoring comes with many guidelines, but it has no rules or strict directions. Rather, mentoring is improvisation at its best. As Colbert (2011) described in his commencement address at Northwestern University, we serve each other in improvisation. We can serve others through mentoring, as well. Like improvisation, mentoring is not about winning (or losing). No individual person is the most important; rather, everyone is paying attention to everyone else and to the evolv-

ing interaction. Each player watches the others intently, looking for the opportunity to step into the scene to propel the action forward *but not to steal the attention.* One player may indicate, "I've got this. Let me help." Each person serves the other and the common concept of "the scene" (or situation). With the improvisation scene as a metaphor for our lives, the quality of the connection and the communication throughout the scene influences the quality of the scene.

What Prompts Us to Step Into Mentoring?

Taking on a new position—whether at work, through a professional association, or for a community organization—can be one prompt to try mentoring. The new position may demand new or enhanced skills or require a higher level of organizational knowledge. We are wise to realize that we can learn a lot from long-time colleagues who may be in subordinate positions in the organizational chart. A new position may require us to build new partnerships and alliances. A great way to do so is through service on committees and projects. To accomplish organizational goals, we often need to collaborate and share ideas across our organization. Do we know someone who seems to create connections naturally? Alternatively, encouragement may be what we crave most when we accept a new position. Could we be mentored by that colleague who always seems upbeat and enthusiastic?

Mentoring may be offered along with the new position. If it is not, then we may need to seek to establish a mentoring relationship. Taking on a new project can be another prompt for entering into a mentoring relationship. Many of us have been mentored by consultants and colleagues during the implementation of new technology. Taking on a new perspective can be another, more personal prompt for reaching out to a mentor. Perhaps you have a friend who practices yoga or meditation who will mentor you in mindfulness.

Taking the First Steps as a Protégé

For all the benefits of mentoring, we first must do what might seem most difficult: Ask someone to be our mentor. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "You must do the thing you think you cannot do" (1960, 29–30). You must desire to learn; to challenge yourself; to be curious; to be truly ready for a mentoring relationship. Here are four steps for getting started as a protégé:

- Identify what you want to develop (*e.g.*, skills, relationships, organizational knowledge, encouragement, etc.).
- Establish support to take the risk.
- Identify who can be your mentor.
- Plan how to invite that individual to be your mentor.

Taking the First Steps as a Mentor

For all the expectations placed on a mentor, we again must first do what might seem most difficult: Say "yes" to serving as a mentor. When we feel we still have so much to learn ourselves, it can be daunting to be asked to be a mentor. We may feel we are neither experienced enough nor sufficiently wise. Here are six steps to get you started as a mentor (Tiao, 2016):

- Set expectations from the start.
- Develop the protégé's capabilities, as you are able to.
- Provide your particular perspective.
- Inspire and encourage your protégé's initiative.
- Give and receive feedback.
- Introduce your protégé to other potential mentors.

Creating a Mentoring Circle

Because no one mentor can meet all our needs, we are wise to create mentoring circles to encourage our success and skills throughout our lives. Together and over time, our mentoring circles can provide what we need when we need it. The list of needs can be as diverse as the individual. Consider drafting your own list of characteristics for your own mentoring circle by completing this sentence: "My mentors should…."

A sample list might include any of the following: My mentor should…

- believe in me.
- listen and give direction.
- provide access to resources and information.
- supply me with honest feedback.
- be open-minded and compassionate.
- be better than I am at the ability I need to improve.
- have patience with me.

- be impatient with me.
- serve as a role model.
- care about our mentoring relationship.
- be available over time.
- be available just in time.
- help me have fun.

Encouraging Next Steps

If you want the benefits of mentoring, then tailor mentoring to your needs and situation. How can mentoring help you grow, right now, personally and professionally? Who can help you grow, right now, personally and professionally? As you draft a list of possible mentors, be sure to celebrate those who encircle you as potential, past, and current mentors. Think of those you could invite into your mentoring circle. Create an environment—as far as your influence shines—that encourages yourself and others to enter mentoring relationships. Acknowledge that even small acts can ripple into ever-increasing seas of encouragement. As Buscaglia (1972) writes, "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around" (p. 127).

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The Power of Many: Mentoring Networks for Growth and Development

By Lynn Wild, Anne Marie Canale, Cheryl Herdklotz

In higher education, as in many professions, employees new to their positions are advised to seek a *mentor*—an experienced individual who knows the profession and the academy *and* is invested in his or her mentee's success. Mentoring has long been recognized as an effective method for enabling new employees to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to successfully discharge their responsibilities; in addition, mentors can help new employees better understand the organizational culture and institution-specific norms. Increased professional demands on new employees today make rapid integration into their careers and the culture more vital than ever before (Ensher, Thomas and Murphy 2001). For many reasons (discussed within this article), the single mentor of years past has given way to a *mentoring network*. The *network* has emerged as an efficient and valuable way for new employees to gain the skills and knowledge they need.

This article describes the development of a comprehensive mentoring program for faculty. The program evolved to include the design and use of alternative mentoring models and employs strategies easily adapted for staff and administrators.

Mentoring Network

A mentoring network is based on the premise that no single individual possesses all of the experience and expertise a new employee needs to plan and develop a successful career. New and experienced faculty at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) are encouraged to develop a constellation of "mentoring partners" who assist one another in non-hierarchical, collaborative partnerships, each contributing according to his or her own knowledge and experience. This mentoring model can be both broader and more flexible than the traditional model and often provides "'just-in-time' advice and guidance" (Sorcinelli and Yun 2007).

While the initial impetus for the creation of the Faculty Mentoring Network at RIT was to provide mentoring for minority and women faculty, it became apparent that a mentoring program should be inclusive of all faculty because all can benefit from the guidance a mentoring program can provide. The network now includes many mentoring configurations: one on one, peer groups, and facilitator groups, to name a few. It was also determined that utilizing some forms of reward and recognition for individuals who serve as mentors would drive the success of the program (The Faculty Mentoring Network at RIT Report to the Provost 2010).

Mentoring Opportunities and Approaches

In addition to developing the traditional mentor-mentee relationship, the mentoring program at RIT includes:

- *Guidance from a peer or "near peers"*—colleagues who are close in career level and who have had similar experiences (Sorcinelli and Yun 2007).

These relationships often continue until a particular career goal is met, *e.g.*, gaining tenure.

- *A peer mentoring group* brought together by similar needs, such as developing a research agenda or teaching improvement. In peer mentoring, faculty groups meet and network with peers across departments and colleges in order to work on specific objectives, such as increased dissemination of scholarly work. Feedback from program participants repeatedly shows that one of the most positive and rewarding aspects of peer mentoring and participating in a peer network is that it enables individuals with a particular skill set or knowledge to help others and so contribute to the overall development of a group of colleagues, resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship.

> **"Mentoring is always a worthwhile experience. It is the most rewarding and satisfying part of my job."**
>
> RIT Mentor Satisfaction Survey, 2015

- *A mentoring group led by one or two experienced faculty members*. In a group meeting format, everyone has opportunities to ask questions and learn from the mentor(s). Mentoring groups may exist for an academic year or may continue for a longer period of time.
- *"Ad hoc" mentors.* These individuals have specialized knowledge that is needed "in the moment," such as using an academic technology or working effectively with a book editor. Ad hoc mentors may exist outside of the university and may include former teachers, professional associations, or former colleagues. Typically, they participate in short-term, project-based relationships.

Ensuring Success and Fostering Accountability

At the university level, the Faculty Career Development (FCD) team created resources and support for mentors, mentees, and administrators and promoted the idea of mentoring networks as an expansion and enhancement of traditional college-based mentor-mentee relationships.

Mentoring Guides

Web-based guidebooks offering resources, tools, guidelines, and clarification of the different types of mentoring roles (*i.e.*, mentee, mentor, and administrator) were created (*see* rit.edu/facultydevelopment/faculty-mentoring/overview).

Small Grants Program

The university has invested financially in the mentoring model. A small grants program offers mentoring groups support for one project or activity annually. The goal is for faculty to participate in activities or projects that will help the mentoring group become successful. Since the program's inception, more than 45 mentoring groups have received an average of $2,000 each for projects such as interdisciplinary research, gender-specific mentoring, grant writing, book clubs, guest speakers, and workshops.

The following are examples of successful mentoring projects:

- A senior lecturer in the College of Science was awarded a grant to implement a new mentoring model specifically for non-tenure-track faculty. The funds enabled her to invite guest speakers from another university to share their experiences so that a similar model could be developed at RIT. The new mentoring model was put in place to assist faculty with promotion, scholarship and teaching, professional development, and pedagogy and recently was expanded to include department faculty at all ranks.
- A unique idea for a faculty mentoring program was developed by an associate professor in the College of Liberal Arts who founded and continues to lead the Psychology Women and Gender Minority Mentoring Group. Like the peer-to-peer model, this group is inclusive in its involvement of a group of faculty at the junior, senior, and non-tenure-track levels who work together to identify common goals and provide mutual support, advice, and encouragement.
- The Untenured Faculty Accelerated Scholarship Team (UFAST) is a notable mentoring model within the College of Applied Science and Tech-

nology. RIT faculty developed a variation of the peer mentoring model in which a group of peers share and track research, scholarship, and grant-related activities and projects for everyone in the group. The group meets monthly so members can learn from one another. Because this peer mentoring network focuses on expectations for scholarly performance, the meetings keep members on track and accountable. Team members have cited the group's support as an important resource that results in members' accomplishing their desired goals (*e.g.*, published research and invited conference presentations) (Garrick *et al.* 2010).

Faculty Success Series

A key strategy to assist faculty in building mentoring networks at RIT is a "faculty success series"—social and/or learning events held throughout the academic year. These annual offerings include workshops, seminars, training, and networking opportunities. A recent example for career development was a workshop entitled "Evolving Your Career: Managing Transitions" that focused on customizing a career guide or blueprint for directing one's career.

A two-and-a-half-day orientation program prepares new faculty to "hit the ground running." The program's presentations and interactive sessions welcome new faculty and introduce them to the resources, people, systems, and materials they will need to succeed. At the start of the academic year, new faculty are introduced to the calendar of networking and community-building events and are encouraged to attend. One such event is the annual "Power Reception," which offers new faculty the opportunity to continue to build their network of RIT administrators, deans, and key staff.

The faculty success series is designed for all faculty ranks, including a large and growing group of adjunct faculty. In fact, an adjunct faculty mentoring community was created and supported through professional development and networking. This community comes together to network, to share conversation about topics they identify, to learn about resources specific to their needs, and to provide guidance and support for the concerns and challenges they encounter.

Provost's Award for Excellence in Faculty Mentoring

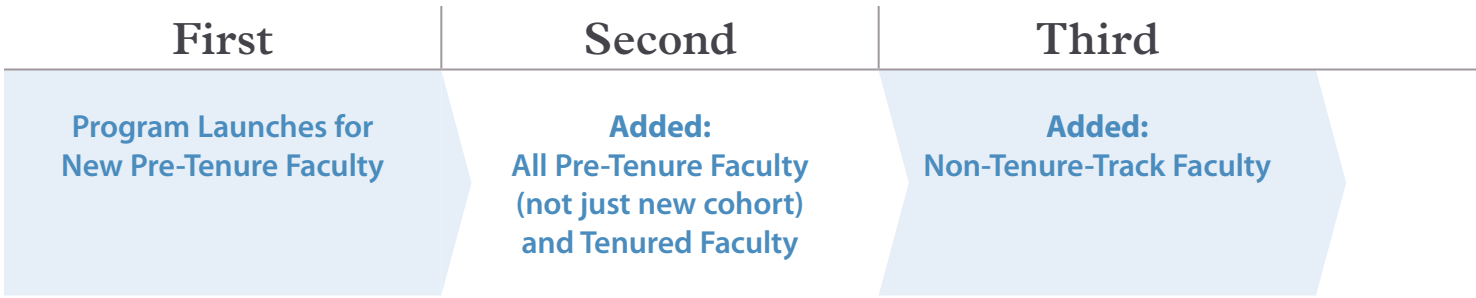
A new award was established to recognize an individual professor who demonstrates an outstanding commitment to faculty mentoring by actively helping non-tenure and tenure-track faculty develop their careers at RIT. These exemplary mentors are nominated by their mentees, who describe the advice, feedback, guidance, and often extraordinary efforts of the mentor to ensure their success. Since the award's inception, sixteen faculty members have received it.

> **"One of the strengths of our mentoring group is its diversity in including faculty at all different stages of career and family lives. The value has come from having representation of a variety of viewpoints and our desire to find multiple pathways to success for our members."**
>
> RIT Grant Recipient, 2015

Program Evaluation and Expansion

In response to data collected from a variety of sources (such as surveys, questionnaires, at-event feedback, focus groups, and mentoring project grant outcomes), the Faculty Mentoring at RIT program has evolved and expanded each year. In its first year, the program supported only pre-tenure faculty. In its second year, invitations were extended to pre-tenure and tenured faculty to allow for more informal networking and potential ad hoc mentoring relationships. The third year was significant because the program was expanded to include RIT's non-tenure-track faculty, i.e., lecturers; this was due to an increase in the total number of new hires such that it equaled the number of tenure-track faculty. The most recent enhancement to RIT's program was the addition of the adjunct mentoring community (*see* Figure 1, on page 40).

Figure 1. **Incremental Changes to Faculty Populations Served, by Year**



In addition to expanding and improving the mentoring program, and due to the outstanding caliber of project requests for mentoring grants, additional funds were contributed such that the original amount allocated to the program was nearly tripled. Together, these changes have strengthened the program and broadened awareness of the value of RIT's faculty mentoring program, reflecting the institution's commitment to faculty success and its mission of ongoing support at all stages of the career continuum.

Self-Advocacy

A wide range of support resources for faculty exists at both the institute and college levels. Faculty are encouraged to act as "self-agents" in finding and taking advantage of networking opportunities. Faculty members' personal commitment and determination to find and connect with mentors—and to serve as mentors to their peers—accelerates their integration into the RIT community.

> **"We've found that together as a group we can help each other solve any problems."**
>
> RIT Grant Recipient, 2015

While mentoring alone cannot provide employees with all of the support, community-building, and competency development they may require to be successful, it is nevertheless a vital component of their development. Employees who invest time and energy in their mentoring relationships are much more likely to obtain information and guidance and to benefit from the experiences of others than are their peers who try to "go it alone."

Mentoring Among Staff

Faculty are not alone in creating networks for success on today's university campuses. It behooves all departments and service units to establish a mentoring opportunity for staff. Mentoring should be built in from the initial on-boarding stage throughout staff members' careers. Administrators and supervisors can utilize resources such as guidebooks, articles, and orientation materials, and veteran staff members can draw on their hard-earned wisdom to create a range of learning experiences so that staff become proficient at their jobs. This will result in more satisfied staff members and may increase retention.

Mentoring for staff might include working with an individual or network to identify answers to questions about a particular department or the campus community as a whole. A mentor could serve as an advocate or could provide information about the organizational climate and opportunities for growth and career advancement. Mentoring can and should become part of an ongoing annual plan of work to ensure that competencies are built and strengthened; such relationships can contribute much to successful and rewarding careers. Seeking appropriate mentoring opportunities to guarantee that job role expectations are met or surpassed is one way to guarantee success and may enhance advancement opportunities.

Fourth	Fifth
Added: Adjunct Mentoring Group	**All RIT Faculty Included in Mentoring Program**

Recently, RIT's Center for Professional Development created a series of podcasts specifically related to mentoring (rit.edu/fa/cpd/podcast). The series presents the personal "road to success" stories of select faculty and staff. Although the individual speakers present a wide array of professional and faculty perspectives, they all attribute their success to having had a mentor. Successful mentoring relationships are key to career success and help lay the foundation for a positive work environment.

Conclusion

Whether it includes peer groups or facilitated groups, any successful mentoring program should include one-on-one and group mentoring. Providing multiple mentoring types and a variety of mentors can lend a wider perspective and help create a well-rounded and engaged campus community. The benefit of increased retention of faculty and staff is a win-win for universities, leading to a better and more productive workforce that is positively engaged.

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Equity and Access: Strengthening College Gateway Programs with Credentials

By Rodney Parks, Jesse Parrish, and Melissa Holmes

The information economy of the 21st century demands workers who can navigate immense, interconnected systems and apply adaptive problem-solving techniques. Advances in telecommunications, transportation, and knowledge dissemination have catapulted our collective output into unprecedented levels of complexity and vastly outpace the ability of our nation's primary and secondary schools to educate students accordingly. Along with the closely related phenomenon of globalization, this progress all but necessitates that individuals enroll in postsecondary education to ensure their success and self-actualization.

As postsecondary credentials become even more essential to bridge education programs and career pathways, it is critical to reevaluate expectations regarding the transition from high school to college. More specifically, it must be determined how best to support students in marginalized populations that historically have been less likely to attend university. Low-income students with no family history of college enrollment typically lack the education and support systems to help them navigate the transition to college. Without targeted intervention, the achievement gap is sure to widen. Many higher education institutions have designed gateway programs to assist local student populations with the transition to college. Programs such as those at Donnelly College and Community College of Philadelphia help students start their college experience while they are still enrolled in high school. Yet few institutions document such education in the form of an academic credential outside of regular college courses earned through joint enrollment.

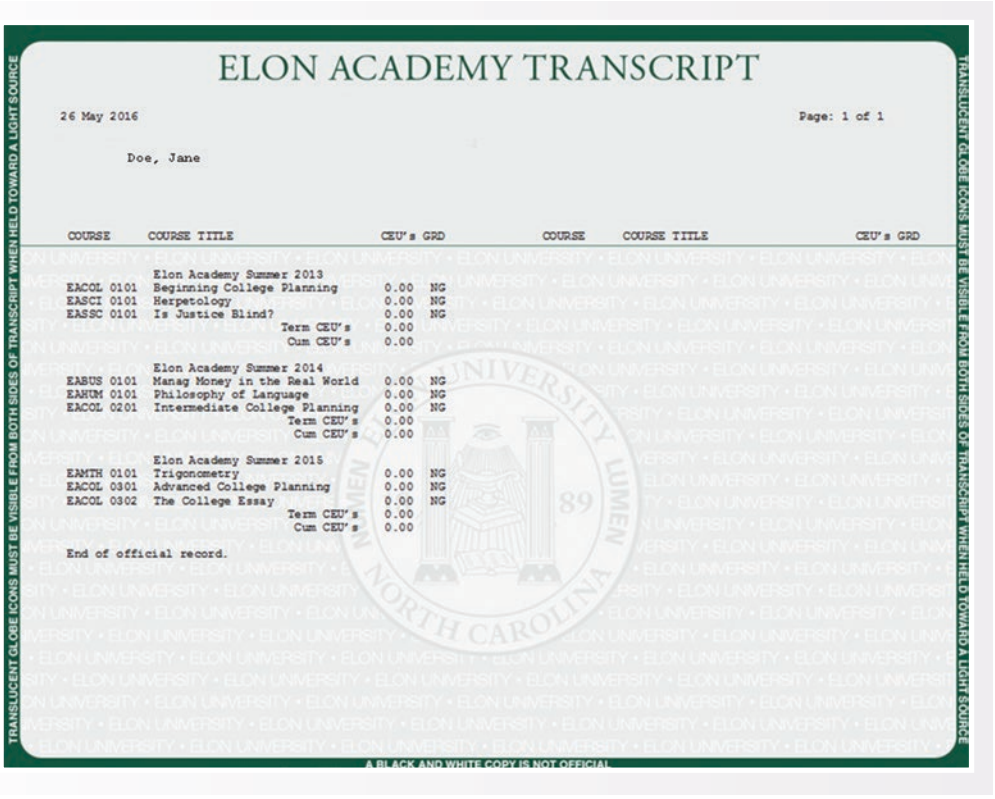
In summer 2007, Elon University established Elon Academy, an intensive college access program focused on academic enrichment, leadership development, and family involvement. The program serves academically promising high school students with significant financial need and/or no family history of college—both common barriers to obtaining a college degree. The academy's mission is to support these students as they prepare to pursue higher education, to build their leadership skills, and to help them develop a sense of social responsibility. The program prepares students and their families to meet the financial, academic, personal, and social challenges related to the transition to college.

The residential program mirrors college life by offering academic classes; co-curricular, service, and cultural experiences; college planning; and college visits. University faculty, high school teachers, and community members teach classes while college students serve as teaching assistants and mentors. All classes integrate reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills and emphasize the development of collaborative, organizational, time management, and study skills to increase participants' likelihood of success in both high school and college.

Students do not receive credit for training. And few, if any, colleges and universities document such learning on a credential. However, as learning pathways and the credentials that represent them increase in number and

Figure 1.

Elon Academy Transcript



ELON ACADEMY TRANSCRIPT

26 May 2016 Page: 1 of 1

Doe, Jane

COURSE	COURSE TITLE	CEU's	GRD	COURSE	COURSE TITLE	CEU's	GRD
	Elon Academy Summer 2013						
EACOL 0101	Beginning College Planning	0.00	NG				
EASCI 0101	Herpetology	0.00	NG				
EASSC 0101	Is Justice Blind?	0.00	NG				
	Term CEU's	0.00					
	Cum CEU's	0.00					
	Elon Academy Summer 2014						
EABUS 0101	Manag Money in the Real World	0.00	NG				
EAHUM 0101	Philosophy of Language	0.00	NG				
EACOL 0201	Intermediate College Planning	0.00	NG				
	Term CEU's	0.00					
	Cum CEU's	0.00					
	Elon Academy Summer 2015						
EAMTH 0101	Trigonometry	0.00	NG				
EACOL 0301	Advanced College Planning	0.00	NG				
EACOL 0302	The College Essay	0.00	NG				
	Term CEU's	0.00					
	Cum CEU's	0.00					

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variety, prior learning assessments will become more common. It is possible that Elon Academy students could ultimately earn academic credit for the courses they complete, increasing their self-confidence and their likelihood of completing a postsecondary credential.

In pursuit of these noble goals, Elon's Office of the Registrar developed a new credential to document academy students' learning experiences. Adopting foundational elements of the institution's recently redesigned experiential transcript, the new Elon Academy transcript confirms that its graduates are capable and prepared for life after high school. It also serves as an attainment upon which its recipients can reflect and by which they can communicate the significance of their academic experiences.

Evolution of the Transcript

Continuing education and associated transcripts have existed for decades. Such programs are frequently beyond the purview of the registrar, but the underlying data structures of related transcripts are quite similar. Although many registrars work with inflexible information systems that were designed without a vision for future expansion, there is always room for innovation. Rather than simply representing completion of a collection of non–credit bearing courses, the Elon Academy transcript is designed to evolve should the university add other lifelong learning programs. For example, the course prefix for each Elon Academy course begins with "EA" and is followed by a three-character prefix to represent traditional academic disciplines (see below). Should Elon decide to launch new programs, the first two characters—*e.g.*, PE for professional education programs, CE for community education courses, or HW for health and wellness courses—could represent them without cannibalizing number ranges from other programs.

Because this transcript is a digital-first credential, the watermark, color scheme, and other aesthetic elements can be changed to represent a more comprehensive name, such as Elon Institute of Learning or Elon Continuing Education.

This credential can be combined with others to represent the depth of the student experience at Elon. For example, Elon Academy students perform a minimum of four hours of community service each summer at different locations. Thus, they could receive an Elon Academy transcript as well as an Elon Experiences transcript to submit with their college admission applications (*see* Figure 2, on page 46).

Even without awarding credit for prior learning, admissions officers can use this record to gain a better understanding of an applicant and the experiences that have prepared him for college-level work. It could also strengthen the case for a more generous financial aid award or inform conversations with counselors as they identify curricular paths for individual students. The credential could certify legitimate, verifiable academic and service-related experiences. Lumina Foundation president and CEO says:

> *The vital step in meeting this exploding demand for talent—the indispensable step, we at Lumina Foundation are convinced—is to significantly increase postsecondary attainment rates, especially among students who represent our future as a nation: non-white students, working adults, first-generation students, and low-income students.* (Merisotis 2016)

Elon's registrar's office seeks to aid these students by offering innovative credentialing. Elon Academy enrolls first-generation and low-income students, providing them the opportunity to experience the collegiate atmosphere and igniting their desire to pursue higher education. It operates a parallel program for family members, equipping them with the knowledge and tools necessary to support their students during this major transition. In addition to successfully preparing and promoting its cohorts, Elon's provision of unique, institutionally verified credentials will advantage its students in their subsequent pursuit of higher education.

Given Elon Academy's goal of preparing students for higher education, what better way to certify their learning than by providing a transcript comparable to that earned by college students? Creating courses, course descriptions, and an academic credential enculturates an expectation of success in postsecondary education.

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Figure 2.

Elon Experiences Transcript

ELON EXPERIENCES TRANSCRIPT

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT • INTERNSHIPS • LEADERSHIP • SERVICE • UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

STUDY ABROAD/STUDY USA

Elon University validates all information presented on a student's Elon Experiences Transcript. Validation occurs within each program responsible for the experience and is then maintained in a centralized system. Students do not personally enter any experiences onto their Elon Experiences Transcript. The Elon Experiences Transcript is an official document of Elon University.

Name: Jane Sally Doe
Degree: AB - Bachelor of Arts
Major(s): English
Minor(s): Political Science

STUDY ABROAD

Winter	2012	Studies in Costa Rica/ELR	Semester
Winter	2013	Science in London/ELR	Semester

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Spring	2011	Elon Service Day	4 hours
Spring	2011	Cummings High School	3 hours
Spring	2011	ElonTHON	24 hours
Spring	2011	Service Learning	40 hours
Fall	2011	Blood Drive	0.5 hour
Spring	2012	Boys and Girls Club	1 hour
Spring	2012	Alpha Chi Omega	6 hours
Fall	2012	Alpha Chi Omega	2 hours
Fall	2012	Alpha Chi Omega	3 hours
Fall	2012	Habitat for Hummanity	3 hours
Spring	2013	ElonTHON	24 hours

INTERNSHIPS/CO-OPS

Summer	2012	Washington Center Internship	160 hours
Spring	2012	Internship with Gallup	260 hours

LEADERSHIP

Spring	2011	Resident Student Association	Vice-President
Fall	2011	Alpha Chi Omega	New Member Educat
Spring	2012	Alpha Chi Omega	New Member Educat
Fall	2012	SPARKS	Peer Educator
Spring	2013	SPARKS	Peer Educator
Spring	2013	Orientation	Head Staff
Fall	2013	Alpha Chi Omega	Vice-President
Spring	2014	Alpha Chi Omega	Vice-President

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Spring	2012	Elon Research Forum
Fall	2012	Research in English
Fall	2013	Research in English
Spring	2014	Research in English

About the Authors

Rodney Parks is the Registrar and Assistant to the Provost at Elon University. Dr. Parks also serves as an Assistant Professor of Human Services. Over the years, he has led efforts to expand the academic record to capture a comprehensive picture of the student four-year experience. His work to expand the transcript led to Elon's selection on the AACRAO sponsored Lumina Grant project.

Jesse Parrish is Assistant Registrar of Communications at Elon University where he has served since 2015. Mr. Parrish has contributed to multiple publications and book chapters during his short tenure at Elon University and has a passion for mentoring undergraduate research students.

Melissa Holmes is an Assistant Registrar for Technology. Mrs. Holmes has contributed to multiple publications in the office focused on new technologies and sensitive social issues in higher education.

FORUM | Commentary

Reigniting the Promise of the Transfer Pathway

By Stephen J. Handel

Community college transfer—rooted in the notion that *any* individual, regardless of background or academic preparation, could enroll at an open access college, transfer to a four-year institution, and earn a bachelor's degree—is the most transformative educational experiment of the century. Even for a nation that prides itself on second chances, the transfer process is exceptional.

But there are two major problems with this generous perspective: First, community college transfer is *not* an experiment; it is a practice more than 100 years old. Second, transfer was a transformative idea *in the last century*, not this one.

Despite the progressive intentions of its founders, the transfer process in the United States still underperforms. Far more community college students wish to transfer than ever do (Bailey, Jaggers and Jensen 2015; Handel 2013a, 2013b). The discrepancy between students' intentions and their educational reality is more than disappointing. It is evidence of our lower expectations for students who attend two-year institutions (Handel 2015).

Part of the problem is the way in which community colleges in this country are supported, which in turn affects the extent to which they are able to serve students' educational expectations. Hobbled by insufficient support by state governments and humbled by their placement on the lowest rung of the higher education hierarchy, these colleges still enroll nearly half of all U.S. undergraduates (American Association of Community Colleges 2016). Community colleges' open access mission—their defining characteristic and the most majestic element of their democratic mission—has been undercut by withering criticism that they are revolving door institutions from which most students never earn a degree or credential.

It is a distressing story, especially for those who benefitted from a community college education during the great expansion of these institutions in the 1970s. More than three decades ago, I attended Cosumnes River College in Sacramento. It was not my first choice (I had my sights set unreasonably on UC Berkeley). But my experience at that community college was intellectually transformative thanks to my instructors:

- Donna Sparks taught me public speaking, stressing that there was no substitute for practice and no excuse for boring an audience. She also taught me the power of rhetoric that is both ethical and charismatic (a necessary reminder in every presidential election year).
- Arnie Zimbelman, my favorite history instructor, revealed on the first day of class that his own political views were just "left of center" as he invited us to take exception if his perspective did not accord with the historical record.
- Jean Harris, my English 1A composition instructor, made me appreciate the importance of criticism as represented by red pencil marks. "Get used to it," she would say with a smile. Never have my academic failures been so cordially and objectively communicated—and never so productively.

Cosumnes River College, a place of intellectual stimulation, gracious collegiality, and plenty of free parking, was a starting point for me. After two years, I transferred to California State University, Sacramento. The transfer process was relatively painless. "Sac State" catered to transfer students. The institution welcomed me and made me feel I was part of its fabric from the outset.

Today, however, I fear that the transformative momentum of the transfer promise has stalled. States invest far less in higher education than ever before. The national college completion agenda seems to have lost political traction. And the triumphant spirit of America's community colleges seems to have faded as the institutions are called upon to educate students whose challenges often center on earning money for gas rather than making the dean's list.

Four-year institutions also face significant challenges. One is the inconsistent (and occasionally shabby) treatment of transfer students. Many colleges and universities refuse to admit community college transfer students in large numbers, as if these students had not earned a place in their laboratories, libraries, and classrooms. Such a perspective, however, ignores decades of research showing that transfer students who successfully traverse the transfer chasm—a hurdle in itself—often do as well as, if not better than, first-year students (Bowen, Chingos and McPherson 2009).

Far from discouraging transfer students, four-year institutions should embrace them, if only to ensure a steady stream of enrollees as the nation's high school graduation rate flattens. For example, Hispanic students, the fastest-growing of the nontraditional college-going populations, are far more likely to begin their studies at community college (AACC 2016). Moreover, families devastated by the Great Recession of 2008 are leveraging their limited higher education savings to send their sons and daughters to community colleges to prepare for transfer. Finally, as noted earlier, surveys of first-time community college students reveal that between 50 and 80 percent want to transfer and earn a baccalaureate degree (Handel 2013a, 2013b).

For these reasons, higher education needs to invest in the transfer process. Right now, the transition remains difficult for most students. Courses may not be accepted for credit at the receiving institution, or, if they are, may not apply toward the requirements they were intended to

satisfy. Articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions may be limited or non-existent. The lack of information is exacerbated by incoming community college students' need for explicit academic guidance. They are more likely to achieve their educational goals if they possess at least a tentative plan at the start of their college careers (Horn 2009, Moore and Shulock 2011).

To address the challenges facing transfer students, community colleges and four-year institutions need to find a new approach—one that can animate the spirit of the transfer process and deliver better outcomes for students. One transformative idea is "guided pathways" (Bailey, Jaggers and Jenkins 2015, Complete College America 2012, Rosenbaum 2001). A guided pathway is an explicit academic plan assigned to all incoming community college students when they begin their studies. These pathways take into account students' interests, funneling them into two- to four-semester course plans that prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. Pathways are characterized by lock-step course schedules that align closely with the curricular and preparatory pre-major requirements of receiving four-year institutions. Completion of guided pathways ensures that transfer students are fully prepared to enroll in upper-division coursework for their chosen majors and ready to perform well alongside students who enrolled at four-year colleges and universities as freshmen.

Guided pathways differ from current practice, which allows students to select courses from a wide variety of offerings. This "cafeteria" approach provides students with little guidance and almost no organizing principle for their education (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen and Person 2006). Many community college students come from low-income backgrounds or are the first in their families to attend college. Lacking parents or peers with college experience, they often have little knowledge or support to make informed decisions about their educational futures. Students select courses on their own, attempting to translate whatever inchoate ideas they may have about majors into sound course taking that propels them toward a degree or certificate. Students lacking plans often take unneeded courses and exhaust their finite financial aid resources. All of this, of course, undermines their academic momentum, with many leaving college without certificates or degrees to show for their investment of time and money.

The cafeteria approach to selecting courses might be beneficial if community colleges were able to offer adequate advising resources to help more of their students succeed. Yet many of these institutions—the least well-funded in higher education—are unable to provide the requisite counseling to guide students through the process of transferring to four-year institutions to earn baccalaureate degrees.

Given the abundance of choices at community colleges and the inherent difficulty of transferring from one institution to another, four-year institutions must take on a greater role in preparing prospective transfer students for this transition. Traditionally, four-year institutions have provided guidance by issuing articulation agreements—statements that define how individual courses at a community college will transfer to the four-year institution. But that approach, while necessary, is passive. It substitutes data for guidance and assumes that relatively inexperienced community college students will know how to do the equivalent of building a house by studying a blueprint.

Guided pathways are more promising than articulation agreements if only because they incorporate such agreements as building blocks in the construction of systematic, term-by-term academic plans for prospective transfer students. Thus, in addition to a blueprint, guided pathways provide students with the tools they need to construct their own futures.

Some critics argue that transfer pathways are just tracking—forcing students into programs and majors based on who they are rather than on who they want to be. In previous decades, community colleges were often accused of directing students from underrepresented groups into short-term vocational or work-force programs rather than transfer-oriented, liberal arts pathways, despite their overwhelming preference for the latter (Brint and Karabel 1989).

This is a legitimate concern. Community college leaders and student service professionals should be wary of any proposals that attempt to constrain student choice—even for the best of reasons. But the present mix-and-match, cafeteria-style model works *only* for students with both the resources and time to explore their options. And given the low transfer rate in the United States, it's clear that this approach does not work well.

An effective guided pathway strategy will provide students with choice and flexibility. Most students readily identify overarching interests that fall within disciplinary "meta-majors" found on almost all college campuses: humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and

physical sciences (Complete College America 2012). Guided pathways that take into account these broad-based areas have value. For example, if a student expresses interest in pre-med studies, an institution would have little difficulty identifying a set of courses that would set her in the right direction. Even if students' major interests are largely unclear when they enter college, their aspiration—to earn a baccalaureate degree—is not. Providing students with at least an initial plan upon entry to college, even if it is tentative, will help them direct their time and energy toward transfer.

Since my return to the University of California three years ago, I have been committed to a university-wide effort to streamline the transfer process for California community college students by implementing a guided pathways approach (see Handel *et al.* 2015). UC's "Transfer Pathways" is a faculty-led effort to develop guided pathways for its most popular transfer majors. This means that every one of UC's nine undergraduate campuses will require community college students to complete exactly the same set of courses in order to be eligible for transfer in a particular major. The overarching goal of this initiative is to encourage the institution to develop a direct, sustained, and transparent relationship with community college students—one that does not minimize the academic demands of preparing for transfer but rather provides the guidance students need to transition successfully to a four-year college or university.

Although community colleges are often criticized for low transfer rates, only four-year institutions can admit transfer students. This obligates these institutions to improve their outreach to prospective transfer students, providing them with the kind of rigorous and relentless guidance that characterizes their work with high school students. Insisting that four-year institutions play a pivotal and sustained role in providing explicit direction—whether via a guided pathways approach or some other commitment—is key to strengthening the transfer process in the United States. Enhancing this partnership will reignite the community college promise, a transformative reality for those of us from lower-middle-class households whose startling introduction to college was a modest classroom led by instructors who loved to teach.

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Graduation Certification—Too Late to Graduate!

By Mark S. Doman

Oakland University (OU) in Rochester, Michigan, was experiencing growing pains. The good news was that OU had experienced 23 years of continuous enrollment growth, with student enrollment exceeding 20,000 in 2015 for the first time ever. The downside was that various administrative processes throughout the university were straining to keep up. One of the administrative processes experiencing problems was the graduation certification process. Record numbers of students were applying to graduate, and the process was really bogging down.

Students planning to walk at the following year's April commencement began applying for graduation in July. They believed all was well until deficiency notices began to go out later in the year. With help from their advisors and the registrar's office, most students were able to clear their deficiencies. But too many students were not able to do so and were notified of their graduation deficiencies too late to register for the courses they needed in order to graduate on time. The results were extreme student dissatisfaction, harried and frustrated staff, and decreased OU graduation rates.

Lean Journey

The registrar, whose office bore the brunt of the fallout from the graduation certification process, took the first step in fixing the process. He contacted me, an OU faculty member with whom he had worked previously. For the past several years, I had taught an undergraduate "Lean" course as a part of which student teams would conduct "Lean Workouts" of dysfunctional processes at local businesses, non-profit organizations, and sometimes even OU itself. The registrar had sponsored a student team that had conducted a Lean Workout of the OU grade change process. The team of six undergraduate students had produced a "leaned-out" online process that effectively prevented any grade change errors from reaching the registrar's office. (See Doman 2011.)

Inspired by the success of the previous Lean Workout, the registrar decided to sponsor a student team to conduct an initial Lean Workout of the OU graduation certification process. The student team mapped out the process, identified the waste in the process, and proposed several insightful countermeasures that would significantly shorten the cycle time and decrease the number of last-minute deficiencies (many of which derailed students' graduations). After reviewing the results of that student team's work, the senior associate provost and registrar decided to take the next step in their Lean journey.

Together, they sponsored a cross-functional Lean Workout team of subject-matter experts from across the campus. The team included key members of the registrar's office, including the senior associate registrar, the associate registrar, the assistant registrar for technology, the graduation auditor, the transfer coordinator, and the registrar coordinator. The team also included the associate dean for the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), the director of advising for CAS, the director of advising for the School of Engineering and Computer

Science, the director of the Pawley Lean Institute, and two undergraduate students who had taken OU Lean courses and earned Lean Green Belt Certificates.

I facilitated the team which called itself the "Grad Path" team. We met every Wednesday from 1 to 3 p.m. during the winter semester and used the Lean A3 Report methodology to thoroughly investigate the process problems, current condition, and root causes before identifying consensus countermeasures, a target condition, and an implementation plan.

Process Problems

Information from all across the university helped clarify that the process problems were that the undergraduate certification process took too long and had too many defects to correct at the last minute; also, too many students learned about the deficiencies too late to be able to graduate in the semester they had expected to.

- Too long: The undergraduate graduation certification process was taking almost a year to complete, including more than four months to audit and 43 days from commencement to diploma ordered.
- Too many defects: 80 percent of applicants for graduation had some sort of deficiency.
- Too late to graduate: Many of the deficiencies were not discovered until the end of the certification process. Students and staff scrambled to resolve the deficiencies, but an estimated 17 percent of applicants ultimately were not able to graduate in the semester they had expected to.

The team's primary purpose was to minimize the "waste" in the graduation certification process so the Grad Path for students would be shorter, more efficient at correcting the defects, and more effective in producing graduates.

Current Condition

The team found that the undergraduate certification process was an end-of-the-line, large-batch inspection process that assumed that students knew exactly what they needed to do to graduate and that they would do it in the correct sequence and according to the appropriate timeline. Yet the data revealed that only a small fraction of students did. Thus, the undergraduate certification process was characterized more by defects and corrections than by self-sufficient students successfully navigating the OU curricula (130 majors and six catalogs) so as to graduate "problem free" and on time.

The Current Condition Timeline (Figure 1A) clearly illustrates how the OU undergraduate certification process functioned. The first audits by the registrar's office (RO) and advisor began only after the graduation application process closed, which was after the last add/drop date for the upcoming semester. The auditing process itself consumed the resources of advising, the registrar's office, and faculty in a frenzy of checking and correcting defects in the records of students who had applied for graduation. The back-and-forth auditing by the registrar's office and advising lasted over four months. Many students walked at commencement in the hope that they would receive a diploma in the mail in the months to come; some received a deficiency letter instead.

Root Causes

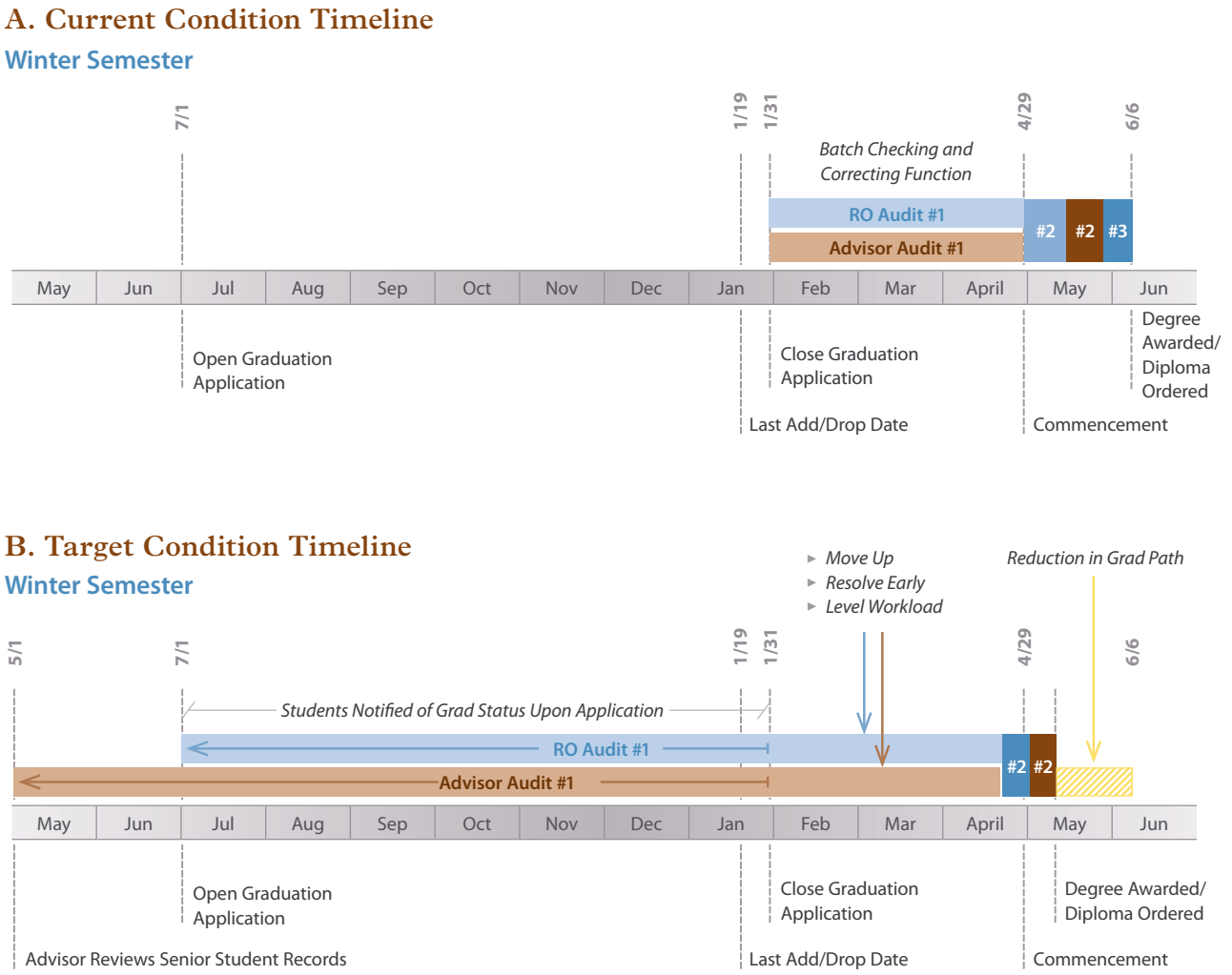
The team soon discovered that it needed to look beyond the undergraduate certification process and map the entire OU undergraduate value stream because all of the processes in the value stream (*e.g.*, admissions, transfer articulation, orientation, registration, etc.) were interconnected. In reality, many root causes of the waste in the graduation certification process were upstream. After evaluating the various root causes, the team focused on the following issues:

- The timing of the audit was determined by when students submitted their graduation applications.
- Graduation applications were not pre-screened for deficiencies at the front end of the process.
- Advisors were not aware when students had applied for graduation.
- Audit 1 was delayed until the graduation application process had closed.
- There was a lack of standards for completing the graduation audit of student records.
- There were no standardized formal metrics or tracking of the process.

Countermeasures

The team's countermeasures were designed to change the undergraduate certification process from an end-of-the-line, large-batch inspection process to a more

Figure 1. **OU Undergraduate Certification Process**



just-in-time (JIT) serial inspection process. By implementing the countermeasures below, OU has begun transforming the undergraduate certification process from a "check-and-correct" disaster recovery operation to a more value-added, front-end-loaded "counsel-and-coach" process for students.

The six initial undergraduate certification process countermeasures were as follows:

- Provide advisors with a "senior status list," a list of students who have earned 91 or more credits.
- Have professional and faculty advisors proactively schedule consultations with senior students prior to submission of their graduation applications.
- Create automatic front-end checks (poke-yokes) in the graduation application process to immediately notify students and advisors of deficiencies.
- Produce a daily graduation applicant report for advisors, the registrar's office, the provost, etc., listing the names of students who have completed the graduation application process.
- Move Audit 1 earlier in the process to precede the close of the graduation application process.
- Establish and implement standards and metrics and then document, train, and measure the new undergraduate certification process.

Target Condition

These countermeasures help identify problems much earlier in the process, focus student and advisor attention right away, and expedite corrective action (Figure 1B). They allow advisors to level their workloads and to "counsel and coach" students along their Grad Path. Students receive a timely roadmap with clear sightlines to graduation. These feasible, cost-effective countermeasures help minimize many last-minute student frustrations and facilitate students' graduating on time. Many can be implemented within the registrar's office, but several require university–wide collaboration. Finally, they establish a single comprehensive source for student information (Banner/CAPP) and lay a solid foundation for the future introduction of Degree Works.

Implementation Plan and Results

The senior associate provost and registrar took charge of the implementation plan. This was key. Having the provost's office support the effort and lead the way really propelled the plan forward. The senior associate provost conducted monthly meetings to review progress in implementation of the team's countermeasures and provided assistance in overcoming institutional roadblocks. The registrar appointed a member of the team to serve as "implementation manager" and to oversee implementation of the team's countermeasures and lead the training program.

The implementation manager worked with the registrar's office and advising personnel to:

- Create and publish the countermeasure implementation plan and track ongoing progress.
- Develop Key Process Indicators (KPIs) and automate a tracking tool to measure progress year over year.
- Create a problem log to track issues with assigned owners and prioritization.
- Write standards for the graduation certification process and walk through the document with personnel in the registrar's office.
- Collaborate and reach consensus with the directors of advising on standard application language

for front-end "all clear" or "deficiency" messages to students, advisors, and the graduation auditor.

- Develop an Excel electronic working list (EWL) and write detailed instructions to track applicant status each semester from application to diploma ordered.
- Lead monthly meetings with the senior associate provost and key leadership team members to review the progress of the implementation plan.

Because of these efforts, significant improvements have already been made: Students receive feedback within the first 48 hours of submitting their applications, receive notifications in time to correct any deficiencies, and receive their diplomas sooner.

After just one academic year, specific results that helped shorten the undergraduate certification process and increase the number of graduates were as follows:

- Commencement (grade roll) to diploma ordered cycle time decreased more than 46 percent—from 43 to 23 days.
- Students are notified of potential deficiencies within 48 hours of applying for graduation.
- Ninety-two (92) percent of students with a potential deficiency received notification prior to the add/drop deadline for their final semester.
- The proportion of students who were denied graduation due to unmet degree requirements was reduced to 3.8 percent.

The most recent academic semester results continued to improve even with a fifteen (15) percent increase in the number of students applying to graduate as follows:

- Commencement (grade roll) to diploma ordered cycle time decreased another 17 percent—from 23 to nineteen days.
- Ninety-nine (99) percent of students with a potential deficiency received notification prior to the add/drop deadline for their final semester.

OU's top-level leaders made a particular effort to endorse the results of the Grad Path team and recognized Grad Path team members with its 2016 Team Award. The president hosted team members at a private luncheon and participated in a spirited, wide-ranging discussion about the Grad Path Lean Workout. The board of trustees also recognized the team members at its public meeting.

More improvements to the graduation certification process need to be made, but this Lean Journey has gotten off to a very good start and is making significant progress with each new graduation cycle. The initial set of countermeasures has been implemented and quickly produced positive results. A solid infrastructure with standards, KPIs, and tracking mechanisms is now in place and producing continuous improvements. From its top leadership down, Oakland University is excited about opportunities to improve the process and, so doing, to increase student satisfaction and graduation rates.

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AACRAO

Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement Program

AACRAO's Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement Program (SEM-EP) is designed to provide a well-defined professional development program and career advancement track for enrollment service professionals. For the individual, completion of the program is a valuable addition to a resume and a formal recognition by AACRAO regarding professional readiness to conquer current and future challenges in the field. For the institution, the program will offer a better way to evaluate the preparedness of prospective employees for SEM positions.

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The SEM-EP is tied to the most recent SEM material and trends in the field. The program is designed to be completed in 12 to 18 months.

What do I receive when I complete the program?

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Program Eligibility

- Five years experience in the field of SEM (Registrar, Admissions, Recruitment, Financial Aid or related fields as determined by the SEM-EP program committee).
- Individual must be employed (full or part time) by an "accredited" post-secondary institution.
- Provide a one page vita or resume reflecting career experience, professional accomplishments and education.
- Hold a minimum of an earned baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution.

Curriculum

The SEM-EP faculty are drawn from highly experienced professionals in the field of enrollment service.

1. ***SEM 101 Online Course***
   A four week course to develop a baseline understanding of SEM.

2. ***Webinars***
   Three pre-recorded webinars on topics focused on key components of SEM.

3. ***Field Visits***
   Visits to three approved institutions of distinct types followed by a written report guided by prescribed questions. In addition, **attendance at the AACRAO Annual Meeting or AACRAO SEM Conference will fulfill one of the field visit requirements.**

4. ***Capstone Research Experience***
   All SEM-EP candidates are expected to conduct a brief research capstone project during the course of the curriculum. The assignment focuses on tracking and analyzing a local population of students from the candidate's institution and concludes by reporting conversion outcomes or conducting an annotated literature research project.

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For more information on this and other professional development opportunities, visit: aacrao.org

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AACRAO Research: A Year in Review 2016

By Wendy Kilgore

2016 was again a productive year for AACRAO Research thanks to the active and ongoing participation of our membership. We completed eleven research projects this year, including eight 60-Second surveys and three comprehensive projects. The intent of the 60-Second surveys remains the same since its inception. They are intended to capture benchmarking practice snapshots of interest to our members and sometimes our sister organizations as well as occasionally measure members' interest in proposed AACRAO professional development opportunities or support of AACRAO's publications. Beginning May 2016, the frequency with which we deploy 60-Second surveys was reduced to every two months. The comprehensive projects seek to provide career profile information for key enrollment related positions as well as to provide an opportunity to take a deeper dive into topics. The topics are most often drawn from member inquiries or hot topics in higher education news (*e.g.*, "early" FAFSA). Below is the complete list of 2016 projects in chronological order.

- FERPA Training Practices—January 60-Second Survey
- Curriculum Management Practices—February 60-Second Survey
- Class Start Times and Lengths—March 60-Second Survey
- The Impact of Electronic Content Management (ECM) System Ownership on Student Records Management Practice—March 60-Second Survey
- New Student Registration and Orientation Practice—April 60-Second Survey
- Competency Based Education—May 60-Second Survey
- 2017–2018 FAFSA: Impact on Practice—July 60-Second Survey (U.S. only)
- Class Scheduling (aka Timetabling) Practices and Technology—September 60-Second Survey
- Dual Enrollment in the Context of Strategic Enrollment Management—November (U.S. only)
- Miscellany (practices)—November 60-Second Survey
- U.S. Chief Admissions Officer Career Profile Report—December (U.S. only)

These initiatives were designed to help meet our research goals:

- Contribute to a better understanding of the factors and conditions that impact higher education academic/enrollment services and ultimately student success
- Use the Research Advisory Board to engage the membership in determining the focus of the research.
- Develop new insights and information for our members to help them successfully lead their institutions in a continually evolving environment
- Maintain current partnerships and develop new partnerships with other organizations and associations who share common interests with AACRAO.

- Disseminating relevant, up-to-date research on student success to practitioners and institutional decision makers.

Our members continue to be highly engaged in our research efforts. On average, 745 institutions responded to our surveys last year. When we remove the U.S.-only surveys from the average, it increases to 846. These averages represent a one-response-per-institution or per practice. That is, some comprehensive institutions report both undergraduate and graduate practices when they differ, and as such, those institutions are counted twice in the average. In addition, we retained more than one response per institution when it was known that the respondents represented different academic departments within the institution with different practices. We also, more often than not, captured a representative[1] sample of degree granting U.S. post-secondary institutions based on 2014–2015 NCES data (n=4,627)[2].

As was noted in the 2015 research review, we regularly received more than one response per institution for the 60-Second surveys, and those responses almost never match. Although this is an imperfect methodology, when this occurred we chose the response that was the most complete and/or represented the response from the position most likely to be responsible for the topic in the survey. This determination was made based on the position title.

Included here is a summary of the key findings for the year for each project. All can be found in their entirety on the AACRAO research page: aacrao.org/resources/research.

FERPA Training Practices

The January 2016 AACRAO 60 Second Survey focused on institutional FERPA training practices and measuring the level of interest in an AACRAO-developed online FERPA training module.

Key Findings

- Almost three-quarters (72%) require FERPA training for all new hires who work with student records.
- Among those who do not require the training, many noted that the training is offered but not required. Others stated that those who work with student records are required to sign a form saying they understand FERPA but are not required to complete training.
- Faculty and others with access to student records are among those listed as not being required to complete FERPA training.
- One-third require FERPA refresher training on a regular and recurring basis.
- In-person training is the most common format.
- Twenty-six percent provide FERPA training to parents, and most of that training is offered in person.
- The registrar is, most often, the position primarily responsible for FERPA training.
- Almost all (95%) see value in a short online training course on FERPA, and half are interested in one developed by AACRAO.

FERPA Training Resources

AACRAO regularly updates its *AACRAO FERPA Quick Guide*, which is available to members and nonmembers through the AACRAO bookstore as well as other FERPA publications. Members also have access to sample FERPA brochures and training materials through the AACRAO portal, which can be accessed through our FERPA resources page (aacrao.org/resources/ferpa).

Curriculum Management Practices

The February 2016 AACRAO 60-Second Survey focused on undergraduate and graduate curriculum management practices. The results of this survey served to support the narrative in our AACRAO book "*Curriculum Management and the Role of the Registrar*."[3]

Key Findings

- Less than 10 percent have a "stand-alone" curriculum office (*i.e.*, an office that is a separate unit as compared to a function that is contained within another office or spread across multiple offices), and these offices typically employ 1–3 full-time-equivalent employees.

[1] Confidence level 95%, Margin of Error 5%

[2] *See* <nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_317.10.asp> "Degree-granting institutions grant associate or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs."

[3] Available at <www4.aacrao.org/publications/catalog.php?item=0145>.

- For most of those who do not have a stand-alone curriculum office, Academic Affairs has primary responsibility for the function.
- About one-third reported offering between 25–74 different academic programs (majors, minors, certificates, specializations, graduate programs).
- Almost three-quarters use some type of technology to support the academic catalog.
- Most only allow program/degree changes to be made effective once per calendar year; less than half apply the same limitation to course changes.

Class Start Times and Lengths

In response to the recent *Inside Higher Education* article[4] about one institution's decision not to offer 8:00 a.m. courses, we developed this survey to capture a snapshot of in-person class start times and lengths at the undergraduate and graduate level and by calendar system (Appendix A). We were curious about the predominance, or lack thereof, of early morning, late night and weekend courses as well as institutional reasons for not offering early morning courses. Comprehensive institutions were able to submit one response for undergraduate practices and another for graduate practices if the practices differed.

Key Findings Undergraduate

- The vast majority (91%) still offer classes that start between 8:00 a.m. and 8:59 a.m.
- Almost one-quarter offer classes that start between 7:00 a.m. and 7:59 a.m., and 4 percent have classes that start before 7:00 a.m.
- More than three-quarters have classes that start between 6:00 p.m. and 6:59 p.m., and 12 percent offer classes that start at 9:00 p.m. or later.
- Some institutions offer the very early and very late classes on Saturdays and Sundays as well as weekdays.
- Fewer than one-in-five (17%) offer six-hour courses.

Key Findings Graduate

- Fewer than three-quarters (68%) offer classes that start between 8:00 a.m. and 8:59 a.m.
- Just 12 percent offer classes that start between 7:00 a.m. and 7:59 a.m. and 2 percent before 7:00 a.m.
- Three-quarters have classes that start between 6:00 p.m. and 6:59 p.m., and 8 percent offer classes that start at 9:00 p.m. or later.
- At the graduate level, Saturday course offerings are more predominant than Sunday.

New Student Registration and Orientation

One of the well-attended sessions at the 2016 annual conference in Phoenix was entitled *All Aboard: Registration Models for First Semester Students*. The survey focused on two different practices: 1) self-registration and orientation practices for first-time, domestic, new and transfer undergraduate and graduate students, and 2) registration by the institution on behalf of first-time, domestic, new and transfer undergraduate and graduate students and the orientation practices for this population.

Key Findings Self-Registration

- There is a wide variety in self-registration and orientation practices.
- In the aggregate, slightly more than half let freshmen partially or completely self-register, and almost two-thirds allow new graduate students to do the same.
- Lower-division-only institutions are more likely to allow freshmen to self-register than other types of institutions.
- On the whole, almost three out of four require freshmen to meet with an advisor before registering.
- Slightly more than half require new graduate students to meet with an advisor before registering.
- In-person orientation is still required for more than half of the self-registering freshmen. This practice is slightly less common for lower-division-only institutions.

Key Findings Registration on Behalf of the Student

- On the whole, 12 percent of institutions saw an increase in yield by providing either complete or partial registration on behalf of the student prac-

[4] *See* <www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/02/17/university-decides-eliminate-8-am-classes>.

tices instead of self-registration. The majority saw no change in yield (87%).

- Six out of ten either partially or completely register freshmen on behalf of the student. This is much less common for the undergraduate transfer population and slightly less common for graduate students.
- Almost three-quarters required in-person orientation for freshman who have been registered in-part or in-whole by the institution.
- Registrar staff and advisors are more likely than other areas to be responsible for completing the registration on behalf of the student.

Competency Based Education

AACRAO and NASPA recently completed a project funded by Lumina Foundation on comprehensive student records.[5] As one part of that project, we sought to understand the landscape of competency-based education (CBE) and its relationship to credit hours (or Carnegie units). This has a direct impact on how student learning and achievement is represented on a student's record. This survey was designed to help us gain information on the frequency of CBE, generally, and how the paradigm of credit hours/Carnegie units limits or does not limit innovation in this area.

What is Competency-Based Education?

For the purpose of this survey, we used the following definition of CBE. "Competency-based education (CBE) is a flexible way for students to get credit for what they know, build on their knowledge and skills by learning more at their own pace, and earn high quality degrees, certificates, and other credentials that help them in their lives and careers. Students in these programs show what they know and how well they know it through multiple ways of evaluating learning."[6]

Key Findings

- A quarter offer CBE instruction.
- Of the three-quarters who do not offer CBE, 10 percent are planning to offer CBE in the next twelve months.
- Of those who do offer CBE, nine out of ten offer it at the undergraduate level for credit.
- Most who offer CBE convert CBE to credit hours for at least one purpose and the most reported reason is "institutional choice".

The 2017–2018 FAFSA: Impact on Practice

In 2016, incoming and current college students were able to file their FAFSA earlier than in years past, on October 1, 2016. In the past, students had to wait until January 1 to do so. In addition, applicants no longer need to estimate income and tax information and will be able to retrieve their data directly from the IRS, right from the first day the FAFSA is available. The purpose of this survey was to gather a snapshot of if and/or how this change will impact admissions processes and calendars and to gain a sense of any concerns institutions have around this change.

Although there are some international institutions who participate in the Federal Student Loan programs,[7] most institutions that participate in the various Federal Student Aid programs, including loans, are in the United States. As such, we opted to send this survey only to AACRAO member institutions in the United States.

Key Findings

- Most (91%) who responded were aware of the change, and most (94%) also view the change as "good for students".
- Nearly seven out of ten (68%) indicate that the change will not impact the undergraduate admissions calendar.
- Almost all (94%) say that the change will not impact the graduate admissions calendar.
- For those who will make a change to their admissions calendar, most will move student outreach activities to an earlier date.
- Among those who had concerns regarding implementation, about three out of four were concerned about there being a lack of definitive Federal and/or State funding information available at the earlier date.

[5] *See* <www.aacrao.org/resources/record>.

[6] See <www.cbenetwork.org/competency-based-education/>.

[7] *See* <studentaid.ed.gov/sa/prepare-for-college/choosing-schools/types/international#participating-schools>.

- Just slightly less than three out of four were concerned about their ability to package aid earlier and notify students earlier.

Class Scheduling (aka Timetabling) Practices and Technology

The September 2016 AACRAO 60-Second Survey focused on undergraduate and graduate class scheduling practices. Topics included staffing level; primary responsibility for data entry; importance of various factors in the scheduling process; process timeline; availability of year-long registration; enrollment thresholds; the use of technology for class scheduling and student schedule planning; and the expected return on investment associated with the technology.

One prevailing conclusion that can be gleaned from the results of this survey is that class scheduling practices vary: some scheduling services are centralized while others are not; half use assistive technology while half do not; and some have generous staff resources while others do not. The practice comments further elucidates the dissimilarities in practice. For example, one respondent described their practices as "medieval," while another described them as "…pretty much just rolls over from year to year…."

Key Findings for Undergraduate and Graduate Class Scheduling Practices

- More than half of all respondents reported that the registrar's office has primary responsibility for entering the class data into the student information system regardless of student level.
- At the undergraduate level, nine in ten regard faculty availability as an "important" or "very important" factor in the undergraduate class scheduling process, followed by time block popularity and the class schedule from the previous year.
- At the graduate and/or professional level, nine in ten also regard faculty availability as an "important" or "very important" factor in the class scheduling process, followed by student request/need and faculty preferences.
- While 40 percent report scheduling classes an academic term in advance, about a fifth schedule a full academic year in advance, and a further fifth report scheduling "less than one academic term in advance."
- Just 6 percent of institutions in this sample let students register for a full academic year at once. An additional 18 percent allow students to view the full academic year schedule but not register.
- Half do not own a classroom/class scheduling solution.
- Almost two-thirds of institutions set a minimum class size threshold for a course to "run" compared to 8 percent who guarantee all courses will run regardless of enrollment.

Key Findings for Student Scheduling/ Planning Technology

- There appears to be confusion in the field about the difference in technology used by a student to plan which courses he will take in future terms, compared to a degree audit system, and further differentiated from a student scheduling/planning solution. The latter was defined in this survey as the following: "Schedule planning solutions are used by students to create optimal class schedules by identifying preferred classes and blocking off unavailable time. The software instantly informs the student of all possible conflict-free schedule combinations available for immediate registration."
- Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported their institution offers an online schedule planning tool for their students.
- About one-third of those who do not have a solution indicated that they seek to acquire one in the next twelve months.
- When asked about the expected return on investment for current owners, 90 percent of respondents hoped the schedule planning tool would improve the student experience, followed by improving timely student registration (68 percent) and improved time to degree (62 percent).
- While one-third of solution owners do not know the percentage of students using the product almost one-quarter report a very high usage rate (80% or above).

Miscellany

The November 2016 AACRAO 60-Second Survey consisted of a collection of mostly unrelated but important practice and/or policy questions assembled from member inquiries and other sources over the course over

several months. Topics included questions related to financial aid, admissions, curriculum and the registrar.

Key Findings

- More than half withhold official transcripts when a current or former student owes less than $25.
- A third do not drop a student from a course (or courses) for non-payment.
- About a third allow a student to request separate transcripts by course level.
- The use of a "shadow first term" for undergraduate students is a rare practice; just 1 percent report using it.
- Less than 20 percent of undergraduate financial aid recipients are required to take a financial literacy class and less than 10 percent of graduate students have the same requirement.
- Almost three-quarters of undergraduate students are required to meet with an academic advisor at least once a year as compared to less than half of graduate students.
- Standardized test scores are the most commonly used course placement method for undergraduate students.
- Almost one in five institutions report that an undergraduate student must submit a request for his or her submitted transcript to be evaluated for course equivalencies, and a third of graduate students face the same requirement[8].
- Less than half (40%) automatically re-evaluate an undergraduate student's transfer credit when he/she changes majors, and less than a third do the same for graduate students.
- Among title IV granting institutions, 42 percent ask instructors to submit the last day of attendance (LDOA), and staff must follow-up manually with faculty until the date is submitted. Others have a process that forces the submission of the LDOA within the final grading process.
- Just 13 percent of institutions serving undergraduates post degrees automatically, and 11 percent do the same for graduate students.
- More than half do not charge a fee for graduation, and another third charge $50 or more.
- In the aggregate, just one in five ask a student if he or she intends to re-enroll for the following term. When a student indicates he or she does not intend to re-enroll, 81 percent ask the student why he or she does not intend to re-enroll.
- Just 4 percent of undergraduate serving institutions reported assessing the computer literacy of incoming students.
- Almost one in five undergraduate serving institutions have a general education "information" or "digital literacy" requirement separate from the "critical thinking" requirement.
- Half capture final enrollment after drop-add.
- Almost 40 percent report the drop/add period for full-term courses is "through the end of the first full week of full-term courses"

ECM Ownership and Student Records Management Practices

Due to the composition of our membership, we chose to focus on the application of ECM (technology and practice) within the student services domain. For this comprehensive project, we sought to gain an understanding of how, and to what degree, the use of an ECM application impacts student records management practice efficiency.

Key Findings

- Most (71%) of institutions in this sample use at least one ECM; acquisition, implementation and operation cost is the biggest deterrent for those who do not have one.
- The majority view their processes as more efficient with the application of an ECM, and records management is easier.
- Fewer than one-in-five believe their ECM technology is being used to its full capacity, with the greatest roadblock to doing so being not having the time to learn and implement.
- Since most institutions do not use all of the advanced functionality offered in most ECMs, much of the available process efficiency improvement is untapped.
- In the student services arena, a vast majority of registration and records departments (90%) make use of an ECM (90%).
- Two-thirds feel "moderately successful" (as compared with "very successful" or "not successful")

[8] *See* Figure 7 for information about the limitations of the generalizability of this data.

in their ECM use overall, regardless of how long the ECM had been in use.

- Most (73%) institutions have a records management policy and believe it to be up-to-date, easy to understand, and clear on which records should be retained permanently.
- Among those institutions that have a clearly identified official source for the student record (*e.g.*, paper, student information system [SIS], ECM), less than half identify the institution's SIS as the source of the official record.
- Some institutions appear either not to understand the importance of managing the entire student records lifecycle from creation *to final disposition* or to accept the cost and security implications associated with keeping *all* records permanently.

2016 U.S. Admissions Director Career Profile

This report on the career profile of chief admissions officers completed the AACRAO career profile series. The purpose of the report was to build a foundation of understanding of the career profile and position responsibilities for chief admissions officers in the United States. The National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC) partnered with AACRAO on this project, and this partnership roughly doubled the number of respondents.

In addition to responding to closed-ended questions, more than 100 also voluntarily provided "words of wisdom" (first-hand comments, observations, opinions and advice) based on their experience in the position. From those words of wisdom, it is clear that the chief admissions officer position is complex, requires a keen understanding of data, exists in an ever-changing environment, is often personally rewarding, requires the ability to maintain positive working relationships throughout the institution, and has its challenges in today's competitive enrollment environment. Also of note, for some institutions, the position of chief admissions officer and chief enrollment management officer are one in the same.

From the participants, we have concluded that a chief admissions officer in the United States likely:

- is slightly more likely to identify as female than male
- identifies as white
- is between 35 and 49 years old
- has held current position fewer than five years
- spent most of her career in higher education
- has a master's degree
- has more than 20 years of experience in higher education
- reports to the Vice President of Enrollment Management
- has five or more direct reports
- is generally satisfied in her position
- has worked at more than one institution
- views skill in communication and enrollment management as most important for the position
- spends the most work time on enrollment management
- believes that finding time to get things done is the most challenging aspect of the position

Dual Enrollment in the Context of Strategic Enrollment Management: An Insight Into Practice at U.S. Institutions

When we learned that there were no plans to repeat the 2013 Institute for Education Sciences (IES) "First Look" report on dual enrollment options at postsecondary institutions in the United States, we decided to repeat most of the content in that study. We elected to build our study based on the IES survey because we want to understand if and how the dual enrollment landscape has changed in the United States over the last several years.

Different institutions have different names for DE, such as "dual credit," "concurrent enrollment," or "joint enrollment." For the purpose of this project, DE referred to the following:

- Any course or program offered for high school students to earn college credit through a postsecondary institution.
- Credit for courses or the program may be earned at both the high school and college level simultaneously or only at the college level.
- Credit may be earned immediately upon completion of individual courses, upon completion of the program, or upon enrollment at your institution after high school graduation.

- Courses and programs may be taught on a college campus, on a high school campus, at some other location, or through distance education.
- International Baccalaureate (IB) program and Advanced Placement (AP) courses are considered to be part of the DE portfolio for some institutions, because it is another avenue for high school students to earn college credit, so we included a few questions about these options.

Key Findings

- Dual enrollment is widely available and accepted at higher education institutions in the United States. During the 2015–16 academic year, most (78%) institutions in this sample offered dual enrollment options.
- Eighty-six percent accept dual enrollment credit in transfer.
- Lower division only, and/or large and/or public institutions are more likely to offer dual enrollment programs and courses than institutions with other characteristics.
- Private institutions are less likely than public institutions to accept dual enrollment credit in transfer.
- Dual enrollment serves multiple purposes for many institutions. For more than seventy-five percent of the repondents, dual enrollment serves as a recruiting tool. Slightly less than three-quarters selected "helping meet the mission of the institution," and/or as a "community service mechanism."
- Fifty-nine percent have incorported dual enrollment as a strategic enrollment initiative.
- Nine out of ten "agree" or "strongly agree" that dual enrollment courses improve access to college courses.
- The percentage of institutions awarding certificates and associate's degrees to high school students has increased since the IES study.
- One-quarter of participating institutions awarded at least one associate's degree to high school students during the 2015–16 academic year.
- Fifty-eight percent discounted tuition for dual enrollment, and two-thirds of those do so by more than 50 percent.
- Among those that do not offer dual enrollment, institutional culture is the most cited reason for not doing so.
- Nearly all (93%) accept AP and/or IB credits.

About the Author

Wendy Kilgore is Director of Research at AACRAO with more than 20 years of experience as a higher education administrator and consultant in the United States and Canada. She brings expertise in recruitment, admissions, financial aid, academic advisement, curriculum support, registration, records management, veterans' education services, technology, organizational restructuring, student-centric business practice development, policy development and managing comprehensive collaboration to support enrollment efforts. Prior to joining AACRAO full-time in 2009, Dr. Kilgore served as state dean of enrollment services for the Colorado Community College system, and the director of admissions and registrar for the Pima County Community College district. Her professional and consulting experience spans a wide array of institutions, including large public universities, small private colleges, small private faith based colleges, private for-profit institutions, technical colleges, a large two-year multi-campus community college district, and a state community college system.

Acknowledgment: We would like to once again thank all of our members who regularly participate in our research projects. If you have any research ideas or any questions about the reports highlighted here and on the AACRAO research website, please contact me at wendyk@aacrao.org.

Holistic Admissions in the Health Professions: Strategies for Leaders[1]

By Nancy T. Artinian, Betty M. Drees, Greer Glazer, Kevin Harris, Lon S. Kaufman, Naty Lopez, Jennifer C. Danek, and Julia Michaels

In the wake of national health care reform, development of the future health care workforce has become more important than ever. Millions of newly insured patients, many from underserved urban communities, are seeking health care services. In order to provide high-quality care to rapidly diversifying patient populations, health care professionals must be educated in environments that value diversity, and they must possess the background, qualities, and skills needed to address complex health needs.

As the primary educators of the health care workforce, colleges and universities are seeking strategies that will help them increase the diversity of their student populations and, by extension, that of future professionals. The admissions process is one component of an overall strategy to achieve these aims, as it allows universities to build a class of students with many of the attributes needed for success. One emergent strategy is "holistic review," a flexible, individualized way of assessing an applicant's experiences, attributes, and academic metrics and how the individual might contribute value as a student and future health professional. When applied consistently across an entire applicant pool, holistic review contributes to a "holistic admissions" process, best understood as a collection of practices and policies that can help an institution achieve its mission over time. The mission may include diversity goals or other mission-based priorities such as improving the educational environment and meeting local health workforce needs.

Although holistic admissions practices have been adopted by many medical and dental schools, evidence of their use in other professions has been limited. To address the need for evidence, Urban Universities for HEALTH,[2] with support from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the National Institutes of Health, conducted a large-scale, national study on admissions in the health professions that included not only medical and dental schools but also schools of pharmacy, nursing, and public health. The study examined how universities are admitting students into health professions programs and focused particularly on holistic admissions as a strategy for increasing diversity and cultural competence in the workforce, with the larger aim of improving access to care and achieving health equity. The results of the study indicate that diversity has increased at schools that have adopted more elements of a holistic admissions process, while variables related to student success (*e.g.*, average

[1] This project was supported in part by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Award Number U24MD006960, with additional funding support provided by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Publication and report contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH or HRSA.

[2] Urban Universities for HEALTH (Health Equity through Alignment, Leadership and Transformation of the Health Workforce) is a partnership effort of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU)/Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), and the NIH National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). The project aims to improve evidence and the use of data that will help universities enhance and expand a culturally sensitive, diverse, and prepared health workforce that will improve health and health equity in underserved urban communities. For more information, please visit our website at <urbanuniversitiesforhealth.org>.

incoming GPA, graduation rates) remained the same or increased (Urban Universities for HEALTH 2014).

In response to this study, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) convened a small working group of university leaders to review the evidence and identify a set of common strategies that other leaders could employ as they seek to implement holistic admissions processes at their institutions. The group developed the following list of actions, primarily for college and university leaders and national stakeholders, including higher education associations, accreditors, and funding agencies. In publishing these strategies, it is hoped that higher education leaders will look critically at their own institutions' admissions processes and consider adopting additional practices that may help them enroll more diverse student populations within the context of their unique missions and goals.

Strategies

To prepare a diverse health workforce that meets local needs, health professions schools should consider using a holistic admissions process to admit students.

A holistic admissions process incorporates a variety of practices (including holistic review). Schools may choose to implement some practices and not others as they work to improve their admissions processes in accordance with their missions, geographic contexts, and local health care workforce needs.

Rationale: The study indicates that schools using a holistic admissions process have experienced increases in the diversity of their incoming classes (Urban Universities for HEALTH 2014). Academic measures of student success such as average incoming GPA, graduation rates, and pass rates on required licensing exams were unchanged or improved at most schools that used holistic admissions processes (Urban Universities for HEALTH 2014). These results validate similar findings from prior smaller studies on holistic admissions (Price and Grant Mills 2010; Witzburg and Sondheimer 2013). In addition, schools using holistic admissions processes reported increases in student engagement with the community, student cooperation and teamwork, and students' openness to perspectives different from their own (Price and Grant-Mills 2010).

Health professions schools already using some elements of a holistic process may consider assessing their own admissions practices and identifying areas for improvement.

Rationale: The study found variation in the ways in which holistic review has been implemented. Schools using many elements of holistic review reported that the diversity of their incoming classes had increased more than it had at schools that had used fewer holistic review practices. The specific practices evaluated in the study are supported by the literature and have already been adopted by a number of institutions. Examples of holistic review practices that schools are using and that other institutions might consider include:

- Developing a mission statement for admissions that includes diversity;
- Providing admissions committees with training related to the school's mission, including diversity;
- Including non-academic as well as academic criteria such as GPA and test scores in the initial screening process;
- Balancing the weight of non-academic and academic criteria during the initial screening process;
- Adding essay questions to the admission application that address the school's mission and goals, including diversity;
- Evaluating additional criteria related to the school's mission and goals (*e.g.*, global health, research mission); and
- Selecting students from a waitlist on the basis of characteristics related to the school's mission or goals.

Non-academic criteria that schools consider during the initial screening process reflect a broad definition of diversity. The criteria vary according to each school's mission and local context as well as prevailing state laws. Non-academic criteria include:

- First-generation student status;
- Socioeconomic status;
- Race or ethnicity;[3]
- Foreign language ability;
- Gender;
- Experience with disadvantaged populations;

[3] Under federal law, and where permitted by state law.

- Origin in a community that is a health professions shortage area;
- Origin in a geographic location specifically targeted by the school; and
- Other attributes specific to the school's mission, geographic context, and workforce needs.

National stakeholders (e.g., higher education associations, foundations, federal agencies) may help by working together to support schools interested in adopting a more mission-based holistic admissions process.

Any resources provided by national stakeholders would not be ongoing but would catalyze a school's transition to a more holistic process in the short term. For example, national stakeholders might consider the following: developing a core conceptual framework for holistic admissions; developing a list of best practices that could be utilized across professions; delivering training content; facilitating research; evaluating outcomes; and employing various communication strategies to inform faculty and staff as well as prospective students and their parents of the benefits of holistic admissions. Two national higher education associations—the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the American Dental Education Association (ADEA)—have deployed highly successful training workshops. Other associations may choose to develop their own discipline-specific programs.

Rationale: The Urban Universities for HEALTH study (2014) found that one barrier to implementation of holistic review across health professions is the lack of a core conceptual framework and common definition of the practice. Respondents cited the need for evidence-based tools to assist them with implementation, continuous improvement, and assessment. Study participants also requested case studies of successful holistic admissions processes at peer institutions as well as state-specific legal resources and guidelines.

Institutions may consider what additional resources they might contribute to ensure successful implementation of holistic review.

Rationale: Two-thirds of schools already using holistic review reported that implementation required the investment of additional resources. Resources varied in cost, and many schools were able to leverage existing sources of support. Schools invested resources up front for training and workshops, and some reported investing in ongoing resources, such as increasing faculty and staff time for admissions efforts (*see* Table 1).

By working together, accreditation organizations could increase congruence among diversity, cultural competence, and admissions standards across professions.

This strategy may help elevate the importance of diversity and cultural competence for health professions schools in the context of demographic and health system changes and increase clarity around diversity and cultural competence standards across the various accrediting bodies. Harmony across standards may also

Table 1. **Holistic Review Resources, by Level of Investment Required**

Level of Investment Required	Example Resource
Low	Participation in a holistic review workshop conducted by a national association (*e.g.*, existing workshops by AAMC or ADEA or others being developed)
	Internal training of faculty and staff, including peer-to-peer training opportunities
Moderate	Implementing an electronic application system so applications can be processed more quickly
	Reallocating portions of existing faculty and staff FTE to admissions activities
High	Hiring additional faculty and staff
	Increasing student support services and financial aid

help university leaders fashion a coherent strategy for diversity among health professions schools that operate at the same institution.

Rationale: In response to the study, this group analyzed health profession accreditation standards for diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence and found significant variation. Some were specific and detailed while others lacked any reference to diversity whatsoever. Compared to respondents in fields without accreditation standards for diversity, more of those in fields with such standards cited accreditation as a motivating factor in their implementation of holistic review.

Additional research may help institutions improve admissions practices and outcomes.

Possible areas for future research include non-academic attributes that are most predictive of student success and that could be evaluated during the admissions process; the impact of holistic admissions on the learning environment; and the impact of admissions practices on long-term workforce outcomes post-graduation.

Rationale: A portion of schools responding to the Urban Universities for HEALTH survey (2014) reported that they were not evaluating any admissions outcomes; others reported evaluating some but not others. Most schools evaluate student academic qualifications (*e.g.*, incoming average GPA and test scores) but not personal qualities or attributes essential for success in the workplace (*e.g.*, teamwork, openness to other perspectives). More schools using holistic review reported evaluating outcomes related to the learning environment than did schools not using holistic review.

Conclusion

The Urban Universities for HEALTH study (2014) provides clear evidence to support the use of holistic admissions practices across health professions. Data from the study provide a strong rationale for specific strategies that universities and their health profession schools might pursue to improve their admissions processes so as to increase student diversity and success and provide a learning environment where students from all backgrounds can thrive. Although more evidence now exists to support holistic admissions, a national conversation will be needed to identify the types of practices and evaluative criteria that will enable colleges and universities to continuously improve their processes. Developing an evidence-based admissions process is critically important for colleges and universities as they pursue their missions to provide the best-quality workforce for their communities.

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A Guide to Leadership and Management in Higher Education: Managing across the Generations

FITCH, P., AND B. VAN BRUNT. 2016. NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE.

Reviewed by Brad Pulcini

A number of books have been written on the subject of cross-generational differences in the workplace and how to manage them. For example, the second edition of Zemke, Raines, and Fillipczak's (2013) seminal book *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers in the Workplace* examines the root causes of conflicts in the workplace among members of various generations and offers practical guidelines for managing differences. In *Sticking Points: How to Get Four Generations Working Together in the Twelve Places They Come Apart,* Shaw (2013) examines generational differences in offices and how to bridge them so as to obtain better results together. Fitch and Van Brunt's new book, *A Guide to Leadership and Management in Higher Education: Managing across the Generations,* can be added to the list of books on the topic; it focuses on managing and leading multiple generations in higher education institutions. It is evident that Fitch and Van Brunt are experts in student affairs and counseling: their book draws on positive psychology and humanism in order to present an innovative approach to leadership, supervision, and management in higher education institutions. The authors argue that in order to manage across multiple generations, leadership should change the narrative by emphasizing the importance of relationships.

The book is in two parts: Part one presents multiple arguments for a new way of thinking about leadership and management in higher education; part two presents ways to become an authentic leader, including relationship building and psychological theories of humanism and positive psychology. Throughout the book, the authors provide "examples from the experts"—narratives from higher education leaders (including the authors themselves) on related topics and leadership experiences. These examples help the reader visualize what is being presented and apply it to their own situations and experiences. Each chapter also includes a "just one thing" feature that invites higher education leaders to share their "one thing" about leadership. Including multiple perspectives and voices from cross-generational leaders in higher education adds depth and credibility to the book.

Identify Differences and Transcend Clichés

The authors use the terms "Millennials," "Gen Xer's," "Boomers," and "Matures" to identify the different generations working in higher education today. They provide brief narratives to describe the commonly understood characteristics and values of each group. Although her research is not referenced in the book, psychologist Deal (2006) conducted independent research and found that all generations have similar values, but they express them differently. What seems

to matter more than generational differences is differences in age. One study found that every generation of younger people is more narcissistic than its predecessors (Roberts, Edmonds and Grijaiva 2010). This finding may be at the root of the generational clichés and stereotypes that Fitch and Van Buren reference and that they believe act as barriers to capitalizing on the talents of all staff members. The authors argue that managers and leaders should look past generational clichés and stereotypes and develop an understanding of the unique needs and experiences of all staff members in order to better capitalize on their talents (29).

Lead Authentically, Focus on Positives

The authors contend that the time to begin practicing authentic leadership in higher education is now. Authentic leadership can be defined in a number of ways, to include intrapersonal, developmental, and interpersonal (Northouse 2010). Fitch and Van Buren contend that authentic leadership in higher education should focus on words of love, care, and hope and should apply theories, to include the humanistic approach and positive psychology, to the supervision and management of staff. Fitch and Van Brunt argue that such a focus should not replace supervisory goals and objectives in the workplace but rather should be used to encourage supervisors to recognize employees' potential.

In discussing how positive psychology can be applied to work with each of the four generations, Fitch and Van Buren state that the idea of altruism resonates across each generation. Being involved in meaningful work that gives back to a larger community is a shared experience that most individuals can appreciate regardless of their experiences and age (68). It is worth noting that a study on generational values in the workplace that is *not* referenced in the book found that Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers rated leisure and social rewards lowest, extrinsic and altruistic values in the middle, and intrinsic values the highest (Twenge *et al.* 2010). In addition to connecting work to the greater good, higher education managers and leaders should also provide learning opportunities for their staffs and find ways to make their work interesting and challenging.

Identify Strengths

Part one of the book concludes with a section on the importance of self-awareness through the use of self-assessment tools like Gallup StrengthsFinder 2.0 and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Student affairs professionals will relate well to this section, as the use of these tools has become common in the field. It is no surprise that the authors (both of whom have backgrounds in student affairs) advocate for the use of them. Such self-assessment tools enable managers and leaders to deepen their understanding of themselves and their workforce. The authors describe this investment as *upstream work* that "addresses problems at the source in an attempt to smooth operations *during* times of increased productivity and potential frustration or stress" (85).

Once managers and leaders identify their own strengths and the strengths of their staffs, they need to allow time for team building and professional development. The concept of servant leadership is referenced numerous times throughout the text. The authors argue that individuals are more likely to respond to ideas and work when they feel they are not being asked to do anything that the manager or leader is not willing to do herself (98).

Putting it Into Practice

The second half of *Guide to Leadership and Management in Higher Education* offers practical ways to approach leadership through the authentic leadership and positive psychology approaches presented in part one of the book. The authors begin by describing how to establish the supervisory relationship. No groundbreaking information is provided; the authors reference a number of strategies described in other management books—to include building rapport and trust; overcoming negative experiences; addressing defensiveness; using humor; and having an open-door policy.

Perhaps the most helpful chapters in the book are chapters eight and nine. In chapter eight, the authors present a number of scenarios of potential staff concerns and problems across the four generations working in higher education. After each case, five discussion questions are presented to provide the reader with an opportunity to evaluate how he would respond and to apply what he has learned. The authors select com-

mon staff problems throughout higher education that are familiar enough that the reader should be able to easily relate to each scenario. These scenarios—ten in all—are followed by a table of positive and negative interventions. This begins to bring together the main points of the book.

The authors follow chapter eight with one dedicated to common supervisor mistakes. As in chapter eight, the authors present scenarios. The supervisors in the eight scenarios are of varying ages and represent different generational groups. The authors present common missteps of supervisors and make practical suggestions for bringing about positive changes. Each scenario is followed by discussion questions and reflection exercises. The authors effectively show how the generational perspectives and traits of supervisors impact their practices.

Organizational Change

The text concludes by discussing unexpected leadership challenges. One is organizational change. In higher education, change seems to be constant. Fitch and Van Brunt encourage the reader to not focus on the change itself but to focus instead on their own experiences and the practical realities of leading teams through change. The authors argue that leaders can leverage their knowledge of generational characteristics when considering change processes (156). Fitch and Van Brunt then present examples of how each generation's characteristics can be utilized to navigate the change process. Earlier in the text, Fitch and Van Brunt acknowledge that generational stereotypes and clichés are barriers to identifying staff members' unique needs and talents. Individuals never fit neatly into the general characteristics of their member groups. To fully navigate any change process, the unique strengths and characteristics of each *individual*—not their assumed generational characteristics—must be utilized.

Summary

The strength of *A Guide to Leadership and Management in Higher Education* lies in its ability to engage the reader by providing real-life examples, discussion questions, and reflection exercises. In doing so, the book provides guidance to college and university managers and leaders on how to supervise difficult staff in the current difficult times in higher education. The text is ideal for seasoned managers as well as graduate students in student affairs programs. However, because the text does not provide an in-depth look at generational differences in the workplace, readers should supplement it with additional research, data, and findings on generational differences and cross-generational workplaces (including the references cited in this review). Fitch and Van Buren's text is a "how-to-guide;" refer to it as staffing challenges arise.

Follow Your Interests to Find the Right College

MARTHERS, J., AND P. MARTHERS. 2016. TUCSON, ARIZONA: WHEATMARK PRESS. 419 PP.

Reviewed by Marguerite J. Dennis

In *Follow Your Interests to Find the Right College*, the authors instruct the reader to consider the book as a type of buying guide designed to help the prospective college student move from "shopper" to "educated consumer." The premise of the book is that the reader is in charge of the process.

The authors list six goals in the book's introduction:

- Explain the range of higher education options, including the features and benefits of the choices made by the consumer.
- Educate readers about the diversity of colleges and universities.
- Remove confusion surrounding the college search process, and demystify the admissions process.
- Compile information about leading academic programs and types of colleges.
- Urge individuals to first investigate their interests and then investigate schools that offer their desired major. (The authors claim that this differentiates the book from other college publications.)
- Make the college selection journey more illuminating, affirming, and enjoyable.

Part 1

The book is divided into two parts. In Part 1, the authors define liberal arts colleges and public institutions, listing the differences between the two and describing pros and cons of each. Part 1 also provides information about engineering and business schools and lists several schools that offer these majors. This section is followed by a list of the best schools at which to study science and conduct research and a list of colleges and universities by quality and prestige.

A separate section of Part 1 provides brief descriptions of the origins and current status of Ivy League schools — Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, and the University of Pennsylvania. Information is also provided about many "Ivy brand" schools, such as Stanford, MIT, and the University of Chicago.

Service academies and ROTC programs and the benefits of enrolling at these types of schools and in military programs are the next to be described in *Follow Your Interests to Find the Right College*.

Part 1 includes a useful and interesting section on colleges organized around gender, ethnicity, and race; as in previous sections, brief descriptions of several schools are provided.

Nearly 20 pages in Part 1 are devoted to descriptions of several Canadian schools; an equal number of pages list admissions information for many colleges and universities worldwide.

The section on North American colleges with campuses abroad is useful for students who plan to study abroad or who are interested in earning their undergraduate degree abroad.

The final section of Part 1 is devoted to faith-based institutions. The authors list many Catholic schools, Christian colleges and universities, Quaker schools, and colleges with a Jewish heritage. This is a useful resource for prospective college students who are interested in enrolling at faith-based schools.

Part 2

Whereas Part 1 described the diverse types of colleges and universities in the United States, Part 2 presents information about areas of study—particularly the most popular majors, to include:

- Environmental science
- Marine science and oceanography
- Business majors and concentrations
- International relations
- Journalism, communications, and creative writing
- Music and music technology
- Performing arts
- Art, architecture
- Health professions

The authors then provide a brief description of some of the best schools at which to study each major. Admissions information is listed for each school and includes:

- Average GPA of accepted students
- Average SAT and ACT scores of accepted students
- Total enrollment
- Percentage of applicants who are admitted

Part 2 concludes with what the authors describe as "offbeat majors," including:

- Turf management
- Poultry science
- Historic preservation
- Naval architecture
- Aviation programs
- Culinary arts
- Hospitality and hotel management
- Fashion design and merchandising
- Education

Again, brief descriptions of schools offering each major are provided.

Appendix I

Admission Advice for Students with Learning Disabilities

The authors list 61 colleges and universities with strong programs for students with learning disabilities and provide brief descriptions of seventeen of them.

Prospective college students with learning disabilities such as hyperactivity disorders, dyslexia, and Asperger's syndrome can get information on schools that help students with individualized learning plans and accommodate students with special learning styles.

Admission Advice for Homeschooled Students

In this section of the appendix, the authors advise homeschooled high school students as to how to help admissions counselors understand their ability to handle collegiate-level work and how their curriculum and scores compare with those of the rest of the applicant pool.

This is good, detailed advice (the best I have read) about how homeschooled students can best navigate the admissions process.

Transfer Admission

According to some transfer statistics, many students do not graduate from the college at which they initially enroll. Thus, this section is particularly important and relevant.

The authors list fourteen questions that prospective transfer students should ask before transferring from one school to another and provide brief descriptions of 34 transfer student–friendly schools.

Among the topics transfer students should consider are the following:

- Transferring mid-year
- Financial aid implications of transferring
- Statistics related to the transfer policies of each school under consideration
- Number of transfer applicants accepted
- Average number of credits transferred
- Differences in transfer policies of public and private schools

Appendix II

Paying for College

With just five pages devoted to the topic, this is the shortest section in the book. The authors list nineteen questions about financial aid that families should consider before their students apply for admission. Among them are the following:

- Is the admissions process need blind?
- What percentage of need is met?
- What is the average gap if 100 percent of need is not met?
- Is financial aid adjusted annually based on changes in family income?
- Do scholarships require maintenance of minimum grade point averages?
- What forms need to be filed?
- What are the deadlines for applying for aid?
- What tuition payment plans are available?
- What percentage of students receive financial aid?
- What is the average aid award?
- What is the average loan indebtedness of graduates?
- Is there a financial aid appeal process?

The authors also provide information about four tuition-free schools, three schools with work programs in exchange for free tuition, four regional tuition exchange programs, and 29 colleges and universities that offer full scholarships.

Thirteen colleges with loan-free financial aid policies are listed. However, most have sizable endowments that support such financial aid programs—and are the most difficult to which to gain admission (*e.g.*, Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Princeton, Amherst, Bowdoin, and Colby).

As in the opening pages of the book, the authors urge readers to consider college as an investment and make the case as to why families should take the long view when considering college costs.

Conclusion

There are many reasons to read this book. The lists of colleges are manageable, not overwhelming. The book is especially informative if a prospective student knows what major he wishes to study.

The authors achieve goals one and two, related to explaining the diverse range of college options. They also achieve goals four and five, providing the reader with information about leading academic programs and asserting that it is important to investigate interests first and then the institutions that offer the desired majors.

But how many eighteen-year-olds know exactly what they want to study prior to their enrolling in college? Also, there is no section for adult learners, a significant cohort of today's college and university students. A section devoted to two-year colleges would have broadened the base of prospective readers and provided valuable information to that cohort.

No single publication can address everything related to college selection and admission. That said, the authors make no mention of the ability of high school stu-

dents to take courses for college credit while they are still in high school or of the potential to earn transfer credit for online or MOOC courses. In 2014, more than one-quarter of all college students enrolled in one or more online courses. That information seems important for high school students as they plan their college careers.

The authors failed to meet their third goal—to dispel confusion about the college search process—and their sixth goal—to make the college selection process more illuminating, affirming, and enjoyable, especially for those who are uncertain as to what to study in college.

This is a different kind of college selection book. It is unique in organizing information around interests and majors. Description of the breadth and scope of the different types of colleges and universities in the United States and abroad is illuminating.

This is the book for prospective college students who know what they want to study. For students who don't know what they want to study in college, this book should be consulted along with other like publications.

China's Rising Research Universities: A New Era of Global Ambition

RHOADS, R., X. WANG, X. SHI, AND Y. CHANG. BALTIMORE, MD: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS. 206 PP.

Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt

In *China's Rising Research Universities*, authors Rhoads, Wang, Shi, and Chang explore the "contributions of China's universities and their faculty to the nation's expanding role as a global economic, political, and cultural leader" (5). The authors begin with a brief historical overview of higher education in China followed by case studies of four of China's top research institutions. They conclude with a discussion of eight achievements and seven challenges across the higher education system in China. Case study institutions include Tsinghua University, Renmin University, Peking University, and Minzu University.

All four institutions are located in Haidian District in Beijing and receive funding from China's central government through initiatives referred to as "Projects 211 and 985." Despite similarities among the institutions, the authors contend that each has unique cultural characteristics and areas of expertise that distinguish it from the others. In addition, the authors share information they gathered from officials at ten other universities in China regarding changes in Chinese higher education and similarities and differences between Chinese and U.S. institutions.

Rhoads *et al.* observe that China's universities have increasingly become "a point of focus, both in terms of their responsibilities in contributing to the nation's further development and also as a measure of the nation's progress" (4). Because faculty members play a critical role in the production, management, and application of knowledge, the authors view university faculty members as "the critical link in raising the quality and improving the overall operations of the academic enterprise [in China]" (7).

Historical Overview

To provide context for many of the challenges and opportunities China's leading universities now face, Rhoads and colleagues provide an historical overview of higher education in China over the past century. The authors divide this timeline into four distinct periods and discuss how social, cultural, and political activities helped shape the present-day research university in China. The authors label the current timeframe (late 1990s–present) the Global Ambition period and suggest that it is marked by China's economic strength as well as its national efforts to build or further develop world-class universities that are "comparable to…the best western universities" (11).

To attain such ambitious goals, China's government launched Project 211 in 1995 and Project 985 in 1998 to fund its top-tier research universities. The goals of these initiatives are to strengthen management systems, increase research capacity, and develop key disciplines. In addition, Project 985 is focused on elevating a subset of these leading research institutions to world-class sta-

tus in teaching, research, and international engagement. According to the authors, these funding mechanisms support only a fraction of China's ever-growing educational enterprise and may call into question China's aspirational goals in light of widespread economic disparities between urban and rural populations (22).

Major Trends

Rhoads and colleagues identify a number of significant trends that continue to shape and define the present-day higher education context in China, including the interrelated concepts of marketization and research capacity building. The authors note that increasingly, China's elite universities are defining students and families as consumers and are linking university products to business and industry to generate diverse sources of market-driven revenue.

For example, both Tsinghua and Zhejiang universities have "heavily invested…in the development of industrial research and science parks designed to bridge the gap between university research and the needs of business and industry" (18). This entrepreneurial approach to scholarship and innovation is aligned with Crow and Dabar's (2015) vision for the New American University yet is also highly criticized by others who suggest that market-driven and commoditized learning environments are anathema to U.S. higher education (Bok 2013, Samuels 2013). According to Ferrara (2015), this consumer-driven approach has turned many colleges and universities into "quasi-corporations" rather than centers for learning and discovery (121).

Rhoads *et al.* state, "What is clear, even in China, is that private sources of revenue, including reliance on tuition and fees, are increasingly needed to offset the growing costs of an expanding higher education sector" (16). Consequently, higher education in China has experienced greater decentralization, including reductions in funding for all but a select number of top-tier institutions, as well as increased rates of privatization and internationalization as demand for higher education far outstrips supply.

Tsinghua University

According to Rhoads and colleagues, Tsinghua University is considered the most entrepreneurial university in China, with scholarship and innovation deeply embedded in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Despite Tsinghua's world-class faculty and facilities, one of the greatest challenges to scientific innovation at the university is a research funding system that is heavily bureaucratic and open to favoritism. The authors observe, "Instead of spending their time on serious scholarship endeavors…Chinese researchers must spend a good portion of their time developing relationships and making connections" (38).

Consistent with findings by Lang (2013), the authors describe Tsinghua University as a setting in which everyone—faculty and students alike—is in constant competition. Rhoads *et al.* state, "One faces the pressures of living within a massive population offering limited resources and opportunities" (43). Tsinghua has placed great emphasis on key objectives including: advancing industrial and corporate partnerships; furthering technology transfer; incubating innovative ideas through an emphasis on applied science; developing and supporting start-up companies; and cultivating talent among students and faculty (59). The authors note, however, that as in the United States, "Some faculty fully subscribe to the revenue-generating ventures of the modern research university whereas others see such initiatives as compromising the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake" (50).

Peking University

Peking University, also known as Beijing University and colloquially as Beida, is arguably China's first modern university—one marked by a quest for academic excellence. The authors identify unique characteristics that distinguish Beida from its counterparts, including a "pursuit of knowledge with skepticism" (73). In contrast to traditional Chinese thinking and reverence for authority, Beida faculty encourage students to "question values, modes of living, social norms and customs, and moral ideals, both past and present" (73). The authors suggest that "the Beida way" is characterized by critical and independent thinking, creativity, and a willingness to challenge dominant practices.

Competition for a limited number of faculty posts at Beida and throughout China has resulted in increased pressure for faculty to publish in top-tier and international journals. Rhoads and colleagues state, "Some [faculty members] openly wonder if quality has kept

pace with quantity" (81). Despite Beida's elevated expectations for research, faculty generally expressed satisfaction with academia and the opportunity it affords them to conduct research, interact with and mentor students, and develop collegial relationships in their field.

Renmin University

Renmin University has a reputation for bringing together real-world problems and research-based insights. Faculty members frequently are engaged as public intellectuals to advance the nation's economic, political, and legal interests (92). For Renmin, internationalization has resulted in recruiting high-quality professors from around the world and has placed greater emphasis on students and faculty members having academic experiences overseas. Faculty also discussed internationalization as related to university expectations for research and publishing, teaching practices, cultural exchange and communication, and faculty background and training.

In examining higher education policy and university reform, the authors pose important questions regarding the extent to which China is following the U.S. model of higher education and whether this model will ultimately benefit national interests. Ferrara (2015) notes that global convergence, or the drive toward a universal university model, has had an overall deleterious effect among foreign universities and has created market-driven and commoditized learning environments that favor corporate interests over the principles of public good and shared economic prosperity.

Ferrara states, "It is a strange moment in history when the world looks to the United States to provide a template for a universal university model when its own system of higher learning is in a state of crisis" (141). Similarly, Rhoads *et al.* caution that there are "dangers in uncritically adopting western scholarly norms" (123). The authors observe that this is especially true for learning environments in which the concept of academic freedom is not fully supported by China's central government.

Minzu University

Minzu University, also known as Minzu University of China (MUC), is one of fifteen minority-serving universities throughout China known as *minzu* universities. According to the authors, the term *minzu* is typically translated as "national ethnic group" (125). By serving ethnic minorities in China, Rhoads and colleagues draw parallels between *minzu* universities and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States. Approximately 60 percent of all students who attend MUC and more than 40 percent of faculty and staff members come from ethnic minority backgrounds, demonstrating China's commitment to ethnic affairs and its national policy to address social and economic inequalities (124, 132).

Based on faculty interviews, Rhoads and colleagues highlight differing opinions regarding how MUC should advance its interests. A number of individuals suggested that MUC should use funding from Projects 211 and 985 to build stronger ties to business and industry. These faculty members posited that expanding the institution's market-oriented research enterprise would better serve the needs of ethnic minority students. Conversely, ethnocultural faculty placed greater emphasis on the need to strengthen local ethnic cultures.

Rhoads *et al.* state, "[Ethnocultural] faculty did not see the market as irrelevant, but they tended to define the university's ethnic affairs charge as a public good" (141) and preferred to tie their research interests to servicing the needs of underrepresented groups. Research examples include preserving aspects of local folk music and teaching materials and documenting the history of nomadic peoples. Even though they were in the majority, faculty members subscribing to the ethnocultural development narrative acknowledged the growing influence of marketization.

Summary

Rhoads and colleagues conclude *China's Rising Research University* with a cross-case analysis of the four universities featured in the book. Specifically, the authors identify similarities and differences among these institutions and highlight eight achievements of Chinese higher education as well as seven challenges they will need to address to reach world-class standing. Even though the authors introduce both achievements and challenges in individual chapters—including topics such as internationalization and marketization—they delve deeper into the implications of these themes for higher education in China in the final chapter.

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Not surprisingly, a number of achievements and challenges represent opposite sides of the same coin. For example, Rhoads *et al.* indicate that the faculty promotion process in China has improved greatly: Universities have implemented more formalized processes for recruitment and promotion and have relied less on personal connections and ties for individual advancement. According to the authors, these steps have elevated the basic standards for research and publishing and are largely viewed by Chinese faculty members as a positive sign.

However, Rhoads and colleagues also observe that promotion opportunities are extremely limited given that China's government controls the number of full and associate professor positions at each institution. Further, faculty members raised concerns that promotion is largely based on the quantity of publications in top-tier and international journals rather than the quality of research. Several faculty members suggested that quantifying publications was based on the lack of senior administrators' expertise to appropriately judge the merits of a given publication; consequently, senior administrators rely solely on numbers to make recommendations for promotion. These same professors suggest that qualified scholars in the field should play a greater role in assessing faculty productivity and that all publications from Chinese scholars should be held to the rigorous standards of blind peer-review.

Finally, Rhoads and colleagues identify a need for Chinese universities to "strengthen faculty voice and engagement in institutional decision making as a strategy to improve faculty empowerment" (171). That is, higher education in China will struggle to achieve world-class standing as long as issues of academic freedom and transparency persist. Simply stated, "Chinese higher education can advance only as far as its authoritarian single-party political system will allow" (Ferrara 2015, 7).

China's Rising Research Universities is a well-written and informative review of China's tertiary system of higher education and of the funding mechanisms that are advancing China's global ambition. As evidenced throughout the text, China continues to make strides toward improved academic quality based on strategic investments and enhanced pedagogy.

China's burgeoning strength as a global superpower and its strides toward market-driven and commoditized education cannot be ignored. At the same time, however, Baocheng (2014) urges research universities to temper their revenue-generating mentality with a vision of public good and service to society. This call to action is as relevant for higher education in the United States as it is for higher education in China.

Palace of Ashes: China and the Decline of American Higher Education

FERRARA, M. S. 2015. BALTIMORE, MD: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS. 206 PP.

Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt

In *Palace of Ashes*, Ferrara presents a comparative analysis of the development of the modern university in the United States and China. He suggests that higher education in the United States is losing its competitive advantage because of globalization and that these forces "are helping rapidly developing Asian nations… to transform their major universities into serious contenders for the world's students, faculty, and resources within just a few generations" (1). This observation is consistent with the findings of Bok (2013), who notes that "it is likely that our [the United States] impressive standing in the world owes less to the success of our own system than it does to the weakness of foreign universities, which were long overregulated, underfunded, and neglected by their own governments" (3).

To compete for scarce resources (*e.g.*, human resources and intellectual capital), the Chinese government has recently invested billions of dollars to build a world-class education system. Further, China is abandoning the ineffective education models of rote learning and vocational training in favor of broad-based, interdisciplinary learning models. In other words, China is adopting teaching modalities that have long characterized effective and innovative strategies in the United States at the same time that U.S. higher education is moving in the opposite direction—toward increased

specialization. The author suggests that U.S. higher education has effectively jettisoned the values and norms that historically have represented its core strengths.

Ferrara enumerates many of the challenges that U.S. higher education institutions now face (*e.g.*, administrative bloat, unsustainable tuition increases, student loan debt). However, the greatest obstacle seems to be a fundamental shift in how Americans view and operate higher education. Specifically, the author identifies the two most detrimental trends in the United States as the forfeiture of higher education as a public good and the corporatization of higher education.

According to Ferrara, higher education in the United States is now seen as a commodity "bought by an individual consumer to provide upward mobility via professional training, rather than a civic good funded by public coffers" (4). At the same time, colleges and universities have courted corporate ties and private donations in order "to offset declines in state and federal funding for higher education" (12). This is consistent with the observations of scholars who have noted that corporatization tends to focus on short-term financial targets in reaction to increasing economic pressures (Bok 2013, Parker 2011, Samuels 2013).

Historical Context

To examine the implications of global convergence (globalization) in the modern era, the author first traces the development of the earliest education models in China and the United States. Ferrara states, "The ancient Chinese and Greco-Roman traditions of higher learning developed independently from one another, and therefore their pedagogies, educational philosophies, and courses of study reveal…important cultural presuppositions and innovations passed down to later generations" (18). While a full assessment of historical events in China and the United States is beyond the scope of this review, Ferrara provides a rich narrative including key occurrences that reinforce his observations regarding differences between the two countries' higher education systems.

China

According to Ferrara, the civil service exam (originally influenced by Confucian principles of virtue and the cultivation of self through lifelong learning) was distorted over time by multiple dynasties and came to represent privilege (self-interest) over service (public good). Beginning during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the civil service examination became increasingly formalized and complex, which led to "incredible feats of memorization"—a legacy that the author suggests endures in China to this day.

Ferrara writes, "This emphasis on the development of prodigious memories has had the unfortunate consequence of privileging rote learning over the creative synthesis of knowledge" (26). In addition, the civil service exam which correlates with the contemporary university entrance examination "speaks to the long tradition of high-pressure examinations in Chinese higher education" (29).

United States

While colleges and universities in the United States are still relatively new compared to their counterparts in China, historical influences on the U.S. higher education system are no less important. Ferrara notes that historians traditionally trace modern U.S. education back to ancient Greece and Rome; however, he also identifies unique contributions of the Middle East in disseminating and augmenting Greek models of the liberal arts during the Dark Ages. The author describes the early modern period of education in Europe as tumultuous—"centuries of fluctuation and alternations, advances and declines, institutional openings and closings, periodic curricular reforms followed by intervals of degeneration, expansions, and constrictions" (68).

Colleges and universities in the United States were heavily influenced by English and German models; however, U.S. institutions developed their own unique identities through social, economic, political, and cultural developments. For example, access to college expanded for U.S. citizens through a series of legislative decisions including the first and second Morrill Acts (1862, 1890); the GI Bill of Rights (1944); the National Defense Education Act (1958); and the Higher Education Act (1965), among others. Other noteworthy influences include the emigration of German scholars to the United States during World War II and the rise of junior (community) colleges to meet the increased demand for access to higher education.

Higher Education in China

Ferrara notes that during the Cultural Revolution (beginning in 1966) and extending until Mao Zedong's death in 1976, China's universities languished and enrollments dropped precipitously; the focus of higher education was to "instill political correctness and teach technical skills" based on proletarian politics and communist ideology. Since its low point in the 1970s, however, China has rebounded to become the largest higher education delivery system in the world. The author states, "The surge in financial support for Chinese higher education corresponds to equally dramatic declines in funding for American colleges and universities during the same period" (85).

While China's tertiary education is often a tool for political indoctrination, its commitment to education as a means to advance society—not just the individual—marks a noticeable difference between higher education in the United States and China. China's current Development Plan states, "Education is the cornerstone of national rejuvenation and social progress… [I]t must be enhanced if a nation is to prosper" (100).

Decline in U.S. Higher Education

Ferrara notes that between 1949 and 1980, "the United States invested in primary, secondary, and tertiary education [at unprecedented rates] for the benefit of the commonweal and the advancement of its economic goals" (106). However, damaging economic policies, generational budget cuts, exploitation of adjunct and contingent faculty members, and the commodification of technical innovations within U.S. colleges and universities have led to higher education becoming the proverbial "palace of ashes" (111).

The author pays particular attention to the decrease in the number of tenured and tenure-eligible faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities and notes that tenure once was seen as the greatest protection to academic freedom in academia. According to Ferrara, poorly suited corporate principles have been foisted upon nonprofit colleges and universities and consequently turned campus administrators into highly paid executives while professors have become dispensable knowledge workers (109). Ferrara writes, "Many American colleges and universities today are really quasi-corporations where collegial forms of shared governance are seen as obstacles to effective management" (121).

The author also contends that "assessment regimes" in higher education continue to undermine the autonomy of faculty in the classroom. Ferrara writes, "Standardized assessment, college rankings, value-added indicators, and student learning outcomes…obfuscate, mislead, and color public perceptions about the quality of higher education delivery in the United States" and have a "deleterious effect on teaching and research"(125). Ferrara suggests that these frequently unregulated practices represent administrative strategies to subordinate the status of college professors and devalue the "long history of…the established tradition of intellectual freedom that once made American colleges and universities an inspiration to the global community" (130).

Globalization of Higher Education

According to Ferrara, globalization has had a profound impact on higher education by "facilitating the flow of information, knowledge, power, values, ideas, and goods and services across national borders" (136). As a consequence of globalization, many countries around the world are striving to create "world-class" institutions based on the U.S. model of higher education. However, the template on which emerging countries are basing their education systems is not the one that made U.S. higher education great in the first place.

Ferrara suggests that because colleges and universities in the United States were forced to diversify their revenue streams given significant defunding by state and federal government beginning in the 1980s, U.S. higher education has been guided more by corporate interests than by principles of public good and shared economic prosperity. Specifically, he states, "Global convergence has meant that governance arrangements at colleges and universities around the world are becoming more centralized, hierarchical, and authoritarian—rather than the bottom-up, decentralized, and democratic organizational structures that once distinguished American higher education" (147).

This global trend toward market-driven and commoditized learning environments has led increasingly to greater standardization among global institutions that makes them more easily comparable (143). According to the author, the drive toward a universal university

model has resulted in foreign universities' surrendering their own cultural values in order to develop favorable relationships with the United States. However, Ferrara states, "It is a strange moment in history when the world looks to the United States to provide a template for a universal university model when its own system of higher learning is in a state of crisis" (141).

Ferrara also observes that the trend toward specialization in U.S. higher education and tertiary education around the world has largely overshadowed the values of a liberal education, which "prepares students to live in a complex and quickly changing world" (147). This is consistent with findings by Chopp, Frost, and Weiss (2014), who note that the liberal arts help students gain invaluable skills such as critical thinking, an ability to innovate, and the capacity to work in teams with a diverse group of individuals.

These skills, Ferrara says, historically have established a solid foundation on which a specialty could be built in graduate school or the workplace. Liberal education, however, has been increasingly marginalized and underfunded and "mistakenly viewed as ill-suited to producing the engineers and scientists needed by postindustrial economies" (3). Ferrara concludes, "When vocational and technical learning trump the quest for self-knowledge and students are not being taught to think, imagine, criticize, or compare, then a free and democratic society cannot long abide" (163).

Summary

Palace of Ashes is a thoughtful and articulate account of higher education in China and the United States, the two largest economies in the world. Ferrara presents both similarities and striking differences between the histories of these education systems and suggests that the United States seems to be moving away from the values and ideals that represented American higher education between 1945 and 1980. This shift has occurred at the same time that China continues to make strides toward improved quality based on strategic investments and enhanced pedagogy.

While the rise of higher education in China is useful for the purpose of comparison, Ferrara clearly states that *Palace of Ashes* is a uniquely American story and one that has significant consequences in the near to mid future. According to Ferrara, higher education in the United States is in peril; should we continue to defund rather than invest in higher education, "hubs of higher learning in other parts of the world will converge on, and eventually surpass, American colleges and universities as the first choice for international students and faculty" (142–143). This process may take several decades, but it is, he writes, an eventuality. As long as China views education as a mechanism by which to fulfill its global ambition, it will continue to funnel billions of dollars into it. Furthermore, Ferrara wisely notes that China is just one of many countries around the world "investing in higher education as a means of social and economic development" (114).

Despite increasingly global competition in higher education, Ferrara suggests that the United States has remained largely complacent. And without saying it specifically, he seems to suggest that this shortsightedness may represent America's pride coming before its fall. The reputation of U.S. universities relies on credibility established long ago, but historical standing "cannot sustain the academy in perpetuity" (13).

According to Ferrara, global convergence in higher education "need not mean backsliding into obscurity; it could become instead the impetus that invigorates debate and prompts reform" (176). The author communicates a clear call to action for the United States to recognize the paradigm shift that occurred in the late 1970s and 1980s and fully refund public higher education. In doing so, colleges and universities could streamline their administrative and managerial ranks, restore tenured faculty positions, and dramatically decrease student tuition and fees. Ferrara contends that these changes could usher in a new era in U.S. higher education, one that would combine the best features of American colleges and universities of yesteryear with the new world of convergence in which we live and thereby restore our "palace of ashes" to a "grand citadel of learning" (158).

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