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Transitioning Transfer Students: Interactive Factors that Influence First-Year Retention

Interview with Thomas Huddleston, Jr.

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Community College Registrars as Leaders During Systems Implementation

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College and University (ISSN 0010-0889) is published four times a year by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20036-1115. The cost of the publication is included in the AACRAO membership fee. For information on subscriptions and package rates, please visit www.aacrao.org/publications/index.cfm. Back issues are $30 each (price includes shipping). ISSN: 0010-0889.

INDEXED: College and University is indexed in Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE), Education Index, Higher Education Abstracts and Contents Pages in Education.
WILL THEY

stay

or WILL THEY

PREDICTING THE RISK
 OF ATTRITION AT
 A LARGE PUBLIC
 UNIVERSITY

?
THE PROJECT described in this article seeks to utilize a complex set of variables and characteristics, including data mined from an administration of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire, to determine the specific risk of attrition of individual college students prior to their matriculation, permitting specific and personal interventions.

Student persistence is a matter of concern at almost all institutions of higher education, as well as to legislators, government officials, and the public. While some student attrition is not necessarily a negative outcome, the wasted resources and perceptions of failure that are associated with unacceptable attrition levels are problematic for college and university administrators.

Many institutions have implemented strategies intended to enhance student persistence. However, most involve the broad application of programs, services, or instructional initiatives that affect large groups of students. Because it is reasonable to expect that some portion of any group of students would have been retained regardless of the intervention, such a broad approach is, at best, inefficient.

The project described in this article seeks to utilize a complex set of variables and characteristics to determine the specific risk of attrition of individual students prior to their matriculation. For those determined to be most at risk, an intervention specific to the individual student and his or her risk factors will be implemented.

BACKGROUND
A number of studies of student persistence have examined the interaction between students and institutions. Tinto (1975) proposes a predictive model based upon principles of the student’s level of academic and social integration. The model appears very useful in explaining attrition in the second year of college and beyond. However, decades of evidence suggest that attrition is greatest during the first year of college, as demonstrated by Iffert (1958), Marsh (1966), and Eckland (1964).

Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) applied Tinto’s principles of academic and social integration of students in the first year of college. They found evidence to support the basic aspects of the Tinto model—particularly the value of interaction between students and faculty members. Tinto’s research and that of Pascarella and Terenzini are useful models for predicting attrition based upon student characteristics and the nature and extent of student interaction with the institution.

Chapman and Pascarella (1983) studied differences in student social and academic integration, central principles in Tinto’s work, across various types of institutions. The researchers controlled for differences in student characteristics and found that there were differences across institutional type regarding both social and academic integration. The results suggest that particular types of institutions foster different sorts of integration or interaction opportunities for students. Robbins, Allen, Cassilas & Peterson (2006) studied the effect of student self-reported psychosocial factors on college outcomes in the first year and also found differences across institutional type.

Braxton, Vesper, and Hossler (1995) studied students’ expectations of the college experience and the relationship of those expectations to students’ intention to persist across a number of institutions. The study demonstrated
that the extent to which student expectations of their experience are met has an effect on their plans to continue their matriculation. Helland, Stallings, and Braxton (2002) also studied how the fulfillment of student expectations relates to social integration and student departure. Their study at a single institution concluded that the satisfaction of student expectations plays a substantial role in student departure.

In a study at Canisius College, a smaller institution, Glynn, Sauer, and Miller (2003) developed a model for predicting attrition based upon pre-matriculation characteristics and opinions. Their model allowed for identification of the risk of attrition of individual in-coming students prior to the beginning of their coursework. The institution thus was able to design intervention strategies for students at risk of dropping out. The resulting increase in persistence and in degree attainment was a powerful testimony to the usefulness of the predictive model. The same researchers found that the model continued to be effective even after several years as the institution continued to demonstrate a substantially higher rate of student degree attainment (Glynn, Sauer, and Miller 2006).

Efforts to enhance student persistence often involve broad-based, widely applied programs. Such programs include enhanced orientation efforts, required first-year student seminar courses, early alert systems, and mandatory academic advising (Habley and McClanahan 2004). From the standpoint of enhancing service to and support of students, programs designed to enhance student persistence are laudable. When institutions give attention to student success and engage students in programs to enhance their prospects for persistence, the outcome is usually a good one. Further, the programs employed often do have a positive effect on persistence.

However, if the original rate of persistence is greater than zero (which always is the case), then some of the effort and expenditure associated with the programs’ implementation is unnecessary. In other words, some students would have persisted to graduation regardless of the programs.

It is through the prediction of risk of attrition of individual students that institutions can identify those in need of an intervention and can employ a specific strategy to enhance those students’ chances of success. Resources then can be diverted where they are most needed. This article describes the application of a predictive model at a large, Research I institution.

INSTITUTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCE
The University of South Florida (USF) is the third largest university in the Southeast and the ninth largest university in the country. More than 44,000 students study on campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee, and Lakeland. Undergraduate enrollment in 2006–07 was 34,077, and total enrollment was 44,038, with graduate students numbering more than 7,000.

USF is a rapidly growing research university. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching ratings place the University in the top tier of research universities with more than $300 million in research funding. The freshman class on the Tampa campus numbered almost 4,000 in the fall 2006; more than 4,600 transfer students enrolled that same semester. Approximately 4,200 students live on the largely commuter campus.

The University’s student population profile has characteristics associated with higher attrition rates. In fact, the most recent IPEDS data demonstrate that the first-time-in-college (FTIC) population at the University has a four-year graduation rate of 21 percent, a five-year rate of 39 percent, and a six-year rate of 47 percent. Many of the University’s peer institutions have better rates—some dramatically so. In response to a desire to enhance student success and persistence, the institution has made a commitment to improve in this area.

THE COLLEGE STUDENT EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE
The College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) was developed in 1997 (Kuh and Pace 1998) to help institutions understand what students anticipate about the college-going experience. Institutional researchers utilize the instrument to determine whether student expectations need to be modified and also to inform recruitment and enrollment management strategies and approaches. Information about student expectations can help institutions construct orientation programs that provide updated and accurate information about the college experience (Gonyea 2003). Institutions generally are well-served to evaluate students’ expectations because the cognitive dissonance generated by unmet expectations can compromise the commitment of an individual student to the institution (Howard 2005).

Aggregated data evaluated by the national administrators of the CSXQ show that student expectations of the college-going experience are not met (Kuh, Gonyea, and Williams 2005). However, even though the nationally aggregated data are valuable, institutionally based research is both encouraged and recommended (Miller, Kuh, and Paine 2006).

The University of South Florida administered the CSXQ in summer 2006 to in-coming First Time in College (FTIC) students as part of new student orientation. Students were asked to provide their individual student
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identification number so researchers could collect additional information. Approximately 1,000 usable surveys with verified student identification numbers were collected. University officials are interested in the general results of the CSXQ and will analyze them in order to inform any adjustment of student programs and services. For the purpose of the present study, CSXQ data are examined to determine their worth in predicting student persistence; other evidence suggests that student expectations may be useful in a prediction model (Miller 2005). The CSXQ gathers information about student expectations of library use and information technology, interactions with faculty, course learning, writing, campus programs and facilities, and clubs and organizations. What students expect to experience in those aspects of the college experience may prove useful in predicting their continued matriculation.

INSTITUTIONAL DATA TO SUPPLEMENT CSXQ
In addition to the CSXQ data, the research team will examine other known student factors. For example, demographic information shown to be useful in predicting attrition—to include gender, ethnicity, and age—will be part of the data set. Academic performance and potential, in the form of SAT (or modified ACT) and high school average, also will be included. In an effort to account for students’ distance from home, researchers will include permanent address zip code in the data set. Commitment to the institution will be measured by the time lapse between application for admission and matriculation. Plans for the college experience will be assessed by intended major and by plans for residence. Parental support has been found to be of predictive worth, so the data set also will include the number of family members who accompanied a student at new student orientation.

Several University programs are intended to provide extra support to students and to stimulate behaviors to enhance student success. For example, two summer programs—Student Support Services and Freshman Summer Institute—involve special advisement and support for students determined on the basis of pre-matriculation characteristics to be at risk. Further, special support and academic monitoring services are provided to student-athletes. Involvement in these programs will be part of the data set. Some of these factors are likely to be positively correlated with persistence, and some will be negatively correlated.

PROJECT PLAN
The full data set was constructed from the merging of the CSXQ data into institutionally housed data. Once enrollment in the subsequent academic year is firm (i.e., after the drop and add period), the researchers will be able to determine what proportion of the 1,000 students in the study have persisted into the second year. The dichotomous dependent variable, persistence, will divide the data set into two groups; logistic regression will allow the researchers to determine which independent variables in the data set are useful in distinguishing persistors from dropouts, as well as the predictive weight of each of those variables.

On the basis of that set of determinations, a model will be constructed and a regression formula applied to incoming students. The researchers intend to complete model construction by late in the fall of 2007. If aspects of the model demonstrate predictive value, the CSXQ (or a modified version thereof) will be administered in summer 2008 to entering FTIC students attending orientation. The model will be applied to the entering cohort, and a risk-of-attrition score will be calculated for each student.

DESIGNING INTERVENTIONS
The most important aspect of this project is the design of well-formulated interventions in response to information about students determined to be at risk of dropping out. An essential first step is the identification of attrition risk of individual students. But improvement will occur only if the institution fashions responses for students that make success and persistence more likely.

Undergraduate Studies and the Division of Student Affairs at the University of South Florida are committed to developing strategies to enhance the likelihood that individual students will persist. Several departments already provide services that relate directly to student persistence. Some participate in regular, routine interaction with first-year students. Individuals working in First-Year Programs, the Academic Advising Center, Financial Aid, Career Services, and the University Experience (first-year seminar) Course have a considerable amount of interaction with first-year students, sometimes because the interaction is a requirement for the student.

Using the predictive model, the researchers, with the support of appropriate administrative staff, will determine which components of risk of attrition are best addressed by which departments. Students at high risk of attrition and with career or major objectives that are particularly challenging in the context of their academic preparation and performance history would benefit from interventions fashioned by the Academic Advising Center and the Career Center. Students at high risk because of living circumstances may be offered residential scholarships to make campus living affordable. Students planning to spend considerable time in off-campus employment may be offered meaningful, well-compensated jobs on campus.
There are many intervention strategies with many forms of delivery. Research at Canisius College demonstrated that interventions can be productive and fruitful; the key value of the model is that those who design and manage interventions must know exactly who stands to benefit most from them. Delivering help and support where it is most needed is efficient for departments and beneficial to the students served.

**CONCLUSION**

In subsequent writing, the research team will describe findings from the first-year study and will present the model that will be employed to measure attrition risk. Specific interventions tailored to aspects of attrition risk will be described, and the plan for administering the program or attrition intervention will be explained.

**REFERENCES**


**About the Author**

THOMAS E. MILLER is an Associate Professor at the Tampa campus of the University of South Florida, where he has served since 2001. He previously worked in senior student affairs positions at the University of South Florida, Eckerd College, and Canisius College, and he also held positions at Indiana University, and at Shippensburg University. Miller holds a bachelor’s degree from Muhlenberg College and master’s and doctoral degrees from Indiana University.
This study examined the diverse patterns of interactive factors that influence transfer students’ first-year retention at a midsize four-year university. The population for this study consisted of five cohorts totaling 1,713 full-time, degree-seeking transfer students. Sequential sets of logistic regression analyses on blocks of variables were applied to student groups of different transfer status. Findings revealed that transfer credit hours, transfer GPA, college of last attendance, institutional scholarships, post-transfer GPA, and earned credit hours significantly influenced first-year retention. There were diverse patterns of interactive impact factors on first-year retention across the groups of students based on different transfer status. Distinctive patterns of impact factors in retention based upon transfer status of credit hours require diverse retention strategies and efforts.
The 2002 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicates that the transfer student population represents approximately 40 percent of the nation’s undergraduate students. Once seen as institutions catering only to nontraditional students, community colleges now offer programs attractive to traditional undergraduate students, in essence acting as a starting point for many students entering the higher education system and a step stone for transferring to universities. As such, the transfer student population from community colleges significantly contributes to the whole student populations for many four-year institutions. 

Jacob, et al. (2004) contend that the transfer student population is the “forgotten” group in comparison to the resources provided and efforts made to attract and retain traditional freshmen. Tinto (1993) insists that transfer student retention does not receive adequate attention in the discussion of retention efforts. Given the rapid increase in the transfer population, this lack of attention may have a negative effect on an institution’s ability to successfully engage and retain transfer students.

As retention rate continues to be seen as one of the essential indicators of university performance, understanding the characteristics and factors influencing retention is crucial to improving the retention of transfer students. This is increasingly important in light of the fact that many states are experiencing decreases in the projected number of high school graduates. As four-year institutions attract transfer students, the retention of these students becomes dependent on the manner in which the institution can be both proactive and creative in the development of retention programs associated with this unique population. Institutions that create successful retention programs for transfer students are able to address the unique needs, questions, and concerns associated with the transfer student population (Jacob, et al., 2004).

This study intends to develop a group of sequential models that determines what factors of pre-transfer characteristics, financial aid, and post-transfer first-year academic performance significantly influence transfer students’ retention to their second year. Specific to this research, the sequential sets of models illustrate the interactive relationships between the blocks of variables and identified factors influencing transfer students’ retention and their continued enrollment in a mid-sized, moderately selective public university in the Midwest. Distinctive patterns of influential variables were identified and examined across the student groups of different transfer status.

Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman’s (1995) transition model provides theoretical insights into factors related to a transfer student’s transition experience from college to college. In this model, a transition is defined as any event (or nonevent) that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. Specifically, as the individual student’s transfer process unfolds, the individual moves from preoccupation with the transition to integration of the transition. This sequence can result in either personal growth or individual ambivalences.

Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) also identify four major sets of factors that influence a person’s ability to cope with transition: situation, self, support, and

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1 This study was supported in part by a Title III grant (P031A030130-Strengthening Institutions) awarded to Emporia State University by the Department of Education.
strategies. The transition from one college to another is a change process, touching on dimensions of situation, self, support, and strategies that shape the transfer student experience and influence the student’s retention toward earning a baccalaureate degree. Hence, the transfer effectiveness in coping with transition depends on students’ personal resources in these four areas.

Several studies have examined the factors influencing transfer students’ retention and degree completion (see, for example, Buckley and Lafleur 1991; Gao, Hughes, O’Rear, and Fendley 2002; Townsend 1993; Zhai and Newcomb 2000). The research consistently demonstrates that academic performance strongly influences transfer student retention. Buckley and Lafleur (1991) found that transfer student retention typically was an academic issue. Specifically, they note that for a transfer student to persist, he requires better academic preparation. Colleges accepting transfer students need to provide more academic support services specifically focused on the transfer student population.

Townsend (1993) suggests that different academic environments, including academic standards, classroom atmospheres, tests and/or assignments, attendance policies, and faculty attitudes, can make transfer students’ academic experiences difficult and contribute to such students’ departure. Zhai and Newcomb (2000) conclude that a transfer student’s GPA is the best indicator of expected academic performance after transfer while the student’s post-transfer GPA is the single most important measure associated with retention. Other factors found to be related to transfer student retention and/or degree completion include the number of credits transferred at time of entry (Gao et al. 2002; Koker and Hendel 2003) and the type of institution transferred from (Buckley and Lafleur 1991; Koker and Hendel 2003). Transfer student demographics such as ethnicity, gender, and age seem to have had little or no influence on student retention (Gao et al. 2002; Koker and Hendel 2003).

**RESEARCH APPROACH**

**Participants and Data Collection**

Participants in this study were five cohorts of full-time, degree-seeking transfer students (totaling 1,773 students) who matriculated during the fall semesters 2000 through 2004 at a mid-size, moderately selective public university located in a small midwest city. Students who enrolled but did not take any classes (45) and students who graduated within their first year (15) were not included in the analyses. Transfer students’ data for the five cohorts (fall 2000 through fall 2004) were combined together and then categorized into three groups by transfer status, freshmen (0–29 transfer credit hours), sophomores (30–59 transfer credit hours), and juniors (60–89 transfer credit hours). Therefore, subjects for the first-year retention model development of freshman transfers, sophomore transfers, and junior transfers were, respectively, 274; 600; and 839, for a total of 1,713.

The pre-transfer characteristics, financial aid, and academic performance data of the students’ first two post-transfer semesters were collected from the university’s data warehouse. For each financial aid variable of Pell Grant, loan, and institutional scholarship, the amounts were averaged for the two semesters. Similarly, post-transfer earned credit hours and term GPA were averaged for the two semesters. Analysis was based on these averages. For those students who did not enroll for the second semester, first semester financial aid and academic performance data were used in place of the average amount. Both transfer GPA and post-transfer term GPA were transformed into broad-ranged data by multiplying by 10 for easier interpretation.

**Statistical Modeling Techniques**

Logistic regression has been applied extensively to retention research with dichotomous outcomes, such as enrolling or not enrolling. It is appropriate in the model development for persistence decisions (Cabrera 1994). The nexus model, which uses sequential sets of logistic regression analysis, has proven effective in examining the confounding relationships between different sets of variables in the persistence-decision process (Adelman 2006; St. John, Paulsen, and Carter 2005; St. John, Paulsen, and Starkey 1996).

This study adopted the systematic uses of sequential logistic analyses by using three connected steps in the model development of first-year retention for freshman transfers, sophomore transfers, and junior transfers. There were three steps in each of these three transfer retention models: Step 1 used only the set of background variables in building the models for predicting first-year retention. Step 2 added the set of first-year financial aid variables to the model. Step 3 combined a block of post-transfer first-year academic performance variables with the first two sets of variables.

The blocks of variables in each step were entered in a sequence that parallels the order in which students pass through the stages of persistence behavior (St. John et al. 1996). Each of the steps is cumulative, so that variables in one step that meet the statistical criteria for remaining in the model were carried forward to the next step. This extended accounting examines not only the direct effects
of variables on persistence but also their interactions with the variables entered in successive steps (St. John, et al. 1996).

In presenting the statistics of the models, beta coefficients were converted into delta-p statistics, indicating that every unit change in the independent variable changes the probability that X will happen by Y percent given the values of the other variables in the model (Cabrera 1994). The logistic model table provides delta-p statistics only for those beta coefficients that are statistically significant given that there is no way to determine the statistical significance of the delta-p itself (Adelman 2006; Cabrera 1994).

**Blocks of Variables for Model Development**

Three blocks of variables were included in the sequential logistic analyses development for each of the three first-year retention models: (a) freshman transfer retention, (b) sophomore transfer retention, and (c) junior transfer retention. Table 1 presents the three blocks of independent variables, the percentage of frequencies for discrete variables, and their coding.

The first block of variables related to background characteristics included two academic variables and three demographic and other variables. The two academic variables (including transfer GPA and transfer credit hours for degrees) were continuous. The demographic variables included gender, age, and ethnicity, which were categorically coded. Gender and ethnicity were dichotomous variables. Male students were compared to female students; minority students were compared to white students. There were three levels in the age variable: Students who were 20 years old and younger at matriculation were set as the reference level. The reference level was compared to the other two age levels of students: 21–24 and students age 25 and older. (Note: there were only two levels in age in the freshman transfer model development.)

The other two variables in the first block were time interval of last attendance and college of last attendance. Time interval of last attendance was a dichotomous variable. Students who transferred to the university within one year after they ended their study at their last college were compared to students who transferred to the university with more than one year’s hiatus in college attendance. There were four levels in the variable college of last attendance: The reference level was students who transferred from the state’s largest urban community college; the other three levels were (a) students from all other community colleges, (b) students from state public four-year universities, and (c) students from out of state and foreign countries.

| Table 1: Blocks of Independent Variables and Descriptive Statistics of the Overall Study Population |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Variables**                               | **Category**   | **% of Total**  |
| **Block One—Background Characteristics**    | Male           | 42.7 Reference  |
| Gender                                      | Female         | 57.3            |
| Ethnicity                                   | Minority       | 11.4 Reference  |
|                                              | White          | 88.6            |
| Age                                         | 20 and under   | 46.6 Reference  |
|                                              | 21–24          | 44.3            |
|                                              | 25 and above   | 9.1             |
| Time Interval Since Last Attendance          | Within 1 year  | 87.6 Reference  |
|                                              | More than 1 year| 12.4            |
| College of Last Attendance                   | Largest CC     | 13.5 Reference  |
|                                              | Other CC       | 52.0            |
|                                              | State public U | 15.6            |
|                                              | Out of state   | 11.8            |
| Transfer GPA                                 | No             | 69.4 Reference  |
|                                              | Yes            | 30.6            |
| Loan                                        | No             | 33.0 Reference  |
|                                              | Yes            | 67.0            |
| Institutional Scholarship                    | No             | 59.3 Reference  |
|                                              | Yes            | 40.7            |
| **Block Two—Financial Aid**                  |                |                 |
| Term GPA                                     | (Continuous)   |                 |
| Term Credit Hours Earned                     | (Continuous)   |                 |
| Attempted/                                  | 100%           | 22.4 Reference  |
| Completed Course Rate                        | < 100%         | 67.6            |

Table 1 presents the three blocks of independent variables, the percentage of frequencies for discrete variables, and their coding.
The second block of variables, related to financial aid, was composed of Pell Grant, loan, and institutional scholarship. All three variables were coded as categorical variables. Students who did not receive any Pell Grants, loans, or institutional scholarships were compared respectively to students who received Pell Grant, loans, and institutional scholarships.

The final block of variables added to the model were post-transfer first-year academic performance variables consisting of average earned term credit hours, average term GPA, and course completion rate. The former two variables were continuous. Course completion rate was a dichotomous variable. Students who had successfully completed 100 percent of their attempted credit hours were compared to students who had completed less than 100 percent.

**RESULTS**

The model summary statistics for the three-step sequential logistic regression analyses for each of the three groups of transfer students—freshmen, sophomores, and juniors—are shown in Table 2. Omnibus tests in the freshmen models of Step 1 and Step 2 demonstrated that these two models’ chi-squares were not significant, indicating that adding the predictor variable(s) to the model does not significantly predict first-year retention. Therefore, only Step 3 Model for the freshman transfer students was interpreted. All of the three-step sequential models for the other two groups of sophomore and junior transfers were valid and reliable in predicting retention.

**Factors Influencing Freshmen Transfer Students’ Retention**

Significant predictors of freshmen transfer students’ first-year retention included gender and post-transfer term GPA (see Table 3, on the following page). Female students were predicted to be approximately 17 percent less likely to return than male students. An increase of 0.1 of the post-transfer term GPA increased the probability of retention to the second year by approximately 3 percent. Transfer credit hour, transfer GPA, financial aid, and post-transfer credit hour did not have a significant impact on first-year retention for freshman transfer students.

**Factors Influencing Sophomore Transfer Students’ Retention**

Only one background variable—transfer credit hours—was significant across the three steps of the models (see Table 3, on the following page). An increase of one transfer credit hour predicted a one percent increase in probability of retention to the second year.
hour would increase the probability of sophomore transfer students’ returning to their second year by approximately 0.5%. The consistent significant influence of transfer credit hour on retention across all three steps of the models indicated that the influence of transfer credit hours was independent; that is, it did not have a relationship with the other factors, e.g., post-transfer financial aid and first-year academic performance.

In the first two steps of the models, the likelihood of return of sophomore transfer students who were between 21 and 24 years old was predicted to be a decrease of approximately 8 percent, in contrast to transfer students ages 20 years or less. In the last two steps of the models, the likelihood of return of sophomore transfer students who were age 25 years or older was predicted to be between 22 and 25 percent higher than for sophomore transfer students age 20 years or less. The inconsistency of age influence on retention suggests that younger sophomore transfer students seemed to be more dependent on financial aid to continue their study at the university than older students. On the other hand, retention of sophomore transfer students between the ages of 21 and 24 seemed to be more influenced than the older group by post-transfer academic performance. This suggested that if post-transfer first-year academic performance was controlled, there would not be a noticeable difference in retention between student groups between the ages of 21 and 24 and 20 and under, but the group aged 25 years or more would return at a rate significantly higher than that for students ages 20 and under.

Pell grants and institutional scholarships were significant in influencing retention in the last two steps of the models. The likelihood of return of students who received Pell Grants was 10 to 12 percent lower than for students who did not receive Pell Grants. This suggested that transfer students from families with lower incomes were more likely to leave the university even if they received Pell grants. In contrast, the likelihood of return of students who received institutional scholarships was 14 to 17 percent higher than for students who did not receive such scholarships. The influence of institutional scholarships on retention did not relate to first-year academic performance, indicating that institutional scholarship had an independent positive impact on transfer students’ retention and seemed effective in retaining sophomore transfer students, in particular.

The model of Step 3 predicted that a 0.1 percent increase in the post-transfer term GPA increased the likelihood of retention to the second year by approximately 1 percent. An increase of 1 earned credit hour per semester increased the probability of returning for the second year by approximately 4 percent. These two variables of academic performance were the stronger predictors of retention. Gender and ethnicity were not significant in influencing retention to the second year. It is noteworthy that college of last attendance did not significantly influence sophomore transfer students’ retention to the second year.

Factors Influencing Junior Transfer Students’ Retention

The background variables, transfer credit hours and college of last attendance (including student sources from the state public universities and out of state) were significant across the three steps of the models (see Table 3, on the following page). An additional transfer credit hour would increase the junior transfer students’ likelihood of returning to second year by 1 to 2 percent. Junior transfer students from the state public universities were predicted to be approximately 14 percent less likely to return than transfers from the largest urban community college. Junior transfer students from out of state were predicted to be approximately 2.4 percent less likely to return than those from the largest urban community college. The influence on retention produced by transfer credit hours and student sources from the state public universities and out of state universities was independent of post-transfer financial aid and first-year academic performance. This showed that when financial aid and first-year academic performance were at the same level, transfer students with more transfer credit hours would be more likely to continue their enrollment whereas transfer students from the state public universities and out of state universities would be less likely than students from the largest urban community college to continue their enrollment.

In the first two steps of the models, the likelihood of return of transfer students from other community colleges (all the community colleges except for the largest urban community college) was predicted to show a decrease of approximately 9 percent compared to transfer students from the largest urban community college. In the Step 3 model, the feeder institutions of other community colleges were no longer significant. The inconsistent influence of the feeder of other community colleges across all three steps of the models indicated that the influence of student sources from other community colleges on retention seemed to be related to post-transfer first-year academic performance but was independent of financial aid. Thus, if post-transfer first-year academic performance of junior transfer students from other community colleges was at the same level as that of transfers from the largest urban community college, then feeder institutions did not influence students’ retention. However, even if financial aid was
Table 3: Coefficient and Delta-\(p\) of the Three-Step Logistics Regression Models for Transfer Students of Different Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freshmen Transfers</th>
<th>Sophomore Transfers</th>
<th>Junior Transfers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Step 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.434</td>
<td>-0.413</td>
<td>-0.699(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-0.332</td>
<td>-0.404</td>
<td>-0.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>-0.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 and above</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College of Last Attendance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other CC</td>
<td>-0.336</td>
<td>-0.256</td>
<td>0.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Public U</td>
<td>-0.319</td>
<td>-0.276</td>
<td>-0.350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of State</td>
<td>-0.905</td>
<td>-0.927</td>
<td>-0.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Interval Since Last Attendance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1 year</td>
<td>0.425</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>0.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transfer GPA</strong></td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transfer Credit Hours</strong></td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pell Grant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-0.158</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Scholarship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>0.506(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term GPA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.111(^c)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Term credit hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0.178(^b)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Completion Rate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% completed</td>
<td>-0.201</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>delta-(p)</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)p \leq 0.050

\(^b\)p \leq 0.010

\(^c\)p \leq 0.001
at the same level, transfer students from other community colleges were less likely to continue their enrollment than those from the largest urban community college.

In the models of Step 1 and Step 2 including the background and financial aid variables, transfer GPA significantly influenced retention. A 0.1 increase of transfer GPA increased the likelihood of a student’s return by approximately 1 percent. However, the influence of transfer GPA on retention was shadowed by post-transfer academic performance in the last modeling step, indicating that the impact of transfer GPA on retention did not interact with financial aid but did have some relationship with post-transfer academic performance. The model of Step 3 predicted that a 0.1 increase of post-transfer term GPA increased the probability of retention by approximately 2 percent. An increase of 1 earned credit hour per semester increased the likelihood of students’ returning for a second year by approximately 5 percent. These two variables of post-transfer academic performance were the strongest predictors of retention.

Course completion rate also had a positive impact on retention. Students who completed 100 percent of their attempted credit hours were predicted to be 18 percent more likely to return than students who completed less than 100 percent of their attempted credit hours. None of the three demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, or age was significant in predicting return for the second year. Transfer time interval from the last college attended also did not significantly affect junior transfer students’ retention.

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. First, the study did not have the data capacity to include other factors such as family background, institutional commitment, social support, and social involvement, all of which are cited in the literature as being related to retention (Astin 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Tinto 1993). Second, we combined for analysis data relating to five consecutive transfer cohorts based upon the assumption that the yearly time difference in student and institutional characteristics did not affect the analysis. Thus the time variable was not taken into account for analysis. The final limitation relates to the different sizes of the sample groups of freshman, sophomore, and junior transfer students. The freshmen transfer group had a comparatively small sample size (274) for statistical analysis, which could possibly influence the significant factors of the model.
**DISCUSSION**

**Diverse Patterns of First-Year Retention**

One of the primary conclusions of this research is that transfer students’ first-year retention is the result of various interactive constructs, including background characteristics, financial aid, and post-transfer first-year academic performance. Within each of these three constructs, certain key variables either independently or interactively affect a transfer student’s retention to the second year. Transfer credit hour and student source (e.g., from out of state) have an independent impact on retention. Students with more transfer credit hours are more likely to be retained to the second year. Students from out of state are less likely to be retained. Institutional scholarships also have an independent positive influence on the retention of transfer students.

Post-transfer first-year academic performance as measured by term GPA and earned credit hours strongly contribute to first-year retention. These two variables interact with the background variables of transfer GPA and student source from other community colleges (i.e., all community colleges except the largest urban community college). This suggests that transfer GPA has a positive impact on post-transfer academic performance. That transfer students from other community colleges are less likely to be retained than those from the largest urban community college may have to do with academic performance. Such students do not perform as well academically as transfer students from the largest urban community college in their first year at the university.

Diverse patterns of factors were found to influence retention across the transfer student groups of different transfer credit hours. Figures 1 through 3 present these different patterns of factors influencing retention. For freshmen transfer students, only two variables—gender and post-transfer term GPA—seem to influence their retention. More factors influence the retention of sophomore transfer students, and the pattern is more complex. Transfer credit hours contribute independently to retention. Age has a significant influence on first-year retention, which interacts with financial aid and post-transfer first-year academic performance. The higher retention rate of the oldest group (age 25 years and older) is not influenced by financial aid and first-year academic performance. Pell grant and institutional scholarship also contribute to retention. Students receiving Pell grants are less likely to be retained to the second year. Perhaps because the sophomore transfers are closer to degree attainment than freshmen transfers, transfer credit hour and post-transfer earned credit hour—in addition to post-transfer term GPA—influence retention.

As was true for sophomore transfer students, academic factors gained from pre-transfer through post-transfer colleges were found to strongly influence junior transfer students’ retention. These factors include transfer credit hours, post-transfer earned credit hours, and term GPA. The influence of transfer GPA on retention, though inter-
acting with post-transfer term GPA, is greater for junior transfer students. Comparison of the models for the three transfer status groups indicates that the influence of post-transfer first-year academic performance on retention increases as students’ transfer status more closely approaches graduation.

Pell grant and institutional scholarship influence sophomore transfer students’ retention while loan influences junior transfer students’ retention, even if a higher percentage of junior transfer students than sophomore transfer students received institutional scholarships. The positive influence of loan on retention for junior transfer students may indicate the students’ commitment to complete their degrees at the University. The impact of college of last attendance on retention for junior transfer students also differs from the other student groups. Although college of last attendance does not influence retention for freshmen and sophomore transfer students, junior transfer students from the largest urban community college are more likely than students from all other institutions to be retained.

Implications
The models indicate that academic success and engagement are the strongest predictors of retention at a moderate selective university. The findings of this study reflect those in the literature: academic performance as indicated by term GPA and earned credit hours is the significant factor influencing a student’s decision to persist (Braunstein and McGrath 1997; Buckley and Lafleur 1991; Gao et al. 2002; Koker and Hendel 2003; Townsend 1993; Zhai and Newcomb 2000). As the overall retention rate of transfer students is only 2 percent higher than that of traditional freshmen at this University, efforts to retain transfer students—especially those with fewer transfer credits—should be reviewed and should be given equal attention. The findings of the current research should prove valuable to university administrators and faculty members who are working to improve transfer student academic performance and retention. The results of this study have implications for retention programs and also may address transfer students’ self and situational retention patterns.

The transition model of Schlossberg et al. (1995) supports the facilitation of coping, as well as strategies that can be used to assist individuals experiencing change and transition. Various strategies and support have been found effective in assisting in the integration of transfer students. These include orientation programs, living/learning communities, leadership programs, strategic interventions, campus housing options, and interactions with faculty (Jacob et al. 2004). Special attention and support should be provided to students transferring with lower transfer GPAs and fewer earned credit hours. Retention efforts that improve academic performance also should target students from other in-state community colleges (i.e., all community colleges except the largest urban community college) and from out of state.

Dealing with transition is an ongoing process. In order to resolve the issue of academic transfer shock (Wil-
liams 1973), administrators and faculty should constantly examine the institution's commitment and attitudes in helping transfer students whose academic backgrounds may be lacking in certain areas (Townsend 1993). Transfer students' academic performance needs to be closely monitored. Examination of each transfer student's academic background and an evaluation of credit transfer could be made routine components of new transfer student orientation and advising in support of proper course selection; such steps could help ensure that a transfer student will progress within his or her academic ability (Buckley and Lafleur 1991). Further, through the development of sound orientation programs and academic advising, the importance of academic engagement can be strengthened, allowing faculty to partner in helping transfer students earn credits more efficiently and effectively.

Distinctive patterns of impact factors on retention based upon the transfer status of credit hours also require diverse strategies and efforts. For example, with regard to student demographics, retention efforts should target female students in the freshmen transfer group; students ages 21 to 24 years old in the sophomore transfer group; and students from other community colleges (all community colleges except the largest urban community college) in the junior transfer group. On the other hand, academic retention efforts should be focused on students who transfer from other community colleges and on younger transfer students so they can be helped to make better academic transitions in the university. Special academic advising efforts should target younger transfer students and those who have earned fewer credit hours.

Although our previous research on native traditional freshmen retention at this university suggests that financial aid is an important social support (unpublished documents), the present study suggests that financial aid may be comparatively more useful in the retention of transfer students than of native traditional freshmen. Compared with native traditional freshmen, transfer students seem to be more sensitive to institutional scholarships. However, financial aid supports—and especially institutional scholarships—have been focused primarily on traditional freshmen. This situation is consistent with what Jacob et al. (2004) note: transfer students do not receive financial aid as frequently as traditional four-year college students.

Transfer students should receive extra support regarding notice of billing cycles, payment plans, application deadlines, and other financial aid-related information. Efforts to broaden the range of transfer students benefiting from institutional scholarships and increasing the awarded amounts of scholarships are supported by the results of this study. It might be worthwhile to use multiple criteria to determine the distribution of institutional scholarships to transfer students—for example, basing such distribution on transfer status rather than strictly transfer GPA. The fewer transfer credit hours students have, the more dependent they are on non-repayable financial aid. Lowering GPA criteria for institutional scholarship eligibility for

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**FIGURE 3. Pattern of Factors Influencing Junior Transfer Students’ First-Year Retention**

- **Background**
  - CLA Other State CC
  - CLA State U & Other
  - CLA Out of State
  - Transfer GPA
  - Transfer Credit Hours
  - Gender
  - Ethnicity
  - Age (21–24)
  - Age (25+)

- **Post-Transfer Academic Performance**
  - Term GPA
  - Term Credit Hours
  - Course Completion Rate

- **Financial Aid**
  - Institutional Scholarship
  - Pell Grant
  - Loan

---

CLA = College of Last Attendance
transfer students with fewer transfer credit hours could actually result in the creation of more opportunities for them to obtain financial support.

REFERENCES
Williams, R. 1973. Transfer shock as seen from a student’s point of view. College and University. 48: 120–121.

About the Authors

MINGCHU LUO is Senior Institutional Researcher at Emporia State University, Kansas. He earned his Ed. D in Educational Administration from the University of Nebraska. His research interests include college student flow, institutional effectiveness, and school leadership.

JAMES E. WILLIAMS is Vice President for Student Affairs at Emporia State University. He is a graduate of the University of Kansas with a Ph. D. in Educational Policy and Leadership.

BRUCE VIEWEG, at the time of this research, was Chief Information Officer and Director of the Title III Grant at Emporia State University. He currently is Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Information Officer at Concordia College, in Moorhead, MN.
Dr. Thomas Huddleston is vice president for marketing, communications, and admissions at the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando. He leads the development of university marketing, news and public information, new student enrollment, and student financial assistance. Recently, Huddleston led the University in a successful branding campaign. He joined UCF in 1993. The University has grown to the second largest institution in the nation, enrolling almost 49,000 students.

Previously, Huddleston led one of the most comprehensive enrollment organizations in the country when he merged student affairs with enrollment services. This configuration has enabled Huddleston to influence student retention through many strategies and tactics that have an impact on students’ ability to succeed.

The “godfather” of enrollment management, Huddleston has served in public and private sectors in the Southwest, Northeast, Middle Atlantic and South. A pioneer in the use of fundamental marketing techniques in higher education; he was one of the first to leverage marketing concept for the reorganization and integration of primary units to increase and retain student enrollments.

Dr. Huddleston is a frequent presenter at conferences and institutes throughout the United States. He has authored many articles and textbook chapters on enrollment management and marketing.
You have been referred to as the “Godfather” of enrollment management. What are some of the accomplishments that you attribute to this recognition?

Early in my career, I developed a passion for marketing. At that time, no one was writing about marketing in higher education. I became intrigued by one author, Phil Kotler, a prominent professor and author of several marketing books at the Kellogg College of Business, Northwestern University. My doctorate focused on higher education and communications. My graduate study and Kotler’s books led me to begin conceptualizing, writing, and speaking about the place of marketing in the college admissions process and in other student service areas within higher education. Beginning in the mid 1970s, my publications and presentations focused on marketing plan development, market research, segmentation, pricing, integration of the admissions and financial aid offices, the adult student, student retention, and institutional image. Importantly, most of my comments and examples were based on programs that had been developed at campuses where I was employed.

Part of my enthusiasm was spurred by working at private universities. At that time, the private sector institutions were showing the greatest interest in strategic marketing discussions. I was encouraged and given opportunities to test and implement new ideas at each institution I served.

Initially, the College Board provided a forum for a few of us to share concepts. I was active in the College Board’s National Communications Institute (1973) and the First National Enrollment Management Conference (1984). I remember speaking about this new direction in higher education before the Lilly Endowment’s Midwestern Assembly of College Presidents (1979) and at other venues. Under AACRAO’s sponsorship, I joined a few other professionals for a series discussing Methods of Data for Students (MODS) and increasing value for student information systems (1973–75).

Institutes and regional seminars provided other sites for examining marketing in higher education. For seven years, I was one of the early leaders at both the Snowmass Institute (1977–84) and the annual National Association of College Admissions Counseling (NACAC) practicum on college admissions in San Antonio (1977–84). During this time, NACAC developed the national college schools fair programs. The fairs quickly became a successful venture to assist students and parents with planning for college and increase revenue for the association.

More discussions and bolder initiatives to boost enrollments were implemented, sometimes without much thought—as examples, scholarship raffles and mass advertising on beaches; the initiation of magazine advertising that would be distributed into high schools and community colleges; smaller groups of colleges traveling together within and outside the country; publication firms became more prominent; and some colleges began to turn to consulting companies. This period of “wild west” activity contributed to the higher profile of admissions officers and larger recruitment budgets designed to increase enrollment, and build institutional awareness.

The College Board began to invest more in its student search program. A growing number of persons began to use this early tool. Some people in the profession would
purchase a large number of names in the hope that students would respond quickly. Little attention was given to segmentation, zip code analysis, geodemography, and other marketing concepts that could be applied in higher education. It was not uncommon to believe that if a state showed decreasing high school graduation rates, the whole state would be affected. Early, I learned the importance of zip code market analysis and of distance and mobility patterns. It was exciting to pursue this different thinking, to contribute to early adoption of the ideas, and to evaluate the success or failure of those ventures.

During my time at Bradley University, we may have been the first institution to use PRIZM, a commercial software package used by industry to identify geodemographic segments throughout the country. We found appropriate similarities to students enrolled at our institution. The outcomes were used to establish satellite admission offices. This methodology was a new venture for many in higher education, and I found the implementation fascinating.

In 1980, I wrote the article “In Consideration of Marketing and Reorganization.” This was at the beginning of a recession in postsecondary enrollment. The article was the first suggestion of leveraging marketing concepts to strategically organize a platform for new enrollment initiatives. The model was successfully implemented and became an early prototype for a comprehensive enrollment management unit. The units highlighted in the article (prior to adding student affairs offices into the model) are still considered today for enrollment management configurations. Those functional units included admissions, financial assistance, orientation, advisement, retention, and career services.

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tion of UNIX software. The people with whom I worked were technically astute and fiscally aware. My knowledge about advertising became more sophisticated in consideration of the strategies and larger financial budgets that were employed by the companies to reach different segments in the higher education markets.

**SO YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE CORPORATE WORLD WAS MORE TO FURTHER THE APPLICATION OF MARKETING AND ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT YOU DEVELOPED IN HIGHER EDUCATION?**

Yes, I took my experience in marketing and enrollment planning and applied those principles to my work in industry. Still, I was starting a new career, not at a young age, with little knowledge of the industry’s culture. I missed my friendships in higher education.

**WHICH CAREER PATH WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION DO YOU FEEL PREPARES AN INDIVIDUAL TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SENIOR LEVEL LEADER OF ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT?**

Probably less than one percent of people who work in enrollment services ever planned to do so. Those persons who chose to stay in the field seemed to have an appreciation for fundamental marketing principles and have enjoyed applying those concepts within an admissions office, a division, a university. Thus, marketing courses, communication theory, and an understanding of basic research applications are helpful. If young people understand the value of building relationships, the evolution of higher education, and the values the industry represents, there will be a good fit. Unfortunately, there are not many venues that provide a thoughtful study of enrollment management as a new career opportunity.

Credit should be given to the early discussions led by several people from the College Board, a few institutions, and AACRAO. Today, AACRAO is providing the most consistent focus on the field. However, there needs to be more opportunity for professionals to strengthen their awareness, insight, and abilities to perform more successfully within enrollment planning and organizational development. AACRAO has taken the lead in developing a platform for strategic enrollment management. A national curriculum is needed for practitioners. The University of Miami offers a graduate program, two or so AACRAO state associations are creating programs, but access and consistency are limited. AACRAO could provide more access to more people about relevant issues that are essential. A logical step would be the development of online learning courses that are supplemented with internships at member institutions and meetings prior to, during, and after SEM conferences.

The environment in which enrollment managers work has changed from college recruiters targeting traditional markets to a larger focus that requires broader management skills and knowledge base. Individuals who desire to enter the field should appreciate new technology, online services, distance education learning programs, cutting-edge communication systems, and student services.

If you are a leader in an enrollment organization, it is important to have a relationship with those units which have the most to do with successful enrollment. Regardless of the departments that report to you, the expectations of most college presidents and provosts are “quality” new enrollment, improved net revenue, and relevant student support services that engage students and increase graduation rates. Collaborative relationships are essential. You will realize quickly that collaboration within the academic enterprise is critical. A chief student affairs officer has a wonderful opportunity to take a broad view of enrollment management. I have served in both areas and care deeply about the two professions.

**IN 1980, YOU WROTE AN ARTICLE ENTITLED “IN CONSIDERATION OF MARKETING AND REORGANIZATION.” IN THIS ARTICLE YOU SUGGESTED THE REORGANIZATION OF ADMISSIONS, FINANCIAL AID, ORIENTATION, ADVISING, RETENTION, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT TO FALL UNDER ONE DIVISION WITH A LEADER WHO WOULD COORDINATE THE EFFORTS SO THAT BENEFIT DERIVED FROM THE GROUP WOULD BE GREATER THAN THAT OF ANY OF THE INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENTS ALONE.**

**IN 2000, YOU WROTE A CHAPTER ENTITLED “BUILDING THE ENROLLMENT ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL.” IN IT YOU SUGGESTED THAT INTEGRATING THE FOLLOWING SEVEN FUNCTIONAL AREAS WOULD STRENGTHEN AN INSTITUTION’S ENROLLMENT: INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING, MARKETING, ADMISSIONS, REGISTRAR, FINANCIAL AID, ORIENTATION, RETENTION, AND ADVISING. HAS YOUR VIEW OF AN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION CHANGED OVER THE PAST SEVEN YEARS?**

The article from 1980 was written from a perspective of what factors were important to students when selecting a private university. The focus was on the college selection process by prospective students and their families. This was a time of very early discussions about working with current students to help them persist through graduation. The article suggested an integrated organization that could add value. It seemed to be an appropriate discussion to be having on behalf of students, their families, and among institutions that sought greater support for the academic enterprise.

The units suggested had a direct impact on student success through the entire enrollment cycle. Additionally, the
departments noted were important to achieving enrollment goals, improving desired services, building competitive advantage, and developing a positive reputation.

As one example, the development of an "Academic Exploration Program," which increased new student enrollment and boosted retention rates. During that early period, we developed a faculty advising program for students who were unsure about their intended area of study. This special program soon became a differentiation factor of the university’s academic program.

In 2000, the organization suggested didn’t change much. Different examples from other institutions were added, but there was greater emphasis on working within academic environments and developing and evaluating structure. Working closely with the academic side of the institution is paramount for information flow and collaborative relationships.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH WAS ONE AREA MENTIONED IN YOUR 2000 CHAPTER. I’M CURIOUS ABOUT THAT.

Research continues to be important in enrollment planning. Specifically, primary and secondary research can help administrators understand student demographics, attitudes, market research, and retention issues. These research demands are different from those of centralized research offices. The point here is that enrollment services has different research needs. Keep those different research capabilities nearby.

Regardless of the number of units for which you have oversight, some units may be more crucial to reaching your objectives. Sometimes, the more areas you oversee, the less time you spend paying attention to those more important units that affect the more valued outcomes.

MARKET SEGMENTATION IS SOMETHING ABOUT WHICH YOU HAVE WRITTEN AND PRESENTED MANY TIMES. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT MARKET SEGMENTATION AND HOW BEST TO USE IT TO MAXIMIZE ENROLLMENT?

Market segmentation builds on the foundation that there are differences in people and those differences suggest different needs and demands. With that, the question becomes, can an institution accommodate these differences? Who are the primary target audiences? How can an institution accommodate the costs to an individual? Costs are not always financial but psychological and related to personal convenience. A classical model differentiates between full-time traditional students and part-time adult students. Adult students have greater needs for specific time periods for learning. Thus, communication to this market should speak to accommodations such as convenience, compressed scheduling, and assistance. Useful segmentation tools build on differences among persons.

Why are some proprietary colleges “successful?” They know their markets want convenience, decreased time to degree completion, and personal attention. Interestingly, enough students are willing to pay four to five times more for that particular non-traditional experience. Successful access is an important step, but retention and graduation rates are equally important.

Another example would be students who elect to attend regional campus locations. Former AACRAO President Ange Peterson is working in this area—a significantly different environment! Other differences can be found among ethnicity, college entrance scores, first generation freshman, etc.

Segmentation evolved from early ventures in marketing communication. In many cases, colleges and universities used to employ the same strategies and tactics in communication to all students.

We continue to learn about differences in people. Everyone does not use the same communication channel for information, and it is more difficult to understand that today than it was in the past. Finding the match between different communication plans and the profile of individuals or segments requires continual research and message development.

We are in a multi-channel environment: Social networks, interactive web sites, the cell phone, search engines, and print and electronic media are reflective of this. The digital revolution is one of the most significant changes in history pertaining to channels of information and how information will be received and by whom. Every industry is being affected by this revolution.

BRANDING IS STILL SOMETHING WITH WHICH MANY INSTITUTIONS STRUGGLE. CAN YOU SHARE HOW AN INSTITUTION CAN MOVE THE CONCEPT OF BRANDING INTO PRACTICE?

In 2004, I had an opportunity to organize another division. The areas included marketing, news and information, regional campus transfer admissions services, and television services. These areas now are integrated with undergraduate admissions, a college reach out program, and financial aid. The purpose of this new division is to create, coordinate, and deliver strategic communications and quality enrollment initiatives that add value to the university.

Our president and a group of campus leaders had questions about defining our university, the university’s message, and what key market segments wanted to know about us. Some members of our Board of Trustees were
concerned about our lack of visibility. One of the earliest challenges the new organization faced was the integration of the new units, the personnel, and leveraging the strengths of the units for optimal communications. Later, we embarked on an integrated marketing program and brand identity campaign.

Good research is paramount for any successful implementation of a branding program. Research provides information about your brand image and the resolution of your brand identity. Your brand image (what people think about you) has been ingrained in the experiences people have had with your college, how your college communicates, and what others have said and are saying about your college.

**Brand Identity** is the sum of how you want target markets to perceive you. The perception you develop must be truthful and relevant to the needs of your key publics. What are the key values that your targets expect from a “quality” educational institution? What will you say and, more importantly, how can you back it up? In some ways, you are articulating a promise.

Why would you want to go through this process? Perhaps you want to enhance your visibility or strengthen the value of your degree for current students and alumni. Public or private universities that have significant donors or that receive support from taxpayers have an obligation to share more about their institutions.

Understand your institution’s values, your primary and secondary markets, your market segments, and what features and benefits are important to which people. How much awareness, knowledge, and interest are there? How do people learn about you? Can you differentiate yourself from your competition? Do you have a competitive advantage?

The ability to develop an integrated marketing communications platform is a huge step toward a successful identity. The message, look, and tone are very valuable. As others have written, your institution does not own your brand; your constituents do. Your brand is not the logo, nor is it your tag line. Your identity is what your constituents perceive you to be, what your offer, and how well you do it.

Higher education is a mature market. If colleges are at parity—distribution is similar, curricula is similar, pricing strategies are similar—then one of the most compelling factors to study is your brand.

**YOUR MARKETING DEPARTMENT IS SOMewhat UNIQUE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THAT IT OPERATES AS AN AD AGENCY BUSINESS MODEL. CAN YOU SHARE THE ADVANTAGES THIS MODEL BRINGS TO YOUR INSTITUTION?**

Basically, we established a centralized integrated marketing unit that has its own creative team, design group, and copywriters. These are people who have corporate ad agency experience. They understand brand identity, integrated marketing, the value of good design, creativity, and quality work. We have quickly become the agents for many areas of the university, including several academic colleges, the medical college, athletics, the foundation, admission, financial aid, outreach initiatives, and regional campuses. We try to establish partnerships and we have account representatives that work with particular colleges and departments. Assistance is available to develop market plans and the construction of appropriate communication strategies, including the management of the production process. The account executives work closely with the units and report directly to the creative director and assistant vice president for university marketing. As you may imagine, this helps keep communications consistent. Importantly, these efforts have fostered successful results, greater efficiencies and cost savings for those units we are serving.

**DURING YOUR TENURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA, THE UNIVERSITY HAS EXPERIENCED TREMENDOUS ENROLLMENT GROWTH. THE GROWTH HAS BEEN NOT ONLY IN NUMBERS, BUT IN QUALITY AS WELL. HOW HAS YOUR LEADERSHIP INFLUENCED THE GROWTH IN OTHER AREAS OF THE UNIVERSITY?**

When I began work here, my assignment was to develop a new organizational structure that included undergraduate enrollment and academic support services. Successful outcomes would include increasing support for first-year advising, bolstering student retention, expanding multicultural services, establishing community college articulation programs, creating a program for students who were deciding on a program of study, fostering a student leadership program, revamping information communication systems, strengthening financial assistance services, improving academic publications, and creating a new undergraduate admissions office. Five years later, our group integrated with student affairs. The new division was among the largest and most comprehensive in the country. This new division was given an unusual opportunity to focus its attention and the activities of its many units toward achieving success in terms of high-quality enrollment, retention, student services, personal growth, and academic partnerships.

The university has grown to the sixth largest in the country. I am not suggesting that one person or one division was fully responsible for this success. Without relationships, partnerships, support from top leadership, and the overall contributions of numerous people within the university, there would not have been the success story that can be shared today.
Our staff always believed we were providing important support services to the academic enterprise. We recognized the importance of retention, student services, and a rewarding campus experience. We promoted accountability within our team and took pride in our reputation for intrusive services internally and externally. Our efforts were more successful because of the fundamental marketing practices we employed and the relationships we formed. By the way, I have never known of a major university that did not have a strong reputation for the quality of its new students and its undergraduate experience.

It is very important to understand that it is not always what we say about ourselves that matters most; rather, it is what the people who come to our institution say about their experience(s). Everyone here has benefited from the leadership of a special president and the efforts of many talented people. We have seen college entrance scores, high school grade averages, retention, graduation rates, institutional reputation, and visibility increase manyfold.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES ONE CAN EXPECT WHEN ATTEMPTING TO IMPLEMENT AN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT CULTURE? WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES THAT MAY HELP?**

Challenges include gaining consistent support from the president and other key leaders of an institution. Do the values of the institution match what you want to do? Often, people embarking on enrollment management initiatives run into territorial issues. The person leading the effort needs tough skin. There will be resistance to change.

Become recognized for something—for example, your knowledge, your information, your achievements. Communicate. Maintain patience. Find significant others who believe in the new efforts and who will help move your programs forward.

Have a vision, and communicate that vision to the “right” people. Be sure that what you think needs to be done really does need to be done. Evaluate your investments in tactics and personnel. Move quickly. Maintain a sense of urgency. Hire the “right” people that will work with you.

**WHERE DO YOU SEE ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT HEADING IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?**

I don’t see many changes in structure. Enrollment management is maturing from the concept that was advanced in the 1980s. The enrollment planning model has become a part of the fabric of many institutions. There remain differences on how the strategic focus is applied in the private and public sectors. Still, it is perceived by many top leaders as an important factor for improving enrollment. The concept has provided new career opportunities for talented people. My earlier remarks about the digital revolution will continue to inspire innovative thinking.

The most significant changes will come within the management of information technology, new systems, and multi-channel communications. The application of integrated and complex communication systems will grow in importance. College access and pricing issues will continue to be examined.

Outside vendors are much more sophisticated and will become more relevant. Many are useful in that they provide services that increase efficiencies to help realize enrollment goals. However, remember that if you initiate new strategic directions or take advantage of new tactics, you have to act differently. Too often, we have not taken advantage of newly acquired developments because we were so fixated on doing things the same way. Understanding target audiences will remain fundamental.

Finally, the success of any professional will be the ability to surround yourself with people of integrity and passion. I have never doubted that any success I might have had was due to the people with whom I worked with.

**About the Author**

**DR. THOMAS LOBASSO** is the Vice President for Enrollment at Daytona Beach College in Daytona Beach, Florida. While earning his doctorate from the University of Central Florida, he had the opportunity to participate in an internship with Dr. Huddleston. Dr. Huddleston also was a member of LoBasso’s dissertation committee; LoBasso expanded a previous study conducted by Dr. Huddleston and Dr. Lawrence P. Rumbough on enrollment management in the Florida Community College system. In 2006, LoBasso served as a facilitator for the community college open forum at SEM in Phoenix and was chair of FACRAO’s local arrangements committee in 2005.
Community College Registrars as Leaders During Systems Implementation

By Sandra J. Lepley

Editor’s Note: This is the last in a series of four articles related to the functional role of community college registrars and Web systems implementation projects. The result of doctoral research in educational leadership, the first article discussed the functional role of community college registrars during web-enabled student information system implementation projects; the second article focused on the role of registrars as mid-level managers during major organizational change, such as systems implementation; and the third article reviewed related literature on administrative role conflict and ambiguity. This article will focus on the registrar’s role as a leader during technology change.

In 1984, Scarlett predicted that opportunities for college and university registrars to play a role in institutional leadership would increase. Scarlett noted the scope of registrars’ work, the urgency of recruiting and retaining students, and an extension of responsibilities in relationships with other administrators.

Closely following the fears and revelry that characterized the dawn of the 21st century, Cohen and Brawer (2003) published the fourth edition of The American Community College. Their research indicated that the administrative patterns of community colleges showed evidence of a continuing emphasis on college functions. In the hope of optimizing results, this author’s 2004 study of community college registrars identified their functional role with respect to Web technology implementation (Lepley 2006). The study revealed that overall, 62.4 percent of community college registrars were very highly or were highly involved in implementing web-enabled technology systems (p. 52). Also, 67.4 percent of community college registrars were very highly or were highly involved in providing overall guidance and direction to online processes (p. 54). More registrars were very highly or were highly involved in providing overall guidance and direction to online processes if their college used an in-house implementation strategy (76.1 percent), and somewhat fewer of the registrars were as involved in providing overall direction to online processes if their college used an outsourced implementation strategy (57.1 percent) (p. 54). A large percentage of community college registrars whose colleges were implementing a web-enabled system were very highly or were highly involved in collaborating and serving as liaison with other departments, functions, or groups (88.4 percent) (p. 57). Registrars at colleges with no web-enabled technology implementation projects in process at the time of the study were least involved in collaboration with other offices, functions, or groups, yet 78.3 percent of those registrars also reported very high or high involvement in interoffice collaboration (p. 57). The author’s 2004 study further revealed that 47.5 percent of community college registrars were very highly or were highly involved in developing, delivering, and assessing
interdepartmental collaboration, and systems thinking oriented system implementation. Efforts may be action job of institutional leaders during campus-wide globally processes. Volves understanding the nature of change in people and implementation may find that their functional role in registrar and other administrators involved with system implementators in their work as change agents. Again, the college Such information may be helpful to educational adminis identification of actions that are helpful for change agents. Today, the study of change is developing into an applied science of positive human development and involves the think about change and how it is triggered and sustained. They set out to discover how to of how change occurs. They include transformational attributes such as an orientation toward the future, positive outlook regarding change, appropriate risk taking, and modeling commitment for changes and the mission.

Nohria and Harrington (1993) propose several concepts geared toward cooperation and attempting either to prevent or to accommodate resistance to change. These concepts include actions of those in charge of leading change, to include offering clear messages, listening, encouraging enthusiasm for change, frequent repetition of the change message, and taking actions consistent with the change message (Nohria and Harrington 1993). College registrars and other administrators leading system implementation may play a role in persuading others to buy into a system or to maintain the desired pace of an implementation effort. Regardless of organizational structure or administrative strategy, positive displays of vision and confidence, as suggested by Nahavandi (1997), may be an increasingly important aspect of the role of a leader such as a college registrar during systems implementation.

Lerner and Benson (2003) note the infancy of the science of how change occurs. They set out to discover how to think about change and how it is triggered and sustained. Today, the study of change is developing into an applied science of positive human development and involves the identification of actions that are helpful for change agents. Such information may be helpful to educational administrators in their work as change agents. Again, the college registrar and other administrators involved with system implementation may find that their functional role involves understanding the nature of change in people and processes.

Efforts to clarify vision may be an important part of the job of institutional leaders during campus-wide globally oriented system implementation. Efforts may be action oriented, with continuous promotion of shared vision, interdepartmental collaboration, and systems thinking (Cramer 2003). According to Cramer, developing systems thinking involves organizing and conducting frequent cross-functional meetings.

Pressures for colleges and universities to increase their use of information technology led officials in Australia to identify the best emerging technologies and how to implement them (Scott 2003). The process of organizational change resulting from technology’s emerging capabilities for instant answers was viewed as complicated yet important for an institution’s survival in a fast-paced world. Scott (2003) suggests the importance of team efforts or action learning as well as action research allowing for a series of learning and unlearning phases for all involved (Scott 2003).

More recently, Stivers and Garrity (2004) focused on change theory as part of a case study of a student information system implementation project led by an implementation team. The team recognized the need for change leadership during the project. Similarly, Yukl and Lepsinger (2004) found that group process with real participation and recognition appear to be vital efforts for innovation in organizations. Community college registrars may have a greater role in the process of social change during system implementation in that they may choose to activate significant recognition and reward programs in order to deflect resistance to change as learning takes place.

In 2005, holding an executive position, the chief information officer at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (also the Vice Chancellor for Information Technology) helped University employees understand how computing could be applied across the curriculum (Foster 2005). He recognized that while universities promoted innovation, their organizational structures were difficult to change to accommodate interdisciplinary issues. The vice chancellor stated that mid-level administrators sometimes resisted change while top-level administrators and support staff members championed it. Fears of diminished authority prevented mid-level administrators’ support, according to the vice chancellor (Foster 2005). Community college registrars’ functional role may include new leadership opportunities as they demonstrate openness to change, willingness to learn, and assertiveness in communicating across boundaries.

Cramer (2005) recognizes leadership as a key role for project managers as well as members of the implementation teams. Cramer calls for further research concerning project structure and details about individual backgrounds and their effects on student system implementation, including functional roles. This author’s 2004 study of community college registrars suggests that project structure.
and institutional/administrator background characteristics affect the functional role of registrars during technology implementation (Lepley 2006).

**Mid-level Leaders**

Lepley's (2006) study of the functional role of community college registrars during web-enabled technology implementation includes a literature review that examines differences between managing and leading. Community college registrars' job duties, identified in the job descriptions referenced for this study, call for managing and leading (Edison Community College 2000; Palm Beach Community College 2003).

According to Roof and Presswood (2004) leadership and management roles for mid-level administrators in higher education are sometimes confused. Roof, past president of AACRAO, and Presswood, a community college administrator in Florida, reviewed selected literature on leadership and management in relation to their field of work. These authors state that as one moves up in an organization, more leadership opportunities or roles are available, and more leadership is expected. Roof and Presswood (2004) emphasize that knowing one's role is crucial for success and career growth. The author's 2004 study of community college registrars' functional role revealed the administrators' self-perceived role during system implementation. A previously unpublished portion of the results of that study indicates that, as expected, 94.5 percent of the 179 administrators who responded to the survey provided overall leadership for the office of the registrar. Of those, 82.5 percent were at colleges that were in the process of implementing web-enabled student information systems. Thus, the great majority of community college registrars were in the process of leading their organizations in a time of major change initiatives.

Morley and Eadie (2001) observe that higher education leaders typically have been successful managers prior to becoming leaders. According to Morley and Eadie (2001), the administrative skills needed in higher education are many, to include goal and performance indicator setting, planning to meet goals, supervising and evaluating staff, managing projects, and staying current with technology in relation to one's given profession. Key elements of leadership include inspiring, motivating, and empowering staff. More specifically, Morley and Eadie (2001) observe that leaders are concerned with strategy, constantly look ahead, are involved with the outside world, know how to use learned knowledge and skills, and also are keenly aware of and make use of emotional intelligence. Leaders are courageous, and they are interested in growth and positive change. Meyerson (2002) refers to certain types of leaders who are willing to seize an opportunity to make a difference and who test established norms but who may not see themselves as leaders.

As indicated above, the present author's (Lepley 2006) study concerned community college registrars' role in technology implementation, including management and supervision of employees. Peter Drucker (1998) recognizes that technology advancements often create situations in which employees know more about their particular jobs than their supervisors. Drucker describes these as knowledge employees and claims that organizations would be more successful if these employees were led rather than managed. Technology implementation, by way of various administrative strategies, may present a variety of situations in which college registrars alternately must lead and manage.

Dubrin (1996) projects that during organizational change, new roles for middle managers may downplay the functional role and also may result in the establishment of a position responsible for re-engineering the organization. According to Dubrin (1996), this person is the subject matter expert. Dubrin also suggests that during organizational change, middle managers' jobs are different as they become somewhat distant from basic supervision. Middle managers then are free to coordinate several teams and to work more on planning. The present author's research indicates that although some registrars may become distant from basic supervision, most are very highly or are highly involved in supervision, and most also are very highly or are highly involved in systems implementation (Lepley 2006).

Young (2004), in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, discusses the future of colleges in light of their ability to remain current with large-scale innovations in information technology in times of limited funding. According to Young (2004), the role of community college registrars who wish to maintain or to increase their control of students' enrollment processes and records will be increasingly technology oriented. Despite the importance of technology innovation and training, many institutions' budgets for such are limited. Registrars can look to their professional associations, higher education credit, and certification programs for exposure to leading-edge technology and training. Being involved with national, regional, state, and community college professional associations may prove essential to the survival of the community college registrar. Higher education—at least to the master's degree level—may be another essential key. Technical certification may offer opportunities, as well. Registrars' liaison role may be enhanced by professional development in the arts of negotiation and diplomacy. According to retired Secretary of State Colin Powell (2007), the art of
diplomacy includes the skills of building trust, persuasion, and developing an understanding of values.

A college administrator in his 50s, Donald Bunis (2002) was a university registrar and a leader in his profession. Bunis returned to school for his master’s degree to prepare him for his next career move. A true lifelong learner, Bunis can compete in the job market in this post-industrial information age. He encourages others in his profession to avoid becoming a victim of changing practices and to accept the benefits of appropriate use of web-based technology for professional development.

The registrar who is able to lead change can develop readiness for and acceptance of new technology by faculty, staff, and students. Further study of registrars’ liaison and leadership roles may guide professional development in areas such as interpersonal relations and diplomacy.

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About the Author

SANDRA JUSTICE LEPLEY (FAHEY) served as Director of Admissions and Records (1986–97) and Administrator in Information Technology (1997–2001) at Edison College District in Ft. Myers, Florida. She received her B.A. and M.Ed. from Florida Atlantic University, her M.B.A. from the University of Miami, and her Ed.D. from the University of Central Florida.

While working in admissions and records, Lepley was active with the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the Southern Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (SACRAO), the Florida Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (FACRAO), and the Florida Community College Registrars and Admissions Officers group. She served as FACRAO Vice President for Professional Development and as SACRAO Chair for Systems Development. She completed her doctoral program in Educational Leadership/Curriculum & Instruction in 2006 at the University of Central Florida, and she presented her research findings at a session of the 2005 AACRAO Technology Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

Lepley is the author of “Community Colleges and Student Information Systems: A Survey on the Registrar’s Role,” published by AACRAO in November 2006 and from which this article is adapted. Copies may be purchased online at <www.aacrao.org/publications/new.cfm>, or by phone at (301) 490-7651.
Course Availability Initiatives at the University of Connecticut

By Jeff von Munkwitz-Smith

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Last summer I was speaking with a group of parents at a reception during Freshman Orientation. They were talking about their own experiences registering for classes when they were students. Registration in a field house, long lines, and full classes were aspects of the experience that almost all of them shared, regardless of where they’d gone to college. They asked me how students register now; I explained that it all is done on the Web, and there are no longer lines. (I think a few of the parents were disappointed that their children wouldn’t share in their experiences of long lines!) Someone then asked if closed classes were also a thing of the past. “Not exactly,” I responded before going on to describe some of the efforts we’ve undertaken to get students the courses they need while also using our resources effectively and efficiently. The response from the parents was quite positive: They understood that classes do fill and that not every class will be available at the time every student might want it to be.

Unlike the elimination of lines at registration, our approach to improving course availability has not depended heavily on technology. Instead, we’ve focused on collaboration, communication, data-driven decision making, and achieving multiple “small wins” (Weick 1984).

The University of Connecticut is a public research university whose main campus is in Storrs. The Storrs campus has more than 20,000 students, including more than 16,000 undergraduates. Each fall we enroll roughly 3,200 new freshmen in the University’s nine undergraduate schools and colleges. Our undergraduate enrollment has grown by a third since 1995, and the freshman class in fall 2006 was 60 percent larger than in fall 1995. During the same period, the freshman to sophomore retention rate has increased from 86 percent to 93 percent, and the four-year graduation rate has increased from 43 percent to 58 percent. The average time to graduation has decreased to 4.3 years (tied for fourth among public research universities). Our goals are still higher: a 95 percent retention rate and a four-year graduation rate of 65 percent.

How will we get there? We understand that no single approach can do it all. We like to think about what might make a difference for groups of 32 (1 percent of the entering class), undertake multiple initiatives, and build on what works. Three initiatives are related to course availability: packaged schedules, the Course Availability Committee, and expanded summer course offerings.

PACKAGED SCHEDULES

“Packaged schedules” is a collaborative effort of the Office of the Registrar, the schools and colleges, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and several academic departments. We have noted that entering freshmen who cannot get the math and science courses they need in
their first semester start their academic career already behind and consequently are less likely to graduate on time. They are more likely to be unhappy with their college experience and are less likely to continue their enrollment through graduation. Prior to five years ago—before packaged schedules—new students would get the seats that remained after continuing students registered. Often, there would not be enough seats to meet the demand. Even when there were enough seats, they might all be in course sections that met at the same time (i.e., 8 AM), preventing students from enrolling in all of the needed classes. We usually were not able to inform departments of the need for more seats until it was too late for them to assign instructors for additional sections.

Under the new process, we work with the schools and colleges to identify both the majors that will participate in the packaged schedule process and the groups of courses that students with those majors will need. We also estimate the number of seats needed in each course and the number that will be taken by continuing students. We then compare the number of seats we think we’ll need with the number of seats the departments plan to offer and negotiate with the departments for more seats, if necessary. Doing this in January rather than July provides the departments with time to make adjustments. We also identify time conflicts within the groups of courses that make up the packages and work with departments to resolve those conflicts. The next step is the most controversial: We pull the seats we’re going to use for the packaged schedule process out of the system before registration for continuing students begins. Initially, some advisors felt strongly that we should meet the needs of continuing students first. Our response was that we believed we’d left enough seats to meet that demand; we agreed that if a continuing student couldn’t get a class, we would pull a seat from the packages to give to that student. This does occur from time to time, but not frequently. Initially, we built the packages by hand (a somewhat labor-intensive process). But in the past year, we’ve developed software to assist with the process. The packages are distributed to advisors, who meet with students and give them a package appropriate to their background and needs. Students register using the “permission numbers” that allow them to enroll in the package courses, and they also register for general education courses to get a full schedule. Throughout the new student registration process, we continually review, analyze, and adjust the packages.
Typical packages are as follows:

- Biology and Pre-Med students: Calculus I (two-semester sequence), Principles of Biology, General Chemistry (two-semester sequence)
- Engineering students: Calculus I (two-semester sequence), Introduction to Computing, General Chemistry (two-semester sequence), Orientation to Engineering
- Animal Science students: Principles of Biology, Introductory Calculus (three-semester sequence), Introduction to Animal Science, University Learning Skills
- Nursing students: Chemical Principles and Applications, Introduction to Health and the Discipline of Nursing, General Psychology I

Since initial implementation, we’ve made several enhancements. We now create packages of general education courses that fit School of Fine Arts students’ complex studio and rehearsal schedules. We’ve created packages that include freshman seminars for certain academic programs, as in the Animal Science example above. We’ve created “partial packages” to meet the needs of students who bring with them credit for AP science and math courses or the University’s Early College Experience program. We now typically use entire sections of classes for the packaged schedules; leftover seats that don’t become part of packages are given to the schools and colleges to use for transfer students who may need only one or two courses to “catch up” and complete a sequence. We also have begun to set aside seats in various introductory courses to make sure that entering students in majors such as English, political science, and psychology are able to enroll in their first semester in a course in their intended major.

### Table 1: Sample General Education Course Availability Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>As of 22 June 2006</th>
<th>As of 21 June 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>Enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech—Lab</td>
<td>BIOL 102</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech—Lab</td>
<td>BIOL 107</td>
<td>596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech—Lab</td>
<td>BIOL 108</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech—Lab</td>
<td>BIOL 110</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>CHEM 122</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>CHEM 124Q</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>CHEM 127Q</td>
<td>1,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>CHEM 128Q</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>CHEM 129Q</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>GEOL 105</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>GEOL 107</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 101Q</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 104Q</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 107Q</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 121Q</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 122Q</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 131Q</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 132Q</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 140Q</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 142Q</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 151Q</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 152Q</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sci &amp; Tech</td>
<td>PHYS 155Q</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the fall 2007 semester we created 1,500 packages with 50 different course combinations. We also set aside 1,100 “pantry seats” for other incoming students as well as 350 seats in introductory courses in the major for non-science majors. Most incoming freshmen will benefit.

Already, we’ve seen a number of benefits from the process:
- Students get the courses they need to progress toward graduation.
- We identify potential problems in January, when it’s easier to resolve them, rather than in July.
- Time conflicts between required courses can be resolved if they are identified early enough.
- We use available seats more efficiently.
- Registration goes more smoothly.
- Students attending the later orientation sessions aren’t closed out of the classes they need, making orientation sign-up less troublesome.

### COURSE AVAILABILITY COMMITTEE

The Course Availability Committee is a collaborative effort of the Office of the Registrar, the schools and colleges, and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. I co-chair the committee with the Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, who directs the advising program for undecided and pre-professional students. Members include representatives from all of the undergraduate schools and colleges. A key member is the Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The problem we are trying to solve is that it is not always easy for academic departments to predict course demand; as a result, we sometimes run out of seats in critical courses. Without sufficient warning, it can be difficult for departments to adjust their course offerings.

The committee meets prior to the start of registration to identify potential problems and then meets weekly during registration. We review a report of course information—e.g., the numbers of seats offered, open, and taken, and the percent filled—for all general education courses as well as other key freshman- and sophomore-level courses. The reports compare data for the current year to those for the previous year. (See Table 1, on page 35.)

We identify actual and potential problems and suggest possible courses of action, such as adding sections of a heavily subscribed course, shifting instructors from a lower-to a higher-demand course, moving a course to a larger room and increasing the capacity, and suggesting alternative courses to students. Some—but not all—solutions have cost implications. For example, shifting an instructor from Calculus 1 to Calculus 2 usually can be done without incurring any additional expense. Moving a course to a larger room might (but does not necessarily) involve adding teaching assistants. And advising students to take Course X, which meets the same requirements as Course Y, which is full, creates no additional costs. The Provost and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences have also provided academic departments with funding to staff additional sections. Having the request for funding come from the Course Availability Committee rather than from an individual advising office lends additional credence to the request.

Sometimes we uncover curricular changes that can affect course availability. For example, a school may recommend that students take a particular course in the fall semester rather than in the spring, when they traditionally have taken it. Such changes do not always affect large numbers of students, but they can make the difference between having enough seats in a course and being as much as a section short.

We’ve reaped from the process a number of benefits:
- Improved availability of critical courses.
- Earlier identification of potential problems.
- Improved communication about curricular issues.
- Stronger requests for funding additional sections.

### EXPANDED SUMMER OFFERINGS

The initiative to expand summer course offerings grew out of a meeting a Vice Provost and I had with the Student Athlete Advisory Committee. Some student athletes complained that certain required courses were hard to complete during the academic year because they conflicted with practice schedules. They also said that they try to avoid taking certain courses during their competition season because of the demands on their time. One suggestion they made was to offer Chemistry 122, a required course for many majors, in the morning sometimes, rather than always late in the afternoon. (The Chemistry Department was happy to do so, having been unaware that it was causing scheduling problems.) Another suggestion was to offer more and different summer courses, including English Composition, Calculus for Business, Human Genetics, and writing-intensive courses.

When we left the meeting, the Vice Provost asked if the summer course offerings were problematic only for athletes. Not knowing the answer, I called the advising directors of some of the schools and colleges, who told me that non-athletes also would benefit from more and different summer course offerings. Their wish lists actually turned out to be quite similar to that of the student athletes. I provided the list of courses to the Dean of the College of Continuing
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Studies, who oversaw the summer programs, and to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education. Together, they were able to convince some departments to expand their summer offerings; unfortunately, it was fairly late in the process of building the summer schedule, so departments were limited somewhat in their ability to respond.

Last fall’s restructuring of Continuing Studies shifted responsibility for most summer course offerings to the Office of the Registrar. We surveyed undergraduates to ask what courses they would like to take, when they would like to take them, and where. Nearly 7,000 students responded, some at great length. I informed the deans and academic department heads as to the most highly requested courses. Some faculty also heard about the survey, and, planning to teach in the summer, called for advice as to which course(s) to offer. As the proposed course offerings came in from the academic departments, we compared them to the courses students told us they wanted; of course, we encouraged departments to add courses to reflect student requests. Several departments responded by adjusting their summer offerings. We now are using other information gleaned from the survey to craft marketing messages for summer enrollment. So far, we have seen increases in both enrollments and revenue. We plan to continue to work with the academic departments to continue to align summer course offerings with student interests and needs.

CONCLUSIONS
I have described programs that have been successful at the University of Connecticut, and I cannot imagine why they would not work elsewhere. I suspect that similar work is being done at other institutions.

The steps we have taken have not been particularly technology intensive. The program that helps us put together the packaged schedules and adjust them as freshman registration progresses does save us time (quite a bit, in fact), but the packaged schedule process proved extremely useful even when the packages were put together manually. It is true that the Course Availability Committee relies on the weekly spreadsheet, but that was not a difficult report to develop.

Our efforts have not focused on technology, but I have seen a couple of promising developments elsewhere that do use technology. For example, Providence College analyzes the output from advising reports to provide academic departments with projections of the number of students who will need particular courses in the coming term. These projections can help departments plan for the number of sections that will be needed. The University of Vermont has developed reports analyzing registration transaction logs to determine the specific reasons that students could not enroll in courses. Beyond mere lack of capacity, the University has identified other reasons—such as time conflicts between required courses—that have prevented enrollment. The reports are made available to the departments while registration is underway. Both of these developments would be quite useful in course enrollment planning efforts.

We have learned that improvement is possible. It takes commitment. It takes collaboration. It takes effort. It sometimes (but not always) takes money. Communication—especially early communication—is critical. We know that no one program will fix every problem, but multiple “small wins” can be highly effective.

REFERENCE

About the Author
JEFF VON MUNKWITZ-SMITH has been the University Registrar at the University of Connecticut since 1996. Prior to that, he held various positions at the University of Minnesota for more than twenty years. He is the Director of the AACRAO Technology Conference. He holds a Ph.D. in South Asian Languages from the University of Minnesota.
Developing effective systems to document office procedures, policies, and resources often takes a back seat to the daily demands of operating a registrar and admissions office. The traditional documentation approach involves staff members creating and maintaining “desk manuals.” The work involved in keeping desk manuals current is tedious, and more often than not, it is difficult to keep their information current. Unfortunately, many three-ring binders full of good information collect dust on bookshelves, go completely unused, and are forgotten about until the next cycle of updates is mandated by management.

Many offices employ long-time staff members who are highly knowledgeable about their specific duties and so have no need for reference manuals. Dedicated employees are the backbone of any productive office, but managers are rightly concerned about what would happen if those individuals were to be absent for an extended period, to retire, or to leave the office for another position. Complete knowledge transfer to other employees does not always occur—a fact that may not be recognized until a problem arises as a result of a missed task, deadline, or event.

In offices where staff members share duties, it can be difficult to ensure that all staff are current as to correct procedures; have access to the same documents; and can perform all the functions of the office regardless of who is present. Good customer service dictates that students, faculty, and staff should receive the same standard of service regardless of who is on vacation, on a lunch break, or otherwise out of the office. The Office of the Registrar at the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC) has developed an effective online system for addressing these issues using wiki technology. Created in 2006, the KUMC Registrar Resource Network has proved to be an indispensable resource for retrieving procedures, locating forms, and communicating office information.

**WIKIS**

The term ‘wiki’ comes from the Hawaiian word for ‘quick’ and was used by Ward Cunningham in 1994 to describe a web-based system that allows visitors to easily add, edit, and delete any content on a Web site, thus allowing for mass collaboration.

Unlike a typical content management system that has designated authors who submit content via workflow to an editor who approves the changes and then publishes to a public Web site, wikis, by design, typically don’t have any approval processes in place. Rather, every person with access to the wiki has full control to change anything. This bears repeating: *Anyone with access to documents contained in a wiki has the ability to easily and quickly change anything.* Typically, administrators’ first response is to cringe at the thought of rogue administrative assistants accidentally deleting important documents—or, worse, surreptitiously altering the office’s vacation policies.
However, a key element of any wiki product, tight version control exists in order to allay such concerns. Tight version control ensures that at any time, the reader is able to identify who made the last set of changes to a wiki document; to view a history of the exact changes made; and to swap the most current version with any one of multiple archived copies. Commercially available wiki products take monitoring a step further and use e-mail (either immediately or in daily digest form) to notify interested users of changes to an entire wiki-built site or to an individual section thereof.

Many users are familiar with widely known public-facing wikis, such as Wikipedia. However, many institutions are finding wiki systems to be of greater value when they are focused on a more targeted, internal audience. As wiki software has matured, it has taken over many intranet Web sites; larger product suites (such as Microsoft’s Sharepoint) have incorporated wiki concepts into more traditional content management systems.

KUMC REGISTRAR RESOURCE NETWORK (RNN)

The Office of the Registrar at KUMC implemented the Registrar Resource Network (RNN) in 2006 as the office’s documentation and procedures resource. All staff in the Office of the Registrar share responsibility for contributing to and updating the RNN. The Network utilizes enterprise wiki software, and staff with varying levels of technical expertise can readily update the RNN using its graphical user interface editing tools, which are comparable to those of most office productivity software packages.

In its simplest form, the RNN is the department’s online manual. Procedures and policies are listed on the home page. Each link takes the user to more information about the topic. Commonly searched topics are transcript ordering, enrollment procedures, enrollment verifications, etc.

Each individual page contains a description of the procedure, links to relevant Web sites, and policies. The wiki software also allows for file attachments for forms and other relevant documents. To ensure that each staff member is aware of any changes to policies, procedures, or edits to RNN, each receives a daily e-mail listing documents that have been edited on the wiki.

One of the greatest benefits of using an enterprise wiki for an online manual system is the built-in search func-
tionality. Prior to utilizing the wiki, most of the office’s documents and forms were located on network drives. The file structure, naming conventions, and locations of documents were inconsistent, making it difficult to find information. In contrast, the search engine within the wiki allows the user to look for an occurrence of the search topic (text) anywhere within the wiki as well as in any attachments. Registrar staff already have remarked that this is a much more efficient way of searching for documents and/or information that is not frequently used.

In addition to the manuals and procedures documentation functionality, the enterprise wiki includes other features to facilitate communication and information sharing within the Office of the Registrar:
- Office calendar that includes important academic calendar dates, project deadlines, staffing absences, and holidays
- Project task lists to document the progress of office projects and to share important notes
- Automated charts and graphs to track work volume for assessment purposes
- Ability to add comments to every page without modifying the contents
- Ability to export any page or section as HTML, XML, or PDF to share content with individuals outside the office or for paper-based documentation needs

**SUGGESTIONS**

Before replacing your current documentation files with a wiki, several decisions must be made. The same evaluation criteria used to select any software product must be applied to wikis—in particular, deciding between open source and commercial products. Although open source products usually have low to zero initial and recurring monetary costs, they can be more complicated to manage from a technical perspective and offer fewer support options in the event you run into trouble. Commercial products have higher costs but offer a more polished interface, as well as more complete documentation and support options. However, as the end user of a product, you have little control over the product’s future direction.

Portability also should be a concern. Can you retrieve documents you’ve created in your wiki and move them to another product or static Web site, or are they locked in a proprietary format?

How will you control access to your wiki? Virtually all wiki products can require some form of authentication, but most by design do not have complete authorization methods to restrict groups or individuals from viewing or editing files. File-level access control can be difficult to manage in a wiki environment and is not encouraged.

With regard to implementation, consider prototyping the documentation of a certain function or area within your operation. Most commercial wiki products offer trial versions or provide hosted services that allow a user to get started with minimal involvement of local information technology staff.

The success of RNN at KUMC was the result in part of starting small so that staff could see the benefits of the system. Once content and information are transitioned to a
wiki, it is essential that the wiki should become the prominent vehicle when documenting happenings in the office. As KUMC registrar staff work on projects or develop new procedures, they often document in the wiki as they are working. A common lament heard in offices is “I have this great new system, but I now have to go back and figure out how I did this so I can put it in the manual.” Because of the ease of use of the wiki, documenting as you go eliminates an often forgotten (or, more likely, avoided) yet essential step in the operation of an office. Transcendent ‘Aha!’ moments occur when someone brings a laptop to a meeting and adds documentation or post-meeting minutes as they are occurring; staff members literally can have their documentation in their hands even before they return to their desks!

**CONCLUSION**

Wikis are fast becoming a best practice in managing documentation. They allow any member of a team to quickly and easily update information while providing management and other team members with tight version control and ready visibility of any change made.

**About the Authors**

**CHRIS MEIERS** is the Assistant Dean of Students and Registrar at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, KS. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Psychology and Research in Education at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS. In addition to his professional duties, Chris is serving as President-Elect of the Kansas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (KACRAO) and is a representative to the Association of American Medical Colleges’ (AAMC) Committee on Student Records.

**JAMESON WATKINS** is the Director of Internet Development at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, KS. He also teaches graduate courses in information architecture and emerging technologies at the School of Library & Information Management at Emporia State University. He is an active member of the Java Architecture Special Interest Group (JA-SIG) and the Web Portals constituent group leader for Educause.
Challenges with Transforming the Degree Certification Process

By Doug McKenna

Undertaking significant change of one of the core functions of a university—certifying that all graduation requirements have been met—results at best in tremors of discomfort and, at worst, in buttressed walls of resistance. At an institution as large as Michigan State University, with 16 colleges and approximately 46,000 students, even minor changes in policy or practice are magnified. Development of an online degree certification process constitutes anything but a minor change. So why change? What are the issues with the current degree certification process? What are the benefits of an online system, and who will reap those benefits?

Simply stated, the existing degree certification process at Michigan State University (MSU) is labor intensive for all involved. It is paper-based, costly, and time consuming. But by leveraging technology, the process can be streamlined without sacrificing accuracy or data integrity. (And some of the colleges finally might be able to get rid of the typewriters they keep just for this process!)

**THE “DEFICIENCY LIST” PROCESS**

MSU’s current degree certification process begins with students, who apply for graduation via the Web. During the fourth week of the semester (or the second week of summer session), the registrar’s office degree staff generates and distributes to the colleges lists of applicants for graduation. The report is known as the “Deficiency List” because the colleges and departments are required to detail the coursework that each student still must complete in order to graduate.

Two versions of the Deficiency List are created: one sorted alphabetically by student level (undergraduate and graduate) and another sorted alphabetically by major code. The degree staff stores in multiple three-ring binders the copy that is sorted alphabetically by student level. The lists sorted by major are distributed to the colleges, which distribute them to the departments to fill out. Printed on custom, sticker-stock paper, the Deficiency Lists distributed to the colleges detail student information on the left side of each page; the right side is a removable sticker (similar to a mailing label). The label lists the student ID (PID), degree type (BA, BS, etc.), and four questions relating to university requirement completion. Department staff circle “Yes” or “No” in answer to the four questions and then specify the courses or requirements the student must complete in order to graduate. The college reviews and approves the lists and returns the completed forms to the registrar’s office.

The left side of the Deficiency List is identical to the left side of the list sent to the college and is retained by degree staff; the right side is blank. When the colleges return their lists, the degree staff removes the stickers from the “sorted by major” reports and affixes them to the “sorted by level” reports to create one master alphabetical listing of
applicants by level. A separate binder is kept for late applications, and yet another binder is maintained for any correspondence relating either to the application status or to the requirement completion status of a prospective graduate.

The custom, sticker-stock paper costs between $0.47 and $1.09 a sheet, depending on the quantity purchased. MSU graduates between 10,000 and 11,000 students each year (roughly 6,000 each spring, 2,000 each fall, and 2,000 each summer), and each page of the Deficiency List displays information for only six students. In other words, MSU uses a lot of custom sticker-stock paper each year. Additional costs are associated with acquiring and storing the paper stock, as well as with printing and distributing the Deficiency List. In the present era of budget tightening, the Deficiency List is a potential place for significant cost reduction.

CLEARING DEGREES
Each semester, on the day after final grades are due, an Internal Advising Report (IAR) is printed for every student who is still in an “applied” status for the term. The IARs are divided alphabetically to correspond with the binder, and then an associate or assistant registrar compares what the college submitted on the Deficiency List with the student’s IAR. Notes are made on the IAR to indicate to degree staff whether the student graduates, if the student has achieved graduation honors, if there are any problems, or if the student has been denied. The degree staff manually transcribe the graduation decisions from the paper IARs into the student information system (SIS). The process of clearing the initial bulk of the degrees and entering the decisions into SIS takes from five to seven business days, depending on the number of applicants. (In the spring, that may be nearly 6,000 students.) We continue to clear degrees for several weeks as late grades are submitted and/or as individual students’ issues are resolved. The system automatically generates an e-mail to notify each student when the decision to deny or to confer has been made.

The current process is archaic but reasonably efficient given that it is paper-based and given the number of students involved. In the fifteen years the system has been in place, MSU has not granted a degree in error. Many redundancies are built into the process, and many different people are involved to check and double-check that each student has satisfied all of the requirements for his given degree program. But what if a system could be created that retained the same level of oversight and data integrity but eliminated the costly paper supplies and reduced the labor required by the process? Technology is making such a system a reality.

REVISING THE ONLINE ADVISING SYSTEM
In January 2006, MSU’s registrar’s office began a complete overhaul of the way requirements were presented to students and advisors on the Web. MSU uses an online advising tool: Decision Academic’s Degree Navigator. (SCT Banner’s CAPP module and DegreeWorks have their own nuances.) Installed and implemented at MSU approximately eight years prior to my arrival, Degree Navigator (DN) was neither consistently used by the colleges nor strategically developed by the registrar’s office; as a result, it was not viewed as a reliable advising tool.

Addressing the following challenges was the first step in the transformation of Degree Navigator into an automated degree audit system: increase the accuracy of DN; increase the college’s confidence in DN’s new accuracy; and increase usage of DN by the colleges, departments, and students.

To address those challenges, I focused my efforts on establishing relationships with the colleges’ associate and assistant deans. Maintaining an accurate online advising system is an extremely collaborative effort, and assistance from the end users is crucial. I held meetings with representatives of each college to solicit information about their issues with DN; many issues were the same and related to the way in which DN handled the University’s general education requirements.

MSU has three groups of general education requirements: Mathematics, Writing, and Integrative Studies, which is a set of 24 credits in the arts, humanities, social, physical, and biological sciences, with a lab component. Each category has its own rules governing how the requirement can be satisfied. The complexity of how transfer courses, test scores, and AP credit could apply toward a requirement was staggering. Equally confounding was how poorly DN interpreted the various policies. Even when a policy stated a requirement clearly, DN might have indicated something completely different and contradictory. As a result, students received bad information, leading to frustration when it came time for degree certification.

Some of the problems were the result of MSU’s own policies; some were the result of the way we coded the requirements into DN; and some were the result of shortcomings in the DN system itself.

My original intent was to work first with the highest-enrollment colleges; instead, I worked with whomever seemed willing. Any online advising system requires a great deal of scrutiny from the people who know the requirements best. Without the willing participation of college or departmental academic advisors, the quality of the requirements coding suffers.
TEAM EFFORT

In addition to the various college representatives who provide input, the Degree Audit team includes members of the registrar’s office, members of the registrar’s office information services, and members of the Campus IT group, Administrative Information Services (AIS). The team comprises three associate registrars, two assistant registrars, one programmer analyst, a systems analyst, and three or four technical people from AIS. One of the benefits of having such a large team is the level of expertise available on any facet of university policy, practice, or technical system. Each team member made valuable contributions to various aspects of the project, during and outside of our weekly meetings.

The work of the Degree Audit team was not merely reactive. Rather, we sought to resolve the issues with the University requirements while also forging ahead with other sub-projects and ongoing requirements reviews. We resolved several important technical issues specific to MSU, but one sub-project stands above the rest in its importance: creation of the DN batch database. This database has enabled us to move forward with development of the degree audit system.

The DN batch database stores the results of all undergraduates’ degree reports as they are generated by Degree Navigator. With data refreshed nightly, we can determine the status of an individual student’s requirements, display the results of a degree report in any desired format, or verify that a student has fulfilled all of the requirements for graduation. Having this information readily available was the key to moving forward with the rest of the project. It was a challenge to develop, test, and store the data in a format that was easily accessible.

Given the history of inaccurate information coming out of DN, the job of “selling” DN to the colleges proved as challenging and critical to the success of the project as any of its evaluative or technical components. Even the most advanced online advising program cannot be effective if colleges and departments lack confidence in its accuracy and reliability.

Another hard sell was the fact that no online advising system can be 100 percent accurate for 100 percent of students, no matter how simple the requirements. Exceptions to the requirements will always exist, and each system has a unique way of dealing with such. At MSU, “substitutions” typically are handled in the deans’ offices. Substitutions can be complicated and so result in the majority of the questions asked of my staff and myself. In fact, the number of substitutions required for DN to indicate that a student has met all of the requirements continues to be an obstacle as we seek to expand participation in Degree Audit.

THE ONLINE DEGREE CERTIFICATION PROCESS (DEGREE AUDIT)

Ever since the registrar’s office decided to overhaul program requirements in DN, the goal has been an online degree audit system, with the projects and sub-projects having been steps toward that end. In summer 2006, we began reviewing and correcting the DN requirements for one college even as we began to explore the idea that the college would pilot the new degree audit system. With the college’s cooperation, we began the first steps of implementing the pilot program: revising the requirements in DN for all of the degree programs the college offers. Through regular meetings and incremental fixes, we made the necessary revisions over a period of several months.

In the meantime, the Degree Audit team gathered requirements, laying out the roadmap for how the online degree audit system would work. We spent many hours drafting the steps of the process, verifying that we had covered each aspect of the current paper process, and ensuring that we were not omitting anything.

Nevertheless, several things were inadvertently omitted. (An important benefit of having such a large team was that someone always was likely to ask, “But what about…?” Invariably, it would be a scenario we hadn’t thought through completely.) After multiple reviews, we developed a draft of the process that we shared with the pilot college. In response to the college’s feedback, we made some modifications to the process as well as to the new Degree Audit interface the registrar’s office information services group had developed.

The timing proved excellent as information services had rolled out the Electronic Student Academic Folder (ESAF) the previous year. (ESAF won an award for innovation at the 2006 National Academic Advising (NACADA) Conference.) ESAF had been adopted quickly and almost universally by the colleges, so we planned to piggy-back Degree Audit directly into ESAF. We modeled the look and feel of the degree audit application on electronic forms already being used by the colleges and departments.

One of the most challenging aspects of this stage of the project was getting each college to think beyond the paper Deficiency List process and to envision how degree certification could be done online. Like the old system, the new Degree Audit system requires the college to verify that a student has met all the requirements of the degree program. Although the technology allows for complete automation, the colleges we surveyed all wished to retain some oversight. So instead of submitting the information on a sticker, degree decisions now are entered electronically via the Degree Audit interface.
Degree Audit (DA) begins when a student applies for graduation. Colleges and departments generate a report using the DA interface to identify and review applicants and then enter and save degree conferral decisions and/or comments. Decisions are stored in the system pending completion of all criteria (except “deny” decisions, which are processed the following day).

Three levels of security are in place: the department level, the college level, and a college level with “final approval” authorization. Once a department reviews its students and enters decisions, the college must approve all of the conferral decisions. Only college-level users with “final approval” authorization will cause the system to take any conferral action in SIS. (This mirrors the paper-based process in which the departments fill out the Deficiency List and the college reviews and signs off on it.)

When the decision entered for a student is “Confer with Final Approval,” the system performs a number of other checks prior to conferring the degree. These include:

- Student has a current graduation application for the major and term
- DN shows that the student has completed all requirements
- College-level decision of “final approval” in DA
- No “In Progress” courses
- Minimum GPA is greater than or equal to 2.0
- Minimum credits required for the program have been achieved (usually, 120)
- No pending transfer credits
- Eligible date for “work completed” on any former conditional grades
- Any sub-terms concluded before the end of the award term

On the day on which all of the above conditions are met, the student will be processed in SIS. Degree Audit reflects that the decision has been processed, and the following day, the student’s record will be updated with the award status. If a student fails a required course in the final semester, DN will show that a requirement has not been completed, and the student will not be conferred.

Colleges can track students by accessing DA and generating a report to display those students still in an applied status for the semester. The level of detail available in these reports exceeds that available through the paper-based process and represents a shift in the overarching philosophy governing degree certification. The paper-based model is reactive whereas Degree Audit is proactive and informed, giving colleges better tools for managing the process and resulting in ‘value added’ for the college as well as for the student.

**BENEFITS AND SUMMARY**

Despite initial challenges, the pilot of the new degree audit system has gone remarkably well. The “dry run” (when no information was modified in SIS) demonstrated that conferrals for students would have been entered up to five days sooner than in the paper process. Thus, a final transcript showing that the degree had been conferred could be produced that much sooner. Most important, no unearned degrees would have been conferred.

Because we modeled the look and feel of the DA interface on ES AF forms familiar to the colleges and departments, users had very few problems navigating the system. Thanks to both the pilot college’s input and the hard work of the Degree Audit team, the system remained relatively unchanged from our initial design.

Because colleges and departments can access the Degree Audit reports at any time, they can begin making certification decisions for students significantly sooner than the fifth week of the semester, which is when they would have received the Deficiency List. This benefits the student who may need to change an enrollment in order to meet all the requirements for the degree program. Increased scrutiny of the online advising system also will benefit the student as she will know she is receiving accurate information about her progress toward degree. The increased scrutiny has led to curricular changes, as well, as our policy is to code requirements to reflect what has been approved by academic governance committees.

Replacing the Deficiency Lists with an online report will result in significant cost savings for the registrar’s office and for the colleges and departments, which typically make copies of the lists prior to returning them. Requirements-based reporting will be an important byproduct of Degree Audit and one of the added benefits of the DN Batch database project as we will know that colleges and departments are doing the substitution maintenance necessary for their students in DN. Colleges and departments will be able to forecast enrollment needs using information from DN relating to how many students have not yet fulfilled a particular requirement; they also will be able to analyze curriculum trends by determining which courses have been applied to which requirements.

Transformation of the largely unused and mistrusted online advising system into a viable degree audit system seemed overwhelming at first. Eighteen months later, through teamwork and collaboration with our pilot college, we have risen above the initial challenges and ac-
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accomplished the goal. All of the various pieces were finally available to bring this functionality into use: a reliable online advising system, ESAF, the DN batch database, and, most important, a collaborative work ethic among various groups on campus.

Through a successful "go live" for the pilot college in summer 2007, we hope to dramatically increase the system’s usage in the next year; we are targeting the top 50 undergraduate majors by student enrollment. With each new degree program that adopts Degree Audit, the benefits across the University multiply. Degree programs will continue to face challenges in reviewing requirements in DN, but the efficiencies gained make this an important and worthwhile endeavor.

About the Author

DOUG MCKENNA is an Associate Registrar at Michigan State University. Previously, he worked in the Office of the Registrar at his alma mater, the University of Notre Dame, both as a Degree Audit Specialist and as an Assistant Registrar. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration through MSU’s HAILE Program and is targeting the top 50 majors at MSU to adopt the new degree audit system.
Rethinking the NCAA’s Academic Reform

By Gerald S. Gurney and Jerome C. Weber

Both the most casual reader of the local sports pages and the professional consumer of information related to higher education in the United States today recognize that we are witnessing an increasing disconnect between what higher education professes to be about and the dollar-driven, big business of intercollegiate athletics. Fans (short for fanatics) see themselves as supporters of an institution if they buy tickets for a football or basketball game despite being wholly ignorant of—and generally unconcerned about—the fundamental educational issues with which the institution grapples. Some, believing they are helping a particular athletic program, provide "no-show" jobs for student-athletes or press gifts upon highly visible stars (or their families), particularly in the two sports that produce revenue: football and men’s basketball. If one thinks back to the headlines about recruitment, no-work courses, bending of admissions criteria, and athletes declaring themselves headed to professional sports before they even set foot on campus, it becomes clear that most abuses we associate with intercollegiate athletics center on these two sports. These are the sports that grab the headlines, provide the ticket sales, require the luxury suites, and generate the television revenues. These are the sports that result in coaches’ salaries that are many times that of anyone else on campus, faculty member or administrator. Football in particular generates so much revenue that it is possible for an institution hungry for a return to its glory days to successfully lure a coach to its campus from the professional ranks, and, in the process, to break through the $3 million salary barrier.

In this context, the competition for star athletes who are capable of generating the level of play that will justify 100,000-seat stadiums is intense. Some observers of intercollegiate athletics believe that because college sport has become a business, it should be treated as a business; that is, allow schools to provide whatever they wish for prized student-athletes, with perhaps some salary caps built into the system, and hire them to represent the school as the professionals many believe them to be. However, most observers believe there is still much to be gained by not treating college sport as professional entertainment and there should be some means of regulating the dimensions of recruitment, minimum academic requirements for eligibility, determination of championships, etc. Astride this enormously complex and volatile mix sits the National College Athletic Association (NCAA), which determines polices and, when it deems it appropriate, penalizes the institutions that participate in college sport at the highest levels of competition. Of the more than 3,000 colleges and universities in the United States, only those involved in Division IA attract the national attention that results in penalties that matter: loss of scholarships, inability to play in post-season games or to appear on television, or retroactive loss of income generated while using players deemed ineligible.
The degree to which the NCAA has come to be seen as having shifted its focus from the protection of student-athletes to the generation of income for itself and its member institutions is apparent in the fact that the House Ways and Means Committee, the Congressional seat of legislation related to federal tax policy, has required the NCAA to respond to a number of questions, the burden of which was to ask if the NCAA had abandoned its educational mission to the extent that it could no longer justify its status as a tax-exempt organization. This ongoing discussion seems not to have reached a conclusion, although most observers believe that the NCAA will weather that particular storm.

In recent years, recurring scandals that appear in our papers and on our television screens have forced the NCAA to focus more of its energies and attention on matters related to the well-being of the student-athletes whose feats we applaud in games but whose academic lives go un-remarked upon until they are involved in some situation that renders them ineligible or draws negative publicity to their institutions.

In an era of declining state appropriations for higher education, college presidents struggle with reconciling the rising costs of education and the burgeoning costs of an intercollegiate athletics industry. The skyrocketing costs of big-time athletics programs are coupled with indefensible graduation rates in the revenue sports, which precipitates discussion of whether college athletics as currently practiced has an appropriate place in the academy. The climate created by athletics-related behavior problems, loss of public confidence, academic irregularities, and special admissions standards for athletes has aroused considerable criticism from the Knight Commission, the Coalition of Intercollegiate Athletics, The Drake Group, and others. The net effect of these factors has been to spawn a reform movement in higher education and within the NCAA itself.

When Myles Brand became President of the NCAA, it was seen as a move in the appropriate direction: away from athletic directors and, increasingly, toward academic administrators. Former President of the University of Indiana, Dr. Brand was believed to be the right person to move the NCAA toward a greater emphasis on academics. The cornerstone of Dr. Brand’s plan for academic reform was the installation of a complex program designed to “...provide an exemplary educational and athletic experience in an environment that supports the primacy of the academic mission of its member institutions, while enhancing the ability of student-athletes to earn a four-year degree” (NCAA Bylaw 25.01.1).

The program was intended to renew academic integrity both by improving academic preparation for college and by increasing student-athletes’ graduation rates. Unfortunately, not all of the desired outcomes have been achieved, in part because the program fails to address some fundamental issues. For example, while it is perhaps too much to ask any admissions system to address issues of the relationship between student-athlete and institution, it nevertheless seems appropriate to address issues of admissions standards and graduation rates.

Changes in initial eligibility were implemented in 2003 and included an increase in the number of college preparatory core units to 16; a number that will increase to 18 in 2008. In response to complaints of cultural bias on standardized tests such as the ACT and SAT and a determination to expand access to higher education, the NCAA initiated a new standard to qualify for college athletics. This change replaced a minimum standardized test cutoff score with a sliding scale that theoretically could offset a student’s failure to answer correctly even one question on a standardized test with a sufficiently high grade point average in the correct number and distribution of core high school units. Many observers believe that by failing to require a minimum standardized test requirement, the NCAA abdicated its responsibility to set minimum standards to ensure a consistent and appropriate baseline for initial athletic eligibility. Despite warnings from athletic administrators, academic support personnel, and media sources, the changes in admissions requirements spawned new strategies for obtaining whatever high school grade point average was necessary to establish eligibility. It is not surprising that questionable high school alternatives emerged whereby students could raise their grade point averages by participating in nothing other than basketball and in which the entire instructional staff consisted of coaches. In these “schools,” remarkable changes in academic performance allowed student-athletes with extremely low standardized test scores to be eligible for athletic participation as a result of their high school grades. It is noteworthy that this came to public attention through reporting in The New York Times, not through the investigative efforts of the NCAA.

In another example of misplaced priorities, Steve Spurrier, head football coach at the University of South Carolina, raised the hackles of academic administrators this past summer when he declared that it was inappropriate for the institution to deny admission to football recruits whom he had promised admission on the basis of their having met the NCAA’s minimum requirements. While Spurrier had a valid point in that the recruits were not informed that they were being denied admission until it was too late for them to apply and enroll (and play) elsewhere, Spurrier also threatened to leave the University if it did
not address the admissions issues with which he was concerned. In other words, Spurrier seemed willing, as part of his multi-million dollar contract, to also assume the duties of Director of Admissions—at least as they relate to football recruits. Not to be outdone, Coach Tommy Bowden at Clemson University claimed that Clemson should adopt the NCAA standard for initial eligibility as Clemson’s admission criterion. “They took the presidents and spent years and invested millions of dollars and OK, if he gets an 820 and a 2.5, for the most part he can succeed in college. Now who are we to say, wait a minute, no, not at this school he can’t.” The idea that an individual institution shouldn’t be able to require a higher standard for admission than the NCAA minimum is as sensible as the idea that a student who qualifies for a football scholarship at any Division I institution should be eligible for a scholarship at all Division I schools.

While allowing greater access by poorly prepared student-athletes, the NCAA counterintuitively also limited the number of hours of remedial coursework that could be counted toward a student's eligibility. In other words, students who would require developmental courses were less likely to be able to take them. In addition, the NCAA also raised the number of hours a student would have to earn that were applicable to his declared major in the first two years of enrollment from 25 percent to 40 percent of the number of hours required for the degree. These changes present the greatest challenges to the weakest student-athletes—precisely those who were made eligible for admission by the NCAA’s failure to impose a reasonable minimum national standardized test score for initial athletic eligibility. The message seemed to be that it was acceptable to admit marginal students at the institution’s risk. However, that message was coupled with the possibility of the institution being punished if these same underprepared students failed to perform at acceptable levels in the classroom.

The system devised to address the issue of penalties was to award up to two points for each student-athlete per semester, for a total of four points for an athlete who remains at the institution and maintains her eligibility. Each team’s achievement in retention and eligibility is assigned an academic performance rate (APR) at the institution and must earn a minimal threshold for avoiding a penalty. Teams whose attrition rates are greater than 7.5 percent may lose as much as 10 percent of the athletic-related aid.
allocated to them. For example, a football team receiving such a penalty could lose as many as nine scholarships. Teams whose attrition rates are greater than 10 percent are subject to more severe penalties, beginning with a public warning and progressively becoming more severe as through restrictions on teams’ practice and financial aid, postseason competition, and, ultimately, membership status in the NCAA.

A final element of academic reform is a redesigned graduation rate that offers an alternative to the federal graduation comparisons required by the “Right-To-Know Act.” The NCAA packaged a graduation success rate (GSR), calculated for each sport, that differs from the federal formula by including transfer and midterm enrollees in the calculation while removing student-athletes who leave the institution while still eligible under NCAA rules. The rate is characterized by the NCAA as more accurate than the federal rate and as an improved characterization of the attrition patterns of student-athletes. However, the GSR fails to account for student-athletes who may leave institutions for a variety of reasons unrelated to poor academic performance. There are no similar comparisons with institutions’ graduation rates under the federal formula.

An unintended consequence of the academic reform formula is the potential destruction of trust between the academic advisor and the student-athlete. Student-athletes may leave a university for a variety of reasons: A student-athlete may transfer because she wants to be nearer to home or to a significant other; for financial reasons; because of a desire for more playing time; because of disagreement with a coaching philosophy; or any other of a number of valid reasons unrelated to poor academic performance. In many instances, transfers are the inevitable result of a poor fit between the student and the institution and are unrelated to anything having to do with athletics. Academic advisors who work with student-athletes now must consider not only what is in the best interest of the student, but also the impact on the institution of an athlete transferring. The student-athlete may be wary of advice from an athletic counselor when considering academic options related to transfer. Counselors face an awkward ethical dilemma in balancing the protection of their own institution’s APR with serving the needs and interests of their students. Of course, it is simple to say that the institution should be more rigorous in its recruiting to ensure a “goodness of fit” between the recruit and the institution, but the changes enumerated above have made that process only more difficult.

Success for the NCAA’s platform for academic reform depends on the establishment of a meaningful connection between participation in athletics and the mission of the university. This cannot be attained without significant improvement in the graduation rate of the NCAA’s primary revenue-generating sport: men’s basketball. The 2006 NCAA graduation rates indicate that on average, only 46 percent of men’s basketball student-athletes graduate. For African-American men’s basketball student-athletes, the figure is 41 percent. This is particularly troubling given the larger context: African Americans comprise more than half of the players in the NCAA’s featured enterprise.

The academic performance program imposes its standards and thresholds in the same manner for all teams and relies on the belief that all student-athletes are equally prepared to handle the demands of college-level academic work. It is naïve to maintain that the same academic achievement standard should be utilized for both revenue and non-revenue sports when the characteristics and academic profiles of team members from different sports may be entirely different. To expect the same academic performance from these two groups is unrealistic. Recent NCAA APR aggregate data vividly illustrate this point. Current data show 143 men’s basketball teams below the benchmark on contemporaneous penalties. It is the team sport in greatest jeopardy of penalties, and it nearly matches the total number of women’s sports in that category. Imagine 100 or more teams penalized by the loss of critical scholarships or deemed ineligible for the NCAA basketball championships; imagine the loss of television ratings appeal if traditionally competitive teams lose scholarships or are disqualified from participation in March Madness. None of this is to say that student-athletes in men’s basketball are not capable of significant improvement in terms of both academic achievement and graduation rates. The authors believe this can be encouraged by threshold requirements with predictive norms that could be used to improve graduation rates while punishing the worst abusers in each sport. The outcome of such norms would provide for much-needed improvement in these sports without draconian measures being implemented.

The potential for mischief on the part of institutions themselves also must be recognized as a possible outcome of current policies. Just as many high schools made students with low standardized test scores eligible for admission by awarding them unwarranted academic credentials, so some institutions—mesmerized by the glare of publicity, hoping for greater visibility through athletic success, and desirous of increased athletic revenue—could invent courses of study for poorly prepared student-athletes that bear little resemblance to their traditional offerings. This raises the specter of student-athletes playing out their eligibility and
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leaving school with hours toward a degree that bears no resemblance to credentials valued in the marketplace. For those very few who are able to earn a place in professional sports, this may not be a problem. But that number is tiny compared to the number of students involved in revenue sports; many such students believe they will succeed in professional basketball, football, or baseball, though the probability of their actually doing so is very small.

The NCAA seems to believe that the threat of severe penalties (such as the loss of scholarships) will bolster institutions’ efforts to improve the academic performance of student-athlete recruits. However, in addition to making it easier to admit poorly prepared student-athletes, the NCAA has devised an elaborate process whereby institutions may appeal for waivers of potential penalties. A program reliant on large numbers of waivers and exceptions (so institutions can avoid embarrassment?) begs the question of whether that program has merit. In reality, some coaches do not yet understand that academic performance is as important as athletic performance. Some coaches seem to be playing a high-stakes game of chicken with the NCAA, and they very well may win the contest.

Corrective academic reform measures also are necessary to address the behavior of coaches who recruit underprepared students and discard them either when they fail to meet athletic expectations or when they have used up whatever eligibility they were able to maintain. An example of this is seen every year when the media publish the graduation rates of men’s basketball coaches prior to the NCAA men’s basketball championships in March. The predictable cry of alarm is stifled as soon as the ball is tipped. A meaningful reform would be to develop a coach’s graduation rate. The rate could be calculated for each head coach beginning with his first recruiting class. Whether the coach stays at or leaves the institution, he would be held accountable for the student-athletes he brought to the institution. Over time, the coach would accumulate a published graduation rate that would be maintained wherever he coached. This would inform the public—and potential recruits and their families, in particular—of those coaches whose recruits tend to graduate and of those whose recruits tend not to graduate. Certainly, there have been recent, well-publicized examples of coaches being hired whose recruits are known to graduate only rarely. A public and consistent standard by which all coaches are compared would appear to have great value. Of course, college presidents and athletic directors should pay attention now to prospective coaches’ graduation rates; but the glare of publicity would increase the likelihood of this happening.

While the NCAA has responded to public criticism with a serious attempt at academic reform, this initial effort has significant flaws. Failure to require a minimum standardized test score cutoff for admission, in combination with a one-size-fits-all system designed for all sports, is not likely to increase the graduation rates of student-athletes. Moreover, failure to place at least a meaningful portion of the responsibility for the academic performance of student-athletes squarely on the shoulders of the coaches who recruit them seems particularly ill advised. If a coach’s salary is well into seven figures, does it not follow that the coach has some responsibility for the academic performance of the students he brings to the institution? To answer in the negative is to admit that the athletic life of the student-athlete is the only portion that really counts. Are we prepared to make that admission? These authors believe not and hope that the observations offered herein make clear that the academic reform in which the NCAA is engaged—while well-intended—is in need of rethinking and revision.

About the Authors

GERALD S. GURNEY, PH.D., Senior Associate Athletics Director for Academics and Student Life and Adjunct Professor of Education and Human Relations at The University of Oklahoma, has been an athletics administrator and faculty member since 1993 and has been active in athletic academic advising since 1980.

JEROME C. WEBER, PH.D., Regents’ Professor of Education and Human Relations, teaches in the graduate programs in Adult and Higher Education and Human Relations at The University of Oklahoma where he has been an academic administrator and faculty member since 1964.
Editor’s Note: The following is a chapter (1) from “Managing for Outcomes—Shifting from Process-Centric to Results-Oriented Operations,” published by AACRAO in July 2007.

Results are absolutely essential to the viability and vitality of an organization. That may seem harsh to some of us who work in nonprofit organizations, including colleges and universities. We often believe that, unlike in the business world, it is too difficult to quantify the outcomes of our work. We believe that we pass on knowledge, make new discoveries, enrich lives, heal patients, and develop future leaders—all good deeds. “How can that be measured?” we wonder.

All higher education organizations are facing increased competition for the human, fiscal, and physical resources that are vital to keeping their programs viable. The relative scarcity of these resources, combined with a number of societal changes, is rapidly ushering in the Age of Outcomes for higher education.

In my view, the changes are so significant that the landscape of higher education will never return to the time of relatively abundant resources when a program would be adequately funded simply because it was “doing good.” In the Age of Outcomes, all programs will have to demonstrate how they are “doing good” in specific, measurable terms that stakeholders value and expect.

Increased competition for scarce resources for such programs as public transportation and highways, public safety, or from the K–12 education and health care sectors is making the case for higher education funding even more difficult. State leaders often believe that higher education has a unique and significant revenue stream—tuition and fees—and are forcing institutions to ask students and their families to assume a higher percentage of the cost of their education.

The percentage of state revenues devoted to higher education is declining significantly in many states. For example, The New York Times reports that “the share of all public universities’ revenue deriving from state and local taxes declined to 64 percent in 2004 from 74 percent in 1991” (Dillon 2005).

“Results are what count, not the number of hours or the amount of effort expended. Do not let the amount of activity distort the importance of keeping your eye on the results to be achieved.”

Everett T. Suters (1976)
A decline in state funding has serious implications for public and private institutions alike. Federal and state financial aid programs, for example, have a major impact on enrollments in all segments of higher education because cost is often the overriding factor in college choice.

**NATIONAL FOCUS ON ACCOUNTABILITY**

The calls for a greater focus on accountability and outcomes in higher education are numerous. The following are just three examples, among many, of major nationally-based higher education commissions addressing the issues of accountability and outcomes.

- The National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education (2005), a project of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (with support from the Ford Foundation), has published a report entitled “Accountability for Better Results: A National Imperative for Higher Education.” The Commission notes that “The principles of accountability...demand action from all who share responsibility for the performance of higher education” (p. 16).

  The Commission also notes that several groups share this responsibility, including business and civic leaders, governors, legislators, state boards and executives for higher education, accrediting associations, the federal government, as well as higher education institutions themselves (pp. 16–22).

  Institutional performance goals, appropriately more detailed than state goals, must reflect the institution’s mission and performance targets in instruction, research, and public service. Governing boards and administrators are responsible for creating the conditions within institutions that lead to improved performance—a focus on goals, strategic planning to improve performance, and the managerial use of incentives, rewards, and sanctions at the departmental and individual levels.

  Increasingly, institutional leadership has been measured in terms of fund-raising and other external responsibilities. These are essential functions, but better accountability for performance requires more vigorous attention to internal priorities. College and university administrators must be accountable for fostering improved performance as well as acquiring additional resources (p. 21).

- The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges has written a draft paper with input from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities advocating that “public universities and the associations that represent them should work together to develop a voluntary accountability system that would allow prospective students, their parents, and policy makers to compare similar institutions...” The draft paper... calls for consensus on a “meaningful but manageable” set of measures that would include student surveys, measures of student learning, and “consumer data” on net costs, transfer and graduation rates, and postgraduate employment and earnings, among other things (Field 2006a).

- The Commission on the Future of Higher Education, comprising members of the higher education and business communities, was formed in fall 2005 by Margaret Spelling, U.S. Secretary of Education. Goral (2006) notes that the Commission was formed to:... examine an ‘A list’ of concerns—aid, affordability, accountability, accreditation—and develop a comprehensive national strategy for higher education that will meet the needs of a diverse population and address the economic and workforce needs of the future... Its recommendations... could have a long-lasting impact on higher education. And, while many within the industry believe the wake-up call is long overdue, whether those changes will be for the good of the higher education community or not is a matter of debate (p. 57).


  [O]ur colleges and universities are treasured national assets, but the shortcomings we have outlined persuade us that it is time for Americans to concentrate on what higher education can become. The challenge before us is nothing less than securing the promise of the future and unleashing the potential of the American people.

  To that end, we offer recommendations that aim to improve access to higher education and make it more affordable. We seek to strengthen quality and encourage innovation. And we want to bring much-needed transparency and accountability to our colleges and universities... (2006, p. 16).
Accountability is the third recommendation of the Commission:

To meet the challenges of the 21st century, higher education must change from a system primarily based on reputation to one based on performance. We urge the creation of a robust culture of accountability and transparency throughout higher education. We recommend the creation of a consumer-friendly information database on higher education with useful, reliable information on institutions, coupled with a search engine to enable students, parents, policymakers and others to weigh and rank comparative institutional performance (2006, p. 20).

The Commission voted 18 to 1 to approve the report, with David Ward, president of the American Council on Education, casting the sole negative vote.

Citing the report’s tendency to propose “one size fits all solutions” to problems and to minimize the financial problems facing higher education but not of the industry’s own making, among other things, Ward said that he could not sign it. As the panel and Education Secretary Margaret Spellings work to further define, debate, and eventually carry out the report’s recommendations in the months ahead, Ward said, “I think I can be more effective if I am free to contest some—not very many—aspects of this report” (Lederman, 2006).

The Spelling Commission Report received mixed reviews from the various associations of higher education. It is important to note that

Hours after Ward’s decision not to sign the report—a decision that he said those he polled on the American Council on Education’s board had wholly endorsed—he acknowledged that it would be crucial for college officials to advocate for the commission proposals they agreed with and to work to improve the ones they don’t. “We need to find a way to show responsiveness,” he said. “We have to create some self-generated outcomes. This is an agenda we need ownership of. If we don’t, [(the Commission’s report) is a shot over the bow, and colleges can expect changes imposed by others].” (Lederman 2006).

MARKETPLACE DEMAND FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Significant increases in tuition and fees at many colleges and universities are fueling the demand of prospective students and parents for data on what returns on their investments they will realize. Specifically, they want to know an institution’s retention and graduation rates, placement rates in graduate and professional schools, and placement rates and job prospects in various career fields.

College guidebooks have heightened the public demand for the inclusion of outcome data with their annual rankings. Each publication seeks to secure its own niche in the marketplace by slicing and dicing quantitative and qualitative information about colleges and universities.

Many in the higher education community question both the validity and the applicability of rankings by college guidebooks. However, the reality is that prospective students, their parents, and higher education administrators read them. Like consumer reports, college guidebooks are influential; higher education leaders who ignore them do so at their institutions’ peril. Students and their parents have many choices and will gravitate to those institutions that best address their interests, needs, and concerns.

Many legislators and governors either are leading or are facing significant public resistance to tax increases. At a recent meeting of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, an attendee wore a button that read, “I am a Taxpayer Watchdog.” Clearly this individual was signaling his expectations regarding the effective use of taxpayer dollars.

Posner and Rothstein (1994) observe that the reinventing government movement popularized by former U.S. Vice President Al Gore and former government official and journalist (and now writer) David Osborne is based on the assumption that government agencies should operate with much the same efficiency and accountability to stakeholders as stockholders demand from the corporate world.

Transforming inefficient bureaucracies into dynamic customer-driven organizations is challenging under any circumstances. But when the entity is something as vast and multifaceted as the U.S. federal government, many would argue that the mechanisms for substantial change don’t exist, that the problems governments must grapple with—crime, failing schools, the health care crisis—have outstripped its capacity to respond creatively.

David Osborne disagrees. Having spent the last decade studying and writing about innovation in government and much of 1993 working as a senior advisor to the Clinton administration, Osborne is convinced that change at the federal level is not only possible but also inevitable. In fact, he argues, many of the same tools used to improve the performance of companies—employee empowerment, internal competition, and measure-
ment — can be marshaled to "reinvent" government as well (Posner and Rothstein 1994, p. 133).

Aspects of this reformatory movement have moved into higher education as public officials and college and university trustees and regents seek to apply their own corporate experience to the operation of higher education institutions. Accrediting agencies are demanding that institutions make outcome metrics an integral part of their governance and management processes.

Bonding agencies that rate the credit-worthiness of colleges and universities also are demanding outcome data. Even a relatively slight improvement or decline in a college or university's bond rating can have a significant impact on the cost of institutional borrowing. This factor has become sufficiently important that The Chronicle of Higher Education periodically reports bonding agency decisions.

Foundation grants and donations by private individuals have always been extremely important to the success of colleges and universities. In the present era of declining federal and state support, these funding sources have become even more essential. At the same time, donors increasingly are demanding data on the return — or outcomes — of their grants and gifts.

**HIGHER EDUCATION AS A BUSINESS**

Business leaders often respect the mission of higher education even as they are skeptical of its effectiveness. Charles Miller, chair of the National Commission on Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education, is a successful businessman who has used the national platform of his position "... for his blunt critiques of academe and [as] a vehicle for his big ideas" (Field 2006b, p. A16).

From that post, he has poked, prodded, and sometimes provoked academe, challenging its "complacent," "change resistant" culture and calling for it to become more accountable to families and tax payers.

[Miller]... scoffs at the notion that "only the high priesthood of academia" knows how to improve higher education, arguing that colleges could learn a lot from the business world. Among his ideas: testing college students, overhauling accreditation, and remaking the federal student-aid system (Field 2006b, p. A16).

The Greensboro Gazette profiled James Rogers, a successful lawyer and businessman who owns 16 NBC- and FOX-affiliated television stations in five western states and who serves as chancellor of Nevada's System of Higher Education. The state system oversees two universities, four community colleges, one state college, and one environmental research institute for an overall enrollment of 105,000 students (Humes 2006). The profile notes that Rogers is also a member of the boards of numerous universities, banks, and businesses. "He’s given away and helped raise billions for various universities and has provided scholarships for students he's never met" (Humes 2006, p. 20). A strong advocate for higher education, Rogers brings a business perspective to his work as chancellor:

Efficiency and productivity are big challenges for Rogers. "I don’t care what you are doing, you have to put a value on your time. Academicians generally don’t. Meetings that I believe could be finished in an hour last five hours. They don’t understand that there is a need to be efficient even in education. They are not results-oriented. They are efforts-oriented. Academicians are more concerned with how hard they work than with what gets done. There is a big distinction there. Efforts don’t satisfy the requirements of accountability. Results satisfy the requirement of accountability" (Humes 2006, p. 22).

**CONSULTATION AS “PRODUCT”**

The governance structure of colleges and universities usually runs on committees and task forces, and consultation is an essential component.

In summer 2005, the Regents of the University of Minnesota approved a major restructuring of several of its colleges and programs to help move the University toward becoming one of the top three public research universities in the world. Developed under the leadership of University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks, the plan included many significant initiatives along with the merger of three of the University’s colleges with other University colleges. To secure feedback and advice on the process of implementing the decisions of the Board of Regents, the President and the Senior Vice President/Provost established 34 different task forces. At this complex institution comprising four campuses and more than 50,000 students and 16,300 faculty and staff at the flagship campus alone, a large number of task forces were absolutely essential to draw out the institution’s best ideas and to promote buy-in.

The adage that people support what they help create may be time-worn, but it remains true. Meaningful consultation is a hallmark of effective colleges and universities. What is sometimes lost in the higher education community, however, is that consultation is only a means to an end. Consultation should lead to a plan and its implementation. Unless the outcomes of the consultative process are clearly stated and successfully implemented, nothing is ac-
Managing for Outcomes: Shifting from Process-Centric to Results-Oriented Operations

How do you take your organization from good to great? Managing for Outcomes, Wayne Sigler’s new book professing the advantages of emphasizing outcomes over processes, is the first step. Building on years of management experience, the author presents the Outcome-Oriented Operations (Tri-O) Management System and shows how implementing its seven powerful components can translate into greater leadership success—in higher ed and beyond.

Learn how to create effective mission statements, choose and assess staff, write strategic plans and calendars, delegate authority while remaining accountable, monitor budgets, identify metrics for success, and report to stakeholders. Inspiring case studies—from inside and outside of higher ed—lend context to the principles described in the eleven-chapter book.

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Academic Dishonesty: Developing and Implementing Institutional Policy

Academic dishonesty poses a threat to the goals of every educational institution. Drawing from current literature, case law, and a North Park University survey conducted by author Dennis Bricault, the guide provides an overview of academic dishonesty, paying particular attention to its associated legal aspects.

This 70-page booklet summarizes the types and range of academic dishonesty; the causes and manifestations of dishonest behavior; and the legal issues affecting academic misconduct (case law, due process, the content and communication of policies, sanctions, prevention, and detection). Additionally, sample policies and statements provide guidance to administrators and faculty who seek to assess and restructure policies and procedures at their own institutions. Appendices include the original North Park survey instrument and results.

ITEM #0117 | $30 MEMBERS | $45 NONMEMBERS

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The gradual but clear national decline in the influence of many student affairs programs over the past two decades is but one example among many of an undue focus on process over outcomes. (Note: Colleges and universities may call some programs “student affairs” and others “student services.” Such terms may include both groups. For the purposes of this article, I include both terms under the umbrella “student affairs.”)

I hold the work of student affairs professionals in high regard. A master’s degree and a doctoral supporting field in college student development have given me a strong appreciation for the importance of their work to the success of an institution. While the academic mission is, and always should be, the most important mission of a college or university, the personal and social development of students enhances the learning environment and is also a significant value of attending a college or university.

I recognize that there are exceptions to every generalization and I may, perhaps, oversimplify the situation. There are, of course, many effective outcome-oriented managers in the student affairs profession at many colleges and universities. For example, during my years at Minnesota, I have worked with truly outstanding chief student affairs officers and sincerely respect what they and their staff have accomplished. And yet for two decades, I have watched with dismay as many student affairs units and their constituent programs around the country have been moved further and further down in the organization chart. Accordingly, their influence on institutions’ major decisions also has declined. In my view, the major reason for these programs’ precipitous decline in influence and resources is their naive belief that what they are doing is so important that they need not take the time to demonstrate, in measurable terms, the specific ways in which they are contributing to the success of students and the institution. Many student affairs programs refuse to acknowledge that the Age of Outcomes has arrived.

Nevertheless, some student affairs leaders and educators, such as John H. Schuh (Iowa State University) and M. Lee Upcraft (The Pennsylvania State University), are strong advocates of the important role assessment should play in the student affairs profession. Schuh, Upcraft, and Associates (2001), authors of Assessment Practice in Student Affairs: An Applications Manual, might well disagree with my stark assessment of the current state of the student affairs profession. They write:

In general, we believe that assessment efforts can and will demonstrate the effectiveness and worth of student services and programs and show positive relationships between students’ out-of-class experiences and use of...
student services and programs and student learning, including academic achievement and retention... (Schuh, Upcraft, and Associates 2001, p. 10).

However, they also note:

**Student affairs is under considerable pressure to demonstrate its importance and worth. In an era of declining resources and increased competition for what precious few resources there are, student affairs has come under the institutional financial microscope. Questions range from quality and efficiency to the ultimate question: Do we really need this service or program? So the first answer to the question, “Why assessment in student affairs?” is survival... (Schuh, Upcraft, and Associates 2001, p. 9).**

### ACTIVITY as “PRODUCT”

Much of higher education believes that “If we are working hard and keeping busy,” an outcome is inevitable. The common lament “I could do big things if I were not so busy doing little things” is widespread among all organizations, not just higher education, and likely speaks to the lack of accomplishing meaningful things—to working hard but not getting the really important things done. For example, many student affairs professionals have failed to demonstrate leadership for such crucial programs as student retention and on-time graduation. At many institutions—especially public colleges and universities—retention and timely graduation were not given attention until college guidebooks and general media began to publish retention and graduation rates. For more than 20 years, the retention effort went begging for real institutional commitment and leadership.

While an effective retention program requires campuswide commitment and effort, student affairs professionals are well-versed in many related key issues. However, they often have failed to assert their leadership in this area. Today, student affairs professionals are secondary leaders in the student retention movement.

Student affairs is just one example of various higher education programs that have emphasized process and activity over outcomes, to their own ultimate detriment. Even student affairs offices that have management metrics in place have not fared much better in regard to measuring specific outcomes. Managers of these programs often have focused on activity and efficiency rather than on effectiveness measures. Consider the following examples:

- Counting the number of students advised per day does not measure the impact of the advising sessions on students’ retention and timely graduation.
- Cataloging the number of people who use a web-based service does not describe the effectiveness of the service.
- Measuring cost savings does not address issues of effectiveness.

Even programs whose work is more easily quantified—such as those of admissions offices—often fail to assess the outcomes of their various activities.

### Doing Good while Producing Specific, Measurable Results

A number of higher education (and other nonprofit and government agency) programs are starting to demonstrate that they not only are “doing good” in terms of their missions, but they also are achieving measurable outcomes. They are able to show that they are effective stewards of the resources they have been given.

Peter F. Drucker, political economist and author, is widely credited as one of the most influential pioneers in the modern study of management. In a cover story shortly after his death, *Business Week* called Drucker “the man who invented management” (Byrne 2005, p. 97). *The New York Times* notes that over his 50-year career, Drucker donated at least half of his consulting services to nonprofits and small businesses. The Times notes:

> Mr. Drucker counseled groups like the Girl Scouts to think like businesses even though their bottom line was “changed lives” rather than profits. He warned them that donors would increasingly judge them on results rather than intentions (Feder 2005, p. A13).


_But the Moores, like a growing number of big givers, take a businesslike approach to philanthropy. Rather than throwing money at problems, they try to ensure the most productive use of their dollars by funding projects they believe can produce “significant and measurable” results_ (Woolley, Hempel, and Leak 2005, p. 59).
In a Business Week article on “Smarter Corporate Giving,” Steve Rochlin, director of research and policy development at the Center for Corporate Citizenship at Boston College, sounds a similar theme:

Businesses succeed because they are results-oriented... It’s a waste of resources for the community and companies not to get more rigorous about the kind of results they want to achieve (Byrnes 2005, p. 72).

PROCESS VERSUS OUTCOMES

I identify “process” as a shorthand and “catch-all” way of describing an inordinate emphasis on procedures, rules, regulations, consultation, and activity and mistaking this for actual product and outcomes.

Conquering process does not mean eliminating process. Process is not evil. In fact, process is vital and important. It provides the structure, order, and predictability that are absolutely essential to any well-run organization. However, process orientation becomes problematic when its practitioners mistake process for outcome. Please note that I am not suggesting that managers who operate with a process paradigm do not produce results. Rather, it’s that the results often are not what primary stakeholders value or expect; alternatively, the results may not be achieved in sufficient amounts.

It is possible for higher education programs and their managers not merely to survive but to thrive in the Age of Outcomes! However, if they are to thrive, a great many higher education managers will have to undertake a major paradigm shift, from a process orientation to one that is stakeholder-focused and outcome-oriented. Such a shift will not be easy: For many, it ultimately will require a shift in culture.

Those organizations and managers that are able to conquer an undue focus on process so as to be truly stakeholder-focused and outcome-oriented will be those who thrive in the Age of Outcomes.

REFERENCES


About the Author

WAYNE SIGLER has been Director of Admissions at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities since 1992. Prior to joining the University of Minnesota, his work in higher education included serving as Associate, then Director, of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Maryland, College Park and Dean of Admissions/Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services at the University of Houston. He received his master’s and doctorate from The George Washington University in Washington D.C. He is a nationally respected author, speaker, and consultant on transformational leadership, enrollment management, customer service, and recruitment.

Dr. Sigler recently served a two-year term as President of the Association of Chief Admissions Officers of Public Universities.

Copies of "Managing for Outcomes—Shifting from Process-Centric to Results-Oriented Operations" can be purchased online at www.aacrao.org/publications/new.cfm or by phone at (301) 490-7651.
This commentary documents some of the most important and far-reaching issues related to democracy and education in the United States today. It explores the alarming reversionary trend toward exclusivity, wealth, and privilege as they relate to the pursuit of higher education. Historically, a college degree was unattainable by the poor and a privilege of the wealthy. Yet our democratic stance suggests that education should be accessible by all and simply a matter of choice. Theoretically, everyone does have the choice; yet in reality, the democratization of higher education in this country is stymied by the issue of affordability. Many issues compound the complexity of the problem, but they cannot be ignored if the United States is to maintain a competitive, productive, valued-centered position.

The United States has a long-standing history of privilege with regard to those who have access to higher education. Inaccessible to the poor, a college education was a privilege of the wealthy. And yet our democratic stance—that education should be accessible by all and simply a matter of choice—stands in stark contrast. Most are aware of this contradiction, as real barriers have always existed in regard to every individual being able to receive a higher education; this has been particularly true for minorities, who tend to fall on the lower end of the socio-economic ladder. At least theoretically, everyone does have the choice; yet in reality, the democratization of higher education is stymied by the issue of affordability (Dervarics 2004; Dewey 1944).

This privilege of the affluent to receive a college education was never something they voluntarily surrendered; rather, it was governmental influence that publicized issues relating to access to higher education. In 1862, the Morrill Act gave federal land to the states for the establishment of public universities: land-grant institutions. Yet even after passage of the Morrill Act, accessibility to college did not change. In fact, it wasn’t until World War II and congressional passage of the GI Bill, whereby the government invested billions of dollars to provide millions of veterans the opportunity to receive a college education and job training, that accessibility to college was expanded. The GI Bill resulted in rapid expansion of the college population, from less than 2 million in 1939 to more than 15 million in 1999. Yet it is apparent that the government’s passage of the GI Bill was actually a response to overwhelming fear related to how to best integrate so many veterans back into the mainstream of society; the situation was even more urgent given that there weren’t nearly enough jobs (Young Democratic Socialists 2007).

CRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Today, it appears that we are reverting to the model of privilege and exclusivity as the gap between those of low socioeconomic status and the elitist class seems to be widening once again. Although more Americans are attending college, the cost to do so has risen as well. From 1973 to
Once was standard; and staff are often subjected to at-will termination policies that leave them very little ground for recourse. Nevertheless, one group now finds the playing field substantively improved: corporations. Private corporations have taken up the slack as federal research funding to colleges and universities has declined. Passed into law in 1980, the University and Small Business Patent Procedures Act (commonly known as the Bayh-Dole Act) created enhanced corporate intervention within higher education. This law gave universities an opportunity to patent innovations that occurred on their campuses and allowed them to license “their” products to private companies. Hence, universities received patent rights and prestigious acknowledgments while companies benefited from the massive profitability of new products. This was such a successful intervention that private investments in research increased from $236 million in 1980 to $2 billion in 1996 (Young Democratic Socialists 2007). One of the greatest attendant risks is that colleges and universities’ general mission historically has included the promotion of solutions for the well-being of our society—not for the generation of the most profit. Society’s most vital solutions thus may take a back seat to what is most lucrative and may give way utterly to the best interest of the corporate constituents it serves.

PRACTICAL SCHOOL-BASED SOLUTIONS TO RISING COSTS

A few universities are establishing cost-cutting alternatives to address the issue of rising costs and inaccessibility. Strategies include across-the-board tuition cuts, capping the total loan amount, and, in some cases, eliminating tuition altogether. Fifty-percent tuition cuts are the simplest alternative to financial aid and one of the hardest to believe. Yet in ten years, 19 schools—including the University of South Dakota (USD), which slashed out-of-state tuition by 50 percent in 2006; North Park University in Chicago, which lowered tuition by 30 percent in 2005; and Bethany College in West Virginia, which dropped tuition by 42 percent in 2002—have cut tuition drastically (Peter 2007).

Other ways to increase access, particularly among low- and moderate-income constituents, is to revisit and simplify the FAFSA financial aid methodology. Professor Ronald Ehrenberg, director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute, reports that completing the FAFSA is more complicated than filing a tax return (Peter 2007).
higher education as an attainable goal. By lowering overall tuition costs, schools can allocate their grant resources across a wider spectrum given that needy students will require smaller grants.

Bethany College President G. T. Buck believes the advantages of cutting costs accrue to the college as well. By way of example, Buck explains that five years after Bethany College lowered its tuition, its enrollment almost doubled, from 500 students to 900 students—and those allegedly of the same quality. G. T. “Buck” Smith, president of Bethany College, asserts that Bethany neither gained nor lost revenue from the increased volume (Peter 2007).

The University of South Dakota (USD) took a similar approach: According to Cecil Foster, Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Services, USD lowered tuition in order to remain competitive in its recruitment efforts (the university was experiencing decreases in enrollment) (Peter 2007).

The downside of tuition cuts is that high tuition generally is synonymous with high quality, distinction, prestige, and high standards of excellence; it is to high tuition institutions that the elite prefer to send their children. So don’t expect schools like Harvard to cut their costs anytime soon. According to Sally Donahue, Director of Financial Aid, Harvard has a $30 billion endowment and anticipates awarding $103 million in need-based grants for the 2007–08 academic year. It should be noted that Harvard has designed a program whereby students from households with annual incomes less than $60,000 need pay nothing to attend (Peter 2007).

Several universities have capped their student loans. The University of Richmond (Virginia) has created a program that ensures that student won’t have to borrow more than $4,000 a year in need-based loans. Princeton University excludes loans as a component of its initial student financial aid package (Peter 2007).

The U.S. Department of Education is attempting to extend the “no child left behind” initiative into secondary education institutions, according to Susan Sclafani of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, because most jobs require some education beyond high school and also because of the need to improve student access to and success in postsecondary institutions (Lewis 2005).

THE HIGHER EDUCATION MARKET

The higher education market as it relates to competition operates as an anomaly; that is, higher education is the inverse of most markets. When higher education is intensely competitive, prices tend to increase, not decrease. This is because most colleges and universities don’t strive merely to increase their market share of total enrollment. Rather, its goals extend to quality, selectivity, and prestige, all of which set an institution apart in terms of the status competition. U.S. News & World Report ranks colleges and universities according to their status, and wealthy parents rush to enroll their children at those institutions that rank highest (Breneman and Soifer 2007; Sacks 2007). The United States must identify ways to maintain educational opportunity if it wants to remain competitive and productive as a society.

INSTITUTIONAL COSTS

Several challenges complicate the issue of providing higher education at lower cost. Consider that most expenses— including health care, energy, and technology—are skyrocketing. Further, prices of goods and services as measured by the higher education price index rose 22 percent, so that colleges spent 72 percent more on utilities in 2005–06 and 31 percent more on fringe benefits for employees than they did even five years ago (Baum 2007).

In the face of tighter budgets, many colleges and universities are struggling to find ways to reduce costs. Options, according to the 2006 Report by Missouri State Auditor, include filling job vacancies more slowly, salary freezes, deferment of purchases, and identification of ways to lower operating expenses across the board (Breneman and Soifer 2007).

Still another related issue is that colleges compete for the brightest students, in part by investing substantial funds in their facilities and services to make them attractive to their customers (students and their parents) as possible. And yet none of these factors contributes to a higher quality education (Baum 2007).

OTHER RELEVANT CHALLENGES

Low-Income Students Lack Preparedness

Income still may be the most critical factor in determining college access and completion. Dr. William Bowen, President of the Mellon Foundation, states that there is a significant driving relationship between socioeconomic status and elements of college preparedness. Low-income students just are not getting involved in the kinds of activities that prepare them well for higher education; in fact, their low level of involvement probably is due to their perception of higher education as an unattainable goal (Boulevard 2004; Hebel 2005).

The cost of and the demand for higher education have risen simultaneously. Yet one crisis we still must address is how best to transition students from high school to higher education. Secretary Spelings’s 2006 Higher Education Commission points out two insufficiencies at the
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AACRAO’s International Education Services (IES) serves as a resource center for matters on international education and exchange. All of the evaluators in IES have worked for a number of years at institutions evaluating foreign educational credentials for admission purposes. Our staff of professionals has evaluated thousands of foreign educational credentials, and has an average of 20 years of previous evaluation experience before joining AACRAO, with no staff member having less than seven years of experience. Our extensive archives, built up over 35 years, enable AACRAO to accurately research any educational credential in great depth. Historically, this service started with the AACRAO-US Agency for International Development (us-aid) Cooperative Agreement that began in the mid-1960s.

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A study of the structure and content of the educational system of Brazil, including extensive descriptions of undergraduate and technical programs. Also includes specific regional and country-wide statistics, and the author’s recommendations on the evaluation of foreign educational credentials.

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A study of the educational system of India, including the different types of universities, computer and management education, and a detailed list of professional associations in India. Also includes guidelines to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States.

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The Educational System of Kyrgyzstan describes the current educational structure of Kyrgyzstan and serves as a guide to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States. This monograph contains information on both secondary and higher education, grading scales and a directory of post-secondary institutions in Kyrgyzstan. It also covers transitional issues, fraud and academic corruption.

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A study of the educational system of the Philippines from basic to higher education, with information on academic and vocational degrees, and non-traditional education, including distance education. Serves as a valuable guide to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States, with information on accrediting agencies and professional education associations in the Philippines.

Item #6537 $85 nonmembers | $60 members (2001)

ROMANIA
A study of the educational system of Romania. Includes an extensive list of sample diplomas, and detailed guidelines for admissions officers in the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States.

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A study of the educational system of Thailand and guide to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States. Covers preschool education onwards, with a particular emphasis on higher education studies, including degrees and teaching methods. Includes information about teacher training, technical and vocational education and health studies.

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Offers guidance on the structure and content of the United Kingdom’s education system. The five-chapter guide includes a historical look at major legislative and policy changes affecting the system as a whole, and offers details on the country’s Further Education, Secondary Education, and Professional Qualifications frameworks. Additionally, helpful reference information can be found in the book’s five appendices, including: a key to system-related acronyms, listings of the UK’s higher education institutions and further education colleges; details on the National Qualifications Framework; and a comprehensive listing of professional bodies and learned societies.

Item #9027 $95 nonmembers | $70 members (2006)

Contact IES
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 520
Washington, DC 20036-1134
Tel: (202) 293-9161 | Fax: (202) 822-3940
www.aacrao.org | E-mail: ies@aacrao.org
secondary level: inadequate preparation of students for college-level work and an inability to meet the changing needs of the workforce. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) denotes further that only 17 percent of seniors are proficient in math, and only 36 percent are proficient in reading (Breneman & Soifer 2007). These numbers are alarming.

Financial barriers to higher education exist not only for low- and moderate-income households but also extend to other areas. Such barriers dampen this vulnerable population's academic preparation, aspirations, and expectations. Congress has a great opportunity as well as the capacity to effect major improvements to college access and affordability in the United States.

Dr. Anthony Carnevale, co-author of the 2003 report “Socio-Economic Status, Race/Ethnicity, and Selective College Admissions,” shares a startling observation: Only 3 percent of the freshmen at 146 selective colleges and universities in the nation came from families in the low-income bracket. Perhaps more significant is the finding that low-income constituents are generally unaware of their financial aid options (Boulard 2004; Cavanaugh 2004).

This country’s signature program “No Child Left Behind” sends a contradictory message to society’s youth: Improve student performance so they might have the golden opportunity to attend college. Yet on the other hand, the program steadily places them out of the market while leaving them no alternative except to acquire part-time employment (working long hours) while simultaneously accumulating debt (Breneman and Soifer 2007).

Federal and State Support
Federal supports such as the Pell Grant have not kept up with the rising cost of attending college. In addition, the tuition tax credits that were created in the 1990s shifted the focus away from the lowest-income households. Tax-deferred savings further benefit those with high income while providing little incentive to those with low income (Breneman and Soifer 2007).

The states have responded to some degree with their own student aid programs, though several look more like merit-based programs that again are not targeted to low-income students. Generally, institutional student aid packages tend to be more loan- than grant-based, particularly for less academically competitive students, regardless of their families’ income (Breneman and Soifer 2007).

The current system of financial aid lacks a seamless set of processes for federal, state, and institutional programs; this itself is a barrier to higher education access, particularly for low-income students, who tend to be poor navigators of sophisticated systems (Breneman and Soifer 2007).

PROGRESSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS
A plethora of strategies and progressive approaches may be taken to address the issue of continued limited access to higher education.

- Simplification of the FAFSA application process is necessary, particularly as it is perceived as even more complicated than income tax preparation. Research suggests the existence of clear evidence that this process can be simplified—to include significant shortening of the form itself. It even is believed that the current income tax system could be used to determine eligibility for the federal student aid program (Baum 2007).

- The federal aid allocation methodology needs to be revamped. Specifically, the over-award restrictions that provide service limitations to need-based amounts should be abolished. In other words, federal methodology truncates additional aid—aid that is often necessary. For example, students lose their eligibility for Stafford loans and for federal campus-based aid if the institution contributes to meeting the student’s needs. Worse yet, students are penalized as they must work many hours only to find themselves no longer eligible for future Pell grants—and this despite their responsible behavior (Baum 2007)!

- A proposal to extend the Pell grant program to students while they still are in high school is an effort to provide low-income students with the opportunity to take a class at a local university, community college, or technical school (and so to boost their college preparation). Further evaluation is necessary. Research suggests that increased investment in charter schools better prepares students to access higher education. Also, renewed interest by legislators to increase the amount of the Pell grant implies a willingness to revisit the issue of access of higher education in the United States (Breneman and Soifer 2007).

- Good-quality online education alternatives are cost-effective, particularly for students who are in geographically remote or isolated areas. Higher education institutions must re-calculate how to best reward the most effective teachers and administrators (Breneman and Soifer 2007).

- Loosen the anti-trust restrictions which currently prohibit colleges and universities from communicating about financial aid, particularly as much collaborative dialogue is necessary to overcome the present challenges (Baum 2007).
establish partnerships — including the U.S. government’s central role as it relates to higher education. Among minorities, Hispanics appear to be affected most significantly in terms of not having the financial means to attain a four-year college degree (Hoogeveen 2007). In fact, research suggests that higher education attainment does more to reinforce social class than to promote socioeconomic mobility. The overall picture looks grim indeed as trend analysis of federal, state, and college practices reflects a departure from a need-based focus. The needs of lower-income families have been totally ignored. The democratization of education is becoming more myth than reality as many colleges and universities seem to have abandoned their commitment (as President Lyndon B. Johnson once said) “to provide and permit and assist every child born in these borders to receive all the education he can take” (Hoogeveen 2007, p. 44).

The U.S. government’s central role as it relates to higher education should be to ensure educational attainment by all students. This requires the urgent attention of the federal student aid program (Baum 2007).

Better preparation of students is necessary, as is improvement of transfer policies so that students who attend community colleges can earn degrees at four-year colleges (Hebel 2005). This is critical, particularly as the majority of students who choose the low-cost community college alternative are minorities.

**OTHER PROPOSED FEDERAL AID SOLUTIONS**

- **Matched Savings**: Establish Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) such that the savings of low- and moderate-income families are matched by public and/ or private entities.
- **Partnerships**: Establish partnerships—including the federal government, states, institutions, and private entities—that can provide low- and moderate-income students with an early commitment of funds, information about aid and its processes, and personal mentoring and support systems.
- **Debt Payment Relief Programs**: Establish federal policies to alleviate the problem of escalating student debt.
- **Income-Contingent Repayment Plan**: Legislation should eliminate payment obligations for borrowers whose incomes fall below the poverty level. Payments should not exceed 10 percent of a borrower’s income; higher percentages should be required of borrowers with higher incomes.
- **Economic Hardship Provisions**: Eliminate the compounded interest that causes borrowers’ financial debt to increase dramatically.
- **Forgiveness for Public Service**: Forgive a year of debt for each year of public service performed by a borrower—and ensure a living wage.
- **Stafford Loan Limits**: Increase Stafford loan limits so as to diminish reliance on private loans, which tend to have much higher interest rates.

**CONCLUSION**

If they are not addressed, the several compelling issues discussed in this article will place this country in a state of crisis. The issues include: increased tuition cost; the passive role of government as it relates to need-based constituents; decreased financial aid award contributions; institutional prestige which focuses more on the middle and elitist classes (which tend to have higher test scores); lack of reward or of a reinforcement system to compel the inclusion of low-income students; corporate interventions which focus primarily upon profitability; tighter budgets; lack of college preparation; decreased federal and state support; a complicated financial aid application process; and strict anti-trust restrictions.

All of these issues point in a single direction: toward the exclusion of low-socioeconomic constituents. This further hinders our mission in this country as it relates to access to and democratization of education. Moreover, all of these issues suggest that crisis in higher education ultimately will equate to crisis in our society. As white Americans in this country become the minority over the next few decades, it appears that there may be a resurgence of an elitist class in the United States—a class that alone can afford the luxury of a college education. Even though African Americans and Hispanics will make up the larger population, they will be placed at a disproportionate disadvantage as they are priced out of the higher education market; this in turn will hinder their ability both to compete for high-quality jobs and to improve their socioeconomic status. Blacks and Hispanics therefore should be prepared to play an ever more significant role in shaping society (though at the present rate, they will be quite unprepared to do so (Hoogeveen 2007). Research already demonstrates that the U.S. higher education is losing its standing in the international arena. Consider, for example, the college participation rates of students ages 18 to 24 years: Korea claims the highest—48 percent; the United States currently is in fifth place—at 35 percent. In terms of degree completion rates or certificate programs, the United States ranks 16th among 27 countries (Breneman and Soifer 2007). Our nation’s greatest resource is its people, and yet it fails to make the investment necessary to ensure equitable access to higher education (Burd 2007).

Low-income students have limited access because they have been priced out of the higher education market. Among minorities, Hispanics appear to be affected most significantly in terms of not having the financial means to attain a four-year college degree (Hoogeveen 2007). In fact, research suggests that higher education attainment does more to reinforce social class than to promote socioeconomic mobility. The overall picture looks grim indeed as trend analysis of federal, state, and college practices reflects a departure from a need-based focus. The needs of lower-income families have been totally ignored. The democratization of education is becoming more myth than reality as many colleges and universities seem to have abandoned their commitment (as President Lyndon B. Johnson once said) “to provide and permit and assist every child born in these borders to receive all the education he can take” (Hoogeveen 2007, p. 44).

The U.S. government’s central role as it relates to higher education should be to ensure educational attainment by all students. This requires the urgent attention of the federal student aid program (Baum 2007).
Research shows that 30 years ago, Hispanic and black students entered college at nearly the same rate. That rate has declined drastically. As a result, high-income low achievers attend college at the same rate as top-achieving students from low-income families. All the while, top achieving students from high-income families are enrolling in college at a rate of 97 percent (Hoogeveen 2007).

As a result of the recent shift in financial aid policy, most grant funding is now being awarded to affluent families who already can afford college; low-income families are left to address the problem of inadequate funds as best they can.

The federal government is the largest player in the financial aid game, and it has played a significant role in reducing access of higher education. For example, the Pell Grant shrank from approximately 84 percent in 1975 to 36 percent in 2007. Actually, more than half of the $90 billion dollars spent on student aid in 2004–05 was not based on need (Hoogeveen 2007).

Although there probably is no clear or immediate solution to the progression of tuition increases, strategies are being evaluated, to include coordinating purchasing, utilizing technology to support innovative cost-saving practices, and reducing the amount of time to degree completion. To date, the most significant advocacy for lower tuition has been by those students and families who are choosing less expensive colleges—and at greater frequency (Baum 2007).

Expanding access to higher education is essential to the well-being of society and demonstrates the role of education in a democracy that is accessible to and serves all its citizens. College-educated adults are society’s most active civic participants; they also are less likely to be dependent upon public income support systems. Rather, they generate higher tax revenues and contribute to higher productivity and higher wages for all as a result of their active support of a more competitive market (Baum 2007; Finney and Kelly 2004; Herbert 2006). True democratization of education could afford the United States the opportunity to safeguard its premier status in the world’s higher education economy. Many issues compound the complexity of this problem; none of these issues can be ignored if the United States is to maintain its competitive, productive, value-centered status.

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About the Author

DR. NISKEY has served in higher education administration for more than sixteen years. His extensive educational background includes a doctorate in education and a master’s degree in human resource development from The George Washington University and a baccalaureate (concentration: business administration) from Salisbury University. Niskey can be contacted at niskey@verizon.net.
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