AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS

C&U

COLLEGE and UNIVERSITY

Educating the Modern Higher Education Administration Professional

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Contents

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Educating the Modern Higher Education Administration Professional

forum

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Assessing the Climate for TRANS at Two- and Four-Year Institutions

THE TRANSFER FUNCTION IS ONE OF THE DEFINING MISSIONS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEMS, AND IT IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO UNDERSTAND THE EXPERIENCES OF THE STUDENTS WHO ARE OR HAVE BEEN ON THE TRANSFER PATH. ALONG THESE LINES, IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR BOTH SENDING AND RECEIVING INSTITUTIONS TO KNOW HOW THEIR EFFORTS TO ASSIST STUDENTS WITH THE TRANSFER PROCESS ARE BEING PERCEIVED, AND TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ELEMENTS OF THE COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE ARE EFFECTIVELY AIDING THE TRANSFER STUDENT POPULATION. THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES SOME EFFECTIVE WAYS IN WHICH THE CAMPUS CLIMATE AND TRANSFER STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES HAVE BEEN INVESTIGATED, AND INTRODUCES A NEW TOOL FOR ASSESSMENT IN THIS AREA BASED UPON PROMISING RESEARCH THAT WOULD PROVIDE INSTITUTIONS WITH ACTIONABLE RESULTS WITH WHICH TO HELP INCREASE DEGREE ATTAINMENT.

By Adriana Ruiz and John H. Pryor

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How Understanding Diverse Learning Environments Can Help Repair the Pipeline

ONE of the largest routes on the pipeline to a baccalaureate degree is from the community college system to the four-year college system, with approximately 40 percent of students entering higher education for the first time doing so through a community college (National Center for Education Statistics 2006). Although previous studies have shown that approximately four out of five students entering a community college intend this as a stepping-stone to a four-year college and eventual baccalaureate degree, only about one in four ever eventually transfer (Cejda 1997). The rate is lower for those who obtain that sought-after degree. Clearly there is much work to be done to patch this leaky pipeline and increase degree attainment, and this pathway is under increased scrutiny.

The first-ever conference on community colleges hosted by the White House in the fall of 2010 is but one of the recent reminders of the importance of paying attention to the student population that begins their postsecondary education at these institutions. Being that the transfer function is one of the defining missions of community college systems, it is of great importance to understand the experience of the students who are or have been on the transfer path. This article examines some effective ways in which the campus climate and student learning experiences of transfer students have been examined, and introduces a new tool for assessment in this area based upon promising research that would provide institutions with actionable results with which to help patch the leaky pipeline.

One such study examined the impact of the Transfer Alliance Program (TAP) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). TAP is a program that created curricular articulation agreements between UCLA and community colleges in California as a means of strengthening the transfer function, and also helped faculty at community colleges become more actively engaged in helping their students become eligible for transfer. Laanan (1996) compared transfer students who participated in TAP with transfer students who did not using a 104-item questionnaire that examined student background characteristics, community college experiences, and experiences at UCLA. Taking into account both the types of students in the program and the social and psychological factors involved in the campus climate for transfer, as this study did, allowed a more in-depth assessment of the program's impact than if it had been based solely on differences in GPA. Students who had been involved with TAP were more likely to have contact with faculty and to perceive interactions with academic counselors as positive, as were the students who did not participate in TAP. All students, however, had a difficult time adjusting to the new climate if the new environment was considerably different from their old one, which tended to be the case with both TAP and non-TAP students.

In another study that utilized information about student background characteristics, community college experiences, and university experiences, Berger and Malaney (2003) measured achievement and satisfaction levels for students who had transferred to a four-year university. Satisfaction is an important factor in Bean's Model of Student Persistence (1980) but one that had previously not been studied much among the transfer student population. The authors found that white students were more likely than underrepresented minority students to be satisfied with their university experience and their transfer decision, and were also more likely to have higher grade point averages. They also found that knowing the graduation requirements prior to transferring positively predicted satisfaction, while working off-campus and having family commitments negatively predicted satisfaction. Older transfer students also tended to have higher grade point averages, but students who reported spending more time socializing with their peers had lower ones. By looking at how different students adapted to academic and social life at one university, institutions can gain insight into what practices are useful for certain transfer student populations.

Utilizing elements of Tinto's model of student attrition (1975) in their framework, Nora and Rendon (1990) created a new causal model to predict community college students' predisposition to transfer by examining the relationships among student background characteristics, initial commitments, social integration, academic integration, and the dependent variable, predisposition to transfer. The student background characteristics that were utilized were parents' educational attainment, high school grades, encouragement by others, and ethnic origin. Initial commitments were measured by the levels of educational goals and the institutional commitment indicated by the students. Social integration was a single item measure, but Tinto's more controversial concept, academic integration, was measured using academic perceptions, transfer perceptions, behavior counseling, and academic counseling. Three indicators used to measure the dependent variable were number of four-year institutions the student planned to apply to, transfer behavior, and transfer perceptions.

Some of the key findings in the study were that high levels of congruency between students and their environments led to high levels of student predisposition to transfer. In addition, students with higher levels of initial commitment had lower levels of transfer behavior and of transfer perceptions. This finding indicates that something is happening at the community colleges after the moment of initial enrollment that detracts students from seeking the appropriate resources and leads them to have experiences that are incongruent with their expectations. Since initial commitment plays a large role in predisposition to transfer, it is important to understand the experiences that students undergo while they try to reach their end goal.

Studies like the ones described here highlight the important role that community colleges play. On the receiving end, four-year institutions are faced with the task of ensuring a smooth transition for those students who do transfer. It is important for both types of institutions to know how their efforts to assist students with the transfer process are being perceived and to understand what elements of the collegiate experience are effectively aiding the transfer student population. Yet relatively few institutions collect this information, and none do so using a common instrument that provides a strong research-based design and the opportunity for benchmarking.

Recognizing the need for this information on a national level, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) embarked on a two-year process (partially funded by the Ford Foundation) that culminated in the Diverse Learning Environments Survey (DLE). The DLE can be utilized to study transfer students, both at the sending (community college) and the receiving (four-year college) institutions and is the first national survey that integrates assessment of climate, institutional practices, and outcomes. The outcomes of particular interest on the DLE are ones that examine academic skills for learning, competencies for a multicultural world, retention, and achievement. The survey measures were created through a thorough examination of diversity measures in more than 90 surveys used locally and regionally.

Campus climate is measured with concepts such as sense of belonging, student financial difficulty, interpersonal validation, academic validation in the classroom, satisfaction with diverse perspectives, discrimination and harassment, positive and negative cross-racial interactions, and perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity. Institutional practices can be looked at with items about navigational action, student support services, curriculum of inclusion, and co-curricular diversity activities. Outcomes that can be examined with the survey are integration of learning, habits of mind, pluralistic orientation, social action, civic engagement, and student enrollment mobility. All of these themes and constructs were arrived at using factor analysis and fall into a conceptual framework that includes behavioral, organizational, structural, psychological, and historical elements of the institution in relation to a student's identity.

One of the unique features of the DLE is that it features optional modules targeting specific topics. Two of the modules are focused on the climate for transfer, one specifically for two-year colleges and the other for four-year institutions. The two-year module asks about practices at two-year institutions regarding the transfer pathway and climate of support, whereas the four-year module asks respondents about their transitional experiences and their understanding of the campus climate. The latter module contains questions that are relevant to both students who transferred to the institution and those who did not. Both of these climates for transfer modules incorporate elements of the studies cited in this paper. Data collected from the two-year module can be used with Nora and Rendon's (1990) causal model of predisposition to transfer because the survey has demographic input as well as measures of academic integration and predisposition to transfer. Data collected from the four-year module can be used to look at achievement and satisfaction as was done in Berger and Malaney's (2003) study. Their study looked at inputs and involvements that led to transfer readiness at the community college level, and then measures of university involvement that contributed to achievement (based on GPA) and satisfaction at the university level. The DLE survey and the four-year module in particular have measures on nature of involvement, outside commitments, and satisfaction that can be utilized to look at how different transfer student populations adapt at a particular institution. Laan's (2003) study of social and psychological factors that contribute to adjustment and GPA can also be recreated using DLE data since the four-year module incorporates items that look at experiences prior to transfer, experiences after transferring, and adjustment.

THE DIVERSE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS SURVEY PILOT

The DLE was piloted in the spring of 2010 with fourteen institutions and a total of 4,527 students: including twelve four-year institutions and two community colleges. Pilot schools were encouraged to pick optional modules, and five schools used the transfer modules: two community colleges (N=1,609) and three four-year colleges (N = 601). Each school sent requests via email to the students chosen to participate. These requests briefly explained the project, human subject rights, and included a link to the survey instrument and consent forms.

Community colleges using the DLE climate for transfer module found that there were significant opportunities to improve the student's use of programs designed to facilitate transfer. Approximately half of the community college students never talked to a transfer admissions counselor from a four-year institution (51%), never talked to a peer advisor about transferring (49%), and never attended a college fair (49%). Almost as many, 40 percent, had never visited a four-year college campus. All these are designed to measure the student (and campus, in the aggregate) predisposition to transfer. It is possible that the low-level usage is related to fact that half of the students responding reported that it was difficult to access support services outside of regular business hours. Despite the low-level of use of such types of assistance, most students reported a favorable climate for transfer. Almost everyone reported that it was "easy to find help applying to colleges and universities here," with 89 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement.

The module on climate for transfer students at four-year colleges found that more than half of the students who had transferred into the four-year school, 54 percent, had not participated in a transfer preparation program prior to arrival. Even more, 64 percent, had never participated in a transfer-focused program or activity since arriving on campus. Although 62 percent reported that they thought that campus administrators care about what happens to transfer students, about as many, 59 percent, thought that most transfer students feel lost once they enroll. About one third, 31 percent, at least occasionally felt excluded from campus events because they were transfer students. Although this data is based on only a few schools and students, the questions and responses are indicative of the types of information that can be collected using the DLE that provide actionable information on the preparation for transfer and the climate for transfer.

In summary, although the academic achievement of community college transfer students has been studied, there is a dearth of actionable information about the experiences that lead to other outcomes. This new survey tool provides the opportunity to obtain information using the latest theories on success for transfer. It is designed to be used by both two-year community colleges and four-year baccalaureate-granting institutions to examine what efforts might be needed to increase transfer student preparation, to assist with a smooth transition and adjustment, and to lead to high levels of satisfaction with the collegiate experience for students from diverse communities. It is only through the use of theory-based actionable information which can link campus climate, institutional practices, and student learning outcomes, that we can make progress in repairing the leaky pipeline towards the baccalaureate degree for all those who, regardless of the starting point of their journey, desire that goal.

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Ultimately, making financial aid "freshman friendly" also makes financial aid "sophomore friendly," "junior friendly," and "senior friendly." Indiana University has in place an Office of Enrollment Management (OEM) model that includes focused financial aid packaging strategies complemented by unique contact services and communication interventions facilitated by computerized delivery systems. This article describes a model that could be modified to reflect the needs and goals of other institutions.

By Susan L. Pugh and David B. Johnson

How to Make FINANCIAL AID "Freshman-Friendly"

Indiana University (IU) is a large public research institution located in Bloomington, Indiana. It enrolls nearly 32,000 undergraduate students and more than 10,000 graduate students. The IU Office of Student Financial Assistance processes more than $500 million in various types of financial aid for almost 70 percent of these students. More than 7,000 of IU's students were new freshmen in fall 2010. The in-state cost of attendance is $21,290 per year; the out-of-state cost is $39,950. As at many institutions, financial aid administration has been absorbed into an enrollment management paradigm. Regardless of institutional size or management model, however, awarding and packaging financial aid dollars, designing and delivering various contact services, creating communications, and using complex delivery systems should include recruitment goals and awarding strategies that reflect and complement the unique context and nature of the particular institution. IU's recruitment goals are to recruit and enroll a class defined by quality, diversity, international breadth, and affordability.

Consider the graphic summary of IU's recruitment statistics as depicted in Figures 1 through 4.

As part of an effort to increase affordability, IU Bloomington increased support for need-based financial aid programs. Four years ago, the campus provided $1.2 million for the 21st Century Covenant program and $1.2 million for the Pell Promise program for all cohorts; allocations for 2010–11 are almost $6.5 million for 21st Century Covenant and $3.1 million for Pell Promise across all cohorts. In fall 2010, the campus also increased by 17 percent the 21st Century Scholars Covenant and Pell Promise funding awarded to the freshman cohort; these programs combine with state and federal funding to enable students from low-income families to meet the full cost of attendance at IU.

In addition, as part of an effort to address IU's recruitment goals—specifically, the affordability goal—special attention is given to the awarding and packaging of aid so as to minimize financial barriers to enrollment. Assessment tools enable us to determine whether we are providing optimal financial aid packages. OEM's success in doing so should be reflected in the meeting of new freshman enrollment goals and in students' persistence to degree completion. Detailed analyses of trends in financial funding and awarding provide the basis for future fiscal projections. OEM communicates and collaborates with institutional peers so it can better implement processing technologies that complement the Office's strategic plans as well as institutional values and standards of excellence. A strategic approach to collaboration and evaluation within the Office of Enrollment Management and across campus enables us to leverage financial aid dollars in ways that reflect principles of best practice for awarding and packaging financial aid.

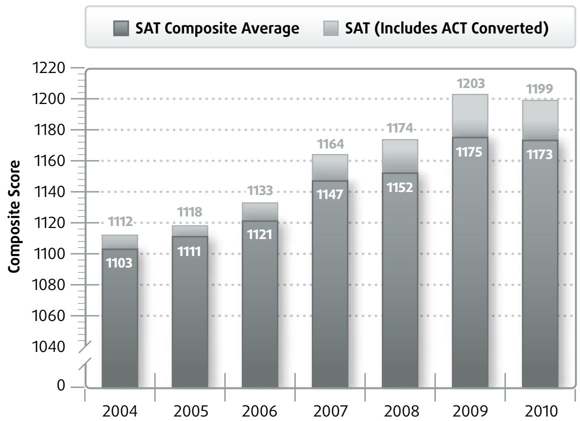

FIGURE 1. *IU Beginning Undergraduate SAT Average, by Year, 2004–10*

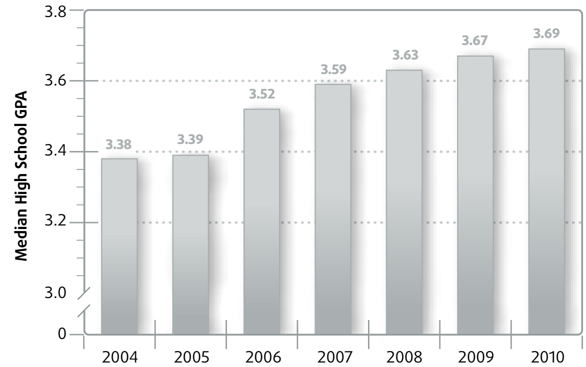

FIGURE 3. *IU Beginner Undergraduates' Median High School GPA, by Year, 2004–10*

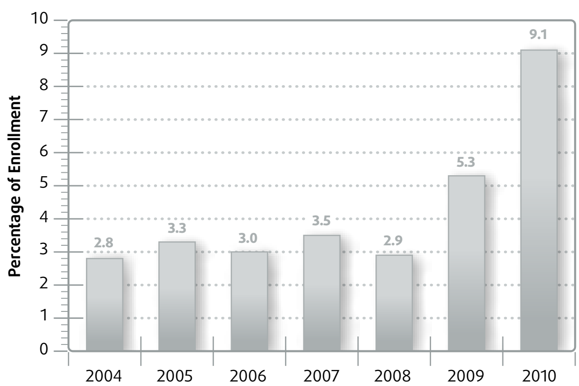

FIGURE 2. *IU–Bloomington: Percentage of International Beginner Undergraduates, by Year, 2004–10*

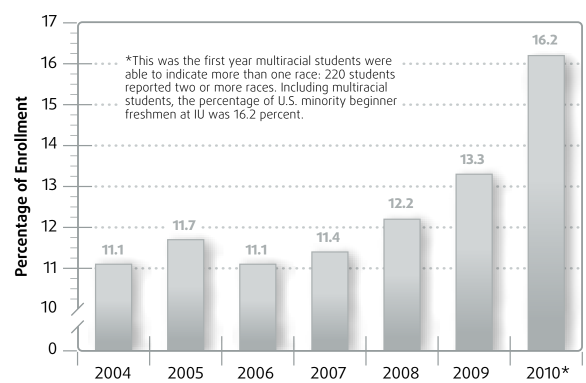

FIGURE 4. *IU–Bloomington: Percentage of U.S. Minority Beginner Undergraduates, by Year, 2004–10*

BEST PRACTICES IN AWARDING FINANCIAL AID TO FRESHMEN

Adequate information should be available to all freshmen prior to the application process. Once students are accepted, the determination and process entry of award amounts—as well as accompanying fiscal transactions—should occur within a reasonable time prior to official notification of the financial aid package. All scholarship and other gift aid recipients should be notified of those awards at least by the time when state and federal financial aid packages are determined. Recipients also should be provided with related information, such as terms of acceptance and renewal criteria.

In order to facilitate prospective students' decision making, determination and notification of institutional award eligibility should be completed at the time of admission. If it is not feasible to make awards within this timeframe, they nevertheless should be made at a time when they will positively influence students' enrollment decisions. Awards should be renewed within the timeframe of future registrations for enrollment, thereby facilitating students' decisions to continue.

IU's best practices are published on its intranet Web site for campus offices, each of which enters awards into the online system. There, staff members can view the status of aid packages already committed to students; can view processing standards and policies as well as best practice statements; and can access online tutorials about the processing of financial aid. IU decision makers have embraced the guiding principles that follow:

- Awards should be granted and entered into the student information system in a timely fashion, with consideration given to already existing IU scholarship commitments.
- Initial eligibility restrictions and renewal requirements should be clearly and continually communicated to recipients.
- Awards should be divided equally between the two semesters, reflecting the nature of costs incurred and other financial aid that may have been awarded.
- Awards to undergraduates should be designed to be renewed for the duration of a four-year bachelor's degree (eight academic semesters). Adherence to eligibility requirements should be monitored on an academic year basis. Changes in award amounts should be determined for the subsequent academic year rather than for each semester.
- Awards should not be withdrawn or adjusted once they have been disbursed.
- Awards should not be made retroactively or for terms of non-enrollment.
- Awards should not be made to students whose costs of attendance have been met with other financial aid.
- Awards should not be made to Title IV federal aid recipients whose financial needs have been met by aid that has been fully disbursed.
- Appropriate mechanisms should be in place to manage exceptions—for example, when a student and/or academic department presents the need to adjust a student's cost of attendance and financial aid award because of changes subsequent to the initial award and packaging process.

The office of IU's chief financial officer sends electronic newsletters to campus stakeholders throughout the year, reminding them that the management of student financial aid is a campus-wide responsibility.

FINANCIAL AID PACKAGING STRATEGY

A financial aid package is the result of combining various types of funding (merit-based scholarships, need-based grants, and other types of gift aid; work-study or other need-based employment; and education loans) in ways that complement the institution's recruitment and retention goals. Each package should be the result of a coordinated and systematic allocation of funds to a student within a planned timeframe. Packaging is dependent upon the amounts of money available and the intent of the various aid donors—*e.g.*, private, institutional, state, and federal funding sources.

Donor intent is of primary consideration: If funds are to be retained—or increased—then donors must be satisfied with the packaging outcomes and reporting. Donors' intents can vary significantly, as evidenced by different eligibility criteria, funding amounts, and funding prescriptions. Because student characteristics within the applicant pool may change—as may the recipient yield—trends in awarding the various funds should be recorded and analyzed. Student eligibility should be monitored continuously to ensure that fund restrictions continue to be met during disbursement periods.

Most financial aid packages include a mix of funds; as a result, aid received by a student may require adherence to different donor rules. For example, a student may remain eligible for some types of aid he has received while losing eligibility for other funds that already may have been expended. Further, the total package may not be sufficient to meet either the student's computed financial need or his family's affordability expectations. In order to package and leverage funds so as to meet recruitment and retention goals, the following questions should be considered:

- Which funds can be directed to new freshmen and renewed within the timeframe recognized for degree completion?
- Can the awarding of funds be prioritized so that the most restricted funds are expended first (*i.e.*, while the applicant pool is still large), with the least restricted funds expended last?
- Is it possible to standardize renewal criteria within broad categories of funds so that students will know what to expect in future years?
- What are the projected borrowing levels for targeted groups of students, and will those debt levels be acceptable to them? Will the borrowing and debt levels be reasonable for repayment—*i.e.*, such that default rates remain low?
- What is the acceptable gap between financial need and financial aid awarded—*i.e.*, what is the price sensitivity for certain targeted groups, and do the amounts awarded reflect the affordability goals of the institution?

FIGURE 5. *IU Intranet Web Page Detailing Scholarship Processing*

IU details its financial aid policies, practices, and programs on its Web site; "back-office" processing and policy detail are provided to departments via IU's secure intranet Web site. (*See* Figure 5 for an example from IU's intranet Web site.)

Even though IU's awarding practices are designed and managed from a "high-tech" perspective, the institution also provides "high-touch" contact services. These are reflected in the personalized award notifications sent to new freshmen. In addition to communicating financial aid information, the personalized notifications also include positive messages about attending IU. (*See* Figure 6, on page 13, for an example of a personalized award letter sent to a freshman.)

FRESHMAN CONTACT SERVICES

Most college freshmen are accustomed to "anywhere-anytime" electronic communications. OEM's goal is to reach out to and engage these students rather than assume that they will respond to whatever our contact services require. At the same time, OEM has the expertise to advise freshmen as to what they need to do to finalize their financial aid applications. For that reason, the Office developed a number of online tutorials that explain FAFSA verification requirements and loan application processes. OEM also has in place a number of monitoring systems that identify when freshmen are "stuck" in the financial aid process and/or seem to have "stopped out" at some stage of eligibility determination or application completion. OEM then contacts them. In addition to specifying what needs to be done next, we encourage them to proceed or to contact us if they continue to have difficulty. Students can monitor their financial aid "to do" list, their financial aid status, and their current awards online. Parents (and others) also can be granted access to this information via a third-party PIN.

Parts of IU's public Web site are tailored specifically to freshmen. "Buttons" lead to relevant sections and provide quick links to related offices and agencies. (*See* Figure 7, on page 13.)

OEM staff record and categorize questions posed by freshmen via e-mail and telephone and post them, along with the answers, on the Web site. In addition, staff members circulate the Q&As among themselves in order to eliminate (or at least reduce) questions resulting from internal changes to information and/or processes.

With far more financial aid recipients than a single office can manage (at least in so far as contact services are concerned), electronic tools and media constitute critical means of communicating most information to freshmen. OEM also utilizes electronic media to educate others who assist freshmen with general financial aid concerns and questions. For example, because the awarding of institutional scholarships is decentralized, OEM developed an intranet Web site for University scholarship providers. On-campus student service providers and work-study employers can contact OEM staff via special e-mail addresses.

All OEM policies and procedures are posted on an intranet Web site that can be accessed by the bursar and temporary summer call center staff. Most financial aid programs, issues, requirements, and timelines are presented in a format that is easy to navigate and understand. (*See* Figure 8, on page 14, for an excerpt from OEM's online documentation.)

The Office of Enrollment Management participates in information sessions and provides in-person contact services at events sponsored by IU's admissions, scholarship, and orientation offices. During the summer's peak processing months, temporary call center staff members circulate electronic status reports at the end of each day as well as the day's most frequently asked questions (and answers). Every morning, permanent staff meet in the call center to discuss interventions that might reduce the number of questions and clarify answers; they also solicit suggestions and recommendations from the group. OEM also partnered with IU's Kelley School of Business so that MBA students could develop and analyze student e-surveys on a variety of financial aid–related topics. E-mailing the surveys through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system optimizes response rates and enables us to monitor responses to other e-mail communications sent to various groups of freshmen.

In recognition of the fact that freshmen who have not yet matriculated do not necessarily depend upon university-based e-mail communications for information, OEM sometimes (and particularly during the spring and summer months) supplements e-mail communications with notifications sent to certain groups of students. (*See* Figure 9, on page 15.)

With careful planning, most contact services relative to financial aid can be proactive rather than reactive. OEM often

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

John Doe Smith
123 First Street
Bloomington, IN 47401

2010–2011
Financial Aid Award Notice
University ID:1231231231

The Office of Student Financial Assistance is pleased that you are considering attending Indiana University. You will be interested to know that IU was recently named one of the "best values in public colleges" by Kiplinger's Personal Finance. To assist you with your educational expenses during the 2010–2011 academic year, we would like to provide the following listing of your financial aid.

Anticipated Federal Work Study	1,300.00
Est Fed Acad Comp Grant Yr 1	750.00
Fed Stafford Subsidized Loan	3,500.00
Fed Stafford Unsubsidized Loan	2,000.00
Federal Pell Grant	2,900.00
IU Recognition Scholarship	2,000.00
Award Total:	$12,650.00

For your convenience, you may access your financial aid account using the "Self Service" tab located in IU's OneStart internet portal (www.onestart.iu.edu). There are other helpful tools available in OneStart and we encourage you to log in and take a look.

You may also want to visit our website where you will find many important financial aid topics including a detailed description of most financial aid awards. Our website also outlines the affordability, value, and excellence of an IU education. The **Freshman 101** and **Affordability** websites can be found on our homepage (www.indiana.edu/~sfa). If you are receiving awards that are not listed on this letter, please visit the **Freshman 101** website and report them using the "Report Other Awards" online form.

We look forward to having you join Indiana University's tradition of excellence. If we may be of any service to you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Susan L. Pugh

Dr. Susan Pugh
Associate Vice Provost,
Office of Enrollment Management and Director,
Office of Student Financial Assistance

FIGURE 6. *Sample Personalized Award Letter to a Freshman*

FIGURE 7. *IU Web Site: Financial Aid Information for Freshmen*

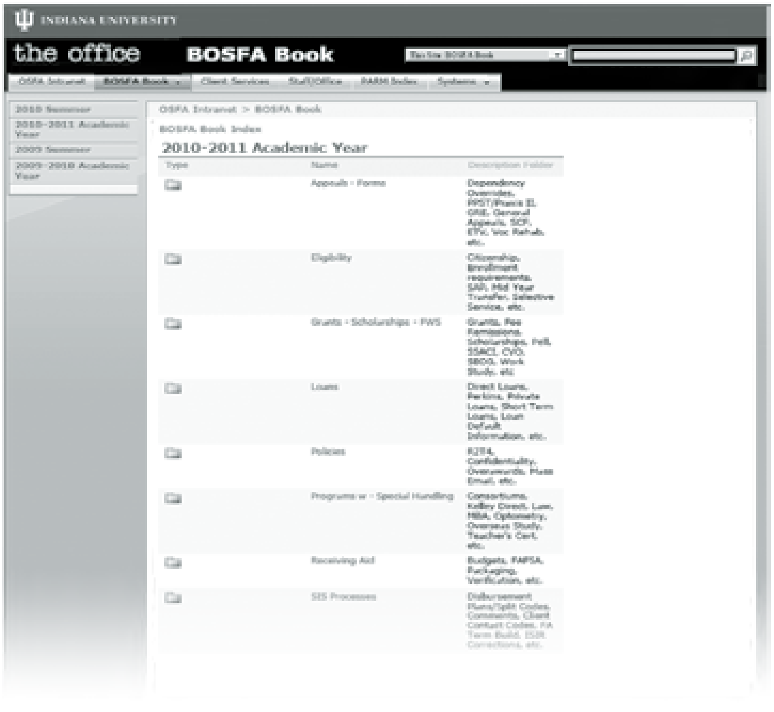

FIGURE 8. *Sample Excerpt from IU Intranet Documentation Relating to Financial Aid*

generates its own financial aid contacts by (a) having in place processing targets that generate high volumes of award notifications in concentrated mailings; (b) inviting large numbers of freshmen to campus for orientation and other events; (c) applying common due dates for all bursar bills; and (d) creating common deadlines and priority dates for all students for all state aid, major scholarships, signing promissory notes for loans, etc. Given these common touch-points with students, how might we design effective contact services?

The three keys to managing contact services with freshmen are collaboration, coordination, and cooperation within the financial aid office, with the enrollment management unit as a whole, and with other stakeholders on and off campus.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS TO FRESHMEN

Most important is to create communications that will be received and understood. Effective communications may contain several elements:

- familiar "branding" by the institution;
- consistent "messaging" across the institution;
- adequate disclosure of financial aid programs, requirements, and appeal processes;
- adequate disclosure of all "right to know" items (to meet federal consumer requirements); and
- specialized information in an understandable vernacular that is targeted appropriately to defined populations.

In addition, describe the action to be taken by the student (or family) in terms she can understand, breaking it down into steps that can be managed easily—perhaps even electronically by clicking on links to forms that can be completed online. Financial aid packaging does not always meet expectations, but students and families should understand the reasons for the outcome as well as alternatives. Similarly, staff explaining financial aid outcomes to freshmen should know that the packaging policies (a) have been consistent, (b) reflect available funding levels, and (c) have been applied equitably across all eligible populations. The conversation is easier if financial aid information was disclosed fully and was followed up with intentional efforts to assist students and families throughout the process. OEM developed a special "affordability" Web site in order to facilitate such a level of understanding. (*See* Figure 10, on page 16.)

OEM also communicates with students via integrated marketing campaigns that employ print, Web, e-mail, and social media resources. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software helps OEM staff members communicate, recruit, track, and monitor students' progress throughout the financial aid process. Further, CRM enables staff to determine the number of "touch points" the Office of Student Financial Assistance has with students and to respond to students' questions or concerns.

OEM staff work diligently to ensure that communications with freshmen are effective. Given the tens of thousands of students on the IU campus, OEM strives to be as personal and proactive as possible. We also make every effort to communicate with students via the venues with which they are most comfortable. (This is challenging given today's social media and ever-changing technology.) Communication methods and platforms on which the Office relied three years ago—or even last year—may not be effective next year.

THE ROLE OF COMPUTERIZED DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Student Information Systems can provide a consistency of purpose and efficiency in serving large numbers of students (and families) that individual staff members could not. Systems also can provide a continuous, neutral evaluation of progress as well as analyses of trends and reliable forecasting of future events based on the routine recording of history. Systems at large institutions such as IU are indispensable and invaluable. Unfortunately, they can become ends in themselves, as when they are deemed—almost by default—the policy makers, the planners, the process definers, the change limiters. This is especially likely to happen during system transition or implementation. Instead, systems should be used as mechanisms for meeting enrollment goals and for providing defined services. This may happen in partnership with other systems but always should happen in partnership with people. So how can delivery systems in a financial aid environment best be used? Ensure that:

- The institution has installed the appropriate products after sufficient research and appropriate input from all stakeholders.
- The institution has levels of technical staff (1) to manage and maintain the systems and (2) to provide creative vision and functional context for operations.
- The delivery systems can be installed, modified, and integrated in appropriate ways, in a timely fashion, and for a sufficient period of time before needing to be replaced.
- The institution can afford the system—not just financially but also in terms of human resources. Training and continually updated, convenient documentation are the keys to a more comfortable staff transition.


INDIANA UNIVERSITY
BLOOMINGTON

Volume 1 - May 2010

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Office of Student Financial Assistance

A Note from OSFA...

Welcome to Indiana University! This quarterly newsletter will provide tips and updates in order to ensure that you are maximizing your aid opportunities. The Office of Student Financial Assistance has created a new Affordability website to provide resources, tips, and answers to your questions about funding your IU education.

The site gives information on all aspects of affordability, from finding on-campus jobs to cost-effective budgeting, breaking down the Bursar bill, and student discounts. There are countless ways for families to afford an IU education and benefit from its value. Let us help find the right path for you by visiting our Affordability webpage.

Looking for information on additional loans?

Look no further. The Federal Parent PLUS Loan or private student loans may meet your needs.

· The Parent PLUS Loan is a credit-based loan in which the parent is the primary borrower. Click here for more details.

· Private student loans are credit-based loans in the student's name. Click here for more details.

· By early July, determine if it is necessary to borrow the Parent PLUS or private student loan and submit the required application by mid July to ensure funds will be received by the start of fall classes.

Interested in working next year?

If you have been offered Federal Work-Study, you will need to visit our Work-Study website for details about the program.

If you have not been offered Work-Study, you can still find a job and work on campus by visiting www.iucareers.com for information about current job listings, resume workshops, and the fall semester jobs fair.

Viewing your OneStart Account

Indiana University's OneStart web portal presents a single front door to online services for the IU community. Students who have applied for aid can view and manage their financial aid information through OneStart at https://onestart.iu.edu/.

Starting in late May, you can view your 2010-11 financial aid and adjust your awards by taking the following steps:

1. Log into https://onestart.iu.edu/.
2. Click the Student Self Service tab on the left side of the screen.
3. Click Go to Student Center.
4. Click View Financial Aid or Accept/Decline Awards.
5. Choose the 2011 year.
6. To print a paper copy of your awards, click View Award Notification on the award page.

We recommend that you review your "To-Do-List", located on the right-hand side of the main page of your Student Center, to see if there are any holds on your account. For a more in-depth tutorial on how to use OneStart, visit http://docs.onestart.iu.edu/dev/MY/my/htdocs/tutorial/tut3.html.

Contact Us

Office Hours: 9am–4pm M-F

Timeline for Financial Aid

File your FAFSA online with IUB's school code (001809).

FIGURE 9. *Sample Electronic Newsletter Sent to Prospective Students*

One of the best ways to ensure that systems are being used appropriately for the administration of financial aid is to continuously benchmark with similar institutions. Ideally, benchmarking is an ongoing process as staff and administrators are in continual communication not only with one another but also with colleagues at other institutions. Identify and study which institutions and/or financial aid operations should be replicated, recognizing that there is always room for creativity and inventiveness.

NEXT STEPS

In order to respond to continuously changing demographics and funding availabilities—perhaps accompanied by changes in campus recruitment and retention goals—we need to recognize that financial aid management strategies also must be analyzed and evaluated continuously. Research results and trend analyses should be completed and shared with the OEM planning team. New initiatives

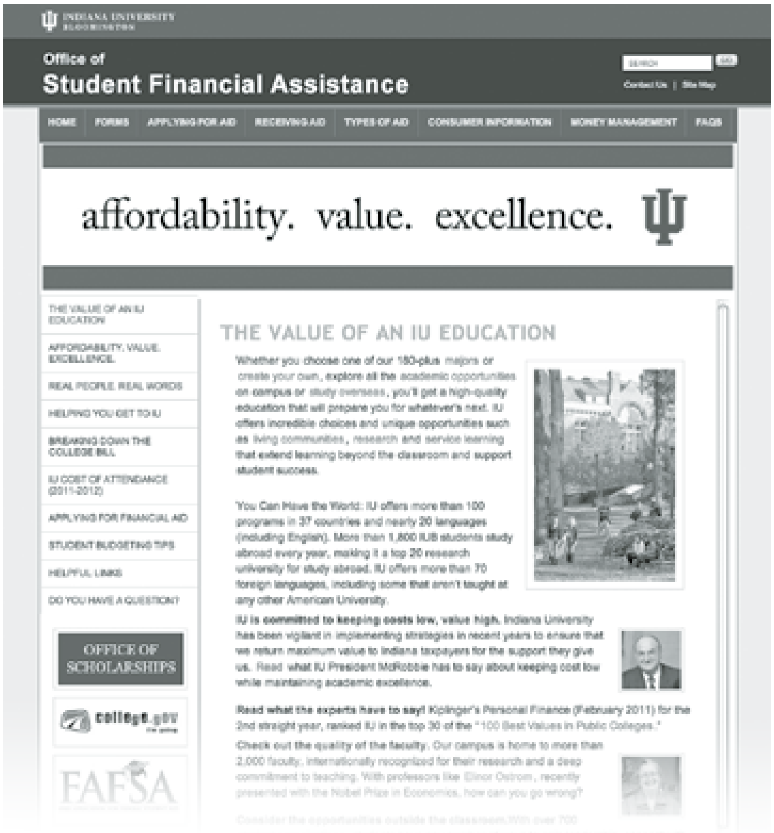

FIGURE 10. *IU "Affordability" Web Site*

should be introduced, and "old" practices and policies should be reviewed before they are continued.

It is important to establish a broad base of support across the enrollment management unit. All OEM offices should feel that they are essential to the success of the financial aid strategic plan. It is ideal to develop and nurture champions among the campus's many constituencies—people and organizations that share the goal of students' attainment of college degrees. And because there are good times and challenging times in any organization, it is particularly important to develop support during the good times—support that will continue during the challenging times (*e.g.*, funding shortfalls, political controversy, diminishing support for specific financial aid programs, etc.).

Financial aid awarding and packaging is in a state of constant change because of the diversity of donors, programs, freshmen, funding availability, and eligibility calculations. Consider this: The federal requirement that "net price calculators" (NPCs) be in place by October 29, 2011 will result in a number of changes (1) in the way families view institutions; (2) in the content and types of messaging issued by institutions; and (3) in the way in which systems are developed to respond to the NPC requirement. The 'net price' is the amount students and/or their families pay after grant aid is subtracted from the published cost of attendance. Following NPC implementation, it will be important for students and families to believe that they have received the most accurate information that is available. Affordability and value will continue to be of great concern and will be examined by policy makers, the general public, and those students and families seeking information about going to college. Embracing the NPC as a tool to help inform prospective students and their families and to provide valuable information that will minimize or even eradicate financial barriers to college will serve institutions well if they respond proactively.

Ultimately, making financial aid "freshman friendly" will also make financial aid "sophomore friendly," "junior friendly," and "senior friendly"—at whatever points students and their families engage the financial aid process.

About the Authors

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GRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS'

Social Experiences

EXAMINED THROUGH THEIR TRANSIENT LIVES

A Phenomenological Study at a Private Research University in the United States

Studies show that students—international as well as "local"—benefit from frequent social contact and peer involvement as they adjust to their new environment (Astin 1984; Klomegah 2006; Trice 2004). Yet little has been done to understand graduate international students' social experiences through their transient lives. This study attempts to enumerate the dynamics of success and persistence as these qualities emerge in participants' lives and personal stories.

International student enrollment in U.S. higher education is negligible, accounting for only 3.7 percent of a total enrollment of eighteen million (IIE 2009). Yet international students comprise 10.5 percent of the overall graduate student body in the United States (CGS 2009). Overall, the United States' global market share of international students declined by 7 percent from 2001 to 2008 (IIE 2009). Worldwide competition—especially for talented graduate students—has increased substan-

By Nishmin Balsara Kashyap

This is a phenomenological study of ten graduate international students at Chardin University (pseudonym). Through 30 in-depth interviews, multiple social contacts, and group and member checking sessions, stories emerged that highlight the social experiences of these graduate international students through their transient lives. For the purposes of this study, "social experiences" include friendships, cultural and religious acceptance, and adaptation to new norms and traditions. Theoretical frameworks used to interpret the findings were transnationalism, adult transitional theory, and the graduate socialization model. This study provided a forum in which participants could narrate their stories rather than remain invisible and silent as they passed through our institutional corridors. What emerged from the narratives is the finding that graduate international students cannot be grouped as a single monolithic entity: rather, they lead variant and divergent lives. Historically, graduate international students' social experiences have been oversimplified; in fact, they lead extremely complex lives as they negotiate a world—and manage a life—comprising home and host country. This study challenges universities to forge new pathways to engage with the members of this vital and vibrant student body in meaningful, innovative, and creative ways. It is the responsibility of institutions of higher learning to understand the intricacies of graduate international students' lives as well as the differences in their religions, languages, and socialization patterns.

tially in recent years. If this trend continues, the United States will lose gifted graduate international students and scholars to other countries (West 2009). Despite the high quality of graduate education in the United States, we can no longer take for granted the country's dominance as the number one destination of foreign students (CGS 2009). This study focuses on the need for U.S. higher education to investigate and better understand graduate international students' experiences in order to remain competitive; other countries have been paying close attention to such students' experiences and are beginning to reap the benefits.

The implications for U.S. higher education institutions are considerable: International students contribute to campus diversity, generate substantial revenue for their host institutions and host countries, engender long-term goodwill, improve national security through enhanced cultural understanding, increase research capabilities (particularly in the sciences), and provide access to talent across the globe (Altbach 2006; NAFSA 2003). Graduate international students who remain in the United States are key to the country's future economic competitiveness (Douglass and Edelstein 2009).

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do graduate international students perceive their social experiences as they persist in their studies and construct identities through their transitional lives during their tenure at a private research university in the United States?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This qualitative study uses phenomenology to highlight and understand graduate international students' experiences and worldviews. I conducted a series of three iterative, in-depth interviews with ten graduate international students to review their life stories and histories; to elicit personal reflections on their self-knowledge and identity through their social experiences; and to glimpse into their futures. My use of phenomenology dovetails with the three theoretical frameworks and guides the interviews and interpretation to depict the complex lives of participants as they negotiate and transition to their new environment.

I sought a representative sample of participants, by gender, country of origin, major, and level of study. After obtaining IRB permission, I sent an e-mail in early March 2010 to all graduate international students at Chardin University. I interviewed each participant three times (for 45 minutes to one hour) over a three-week period and sought multiple forms of engagement in natural social settings. These included social gatherings organized either by the University or by the participants themselves (along with their friends or spouses). I conducted this research at a private (predominantly white) research institution as part of an intentional effort to understand international graduate students' social experiences in a monocultural environment. The juxtaposition of the monocultural American student body with the graduate international student population seemed ideal for this type of inquiry.

Given the small size of both the graduate international student population, Chardin University proved to be an ideal setting for this type of study.

This research has been developed out of years of personal interest in international students' social experiences. My passion for this topic has been sustained through my own experiences both as an immigrant and as a graduate international student. Although the landscape of higher education has changed significantly, some of the issues relating to life transitions remain the same.

Table 1.

Participants' Names, Countries of Origin, and Degree Programs

Name	Country	School	Type of Degree
Elif	Turkey	Education	Ph.D.
April	South Korea	Education	Ph.D.
Nikita	India	Education	M.S.
Cindy	China	Management	M.S.F.
Claire	France	Arts and Sciences	M.S.
Victoria	Paraguay	Education	M.S.
Jude	New Zealand	Advanced Studies	M.S.
Jose	Mexico	Law	LL.M.
Michael	Germany	Management	M.B.A.
Rajiv	India	Management	M.B.A.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE PARTICIPANTS

Six females and four males participated in the study. Five participants graduated in May 2010. Six were married or had a significant relationship in the United States, and four were single. Participants' ages ranged from 23 to 30 years. The six female participants were Elif, April, Nikita, Claire, Cindy, and Victoria. Elif is a confident, intelligent, and determined Kurdish woman from Turkey. She is her father's daughter a statistician in the making. April, deeply religious, mature beyond her years, and a third-culture kid still seeking her ideal community, is originally from South Korea. She has been in the United States since high school and has lived away from her parents since she was fourteen years old. Nikita, the youngest of the participants, never left Mumbai until she started graduate school, and she struggled the most during her initial transition to the United States. Despite a rough start, Nikita is determined to succeed. Cindy was born and raised in communist Eastern China, and is a product of the one child program. Her father has high expectations of her as he would of a son. Claire is from France, misses her family, and is conflicted about her future. She is in a relationship with Barry (pseudonym), her American boyfriend of several years, but feels that she behaves "very French" and talks constantly about her family, friends, and the good food she misses. Victoria, from Paraguay, is married to Peter (pseudonym), a German student she met as an undergraduate at Barry University in Miami. Her journey to the United States has been fraught with complexity and transitions.

The four male participants were Jude, Michael, Jose, and Rajiv. Jude is originally from Mumbai, India, but identifies himself as a New Zealander. He has been a nomad all his life and is on a journey to discern what is next—possibly, settling down. Michael, from Germany, is a maverick. He wants to indulge in and experience American culture and has actively sought ways to stay away from anything familiar—especially German students. Jose, originally from Victoria in Tamaulipas, Mexico, is enrolled in the law school's one-year master's program. He and his wife are both lawyers and are studying U.S. law. Rajiv was born and raised in India and lived in Goregaon, a suburb of Mumbai. The only participant actively engaged in multiple student clubs and organizations, Rajiv is an optimist, networking at every opportunity.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has three overall limitations: First, given the limited number of participants at a single university, the findings cannot be generalized; second, I, the researcher, was working at the institution at which the study was conducted; and third, I personally identified with the participants, having been a graduate international student and immigrant myself. To ensure validity and reliability, I shared my interpretations with colleagues from CU and other universities. In addition, I included the participants in the interpretation phase by conducting one group session and individual member checking sessions to ensure that participants' stories were portrayed in a manner that was honest, truthful, and clear.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature was conducted to identify reasons for shifts in student mobility and to help elucidate the factors that influence graduate international students' social experiences. Global trends explain some of the shifts in international student mobility, but they do not fully explain why the United States is losing talented international students to other countries. Limited research has been conducted on graduate international students' social experiences in the United States. The lack of effort put forth by universities undermines the importance of this talented group. It is important to understand the reasons for recent global shifts in international student mobility and, specifically, the implications of these shifts for the United States. Several factors have contributed to the current trends: national policy changes (*e.g.*, Student Exchange Visitor Information System [SEVIS], the Patriot Act, and creation of the Department of Homeland Security); other countries' increased recruitment of foreign students; improving economic conditions in developing countries; escalating tuition and living costs in the United States; and globalization.

Researchers have explored the importance of harmonious relationships with the local community and peers, adjustment issues, culture shock, "U-curve," and needs assessment using Maslow's hierarchy (Kleinberg and Hull 1979; Lysgaard 1955; Mosalai 1980; Winkelman 1994). Typically, graduate international students spend several years in the United States. They arrive with clear academic goals but have not identified what their social lives might be like in host country. Trice (2004) found that positive contact with American students enhances graduate international students' overall experience.

Several qualitative and quantitative studies have evaluated international students' experiences through the lenses of neo-racism, discrimination, and alienation (Hanassab 2006; Klomegah 2006; Lee and Rice 2007; Mahat and Hourigan 2006; Moffett 2006). Scholars have identified host countries' need for "intercultural competence" (Altbach, Kelly and Lulat 1985; Bennett 1986).

PREDOMINANT THEMES

After coding all 30 interviews into Qualrus software, five composite structure codes emerged: Family (246) and Home (240), Academic Experience (240), Future (167), Change (162), and Social Experience (150). I documented all of the experiences the participants shared and omitted nothing from the interviews. Individual stories imparted unique shades and textures to participants' lives, which in turn provided a deeper level of understanding of each participant.

Of the several themes that emerged through the codes Social Experiences, Home, and Family, four seemed particularly significant:

- Graduate international students regularly stay connected and engaged with family and friends in their home country through transnational social fields.
- Cross-cultural isolation is still prevalent after all these years.
- Religion is a strong factor for some.
- It is time to move away from assimilation theories.

Graduate international students regularly stay connected and engaged with family and friends in their home country through transnational social fields.

Graduate international students mimic transnational migrant patterns, as they both have strong ties to home and host country. A "transnational social field" is an abstract space between host and home countries which international students negotiate (Gargano 2009). I asked participants how often they were in contact with family and friends in their home countries, how often they traveled to their home countries, and what their plans were following graduation. Their stories made it clear that they relied on a network of daily connections that for some were complicated and that often were their sole social network and support system during their sojourn in the United States.

One of this study's most significant findings is that graduate international students communicate on a regular basis with family and friends from home. Often, they communicate for hours at a time given the ease of use of the Internet and free web-based communication modalities, as, for example, Skype. Several participants overcame feelings of homesickness, loneliness, and isolation by relying on daily contact. The difference from my own experience as a graduate international student is astounding: Whereas graduate international students today stay in regular contact with family and friends from their home countries and thus are able to retain former connections, relationships, and religious practices, it was far too expensive—and, consequently, not the norm—to stay connected in such a consistent, sustained manner when I was a student. The Internet has increased the likelihood that relationships and networks will continue and even thrive, despite separation by time zone and distance.

Instant and cheap connectivity benefits graduate international students in any number of ways. Yet in keeping them connected to that with which they are most familiar, it causes them to miss opportunities to engage the local community. Time they could use to befriend people in the United States is devoted instead to staying connected with friends and family in their native culture.

According to a new theory found in transnational literature, migrants stay connected to their homelands longer than originally assumed (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Similarly, graduate international students remain strongly connected to their home countries and families. Unlike migrants, they often return to their countries of origin sooner than expected because of the lack of job opportunities following graduation. Too many students miss the opportunity to truly understand or engage the host community, instead remaining socially and culturally isolated.

The present study found that at best, participants were superficially engaged with their American peers; deep and meaningful relationships were primarily with family and friends in the home country. Students who stayed longer tended to develop more sustained relationships and friendships in the United States, but they still stayed closely connected to their own ethnic communities.

Traditional assumptions regarding the acculturation of international students no longer hold true. Today's international students stay connected to their past and present but make little to no effort to become involved with the local community. Most seem highly engaged in—and fulfilled by—their studies, but their social involvement is superficial and perfunctory at best; for some students, it is altogether absent. Several participants in this study have protracted daily conversations with a family member, friend, or coworker from their native country. With their studies taking up most of every day, whatever little time is left for socializing is often spent in a kind of "virtual reality" with friends and family from home.

Cross-cultural isolation is still prevalent after all these years.

Research conducted decades ago reported cross-cultural isolation among international students; my research suggests the same. When graduate international students have little or no contact with the host community, they may experience feelings of cross-cultural isolation, depression, and fear (Hull 1978; Schram and Lauver 1988).

Most participants in the present study were culturally isolated. Despite attempts to engage American students at Chardin University, most participants did not form meaningful and significant relationships with them. I believe that a strong contributing factor was their use of technology, which kept them connected to friends and family at home and prevented them from forming new friendships and connections. American students seemed somewhat apathetic about understanding or engaging this population in meaningful ways. Although American students are under no obligation to connect with graduate international students, the fact that they fail to do so suggests a lack of interest. Claire and April both stated that they ate lunch by themselves and that they saw their American peers engaged with one another, but no one reached out to them, even in the simple social setting of the lunchroom. Jose and his wife tried to interact with some of their American peers, but they gave up after several failed attempts. Graduate international students have the potential to contribute much in the way of cross-cultural understanding, but most often, this potential is squandered.

Graduate international students are highly visible on campus: They tend to differ in appearance, accent, and even behavior. Yet all too often, the campus community acts as though they are invisible (despite explicit efforts of international office staff to reach out to them). Graduate international students come from countries across the globe in order to better themselves through academic and work experiences. Engagement with the host country's population should—in fact, could—prove beneficial to the international student, the university, and the host country.

International students may feel reluctant to form friendships with American students because they find it difficult to communicate their thoughts and ideas clearly. Nikita, Elif, and Cindy were among the study participants to express the feeling that something—perhaps their language or communication style— was "wrong" with them. Initially, their sense of culture shock was strong. After a difficult transition during her first semester, Nikita refocused her energies on what was really important: She realized that academics were the main reason she was in the United States. Like other graduate international students, she turned inward, seeking the support of her own ethnic community, on campus and elsewhere. Such cross-cultural "disconnect" remains common on contemporary college campuses. Ethnic enclaves continue to flourish as graduate international students seek the company of those who understand them best. Victoria found comfort spending time with other South Americans with whom she could speak Spanish. Those conversations felt meaningful because Spanish was connected to her emotional life. Rather than seeking "success" and making money in a country whose values were alien to her, Victoria was glad that she had decided to return to her home country. Like Victoria, Cindy and Elif found comfort in their own ethnic communities; when students from their native countries were not available, they sought the company of other international students.

Learning social cues is a critical component of understanding American (or any other) culture. Some participants acknowledged that it took years to learn them. Cindy reported that although she had come to the United States to experience American culture and to learn from and engage with the local community, cultural and language barriers proved insurmountable.

Regardless of the length of time graduate international students spend in the United States, their need for meaningful social engagement, connectedness to a community, and belonging remains important. April contended that cultural differences defined every point of her experience in the United States: from how people related to each other, to the food they ate, from their sense of humor, to what was (or was not) important to them. She had hoped to gain more access to the American way of life so she could observe and connect with it, but she believed that Americans should make a comparable effort to reach out. She expressed disappointment that it always seemed a matter of her trying to understand American culture rather than of Americans trying to understand hers. When people first met her, they were fascinated because she was different. But soon after explaining where she came from, she saw their interest wane.

Research shows that superficial relationships and interactions between international students and local students do not contribute to their development or enhance their global perspective (Montgomery and McDowell 2009). Participants in the present study sought to cultivate meaningful relationships and conversations but to little avail.

Religion a strong factor for some.

Some participants were deeply religious and connected to their faith, some were merely "spiritual," and a few were atheists. Rajiv was a deeply religious Hindu who maintained such religious practices as fasting, formalized prayers and singing, and vegetarianism. Using Skype, he participated with his family in prayers during Ganesh Chaturthi, one of the largest Hindu festivals in India. April identified herself as a Christian Korean, deeply religious, and connected to God. Her relationships in this country were strongly associated with her church and her church sisters. Cindy, who came from China, adhered to her communist beliefs and did not practice any organized religion. Michael and Claire were atheists who believed in freedom of religion. Nikita missed the religious rituals of her native India. Her house was a shrine to various Hindu gods, and her father performed several prayer ceremonies, called poojas, at home. In fact, her whole upbringing and socialization centered around going with her parents to one temple or another. Nikita overcame her loneliness and difficult transition to life in the United States by hanging pictures of deities in her room.

Higher education institutions need to appreciate the heterogeneity of the graduate international student population. University administrators need to make an intentional effort to engage them even as they acknowledge the ways in which they stay connected to their native cultures. Often, international students' persistence and perseverance in this country depend on their preservation of these connections, particularly because other forms of engagement prove less than satisfactory. CU, though interested in students' formation and spiritual development by virtue of its being a Jesuit institution, gives no attention to this aspect of graduate international students' lives. Rather, graduate international students spend years at a time in the United States without university staff ever becoming

truly aware of the breadth and depth of the different faiths the students practice.

It is time to move away from assimilation theories.

Transnationalism is a rebuttal of the incomplete and somewhat racist perspective of assimilation theories. A recent study of Latin immigrants in the United States found that older, well-educated immigrants maintained stronger ties with their home countries than more recent arrivals; these findings contradict conventional assimilation theories (Portes, Escobar and Arana 2009). Contemporary research on second-generation migrants continues the debate about assimilation, which states that the classic transnational migration is a short-lived, first-generation phenomenon. Other researchers allude to new forms of transnational connections which encompass youths in "sending" as well as "receiving" countries (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2003).

Assimilation is a one-sided concept that places the burden of adjustment wholly on the international student. In theory, graduate international students should strive to engage more with the people and institutions in this country—after all, having undertaken the journey, they should bear primary responsibility for adjusting to their new environment. However, my research and that of others points to the need for more give –and take between international graduate students and the local community, the institution, and the country (Altbach, Kelly and Lulat 1985; Kleinberg and Hull 1979). Too often, international students feel compelled to change their style of dress, their food, and even their religious practices in order to better blend in with the dominant culture.

Even though graduate international students confront adversity and challenging situations, they tend to succeed at developing a strong sense of identity. All of the participants in this study overcame difficulties relating to their status; by no means did any of them fail or even falter academically. In fact, their persistence and dedication led to their attainment of their original goal: earning an advanced degree from an American university. International students must overcome feelings of isolation and come to terms with their cultural differences. Fighting those differences—or trying to "adjust" to the extent that they lose their identity—is not something any educational institution would encourage.

CONCLUSION

Like migrants, graduate international students' social fields are complex, simultaneous, and multilayered. Administrators and faculty need to understand these complexities before attempting to engage these students during their tenure on college campuses. Engaging graduate international students during their time here would benefit the institution, at the simplest level, by understanding their needs and providing support. If these same students are to become long-term ambassadors of goodwill for the university, and for the United States as a whole (as they have in the past), their engagement with the university must extend beyond the academic realm: Anything short of this would mean that the opportunity for exchanging ideas and forming lifelong friendships would be lost forever.

Although immigration policies are now more formulaic, and visas are fairly standard to acquire, the door has been shut at the back end of these students' journey. While other countries are trying to tap into this educated knowledge base, America is busy restricting their movements, essentially forcing students to return home. Three of the participants herein had to return home or go to other countries for employment. All participants changed their expectations of working in the United States for a few years after graduation owing to the dearth of future career prospects.

Other countries have been paying close attention to international students' experiences. Australian researchers have made it clear that assessing such students' satisfaction and evaluating their experiences are important if Australia is to compete successfully—and on the global stage—for their enrollment (Mahat and Hourigan 2006; Mazzarol and Soutar 2002). In contrast, universities in the United States need to connect with graduate international students as part of an intentional effort to socialize them into American culture. International student advisors should not take exclusive responsibility for connecting with—and determining the needs of—this population. Rather, the university community as a whole, and American students in particular, need to actively engage them. The potential for learning from students from different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds remains largely untapped; neither are graduate international students reaping the benefits of friendships with American students, let alone networking within the local community with an eye toward future business partnerships.

The present study challenges universities to rethink how they engage (or fail to engage) this vital and vibrant student body. It is time to engage this population in meaningful, creative, and explicitly social ways; they have much to teach us about the global environment. After all, we are all connected, if in complex and indirect ways. As administrators at institutions of higher learning, it is our responsibility to understand the intricacies of graduate international students' lives—including differences in religion, language, and socialization patterns. Universities need to identify new and creative ways to stay relevant in the lives of graduate international students. The challenge lies in understanding and then meeting their divergent needs. If we fail to connect with this multinational population in a way that is relevant and meaningful, we will lose the opportunity to engage some of the brightest minds. They are the future of our knowledge-based society. May this research inspire higher education administrators to take the initiative in connecting with the members of this diverse and talented student body.

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The **College Choice** Process of the Women

Who Gender Integrated America's Military Academies

In 1976 and again in 1995, several brave women chose to enroll at—and thereby to "gender integrate"—America's military colleges. In 1976, women were admitted to the Department of Defense (DOD) service academies after an Act of Congress changed a law so as to allow for their matriculation. Beginning in 1995, women were admitted to state-supported military colleges after a long legal battle ended with the decision that state-run academies must be open to men and women. How did certain women come to decide to be the first to attend what historically had been all-male institutions? What were their main reasons for choosing to do so? This study explores the college choice decisions of several of the first women to attend—and so to "gender integrate"—America's military colleges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although students' choice of college has been considered exceedingly important in American society for several decades (Kinzie *et al.* 2004), serious academic study of the college choice process is relatively recent and stems from status attainment literature and the early financial aid work of Jackson (Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith 1989). In 1982, Jackson noted that the following steps were important in explaining college choice behavior: "an inclination toward (or against) college," "non-college" and college alternatives, and a student's "investment decision." Jackson's (1982) model was based on students' economic decision making as they decide whether to attend college. In the ensuing decades, college choice researchers developed several types of models to describe the many and varied influences on a student's college choice. Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith (1989) provided the following all-encompassing definition of college choice:

> *A complex, multi-stage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university, or institution of advanced vocational training.*

In her overview of college choice, McDonough (1997) suggested that college choice studies fall into three basic categories:

- *social psychological studies*, which examine the impact of academic program, campus social climate, cost, location, and influence of others on students' choices; students' assessment of their "fit" with their chosen college; and the cogitative stages of college choice;
- *economic studies*, which view college choice as an investment decision and assume that students maximize perceived cost-benefits in their college choices; have perfect information; and are engaged in a process of rational choice; and
- *sociological status attainment studies*, which analyze the impact of the individual's social status on the development of aspirations for educational attainment and measure inequalities in college access.

Within each of these categories, college researchers have sought to determine why and how students choose particular colleges. Chapman (1981), an early college choice researcher, developed a model that included students' background characteristics as well as external influences. Among the background characteristics that influence college choice are socioeconomic status (SES), aptitude, level of educational aspiration, and performance in high school. External influences include significant persons (*e.g.*, parents, friends, and high school personnel); fixed college characteristics (*e.g.*, cost, program availability, and location); and college efforts to communicate with prospective students (*e.g.*, campus visits, recruiting by admissions, and written information) (Chapman 1981). The Chapman (1981) model asserts that external influences and significant others help students both to form an expectation of college life and to choose an institution. Even as students work through the choice process, institutions determine which students to accept. Ultimately, each individual student selects one college from those that have made offers of admission (Chapman 1981).

In 1982, Litten expanded an earlier version of his model and the Chapman (1981) model. Not only did the Litten (1982) model detail those factors included in the Chapman (1981) model, but it also described how students move from their aspiration to attend college, to their decision to start the college choice process, to information gathering, to application, and finally to enrollment.

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) sought to determine the timing of each of three college choice stages: "predisposition," "search," and "choice."

More recent college choice studies have focused on understanding how various kinds of students negotiate the college choice process. These studies address two primary factors[1]: (1) how a student's race may influence college choice and (2) how a student's family income may influence college choice. Researchers have studied Asian Pacific students (Teranishi *et al.* 2004), Chicana students (Ceja 2004), and African American students (McDonough 1997; Tobolowsky, Outcalt and Mc Donough 2005); others have studied various races and college access (Hurtado *et al.* 1997; Thomas 2004). Studies have focused on the role of aid not only in college choice (Dongbin 2004; Hu and Hossler 2000) but also in persistence to degree attainment (St. John 1990; St. John 2000; St. John, Paulsen and Carter 2005). Some researchers have studied the influence of state public policies (Perna and Titus 2004)[2] and cultural capital (Nora 2004) on college choice. The present study focuses on how a particular group of students (*e.g.*, women who were the first to enroll at America's military colleges) made their college choices. The study relies on the Litten (1982) model to provide the framework for understanding several aspects of the women's college choice process.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research fit the exploratory nature of this project. This study sought to identify the root causes of what proved a radical change; semi-structured interviews grounded in the Litten (1982) model served as the primary source of information and provided insight into the respondents' thinking (Creswell 1998). The design of the study emerged as it was conducted (Brewer and Hunter 1989).

PARTICIPANTS

It proved tremendously difficult to obtain participants for this study: Many of the women who were the first to attend America's military institutions were not interested in speaking about their experiences. It seems plausible that their unwillingness to participate was grounded in the pain of their experiences.

As part of the effort to identify participants for the study, I contacted the public affairs offices of two state-supported military colleges and three DOD service academies. The offices helped me secure participants directly or referred me to their alumni offices for further assistance. The offices sent e-mails to all of the women who graduated in the first coeducational class at their respective institutions. Thirty women replied via email; most indicated that they did not wish to participate in the study. Eleven women agreed to participate, but four eventually dropped out of the study. Of the seven women who participated from start to finish, six were graduates of DOD service academies and one was a graduate of a state-supported military college. Pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' identities.

DATA COLLECTION

Most of the information for this study was derived from two interviews conducted with each of the participants; additional information was gathered from the institutions' Web sites, videos, and written material.Interviews and e-mail also served as data sources. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Both the transcriptions and the final analysis were made available to participants for their review and correction and/or for the deletion of information that might compromise a participant's anonymity.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data for this study were analyzed both by computer and by hand. Computer-assisted qualitative software was used to code for themes in the transcribed interviews. All subsequent analysis was by hand.

FINDINGS

Predisposition

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) defined the first stage of college choice—"predisposition"—as the "developmental phase in which students determine whether or not they would like to continue their formal education beyond high school." During this phase, a student's background is key to the development of college aspirations.

Each of the women in this study possessed several background characteristics that have been found to be supportive of academic aspirations. Each was white (Jackson 1982;

[1] Several of the studies consider race and aid simultaneously. For the purpose of this literature review, studies were categorized according to which factor was emphasized.

[2] This study considered four types of polices, one of which was aid.

Manski and Wise 1983; Paulsen 1990); was not married at the time she entered college (Borus and Carpenter 1984; Paulsen 1990; Stephenson and Eisele 1982); and lived in a middle-class or higher-income family (Christensen, Weisbrod and Melder 1975; Paulsen 1990; St. John 1990) in which the father had a higher occupational status than the mother (Conklin and Dailey 1981; Leslie, Johnson and Carlson 1977; Paulsen 1990). Each of the women also had enrolled in a college preparatory curriculum (Borus and Carpenter 1984; Conklin and Dailey 1981; Paulsen 1990); had a high level of achievement within that curriculum (Leslie, Johnson and Carlson 1977; Paulsen 1990; St. John 1990); and had a high level of academic aptitude[3] (Anderson, Bowman and Tinto 1972; Blakemore and Low 1983; Kodde and Ritzen 1988; Paulsen 1990). Five of the women's parents had earned some type of postsecondary degree (Kodde and Ritzen 1988; Manski and Wise 1983; Paulsen 1990).

Search

The second stage of the college choice process is when students begin looking at various colleges. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) designated this stage "search": "students search for the attributes and values that characterize postsecondary educational alternatives as well as learn about identifying the right attributes to consider." The most important factor in the search process of the women in this study was the change in public policy that allowed women to enroll at U.S. military colleges. College characteristics (cost, especially) further narrowed the women's searches in the direction of military options. Nevertheless, the influence of others—particularly that of the women's parents—likely was the most powerful during the "search" stage.

Public Policy

Public policy was highly influential as it gave the women in this study the opportunity to attend what had been an all-male institution. An act of Congress resulted in women being admitted to the DOD service academies, and Supreme Court litigation led to the admission of women to state-supported military colleges.

Act of Congress. All of the women who attended the DOD service academies spoke of the act of Congress that made admission to their respective institutions possible. Dinah said that she had joked about attending a particular service academy before it was open to women. When it did open to women, she thought, "Oh, cool. Now I can apply." Sarah recalled, "This guy in my class was saying that women could go, and then the final event was President Ford signing the bill." Keely vividly remembers sitting in her school's auditorium on college night and her principal saying, "Before we let you start your evening's activities, we'd like to let you know that three weeks ago, they changed the policy that made the service academies all male. Girls are now allowed to go to the three service academies."

Supreme Court Litigation. Having been involved with ROTC in high school, Ella was interested in pursuing a college military education. She "wanted something more than ROTC in college, something that I could do in the military full time." The publicity surrounding the Supreme Court litigation that required federally supported military institutions to admit women—and Shannon Faulkner's[4] story, in particular—resulted in Ella considering these institutions as colleges she might attend . She said, "...When she [Shannon Faulkner] walked out, I read those headlines." Even though Ella also applied to the service academies, she knew she wanted to attend a state-supported military college onced she learned that they were newly coeducational.

History presented the women in this study with an opportunity that had not been available previously; moreover, this opportunity was much talked about and reported in the media. Public policy thus played a significant role in helping them narrow their searches to military colleges.

COLLEGE CHARACTERISTICS

College characteristics include what programs are available, tuition costs, ambiance, and issues relating to institutional control (Litten 1982). Programs and cost were college characteristics that were particularly important to the women in this study.

Programs. Students often cite particular programs as influencing their college choice process. Not only did the women in this study choose to attend colleges offering

[3] The women's College Board scores and high school grades are evidence of their academic aptitude, as is the fact that each of the women in this study graduated from college.

[4] Shannon Faulkner was the first woman admitted to the Citadel via litigation that reached the Supreme Court.

unique programs of study, but also they chose to attend institutions that offered a unique overall experience and challenge. All of the women mentioned the challenge of the institution as one of the main things that attracted them. Dinah said, "I think the first one [reason for choosing her institution] was that it would be challenging. I'd grown up in a military family. It was what I knew. And I liked that kind of lifestyle."

Cost. Several studies (see, for example, Manski and Wise 1983; St. John 1990) have shown that tuition costs influence students' choices of which college to attend. Five of the women in this study commented directly on college costs. Sarah said, "[S]cholarships were very important. My parents didn't have a lot of money." She also remembered her dad asking, "Are you just going there 'cause it's free?"(At the DOD service academies, college education is free in exchange for military service after graduation.) When asked about some of the things that attracted her to her institution, Sarah responded, "Free. Big-time free. Not only is it free, but they pay you while you're there. They give you an allowance, spending money, they do your laundry, [and] they cook for you." Keely said, "I think the conscious stuff was, 'Wow, if I go here, I don't have to worry about paying for it. I'm not sure how I'm going to pay for college; I have no idea how I'm going to pay for college." Nancy said,

> *I didn't want my parents to pay for my school; I didn't want to be beholden to them for anything. I was [going to] go to college away from home and not have my parents pay for it if I could. I didn't want to feel like I owed them.*

Ella's situation was different: Although she was not eligible for student aid, unique circumstances led to her being highly dependent on financial aid in order to able to attend college. The high cost of the institution she wished to attend caused her great worry. Ella said,

> *Because my parents couldn't afford to send me, they were sort of against me going to the school—not because they wanted to deny me the opportunity but because we couldn't afford it.... We didn't qualify for student aid, so they would have literally had to give up their life savings for me to go to school.*

Ella interviewed with an alumni recruiter who helped collect donations for her education so she could persist to graduation.

INFLUENCES/MEDIA

Students consult a wide variety of sources—parents, counselors, peers, and college officials as well as publications and other media—in searching for a college (Litten 1982). The women in this study were influenced by their parents—their fathers, in particular, all of whom either were serving or had served in the military.[5] Lena talked about her father helping her get information about the service academy she would attend: "He was really supportive of... getting me information.... My dad knew what was required. He thought I would do well at it." Keely remembered her high school principal announcing that the service academies soon would be open to women. She said,

> *My dad turned to me and said, "We really ought to check that out." And his eyes lit up, and he was all excited. And so here you have your first big clue as to why I did what I did. My dad was excited about it.... So we sat there and listened to an officer talk about [one of the service academies] and how cool it was and all the things you could do...and you know, my dad just thought it was the greatest thing.*

Only Sarah spoke about her mother as influencing her search process: She was against her daughter enrolling at a service academy—that is, until she found out it was free.

DECISION TO ATTEND

The final stage of a student's decision making is "choice"; it is when "students formulate a choice (or application set) and decide which institution to attend" (Hossler and Gallagher 1987). Themes that emerged regarding the women's decision to attend were *challenge, money, fulfilling a career goal, getting away from home, getting the attention of their father, and adventure.*

Challenge

All of the women in this study mentioned "challenge" as one of the main reasons they decided to enroll at a mili-

[5] Patricia Ann Palmieri's *In Adamless Eden: The Community of Women Faculty at Wellesley* (1995) noted that the women about whom she wrote were significantly influenced by their fathers as they negotiated the college choice process.

tary college. Dinah talked about wanting this challenge more than anything else. She said,

> *I don't know why I thought that way, but I think that it was something to be the groundbreaker—and the challenge of doing something like that....I really felt it was a great opportunity to go and do that. I think back then, it was probably still the challenge and the excitement of doing something new. I was really excited about going.*

Sarah echoed this sentiment when she said that one of the main reasons she chose her school was "...adventure. That's one, and challenge."

Fulfilling a Career Goal

All of the women in this study were interested in pursuing a career in the military. This interest likely was the result of having grown up in a military family or of having participated in a high school ROTC program. The women talked about a military college as a way to enter their career of choice. Nancy said,

I wanted to go to the [service academy], and that was really the only college I applied to. And then, out of desperation, I decided [that] maybe I ought to apply to an ROTC program. So I sent in an application to the [university in her state], which is right there in [her hometown]. And that was it. The main thing was that I wanted to go into something like Russian studies and be an astronaut.

Financing a College Education

The opportunity for a free education also helped solidify the women's decisions to attend a military academy. Sarah talked about where she thought she might like to go and how important money was to her decision:

> *I was going to go to [a junior college] because, as valedictorian, I got a scholarship. And scholarships were very important. My parents didn't have a lot of money, and they had a lot of kids. So you get an offer—free two years of scholarship—you're [going to] take it. So I was going to go to college with a free scholarship if I didn't get to go to the academy (once I found out the academy was [a possibility]. Before that, I didn't really want to go to college; I just wanted to join [a branch of the armed forces].*

Keely also was worried about how to pay for college:

> *I knew that my choices were limited by money; I still didn't fully understand what college really cost. I just knew that it was really expensive.... So the whole thing weighed heavily upon me because all my life I knew I was [going to] go to college—from the time I was in fourth or fifth grade—and I'd been preparing all this time.*

Father's Attention

Each of the women in this study talked about how proud their fathers were when they showed an interest in attending a service academy. As children of men who either were serving or had served in the military, this attention was particularly important. Keely said that her dad, who "paid very little attention" to her, was "excited" about the prospect of her attending one of the service academies. For Keely, as for several of the other women, her father's pride seemed to take on particular importance in her college choice process.

Getting away from home. Two women talked about wanting to get away from home. Keely wished to be far away from the kinds of people who had made her high school experience difficult. She said,

> *If I go to [college in her state], I'm going to have to deal with this debutante crowd all over again. And I want to get as far away from them as possible because they make me feel like nobody. So how can I get far away? I can't afford to go far away—how can I get far away? Wow, if I go here, I can go all the way to [the state in which the service academy is located]! I can get out of [her hometown], and I hate [her hometown]! I'd never been happy there. I'd been miserable since I was seven.*

Nancy also wanted to get away from home. Attending a college far away would mean escape from a troubled home life. For Nancy and Keely both, attending a military college was a chance to go far from home without having to take money from their parents.

CONCLUSION

The college choice process of the women in this study closely paralleled what researchers have learned from decades of study. That is, the women in this study were

Resources for International Admissions

AACRAO International Education Services

Beginning with its inception in 1910, AACRAO has promoted leadership in developing and implementing policy in the global educational community with a focus on the identification and promotion of high standards and best practices.

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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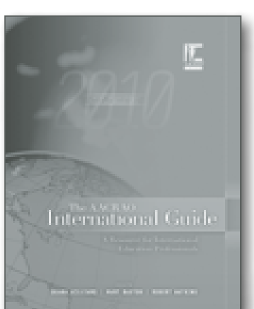
If you are looking for an easily accessible up-to-date electronic resource on foreign educational systems, the AACRAO *Electronic Database for Global Education* (EDGE) provides a wealth of information for each country profile in a convenient and consistent form. EDGE is a valuable and trusted tool for both novice and experienced international admissions personnel. The database is being expanded regularly and updated as educational systems change. For more information and to subscribe online visit aacraoedge.aacrao.org/register.

A Item #9019



B Item #0129

C Item #9018

D Item #9026

E Item #6538

Ⓐ FOREIGN EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS REQUIRED

Looking for a concise and easily referenced source for information on credentials and other documentation that would be required for entry from a given country to a specified level of study? The fifth edition of Foreign Educational Credentials indicates, in a convenient and consistent form, the educational credentials which should be available for applicants from over 200 countries.

Item #9019 $100 nonmembers | $75 members (2003)

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This comprehensive resource for international education professionals contains compelling overviews of the current and future states of the field, as well as chapters on core issues such as international recruitment and enrollment management, technology, study abroad, undocumented students, fraudulent documents, and the Bologna Process. It also includes practical guidance on concerns such as international credential evaluation, student visas, and English proficiency assessment.

Item #0129 $110 nonmembers | $80 members (2010)

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Ⓓ AUSTRALIA: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A guide for United States admissions officers to the structure and content of the educational system of Australia, including descriptions of the state and territorial public school systems. Also includes a formal set of comparability and placement recommendations based upon the author's research.

Item #9026 $95 nonmembers | $70 members (2004)

Ⓔ BRAZIL

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.

Item #6538 $85 nonmembers | $60 members (2004)

Ⓕ THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

A study of the educational system of the People's Republic of China, from preschool to higher education. Includes information on entrance examinations, vocational education, and a thorough guide to the academic placement of students in educational institutions in the United States.

Item #6536 $85 nonmembers | $60 members (2000)

INDIA

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.

Item #5342 $85 nonmembers | $60 members (1998)

Ⓖ KYRGYZSTAN

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.

Item #9020 $45 nonmembers | $30 members (2003)

Ⓗ PHILIPPINES

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 Islamic 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.

Item #5339 $75 nonmembers | $50 members (1998)

TAIWAN

An extensive guide to the structure and content of the educational system of Taiwan, from kindergarten through graduate and professional studies. Includes detailed information about schools recognized and not recognized by the Ministry of Education, a vital guide for any admissions officer considering incoming students from Taiwan.

Item #6539 $95 nonmembers | $70 members (2004)

Ⓘ THAILAND

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 educational and health studies.

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Ⓙ UNITED KINGDOM

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)

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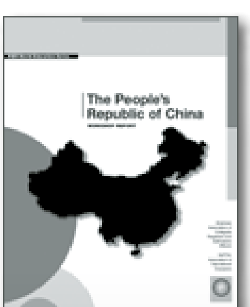

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subject to many of the same concerns (*e.g.*, programs and cost) and were influenced by the same people (*e.g.*, parents) as the typical, contemporary, college-going American. If anything, many of these factors took on heightened meanings in the context of the women's decisions to attend military colleges. Financial aid and no or low cost can become major attractors when a college education is free in exchange for service. Parental influence is even greater when a daughter wants to please a father who serves in the military. "Challenge" can become paramount to high-achieving students who seek an elite college experience. So while the factors influencing the college choices of the women in this study were similar (if not identical) to those influencing the college choices of students today, they were magnified by the personal and historical context within which the women found themselves.

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Playing to Your Strengths: Appreciative Inquiry in the Visioning Process

By Matthew Fifolt and Angela M. Stowe

In Aesop's classic tale of the tortoise and the hare, two animals challenge each other to see who can cross the finish line first. Even though the hare exhibits far greater strength and speed, the tortoise wins the race. History tells us that the tortoise did not begrudge his limitations nor try to become something he was not in order to better his rival. Rather, he focused on his greatest assets: grit and determination. In other words, he played to his strengths in order to prevail in what seemed an impossible contest.

We were reminded of this lesson after a successful visioning experience within the division of student affairs at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Conventional strategic planning models emphasize overcoming one's weaknesses in order to achieve organizational success. Yet three months earlier, this approach had brought us to an impasse. By contrast, a more contemporary, strengths-based approach to planning suggests just the opposite: Focus on the positive, and leverage collective strengths. In comparing these two styles, the latter strategy seems more like the tortoise's plan to win.

In searching for an alternative method by which to move the division forward, we discovered "Appreciative Inquiry" (AI) and utilized it to develop a compelling and meaningful vision and values statement. AI is a structured approach to visioning focused on reflection, introspection, and collaboration. Rooted in organizational behavior theory, AI was introduced in the early 1980s as a life-centric approach to human systems (Watkins and Mohr 2001). Since then, AI has been used widely within the business community; only recently has AI begun to emerge as an effective strategy within higher education.

We believe that AI is an adaptable tool that could be readily utilized on other campuses. The purpose of this article thus is to outline the basic tenets of AI, to describe how these concepts were applied at UAB, and to discuss the key factors that contributed to its successful implementation in a strategic visioning process.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

AI seeks to draw upon an organization's strengths, assets, and successes *(appreciate)* and to question, explore, and discover organizational values and ideals *(inquire)*. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) describe Appreciative Inquiry as the "systematic discovery of what gives life to an organization or a community when it is most effective and more capable in economic, ecological, and human terms."

AI challenges individuals to identify their organization's *positive core* (strengths) through experiences and stories in order to develop a new vision for the organization's future. According to the experts, this fundamental shift in perspective allows individuals to view their organization as a mystery to be embraced rather than as a problem to be solved (Cooperrider and Srivasta 1987).

4-D CYCLE

At the heart of the AI process is a narrative 4-D cycle that is both systematic and flexible enough to accommodate an organization's unique needs. The four phases of the cycle include (1) Discovery, (2) Dream, (3) Design, and (4) Destiny.

The *Discovery Phase* serves as a guide for members and stakeholders to identify organizational strengths and assets. Using a narrative approach, participants are encouraged to share stories and illustrations of personal experiences to examine *the best of what is* and to uncover the characteristics that comprise the organization's *positive core*.

In the *Dream Phase*, stakeholders are challenged to imagine possibilities of a new shared vision of the organization. Through *appreciative interviews* and focus groups, individuals are encouraged to articulate a vision for their organization that is fully aligned with its strengths and aspirations. The Dream Phase characterizes *what could be*.

The *Design Phase* is based on the assumption that an organization will reach its potential by harnessing the strengths and assets of its *positive core*. Individuals express compelling statements of strategic intent, such as vision and mission statements, to provide an organizational framework for assessment and continuous improvement (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005). The Design Phase communicates *what should be*.

In the *Destiny Phase*, participants determine how expressed dreams can be realized through objectives, goals, and action plans. In this final phase, individuals focus on implementing the vision as a way to move the organization toward positive change. The Destiny Phase signifies *what will be*.

CASE STUDY: APPLICATION OF AI PRINCIPLES

To generate momentum for the visioning process, UAB's vice president for student affairs (VPSA) identified key individuals within the division to lead the initiative. The vision team met once a week for several weeks to learn the language and concepts of AI, to establish a timeline, and to develop materials needed to facilitate the AI process. Initially, the leadership team was skeptical; yet its skepticism quickly dissipated as team members began to understand how empowering this new method could be.

One of the team's first priorities was to establish *affirmative topics*, the core strengths that set the agenda for "learning, knowledge sharing, and action" (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005). In turn, these concepts laid the foundation for an interview protocol that was used throughout the AI process.

COLLECTING AND ORGANIZING INFORMATION

Central to the concept of AI is the *appreciative interview,* which Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) describe as a personal dialogue with members and stakeholders that is designed to uncover an organization's *positive core.* The team recruited and trained 30 facilitators within the division to conduct one-on-one appreciative interviews with all members of the division. Each facilitator was assigned to interview four or five individuals who worked in the division but who did so outside of her immediate office or unit. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were based on the affirmative topics. Many of the facilitators also helped gather information from external constituents through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and market research solicitation.

Across the division, individuals expressed enthusiasm for the appreciative interview process and excitement about the opportunity to connect with co-workers. Many expressed gratitude for being asked their opinions and said they believed their input would directly shape the division's future. One front-line manager wrote:

> *I really enjoyed being able to share my stories, ideas, and perspectives about the student affairs division. We do not always have the opportunity to share our ideas for the future, but I really felt like I was being listened to in my interview. It gave me the opportunity to open my mind and envision the direction [in which] I would like to see the division go.*

Team members and facilitators met subsequently to discuss the data that were gathered from more than 500 internal and external stakeholders. With support and guidance from the team, facilitators identified themes that had emerged from individual and collective stories. Despite multiple debriefing sessions, the processes and observations proved remarkably similar among groups.

IMPLEMENTING THE IDEAS

The team drafted a preliminary vision and values statement based on feedback from the debriefing sessions and disseminated it to members of the division and external stakeholders for review. The final version was sent to the VPSA and senior student affairs administrators. The team also drafted a set of guidelines to help departments and units develop action plans and accountability measures based on the priorities they had articulated.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

A number of conditions contributed to UAB's successful application of AI. Although some of the conditions were unique to our institution, we identified five keys to success that could be found on any campus. These include (1) openness to trying something new, (2) the 'right' combination of people, (3) a commitment to transparency, (4) a focus on the positive, and (5) shared responsibility for results.

Openness to Trying Something New

The VPSA recognized the potential of AI to help him better 'tell our story' and was willing to try this new approach in order to move the division in a positive direction. Further, the VPSA saw AI as an investment in the organization's future and committed the resources necessary to tackle such an ambitious initiative.

The 'Right' Combination of People

Change experts Kotter and Cohen (2002) identify two characteristics for building a powerful guiding team: "It is made up of the right people, and it demonstrates teamwork." The eight individuals who served on the vision team possessed a variety of skills and characteristics that contributed to the group's overall sense of direction and balance. What made this group work effectively, however, was its unwavering commitment to continuous improvement. The team's perseverance and persistence were fostered by a sense of collegiality based on humor, trust, and mutual admiration. Most notably, the conversations and debates that occurred during weekly meetings were confidential and respectful.

Commitment to Transparency

Given economic and political realities within the institution and the state, the team recognized early on that individuals were experiencing feelings of uncertainty, instability, and fear. The first priority, therefore, was to ensure that division members experienced the visioning process as an inclusive opportunity—that is, as something that could only be accomplished *with their help* rather than as something that would be done *to* them.

The team developed multiple channels of communication so that individuals could ask questions and learn more about the AI process. We conducted several town hall meetings, created a library of AI materials, and developed a dedicated AI Web site for sharing information and addressing concerns. Minutes from all meetings were made public, and we communicated with the division on a weekly basis.

A Focus on the Positive

Throughout the visioning process, individuals were encouraged to focus on the organization's positive core as a source for inspiration. While this approach initially might have invited criticism for being simplistic or overly idealistic, AI provided a framework within which individuals could share stories and ask, "How can we be at our best all the time?"

Not surprisingly, a few individuals wanted to discuss their frustrations and concerns throughout their appreciative interviews; they were encouraged to do so. Facilitators were taught to help individuals reframe their issues by asking what the situation would look like if it were resolved. By acknowledging concerns and examining root causes, individuals were empowered to envision solutions rather than to merely dwell on problems (Watkins and Mohr 2001).

Shared Responsibility for Results

Rigorous efforts were made to gather input from individuals at all levels of the organization—from front-line staff to senior-level administrators—and to keep them engaged throughout the process. Consistent with the principles of AI, every member of the division had a voice in the process as well as a vested interest in the outcome. By discussing core strengths and searching for ways to maximize them, we already were moving in the direction of organizational authorship.

SUMMARY

Like all systems, AI is not perfect. Individuals who perceive the process as ambiguous or lacking clear direction may fear or resent AI leaders. In fact, AI represents a major shift away from the top-down leadership model in which control resides with a select few. Careful planning and open lines of communication can alleviate concerns and encourage individuals to move beyond their discomfort long enough to engage in the process.

AI provided our organization with the requisite tools and resources to conduct a thorough and honest self-evaluation and to build upon institutional assets in a positive and affirming way. Strength-based visioning enabled individuals to feel proud of the organization and excited about their specific contributions toward its success. It gave them the confidence they needed to play to their strengths. After all, that is how organizations win the race.

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Customer Service in the Self-Service Era

By Bart Quinet

It can be difficult for any customer service environment to keep up with the whirlwind pace of change in today's technology-centric world. The challenge can be particularly daunting in an institutional setting accustomed to deliberative, consensus-driven change. Today's students have grown up in a world where change is constant and almost always is technology-driven. As these students consider where to go to college, they are recruited by schools that inevitably sell themselves as "cutting edge," "state of the art," and "connected to the world."

The Office of the Registrar at Indiana University Bloomington (IUB) has a long-standing and well-deserved reputation on campus for providing outstanding service to its constituents. By 2006, however, it was apparent that many of our services were becoming outdated and were falling behind current-day standards in terms of technology availability and customer expectation. The challenge was not necessarily to establish a culture of customer service but rather to reinvigorate a culture of excellence. What follows is an overview of our journey to modernize our student service environment so as to meet (and even exceed) students' customer service expectations and to ensure that we maintained (and even enhanced) our well-earned reputation of service excellence.

THE JOURNEY

In 2006, IUB's Office of the Registrar still relied predominantly on paper processes for delivering services to students. In-person traffic during peak service periods was sufficient to require two large public-intake rooms to accommodate demand. Long lines of students formed outside the office during the first two weeks of classes, near the automatic withdrawal deadline, and at the end of the term for grade and degree holds. Seasonal hourly employees were hired to ensure that students were in the appropriate lines. Colleagues from back-room areas of the office were brought up front to assist during the busiest periods.

Contrast the service environment of 2006 to that of 2011: Nearly all of the services offered by IUB's Office of the Registrar are via online self-service applications. One public-intake room has been closed because it is no longer needed to accommodate student traffic, even during the busiest service periods. Gone are the long lines that stretched out of the office during the first two weeks of classes. Gone are the long lines of anxious students during the automatic withdrawal period. The introduction of self-service options for transcript requests has resulted in the end of long lines at the end of the term for grade and degree holds. The office no longer hires seasonal hourly employees, and assistance during peak periods from colleagues from other areas of the office is no longer necessary.

A comparison of statistics from 2006 and 2011 illustrates the transformation of our office as we transitioned our customer service approach from being paper based to technology-driven. In the 2005-–06 academic year, the Office of the Registrar received 46,546 in-person visits; five years later, the Office received 22,268, fewer than half as many. During the same period, the number of annual in-coming phone calls decreased from 57,515 to 34,782. Accordingly, the Record Services area of the Office reduced its staff from fifteen to twelve full-time members, from three to one hourly staff member, and from three to one work-study staff member.

It is important to note that these decreases in in-person visits, phone calls, physical space, and full-time and hourly staff occurred during a period of increased enrollment as well as increased enrolled hours. From 2001–11, Indiana University Bloomington experienced a 14 percent increase in enrollment and a 16 percent increase in enrolled hours. These increases equated to more demand for student services. Our ability to meet the increased demand with fewer resources (human as well as fiscal) is a testament to the effectiveness of the customer service changes that have been implemented in the Office of the Registrar.

Table 1.

By the Numbers: Record Services at IUB's Office of the Registrar in 2005–06 and 2010–11

By the Numbers	2004–2005	2009–2010
Number of in-person visits	46,546	22,268
Number of calls answered	57,515	34,782
Number of full-time staff	15	12
Number of hourly employees	3	1
Number of work-studies	3	1

Technology-driven changes to almost every service offered by the Office of the Registrar were introduced between 2006 and 2011. Services such as immunization compliance, grade change, grade rosters, grade distribution, special enrollments, residence classification, the enrollment bulletin, and classroom scheduling were all improved by leveraging technology. The two most visible and "in demand" student services are transcript requests and late drop and adds. What follows is a description of how leveraging technology for these high-volume services helped us attain our goal of improved efficiency and greater convenience—for students as well as staff.

TRANSCRIPTS

In 2006, transcript ordering from IUB's Office of the Registrar was entirely paper-based. Current and former students could come to the Office, complete a paper transmittal form, and leave with a copy of their transcript (or have a copy mailed from the Office). Current and former students could mail their transcript requests along with payment to our office. On a typical day, the Office would receive as many as 175 pieces of mail containing transcript requests. Students who required expedited service could fax their requests along with a credit card number; a copy of the transcript would be faxed within 24 hours, with hard copy following within two days. This service required payment of a "convenience fee." Each year, the Office of the Registrar produces between 55,000 and 60,000 official transcripts. In 2006, every one of these had to be handled manually. Envelopes had to be opened, checks and credit card payments processed, data entered in the student information system, and transcripts produced, folded, and stuffed into envelopes. Students who wanted to confirm that their order had been received and/or processed by our office had to call or e-mail.

Today, students requesting a transcript have a vastly improved suite of services available to them. In March 2007, the Office introduced online transcript requests for current students with active university computing accounts. By placing the request form behind the university's Central Authentication Service (CAS) (a single sign-on with a unique username and passphrase for each user), we met the standard for reasonable assurance for authenticating the student's identity. Once the student "authenticated into" the system, we could release the official transcript with an electronic signature. Additional features included bursar billing embedded within the request application; expedited shipping options; user-entered information (to include recipient information, credit card information, etc.); real-time status check; and instant communication. The system was designed so as to deliver e-mail confirmation upon receipt of the order, as well as when the order had processed to final status. Students could access the system and learn the status of all of their transcript requests.

In May 2009, having heard from frustrated former students who were unable to request copies of their official transcripts online because they no longer had active university computing accounts, we introduced a new application. The challenge was to create an application that would enable online requests while providing a reasonable level of assurance when authenticating former students' identities. After considering a variety of options, such as allowing former students to request new log-in credentials as well as contracting with an outside vendor for authentication services, we decided to build our own authentication process based on information housed in each former student's academic record. Temporary credentials valid only for the length of the transaction were created. Authentication was accomplished by asking for basic biographic information (*e.g.*, name, date of birth, last four digits of SSN or University ID) followed by a series of knowledge-based, multiple-choice questions from the former student's record. Former students who successfully answered the questions were allowed to request their transcripts online. They provided all data entry for their requests, including credit card information; were able to request expedited shipping; and received instant communications from our office as their requests were received and processed.

The next step in transforming our transcript request service was introduced in August 2010. We partnered with Avow Systems and introduced the certified PDF official transcript. The PDF option was embedded within the transcript request application as another option available to current and former IU students. In addition to those features already included in the online request application, the PDF option offered immediate processing and confirmation. PDF transcript delivery promised cost savings by eliminating the need for transcript paper, envelopes, printers, and postage. Also, because PDF transcripts were delivered immediately, the demand for follow-up service decreased significantly.

Statistics from the past year demonstrate the transformation of our transcript request environment: Of the 56,467 transcript requests received within the past twelve months, 92 percent were via self-service; 5 percent were made in person; and a mere 3 percent were via mail. In only three years, we have transitioned from receiving nearly 90 percent of transcript requests via mail (10 percent were made in person) to receiving more than 90 percent via online request applications. Only eight months after implementing the PDF transcript delivery option, nearly 30 percent of requests are for PDF delivery.

Table 2.

IUB Transcript Request Data, 2010

Total transcripts produced	56,467
Percentage of requests placed via Self-Service	92%
Percentage of requests made in person	5%
Percentage of requests received via USPS	3%

These changes to our transcript request environment have resulted in savings both in terms of the materials required to support transcript services as well as the human resources required to respond to requests. Most important is the improved service our current and former students experience when they request their official transcripts. IUB's transcript services are now available 24 hours a day, seven days a week; they are accessible from anywhere in the world, provided only that the requestor has an Internet connection.

LATE DROP AND ADD

Although Indiana University introduced online course registration in 1997, late drop and add remained a paper-based process. Ten years later, students still were required to walk around campus to obtain multiple signatures from their schools, departments, and instructors—and all during regular business hours, Monday through Friday. Once they had the signatures, students had to submit the form at the Office of the Registrar. Students who waited until the automatic withdrawal deadline to drop a class found themselves standing in long lines.

In addition to being inconvenient for students, the paper-based late drop and add process also was inconvenient for faculty and staff. Enrollment was tracked manually—using tallies— with the result that counts of the number of drop and add requests that had been processed were often inaccurate. The paper-based late drop and add process was a resource drain for the Office of the Registrar. In a typical semester, staff processed more than 25,000 late drop and add paper forms. Each form had to be entered into the Student Information System, counted as part of a daily total, filed alphabetically, and converted to microfilm.

In fall 2008, IUB piloted eDrop/eAdd, a Kuali Enterprise Workflow application which is a "content-based electronic routing infrastructure" (*www.kuali.org*). The application includes key features such as a user work queue, document searching, document audit trail, routing rules, e-mail notifications, and a direct interface with the Student Information System. A select number of departments on campus agreed to participate in the inaugural offering of eDrop/eAdd.

Beginning in spring 2011, eDrop/eAdd was introduced to the entire campus for late drop and add. The application enables students to initiate drop/add course requests online and then routes their requests electronically for the appropriate approvals, allows them to track the progress of their requests, warns of potential consequences of an action, and provides e-mail notification once the document reaches its final status. During the late drop and add period, students can access eDrop/eAdd from the student portal 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from anywhere they can connect to the Internet.

In addition to being more convenient for students, eDrop/eAdd also has proven more convenient for faculty and staff. The system features real-time enrollment monitoring, eliminating the need to maintain manual tallies. Reviewers may add notes to the documents for students (or others along the routing path) to read. The system permits certain reviewers to override course restrictions. Once the documents are processed and a student's schedule changed, a courtesy notification is sent to the Office of the Bursar and the Office of Student Financial Assistance. Benefits to the Office of the Registrar are many; they include the elimination of data entry, form collection and filing, long lines during the automatic withdrawal period, and staff resource drain during the busiest periods.

The eDrop/eAdd system is highly configurable down to the course level. Each department can choose how its courses are routed within the system. The system allows "rules" to determine what happens at each "node." For example, at the course node, a rule might exist for every course offered. (More than 2,300 "rules" govern eDrop/eAdd at IUB.) The system also allows for multiple workgroups of "approvers" within each department. More than 290 active workgroups are currently in the system.

Some on campus were concerned that ease of access to eDrop/eAdd would result in a significant increase in course changes during the late drop and add period. There also was concern that documents would not be processed in a timely manner, leaving students uncertain as to the outcomes of their requests . In fact, the number of requests during the late drop and add period did increase slightly, but this was not surprising given increases in enrollment. A fourteen-day cancellation policy was implemented to address concerns about the timely processing of documents: Any document not in final status fourteen days after submission is cancelled by the Office of the Registrar. eDrop/eAdd statistics show that 94 percent of all drops and 84 percent of all adds are in final status within one day of submission; within three days of submission, 99 percent of all drops and 95 percent of all adds are in final status.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Not everyone is eager for new technology, and not everyone is eager for more change. Many people believe things work fine the way they are. Among the challenges to consider when implementing new technology is how best to engage staff, some of whom may not be enthusiastic about new solutions. While it might be easy to assume that those resistant to change will have no choice but to adapt, it is important to remember that these are the people who will be the face and voice of the new service environment. Staff will determine the extent to which new technology solutions will be successful. Technology is key to modernizing the service environment, but it is not the whole solution. Humans are still involved. This means, of course, that there will be error, misunderstanding, and frustration.

Thus, it is critical to develop a plan to obtain as much buy-in from staff as possible *before* implementing technology-driven services.

BUY-IN

Communication is the single most important component in ensuring buy-in from staff as the new service environment is developed and implemented. Ensure that staff are kept informed as the project develops. Explain why change is needed. Share e-mails complaining about the archaic nature of the existing transcript operation.

It is also important to be open to questions and suggestions from staff. Give staff a deadline for providing feedback. As staff become actively engaged in the forthcoming changes, and as their participation is encouraged, they will feel more invested in—and connected to—their success.

STRUCTURE

Technology changes jobs. When staff originally hired to assist 45,000 in-person visitors per year now assist only 23,000, the need to change proves inevitable. Similarly, when staff originally hired to hand-process 55,000 transcript requests per year now hand-process fewer than 5,000, the need to change proves inevitable. When staff originally hired to collect and hand-process 25,000 late drop and add paper forms each term now collect and hand-process zero such forms, the need to change proves inevitable. Numbers such as these point to the success of the self-service environment; they may suggest something different to staff. As staff sense a decreased need for the work they were hired to do, they may feel less valued and less important to the overall success of the Office. As a result, it is important to make structural changes to the staffing environment in a manner that allows staff to feel engaged with the new service environment. They need to see how the work they do helps support the success of the changes that are implemented. Beyond considering the ways in which job duties may change, it is important to consider how the physical structure of the office might change: Is the space configured for work being done today or is it a relic of the past? Finally, introducing technology-driven services and hiring tech-friendly people with excellent communication skills will support and enhance the new service environment.

SECURITY

As new technology is introduced as a way to perform services related to student records, it is critical to keep FERPA obligations in mind. This begins with granting access only to those who genuinely require it to perform their job duties. It is equally important to review users' access on a regular basis and to remove it if and when necessary. Use a listserv for continued access verification. Require a FERPA tutorial and user agreement for all new users. Educate and train users, showing how and where FERPA applies to the technology being used.

Table 3.
eDrop/eAdd Processing Time at IUB

	Number of Days	Percentage in Final Status
eAdds	1	84
	3	95
	>3	100
eDrops	1	94
	3	99
	>3	100

LESSONS LEARNED

Not everything will go as planned. The suggestions that follow are based on lessons learned during four years of re-orienting the student services offered by IUB's Office of the Registrar:

- **Communication:** Engage key stakeholders early in the process. Let people know what is coming and why.
- **Training:** Get ahead of the change and show people what to expect.
- **Documentation:** Documentation for system users is important, but keep it simple. People are less likely to engage with documentation if it is too involved and not entirely germane to how they will interact with the technology being introduced. Less is more.

- **Implementation:** Embrace the pilot model. Doing so enables you to identify problems and areas for improvement in a small, controlled environment.
- **More Communication:** Communication should not stop at "go live." Keep people informed.
- **Spread the News:** Use available resources (*e.g.*, campus newspaper, campus portal, campus e-mail, etc.) to announce upcoming changes.
- **More Training:** Continue to educate users after their initial training. Schedule regular training opportunities for new and current users.
- **Reminders:** Show people internal to your office and across campus how everyone benefits from new systems and new technologies.
- **Be Prepared:** There will be problems. Have contingency plans.

CONCLUSION

The Office of the Registrar at Indiana University Bloomington experienced significant change in the student services environment during the five-year span described in this article. Yet we continue to seek new and innovative ways to improve what we do. As we search for ways to become more efficient and to provide greater convenience, we help create and nurture a spirit of innovation even as we resist the temptation of easy satisfaction and stagnation.

Many people were involved in conceptualizing, designing, and implementing the changes described above. Colleagues within the Office of the Registrar, from registrar's offices at other IU campuses, and from our system-wide Information Technology and Student Enrollment Services offices all played a vital role in our success. Working together toward a shared vision, we persevered through unexpected problems and setbacks. Collaborating with such a talented and dedicated group of professionals is part of what makes higher education an exciting and rewarding place to work.

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What Makes a Good University? A Literature Review Regarding the "Soft Power" of Colleges and Universities in China

By Fu-bin Han and Jian-mei Dong

During the past few years, "soft power" has been widely discussed and studied in China. Higher education, one of the largest components of national soft power, has begun to play an active and important role. In this article, we review the literature on the soft power of colleges and universities and describe ways to enhance it; we also identify some problems relating to the constriction of such institutions' soft power.

BACKGROUND

In 2007, President Hu Jintao argued that China needed to increase its soft power. This was the first time the concept of "soft power" was used in an official Communist Party Congress Report. It was clear that the concept had been elevated to a higher (in fact, the national policy) level. As mass higher education in China began to take hold, colleges and universities developed with unprecedented speed: Not only did campuses grow in size, but so did the national investment in teaching and in research equipment. As these elements of colleges' and universities' "hard power" were strengthened, the elements of their "soft power"—that is, their spirit, mission, and even institutional structure—were neglected. These trends have brought us to our present state. The consensus of the people at present is to enhance the soft power of colleges and universities even as our national policy is to enhance the soft power of our culture.

DEFINITION

Joseph Nye, of Harvard University, introduced the concept of "soft power" in his 1990 book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power.* He developed the concept further in his 2004 book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics.* He posited that overall national strength comprises "hard power" and "soft power." Whereas the former consists of economic, military, and scientific and technological strength, the latter is reflected primarily in a nation's culture, values, policies and institutions. A nation's strength thus is contingent at least in part on the extent to which these "primary currencies" are able to influence other actors to seek the same goals (Nye 2004).

In China, soft power refers primarily to culture. Zhang Guozuo, director of the Chinese Culture Soft Power Research Center, believes that culture is not only the mainline and spirit of soft power but that it also determines the prosperity and strength of a nation and of its rich and poor (Zhang 2010). It was against this background that the definition of colleges and universities' soft power began to be discussed. Although consensus has not yet been reached, typical opinions include the following:

- Colleges' and universities' soft power refers to the spiritual existence that extends beyond their physical existence; the spiritual existence is created by faculty and students through teaching, scientific research, social service, and entertainment (Liu 2006).
- Colleges' and universities' soft power refers to a typical core value and intrinsic quality as they interact to create a distinctive culture. It also embodies the spirit, tradition, idea, system, and atmosphere of the university, to include strength in its culture, ideology, system, authority, and aptitudes (Fu 2008).
- Colleges' and universities' soft power constitutes an important part of their overall strength and core competitiveness. Beyond their culture, system, and conduct, it includes the strength that derives from their spirit, system, and image (Zheng 2009).

The three definitions communicate a common idea: The soft power of colleges and universities equips them to strengthen their relationships to external as well as internal constituents.

IMPORTANCE

Colleges and universities contribute significantly to China's soft power. As creators of knowledge, ideas, methods, and systems, they are in essence the birthplace of China's soft power (Ding 2004).

Li Jian, secretary of Wuhan University's party committee, expressed his belief that the need to build a strong nation of higher education—and thereby to enhance the soft power of colleges and universities—is urgent (Li 2009). He explained further that although a few universities in China are close to being world class in terms of their hard power, they have a long way to go to match the soft power of true world-class universities.

Some scholars argue that enhancing the soft power of colleges and universities could serve to focus their development. Not only is soft power an internal dynamic relating to sustainable development, but it also is an effective means of building cohesion among colleges and universities. Ultimately, soft power will increase the core competitiveness of colleges and universities in China (An 2009).

Quality is a dominant theme in higher education in China. Since 1999, when the plan to expand the nation's higher education system went into effect, it has been acknowledged that quality is embedded in institutions' historical tradition, spirit, ideology, and institutional characteristics. On that basis, some scholars believe that an institution's soft power supports the innovation of students' work in part through the supply of a stimulating campus environment, distinctive campus cultural activities, vigorous campus spirit, and rigorous scientific system (Liu 2008).

STRATEGIES

Scholars suggest any number of ways to enhance colleges' and universities' soft power. Some believe that colleges and universities are presented with opportunities as well as challenges to building their soft power. For example, whereas the rapid growth of China's economy contributes to improvements to the campus cultural environment, colleges and universities simultaneously are beset by such problems as insufficient government investment, lack of administrative initiative and systems support, and negative environmental influences. A fundamental way to enhance soft power is to increase the strength of colleges and universities by freeing them from the negative influence of the planned centralized higher education system. Colleges and universities need to become more cohesive by cultivating alliances with one another, distinguishing the discipline of education and the contributions of faculty, carefully managing themselves, and ensuring that the instruction they offer is in support of a positive ethos (Li 2005).

Scholars put forth five proposals for the development of soft power: First, colleges and universities should intentionally build an enriching, stimulating, and diverse culture of higher education by establishing a specialized organization. Second, colleges and universities should cultivate their characteristic culture in accordance with their unique histories and features. Third, resources external to colleges and universities should be developed to generate new ideas and practices for the enhancement of soft power. Fourth, universities need to develop their brands. Fifth, it is important to remember that strengthening soft power will require at least as much time as the strengthening of hard power (Zhou 2009).

Some believe that university spirit is the core culture of higher education. The development of university culture needs to combine with core societal values in order to guide social ideology, reveal the sophistication of university culture, and promote innovation and scientific development (Chen 2006).

Li Peigen, of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, has put forth constructive proposals relating to the spirit, management, external resources, and leadership qualities of the university (Li and Wang 2006). Tan Wenhua, of Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, has argued that colleges and universities should plan their cultures scientifically— that is, university culture needs to be based on the well-rounded development of human beings, to include cultivation of a combination of humanistic and scientific spirit (Tan 2008).

In recent years, discussion of how to enhance the soft power of colleges and universities has become more widespread and more specific. For example, reform of curriculum and instruction, recruitment of first-class academic talent, and cultivation of excellent teachers are all related to the enhancement of colleges' and universities' soft power (Chen 2009, Ding 2008, Peng 2008).

CONCLUSION

In China, little attention is paid to the research on colleges' and universities' soft power—particularly in comparison to the nation's soft power. To some, the definition of colleges' and universities' soft power lacks functionality. Li Jian, secretary of the party committee of Wuhan University, is of the opinion that theoretical study of China's colleges' and universities' soft power is nearly non-existent. Others believe that recognition of the importance of colleges' and universities' soft power cannot actually change the "hard power" bias of higher education. Zhu Shiqing, president of Central China University of Science and Technology, said that the reason China lacks a world-class university is that its institutions over-emphasized the acquisition and development of first-class facilities at the expense of world-class ideas and culture (Yuan 2007). Further, in comparison with foreign universities, problems with the development of soft power among China's colleges and universities are many. To name just a few, school characteristics are not outstanding; the cultural atmosphere is weak; the overall level of academic research is low; the management system is inadequate; and research and discussion of institutional mission are insufficient. The specific work of managing change—as, for example, with regard to enrollment and curriculum design—isn't human, individual, or meticulous. Our hope—of "A Strong Nation of Higher Education"—will become reality only if the problems described above can be resolved. In the words of Mei Yiqi, former president of Tsinghua University, "What makes a university is not the vast buildings but the excellent teachers."

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Higher Education, Democratization, and the Corps

By Jerome C. Weber

In recent years, colleges and universities in the United States have had an on-again, off-again relationship with Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) units on their campuses. At a time when a number of institutions are again reconsidering that relationship, it seems appropriate to consider the history of how these units came into being and how benefits accrue to all involved parties—individually and collectively—as a result of the ongoing relationship between the schools and the units.

The United States, which has long held the preeminent position in higher education in the world, owes much of this prestige to the way in which its higher education system is organized and to the purposes to which it is dedicated. As a nation of immigrants; as a nation with enormous natural resources and land; and as a nation with little history upon which to base its various activities, the United States was able to borrow freely from other traditions and to organize its higher education activities in ways that promoted the goals society identified as desirable. It is common knowledge that American higher education began in 1636 with the establishment of Harvard College. This first institution was modeled on English antecedents and focused its early activities on training ministers and other professionals. Its central function was to educate students we now refer to as undergraduates. As academic disciplines proliferated and became increasingly specialized, colleges began both to employ faculty with expertise in specific disciplines and to combine undergraduate education with more specialized graduate education. In order for faculty to train for these roles, graduate education up to the doctoral level was required; at the time, the primary place to seek such education—particularly in the sciences—was Germany. Thus, faculty often sought additional training at German institutes devoted to specific disciplines. Often, these institutes were organized separately from universities and were devoted to research as an activity separate from teaching. When the newly trained academicians returned to the United States to take up faculty roles, they typically did so at the colleges and universities where they had taught previously. Thus, we can consider that the American higher education system borrowed first from the English tradition of training undergraduates and then borrowed from the German tradition of research and graduate education.

Yet that was not the end of the evolution of American higher education. While the older, more traditional western countries which provided the models for American higher education typically focused on educating the upper classes, in America, with its evolving traditions of individualism and the presumed universal ability to improve one's social and economic status, higher education was not necessarily limited by class or role. Of course, it is important to note that affluence, one's role in society, one's parents, one's race, and one's gender were all elements that made access to higher education more or less likely for any given individual. But in a country whose population believed in the idea of change, these elements were less rigid than in most other countries—even though higher education remained largely the province of the well-to-do. Remember that our national pride in "we, the people" initially was limited to those who were white, male, and owners of "property," to include other people whose skin color was darker in hue. In spite of this, as the nation developed geographically and economically, the need for more specialization, more access, more knowledge, and more opportunity became clear. The nation responded with what can only be described as an element of genius: the Morrill Act of 1862.

The Morrill Act was "An Act Donating Public Lands to the Several States and Territories Which May Provide Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts." In a nation rich in land and in need of knowledge, the federal government offered each state 30,000 acres of land for each senator and representative allowed by the census of 1860. The requirement was for the state in turn to create "...at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts..." (Our Documents, p. 1). In other words, the federal government asked the states to create what we now refer to as land-grant colleges; they were encouraged to do so by being granted land to support these purposes. The colleges were to provide focus to "...the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life" (Our Documents, p.1). Higher education was declared to no longer be the exclusive province of the upper classes (*i.e.*, wealthy land owners in a nation without a nobility) and instead was given the task of supporting practical education for a far greater proportion of the population. Note that the focus on agriculture and the mechanical arts gave rise to what initially were called "A&M" institutions. In many states, these colleges were initiated as complements (or competitors?) to the state universities, which often were older and focused on more traditional disciplines and professions such as medicine and law. The state of Oklahoma provides a good example of this evolution of higher education, as well as of the fact that many of the institutions initially called "(state name) A&M" eventually became "(state name) State University." Elsewhere, the state university subsumed the intended role and responsibility of the A&M college, with the result that one institution became both state university and land-grant institution (as, for example, the University of Nebraska). Because education historically has been a state function, states were reasonably free to determine how to meet the intentions of the Morrill Act.

The Morrill Act was the logical national outcome of individual states' efforts to make higher education relevant to the interests and needs of the general population. Probably the earliest formal declaration of this intention came to be known as the "Wisconsin Idea," as promulgated by University of Wisconsin President Charles Van Hise, who in 1904 stated, "I shall never be content until the beneficent influence of the University reaches every home in the state" (University of Wisconsin Madison, p. 1). In other words, these were the ideas that attached "service" as the third responsibility of America's great public universities. To the English focus on undergraduate education and the German focus on graduate education and research was added the great American idea of public service and recognition of the obligation of the university to serve the many needs of the society that supports it. Today, the trilogy of teaching, research, and service form the basis of the evaluation of individual faculty members and of the activities in which higher education institutions engage. Economic development, often believed to be a basic activity of the modern university, is simply the reflection of these three primary activities. What began as borrowing from the higher education traditions of England and Germany became, with the addition of the service component, a distinctly American model of higher education that maintained traditional educational goals in combination with a responsibility to support society at large.

It was the Morrill Act that spoke specifically to military tactics and that caused land-grant colleges to provide what we now know as ROTC within their curriculums. The first such program was launched at Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont. (Founded in 1819 as the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy, its name was nothing if not ambitious.) The Morrill Act was a great impetus to the creation of ROTC units at colleges and universities across America. In fact, ROTC, whether Army, Navy, or Air Force, became so common that it was not unusual for women to be required to take physical education classes while their male counterparts were required to enroll in ROTC. This practice continued until the late 1960s, when opposition to the war in Vietnam became so widespread that many institutions made enrollment in ROTC voluntary. At some institutions, opposition to the Vietnam War was so strong that ROTC was dropped from campus offerings altogether. Inter-institutional agreements sometimes developed that allowed students enrolled at an institution that did not offer ROTC to enroll in ROTC at a neighboring college.

Until the Clinton administration passed the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in 1993, voluntary enrollment was the norm at institutions with ROTC programs. This policy essentially said that people who were homosexual could remain in the military if they did not announce their sexual preference; commanders were not to ask an individual about his or her sexual preference. Even though federal anti-discrimination laws did not address sexual preference as a category, the passage of "don't ask, don't tell" created circumstances that many in higher education viewed as being in conflict with campus anti-discrimination policies. As a result, some institutions eliminated ROTC from their campus offerings. What made the issue even more visible was the fact that a number of prominent colleges (Harvard among them) eliminated their ROTC programs on this basis. The Obama administration repealed "don't ask, don't tell" in 2010. In response, many institutions have begun to reconsider both their opposition to military recruitment on their campuses and the elimination of their campus ROTC units. In March, Harvard announced that it would invite the Navy ROTC program back to its campus; in April, Stanford faculty voted to invite ROTC back to its campus. Of course, one also must consider recent changes in the overall national climate and in the campus climate in regard to the military. While there certainly is a good deal of opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is no vitriol directed accordingly at members of the military. In fact, in announcing the return of ROTC to Harvard, President Drew Faust said, "…[ROTC] broadens the pathways for students to participate in an honorable and admirable calling…" (*Harvard Gazette* 2011). This is in stark contrast to the rhetoric that prevailed during the years during and after the war in Vietnam. This seems to be a direct result of the change in national military policy from a draft to an all-volunteer army.

Despite societal and policy shifts, a number of institutions remain uncertain as to whether to invite ROTC to return to their campuses. In response, I suggest that having ROTC on campus benefits individual students, the institution, and, perhaps most important, the nation. Benefits to the student are many: First, ROTC offers a direct pathway to serving the nation as a member of the military. In addition to providing an additional professional option, ROTC offers scholarship support, enabling participating students to attend college in exchange for a fixed number of years of military service following graduation and commissioning. For the ROTC student who does not envision a career in the military, a limited number of years of experience provides additional training for professions following his or her service obligation. Whether a student is interested in a career in business or in any other field, military service can enhance applicants' professional qualifications. Often, members of the military have the opportunity to assume leadership positions well in advance of their peers in non-military environments. Leadership, self-reliance, and discipline are learned and practiced in military roles.

The benefits to the institution of having ROTC on campus are analogous to those that accrue to the individual. Not only does having an ROTC unit on campus bring financial benefit, but it also increases the pool of potential students by providing opportunities to enroll with full financial support. ROTC classes are taught by ROTC personnel whose salaries are paid by the government; credits earned for ROTC typically count toward students' graduation requirements. In addition, having ROTC personnel on campus provides another opportunity to increase diversity—an educationally desirable goal that is not always associated with military personnel. Moreover, commanding officers of ROTC units and their executive officers typically have master's degrees (at least) and represent their branch of the military well. It is far more difficult to demonize those who are different from ourselves—whether in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, or military affiliation—if we have individuals against whom we can readily measure our preconceptions. As the United States continues its current wars into their second decade, the burdens of the war continue to be borne primarily by a tiny proportion of the population. Having military personnel on campus, as faculty and students, compels us to recognize that these individuals are our friends and neighbors, not a breed apart.

Finally, consider the benefits to the nation: The most obvious is provision of the military with well-educated personnel who likely will serve as officers. Not everyone who serves in the military does so as a result of being the child of military personnel or as a means of escaping poverty. Many young men and women explore ROTC as they do other options on campus; for some, it proves a good personal choice that also enriches the military. In his comments regarding the return of Navy ROTC to Harvard, Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said, "NROTC's return to Harvard is good for the University, good for the military, and good for the country. Together, we have made a decision to enrich the experience open to Harvard's undergraduates [and to] make the military better and our nation stronger. Because with exposure comes understanding, and through understanding comes strength" (Harvard Gazette 2011, p. 1).

As with any policy discussion and decision, one is wise to consider the results—positive and negative—of one course of action as opposed to an alternative course of action. While there is little or no possibility of ROTC being eliminated completely from college campuses, such an eventuality would not diminish the need for military personnel, including the many officers who enter service from ROTC units at civilian colleges. Without ROTC, the vast majority of military officers would come directly from service academies. Although the quality of education at service academies is excellent in every way, the idea of the nation's military leadership coming entirely from such institutions could lead to the further alienation of military personnel from their civilian counterparts. Suspicion and lack of trust likely would increase, to the clear detriment of the nation's interests. Essentially, the question is whether we want a Prussian-style military elite largely separate from civilian society or a military leadership educated in large measure at civilian institutions and that shares the values of the larger society. The answer is simple: ROTC diversifies and thereby enriches the military, and the military diversifies and thereby enriches our colleges and universities. And that is to the advantage of each of us.

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Curriculum Reform in Hong Kong: Preparing Students for Lifelong Learning and Whole-Person Development

By Cheung Kwok-wah

REFORMING EDUCATION

Learning is the key to one's future. It is through education that individuals learn to empower themselves and excel. Students—and their best interests—thus are the focal point of curriculum reform in basic education in Hong Kong. Indications are that the 21st century is a time of unprecedented changes, not only in the world but in Hong Kong in particular. As a result, our younger generation must learn to meet new challenges. Adaptability, creativity, positive values and attitudes, communication, independent learning, and collaborative skills are prerequisites for success. Curriculum reform in basic education in Hong Kong is intended to cultivate these qualities in our young people.

Since 2001, we have sought to reform basic education so as to enable every student to become "all-rounded." At a practical level, this has meant the cultivation of students' ethics and values, intellect, physical fitness, social skills, and aesthetics according to their individual strengths; these qualities will enable them to succeed in today's knowledge-based, technological, and constantly changing society. We hope our students will become lifelong learners and critical thinkers who are innovative and able to change. We hope they will develop self-confidence and team spirit; that they will work to further the prosperity, progress, freedom, and democracy of society; and that they will contribute to the future well-being of their nation and of the world. Toward these ends, we have identified seven learning goals to realize our vision of lifelong learning and whole-person development.

CURRICULUM REFORM IN BASIC EDUCATION

In September 2000, the Education Commission of Hong Kong submitted its "Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong;" its key message was "learning for life, learning through life." This document established the goal that every student should attain competencies at the basic education level (*i.e.*, from Primary One to Secondary Three). "Learning to Learn—The Way Forward in Curriculum Development," the comprehensive report issued in June 2001 by the Curriculum Development Council of Hong Kong, set forth the blueprint and guidelines for curriculum development for the next ten years. It sought to describe the means for fulfilling the vision of enabling students to develop their capacity to become lifelong learners and all-rounded individuals. It recommended strategies and actions for the short term (2001–02 through 2005–06), for the medium term (2006–07 through 2010–11), and for the long term (beyond 2011). Responsibility for these strategies and actions was to be shared by the government, schools, teachers, teacher educators, parents, and community members committed to the success of curriculum reform.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Even as we acknowledge the importance of flexibility and sustainability in implementing curriculum reform, we believe in the simplicity of a clear guiding principle: to help students *learn to learn*. This requires developing students' independent learning capabilities, which contribute in turn to whole-person development and lifelong learning. Regardless of individual differences, all students have the ability to learn. None should be deprived of opportunities for personal development. All students are entitled to essential learning experiences provided as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. As students' needs, interests, and abilities develop, the concept of learner diversity should anchor our efforts to identify and implement appropriate as well as diversified learning, teaching, and assessment strategies. We believe in a learner-focused approach. All decisions should be made in accordance with students' best interest.

In addition to the challenge of learner diversity are those of disparate academic, personal, economic, and social goals of the curriculum; learning and teaching pedagogies; and assessment modes. We must take into account the tension between desirability and feasibility; between uniformity and diversity/flexibility; between knowledge transmission and knowledge creation; between competition and cooperation; between central- and school-based curriculum. We must strive to adopt curriculum design and implementation practices that will help achieve a dynamic balance.

We believe in diversity. There is no single correct model of curriculum change by which to improve students' learning capabilities. Rather, we believe schools should have the flexibility to design their own curricula to meet their students' needs even as they fulfill the requirements of the central curriculum framework. Schools should have the professional autonomy to develop their own unique school-based curricula—curricula most relevant to their students and best suited to be taught by their staff.

The year 2001 signaled the beginning of this major curriculum reform. A continuous improvement process was initiated to help students make ongoing progress. Although we began with a ten-year plan for curriculum reform in basic education, we are well aware that significant change takes more than a decade. It is quality rather than speed that matters. Despite numerous challenges and even setbacks during the past ten years, we remain committed to the principles that underlie our reform efforts: positive thinking with patience, celebration of small successes, and tolerance of ambiguity so as to ensure the sustainability of change. This is the spirit we uphold as we enter the next phase of reform: that of the new senior secondary curriculum. Such reform is the final step toward maximizing the benefits of the basic education reform of the past ten years.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

To ensure that reform proves effective, it is important to identify strategies that support schools' implementation of the proposals for change. The Hong Kong Education Bureau recommends a gradual approach. Schools must implement and review new practices, and all stakeholders need time and experience to build their capacity for change. Time and professional dialogue are prerequisite to applying and sharing experiences of reform. Recognizing that stakeholders must work in partnership to achieve the common goals of curriculum reform, the Education Bureau facilitates collaboration and continuously engages stakeholders in every stage of development.

IMPORTANT INITIATIVES

Important reform initiatives include four key tasks (moral and civic education, reading to learn, project learning, and information technology for interactive learning); five essential learning experiences (moral and civic education, intellectual development, community service, physical and aesthetic development, and career-related experiences); and the cultivation of three key skills (communication, creativity, and critical thinking). Schools are to adopt these initiatives, using the four key tasks as entry points for promoting learning during the short term. During the medium term, schools are to build on their strengths, improve plans and actions, and continue to increase the effectiveness of learning and teaching as they prepare students to become lifelong learners.

PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Since 2001, the Education Bureau has collected data pertaining not only to how reforms have been implemented in schools but also pertaining to stakeholders' (*e.g.*, school

heads', teachers', students', parents', and the public's) perceptions of the reforms. These data have contributed to a better understanding of the implementation experience and have informed planning for future improvements. Surveys, focus group interviews, and school visits indicate that significant reform already has been implemented. Support for reform—and for the learning goals, in particular—is strong and growing. Schools have been making significant progress in offering a broad and balanced curriculum designed to build students' foundational knowledge and to enhance their "learning to learn" capabilities, particularly through the intentional development of their critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills. Learning opportunities both in and outside the classroom are increasing. Significant progress has been made in almost all key areas of curriculum reform, including development of a student-centered curriculum.

Curriculum reform of basic education in Hong Kong is bearing fruit. The majority of school administrators and teachers have benefited professionally as they have worked to transform their schools into learning communities. Students' communication, creativity, and critical thinking skills have improved, and they are becoming more independent learners. Students' positive values and attitudes—including those relating to national identity and commitment—have been strengthened since 2001. Teachers' implementation of strategies to ensure that all students acquire basic competence in Chinese and English have resulted in an overall improvement in language teaching in primary and secondary schools. On-site observation and other data indicate positive changes in student learning and performance, teaching effectiveness, and school culture. Curriculum reform of basic education is benefiting schools, teachers, and student learning.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Notwithstanding the achievements of the past few years, key challenges remain, including teachers' workload, professional development, assessment, learner diversity, and parent support of education reform. The Education Bureau must continue to collect feedback, adjust strategies, and provide timely support in order to meet teachers' needs and strengthen school leadership. We are well aware of the challenges that continue to confront the education sector; we also understand that the quality of teaching is a key determinant of students' learning at school. Because the leadership provided by principals and administrative teams is also critical to teacher and student performance, we seek to build professional learning communities in all schools. Teachers must have opportunities to engage in professional dialogue and to benefit from professional development. Communication with parents must be ongoing. Given their influence on their children's education, we must enhance parents' understanding of and support for reform. Since 2009, we have sought to build on the progress made in basic education by extending our reform efforts to the new senior secondary curriculum.

HONG KONG'S COMMITMENT

Factors that have contributed to the success of education reform in Hong Kong include a solid curricular base on which to build, a clear and coherent reform agenda, and a talented workforce dedicated to implementing reform. The primary challenge that remains is to maintain the momentum for reform so that we might proceed further in the journey toward equipping students for success. The Government of Hong Kong is committed to continuously improving the quality of basic education so that all students will be equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

For further information, visit <www.edb.gov.hk/nas/en>.

About the Author

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