
Enrollment Management: An Introduction to Concepts and Structures

College Savings Plans, Financial Aid, and Tax Strategy

Interview with Cliff Sjogren

Policy Analysis
Some Cold, Hard Truths About College Costs and Prices
In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students and the DREAM Act: Implications for Higher Education

Commentaries
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The Evolution of a Successful Admissions Director by Jim Scannell
In this issue Marguerite Clarke, Boston College, takes a look at the U.S. News ranking formulas and finds evidence to support critics’ concerns that the weight-and-sum method used to determine the rankings results in problems in both the weighting of the indicators and the precision of the overall scores.

Bob Bontrager, Oregon State University, begins the first of a two-part series on Strategic Enrollment Management including core concepts, organizational models, and strategies.

Richard Whiteside, Tulane University, and George Mentz, Loyola University of New Orleans, offer a primer on educational financing for administrators who can benefit from a basic understanding of financing options.

Jennifer Hodges, Michigan State University, interviews AACRAO Past-President and former Director of Admissions at the University of Michigan, Cliff Sjogren, who offers his candid observations on the current state of the college admissions process.

In the Forum section, Jim Scannell, Scannell & Kurz, Inc., offers a profile of today’s effective admissions director and lists five qualities that are keys to success.

Jim Black, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, returns with an article about successful enrollment management strategies including effective communication with today’s digital-age students.

Richard Cherwitz and Susan Alvarado Boyd write about Intellectual Entrepreneurship (ie), a philosophy of graduate education at the University of Texas-Austin, which aims to achieve diversity.

Jane Sjogren, Johnson and Wales University, offers a commentary about the increasing complexity of higher education, the accelerating rate of change, and the tendency to use terms associated with economic markets to describe institutional practices.

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AACRAO members are especially encouraged to submit articles, but non-members, faculty, graduate students, and members of the corporate sector are also welcome to share their work. Authors will receive copies of the issue in which their article appears, and will be issued an author honorarium.

Barry Himmel, Signature Legendary Sales and Service Training, recommends techniques for providing customer service that will exceed students’ expectations and create a positive and energized environment where students will persist, mature, engage, and graduate.

Brian Howe, MultiView, Inc., discusses how Tarrant County College found a cost-effective way to deliver course catalogs and schedules to current and prospective students.

In the public policy arena, Juan Garcia describes how the Act, which is now before the Senate, would allow alien minors to apply for permanent residency and qualify for federal financial aid. Travis Reindl tackles the issue of higher education affordability and encourages policymakers, leaders, and the media to accept some of the hard truths about college costs and prices.

Tom Johnson, University of Wisconsin-Madison, reviews Student Academic Services, a useful reference book containing 20 chapters on a range of topics including registration, academic records, enrollment management, orientation, retention, and financial services.

Kimberley Buster-Williams, Old Dominion University, reviews Grade Inflation, A Crisis in College Education, and finds that grading inequities persist because their consequences are misunderstood.

Finally, I hope you will consider supplementing your reading with the professional development and networking opportunities offered at AACRAO’s Annual Meeting in Las Vegas. I hope to see you there.
Almost every year since 1983, *U.S. News & World Report* (U.S. *News*) has ranked the “academic quality” of institutions of higher learning. Reactions have varied; some declare the rankings to be among the best ever published, while others find them fundamentally flawed (Webster 1992). Over the years, the *U.S. News* editors have met criticisms of their ranking formulas by removing, modifying, re-weighting, or adding indicators (Clarke 2002a). Most recently, they dropped the yield indicator (the percentage of applicants accepted who later enroll) in response to complaints that institutions could influence their rank by manipulating their yield number (Steinberg 2003).

While indicators have changed, however, the way in which schools’ overall scores are computed has not.¹ This is despite numerous complaints about the lack of a research base for the indicators and weights used (e.g., Machung 1998) as well as the “falsely precise” overall score (e.g., Pellegrini 1999). These concerns are summarized by Gerhard Casper, then president of Stanford University, in a letter of protest he wrote to the editor of *U.S. News* in 1996:

*Could there not...be a move toward greater honesty with, and service to, your readers by moving away from the false precision? Could you not do away with rank ordering and overall scores, thus admitting that the method is not nearly that precise and that the difference between #1 and #2—indeed, between #1 and #10—may be statistically insignificant? Could you not, instead of tinkering to “perfect” the weightings and formulas, question the basic premise? Could you not admit that quality may not be truly quantifiable, and that some of the data you use are not even truly available?*

These questions have given rise to much debate, but little research. This article takes a closer look at the *U.S. News* ranking formulas and finds an empirical basis for critics’ concerns. The article begins with an overview of the rankings, followed by a discussion of the weight-and-sum method. Evidence is found to support concerns about both the weighting of the indicators and the precision of the overall scores, which are analyzed using data from the 2003 *U.S. News* rankings of graduate schools of business and education.² The article concludes with four suggestions for improving the interpretability and usefulness of the rankings.

Before we proceed, a caveat is in order. While many have questioned the very concept of ranking higher education institutions, this article takes no stand on this issue; instead it focuses on specific limitations in the weight-and-sum method and how these affect the *U.S. News* rankings.

**Overview of the U.S. News Rankings**

*U.S. News* published its first rankings of the academic quality of colleges in 1983, the same year that the National Commission on Excellence in Education released its influential report blasting the quality of education in America. On the basis of a survey of college presidents, the magazine listed Stanford, Harvard, and Yale as the top three national universities, and Amherst, Swarthmore, and Williams as the top three national liberal arts colleges (Solorzano and Quick 1983). By the late 1980s, *U.S. News* had broadened its approach, weighting and combining information on faculty accomplishments, student achievements, and institutional academic resources to produce an overall score by which to rank colleges. Around this time, the magazine also began ranking graduate schools of business, engineering, law, and medicine using a similar weight-and-sum method. Rankings

---

¹ In 1997, the *U.S. News* editors began rounding overall scores to the nearest whole number. In 1999, they began standardizing schools’ performance on each indicator before applying weights. Neither adjustment fundamentally changed the weight-and-sum method.

² The year appended to a ranking is the calendar year in which it was released.
of graduate schools of education did not appear until 1995.

The most recent rankings still use the weight-and-sum method (Morse and Flanigan 2003; Morse, Flanigan, and Setoodeh 2003). At the undergraduate level, schools are categorized by mission (national universities–doctoral, liberal arts colleges–bachelor’s, universities–master’s, comprehensive colleges–bachelor’s) and in some cases also by region (Midwest, North, South, West). Up to fifteen pieces of information are collected on each school, including academic reputation, graduation rates, test scores for entering students, and per-student spending. These indicators are standardized, weighted, and summed to produce an overall score by which to rank schools in each category against their peers.

At the graduate level, schools are categorized by type (business, education, engineering, law, medicine). Depending on the type of school, data on up to twelve indicators—including test scores, research expenditures, graduate employment rates, and reputation—are collected. Again the indicators are standardized, weighted, and summed to produce an overall score by which to rank the schools.

### The Weight-and-Sum Method

The weight-and-sum method involves assigning to each indicator a weight that reflects its perceived importance and then combining these weights into an overall score. While this method is popular for evaluating household products (see www.consumerreports.org for an example), opinion is divided as to whether it is appropriate for evaluating educational quality (e.g., Hattendorf 1993; Scriven 1991).

There are two main concerns. First, commercial product ratings tend to be based on observable properties of a product or its performance (e.g., safety features in a car), whereas academic quality ratings tend to be based on more abstract characteristics of institutions (e.g., reputation). It is therefore not as easy to decide which criteria to use and how to measure them when assessing academic quality as it is in the case of assessing car performance. Second, there is little research on the relationships among various indicators of academic quality or on their relative importance in the assessment of institutional or program quality. Because of this, it is difficult to know how to weight the indicators and whether it is even appropriate to try. (This is why some rankings do not compute an overall score, instead ranking schools on individual indicators.) In product ratings, the relative importance of various aspects of product performance and how they relate to each other is much clearer.

### THE WEIGHTING OF THE INDICATORS

Tables 1 and 2 show the correlations among the indicators used for the 2003 U.S. News business and education rankings (Table 3 contains a description of each indicator). The correlations are based on data for the top 50 schools in each ranking.

The most obvious difference between Tables 1 and 2 is in the size of the correlations. Those for the business indicators tend to be larger, meaning that the relationships among the indicators used to assess quality in schools of business are stronger than among those used to assess quality in schools of education. Thus, a business school that performs well on one of the indicators shown in Table 1 (e.g., Mean GMAT Score) is also likely to perform well on many of the others (e.g., Mean Undergraduate GPA, Acceptance Rate, Mean Starting Salary, Peer Assessment Score, and Recruiter Assessment Score). It is harder to make such predictions with the education indicators since the correlations are mainly low and non-significant. For instance, education schools with high Mean Quantitative GRE Scores for entering students may or may not also perform well on the Peer Assessment Score, Superintendent Assessment Score, or Total Research Expenditures indicators.

Because the business indicators tend to be highly correlated, decisions about how to weight them become less consequential. For instance, whether the biggest weight is given to Peer Assessment Score or Mean Starting Salary will have relatively little impact on the ranking since schools tend to perform similarly on both indicators \((r = 0.87)\). In contrast, because the correlations among the education indicators are much lower, the choice of weights is of considerable importance, and the lack of a research base for these weights is of greater concern. For example, depending on whether the bigger weight is given to Superintendent Assessment Score or Mean Quantitative GRE Score \((r = 0.15)\), schools will rise or fall in the rankings. It is evident that without a firm empirical basis for the weights being used, the final ordering of schools may be arbitrary and misleading. It is also evident that without this basis, changes in the
Table 2: Correlations for 2003 Indicators: Education Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Assessment Score</th>
<th>Superintendent Assessment Score</th>
<th>Mean Verbal GRE Score</th>
<th>Mean Quantitative GRE Score</th>
<th>Acceptance Rate</th>
<th>Student/Faculty Ratio</th>
<th>Doctoral Degrees Granted (n)</th>
<th>Proportion in Doctoral Programs</th>
<th>Total Research Expenditures</th>
<th>Research per Faculty Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Assesment Score</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.73b</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>−0.13</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.42b</td>
<td>0.55b</td>
<td>0.38b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>−0.08</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.30b</td>
<td>−0.30b</td>
<td>0.47b</td>
<td>0.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment Score</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean Verbal GRE Score</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.65b</td>
<td>−0.61b</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>−0.30b</td>
<td>−0.27b</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.33b</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Quantitative</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>−0.60b</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>−0.16</td>
<td>−0.15</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.11</td>
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<td>GRE Score</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance Rate</td>
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<td>−0.18</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>−0.19</td>
<td>−0.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student/Faculty Ratio</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.31b</td>
<td>0.22</td>
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<td>Doctoral Degrees</td>
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<td>0.31b</td>
<td>0.47b</td>
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<td>Granted (n)</td>
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<td>Proportion in</td>
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<td>Total Research</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>Expenditures</td>
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<td>Faculty Member</td>
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</table>

Note: Based on data for the top 50 schools and rounded to two decimal places.

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Indicators Used in the 2003 Baseline Regression Models: Business Schools and Education Schools

**Business (change in adjusted R² when removed)**
- Peer assessment score—based on business school deans’ and directors of accredited programs’ ratings of program quality (.0197)
- Recruiter assessment score—based on corporate recruiters’ ratings of program quality (.0153)
- Mean undergraduate grade point average (GPA) for Fall 2002 entering class (.0077)
- Mean Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) score for Fall 2002 entering class (.0035)
- Proportion of applicants for Fall 2002 entering class accepted (.001)
- Mean starting salary and bonus for 2002 graduates (.0081)
- Percentage of 2002 graduates employed at graduation (.003)
- Percentage of 2002 graduates employed 3 months later (.011)

**Education (change in adjusted R² when removed)**
- Peer assessment score—based on education school deans’ and deans of graduate studies’ ratings of program quality (.0673)
- Superintendent assessment score—based on school superintendents’ ratings of program quality (.0161)
- Mean Graduate Record Exam Record Examinations (GRE) score for Fall 2002 entering doctoral class (.0082)
- Mean quantitative GRE score for Fall 2002 entering doctoral class (.0032)
- Proportion of doctoral applicants for Fall 2002 entering class accepted (.0071)
- 2002 ratio of full-time students to full-time faculty (.0023)
- Number of doctoral degrees granted in the past school year (.0002)
- Proportion of Fall 2002 students who were in doctoral programs (.0012)
- Total research expenditures, averaged over fiscal years 2001 and 2002 (.0186)
- Expenditures per faculty member in funded research, averaged over fiscal years 2001 and 2002 (.0336)

The “False Precision” of the Overall Scores

Some of the most vocal critiques of the *U.S. News* rankings have focused on the false precision of the overall scores (e.g., Casper 1996; Crenshaw 1999), noting that statistically insignificant differences in schools’ scores are used to assign them to discrete ranks. One reason for this is that the weight-and-sum method does not produce a standard error, thus preventing *U.S. News* from discussing the significance of differences in schools’ scores. It is possible, however, to obtain information on the error around schools’ scores through other means. One of these methods—a technique called jackknifing—is shown here (Efron and Tibshirani 1993; Wu 1986, pp. 1263-1277). The jackknife technique allows one to calculate standard errors for schools’ scores and consequently to perform significance testing.

The jackknife technique models the effects of small changes in the set of indicators and weights (the “tinkering” issue mentioned in Casper’s letter) on schools’ overall scores and then uses this information to create an error band around each school’s score. This means that instead of a discrete “quality” score, each school is given a range within which its score may lie. Since this approach does not take into account other sources of error in the data (e.g., the reliability of the indicators) it should be considered a conservative estimate of the uncertainty around schools’ scores.
First, a regression model is substituted for the U.S. News weight-and-sum formula: the overall scores for schools in a ranking are used as the outcome variable, and the indicators as the predictor variables. This process basically replaces one linear model with another. The jackknife procedure then removes one indicator at a time from the regression model, recalculating the overall score for each school with the remaining indicators before replacing the indicator and repeating the procedure with a different indicator.

For example, if there were ten indicators in the baseline regression model, the jackknife procedure would run the regression analysis ten times, and each time one of the indicators would be removed from the analysis before overall scores for schools were computed. At the end of the ten runs, there would be ten predicted scores for each school, one for each run. The jackknife standard error for a school is obtained from these values according to the following formula (Efron and Tibshirani 1993):

\[
\text{se}_{\text{jackknife}} = \sqrt{\frac{n-1}{n} \left( \hat{\theta}_i - \sum \hat{\theta}_i \right)^2}
\]

where \( n \) is the number of regression models to be estimated and \( \hat{\theta}_i \) is the predicted score for a school from the \( i \)th regression model with one indicator removed.

This standard error is an estimate of the precision of a school’s U.S. News score and can be used to assess whether the score of one school is statistically significantly different from that of another.3

This approach was applied to data for most U.S. News college (i.e., national universities-doctoral, liberal arts colleges-bachelor’s) and graduate school (i.e., business, education, law) rankings produced between 1999 and 2003. The data were obtained from the U.S. News rankings publications for those years. Since in the case of many rankings no data are published for schools below the top 50, analyses were confined to the top schools in each ranking in order to keep them parallel.4 The results shown here are for the 2003 business school and education school rankings (results for some of the other rankings can be found in Clarke 2002a; 2002b). The business school results represent the general findings obtained, and the education school results represent the anomaly.

The indicators included in the business and education baseline regression models are shown in Table 3, while Tables 1 and 2 provide the correlations that underpin each set of data. The overall fit of the regression model to the data for each ranking was assessed in terms of the adjusted \( R^2 \) (a measure of how well the regression equation predicts the outcome variable), with values of 0.9 and above considered a good fit (the coefficient can vary from 0 to 1). Both baseline models met this criterion, with adjusted \( R^2 \) values of 0.9732 for the education model and 0.9995 for the business model. This suggests that the regression models were very good at predicting the overall score produced with the U.S. News formula.

In the next stage of the procedure, one indicator at a time was removed from the baseline regression model for each ranking, and the overall scores for schools in that ranking were predicted via the remaining indicators. The indicator was then returned to the model before removing another and repeating the procedure. Removal of an indicator from the model did not seem to affect the adjusted \( R^2 \) in most instances. For example, for each of the eight models estimated with the business school data, the adjusted \( R^2 \) never varied by more than 0.0097 from the value for the overall model. Schools of education tended to be less immune to changes in the set of indicators used to create their overall scores. (This is not surprising since, as we have already seen, the indicators are less highly correlated.) Nonetheless, for each of the ten models estimated with the education data, the adjusted \( R^2 \) stayed quite close to the value for the overall model (see Table 3).

As a result of their robustness to changes in the indicators used, the jackknife standard errors for business schools are quite small, varying from 0.90 to Emory University to 6.37 for Brigham Young University (mean: 2.92). Differences in the size of each school’s standard error are related to sensitivity to the indicators used: a smaller standard error (Emory University’s) indicates less sensitivity than a larger one (Brigham Young University’s). Because of their greater sensitivity to changes in the indicators used, the jackknife standard errors for schools of education are larger, on average, than those for business schools, varying from a low of 1.70 for the University of Massachusetts-Amherst to a high of 10.70 for New York University (mean: 4.35). As described subsequently, the larger standard errors for schools of education made it much harder to find significant differences in these schools’ scores.

The standard errors were used in t-tests to assess whether the score of one school was significantly different statistically from that of another. This meant 49 t-test comparisons for each business school and 52 t-test comparisons for each school of education. In order to control for the increased probability of Type I error (finding a significant difference when there is none) owing to the number of comparisons being made, the Bonferroni method for multiple comparisons was used (see Glass and Hopkins 1996, pp. 456-457).5

The results of these school-by-school comparisons are summarized in Tables 4 and 5. In each table, schools are ordered by their 2003 U.S. News overall ranking score across the headings and down the rows (the overall score is shown in parentheses after the name of the school). Read across the

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3 The jackknife procedure assumes that the indicators used are randomly sampled from a population of indicators. Since the indicators used to create the U.S. News rankings form more of a convenience sample, the standard error produced with these data is, strictly speaking, not a standard error. Specifically, in the analyses reported subsequently, the standard error obtained represents the square root of the variance around a school’s U.S. News overall score due to changes in the indicators used to compute that score.

4 In addition, since U.S. News does not publish all of the data used to rank these top schools (on average, information on two indicators is missing from each ranking), data sets were often incomplete. As shown subsequently, the missing data did not present a problem for the regression analyses, because the available indicators almost perfectly predicted the overall scores produced with the U.S. News formula. Thus, very little information was lost.

5 The results of these school-by-school comparisons are summarized in Tables 4 and 5. In each table, schools are ordered by their 2003 U.S. News overall ranking score across the headings and down the rows (the overall score is shown in parentheses after the name of the school). Read across the
row for a school to compare its performance with the schools listed in the headings. The symbols indicate whether the overall score of the school in the row is significantly higher than that of the comparison school in the heading (arrow pointing up), or significantly lower (arrow pointing down), or whether there is no statistically significant difference between the two schools (shaded cell with circle). The blank diagonal represents a school’s comparison with itself.

If there were no error around the overall scores for schools, Tables 4 and 5 would consist only of arrows pointing up and down, except for instances in which two schools have the same overall score and are tied for rank. This is not the case, as evidenced by the amount of shaded area in each table. The fact that there is more shaded area in Table 5 means that it is harder to find “real” differences among the overall scores for schools of education, since these can change quite a bit depending on the indicators and weights being used. The fact that there is less shaded area in Table 4 means that it is easier to find “real” differences for business schools since their scores tend to be fairly stable. Even so, it is evident that there are far fewer “real” differences among business schools than is implied by the overall score attributed by U.S. News.

For example, in the business school comparison table (Table 4), Harvard University is listed first in the row and heading because it has the highest overall score among business schools. However, reading across the row, it appears that Harvard’s overall score of 100 is not significantly different from that of eight other schools ranked beneath it. These schools include Stanford University, in second place with a score of 97, and the University of Chicago, ranked ninth with a score of 88. Only schools ranked below ninth have scores that are significantly lower than Harvard’s.

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1 While this approach controls for Type I error, it increases the possibility of Type II error (i.e., failing to find a difference when there is one, also known as loss of power). As a means of monitoring the effects on power, analyses were conducted with the overall alpha (i.e., Type I error probability) set at three different levels: 0.05, 0.25, and 0.50. Since the results were almost identical at all three levels, only results for the 0.05 level are presented here.
The overall pattern of results in Table 4 can be described in terms of three main groupings (one could also make the case for four groupings). The first group could be said to comprise the nine schools at the top of the ranking, extending from Harvard to the University of Chicago. These are schools with scores that are, for the most part, not significantly different from each other but significantly higher than all others in the top 50. The second grouping extends from about 10th-ranked Dartmouth College to 16th-ranked Cornell University. These are schools with scores that are, for the most part, significantly lower than those of the first group but significantly higher than those of the rest of the top 50. The third and largest group comprises approximately 34 schools, extending from 17th-ranked Carnegie Mellon University to 50th-ranked University of Pittsburgh. These are schools with scores that are, for the most part, not significantly different from each other but significantly lower than those of the previous two groups. While this three-group pattern is an artifact of the number of schools included in the analysis (i.e., if data for all 365 business schools surveyed were included, slightly different groupings would result), it illustrates the idea that differences in academic quality may be better represented by a band than a ranked position.

Similar grouping patterns can be seen in the top 50 schools for all other rankings examined (i.e., law schools, national universities-doctoral, liberal arts colleges-bachelor’s), with the exception of schools of education. The larger standard errors for schools of education were an early signal that it was going to be more difficult to find significant differences in these schools’ scores, and this is confirmed by the large amount of shading in Table 5. It is hard to discern any groups in this table. There are about five schools at the top of the ranking with overall scores significantly higher than those of most other schools, but below this point most schools’ scores exhibit no statistically significant differences.

The reason for the differences between Tables 5 and 4 rests in how the U.S. News editors chose to operationalize quality for schools of education versus other types of schools. As has been mentioned, the indicators chosen to represent the quality of schools of education are less highly correlated than...
those chosen to reflect quality in other schools. Thus, schools of education are more sensitive to changes in the indicators used. This results in larger standard errors around their overall score and fewer significant differences in the scores of neighboring schools.

The implications of these results for the interpretation of a school’s position in the rankings is striking. With a vertical column of schools now collapsed into a few bands, the findings suggest that not only may there be no difference between School 15 and School 16, but—in the case of schools of education—there may even be no difference between School 15 and School 46. As for interpreting changes in a school’s rank over time, the findings suggest that changes in rank from one year to the next do not necessarily move a school out of its “quality” band. While these bands are not absolute and do not take into account other sources of possible error in the scores (e.g., mistakes in the data used), they do illustrate the dangers of using discrete scores to make fine distinctions among schools.

**Recommendations**

On the basis of these findings, four recommendations are offered for making the *U.S. News* rankings easier to interpret and more useful. First, the editors need to reexamine the validity of the indicators and weights used for each ranking. Work especially needs to be done to establish an empirical rationale for the weighting system that underpins all *U.S. News* ranking formulas.

Second, even if a research base can be established for the indicators and weights used, the editors should refrain from using an overall score to rank schools. These scores are not reliable enough to allow fine distinctions among schools. A more defensible approach would be to use schools’ overall scores to place them into “quality” bands, listing them alphabetically within each band. This would not only acknowledge the lack of precision of the overall scores, but would reduce the confusion produced by the almost annual changes in the *U.S. News* ranking formulas and their effect on schools’ positions in the rankings.

Third, *U.S. News* could allow consumers to create their own ranking formulas. Many of the data used to create the *U.S. News* rankings are available (for a fee) on the magazine’s Web site. In addition, the site allows users to rank schools on individual indicators. If these features were extended to allow users to choose their own indicators and weights, users could create rankings that fit their individual needs, values, and preferences. Producers of rankings in other countries already use this approach (see www.dashochschulranking.de for an example).

As a final recommendation, consumers—students, parents, and institutions—need to become more critical of the assumptions underpinning rankings as well as the value system behind the choice of indicators and weights. This could mean encouraging *U.S. News* to make the changes proposed above. It could also mean—in the case of institutions—reflecting on the extent to which the rankings match a school’s mission and goals, and reassessing their use in marketing the institution to students and others. If this more critical stance were adopted and the aforementioned recommendations implemented, the *U.S. News* rankings would be a more useful and accurate guide for those trying to decide where best to pursue their college or graduate school education.

**References**


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Enrollment Management: An Introduction to Concepts and Structures

In the increasingly complex world of managing enrollments, success or failure hinges on building a solid foundation of concepts, structures, and strategies. This first of a two-part series reviews the core concepts and structural considerations that underlie successful enrollment management organizations.

Bob Bontrager

Introduction: Historical Forces, Current Challenges, Future Realities

Strategic enrollment management. This three-word phrase is increasingly used throughout higher education. However, the more it is used, the more apparent is the range of interpretations surrounding this deceptively simple concept. The purpose of this article is to summarize the core concepts and organizational principles that form the infrastructure of successful enrollment management organizations.

Enrollment management as we know it today was born in the anticipation and impact of a demographic downturn. From the 1950s through the 1970s, colleges and universities enjoyed a steady stream of students fueled by a succession of societal and demographic changes. From the G.I. Bill in the 1950s, to the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, to the last vestiges of the baby boom generation in the 1970s, higher education saw an expansion of interest, access, and sheer numbers that provided a steady stream of students. Even in those boom times, and indeed throughout the history of higher education, colleges and universities have been concerned not only with enrollment itself, but also with the types of students they are able to attract. Thus, efforts to more effectively recruit targeted groups of students through enhanced market segmentation, improved recruitment services, and merit aid were employed well before the modern enrollment management era (Henderson 2001).

By the early 1970s, however, astute observers of the higher education landscape could see difficulties looming in the future as they noted the projected drop in high school graduates. This decrease in the number of students graduating from U.S. high schools began as the last members of the baby boom generation finished high school in the early 1980s. From that point through the mid-1990s, the number of high school graduates was in free-fall, dropping nationally by 700,000 students, or over 20 percent, by 1995 (National Center for Educational Statistics). In this environment, colleges and universities began to employ more comprehensive approaches to enrollment, which moved beyond marketing, recruitment, and financial aid to include sophisticated financial aid strategies, institutional research, and retention efforts.

This shift varied among institutions and regions of the country. For many colleges and universities, the decrease in high school graduates was balanced through the 1980s by increases in the number of nontraditional students they enrolled, especially adult degree completers and students of color. Enrollment of these new groups allowed many institutions, especially public schools in urban locations, to maintain or even increase their enrollments. Institutions in the South and West were aided by population shifts to those regions. By the early 1990s, however, the sheer weight of the demographic downturn caught up with virtually every segment of higher education.

While enrollment management gained momentum initially in response to demographics, it has been nurtured in an environment of increased accountability and, in a growing number of cases, constrained resources. Criticism of the rapid rise in college tuition costs over the past two decades is especially applicable to the enrollment management enterprise. Many institutions have fallen into the trap of throwing money at their enrollment problems, with too little planning and lack of accountability to achieving the desired outcomes. At the same time, economic forces have become increasingly challenging, and are limiting the resources available to fund enrollment efforts on many campuses, especially in the public sector.

Thus, in the current context, enrollment management is characterized at many institutions as resource management. In addition to traditional recruitment and retention strategies, enrollment managers have expanded their tool kits to include “efficiency” strategies such as geodemographic research, financial aid leveraging, information management, and a broadening array of educational outcomes assessments.
These tools and many others are woven together into comprehensive, long-term enrollment programs that often are as much about using resources efficiently as they are about achieving enrollment goals. Indeed, these tools have developed and gained prominence as primary contributors to the enrollment management movement.

The future of enrollment management remains to be determined. At present it is a broad concept applied differentially at a subset of colleges and universities. A review of enrollment management structures reveals a seemingly endless array of unique organizational alignments, strategies, and tools that have evolved on an ad hoc basis on individual campuses. Many institutions have dabbled superficially with the concept, making isolated structural changes and then, often, reversing those decisions depending on the persons available at a particular time and their respective competencies. Part of this is a natural consequence of a concept that is by its very nature contextual. That is, there is no one enrollment management operation that fits every organizational structure or set of institutional circumstances.

Yet there is a very real sense that enrollment management is emerging as a profession, having already achieved a number of the required components—a research base, experience over a significant period of time, a growing body of professional literature, graduate study programs (Henderson 2001). Increasingly, institutions are mastering the concepts and structure of enrollment management.

The Core Concepts of Enrollment Management

Enrollment management is a complex of concepts and processes that enables fulfillment of institutional mission and students’ educational goals by:

- establishing clear goals for the number and types of students needed to fulfill the institutional mission
- promoting academic success by improving student access, transition, persistence, and graduation
- determining, achieving, and maintaining optimum enrollment
- enabling the delivery of effective academic programs
- generating added net revenue for the institution
- enabling effective financial planning
- increasing process and organizational efficiency
- improving service levels to all stakeholders (e.g., prospective and current students, other institutional departments, other institutions, coordinating agencies)
- creating a data-rich environment to inform decisions and evaluate strategies
- creating and continuously strengthening linkages with functions and activities across the campus

Contrary to prevailing myths, enrollment management is not...

- a quick fix to achieve higher enrollment
- solely an organizational structure, though restructuring is a key consideration in implementing enrollment management
- an enhanced admission and marketing operation

- an administrative function which operates separately from the academic mission of the institution

Enabling Institutional Mission

Every institution operates in a unique context that drives the enrollment management enterprise. This involves understanding the unique role an institution plays in the environment it operates in and how to translate that role into attracting and retaining students. An institution cannot be all things to all people. Not every institution can or should seek to become more selective or expand its reach to a national scale, though there is sentiment on many campuses to do so. Any enrollment effort must begin with an understanding of what an institution is trying to achieve, based on the niche it fills in the higher education marketplace. From there the enrollment manager begins to address what that means in terms of the optimum size of the student body, the types of students desired, and how to achieve those goals.

Academics and Student Success

If enrollment management starts with institutional mission, it ultimately succeeds or fails based on the strength of its links to academics and student success. Whatever its broader purposes, every institution’s mission is based on the academic enterprise. Similarly, achieving enrollment goals depends on an institution’s ability to effectively promote students’ academic success. The ability to deliver programs and build relationships which enhance student access, transition, persistence, and individual goal attainment will determine whether the institution is able to recruit and retain students in sufficient numbers to achieve optimum enrollment.

Effective enrollment managers take every opportunity to support and promote the academic program of their institutions. The wisdom of doing so is clear. Research on student college choice consistently ranks perceived academic quality among the most influential factors in students’ decisions of which institution they will attend (Braxton 1990). Successful student transitions to college and their persistence to graduation are directly linked to their affiliation with academic departments and individual faculty members (Bean 1990). In many cases, and especially when finances are tight, the vitality of individual academic departments will depend on enrolling a steady stream of students, sometimes requiring targeted promotional and retention activities. Further, the need for program-specific efforts will shift over time in response to changing career opportunities, expansion into new geographic markets, and emergence of new niche opportunities where public demand and institutional expertise converge. For all these reasons, it is critical that enrollment management is directly linked to the institution’s academic mission and programs.

Optimum Enrollment

Many institutions operate on the simple premise that they want more students than they have now. Many such institu-
tions would have difficulty stating how many students would be “enough.” In fact, determining an institution’s optimum enrollment is an extraordinarily complex undertaking, requiring careful and thorough analysis of multiple data points (Dolence 1993). The outcome is not one enrollment goal, but many. Depending on institutional type, there are any number of optimum enrollments based on a wide range of variables, including:

- academic ability
- academic program interest
- special skills (fine arts, leadership, athletics)
- ethnicity
- undergraduate/graduate
- financial status
- resident/non-resident
- program and facility capacities

It would be difficult to argue the wisdom of establishing clear goals around these and other variables. Yet institutions often lack specific enrollment goals or, if such goals do exist, they represent more of a wish list than objective goals derived from careful data-gathering and analysis. A precursor to any effective enrollment plan must be a detailed analysis of the institution’s enrollment opportunities and subsequent establishment of specific goals. This task should be assigned to a high-level group reporting to top-level decision-makers, with broad campus representation.

**COMMITMENT TO TOP-QUALITY SERVICE**

The mantra of customer service has been spoken for years now in all sectors of society, from the corporate sector to higher education. Over the past 20 years, virtually every college and university has implemented a quality initiative of some sort. Many institutions can point to more than one such initiative, with varying results. Effective enrollment management requires that institutions take their commitment to top-quality service to a higher level.

**FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES**

From the beginning, enrollment management has been hard-wired to an institutions’ financial well-being. In its early stages, enrollment management was essentially defined as increasing enrollment to regain financial stability for tuition-driven private institutions. By the mid-1990s, when financially challenged institutions had either increased their enrollments or otherwise adjusted to their new economic realities, there was a shift in focus from not only increasing student numbers, but also improving efficiency. This trend toward efficiency has gained momentum as public institutions increasingly find themselves in the same tuition-driven boat as their private counterparts, while at the same time experiencing significant budget limitations. Indeed, efficiency in the enrollment enterprise has gone from being secondary to enrollment numbers, to being of virtually equal importance on many campuses. The overarching goal is not simply to increase total revenue, but at the same time to reduce institutional costs in order to improve net revenue.

The focus on efficiency begins with basic enrollment management operations. The stark reality on many campuses is that enrollment professionals are being asked to maintain or improve enrollment results with fewer resources to hire staff and implement programs. Efforts to improve efficiency must begin with analysis of core business practices. There is little benefit to be gained by employing new recruitment and retention strategies if basic processes are unduly cumbersome and leave students feeling poorly served. Once basic business practices have been analyzed and reengineered, a variety of efficiency and revenue enhancing strategies may be employed.

Earlier efforts to simply increase revenue by enrolling more students have given way to far more sophisticated strategies designed to enhance net revenue. Through the use of market segmentation, geodemographic research, predictive modeling, and other tools, institutions are increasingly able to target recruiting efforts more precisely to those students they have the best chance of attracting. In this process they avoid expending staff time, recruitment materials, and other resources on prospective students who ultimately will choose to attend elsewhere.

Enrollment management has also ushered in an era of highly developed financial aid strategies. Previously exclusive to the private sector, institutions of all types are employing finely honed approaches to their disbursement of student financial assistance, especially institutionally-funded grants and scholarships. Rather than offering aid of equal value to all students who meet certain academic qualifications, institutions increasingly tailor financial aid packages to tweak the college-choice sensibilities of individual students, taking into account their financial need, geodemographic characteristics, and institutional goals for enrolling students with specific attributes. Often, such strategies involve making smaller awards to a larger number of students.

**CREATING A DATA-RICH ENVIRONMENT**

Enrollment management is a performance-based, outcomes-oriented enterprise that requires copious amounts of data to operate effectively. While referred to in a variety of ways—performance indicators, success indicators, and outcomes assessment to name a few—enrollment management relies on a broad array of metrics to assess the achievement of goals, evaluate program effectiveness, and benchmark operations and strategies with other institutions. Examples include:

**Recruitment metrics**

- Number and characteristics of prospects, inquiries, applicants, admits, deposits, enrolled students
- Percentage of students moving from one recruiting stage to the next
- Number and percent of students for each identified target group (ethnic groups, high ability, particular high schools, geographic areas)
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Creating an Effective SEM Organization

It seems there are as many organizational structures as there are colleges and universities. Structures vary among institutions for a number of legitimate reasons. This certainly has been the case for enrollment management organizations, as such structures only recently have been part of the higher education landscape. Enrollment management organizations vary along four dimensions: structure, composition, institutional type, and philosophical alignment.

ST R U C T U R E

Traditionally, four types of enrollment management structures have been identified (Dolence 1996; Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green 1982). The enrollment management committee brings together a group of faculty and administrators to focus on enrollment issues. This approach has the advantage of rapid and relatively easy implementation. Indeed, enrollment management committees often crop up in the wake of a drop in enrollment and the resulting sense that “we need to do something.” However, this approach requires the least institutional support or commitment and therefore is the least likely to succeed. The enrollment management coordinator model assigns an individual to coordinate departments and activities to achieve enrollment goals. This model also requires minimal institutional commitment since the coordinator usually has little formal authority.

The enrollment management matrix model, is similar to the coordinator model, except that in this case the person in the coordinating role is a top-level administrator. Thus, there is a higher degree of authority and the potential for greater institutional support. Finally, there is the enrollment management division, in which the key offices and functions related to enrollment management are brought together under the leadership of a senior-level administrator. This model reflects the highest degree of institutional commitment to influencing enrollments. Additionally, it increases the likelihood that enrollment management efforts will be led by an enrollment specialist, i.e., an individual with experience and training specific to managing college and university enrollments.

As enrollment managers have sought to gain a foothold within their institutions, they typically have downplayed the differences between these four organizational models. In the earlier stages of the emergence of enrollment management, it often was difficult to convince top-level decisionmakers of the need to create formal structures in support of enrollment efforts. As enrollments dropped and institutions developed a greater sense of urgency, it became easier to make the case for the more significant changes required of the matrix and division structures.

The main point about enrollment management organizations is this: enrollment results will generally depend on the structure adopted and institutions should adjust their expectations accordingly. When enrollment issues are less pressing, institutions may be well served by the committee or coordinator models. Institutional politics also may dictate adoption of these less intrusive models, though in that case decisionmakers need to be prepared for more modest results. A desire for greater influence over enrollment results requires implementation of more significant structural changes. Figure 1 illustrates the interplay between structure, institutional change, and enrollment results.

As enrollment management emerges as a profession, there is growing acknowledgement that implementation of the more significant structural changes required of the matrix or division models will lead to stronger enrollment results. Institutional commitment to the concept of enrollment management is far greater with these models. They also take advantage of the emergence of enrollment professionals: individuals who have direct experience with one or more core
enrollment operations, who have studied the growing body of enrollment management literature, have been involved with the SEM community, and thus are uniquely qualified to lead campus enrollment efforts.

COMPOSITION
Composition is another key dimension to be considered when establishing an enrollment management organization, that is, which departments and functions will be included under the enrollment management umbrella. Basic enrollment management organizations commonly include admissions, financial aid, registrar’s offices, and orientation. However, such structures suggest a limited view of the enrollment management concept, characterizing it as a grouping of services rather than management of goals and strategies. The conceptual framework of student success suggests that the “reach” of the enrollment management organization should be extended chronologically at both ends of the student experience. Thus, student preparation, pre-college programs, retention, and career services are part of the enrollment management structures of many campuses. The most highly developed enrollment management organizations extend their reach still further, taking an institutional advancement perspective that includes community and alumni relations. (See Table 1.)

Whatever the organizational model, managing enrollments requires involvement of departments and functions from across the campus, not all of which can or should be part of the enrollment management structure. For example, academic advising is critical to enrollment management, but usually remains under the purview of a more traditional academic model. Similarly, student affairs units perform many important retention-related functions, but more often are organized as a separate division. Where formal reporting lines do not exist, strong communication links must be established. These cannot be left to chance or good intentions. Rather, formalized relationships must be established within the committee structure of the institution. Further, links must reflect the core understanding of the enrollment management concept with direct ties to institutional mission, academic program, and student success. Required organizational links are diagrammed below, with choices to be made as to whether solid or dotted-line relationships exist among the departments and functions listed. (See Figure 2.)

INSTITUTIONAL TYPE
Enrollment management organizations tend to vary by type of institution. Private institutions often have more elaborate enrollment structures. The demographic downturn, which led to the emergence of enrollment management, hit private institutions first, and thus they have a longer history with its implementation. Also, private institutions are typically smaller, can implement changes more quickly, and require administrators to take on a broader array of functions. For these reasons, the enrollment management organization at a private institution will generally have more direct reporting lines, whereas at public institutions there will tend to be dotted-line relationships facilitated through committee work. Another private/public difference is the titles held by chief enrollment officers. Vice presidents often head enrollment management divisions at private institutions, with direct reporting lines to the president. At public institutions, enrollment division heads typically have roles as assistants or associates to provosts or vice presidents.

Table 1: Composition of Enrollment Management Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural type</th>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
<th>Matrix</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional commitment to change</td>
<td>Lower Commitment</td>
<td>Higher Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise of person leading enrollment efforts</td>
<td>Less Expertise</td>
<td>More Expertise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment results</td>
<td>Weaker Results</td>
<td>Stronger Results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: The SEM Organization Continuum

Figure 2: XXX

(Adapted from Whitecole, 2007)
Finally, when creating enrollment management organizations, a decision must be made regarding philosophical alignment. This decision is complex due to the cross-functional nature of the enrollment enterprise, such that enrollment management does not “fit” neatly within traditional institutional structures. Because of the important student services provided by enrollment management departments, some members of the campus community, especially at public institutions, are inclined to align enrollment management organizations with their student affairs divisions. Even though enrollment management and student affairs professionals have many common interests and perform similar student service functions, aligning them under the same organizational structure generally will not serve enrollment managers as well as alternative structures. The integration with academic programs, accountability to quantifiable goals, and importance of achieving the institution’s academic mission all point to alignment with top-level decisionmakers. Reflecting these realities, institutions more often align enrollment management organizations with the president or academic affairs divisions, rather than student affairs, with variances in the private and public sectors as noted above (Huddleston 2001).

Preview: Core Strategies and Best Practices
An infrastructure of foundational concepts and structural alignment is necessary to build successful enrollment management organizations, but it is not sufficient. Achieving optimum enrollments requires that institutions use their carefully-developed infrastructure to launch leading-edge strategic initiatives. In the next issue of C&U, the second part of this article will discuss core strategies and best practices in key areas including:

- Recruitment: Initiating the student/institution relationship
- Marketing and communications
- Student transition and retention
- Graduation and beyond
- Pricing strategies
- Information management
- Business practices and customer service
- Technology

References and Resources

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A college degree is one of the most expensive purchases an American family can make. Recently, the College Board⁴ reported that if the annual rate of increase averages 5 percent, the cost of a baccalaureate degree for a child entering the first grade in September 2003 will reach approximately $104,000 at a public institution and just over $214,000 at a private institution.

On the brink of this significant investment, families often receive inadequate information from frontline admission and recruitment personnel. Parents, particularly those with incomes well above the national average, have questions that go beyond the basics. They want to know how to leverage their limited resources so that they can help their sons and daughters pursue higher education and still preserve their financial condition.

While today’s costs are higher than ever before, parents have many more options whose sheer number and complexity have given rise to a whole new field—financial planning for college. This article, which is based on materials created for the enrollment management program at Tulane University, will supply admission and recruitment staff with practical financial planning advice that they can share with parents. It is a primer in college finance with enough detail to allay a family’s fears and keep them engaged in the discussion of college affordability. The reaction from the families of prospective Tulane students has been very positive. They found this piece among the clearest and most comprehensive treatments of college finance that they had encountered.

This article focuses on federal need-based programs and explains how savings and other investments affect a student’s eligibility for financial aid under the federal program guidelines. Institutionally-funded aid programs are mentioned when appropriate.

Key Questions
Five key questions drive financial planning for college.

1. How much financial aid will be available to the family?
2. How much need-based financial aid could they receive?
3. How much will they pay from annual income?
4. How much will they pay from savings?
5. How much will they finance?

Any discussion of financial aid and college finance must focus on these five questions as well as the four broad categories listed below.

- Financial aid programs—the basics
- Tax relief provisions for families with educational expenditures
- Tax incentives for those wishing to save for educational expenses
- The impact of various savings instruments on financial aid eligibility

Financial Aid Basics
Creating an effective strategy for financing a college education begins with a basic knowledge of current financial aid programs and processes. While the rules and regulations are numerous and complex, families formulating a college investment strategy only need to understand some basic principles.

Bases for Awarding Financial Aid
Two types of financial aid are available: merit and need-based.

Merit-based Awards
Merit-based financial aid awards recognize the student’s special skills or academic achievement. In making these awards, institutions typically do not consider whether the student needs the funding. Merit-based aid might be awarded to those with outstanding records of academic achievements,
special abilities (e.g., athletic or musical), demonstrated commitment to community service, or some other activity that the college seeks to promote.

**Need-based Awards**

Need-based financial aid involves an analysis of the cost of a particular college and a family’s income and assets. Financial aid is awarded to cover the portion of college costs that exceeds the family’s ability to pay.

**Types of Financial Aid**

Financial assistance includes grants, scholarships, loans or work-study arrangements. Grants and scholarships represent a real reduction in the cost of attending the institution and carry no obligations for repayment. While there are many different kinds of educational loans, they all require that the amount borrowed plus interest must be repaid. Work-based financial assistance is the payment of an hourly wage for services performed.

**Sources of Financial Aid**

Financial aid programs are funded from a variety of sources including the federal and state governments, the colleges themselves, private organizations, and scholarship foundations as shown in Figure 1.

- Merit-based financial aid is usually funded from state, institutional, or private sources.
- Need-based financial aid may be provided by the state, the federal government, the institution, or private foundations and organizations.

**SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID**

Financial aid programs are funded from a variety of sources including the federal and state governments, the colleges themselves, private organizations, and scholarship foundations as shown in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1: THE FINANCIAL AID ENVIRONMENT**

Funds from federal or state sources are administered in strict compliance with the rules and regulations established by the federal government and the state providing the assistance. In the case of funds from the federal government, the rules and regulations apply uniformly to all residents of the United States. The states, private organizations, individuals, and colleges can maintain their own rules for the administration of their funds, but those rules cannot conflict with those established by the federal government. Although there are differences, these regulations have many commonalities, particularly in the areas of calculating cost, determination of what a family can contribute, and the calculation of financial need.

**College Costs**

The annual “cost of attendance” for a particular college includes tuition, student fees, living expenses, books, transportation to and from the school, and miscellaneous personal expenses. Expenses for students living on-campus are represented by the college’s room and board charges. Families who provide housing and meals for their college-age children are given a “home maintenance allowance”—an estimation of these costs—as an item in the cost of attendance budget. Tuition, fees, room and board are paid to the college and represent a direct expense. Books, transportation, home maintenance, and miscellaneous expenses are paid as they are incurred and represent indirect or out-of-pocket expenses. Both direct and indirect expenses are used in determining the student’s annual budget.

**Needs Analysis**

College attendance is defined as voluntary by current public policy. Unlike the elementary and secondary educational opportunities that are free to every U.S. resident, the costs associated with attending college, although subsidized heavily by state and local governments, remain an obligation of students and their families. Financial aid is provided to help them cover the amount that exceeds their resources. What a particular family can afford to pay is called the “family contribution” and includes both what the parent and the student can contribute toward the cost of attendance.

The United States Congress developed the Federal Methodology for determining the expected family contribution for those who want federally-funded financial aid. It is the only method for determining eligibility for federal programs, and it is often used in the administration of many state-sponsored programs. Individual colleges or private parties may require additional information not considered in the Federal Methodology and apply an “Institutional Methodology” in the determination of the ability to pay. These institutionally-specific methodologies can be used only in the administration of their own funds. An Institutional Methodology can never replace the Federal Methodology for determining eligibility for federally-funded financial aid programs. The college student may have to comply with several sets of financial aid rules and regulations.

**Determining Family Contribution**

In the Federal Methodology, the parents’ and student’s earnings and assets are analyzed to determine the amount the family can contribute toward the student’s educational expenses. Families in stronger financial positions are expected to contribute more than those with lower incomes and fewer assets. It is difficult to provide an estimate of the expected contribution based on income because the formula treats

---

1. FEDERALLY-FUNDED FINANCIAL AID
2. STATE-FUNDED FINANCIAL AID
3. COLLEGE-FUNDED FINANCIAL AID
4. PRIVATELY-FUNDED FINANCIAL AID

---

**THE RULES, REGULATIONS, AND PROCESSES OF ALL FUNDING SOURCES MUST BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REGULATIONS.**
income and assets separately and allows families to take
deductions that vary by family size, the state of residence,
total taxes paid, and a variety of other factors. Table 1 pro-
vides a rough estimate of the expected contribution based on
family income without assets.
The family contributions shown in Table 1 are approxima-
tions based on national averages and were determined by
using the Federal Methodology.
The family contribution is considered to be available to
offset the expenses associated with college attendance. If
there is only one child in college, the entire family contribu-
tion is available for that student. If three children from the
same family are in college at the same time, the contribution
for each child is one-third of the total family contribution.
The expected family contribution can be determined by
using various financial aid calculators that are available on
the Internet. One of the most popular and useful Web sites
for financial aid information can be found at: www.finaid.org.
It provides a wealth of information about scholarships, edu-
cational loans, college savings plans, and a series of calcula-
tors that allow families to estimate their contribution, loan
repayment obligations, etc.

Many families are shocked by the amount of their
expected contribution. When it is added to their fixed obli-
gations for housing, cars, and other goods and services, they
often conclude that they cannot afford to pay that amount
annually. In today’s economy, the family contribution is actu-
ally an index of their financial strength because it represents
the amount that they can absorb in terms of cash payments
or borrowing. Most American families soon realize that a
college education is a purchase financed like a home or a car.

**NEED**

Need is defined as the difference between the cost of atten-
dance at a particular college or university and the family con-
tribution. Because of considerable differences in the cost of
attendance, student need varies widely, although the family
contribution remains constant unless a particular institution
applies its own as well as the Federal Methodology. A stu-
dent may have no need at one institution but demonstrate
considerable need at another. For example, if the family con-
tribution is calculated at $15,000 and the student attends a
college with a cost of attendance of $15,000, his or her need
would be zero. However, if the same student selects a college
with a $15,000 annual cost of attendance, he or she would
have $20,000 in need.

**THE FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE**

Need-based financial aid programs should provide enough
funding to meet demonstrated need. Most institutions will
attempt to meet some or all of the student’s need by provid-
ing funds drawn from several sources. Their offer of assis-
tance, commonly referred to as the financial aid package, will
be a combination of grants, loans, and work-study funds.
However, many colleges and universities do not have suffi-
cient resources to fund everyone who wants to enroll, and the
sum of the family contribution and the financial aid offered
by the college may not amount to the cost of attendance. This
gap between available resources and cost could make college
attendance more difficult.

**Tax Relief for Families**

**With Educational Expenses**

The financial aid programs funded by governmental agencies,
institutions, and private sources represent only pieces of the
college-financing puzzle. The federal tax law changes that
took place in 1997 and again in 2003 provide income tax relief
for families with children in college. They are intended to
increase their ability to absorb educational costs and are most
useful to families of college students or to those with little
time left to save for college.

**Tax Relief Programs**

**HOPE CREDITS**

The Hope program ($1,500) was created to make the first two
years of college available to all American families. Taxpayers
can claim a credit equal to 100 percent of the first $1,000 of
tuition and fees and 50 percent of the second $1,000. These
amounts are indexed for inflation after 2001.

This tax credit is available on a per-student basis for net
tuition and fees (tuition and fees minus grants or scholar-
ships) paid for college enrollment after December 31, 1997. In
2003, it was phased out for joint filers with incomes between
$83,000 and $103,000 and for single filers between $41,000
and $51,000 (indexed periodically). The credit can be claimed
in two tax years for any individual enrolled at least half-time
for any portion of the year.

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**Table 1: Expected Family Contribution Based on Parent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Estimated Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$85,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>$95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>$105,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>$110,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>$115,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$65,000</td>
<td>$130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70,000</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Amounts are rough approximations and should not be considered definitive.
LIFETIME LEARNING CREDITS
Congress created Lifetime Learning Credit for college juniors, seniors, graduate students, and working Americans pursuing lifelong learning to upgrade their skills. For those beyond the first two years of college, or those taking classes part-time to improve their job skills, the family will receive a 20 percent tax credit for the first $10,000 of expenses. The credit is available for net tuition and fees (minus grant aid) paid for postsecondary enrollment. It is available on a per-taxpayer (family) basis, and it is phased out at the same income levels as the Hope tax credits.

Note: There can only be one credit taken per child, either Hope or Lifetime Learning but not both in the same year.

STUDENT LOAN INTEREST DEDUCTION
The Student Loan Interest Deduction provisions of the 1997 tax law changes allow for an “above-the-line deduction” (the taxpayer does not need to itemize in order to benefit) for interest paid in the repayment on private or government-backed loans used for postsecondary education and training expenses. The maximum deduction is $2,500. It is phased out for joint filers with incomes between $100,000 and $130,000 and for single filers between $50,000 and $65,000 (indexed after 2002). The deduction is available for loans made before or after enactment of the tax change. The loan amount eligible for the deduction is limited to postsecondary expenses for tuition, fees, books, equipment, room and board, and this tax break has been extended beyond the original application to the first five years of repayment.

IRA WITHDRAWALS
Taxpayers may withdraw funds from traditional IRA accounts, without penalty, for the higher education expenses of the taxpayer, spouse, child, or grandchild. This amount is limited to net postsecondary expenses (expenses minus other forms of grant or scholarship financial aid) for tuition, fees, books, equipment, and room and board.

COMMUNITY SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS
This provision excludes from taxable income loan amounts forgiven by non-profit, tax-exempt charitable or educational institutions for borrowers who take community-service jobs addressing unmet needs.

Tax Incentives to Save for Educational Expenses

SAVING FOR COLLEGE
In addition to providing tax relief, the tax code changes created several college savings mechanisms of particular interest to those families who have several years or more before their children begin to enroll in college.

In the area of savings, two key questions come into play. First, how will savings affect the student’s eligibility under federal regulations for need-based financial aid? Second, and closely tied to the first, who should be the custodian of the savings account?

Many families underestimate the power of long-term savings. Even modest monthly savings beginning when a child is born can create a sizeable asset to cover college-related expenses. Table 2 shows the accumulated value of family savings for a newborn child (18 years of savings prior to college entry) for interest rates between 2 and 5 percent annually for monthly savings of between $50 and $700 per month. This analysis assumes that the savings are in a tax-free investment vehicle and that the monthly payment occurs on the first of each month.

Many families believe that saving for college simply reduces the student’s eligibility for aid. To some extent this is true. Savings will reduce eligibility for need-based financial aid. However, the degree of reduction is often over-estimated. Under the Federal Methodology, the value of savings and other assets has a much smaller impact than would earnings of identical value.

PARENTAL SAVINGS
In constructing the Federal Methodology, Congress recognized that parents should be saving for their retirement as well as for the children’s educational expenses. As a result, two provisions were established that impact how parental assets are used in the determination of family contribution. The first provision establishes an “asset protection allowance” with the amount determined by the age of the older parent. The allowance is deducted from the total assets thereby reducing its overall value in the needs analysis process. The second provision uses only a percentage of the remaining asset balance as a supplement to income. Currently, this is set at 12 percent of the remaining asset balance after the deduction of the appropriate asset protection allowance. This amount is added to the family’s adjusted income, which is income after the deductions made for all allowable expenses permitted by Congress. The total adjusted income is then “taxed” using a sliding scale. The highest marginal taxation rate for parents is currently 47 percent. Assets are protected by the reduction due to the asset protection allowance and by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Monthly</th>
<th>2%</th>
<th>3%</th>
<th>4%</th>
<th>5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$13,009</td>
<td>$14,333</td>
<td>$15,832</td>
<td>$17,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$26,017</td>
<td>$28,666</td>
<td>$31,664</td>
<td>$35,069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$52,035</td>
<td>$57,331</td>
<td>$63,329</td>
<td>$70,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$78,052</td>
<td>$85,997</td>
<td>$94,993</td>
<td>$105,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$104,069</td>
<td>$114,622</td>
<td>$126,658</td>
<td>$140,263</td>
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<tr>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$130,086</td>
<td>$143,328</td>
<td>$158,322</td>
<td>$175,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$156,014</td>
<td>$171,993</td>
<td>$189,987</td>
<td>$210,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$700</td>
<td>$182,121</td>
<td>$200,659</td>
<td>$221,651</td>
<td>$245,460</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Savings Calculator
using only 12 percent of the remainder with that amount “taxed” at no greater than 47 percent of the remaining value.

Table 3 presents an analysis of two families with identical incomes and college-related expenses. One family (column A) has no savings while the other (column B) has saved $100,000. As shown, the $100,000 asset decreases the eligibility for need-based financial aid by just over $3,100. Family B will be expected to provide approximately $3,100 more to help cover college costs. However, they will have, even after paying the additional $3,100 in college expenses, some $96,900 in the bank while family A has no savings.

Of course, the college experience involves more than a single year. Table 4 shows how a family’s $100,000 asset is depleted over the course of a four-year long baccalaureate program. Again, in this illustration the older parent is 44 years old at the time of initial enrollment. Table 3 assumes that the amount remaining in the account will earn 2 percent interest annually and that the cost of attendance remains constant for the four-year period of attendance.

As shown in Table 4, at the end of four years, the family will have expended about $11,800 more for college expenses than did the family with no savings. However, earned interest on the account will have offset all but about $4,100 of this expenditure. The family still has about 96 percent of their savings. Of course, they are also in a position to refuse the loan portion of any financial aid award and decide to cover the loan from available savings.

**STUDENT SAVINGS**

Families who decide to save for college often must decide whether to place savings in their or the student’s name. Since savings accounts typically generate taxable interest, many decide to place the savings in the student’s name assuming that he or she is usually in a lower tax bracket. More of the interest earnings would then be retained for college expenses.

However, in most cases, it is in the parents’ long-term interest to maintain control over the savings earmarked for college even though some of the interest earned may trigger increased income tax liability. The existing needs analysis formulas provide a more favorable treatment of parental savings than of student savings.

Student assets are treated more harshly under the Federal Methodology. Congress determined that the primary focus of college-age students should be on completing their education not on providing for their long-term retirement needs. As a result, there is no asset protection allowance provision for student assets. Furthermore, the percentage of the student-controlled asset considered available to underwrite the annual cost of attendance is set at a flat 35 percent rate.

Table 5 (on the following page) shows the depletion, under the Federal Methodology, of a $100,000 asset held in the student’s name which triggers a $35,000 contribution toward educational expenses in year one (as opposed to the additional $3,100 when held in the parent’s name.) With this level of contribution, the student would not qualify for need-based aid unless the cost of attendance exceeded $35,000 and there was no expected contribution from parental income.

Given the existing needs analysis methodology, placing the money in the student’s name makes sense only if the parents are certain that the family would not qualify for financial aid even at America’s most expensive college and universities or if there are estate planning considerations. In these situa-

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**Table 3: Analysis Of Asset Impact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[A] No Family Savings</th>
<th>[B] $100,000 Savings*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Contribution from Income</td>
<td>$9,701</td>
<td>$9,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset Protection Allowance (Older Parent is 44 Years Old)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$44,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Asset Value</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$53,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Asset Used to Supplement Income (%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Asset Available as Supplement to Income</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$6,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Supplement Added to Family Contribution at 47%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$3,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revised Family Contribution</td>
<td>$9,701</td>
<td>$12,838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Institution’s Cost of Attendance | $25,000 |
| Revised Family Contribution | $9,701  | $12,837 |
| Need (Cost – Family Contribution) | $15,299 | $12,163 |
| Decreased Need Resulting from $100,000 Asset | N/A | $3,136 |

* Savings in parents’ names

**Table 4: Depletion of Parental Asset**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Older Parent</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asset Beginning Balance</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>$98,801</td>
<td>$97,711</td>
<td>$96,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset Protection Allowance</td>
<td>$44,400</td>
<td>$45,500</td>
<td>$46,700</td>
<td>$48,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Net Worth</td>
<td>$53,600</td>
<td>$53,301</td>
<td>$51,011</td>
<td>$48,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset Conversion at 12%</td>
<td>$6,672</td>
<td>$6,396</td>
<td>$6,121</td>
<td>$5,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount Used for Expenses in Year (Max.)</td>
<td>$3,136</td>
<td>$3,006</td>
<td>$2,877</td>
<td>$2,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining Asset Value</td>
<td>$96,864</td>
<td>$95,795</td>
<td>$94,834</td>
<td>$93,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus 2% Interest on Remaining Balance</td>
<td>$98,801</td>
<td>$97,711</td>
<td>$96,731</td>
<td>$95,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset Remaining at End of Four Years (%)</td>
<td>95.87%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditure from Asset over Four Years</td>
<td>$11,762</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the parents’ supervision as custodians. State laws affect this

 visions, gifts and investment earnings can accumulate under

 Uniform Transfers to Minors Act (UTMA). Under these provisions, gifts and investment earnings can accumulate under the parents’ supervision as custodians. State laws affect this

 type of account, and the child may have rights to these investments at age eighteen or twenty-one (age of majority). The “kiddie” tax laws may apply, and unearned income may be subject to the parents’ tax rate until their child reaches age fourteen. Custody Accounts are still treated as student assets, even if the student can’t access them until the age of majority.

 Saving Instruments

 What kind of savings instrument should families use if they decide to save for college? There are, of course, many options but several, in addition to the ordinary bank savings account, receive favorable treatment under state and federal tax laws. The most common are listed as follows:

 **529 Plans (Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code)**

 Each state now has at least one 529 Plan designed to help families save for future college costs. As long as it meets basic requirements, the federal tax law provides special benefits to the account owner.

 Section 529 of the IRS code provides for the establishment of two types of college financing instruments: prepaid tuition or college savings plans. Some states offer both. Others offer prepaid tuition contracts covering in-state tuition and may allow the account owner to transfer the value of their contract to private and out-of-state schools. However, they may not receive full value in these kinds of transfers. If the family uses a 529 savings program, the full value of the account can be used at any accredited college or university in the country (and even some foreign institutions). Both types of 529 financing plans are funded through “after tax dollars.”

 A 529 Plan investment grows tax-free for as long as the money is within the plan. When a distribution occurs to pay for the beneficiary’s college costs, it is exempt from federal taxes from 2003 through 2010. Unless Congress extends this tax code provision, 529 distributions made after 2010 will be taxable to the beneficiary (i.e., only gains above the principal originally invested). Generally, 529 Plans are treated as the owner’s asset. Thus, if grandparents are the owners, they are generally not considered in their grandchildren’s aid analysis. If the student is made the owner (rare but allowable under the regulations), then the 529 Plan value is treated like his/her asset. The big benefit of these plans is that the donor can stay in control of the account. With few exceptions, the named beneficiary has no rights to the funds.

 The U.S. Department of Education has ruled that 529 savings accounts held in the parents’ names are treated as their asset in determining eligibility for federal financial aid. Thus, the expected contribution towards their child’s college costs is subject to the same treatment as are other parental assets—treatment far more favorable than if the funds are under the ownership of the student.

 Since colleges and universities are free to develop a methodology for awarding their own financial aid funds (as opposed to financial aid programs funded by governmental
agencies), they may decide to treat 529 Plan assets differently when determining eligibility for the institution’s financial aid.

Distributions from 529 Prepaid Tuition Plans reduce financial aid eligibility dollar for dollar. Thus, if the family’s prepaid tuition contract disburses $5,000 in tuition benefits this year, the student will be considered as having $5,000 less need for financial aid.

Upon the completion of a beneficiary’s education, the balance in a 529 account reverts to the owner, which, in turn, will trigger taxes on his or her accumulated earnings.

The most comprehensive Internet sites for 529 Plans can be found at: www.savingforcollege.com and www.collegesavings.org.

Although 529 Plans have distinct tax advantages, some of the savings plans carry risk. Certain states allow 529 Plan contributions to funds ranging from annuities, featuring a guaranteed fixed rate of return annually, to highly speculative equity investment funds in which investors could lose all or a substantial portion of their investment. Because of the volatility in the financial markets in the last few years, some families have lost sizeable portions of their 529 Plan investment. In reaction to these conditions, some states have temporarily suspended new contributions to existing 529 accounts as well as new accounts.

**COVERDELL ACCOUNTS (ESA)**

In 2002, the contribution limit to the Coverdell Education Savings Account (formerly Education IRA) increased from $500 to $2,000 per child. However, if accounts that are established by different family members for the same child cause the total contributions to exceed $2,000, a penalty may be owed.

The parents’ after tax contribution goes into an account that will eventually pass to the child if the funds are not used for college expenses. Unlike unused funds in most 529 Plans, the donor cannot reclaim these funds. Since the annual contribution limit is low, the level of fees and charges to maintain this type of account should be a major concern when selecting the company to manage the Coverdell IRA. In general, Coverdell accounts must be fully withdrawn by the time the beneficiary reaches age 30, or else it may be subject to taxes or penalties.

Funds in a Coverdell account are considered the student’s and not the parents’ asset for financial aid purposes. Under the existing federally-mandated financial aid needs analysis system, 35 percent of a student’s assets are added to his or her contribution from income. Therefore, if the value of a Coverdell were $20,000, the impact on the student’s eligibility in the first year of attendance would be $7,000 or 35 percent of the total account value. Two notes of interest: these

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**Figure 2: How the Pieces Fit Together in Need-Based Financial Aid**

| Total Parent Resources | = | Earned & Other Income + Parent-held Assets
| --- | --- | --- |
| Total Student Resources | = | Earned & Other Income + Student-held Assets
| Needs Analysis | = | Federal & Institutional
| **Cost of Attendance** | = | Total Family Contribution
| = | Demonstrated Need
| = | Pre-Paid Tuition (529)
| = | Unmet Remaining Need
| Institutional Awards | = | Scholarships & Grants
| Work-Study Loans | = | Loans
| **$ The Financial Aid Offer** |

---

1. Taxed on graduated scale of 0–47%.
2. Subject to 12% assessment after deducting asset protection allowance.
3. Taxed at 50% flat rate.
4. Subject to 35% assessment.

Note: Funded retirement plans, equity in primary residence, tax credits, hope credits, and lifelong learning credits are not included in asset calculations.
types of accounts may be phased out for singles earning between $95,000 and $110,000 and joint filers earning $190,000 and $220,000, and may be available for elementary or secondary expenses.

**Conclusion: Putting the Puzzle Together**

Figure 2 (on the previous page) provides an analysis of how all the pieces of the puzzle come together—the cost of attendance, the treatment of income and assets in the calculation of family contribution, the calculus defining need, and the components of the financial aid package. In order to provide our students and their families with solid financial planning advice, enrollment management professionals should understand these interlocking components and the principles listed below.

- If the family begins to save early enough, then even modest monthly set asides can result in a significant asset to underwrite the cost of a college education.
- A sizeable asset held in the parents' name retains most of its initial value even after four years of attendance.
- Given the preferential treatment afforded parental assets as opposed to student assets, families are well advised to keep savings accounts in the parents' names.
- Assets held in the name of the student suffer a much higher depletion than do those held in the parents' names.
- Recent tax changes allow families greater freedom in drawing upon available resources to fund a college education.
- Recent tax changes have created several savings mechanisms that have been designed specifically to help families to save for a college education.
- These new savings instruments receive favorable treatment under the existing tax code.
- For America's wealthiest families—those facing potential estate tax problems—the trust and gift options available ensure that their child’s educational costs are covered no matter what happens to them.

Although college is more expensive than ever and college costs are growing at a rate faster than inflation, today's families have many more options to pay for college. Our frontline recruitment and admission personnel can and should be able to help them design a financial plan that will meet their needs and capabilities.

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**Note:** This document does not claim to give investment, tax, or legal advice. All tax rules or quoted numbers can be changed or indexed by the government at any time. Some phase-out salary information in this document may be based on MAGI or AGI. Moreover, some of these tax breaks have a sunset provision in which they may expire in a few years. Consult with a licensed tax, legal, or investment professional before making any important decision or any decision related to this document. Advice herein is subject to the academic exemption for research.
When you were a little boy, did you want to be an admissions director when you grew up?

When I was a little boy I wanted to be a sailor or drive a fire engine. I didn't know there was such a thing as admissions. I fell into the profession much like a lot of people do, almost by accident. I was a counselor in a high school in northern Michigan. Russ Gabier, a friend of mine, we'd been on the high school track team together, happened to be working for Western Michigan University. He asked me if I'd like to get into college work. And I said “No, I love it up here, skiing, fishing, and hunting. I've got it all up here.” Well, we had three young children at that time and when I mentioned to Pat, my wife, that Russ had asked me about getting into college work, she quickly said “Yes, let’s do it!”

Describe your tenure as director of admissions at the University of Michigan.

After four years at Western, I spent 24 years at Michigan, 16 as director of admissions. I served under what George Hanford, the one-time president of the College Board, called the best one-two punch in college admissions, Clyde Vroman and Gayle Wilson. They were national figures in admissions and created one of the first admissions offices in the country for a public university. These were two incredibly scholarly, sensitive men who, back in the early 1960s, gave their staff a long leash to really do something creative in admissions. They hired two or three of us younger guys at that time and together we came up with a highly successful student-centered admissions program within the very competitive admissions situation at Michigan.

In 1989, I left Michigan and began consulting. One of my jobs was at the University of Southern California. I was soon after hired by usc and spent four really great years there. They'd had some problems in their admissions operation and they thought I might be able to fix them. Happily they were fixed and they're doing very well now. I left usc in 1993 and since that time have had some consulting assignments in Mexico and around the u.s. I've also continued my very active participation in the International Baccalaureate (ib) program with which I have been associated since 1972. During my years at Michigan and usc, I was also very active in the College Board, where I served as chair of two or three committees, and the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, where I helped create and subsequently chaired the Admission Section.

Admissions offices tend to have three primary interests that they’re going to serve: the student interest, societal interests, and university interests. The first and foremost priority should be the student interests. At Michigan at that time, we didn’t use words like recruiting and marketing. The second interest that we wanted to serve was the social interest. We wanted to try to enroll poor kids, minority kids, returning adults, and students with disabilities into the University. Then the third interest that we served was the University.

My concern is that today those interests seem to have been reversed. Now it seems that we’re more interested in serving the university interests first. We bring in very big, fast guys to perform on our football teams. (Judging from this year’s Rose Bowl result, I was better at that at usc than I was at Michigan!) We give special priorities to rich people who may give us some money. We go out and get the “best” students (defined as those with the best test scores and class ranks) because it will make us, the university, look better. The second interest continues to be social, and then the third is the student interest. That is basically why I chose to do this interview. I’m really concerned about this switching of interests. I think we can return to a more civilized way by placing student interests first. That’s what many institutions are now doing and that’s what I feel all should do!
You mentioned this switch from universities being focused on the student interests to being focused on university interests. Do you think that shift is more prevalent in elite, research institutions or do you think that it is something that is occurring across the board?

Certainly to an extent it’s across the board, at least among the institutions with selective admissions. I’m defining admissions in two ways. There’s “selective” admissions, which means you have to be qualified to attend. The other is “competitive” admissions, which means that the institution has more qualified applicants than it can accommodate so they have to make choices among qualified students. It seems to me that all too often both of those groups—the competitive and the selective institutions—have placed student interests somewhat below their own.

News reports are filled with stories describing student anxiety about college admissions. I frequently hear college people say, “We’ve got to improve our place in the U.S. News & World Report ranking of colleges, and the way we do that is to get students with higher test scores.” That leads recruiters directly into high-income areas with their high-powered public and private schools, well-paid staffs, a strong AP or IB program, and counselors who are trained to write inspiring recommendations. Yes, I think we’re getting away from looking at the student interest and I have some ideas on ways to reverse the current situation while making the process more student-centered, reducing some anxiety for everybody, and saving an awful lot of money.

**Could you elaborate a little on those ideas?**

In the first place, we really haven’t researched all of those criteria that we require in the admissions process. We don’t know what extracurricular activities, the essay, and recommendations really tell us about a student’s probability of success. We do have some research on test scores. Typically students with higher test scores will do a little better in college. But those other things really haven’t been researched. But before I get into some of those things, I’d like to talk about changes to the admissions process itself.

I think that institutions should eliminate all plans called “early action,” “early decision,” “early preference,” “precipice admission,” and so forth. Such ill-conceived schemes clearly show that institutional rather than student interests are paramount. Early decision means that we’ll admit you now but you have to pay a deposit and we’re not going to give in if you change your mind. So here’s a student in October of his senior year, his girlfriend wants to go to a certain college, so he wants to go there too (admittedly a poor reason to choose a college, but it does happen). They break up in December and now what’s he going to do? I would not want students on my campus that would rather be someplace else. Now, sure there are some cases where you can break the agreement especially if you’ve got assertive, bright, lawyer-trained parents. But the poor kid out of Pine Stump Junction whose dad works in the forest and mom never went to high school is at a real disadvantage with something like that. We’ve complicated the process so much that we’ve literally intimidated a lot of the people that we really want to attract to create this diversity that we’re looking for on campus.

All institutions, I feel, should return to the old time-honored “rolling admissions” plan. At Michigan we managed rolling admissions and it worked beautifully for us. We began receiving applications in September and started making decisions on them. We began notifying applicants of their decisions in October. To receive equal consideration for admission, seniors had until February 1 to submit their application. There was no advantage to applying earlier and we did not require any enrollment commitment from the student upon admission. At Michigan we admitted to nine schools and colleges and we had in-state and out-of-state enrollment targets. We actively encouraged enrollment of minorities, low income, and geographically remote students. Even with rolling admissions, we were usually on or within a few percentage points of our target enrollments in all of the units. We developed sound projection mechanisms, although we didn’t have Excel and all those neat little things you have now to do these projections. We depended on slide rulers and subsequently calculators.

We would typically make final decisions on about two-thirds of our applicant group in the Fall. Most of these would be admitted and many would be rejected. They were rejected because it appeared that even if they got all As during their senior year, they still wouldn’t have made it in. The other third would be delayed, either for more grades and more test scores or possibly a portfolio, information interview, or music audition. After February 1, we’d take a look at the numbers we had and usually found that about 80 percent or more of our admission offers would already have been committed. So we would go through the delayed group in March to fill the remaining slots with students who had done well during the Fall term. Many students improved, although those who took easy courses would usually be denied. We would begin offering financial aid the first of April and students had to commit to us by May 1, the nationally-recognized Candidates Reply Date. Under this plan, most applicants needed to worry only about doing well in their classes and not be so concerned about failing the “admission game.”

Because we could never predict precisely the final number of students who would accept our offers of admission, we would create an extended waiting list after May 1. So we would say to some students “You’re very close but you’re not quite there. We’re going to wait and see how many enrollment deposits come in and if there are places remaining we may be able to admit you.” Enrollment targets were protected with this extended waiting list and that list was cleaned up by the first of June. So it really didn’t create an awful lot of stress for kids, although they may have been a bit anxious if they were borderline and had to work hard during the Fall term. That’s basically the rolling admissions approach and it’s very workable. It’s so easy to set up and manage the projections...
and, most importantly, it provides the kids with some stress reduction during their senior year.

**What have been some of the catalysts for this switch from a focus on student interests to a focus on university interests?**

I think a lot of it is money. Colleges may not admit it, but they'd love to fill their classes with kids with high entrance test scores who don't need financial aid. Athletics has probably played a part as well. I used to sit as the chair of the Academic Requirements Committee of the NCAA. I saw situations where a lot of institutions compromised their academic program by bringing in athletes who couldn't read or write. Recent initiatives by the NCAA, including Proposition 48, which I drafted in 1983, have helped a little bit, but more needs to be done. I think another reason is that a lot of the institutions have gotten terribly large and terribly bureaucratic. They're looking at bottom-line numbers and not always at the individual. This is true primarily at the large public universities and a few of the large private institutions. The smaller private institutions and certainly the community colleges have been less inclined to go that route. Those institutions, generally, provide a much more student-friendly process.

Online degree-granting institutions are becoming popular in part because they provide a kind of “no pain” approach to admission. You send in your money and you're admitted. Unfortunately, that could be an attractive feature to some people rather than endure the torture they have to these days in some traditional colleges.

My current concerns are influenced considerably by my active involvement in the International Baccalaureate Program. The IB is a comprehensive academic program, characterized by a substantial breadth and depth of curriculum that helps prepare students for life as well as serious intellectual challenges. I lead teams that evaluate the schools for participation in the IB programs. We spend two days at the school where we talk to the students from junior high through twelfth grade, their parents, counselors, and teachers. I have observed that, rather than for the educational enrichment the IB is designed to provide, all too many ninth graders choose the IB primarily because they feel that it will impress a college admissions officer. Part of it is the fault of their parents and part of it is the fault of the university. We start to put this stress on these kids very early on. That’s why when I say these things I’m not just blowing smoke. People say, “He hasn't been around for a long time,” but I was around two weeks ago at a school in Tennessee where I saw this happening and it was very troublesome to me.

**So from your perspective the students have become so focused on the process of getting admitted that they’re not focusing on why they wanted to be admitted in the first place?**

Yes! I have a principle; the best predictor of academic success is previous academic performance. But, we've thrown all of these other things in the application mix. If we could just get these kids to concentrate on learning and not have to contend with all this other stuff, they'd be well served in the college admissions process, and more importantly, well served in life. That's what counselors and their students should concentrate on.

I would like to see the elimination of the required essay. If you enter “college admission essay” in Google, you'll find hundreds of services out there where you can pay anywhere from $8 a page to $800 for the full shot to have somebody edit or even write your essay. It's cheaper if you're willing to take a canned essay. They've got hundreds of titles. And if you need something very specific about yourself, you just outline the data and somebody will write that for you. Those cost a little more, $400–$600. What's the kid from a family that can't afford that kind of money for those essays going to do? And yet, while we preach “diversity,” we still require them. In one of the urban papers I saw an article where a child was quoted that his lawyer father helped him with the essay. What if his father was a recently landed immigrant from Greece or Korea? To my knowledge, there's no evidence that essay performance can help predict college success and yet we continue to require them.

What I'd like to do is invite the student to write a one-page statement about anything he or she chooses to bring to the reviewer's attention. Maybe there's an explanation for the grade of C- in geometry in the tenth grade. Quite possibly there was a serious conflict with the teacher or maybe they had mono. These kinds of things can happen. Give the child an opportunity to explain those things or to reveal special circumstances, skills and experiences that might strengthen chances for admission, or show character, but let's not use the essay itself as an important factor in the decision.

**So you're saying that the essay shouldn't be completely thrown out but used only to further explain the academic record?**

I would throw out the term “essay.” That in itself is intimidating. I would say we should invite a statement on anything that he or she would like to bring to the attention of the reviewer. That’s it. Because you can hire people to write them for you, essays shouldn't be considered. The only logical way to evaluate an essay, and this is impractical, is to invite students in to your office, assign a topic, and sit there and watch them while they write it. Of course, that’s not going to happen.

Another thing that should be dumped are recommendation letters. I got tired of reading countless cliché-ridden, template-prepared recommendations. And it seems to be getting even worse these days. But high school counselors have to prepare these kinds of statements to satisfy their students, their parents, and regrettably some admissions people. What really worries me about recommendations is that so much of the impact comes from the ability, or the inability, of the counselor to write a good recommendation. Why should that influence an admission decision? If I'm a counselor and a student of mine wants to go to an Ivy League school, and I
don't think he or she is quite ready for it, I have a responsibility to share my feelings with that student. That's the way true counseling should happen. Recommendations will generally favor students from high income or private schools where they have more experienced recommendation writers. Those students are probably going to have the edge over the student who goes to a school in a typical low-income neighborhood or rural school because the counselors there will generally have less experience in preparing recommendations. Think of the staff time admissions offices would save each year if they did not have to process, read and critique thousands of essays and recommendations, sometimes over and over again, and for what purpose?

You mentioned that you have some ideas about what should be included in the admissions process; could you elaborate on those ideas?

I'd like to see high schools and colleges becoming partners in a much more student-centered admissions process. If one buys the concept that the best predictor of academic success is previous academic performance, we will need a much better way of determining what the high school record really represents. Right now we usually don't know. For example, there was a private school in an eastern state that knew colleges were interested in an applicant's class rank. To give their students an advantage, they managed to get 80 percent of their students placed into the top 10 percent of the senior class. They did this by computing a raw grade point average of all of their students. Then, they determined the 90th percentile; let's say it was at a 3.6 GPA. After that, they weighted honors, accelerated, and AP courses. At this private school, almost all of their courses were honors level. So with the weighted GPA, 80 percent of the students had above a 3.6 and were counted as being in the top 10 percent of the class. Now that's an extreme case. There are other high schools, however, where virtually every college prep course was designated as "honors," or courses will be listed as AP, but only 10 percent of the students in the class take the AP exam. Because of the current dizzying array of schemes and plans that high schools use to try to impress colleges, admissions personnel often don't know what a grade represents. It's symptomatic of the things that high schools and colleges do to try to impress each other, while using students as pawns in the process.

I propose that we develop a standard form with some questions about the school's grade distribution. We know that grade inflation concerns educators everywhere, but it's much worse in some schools than it is in others. We need to know how honors courses are defined and how many students are allowed into those courses and what are the grading practices and the grade distribution. Also, does the school offer AP and IB courses and, if so, how many students are in those courses and how many take the examinations? AP test results are solid indicators of academic ability. If a school has an AP test score average of only three, but every student in the course took the test, I'm more impressed than if their average is four but only 10 percent of the students took the test. So we need that information. I'd like to know the median or mean SAT and ACT scores and how many sat for the exams. I think it would be significant to know the percentage of teachers who hold advanced degrees because that is an indication of the community support of their education programs. If we have this information, we begin to restore integrity in the grading system and we can go back to the time-honored principle and state with some confidence that the best predictor of academic success is previous academic achievement. We now know how to measure that predictor. With this kind of information we'd know what a B+ or a C really represents. To explore the possibility of such partnerships between high schools and colleges, prototype plans could be created by colleges in cooperation with their primary feeder schools. It is likely that the majority of the entering freshmen in public regional and large research universities are from maybe fifteen or twenty high schools.

If you had all of this information from the schools, how would you compare and make decisions about a student from a high school that offers AP courses and has teachers with master's degrees versus a student from a less affluent school that doesn't have any of these extras?

I'd start by looking at the student's choices. If the student chose the most rigorous courses that were available at his or her school, that tells me that the student confronts rather than avoids challenges. That alone is significant. Beyond that you might rely a little bit more on the SAT or the ACT, but you certainly can't punish the student because he or she didn't take AP or IB courses if none were offered. I have done surveys and found that students from Michigan's Upper Peninsula and the Northern Lower Peninsula, while they may have lacked somewhat the high grade point averages at the University that students from more affluent areas had, persisted through to graduation at a higher rate. In other words, these students came in without always knowing all of the new ways of learning that a lot of the suburban schools offer but they nonetheless experienced success. Now I've thought about that a lot and this has been reinforced by my experience with the IB.

There are two ways of selecting ninth-grade students to participate in the IB in high school. One is selective; you look at the grades and the test scores, have them write an essay, and get recommendations. The other is what we call self-selection; you provide them with the good information about requirements and expectations of the IB so that they have what they need to make wise choices. We've found no statistical difference between the two groups in the percentage of students who were successful on their IB examinations. That clearly indicates that forcing students to jump through numerous hoops didn't really help the selection process, rather let kids do their own selection and they will usually make the right one. Now, you can't realistically do that in college admissions because the number of slots is finite. It does
show a principle, though, that the essay, recommendations, and all that stuff didn’t help determine whether or not those kids would be successful in the IB.

**Which other aspects of current admissions policies or processes need some attention?**

An important topic is standardized testing. I’m a great believer in the tests, but I think only high scores should be considered. High test scores on reliable tests like the SAT and ACT are unambiguous. They tell us that the student probably has those verbal and mathematical learning skills needed to be a successful student. There’s reliable documentation on this. Low scores are ambiguous. Low scores don’t tell us that the student doesn’t have the skills; only that maybe the student has the skills but that couldn’t be validated on this test. Low scores are often caused by test anxiety, lack of the language skills, a physical condition, or maybe not a very good English teacher in high school. Maybe this child didn’t have access to or could not afford the services of commercial test preparation centers that exist in and around a lot of the larger cities. There are all kinds of reasons for low entrance test scores. I’d still require the tests but I would only consider the high scores to provide students with yet another opportunity to show that they have the academic potential to do well.

Less emphasis, if any at all, should be placed on extracurricular activities. Some admission people say they seek the “rounded student.” I’ve never been able to figure out what a “rounded” student was and whenever I’d ask counselors and admissions people, they’d answer, “Well it’s the kid that’s into everything in high school.” I don’t necessarily want that student. The easiest thing to do in high school is to join something. To be elected as vice president of your class means that you’re probably popular and it usually helps to be attractive. Or better yet, attend a small school where there are fewer candidates for the clubs or class offices. What I want to know is what has this student done to distinguish himself or herself in some way either within or outside of school. If they have a leadership role in school and they do something significant with it, they’re the kind of student I want. Just to be in the clubs really doesn’t tell me much. I have actually had students come to me and say, almost apologetically, “I couldn’t participate in any school activities because my dad has this service station and I had to get down there right after school and pump gas,” or “I had to go home after school because we have a severely ill family member and I had to help her.” That shows strength of character and that interests me a great deal.

Another concern I have relates to the priorities some institutions give to the children of benefactors, alumni, and faculty. Public institutions should in no way give any kind of privilege in the admissions process to the children of these groups, except maybe for out-of-state students if they meet the standard required of the in-state students. Every state resident should be given equal consideration for admission.

Further, I would like to see all “no need” financial aid eliminated. I think our current practices are a corruption of the process. A worthy student who doesn’t have the need deserves commendation and might be given a book award, a certificate of merit, housing privileges, or recognition in the hometown newspaper. But don’t sap the limited funds away from the students who really need it. Colleges strengthen diversity by bringing in low-income students. We’ve got to change the mentality here and continue to recognize the achievement of the high-income applicant, but let’s give the money to the child who really needs it.

Finally, as an even more radical change, I would like to eliminate the awarding of credit for college-level work taken while in high school, including dual enrollment programs with area colleges. While students should be encouraged to take AP and IB courses and should be exempted from freshman-level college courses if they’ve mastered the information, they should still be made to complete the full amount of college credits that are required of other students. This would enable those advanced students to continue their accelerated learning and have a richer college experience by expanding the depth and breadth of their undergraduate education. These students would then be better prepared for graduate school and for community or national leadership.

**You’ve talked about the student interests and the university interests, but how do the social interests, specifically diversity, fit into your plan?**

There are multiple issues to discuss here and these characteristics and experiences could be revealed and described by the applicant in the personal statement. We should evaluate carefully those achieving students who have overcome hardships, such as a health problem or a physical handicap, or maybe they are from a very difficult home environment of abuse or limited finances. Maybe it’s the type of school the student attends, a very small rural school or an urban school where very few students go on to college. It might also be a recently landed immigrant or even a foreign student. It could be a child of a family that has been here for a generation but there’s still very little English spoken in the home or one in which nobody from the family has ever attended college. Students who confront and successfully manage severe personal problems and still get themselves reasonably well prepared for college should be afforded special consideration. This would help diversify and enrich the campus environment as well as help meet a social responsibility.

We also need to look at the talents of the applicant. A student who excels in music, debate, athletics, or accomplishes something outside of the school, such as managing a lawn maintenance business or teaching computer skills to retirees, will also enrich the campus environment. Recognize those who have done something that’s out of the ordinary. We need to find ways to enroll those students who demonstrate creativity, commitment, and possess the initiative to do special things with their lives.

The ethnic backgrounds of students also contribute to campus diversity. Give extra admission nudges to applicants
of populations that are seriously under-represented, who are usually, but not always, Americans of Hispanic, African, Asian, or Middle Eastern ancestry, as well as Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and recently arrived Eastern Europeans. Students from far reaching areas of the state and the country will add diversity. Of course, this student should be qualified and at least almost competitive. 

To make an admission decision, do we really need to create such stressful situations for high school students? To change the way we now do things is going to take some very courageous and creative educators. I would be happy if, after reading this rather rambling interview, a few people would say, “We may not be able to do all of that but we’re going to go back and look at the things we do and determine what really is needed!” We cannot, I feel, predict academic success on the basis of a recommendation, or the number of extra-curricular activities, or the applicant’s essay; they’re just not reliable indicators of readiness for college. If people would go back and look at these things and tweak the process, maybe with enough tweaking we could fix things a bit. As we review the applicant’s file, we need to ask: “Did the student take the best courses the school offered? Were the test scores reasonably good? Will the academic background, skills, and personal attributes, as described by them, result in a good fit in the freshman class?” To assure that the entire admissions staff is on the same page, directors will need to conduct training sessions on how to apply these nonacademic nudges to the admission decision.

One of my academic heroes is Howard Gardner, who has done much work on multiple intelligences. He claims, and he’s right, that each of us possess varying levels of several different “intelligences.” Those intelligences include verbal, logical or mathematical, music, bodily, interpersonal, intrapersonal, street smarts intelligence, and others. I think that Gardner might have added “persistence and determination.” I admire kids who grow up in impoverished or otherwise difficult environments and who somehow overcome adversity and get themselves prepared for college. I’ll take a chance on somebody like that because I think they’ve got something that we can’t measure in the ways verbal or math skills are measured. Somehow if we could identify persistence and determination in students, probably best measured by a reliable high school record, we’d be able to better assess a student’s chances for success. A good way to serve all of our students is to bring in students from low economic populations, rural populations, culturally different and remote populations, and groups of students who’ve overcome difficulties in their lives to achieve, rather than only those students who present slick essays, several pages of recommendations, and a shopping list of school activities, but who might lack character.

To switch gears just a little bit, how do you think your time in the leadership of AACRAO impacted your professional life as an admissions counselor? 

I love my profession. I really do. I have not experienced a boring moment in it. Among admission people, I’ve seen some of the most sensitive, creative educators, starting way back in the 1960s and all the way up until when I left the field in the 1990s. I’ve been offered good positions out of the admissions field that I turned down because I wanted to stay in this profession. AACRAO is one of the places where you meet and work with a lot of the other players in the enrollment process including the registrar, computer technicians, orientation people, financial aid folks, foreign student specialists, and people who are involved with graduate school admissions. AACRAO brings all of these people together and good things happen! You need an aacrao-type organization on a national level where you can share ideas and practices with your colleagues from around the country. Besides it’s a lot of fun. Admissions people tend to enjoy life, although there are strains and stresses and maybe it isn’t as much fun now as it used to be. But the satisfaction you get from helping a youngster make the right choice and having that person come back after a few years and thank you for the impact that you had on his or her life makes you feel really good.

Any other last thoughts? 

I don’t know if the radical changes I have suggested here will ever happen. If there is some agreement that changes are needed it’s going to take a lot of creativity and courage to bring them about. I would hope to see these ideas discussed at national and regional meetings of aacrao and I’d like to have high schools talk about them. I just hope that colleges are willing to step back and look at what they do and justify somewhat scientifically why they put students through all of this. If they’re going after kids in upper income areas, they should admit it; say they need the money and that they simply can’t take poor kids. Many students from lower income families are going to two-year colleges or enrolling in online degree-granting programs because the increasingly complicated college admissions process intimidates them. If we really want diversity, we don’t have to come up with rigid point systems and lengthy essays seeking politically correct responses. Instead, we should simplify the process and base decisions on a true assessment of previous educational achievement. I fear too many of today’s educational leaders lack the courage to be innovative and I suspect that the ideas I’ve suggested will be seen as too “pie in the sky” to ever happen. Nonetheless, I hope that colleges will at least decide to take a good look at what they do. Then, maybe somebody will have the courage to raise some questions: “Is it plausible to again make student...
interests the paramount factor in the admission process? Do we really need all of those recommendations? And essays? How important really are extracurricular activities? Should students be motivated to take IB and AP courses just to get through college quicker? Should low test scores keep kids out of college? Do legacies and alumni families really deserve special admission privileges? Can we employ a true rolling admissions plan?” If those questions are asked and answered on even a few U.S. campuses, I shall be very happy.

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Diane Lampe, Associate Vice President Student Services and Academic Advising
The recent introduction of the Affordability in Higher Education Act of 2003 by Rep. Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (R-CA) has re-ignited debate regarding what colleges and universities charge and how they spend their money, two of the most contentious questions in higher education policy. Though Congressman McKeon and his colleagues have raised the stakes by proposing federal sanctions for substantial tuition increases, little else has changed in the contours of public debate on the issue. The same talking points are being exchanged (though with updated numbers), and many of the same “sticker shock” stories are being written (but with different campuses in the hot seat). Why is this a case of “déjà vu all over again?” Simply put, the discussion repeats because policymakers, higher education leaders, and the media refuse to accept some cold, hard truths about college costs and prices.

Better Information Makes Better Informed Consumers

Poll after poll and study after study confirm that the general public is woefully misinformed about what a college education costs, due in significant part to a steady diet of media coverage that focuses on a handful of the nation’s most expensive schools. So why do we continue to use sticker prices and percentages as our primary means of communicating about college prices, when the average student pays less than half the sticker price at a public four-year institution (see Figure 1), and percentage increases can make low-tuition schools look like sinners and high-tuition schools look like saints? Policymakers and journalists serious about helping students and families need to start with the following two small but meaningful changes.

Read the research. In the 1998 Higher Education Act Amendments, Congress charged the Department of Education to investigate the factors influencing costs and prices. The results of that investigation were published in 2001, and revealed that:

- For public four-year colleges and universities, state appropriations were the single most important factor influencing tuition levels at these institutions.
- For private four-year colleges and universities, the picture is more complex, with no single factor explaining recent changes in tuition levels.

These findings, and especially the relationship between state funding and public university tuition, are essentially being ignored by some policymakers, a number of whom advocated for the very study that confirmed the linkage. Unfortunately for this camp, the proof is in the numbers. (See Figure 2 on the following page.) The lesson? Don’t ask the question if you’re not really interested in the answer.
Recognize the limits—and leverage—of federal policy.

Three decades ago, Congress made the decision to put federal financial aid in the hands of students, rather than institutions. Consequently, any effort to apply “carrots” or “sticks” through Title IV policy will have a disproportionate impact on students. That is not to say that Congress does not have leverage; however, exerting that leverage would place access and choice on an equal footing and would mean re-thinking a system that disadvantages states that invest in higher education and effectively rewards states that disinvest in their colleges and universities. A revamping of this magnitude is highly unlikely, however, because too many interests are too invested in the status quo.

Colleges and Universities Need to Show More Leadership When it Comes to Disclosure

To put it bluntly, recent initiatives to document and disclose costs and expenditures have received a tepid response in the higher education community, and questions about indicators such as instructional cost per student are answered in caveats. This simply must change if institutions are to effectively blunt criticism of their spending and demonstrate good stewardship of state and student investment.

College presidents, pundits, and politicians continue to speak of the nation’s higher education system as “the best in the world.” If that is so, then we should have a public policy discussion of higher education finance that is worthy of such a system, as opposed to the one that we find ourselves sadly repeating today.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Imagine three different students. First, there’s Giovanni, a student from Salt Lake who just graduated with top grades from West High School. Next, there’s Nancy, who learned English, stayed in school, stayed away from drugs, did every-thing she was told, and graduated as her high school’s valedictorian. And lastly, there’s Gabriela. She studied hard, got good grades and ranked first in her class of ROTC Cadets. Other than academic excellence, what is the common denominator linking them? They are all undocumented students who will be unable to afford college because they are charged out-of-state tuition, which can run two or three times higher than in-state tuition. These students are paying a high price for the decision their parents made to bring college because they are charged out-of-state tuition, which can run two or three times higher than in-state tuition. These students are paying a high price for the decision their parents made to bring them to the United States at an early age. After spending most of their lives here, it’s hard for them to think of themselves as anything other than American and pursuing the educational dream of higher education.

A National Dilemma
Colleges and universities are increasingly facing the decision as to what tuition rates should be charged to these undocumented students. Some states have passed laws that allow these students the earned opportunity to pay in-state tuition. Among them are Texas, California, Utah, New York, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Washington, who grant in-state tuition to a student if he or she has attended high school in the state for at least three years. Administrative implications for colleges and universities implementing these statutes can include how to classify these students once they have gained in-state tuition and enrolled in classes. Are they residents? International students? Individual approval? Special admission? Do they qualify for state financial aid assistance? Federal assistance? Many institutions have opted for in-state resident status so the student is able to receive some state assistance.

Measures to allow in-state tuition have met with fierce opposition from critics who claim the trend “slowly chips away at the cultural goal of citizenship.” Critics also claim these states are skirtsing federal immigration laws which prohibit in-state tuition to illegal residents. These implications have placed higher education in the middle of an immigration tug-of-war, and raised academic questions regarding testing, assessment, evaluation, and reporting for this group of students. According to the Department of Education, 50,000–70,000 undocumented students graduate from high school every year and 20 percent of the entire undocumented population is under fifteen years of age. The educational implications for this group will continue to grow during this decade and the next.

The DREAM Act
Even with in-state tuition, many immigrants face the stark reality of not qualifying for federal financial aid, and due to their immigration status, not being able to work once they graduate. The DREAM Act of 2003: The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act sponsored by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Richard Durbin (D-Illinois), would address these issues and would permit qualifying immigrant students to apply for their permanent residency (green card) status, which in turn allows them to apply for federal financial aid. Under the legislation, illegal immigrants could apply for legal residency if they have lived in the U.S. for at least five years and entered the country before age sixteen, have completed two years of military service or two years of college within six years of high school graduation, and have a clean criminal record. The DREAM Act would repeal Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), which requires any state that provides in-state tuition to undocumented
immigrants to provide the same tuition rate to out-of-state residents. Section 505, therefore, discourages many states from offering in-state tuition to undocumented students.

In the House of Representatives, Chris Cannon (R-Utah), Howard Berman (D-California), and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-California) introduced the Student Adjustment Act. Like the Act, the Student Adjustment Act would also repeal Section 505, restoring a state’s right to determine criteria for in-state tuition and other student assistance. Both acts would allow certain immigrant students to adjust their status to that of legal permanent resident, and would make them eligible for federal education loans and work study programs. However, under the Act, students would not be eligible for federal student aid grants, such as the Pell grant. If enacted, the Student Adjustment Act would qualify students for Pell grants, student loans, and work study programs. To qualify for the Student Adjustment Act, the same criteria apply as listed above for the DREAM Act.

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted to support the DREAM Act by a 16–3 margin and at the time of publication, the Act is traveling to the Senate floor for debate. Some debate issues that have been added to the bill include: requiring students to attend school without the ability to apply for federal financial aid grants, and requiring students to register under the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This system is used for tracking individuals entering the U.S. with a student visa. These elements are currently in discussion and must be worked out for full Senate floor debate.

For immigrants in higher education, the DREAM Act and similar approaches are earned benefits that would be afforded only to those who graduate from U.S. high schools and qualify under the stipulations mandated. Giovanni, Nancy, and Gabriela have worked hard to reach their goals and aspire to continue their educations, get college degrees, and move on to productive careers. These are some of the country’s future doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, entrepreneurs, and leaders.

No one can deny that in order for this country to continue its leadership role in the world, an educated population is vital and mandatory. We cannot afford to turn away intellectual talent and dreamers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Juan B. García is the Director of Admission and Records at Blinn College. Mr. García has worked in Student Services for over fourteen years at both the community college and university level. He is also the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Vice President for Young Adults. In his position with LULAC he serves as a nationwide advocate and facilitator of college and university success for Latinos and Latinas.
Enrollment management organizations are driven to the brink of excellence or extinction in the relentless pursuit for strategies to improve competitive position, recruit a larger or higher profile class, retain a greater percentage of students, or enhance student satisfaction. Some are scientific, data-supported strategies while others are derived from past experiences. Still other strategies are mandated from the top, emanate from “gut instincts,” or linger because “it is the way it has always been done.” Regardless of the source, some strategies work and others do not. Knowing the difference and acting accordingly often determines the enrollment management organization’s win rate.

Successful enrollment management strategies in the decade ahead will focus on speed of delivery, customization, personalization, and convenience. Automated e-mail responses, e-brochures, dynamically created Web portals, electronic confirmations, real time degree audits, and instantaneous early intervention contacts are examples of speed strategies that are in use on many campuses today. These speed strategies resonate well with students who have grown-up digital. Their culture is one of immediacy.

In the digital world, students are inundated with spam and are increasingly irritated by communications that are unsolicited and seemingly irrelevant. So, the first rule of effective communication in the electronic age is to incorporate permission marketing. Seek the recipient’s permission to send communications along with an option to be removed from the distribution list. The second rule is to customize the communication, so that it is relevant for the individual. Segmented e-mail and Web-mail, vertical portals, digital publications, targeted phone contacts, and interactive Web chats represent a few mediums for delivering content that is specific to an individual’s interests and decision-making stage. By using data mining tools, such as Customer Relationship Management software, a profile of each prospective and current student can be developed and used to tailor communications as well as special offers.

For this level of customization to work, you must have the technology infrastructure and the staff expertise. You also must personalize the communication. Using the student’s name in Web pages, e-mails, phone calls, publications, and letters adds power to the message and increases the likelihood that it will be read. The content becomes “my message” rather than something sent to thousands of people. Having “my” admissions counselor, academic advisor, peer mentor, online personal assistant, or student services advocate adds a degree of personalization to the student’s experience. Particularly at large universities, this approach humanizes the experience by providing a face to an otherwise anonymous institution.

Knowing who to go to with issues is both reassuring and convenient for students. Today’s students live extremely busy lives, so the more business transactions, information, and decision-making tools they can access anytime, anywhere, the more satisfied they will be. For example, students should never have to walk into an office to pick-up a form. They should not have to understand your organizational structure or know how to find information buried on your Web site. They should never experience “runaround” or receive inaccurate information. Simply put, matriculating into and through an institution should be intuitive, seamless, and hassle free. They enroll to receive an education, not to master your bureaucracy.

Strategies do matter, but execution matters more. Quality execution depends on systems and people. Reengineer all major processes to produce a quality deliverable, to prevent problems from occurring, to identify and eliminate “bottlenecks,” and infuse quality control measures. Build a culture that values quality work. That means having clearly defined expectations, incentives for innovation and excellence, accountability, adequate resources and infrastructure, an action plan, and skill development opportunities.
Regarding the latter, invest in people. The staff in your organization represent your only sustainable competitive advantage, not strategies. Provide learning opportunities specific to their functional area but that also introduce them to enrollment management concepts, your enrollment management strategies, the institution’s vision, and higher education in general. When staff understand how their functional role fits with the bigger picture, they think “outside the box” and take calculated risks. They contribute to the enrollment management organization in ways that you never imagined. And most importantly, if you recognize their contributions, they will feel like valued members of the team.

Search for as many win-wins as possible, strategies that produce results while improving efficiencies, the work environment, or the skills of the staff. When people believe a strategy will somehow make their work life better, they are more passionate about the cause. Passion yields commitment and when necessary, personal sacrifice.

And lastly, improve your win rate by focusing on the strategies that offer the best return on investment. Know how much money and time are invested in each strategy and compare that investment against the return. Did you meet or exceed the desired objective for a particular strategy? Are there other promising strategies that could yield a higher return on investment? By constantly assessing everything you do and using information gathered to eliminate or refine an existing strategy or perhaps, invest in a new initiative, you will create a high performing organization.

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Following the June 23, 2003 Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action in admissions to graduate and professional programs, many institutions are contemplating how, if at all, to utilize race and ethnicity in making admissions decisions. The Court’s ruling notwithstanding, a nagging question lingers: Can race-conscious admissions policies actually enhance diversity? Traditional approaches to recruitment have never produced a proportionately significant number of minority graduate students. Therefore, why should we assume that tweaking the admissions system and expanding financial aid will substantially increase the number of minority graduate students (Cherwitz 2003; Cherwitz forthcoming)? The reality is that many minority undergraduates may not be as likely as other students to think about opportunities made possible by graduate study; yet knowledge of opportunities precedes the impetus to take advantage of the application process.¹

Unfortunately, the current institution-based recruitment model does little to ensure that spaces are created where minorities may acquire sufficient and relevant insight into graduate education. To achieve greater diversity, we must increase awareness of the value of graduate education and devise experiences allowing minority undergraduates to explore how advanced study can engage their hearts and minds—helping them fulfill their professional visions and ethical commitments. Recruiting a critical mass of outstanding Hispanic and African American students requires a change in mindset.

Intellectual Entrepreneurship: A New Approach to Increasing Diversity

Richard A. Cherwitz and Susan Alvarado Boyd

Intellectual Entrepreneurship: A Vision of Education

At the University of Texas—Austin (UT), Intellectual Entrepreneurship (IE) is a program and philosophy of graduate education promoting the virtues of discovery, ownership, and accountability. IE challenges students to be greater than the sum of their disciplinary parts—to be “citizen-scholars” contributing both to academe and the community (Cherwitz and Daniel 2003; Cherwitz, Darwin, and Grund 2003; Cherwitz, Rodriguez, and Sievers 2003; Cherwitz and Sullivan 2002; Cherwitz, Sullivan, and Stewart 2002; Chu and Evans 2002; Devine 2001; Weisbuch 2001). IE is not a professional development program: it asks students in all fields of study to consider what matters to them most, using those answers to shape their intellectual and academic development. It provides a mindset and impetus for acquiring and producing knowledge in academic disciplines.

In so doing, IE explicitly underscores the enormous impact of scholarship in the arts, sciences, social sciences, and humanities to society. Yet the value of these time-honored areas of learning is something not always apparent to undergraduates who, as they weigh their options following graduation, frequently choose careers in business, law, and medicine where the perceived impact on society is transparent. By engaging students in community projects where they discover and put knowledge to work, as well as requiring them to identify and adapt to audiences for whom their research matters, IE confirms that traditional areas of scholarship are as vital as the so-called “applied” fields of study and provide important venues for contributing to society. For IE participants, graduate degrees become more than certificates designating completion of institutional requirements; they are tools for creating intellectual and practical possibilities and for fulfilling one’s passions.

¹ The evidence for this is overwhelming. Excluding professional schools like business, law, and medicine that historically have been somewhat more successful in recruiting minority students, the applicant pool for programs in arts, sciences, humanities, and social sciences is characterized by a paltry number of underrepresented minorities. For Fall 2003, only 6.2 percent of the 18,000-plus applicants to the University of Texas at Austin, one of the nation’s largest graduate schools, were Hispanic, African American or Native American—a statistic comparable to that of many graduate institutions. Never in the past ten years, which includes the pre-Hopwood era when affirmative action in admissions and funding was the norm, has this percentage risen to double digits. Moreover, over 60 percent of minority applicants are in less than 20 percent of the institution’s available degree programs.
Intellectual Entrepreneurship and Diversity

What does the IE program and philosophy of education have to do with increasing diversity? It demonstrates that attracting minority applicants necessitates more than targeting a population. Implementing changes in education that benefit all may have the unintended—but important—consequence of helping minorities. For example, IE was devised to increase the value of graduate education. Yet we discovered that 20 percent of students enrolled in IE classes are underrepresented minorities, while this same group comprises only 9 percent of UT’s total graduate student population. Minority students report that, by rigorously exploring “how” to succeed, IE courses demystify graduate school and the academic-professional world, helping first-generation students learn the unspoken rules of the game.

More importantly, though, students tell us that IE provides one of the few opportunities to contemplate how to utilize their intellectual capital to give back to the community as well as their academic disciplines—something that informs the career decisions of many first-generation students. Unlike professional development, the spirit of intellectual entrepreneurship resonates with and meets a felt need of minority students. This is because IE facilitates exploration and innovation; it implores students to create for themselves a world of vast intellectual and practical possibilities, developing the toolkits, networks, and other resources needed to bring their visions to fruition.

This attitude toward students and the manner in which it supplants empowerment for traditional top-down, patriarchal methods of education and professional development seems especially attractive to minorities. After all, while minority graduate students know they are intellectually smart enough to succeed and may not wish to be “given” special assistance or professional development, they often desire—as do other students—opportunities and experiences allowing them to own and discover the value of their graduate education and to be accountable for it by giving back to the community. This propensity to foster citizen-scholarship may be one reason why Harvard Afro-American Studies scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. proudly proclaimed, “I am an intellectual entrepreneur.” The IE philosophy, therefore, may be an important mechanism for improving odds for completing a degree, increasing chances for professional and academic achievement, and leveraging knowledge for social good—outcomes that are important to many, including minority students. In fact, we contend that there might be more interest in graduate education if minority students could discern a closer link between added knowledge and fulfillment of their various political and social agendas.

Intellectual Entrepreneurship: A Recruitment Model

IE offers not only a distinctive vision of education attractive to minorities but also a unique methodology for expanding the minority graduate applicant pool. By shifting from institutional recruitment strategies to initiatives addressing students’ intellect and passions, the IE philosophy has the capacity to help those who have never contemplated advanced study discover whether graduate education resonates with their personal and professional aspirations. In the language of public administration, this represents a shift from “place-based” to “person-based” policy.

Consider Daisy Fuentes, a UT senior studying biology who, along with nearly two-dozen of her classmates and students from local colleges and universities, participates in an IE pre-graduate school internship program administered by the authors of this essay. These internships pair undergraduates with faculty mentors and graduate student “buddies,” immersing them in the culture of graduate study—something about which most undergraduates, especially minorities and first-generation students, are frequently unaware.

Fuentes’s story is a familiar one. As a science student, she always assumed she would become a medical doctor, using her talents to contribute to the well-being of others. Until recently, Fuentes never imagined that a graduate degree in a science or education discipline might equip her to fulfill her vision of contributing to the community. Fuentes’s revelation did not occur because a graduate program “recruited” her or because of a recruitment workshop that explained how to apply to graduate school and obtain financial aid. Fuentes’s transformation came from her epiphany that she is an “intellectual entrepreneur.”

Early in her internship, Fuentes is discovering the desire to develop a comprehensive community health center. When asked what knowledge and skills might be needed to accomplish this, Fuentes has begun to approach her education in a more inductive, entrepreneurial manner. Instead of starting with an academic discipline (typically the one in which an undergraduate degree is earned) and then devising a strategy for admission, a practice common among most would-be graduate students, Fuentes is utilizing her desire to contribute to society as a lens for determining the most appropriate, relevant fields of study.

While Fuentes’s story is just beginning, her participation in the pre-graduate school internship has already produced a major revelation. She learned the importance of approaching academic decisions as an intellectual entrepreneur—to discover, own, and be accountable for educational choices. Fuentes discovered that becoming a professor may afford her the requisite intellectual capital and therefore the greatest potential to impact both academe and the community. Via teaching and research, she envisions a plan for sharing her knowledge and training with the widest possible audience. While never seriously considering being a professor, she now admits that this is an important professional prospect. Not surprisingly, Fuentes recommends the IE internship for first-generation, minority students: “It connects you with experiences and opportunities relevant to your dreams and goals, placing you strategically on the game board of life.”

Fuentes’s experience documents that increasing diversity in graduate education means moving beyond mechanistic
Traditional recruitment methods don't present the “package” of students—particularly minorities—need for connecting their academic, professional, ethical, and personal commitments. Unless students learn how graduate education incorporates and satisfies these various dimensions of their lives, the prospect of a more representative graduate student body remains bleak.

Focusing on admissions and financial aid won't markedly increase diversity. A new mindset is required—one valuing students as individuals, creating opportunities for them to discover, own, and be accountable for their education. Abdicating institutional responsibility by pointing to an insufficient minority applicant pool is no longer acceptable. Believers and doers among the professorate and administration of universities are needed to expend the time and energy demanded by this new, labor-intensive approach to recruitment.

References

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS
Using Legendary Customer Service to Increase Your Retention and Admission Rates

by Barry Himmel

You work hard to recruit and attract the best possible students. You develop marketing programs that position your school as the ideal place for your students. Your messages all point to a great student experience and education. Once the student is enrolled, the focus then turns to retention. How do you create a positive and energized environment where students want to stay, grow, learn and graduate?

**Good vs. Bad Service**

The service you receive helps define an organization and determine your loyalties. For example, you may have restaurants, stores, or businesses you like to frequent because of the service they deliver. This loyalty is built because of the emphasis these establishments place on service. These establishments make you feel welcome and leave you with the feeling you have received a good value for your time and money. They give you a reason to return.

Conversely, if you receive poor or indifferent service, you stop doing business with that organization. For example, most people will not return to a restaurant if they receive poor service—even if the food is good. They remember the service. Organizations that are known for their service work very hard to get that reputation.

**Service and the Student Experience**

Service also plays an important role in the student experience. Students want good service, and they want to feel welcome and appreciated. Their perception is that they are paying a lot of money for an education and want to be treated with respect and courtesy.

At the forefront are your institution’s faculty and staff. They can influence student satisfaction and ultimately impact your reputation.

Every staff member is a representative of your school and can help improve the student experience. Students have many points of contact throughout the school community, and every day interact with staff from many different departments. This interaction ranges from the simplistic (perhaps at a dining hall) to something more complex (a counseling session). The service the students receive helps shape their perception of your school. As such, you want to develop a culture where the focus is on consistently exceeding students’ expectations. When you develop and implement this culture, you create an environment where staff treat students as valued customers, and engage with their colleagues in a respectful manner. This is a building-block for a positive work environment.

**Improving Service**

Here are some simple techniques for improving the service your staff provide:

- **Set service standards for each department.** Employees need to know what is expected of them and the standards you set define those expectations. Your school has many standards that impact many facets of your operations. You have academic standards and financial standards and you should also have service standards. Examples of these standards might be:
  - how long it takes to get back to a student or colleague
  - a proper greeting over the phone
  - how long it takes to greet someone entering an office
  - the appearance of the work area
  - updating voice mail daily
  - personal appearance

Ask your staff to help define these standards. If these are their standards, they will be more apt to follow and defend them. These standards help define expectations for both staff and students.

- **Recognize those that deliver exceptional service.** When you define standards that are objective and measurable, it
is easy to hold staff accountable. When staff exceed your expectations, recognize them. There are many inexpensive and effective ways to provide incentives, such as movie tickets, time off, and gift certificates. This sincere recognition helps reinforce the importance you place on legendary service. Everyone likes their work and contributions to be recognized.

- **Review your priorities.** It is very easy, especially with administrative functions, to become overwhelmed with operational and bureaucratic tasks. Things are changing all the time and demands and work loads keep increasing. That is a reality of today’s work environment. We are asked to do more with less!

  However, that does not mean we can discount or minimize the level and importance of the service we deliver to our colleagues and students. They deserve our best, even if that is an apology or bad news or a delay in their request. When you begin compromising your service standards, students start looking elsewhere and lose some of the loyalty to your school. You also develop a more cynical customer that becomes more difficult to work with over time and retain.

- **Own the situation.** You want to develop a culture where there is more ownership of the problem or situation. Some organizations are so large that it is easy for the student to get ‘lost in the shuffle.’ Many of your students are young and don’t have the experience to work through the administrative maze. Help them and make certain they understand the staff at your school is a partner in this process.

- **Provide your staff the tools and skills to be legendary.** You are part of an educational institution and certainly understand the importance of training. Your staff needs the skills and tools to be able to properly respond to students’ concerns. For example, they need to understand how to react to difficult situations or work with different personality styles. Staff need to recognize how they can positively impact student retention.

- **Have fun.** Create a fun environment where people want to work and students like to visit. When staff are in a good and upbeat mood, this is communicated to students and colleagues. Build a department that makes a difference.

Setting the service standard in your market requires a commitment from both management and staff. This commitment is backed by an organized effort to raise the bar on the service you deliver. Once you begin delivering this exceptional level of service, you will be rewarded with a happier staff that is more focused, students who are satisfied with their service and educational experience, and ultimately a higher retention rate, meaning higher revenues and increased enrollment numbers.

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In introductory economics courses, it is customary to introduce the concepts of “normative” and “positive.” As noted by Milton Friedman some time ago, “positive economics” refers to what is, what was, what will be; that is, something described in positive terms refers to what can be empirically observed. “Normative,” on the other hand, refers to what “should” or “ought” to be. Thus, a normative perspective is a subjective one.

In higher education, much use has been made of a metaphor that conveys a positive view. I want to argue in this essay that there is also an important, if often unrecognized or unspoken, normative aspect to its use as well. This metaphor/model is, of course, viewing higher education as a “market.”

When thinking about trends in higher education, it is increasingly common to use terms that reflect a market-based perspective. For example, there are frequent references to “the market for online education” or “costs of [fill in the blank] that the market just won’t bear,” “maximizing revenue,” or even “a profit-making operation.”

But, when thinking about trends and doing so using market-based terminology, it is important to bear several things in mind. First, what do those terms mean? Second, are they accurate? And third, what implications are implicit in them? Without these considerations, it is difficult to view the changing landscape in higher education with clarity and objectivity. When thinking about the nature of a “trend,” deliberate consideration of the context in which it is occurring and the impact of the conceptual model used to define and analyze an observation leads to a clearer, better articulated, and certainly more accurate analysis.

**Trends and Context**

Recent trends in higher education, i.e., the general directions in which higher education has tended to move during the past two decades in particular, have become increasingly pronounced because of the accelerating complexity of the environment in which American higher education operates and the increasing speed of change in that environment. These contextual conditions are what make the identification of trends both a challenge and a necessity.

The context of American higher education is unquestionably more complex than ever and not simply because there are more students and more institutions. Colleges and universities are performing more functions than they did twenty years ago. The breadth of student services has grown; physical plants are larger, more sophisticated, and more costly to operate; administrative systems are more comprehensive and in many respects more demanding as both internal and external reporting requirements have expanded; revenue raising and related financial management practices are first priorities; and institutional goals and expectations have expanded, even as they now run the gamut from being “the best” to simply staying in operation.

These increases in complexity are tied, predictably perhaps, to increasing institutional dependence on external ties. For example, student financial aid systems are increasingly tied to private financial enterprises as well as to the federal government; private vendors (who are increasingly likely to be for-profit) compete aggressively to sell everything from food concessions to technology-based hard and soft goods to highly specialized consulting services; and professional associations of all sorts are trying to act as middlemen between institutions and vendors as well as compete with for-profit vendors. Indeed, higher education institutions are increasingly more dependent on external providers (and less self-reliant) than in the past, even the recent past.

At the same time, the other important contextual characteristic is that the rate of change overall has increased. There are two important and related aspects to this: knowledge and technology, both of which act as cause and effect of changed
expectations. The complex connections among the increasing amount of knowledge, advancing technology, and social/economic expectations has been well-documented. For higher education, the core of which is knowledge development and dispersal, the increasing speed of changes in these areas hits harder and faster than in many other areas of American life, so that the immediate challenges and the immediate effects are more profound.

As a result, the landscape of higher education is both larger and more complex. One might argue that the rate of change in higher education started accelerating when the effects of the GI Bill began to be felt. Since then, the landscape has grown larger, whether measured by numbers or sizes of institutions, by enrollments, by the range of academic offerings, by gross expenditures, or even by social expectations. And the growth in size has been matched by the increase in complexity.

The Market Metaphor
In an effort to deal with this complexity, it is tempting, and perhaps even rational, to look for a model to identify and objectively analyze core elements. Increasingly, this takes the form of viewing higher education as an “industry” that is subject to “market forces.”

Markets are social/economic mechanisms that determine what gets produced, how it gets produced, and who gets what is produced. Markets therefore, determine how much of something gets produced and sold and the price at which it is exchanged from sellers to buyers. In order for any market to accomplish these functions, there have to be both sellers and buyers. No market exists without each kind of actor, despite the common view that sellers are typically in control of those three functions. Price, as determined by the market mechanism, is the key element in decision-making by both groups.

The important implications of looking at what goes on in higher education from this perspective are that for both producer-sellers and consumer-clients, price is the primary driver of behavior and that all market participants are acting in their own self-interest. For buyers, self-interest is usually considered to be something resembling satisfaction. For sellers, it is something along the spectrum of profit-maximization to size-maximization to satisficing (simply staying in business).

All this implies that there is a “product” being produced and bought. What is this product when it comes to higher education? Upon some thought, the answer to this is neither obvious nor simple. Immediate responses often include the words “knowledge” or “education,” perhaps “learning,” or even “ability.” But a frequent objection to these is that, while meaningful, these are vague definitions and that it is impossible (or close to it) to determine that this is what has been exchanged effectively between buyers and sellers. Other perhaps more quantifiable definitions of the “products” of higher education are degrees, academic credits, even graduates. Yet these definitions fall short of what most buyers and sellers see themselves doing.

The complexity of what gets produced and sold in higher education, and the difficulty in defining it, means that the real price of the product and the means of exchange are seriously difficult to identify. This, in turn, makes decision-making difficult and complicated for both sellers and buyers.

An additional complication that affects the nature of the price-product relationship in higher education is that education per se has many of the qualities of what economists refer to as “market failure.” That is, because many of the benefits of education are not included in its market price, the market mechanism does not produce or distribute it optimally. For example, although I benefit either directly or indirectly from others who pay to become educated, they cannot make me pay a price that reflects my benefits from their education. This, of course, is the rationale for government “intervention” in higher education markets—intervention that typically takes the forms of state institutional support and federal student financial aid, which then distorts price to both producers and consumers.

Consideration of who the consumer/buyers of higher education involve recognizing that there is no single group of customers. Clearly, students (and their families) pay much of the price of higher education and benefit from buying it. Governments (federal, state, and in the case of some community colleges, counties) also “buy” this product, but the price they pay is different from that paid by students, as are the benefits. Employers also benefit, but pay directly only when they offer employee tuition reimbursement, fund research and development (R&D), or donate to institutions directly, all of which are discretionary.

The producers are degree-granting institutions of higher education, primarily colleges and universities. There are public, private non-profit, and private for-profit institutions. Each faces substantial costs to produce, costs that many have argued are increasing dramatically. At the same time, there is wide and increasing variation among these as institutional specialization (the search for a “niche”) continues.

This, in turn, reintroduces the question of what it is that is getting produced and consumed. The variety of types of institutions is reflected in the different “products” they produce: liberal arts, preprofessional, technical, and applied educations, to name several of the main types. Open vs. selective admissions, different class sizes and physical facilities, research vs. teaching priorities, different missions or financial aid policies, and, of course, different “quality” (often recognizable, but certainly difficult to define) means that there are sub-markets operating within the overall market and certainly adds to the difficulty of thinking about higher education as a market-based industry.

Market Price as a Measure of Cost
All these considerations raise two related issues. What does market competition mean in this context, and what role does price play in this competition? Rephrased, what do colleges and universities compete for and do they do it via price, as the market perspective suggests they do?
A strong argument can be made that they compete with one another for revenues that come from students and families (tuitions and fees), alumni (donations), corporate and other kinds of donors such as foundations (donations), investors looking for a return (sponsored R&D funds), the federal governments (student financial aid, R&D funds), and states and counties (public sector appropriations and student financial aid).

Because many sources of revenues come with students, both directly or indirectly, there is competition for students. As a result, we see increasing expenditures by colleges and universities to attract students, often by use of advertising designed to distinguish one institution from another. Institutional spending on such marketing has increased dramatically over the past two decades, and as it has ratcheted up, so has spending on marketable aspects of what institutions can advertise: physical facilities, breadth of student services and amenities, and state-of-the-art technology are common examples.

One clearly observable result of this is that the costs of operating colleges and universities have increased. Whether measured in terms of gross expenditures, per student expenditures, operating expenditures, or other measures, it is nearly impossible to find an institution that is spending less today in real terms than it did ten or twenty years ago.

Another, perhaps more profound, trend is that price is increasingly less reflective of cost for colleges and universities, both externally and internally. Externally, with the exception of most proprietary schools, tuition charged (the “sticker price”) can vary from roughly 20 percent to 95 percent of an institution’s cost per student. This applies to both public and private institutions. When various forms of financial aid are factored in, the relationship between costs and prices becomes even more tenuous. Internally, there is increasing competition among cost centers for fungible institutional funds so that the concept of prices as measures of costs becomes even murkier.

If prices and costs are widely different, it becomes impossible for the market mechanism to operate with efficiency. Resources do not get allocated to their best (most efficient) use if price doesn’t indicate their true economic cost. And price is not a good indicator of costs in higher education.

**The Implications**

Yet, we continue to refer to higher education issues and concerns in terms related to market-based competition; phrases such as “developing market niches,” “running a profit,” “tuition pricing strategies,” and “listening to our customers” are common. What this does is effectively define the conversation, thereby making important implications about the importance of “profits,” of pricing strategy, of effectively beating out competitors, and of pleasing the customer in an environment that encourages “competition.”

The effect of this language and the implicit message it contains is that the market model is right for higher education, that its language and its translation into institutional and public policies is appropriate. Yet the main part of the market model—the use of price as a good measure of cost and the usefulness of its role as the mechanism of decision-making for producers and consumers—all too often does not hold up.

The lesson here is that yes, institutions have to have sufficient revenues to cover their costs of operation, and yes, they want to use their resources efficiently. But given that the nature of higher education is socially as well as privately valuable, and that this is recognized by the subsidies built into operating costs of both public and private institutions, a market-based price and profit-making mentality doesn’t fit right.

Whether it is the environment (U.S. News & World Report rankings or for-profit vendors of goods and services, for example) or the participants themselves that have driven this, the market-based view of the higher education environment has certainly had the effect of raising costs of operation. Some of this may be good—in many respects, students get much more than they did two decades ago—but it does raise the question of are those increased costs worth what has happened? Increased costs to institutions mean increased costs to students and to society, raising issues of access and affordability as well as of what is appropriate for a higher education. It also increases the risk of having core missions and values of higher education relegated to an increasingly distant second priority.

There is no easy “solution” to this issue. Neither the language nor the mentality is going to go away. But it can be made into something productive. Pausing to stop and consider what the terms of the discussion mean and where they lead does support broader thinking and reconceptualization. Simply being aware of the impact of the language of market competition—price, consumers, producers, “profit,” enterprise objectives, decision-making and resource allocation, and “market failure”—can be used to heighten awareness to keep focused on the real goals of higher education, which are the betterment of individuals and society through learning and increasing knowledge.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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**Note:** This essay is based on a talk given by the author for the board of directors of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers in October 2002.
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The Evolution of a Successful Admissions Director

by Jim Scannell

Long before the GI Bill, and thus before getting a college education was a populist ideal, admission at most institutions of higher education was performed by the registrar. The role played out as one of gatekeeper. Then, with veterans returning from World War II in the 1950s, followed by the Higher Education Act in the 1960s, the business of admissions quickly evolved into the profession we know today. The qualities that initially produced successful admissions officers and the personalities attracted to this line of work early on can best be portrayed by the image of the friendly and supportive counselor. Since those halcyon days, demographic downturns, double-digit tuition increases, the failure of K-12 education, and more recently the explosion of the Web, have converged to create a complex and broad set of qualities and characteristics necessary to be successful in leading an admissions office in the 21st century.

A fundamental premise of this paper is that there exists a common set of qualities and characteristics for a successful admissions officer, despite the fact that these qualities and characteristics may play out differently based on the size of the institution, the position of the institution in the competitive food chain, the history and traditions of the school, etc. A common, working definition for a director of admissions, regardless of institution, is the person responsible for the oversight and management of the day-to-day allocation of resources (human and fiscal) to implement “the plan” to recruit and admit the expected number and profile of new students. Today there are at least five qualities or characteristics that are key ingredients for success.

The successful director of admissions today must be:

1. A developer and builder of staff. One constant, regardless of whether the institution is public or private, large or small, profit or non-profit, top tier or bottom tier is the turnover of personnel on the recruitment team. It is, to be sure, a "younger" person's job. Whether classified as admissions counselor, recruitment representative, or assistant director of admissions, the average job tenure is much less than five years. This means that, even with a small staff, turnover can be an annual event, as can training. The successful admissions director not only allows people to learn and grow (and even accepts mistakes), but thrives on providing the opportunity and environment for such growth. The successful admissions director, therefore, is at least in part a coach and mentor.

Tracy Manier, Director of Admissions at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, puts it this way:

"As an admission director, it's been my great privilege to hire intelligent, motivated, and eager admission counselors, most of whom happen to be young and at the start of their careers. Given these characteristics, they want and need to be challenged. From the beginning I think it's just as important for them to learn the "big picture" of admission and recruitment (such as how financial aid plays a role, how to use historical data to make predictions about their territory, or how a communication stream might impact yearly performance) along with the more detailed (and sometimes uninspiring) tasks of an admission counselor (such as scheduling high school visits and reviewing application paperwork). In a sense, I want to show them that there's always something new and interesting and complicated to learn about this profession—that we're really learning together. Soon they'll be able to tell me something I don't know. And yes, run the risk of losing them."

2. Focused on what matters. The most productive directors of admissions have a learned ability to avoid distractions and stay attuned to the most critical processes and activities. As a society, we are close to implosion with the endless
Be a mentor – nurture young staff and help them flourish – it’s rewarding!

Adjust direction to meet market and world demands – flexibility is key!

Look for trouble! Constantly be alert to customer service and processing issues!

Analyze daily – know where you are relative to goals every single day!

New ideas – be open to them! You need to remain competitive!

Learn priorities are required to move staff forward to goal achievement!

Enjoy yourself, too. Take time to smell the roses – and pat yourself on the back!

Be a public person. The admissions director, if good, is a role model in the office, on the campus, and in the profession. What qualities do the best admissions leaders exude? Fairness, ethics, decisiveness, sensitivity, and vision to name but a few. To lead and have others follow, the director must model behavior others wish to emulate. John Mahoney, Director of Admissions at Boston College, is deliberate and intentional about modeling his behavior.

“My personal management/leadership philosophy is that I ask no one to do what I would not do myself. This approach pertains both to in the office activities, as well as activities in the field. For example, when the mail volume is huge at application deadline time, I spend time opening and sorting along with everyone else. Likewise, I try to deliver my fair share of information sessions on the campus, along with other staff members. I find it funny when parents come up to me afterwards wondering if I do this often. They don’t expect to encounter the director of admission when they come to campus, but I think it’s important to be as visible as possible.”

Be a voice. It is very important for the director of admission to represent the collective voice of the customer to the institution. The customer is of course the student, especially future students. Think about it. If admissions leadership doesn’t perform that task, who would? Academic leadership has to speak for faculty. Coaches have to speak for athletes. Student life staff speak for today’s customer, not tomorrow’s. Advancement specialists need to speak for alumni and donors. Presidents and financial officers serve governing boards. Regardless of whether heading up an admissions office at a research university or a community college, the student perspective needs to be known and understood as the institution reinvests, reshapes, and redirects itself to stay relevant and competitive. For example, Sue Bibeau, Director of Admissions at the United States Coast Guard Academy, recalls vividly what she needed to do to make the campus aware of the importance of the Web.

“It’s no surprise to those in admissions that students prefer the Web as a starting point for their college search and some portions of the communication that takes place in the admissions process. Delivering that message at every level to the faculty, staff, and volunteer force has been a priority for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy Admissions Department in the last two years as we have invested more heavily in our Web presence and online application. Repeating the call early and often has been a significant leadership challenge. Fortunately, there were many venues from which to speak: Academic Council meetings, faculty meetings, the new Internet Content Configuration Board, our Strategic Plan, senior management team meetings.”

Be data savvy. The director should be enough of a “quantoid” (as opposed to a “gutician”) to use information to stay on course. While today’s admissions officer doesn’t have to solve quadratic equations or perform multiple regression analyses, she can’t be innumerate, and she can’t only trust her intuition. She can’t neglect the facts. At the same time, the most successful admissions directors have an excellent intuitive sense that is used daily to direct queries or suggest what needs to be analyzed. Simply stated, it is the intersection of empiricism and informed guessing that produces the best results.

An institution looking to hire the perfect director of admissions will probably not find all of these qualities represented equally and sufficiently in one individual. They are, however, part of the profession’s evolution, and thus important considerations.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Jim Scannell is President of Scannell & Kurz, Inc., a consulting firm that specializes in reviewing organizations, operations, and strategies in enrollment-related offices, and developing customized enrollment management solutions for higher education clients. Jim’s special area of expertise falls in recruitment—from mentoring admissions leaders to building new demand through data analysis and the development of strategic communications. More information on Scannell & Kurz, Inc. can be found at: www.scannelkurz.com
In a time when the social and philosophical value of a high quality education is a well-documented issue, it is hard to understand the trend towards diminishing collegiate operating budgets. Yet more and more, colleges, for a variety of reasons, are compelled to continue seeking additional ways to cut costs despite higher enrollment figures.

Recent years have witnessed a shaky economy and the downturn of several industries, subsequently instigating an increase of overall college enrollment numbers. Recently, large numbers of individuals from the workforce have returned to school to supplement their education and job market qualifications. This reality has posed challenges for many colleges across the nation, not the least Tarrant County College (TCC), based in Fort Worth, Texas. In fact, colleges in Texas were among some of the hardest hit by the recent instability of the economy.

Cost-Effective Delivery of Course Catalogs and Schedules
Among the rising costs of collegiate operation, expenses related to the printing of course catalogs and schedules represent a significant annual budget line item. To minimize and better manage publication costs, TCC has attempted to "migrate" many of its existing and prospective students from print to a more cost-effective method of delivering course catalog, schedule, and enrollment information.

At first blush, this was simply an issue of transitioning course and schedule publications to an online Web site solution. But TCC quickly identified some key disadvantages with traditional Web-based course schedule applications; the most notable of those being limited broadband Internet access for today’s students. It’s estimated that over 75 percent of today’s computer users are still accessing the Internet via dial-up modems, making access to many Internet elements an arduous and slow prospect. The primary reason potential and existing students visit TCC’s Web site is to view course schedules and catalogs. To better facilitate this use, the college decided to enhance the presentation and access of its course materials, in hopes it could also reduce its publication costs.

Synchronized-Web Application

To achieve an appropriate balance between the improved costs of a Web-based system and the simple accessibility of print, TCC turned to an innovative electronic solution. This is a newly developed program that uses a “Synchronized-Web Application” that resides on the user’s computer and, through periodic connections to the Internet, allows a user to receive updates to the course schedule and catalog. The program is offered as a free download from the college’s Web site. Once downloaded, students have quick access to course schedule information without having to be tethered to the Internet.

The desktop application allows students to research and create their course plan offline, where they can benefit from the speed of their computer and avoid the slow response of dial-up connections. When the students have completed their course plan, the application can connect them to the college’s Web site for accurate online registration.

Because the students are planning their courses offline, the college has been able to free up its Internet resources and minimize congestion during peak registration periods.

After the students have developed their preliminary course schedule offline, they are connected to the college’s registration Web site with the simple click of a button. In general, this electronic document technology streamlines and enhances the course selection process, minimizes Web congestion, and helps students better prepare for the registration process.

The updateable nature of the application makes class schedule and course description changes much simpler than...
with print, which cannot be updated without a full reprint of the catalog. But best of all, TCC has been able to significantly reduce publication expenses by introducing the new electronic publication solution to its marketing communications mix.

**Saving Money While Increasing Marketing**

Reductions in both catalog and schedule print runs were a direct result of TCC’s new electronic catalog publication. The introduction of an integrated method for producing catalogs and schedules has allowed the college to reduce the number of printed catalogs by 50 percent. Printed credit schedules were likewise reduced by 83 percent. Total savings for the college are estimated to exceed $60,000 for the Fall semester. Annual savings for year two are expected to exceed $500,000.

In addition to the cost savings, the college now has a powerful marketing tool to help differentiate itself. When a user downloads the application, the college is now able to gather ‘opt-in’ marketing data concerning the prospective or existing students. The college is able to identify user locations and other contact information.

Once installed on the computer, the college’s logo appears on the user’s computer desktop each and every time the computer is turned on. This logo also appears on library and lab computers throughout the college for easy access by students. In addition, the college has marketed the application to high school counselors, making sure course materials are up-to-date and easy to access. The college’s internal counselors have also started using the Synchronized-Web Application as a tool to aid them in their work with students.

**Conclusion**

Electronic media offer many benefits to the college community, and the efforts of institutions like TCC are to be applauded. They demonstrate the foresight and dedication to continuously find efficient and effective ways to better serve their prospective and current students. And it is encouraging to note that with the help of newly emerging software technology, the college industry continues to successfully adapt to changing economic conditions while still maintaining a high level of service and commitment to its student population.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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**Note:** For more information on MultiView, Inc., visit www.mvinc.net or contact Chris Hunter at chunter@mvinc.net or (972) 582-7052.
Student Academic Services is a hefty tome and covers in a systematic and thorough manner the principal responsibilities usually associated with that term and the issues and concerns that are current today. Many times a reader will skip the Preface of a book in the belief that it contains little of interest or relevance. Not so here. A serious reader is well advised to read the Preface, which outlines the organization of this book and describes its purpose. Complementing the Preface is a section captioned “About the Authors.” Here the reader is treated to brief sketches of each of the contributing authors and can assess the credentials that each brings to his or her subject matter.

This is not necessarily a work that one would choose to read literally from cover to cover. Discerning readers will review the Table of Contents and mark those chapters that warrant their early attention. For example, registrars would be well advised to read “Course Planning and Registration,” co-authored by Louise Lonabocker and Jim Wager. The chapter discusses the experiences of Boston College and to a lesser degree, Penn State, in the delivery of these essential services. The idea of consolidating the delivery of related services under the one-stop shopping concept is thoroughly explored. A second chapter of special interest to registrars is “The Essential Academic Record,” jointly written by W.W. (Tim) Washburn and Gene Priday. They discuss what constitutes the academic record, essential elements of the transcript, record security, FERPA, degree requirements, academic transfer issues, and other matters related to the maintenance of the academic record and the creation of campus-wide databases. Both of these chapters are well written and focus on matters of contemporary genuine interest and concern.

The admissions officer will likely find “Enrollment Management and Conceptual Underpinnings,” written by Jim Black, to be of interest. He describes the history and current state of enrollment management, the concepts behind it, and its future in higher education. He also discusses the importance of having a student retention strategy and the manner in which enrollment management can influence modern systems thinking.

Other specific chapters are devoted to topics like Orientation, Career Planning, Student Financial Services, and Student Retention. Still other chapters provide a theoretical underpinning for the philosophy or outlook, which tells us that these traditionally discrete services are becoming more interdependent and holistic as delivered to students. This trend, according to the cadre of authors, is due in part to the enlightened attitudes of staff who administer these services and in part to the development of new software, often vendor produced, that make collaboration and cooperation a virtual necessity. This bodes well for the student since consolidation of related services is often a practical result of these developments. “Service with a smile” by knowledgeable, front-line personnel is the ultimate objective.

For a work that includes contributions from 35 authors, this reviewer found it to be surprisingly free of jargon or terms that only a doctoral student in education could appreciate. Each chapter contains a bibliographic listing of sources that extend from a handful of entries to several pages depending on the topic. In addition, the book contains two indices, one a name index and the other a subject index.

For an academic administrator involved with the design and delivery of student services, this is a valuable reference that will likely be consulted time and again. A passage in Chapter 19 restates the over-arching theme and is cited here as follows:
Grade Inflation—A Crisis in College Education
VALEN E. JOHNSON
SPRINGER-VERLAG NEW YORK, INC.; 262 PP. 2003; $34.95
REVIEWED BY: KIMBERLEY BUSTER-WILLIAMS

Grade inflation is not new to the academy. Mean grade averages have incrementally increased over the past few decades at even the most prestigious institutions. Some faculty senators have been proactive in exploring the veritas in this area and formulating reform practices, and others have not.

In his book, Grade Inflation—A Crisis in College Education, Valen E. Johnson, a professor of biostatistics at the University of Michigan, focuses on grade inflation and its prevalence and impact on postsecondary education. The focal point of this book is an online course evaluation experiment conducted at Duke University during the 1998-1999 academic year. Called DEUET, this experiment possessed several unique features including the solicitation of survey responses from students both before and after they had received their final grades, and evaluations of courses taught in the past (p. 15).

The author states that the purpose of this book is two-fold: first, to expose many of the myths associated with grade inflation, the use of student evaluations of teaching for administrative reviews of faculty, the effects of disparate grading practices on students, and the effects of grading practices on student enrollment patterns; and second, to expand the discussion of college grading from the sensationized topic of grade inflation to the broader issue of how assessment practices can be modified to reflect student and faculty achievement more fairly (p. 14).

Beginning with a substantial introduction, the book consists of eight cogent chapters that offer further explanation of the DEUET experiment, analysis of the experiment, validity of the experiment, analysis of the DEUET course selection data, grade equity analysis, and a focus on overall reform. The author does an excellent job with loosely coupling examples of grade inflation from the DEUET experiment with established theories in the area of testing measurement and appraisal.

The author begins with a monograph highlighting the following compelling findings: the mean GPA at Dartmouth in 1994 had risen to 3.23, up from 3.06 in 1968, the median GPA at Princeton in 1997 was 3.42, and at Harvard, during the 1996-1997 academic year, 46 percent of grades awarded to undergraduates were grades of A or A- (p. 3). In the Fall of 1994, Dartmouth administrators put forward a policy to address the spiraling grade increases. The Dartmouth faculty adopted a plan to list median course grade and class size next to student grades on university transcripts (p. 2).

Sharing examples at the onset of the book of the apparent crescendo effect occurring amidst the mean grade point averages at some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the country—namely Harvard, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Duke—was an astute tool for piquing the reader’s interest. Very quickly one feels compelled to read further. In a very methodical manner, the author then continues by elaborating on various myths about grading, and does an excellent job with comparing and contrasting the traditionalist perspective of grading versus the postmodern view of grading. According to the author, “therein lies the rub.”

When the issue of grade inflation emerged in the late 1990s at Duke University, officials formed a committee charged with conducting a comprehensive investigation of the problems associated with Duke’s grading policies. In the end, the conclusion of the committee was that disparities in grading practices, rather than grade inflation, were responsible for most of the problems usually associated with lenient grading. Therefore, faculty members rejected the proposed statistical adjustment scheme called the Achievement Index, which would have corrected GPAs for differences between grading policies employed by different professors and departments, and which would have provided feedback to faculty concerning their individual grading practices (p. 3).

Ironically, the conclusions found at Duke University link directly with one of the theses of this book, which is that grading inequities persist because their consequences are misunderstood (p. 9). According to the author, they exist and are perpetuated by the following five myths:

- Students’ grades do not bias student evaluations of teaching.
- Student evaluations of teaching provide reliable measures of instructional effectiveness.
- High course grades imply high levels of student achievement.
- Student course selection decisions are unaffected by expected grading practices.
- Grades assigned in unregulated academic environments have a consistent and objective meaning across classes, departments, and institutions.

After the grading-reform proposal was rejected at Duke University, several faculty members were still concerned with the state of affairs as it pertained to grading policies. Chapter two discusses how the DEUET experiment evolved with a summarizing timeline graph found on page eighteen. In this chapter, the DEUET survey items were listed along with an appendix, which detailed the issue of the “non-respondent”
questionnaires. The author did a good job of relegating some of the more detailed information to appendices at the end of each chapter for non-obtrusive reading.

In chapter three, the author reviews past studies and experiments on grading, along with their underlying theories such as teacher-effectiveness theory and grade-satisfaction theory. The teacher-effectiveness theory is based on the supposition that students learn more in courses taught by effective teachers (p. 48). The antipode of the teacher-effectiveness theory is the grade-leniency or grade-satisfaction theory (p. 49). The basic tenet of this theory is that students reward instructors who reward them (p. 49). According to this theory, positive correlations between mean course grades and student evaluations of teaching represent bias. It is a bias in the sense that the effect of grading on teaching evaluations represents a factor not related to either effective teaching or student learning. The author correctly points out that some attributes such as prior student interest and student motivation serve as reasonable explanations for positive correlations between student grades and student evaluations of teaching (especially in upper-level courses). Chapter three establishes a nice foundation for the DUET experiment results that are discussed in chapter four.

Chapter four analyzes the DUET experiment data in hopes of creating a watershed effect towards clarifying two important issues: the extent to which grades reflect a “biasing” influence on student evaluations of teaching, and the magnitude of the bias that grades have on student evaluations of teaching. The author did a wonderful job providing some important background information on how Duke University was able to get students to fill out the course evaluation twice (the methodology). The author states that,

In order to minimize the possibility that students would discover the purpose for having to complete the same survey for the same courses twice, participating first-year students were told in the fall that they had been asked to complete the survey for their current courses because they, unlike upperclassmen, had not taken courses the previous semester. In the spring, they were again asked to complete the survey for their fall courses, this time under the pretext that thus was the default procedure used for all students. Since only one student utilized the survey’s comment facility to complain about the “inefficiency” of this procedure, it appears that this deception was effective (p. 101).

The final discussion points in chapter four center on the actual findings from of the DUET survey. The final outcome was that the regression analysis corroborated the findings of earlier grade-manipulation studies and a preponderance of correlation studies (p. 118). Because the design of the DUET experiment effectively eliminated the possibility that unobserved environmental factors were responsible for these effects, the results from this analysis provide conclusive evidence of the biasing effect of student grades on student evaluations of teaching (p. 118). While chapters three and four look at the influence that grades exert on student evaluations, chapter five looks at the broader issue of the validity of student rankings of instruction for assessing faculty teaching.

In chapter five, the author gives a brief historical synopsis of student evaluations of teaching (SEET) forms and the issues that have arisen in regard to their validity. The historical overview included mention of the fact that numerous evaluations have been constructed to measure the multiple dimensions of effective teaching, which include the Endeavour Instructional Rating Form, the Michigan State Instructional Rating System Form, and the Student’s Evaluation of Educational Quality form (SEEQ). Not surprisingly, all the aforementioned surveys have been plagued with the validity issue. In the end, questions of validity have been somewhat diffused by offering multidimensional interpretations vis-à-vis construct validity and convergent validity.

Overall there seems to be little dissent in the educational community about the validity of the various surveys, but rather, the question is if a well-designed form is at all relevant in predicting student performance and learning (p. 147). And what is the intended purpose of such surveys? One reason that items on teacher-course evaluations are not more often tied to measures of student achievement is that there is no universally agreed-upon measure of student achievement (p. 152). According to Johnson, the bottom line of this chapter is that current evaluation instruments provide little legitimate guidance to administrators in promotion, tenure, and salary decisions (p. 164). At the very least, items on these forms explain only a small portion of the variation in student learning from one class to the next (p. 165).

Chapter six discusses grade and student course selection. The author shares some anecdotal findings as well as knowledge about the limited quantitative research available in this area, specifically a study by Coleman and McKeachie and one by Sabot and Wakemandalin. The bulk of chapter six focuses on the analysis and comparisons of DUET (student) course selection data. The frequency charts and graphs in this section were very helpful. The author concludes this chapter with the following observation, “The influence of grading policies on student course selection decisions is substantial; when choosing between two courses within the same academic field, students are about twice as likely to select a course with an A– mean course grade as they are to select a course with a B mean course grade, or to select a course with a B+ mean course grade over a course with a B– mean course grade (p. 193).

In Chapter seven, disparities in grading practices among disciplines are documented by examining average differences in the grades received by the same students in different fields (p. 195). The findings from the DUET experiment were that natural science, mathematics, and economics courses are found to be the most stringently graded disciplines; humanities courses are the most leniently graded (p. 195). For many Duke students, the grading policies used by their instructors were nearly as important in determining their GPA and class rank as was their academic performance. Examples of tran-
scripts were shown to support this assertion. This chapter also discusses the studies of Goldman and Widawksi, Strenta and Elliot, and Elliot and Strenta in relation to their work using SAT and high school GPA to predict college outcomes. The conclusion of this chapter is that knowing the grading practices of the instructors from whom students took courses is as important as knowing the grades they got (p. 239).

The last chapter of the book recaps findings from the DUET experiment and further talks about the overall significance of the experiment. The fact that this was the first large-scale study in which student evaluations were analyzed both before and after they received their final grade is very significant. Although many of the findings make perfect sense to non-academics, it still may be difficult to convince faculty members of the significance. Studies in this area have been underway for more than 70 years, so this study just adds to the body of work that currently exists. The author does call for reform and indicates that with adequate faculty and administrative support, any number of these strategies might be adopted to enact reform:

- Encourage institutional dialogue.
- Provide instructors with more information about their university’s grading practices.
- Constrain course grade distributions.
- Include information about course grading practices on student transcripts.
- Allow students to optionally report adjusted GPAs on their transcripts.
- Use adjusted grades and GPAs to establish honors distinctions.
- Selectively exclude student evaluations of teaching from instructors’ summaries (p. 246).

The disparities in grading practices that result from divergent views of grading have serious consequences, the most obvious being inequitable assessment of students (p. 9). Clearly, students who take classes from faculty who grade leniently have a better chance of finishing college with higher GPAs and thus better career prospects than do students who take most of their classes with instructors who grade more stringently. The impact on faculty members is equally severe. Stringent graders, by virtue of their lower course enrollments and lower course evaluations, are less likely to receive tenure, salary increases, and promotions (p. 9).

In conclusion, this is a wonderful book. The approach used was very effective. The reviewer would strongly recommend this book to anyone who teaches on the college level, and more importantly to faculty senates who traditionally retain the authority to make change in grading policies. The phenomenon of grade inflation is not limited to any one college or university, and most colleges could stand to take a look at the issue.

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**Thomas L. W. Johnson** completed a 44-year career in the Registrar’s Office of the University of Wisconsin-Madison in June 2003. Now Associate Registrar Emeritus, he comes into the office a couple of days a week to work on special projects. A graduate of UW-Madison, Tom also holds a Master of Arts degree from the University of Kansas.

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