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College Prep and Access from the Perspective of Diversity College Admission Professionals
BY KATHRYN A. BETHEA

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BY BRIAN BOURKE

First-Generation Students’ Persistence at Four-Year Institutions
BY TERRY T. ISHITANI
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Heather Zimar, C&U Managing Editor, AACRAO, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20036; Tel: (607) 279-7819; E-mail: zimarh@aacrao.org
A few months ago I had lunch with one of my early mentors in the registrar field, Sam Lewis, the former University Registrar at the University of Minnesota, where I began my career. Just about everything good I know about managing staff, I learned from Sam, a compassionate, supportive, servant-leader. He cared about students, faculty, staff, and the institution. He focused on the big picture. All of those things I tried to emulate. Sam has been retired for a number of years, while I’ve been retired from my university position for a few months. Much of our discussion during lunch was about navigating retirement. When we left the restaurant I told Sam that it appeared he was going to be my mentor in retirement, as well as in my professional career.

Several years ago AACRAO published a series of articles in C&U on the topic of leadership. (These were subsequently compiled into a book, Leadership Lessons.) With this edition of C&U we begin a series of articles on mentorship. We present three perspectives on generational mentorship, by Eric Shadle, Erin Seheult, and Ismari Altamirano. I’m excited about the series and I think these three articles get it off to a good start!

In feature articles, Kathryn A. Bethea examines how diversity admissions professionals define college preparation. Brian Bourke considers the term “Predominately White Institution.” Also, Terry T. Ishitani reports on the longitudinal college persistence of first-generation students at four-year institutions.

This edition includes three Campus Viewpoint articles and one Commentary. Connie Book and Rodney Parks address the question, “should institutions expand the academic record?” Christopher Shaffer, Amanda Sohl, and Jessica Storm Steele discuss federal financial aid policy changes from the Net Price Calculator to the upcoming shift to use prior-prior year income for the FAFSA. Rebel Smith considers how a traditional university recruits and services online students. Finally, Philip Henry writes on changes in UK higher education over the past 35 years, the role of data in supporting student success, and the key role of the registrar.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of C&U. I am always interested in hearing comments and suggestions from our readers. And, as always, I am looking for authors! In particular, we still have openings for articles in the mentorship series.

Jeff von Munkwitz-Smith, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief
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Studies have found that there is a college access gap for students of color in P-16 education. I utilize Perna’s (2006) integrated college access model in exploring college admission’s knowledge of college preparation in education. The present study uses qualitative questionnaires to measure diversity college admission professionals’ (DCAPs) definitions of college readiness, college-going culture, and college access. Findings suggest that DCAPs are aware of the opportunities and challenges in promoting urban college access. This can lead to researching DCAPs as an informative stakeholder in the college access gap. The implications of these findings for college counseling will be discussed.
Diversity is an important part of learning and a compelling reason for higher education to consider sociocultural background such as race/ethnicity in the college admissions process. Many U.S. colleges and universities have made commitments to diversity. The National Association of College Admission Counselors’ (2003) Admission Trends Survey found that among institutions that do consider race/ethnicity in the admission decision, 82 percent credited this policy with increasing the number of racial/ethnic minority students in the student body. Yet even with the consideration of race/ethnicity in college admissions, a college access gap exists between underrepresented students of color and their white peers in the United States (Aud, Fox and Kewal Ramani 2010; Perna 2006; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003).

College access is a topic of importance because it stems from the “college pipeline” issue of enrolling underrepresented students of color (Carter, Locks and Winkle-Wagner 2013). Colleges play a role in constructing the current climate of greater need for access to higher education, which results in turn in the access gap and under-enrollment of students of color. Venezia, Kirst and Antonio (2003) and other scholars found that P–12 and higher education create barriers between high school and college that undermine student aspirations (Freeman 2005; Perna 2006; Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b). For example, they found that students, parents, and P–12 educators expressed confusion and frustration about their knowledge of college entrance requirements (Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003). Overall, Venezia, Kirst and Antonio (2003) assert that the college access gap between P–12 and higher education sends conflicting and vague messages to students, their parents, P–12 educators, and higher education professionals about the academic preparation needed to enter and succeed in college.

Diversity college admission professionals (DCAPs) play an important role in college access because they are situated to assist in the transition between P–12 and higher education. DCAPs are specialists who recruit students of color as part of their formal duties. DCAPs make college admissions decisions by evaluating students’ academic performance and college readiness in the context of students’ sociocultural backgrounds. DCAPs are knowledgeable about college entrance requirements. To assess their work, this study explores DCAPs’ understanding of the preparation of underrepresented students of color during P–12 education to enter college. The purpose of this study is to investigate DCAPs’ understanding of college preparation concepts that lead to college enrollment.

The literature on college access provides insight into the disparities in college access—especially college knowledge and higher education’s role. DCAPs’ definitions of college preparation were analyzed in order to gauge their knowledge of the factors that support college going. The
intent of this article is to explore DCAPs' constructs of college preparation in light of their duties of recruitment and college admission counseling. The researcher provides a brief background of cultural capital theory and of Perna's (2006) integrated college access conceptual model as the theoretical framework. The researcher then presents the findings from an open-ended questionnaire on the following concepts: college access, college readiness, and college-going culture. This study includes new considerations about DCAPs' role in the college access pipeline.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to research local diversity college admission professionals' (DCAPs') views of college preparation. It was anticipated that the knowledge generated from this inquiry would align with previous research and would afford new insights into college access to inform P–16 policy and practice. The study utilized qualitative questionnaires to analyze local DCAPs' understanding of college preparation. This was exploratory to chronicle DCAPs' viability as stakeholders to address issues of college access for students of color. This study was designed to provide a starting point for understanding a significant facet of higher education's role in college access. The guiding research question was “How do diversity college admission professionals (DCAPs) understand college preparation through defining college access, college readiness, and college-going culture?”

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inequitable Cultural Capital and College Access

In the current study, college access is analyzed through the theoretical framework of cultural capital to explain students' access to resources, adequate college counseling, and college knowledge (Cabrera and La Nasa 1999, 2000; Conley 2010; McClafferty, McDonough and Nunez 2002; McDonough 1997; Nunez and Oliva 2009; Perna 2000, 2006). Cultural capital is a socioeconomic theory that explains how the power and resources related to acquiring college knowledge affect the college admissions process. More important, race/ethnicity affects cultural capital in the form of knowledge about the college application process (Bell, Rowan-Kenyon and Perna 2009; Freeman 1997, 1999; Perna 2000, 2006; Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Solorzano and Ornelas 2002; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003).

Due to racial/ethnic disparities and stratification within the U.S. education system, not all students have equal access to college knowledge as cultural capital (Perna 2006; Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Savitz-Romer 2012; Tierney and Jun 2001; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003). In other words, some students possess greater college knowledge, which helps them gain access to college, whereas students who do not possess this capital do not gain access to college (Grodsky 2007; Grodsky and Kalogrides 2008; Perna 2000, 2006; Roksa et al. 2007; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003). This results in the current college access gap. Without proper college knowledge, underrepresented students of color have difficulty identifying the range of college types that are available to them (McClafferty, McDonough and Nunez 2002; McDonough 1997; Perna 2006; Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Savitz-Romer 2012; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003). Also, public high schools may not be able to provide current information and holistic guidance about college equally to all students (Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Savitz-Romer 2012; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003).

Numerous studies have looked at college preparation and the factors needed to increase college access by underrepresented students of color (College Board 2011; Conley 2010; Corwin and Tierney 2007; McClafferty, McDonough and Nunez 2002; Perna 2006; Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Savitz-Romer 2012; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003). In this study, cultural capital as college knowledge is explored through three concepts: college-going culture; college readiness; and college access. College preparation is complex and is more than mere academic achievement. In the following section, college access, college readiness, and college-going culture are defined to affirm DCAPs' knowledge of and authority over college preparation. In addition, DCAPs discuss these concepts as important components of college preparation and traditional college enrollment.

College Readiness

College readiness is “a process to develop postsecondary aspirations and expectations, gain awareness of one's interests and abilities, and receive support and information
for college access and success” (Savitz-Romer 2012, 99). In other words, it is the preparation to enter college that ranges from rigorous course taking and academic excellence to good study habits and interpersonal skills.

**College-Going Culture**

College-going culture is creating a school environment that guides students’ attitudes toward college (College Board 2006). It exists where opportunities to attend college are expected and encouraged for everyone. Such a culture helps all students set future plans, achieve goals, and generate other important values such as appreciation of academics, desire to succeed, and drive to attend college and become a lifelong learner (College Board 2006).

**College Access**

College access is the ability to receive college information and awareness of college options. College access is also an understanding of the college admission process, to include “curricular, testing, and application requirements; college options and choices; tuition, costs, and the financial aid system; placement requirements, testing, and standards; the culture of college; and the level of academic expectations and challenge in college courses” (Conley 2010, p. 58).


In discussing college access as capital, Perna’s (2006) integrated college access conceptual model integrates aspects of Bourdieu’s (1986) and Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) sociological theory of cultural capital and cultural *habitus* to explain sociocultural factors such as race/ethnicity’s impact on a student’s college decision making. The model assumes that an individual’s college choices are shaped by four contextual layers: (a) the individual’s *habitus*; (b) school and community context; (c) the higher education context; and (d) the broader social, economic, and policy context (Perna 2006).

The current study focuses on the higher education context to show the impact of DCAPs on college access. As suggested by Perna’s (2006) model, this layer signifies the role that higher education institutions play in shaping students’ college-going views, attitudes, and behaviors. Higher education institutions influence the process by being a source of information about postsecondary enroll-
ment rates of low-income and underrepresented students of color may be attributable to lack of college knowledge and preparation between P–12 and higher education (Perna 2006; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003). DCAPs help maintain higher education’s role in U.S. markets and higher socioeconomic attainment. Explaining college preparation through DCAPs’ viewpoints may be beneficial in developing initiatives to promote college access for all.

METHODS

Research Context and Data Collection

The College Success 101 (CS101) program is a collaborative of DCAPs who want to promote the college-going culture in an urban area. The networking organization sponsors college information packets, workshops, and a college fair. The present study was conducted in 2013 in tandem with the CS101 programming. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, the researcher sent DCAPs a questionnaire as part of an effort to understand their knowledge and attitudes concerning college preparation. The questionnaire was administered both to define the college preparation terms and to gain background information. DCAPs were contacted via e-mail; all agreed to participate.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to help locate the most “information-rich” cases pertinent to the research study (Patton 2002). DCAPs were recruited to participate in the study because of their involvement in CS101 and their work with the urban school district. The sample included thirteen DCAPs from seven colleges and universities: three were employed by local public research universities, five were employed by a private research university, two were employed by a community college, and three were employed by local liberal arts colleges.

The majority of the DCAPs were between 26 and 40 years of age and were male, black or African American, and native to the urban area. Some of the participants had graduated from the local school district, and the majority had attended high school in the greater metro area. Every participant had earned a bachelor’s degree—the majority from colleges in the region. The length of participants’ employment in the college admission field ranged from one year to 20 years, the average being three to five years.

Data Analysis

This qualitative study used a constructivist approach to investigate local DCAPs’ perspectives on college preparation (Lincoln 1995, Lincoln and Guba 1985, Lincoln, Lynham and Guba 2011). The researcher is considered an insider with practical experience in college admissions and has an emic research stance in the inquiry process due to service as chair of the CS101 collaborative.

The researcher analyzed the questionnaires using an iterative process of analysis with a focus on developing theory out of the common themes from the data (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2011). The process included four phases of analysis: (1) “noticing” or “reading” analysis; (2) “collecting” analysis; (3) “thinking” analysis; and (4) “writing” or “display” analysis (Diffendal and Weidman 2011, Seidel 1998). In order to improve trustworthiness, the researcher employed several strategies consistent with assessing the “goodness” of qualitative research (Arminio and Hultgren 2002; Jones, Torres and Arminio 2006), including peer debriefing, member checking, and an electronic data audit trail.

RESULTS

The major finding pertains to DCAPs’ understanding of college preparation. DCAPs’ definitions of the concepts of college readiness, college-going culture, and college access were analyzed for common themes. The following discussion derives from DCAPs’ definitions of college preparation.

DCAPs’ Understanding of College Readiness

In analyzing DCAPs’ definitions of college readiness, three themes emerged: academic preparation, interpersonal skills, and college awareness. Overall, all of the DCAPs believed that students need to be academically prepared for college. One DCAP explained academic success as “the desired quality where potential college students possess the appropriate maturity and interpersonal and academic skills to be successful in higher education.” Another said, “Students who are adequately prepared to deal with the academic and social rigors of collegiate life, or if not, are well aware of resources available to help.” DCAPs specifically described college readiness as academic performance, course rigor, math and English course requirements, support, and college knowledge. Overall, DCAPs expressed the need and concern for students to be prepared for college.
DCAPs believe that students need not only academic ability but also non-academic interpersonal skills such as good communication, good habits, and initiative. In addition, they should have mental, social, financial, and emotional skills. One DCAP noted that students should “[have] the skills (academic, mental, and emotional) to successfully compete and complete a college/university program.” Some DCAPs responded that to have the interpersonal skills to be college ready meant that students would be successful in college.

Students’ college awareness was another theme in DCAPs’ definitions of college readiness. DCAPs expressed the need for students to be aware of academic standards needed to go to college. Another representative comment was that college awareness is “the ability to understand the process of college going in order to prepare yourself with knowledge in the classroom and about college.” Overall, DCAPs explained that students needed to be aware of the college admission process, including timelines and available resources.

When describing the college prep program’s objectives and goals, many DCAPs explained that students should gain adequate and sufficient college information. They also expressed that youths need to be aware of their personal interests and need to take personal responsibility for their futures. One DCAP commented, “You have a good idea of your academic interests as well as what colleges are expecting.” In other words, it was important to the DCAPs that students gain non-academic as well as academic skills to be successful in college and also that they be aware of their personal interests in addition to college requirements and standards.

**DCAPs’ Understanding of College-Going Culture**

In analyzing DCAPs’ responses regarding college-going culture, three themes emerged: expectations, culture/environment, and student awareness/responsibility. Some participants responded that it was important for students to have an expectation of going to college. One DCAP commented that college-going culture is “potential traditional and non-traditional students having the ability to access and the expectation to pursue higher education.” Another described college-going culture as “the culture that surrounds students, parents, advisors, and academics encouraging high school students to go to a higher education institution.” All of the DCAPs listed all of the important stakeholders who are involved in the college admissions process: students, parents, friends, and K–12 educators.

Most of the DCAPs explained that the environment has an impact on college-going behaviors. The environment includes people as sources of support. One participant described the “culture where the expectation is that you attend college and are given the necessary tools and resources to successfully enroll.” Some DCAPs also mentioned that encouragement and support are necessary to create a strong, positive college-going culture.

One DCAP described the student responsibility/awareness theme as “the process of understanding the ins and outs of preparation in high school all the way to admission and enrollment.” Some felt that college-going behaviors included students’ own awareness of the college admission process. All listed at least one of the important academic, social, financial, and/or professional steps a student needs to take in order to apply to and enroll in college.

**DCAPs’ Understanding of College Access**

In analyzing DCAPs’ responses related to college access, three themes emerged: admission, opportunity, and college knowledge/awareness. All of the DCAPs stated that the reason for college access is for admission to and enrollment at college. Many indicated that through college access, students should have opportunities to pursue higher education. One described opportunities as “academic and financial.” Some stated that students should have opportunities regardless of background variables such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, and academic ability. Another advocated for “the removal of barriers that prohibit students from successfully matriculating.”

Some DCAPs explained that college access comprises the resources or college knowledge to gain admission and enroll. Specific steps students need to follow include “standardized test taking, applications, fees, essays, scholarship information, and beyond,” according to one respondent. Another listed resources that could be available to students: “websites, guidance counselors, college visits, fairs, and personal outreach.”

All of the DCAPs recognized the importance of opportunity and awareness, which aligns with research on college knowledge as well as college access barriers (McClafferty, McDonough and Nunez 2002; Roderick et al.
GPA and academic rigor are important, yet DCAPs also understood that gaining college knowledge about the SATs, admission requirements, and academic resources is just as essential to college going. The college admission process is an example of gaining cultural and social capital in the form of information in order to gain college access, further affirming that students have to consciously and intentionally seek resources for college access because the admissions process is not automatic.

With regard to defining college access, DCAPs’ responses were similar. This may reflect “groupthink” or simply the common purpose of DCAPs to promote college access among underrepresented students of color in urban areas. Respondents were very specific and demonstrated the most conceptual knowledge of college access. All participants discussed and described college readiness, although that exact phrase was not necessarily used. Rather, they referred to college readiness as academic preparation and interpersonal skills. The responses for college-going culture were the most diverse and varied, perhaps because defining college-going culture elicits the diversity of beliefs among DCAPs as well as the diversity of the institutional types at which they are employed. It is noteworthy that there is variety within the group.

DCAPs hold different opinions as to whether college preparation is the responsibility of the student or the school. Those who believed that it is the student’s responsibility stated that the student should understand and be aware of the requirements of the college admission process. Others believed that the culture/environment plays a significant factor in how students are encouraged and supported to go to college. This may explain some students’ lack of college knowledge and disjuncture in the education system (McClafferty, McDonough and Nunez 2002; Perna 2006; Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003). In other words, some DCAPs expected students to understand the criteria for college admissions even though they may not attend a high school that has a good college-going culture or the resources to promote college readiness. This discrepancy in DCAPs’ beliefs about college access warrants further research.

One factor that didn’t align with previous research is the hope of college access opportunity. This theme emerged from DCAPs’ definitions of college access; they explained that the reason for college access is admission, but more important, through college access, there is opportunity. This viewpoint can be explained by the “college for all” mentality; yet opportunity is limited as a result of a meritocratic system in which there is competition for good grades and high test scores. DCAPs described college readiness as academic performance, math and English course requirements, and course rigor. In other words, there is opportunity, but students must be competitive and gain admission in order to take advantage of it.

**DISCUSSION**

Overall, DCAPs’ perspectives were enlightening and touched on concepts of college preparation that previous studies have examined. Respondents thought that college readiness, college knowledge, and college access are important, and they also acknowledged the steps and characteristics needed to be college ready. Many of the responses were comparable to previous research definitions of college access, college readiness, and college-going culture. DCAPs’ definitions demonstrate that there is a great need for college knowledge in order to go to college (College Board 2006; Conley 2010; McClafferty, McDonough and Nunez 2002; Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Savitz-Romer 2012; Perna 2006; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003). Some meta-themes such as interpersonal skills, college knowledge, awareness, and support emerged and aligned with the literature review of college access research (Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Sommerfeld 2011; Vargas 2004). This group of stakeholders appears to be a viable resource when seeking relevant interpretations of college access and the college admission process to inform theory. There is a particular groupthink and culture in college admissions and among DCAPs that is worth exploring in order to better understand higher education’s construct of college preparation.

DCAPs understand college access as cultural capital, which aligns with Perna’s (2006) model and other sociological theories of college being a social and economic investment (Bourdieu 1977, 1986; Freeman 1997, 1999; Perna 2006; Tierney 1999). For example, they defined college access as not only admission to college but also academic and financial opportunity as a form of social attainment. Similarly, DCAPs expressed their concerns about students having the resources and cultural capital to gain admission to
college. Roderick et al. (2008) found that low access to cultural capital (e.g., norms, information, and support) made managing the college search process of identifying colleges that matched student qualifications and interests difficult.

DCAPs also reflected current research on the impact of sociocultural factors in relation to the various layers of the education system (Perna 2006). They believe that multiple groups (such as peers, parents, teachers, etc.) influence students’ habitus, which in turn has an impact on their college preparation. This suggests that DCAPs, as an entity of the higher education context, are likely to have a significant impact on students’ access to college. Therefore, DCAPs are an important element of social and cultural capital for gaining not only college access but also college enrollment.

DCAPs shared their perspectives on local college-going culture, but only a few talked explicitly about race/ethnicity. However, many discussed race/ethnicity indirectly when they spoke about the local urban school district, where the majority of students are African American. While discussion was subtle, research supports the fact that race/ethnicity and culture (Freeman 1997, 1999; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Perna 2000, 2006) as well as urban public high schools (Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b) are factors in college access. It is important to analyze the strengths and differences among racial/ethnic groups in order to better understand the factors affecting college access, readiness, and enrollment/transition. For example, Freeman (2005) found that students of color are influenced by the type of high school and also the type of experiences within the high school such as linkages with colleges/universities. The current study found that DCAPs are aware of how race and ethnicity (and other identities) play a factor in college access. A few DCAPs discussed race/ethnicity as a factor in the admissions process and a barrier in college enrollment. DCAPs’ theme of hope of college access affirms that disparities and stratification exist in college access. DCAPs expressed a common belief that all students should have the opportunity to go to college. This alludes to the reality that not all students have the opportunity to gain college knowledge, which further explains the college access gap. Research is needed to focus more specifically on the complexity of race/ethnicity, local context, and social stratification in college access.

Higher education institutions can align their admission standards and share the work of college counseling. An effective college transition would require postsecondary institutions to work with high schools to build a culture where college going was the norm and all resources were geared toward students’ admission to and success in higher education (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown II, and Bartee 2005; Bensimon et al. 2004; McClafferty, McDonough and Nunez 2002; Milem, Chang and Antonio 2005; Oakes et al. 2002; Perna 2006; Roderick et al. 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Vargas 2004; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003; Williams, Berger and McClendon 2005). School-college partnerships should seek to smooth the transition to college and should identify objectives to improve students’ interpersonal skills, increase their academic readiness, and expand their educational options (Adelman 1999, 2002; Gladieux and Swail 1999; Milem, Chang and Antonio 2005; Swail and Perna 2002; Tierney and Hagedorn 2002; Tierney and Jun 2001; Venezia, Kirst and Antonio 2003).

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study contained limitations related to the common critiques of qualitative research; some are inherent in the study’s research design (Marshall and Rossman 2011). Limitations arose from the restricted sample size, researcher bias, and participants’ reactivity (Marshall and Rossman 2011). For example, due to their membership in CS101, DCAPs may have had specific opinions that differed from those of non-CS101 affiliated DCAPs.

There are limitations in the narrow scope of this study (one urban metro area). Yet it was the narrow scope of this research that enabled the researcher to concentrate on specific themes in DCAPs’ views of college preparation. Also, the narrow scope allowed for a clear connection between DCAPs’ perspectives and previous research. The advantages and disadvantages of this current qualitative inquiry have helped further research on DCAPs’ role in college access. Future qualitative research involving DCAPs—for example, focus groups and interviews—will enhance the data set.

CONCLUSION

Within U.S. higher education, there is growing concern over inequality in college access. To change in accordance with the nation’s demographic shifts, legal cases, political pressures, economic demands, and societal expectations, educators will need to better understand and address
how underrepresented students of color go to college. Most P–12 and postsecondary education staff/faculty, like DCAPS, have to address the persistent social inequities in education that result in low numbers of underrepresented students of color who matriculate, persist, and graduate from college.

Cultural capital theory promotes a comprehensive understanding of college preparation as cultural capital. By recognizing the multiple layers of context, including higher education, this study explored DCAPS’ perspectives on the college access gap. It also showed that DCAPS are aware of the challenges that prevent students from attaining their postsecondary goals. The study’s analysis advances the importance of promoting college preparation so that underrepresented students of color can enroll in college. If higher education institutions fail to address the college access gap, they will continue to struggle to promote diversity on their campuses.

College admission offices and DCAPS are authorities in the recruitment and advisement of high school students with regard to their college options. Therefore, it is important to examine DCAPS’ knowledge of P–12 college readiness, to promote college-going behaviors, and to engage with high schools in the process of college admission counseling (McDonough and Roberston 1995). DCAPS are higher education professionals who are primarily involved in outreach to high schools and who provide substantial support to students planning to go to college. Therefore, DCAPS’ role should be further researched and leveraged in order to promote college opportunity for all students and to have greater impact on college access. Findings from the present study should inform college access research on the roles of different stakeholders in the college access gap.

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**About the Author**

**KATHRYN A. BETHEA** is Chair of the College Success 101 program. She has a Ph.D. in Higher Education Management from the University of Pittsburgh. She received a master’s degree in Human Development and Psychology from the Harvard Graduate School of Education (Ed.M.). Her research interests are two-fold: (1) higher education’s role in equity, access, and the experiences of students of color in postsecondary education, and (2) promoting diversity and inclusion programs and services in P–20 education. She currently focuses on diversity college admission professionals’ (DCAPs) narrative on college preparation and race-conscious admission policies.
THE TERM “PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION” FREQUENTLY GETS TOSSED AROUND WITHOUT THOUGHT TO ITS SIGNIFICANCE. IN THIS ARTICLE, THE AUTHOR USES CRITICAL RACE THEORY AS A LENS TO EXAMINE THE TERM PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION. THROUGH THIS ANALYSIS, THE AUTHOR HIGHLIGHTS WHITENESS IS EMBEDDED INTO INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES OF PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS.
Institutions of higher learning are regularly identified in scholarship and conversation by their racial composition, which generally reflects a distinction between predominately white institutions (PWIs) and minority-serving institutions (MSIs). While PWI is not an official designation for any institution in the United States, six categories of MSIs are classified by the Higher Education Act: Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Alaska Native Serving Institutions (ANSIs), Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions (NHSIs), and a general category of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) (Benitez and DeAro 2003). The designation of a particular MSI type may be based either on mission or student enrollment. HSIs, ANSIs, and NHSIs are typically defined by the percentage of enrollment of the student group identified in the category name. For example, the Higher Education Act requires that HSIs have at least 25 percent of their full-time equivalent enrollments be Hispanic and at least 50 percent of those be low-income individuals (Dayton et al. 2004). In contrast, HBCUs and TCUs have unique missions and/or federal acknowledgment of their responsibility to their respective populations (Benitez and DeAro 2003). These labels are based on the compositional diversity of the institutions or on a specific institutional mission to serve a specific racial group. The term “predominantly white institution” is used without thought being given to its significance: that race and racism are the cornerstones upon which these institutions were built and currently operate (Hughes 2014).

The seemingly quick rise of campus protests connected to the Black Lives Matter movement helped demonstrate the prevalence of the extent to which race is embedded in PWIs throughout the United States (Kingkade, Workneh and Grenoble 2015). What has been protested is that racism (which relies on the prevalence of whiteness) is woven into the very structures and systems on the basis of which colleges and universities function. Something that has been clarified about the historic role of race in U.S. higher education is that colonial and early American colleges relied on slave labor to build their campuses and to support their operations (NPR Staff 2013). The current protests at PWIs across the United States have been described as necessary in the continuum of efforts to address persistent racial inequities in higher education (Demby 2015).

Oversimplified, “predominantly white” can be taken to mean that more white students are enrolled at the institution than are students who are members of underrepresented racial groups. However, the term is complex and
can have various meanings. The purpose of this article is to critically examine the term “predominantly white institution.” The premise is that what is predominant at these institutions stems from much more than simple numbers of white students as compared to numbers of students from underrepresented racial groups.

From an educational standpoint, when campuses equate diversity only with changing institutional patterns of representation, they fail to maximize the benefits associated with diversity because widespread educational benefits are much more likely to emerge out of the context of institutional commitment to all facets of diversity (Chang 2002, p. 131).

Patterns of representation are examined through a lens of critical race theory (CRT). The article concludes with implications for enrollment management. For the purposes of this article, the author uses enrollment management to reflect an institution’s “organizational integration of functions” intended to positively affect student enrollments (Hossler 2014, pp. 7–8). This definition is used purposefully to connect to the premise that whiteness is part of the “organizational integration of functions” within PWIs (Hossler 2014, pp. 7–8).

**CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

As a critical analytical tool, CRT offers a means of examining the relationships among race, racism, and social structures. Colleges and universities are social structures, providing an open opportunity to examine the term “predominantly white institution” through the lens of CRT. In its application to educational settings, CRT consists of three primary tenets:

1. “Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the U.S.” (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006, p. 12).

   Different racial groups are marginalized, dominated, and oppressed at varying levels at different times depending on the needs of whites. One racial group may occupy a space of privilege over another yet still be subjugated by whites on the basis of any number of factors, from the value of their contribution to the labor market to the perception of their efforts to assimilate to white society or to “act white.” A current example of differential racialization is the position of Asian American students in relation to black and Latina/o students. Because Asian American students are perceived to be highly intelligent and motivated whereas black and Latina/o students are perceived to be less intelligent and lazy, Asian American students are afforded a racialized space that whites would be likely to describe as equal (Valdes et al. 2002).

   Race is so deeply embedded in daily life in the United States that it has taken on an ordinariness (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). Calls for “race-blind” admission policies reflect this tenet in that the only possible solution to racism and other issues surrounding race is to simply act as though racial differences do not exist (Valdes et al. 2002). Contributing to calls for race blindness and race as an ordinary part of life is the fact that discussions of race and racism are routinely marginalized, further marginalizing those who experience it in their everyday lives (Kozol 1991, Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). The fact remains, as detailed in a vast assembly of scholarship referenced throughout this article, that race remains a “significant factor in determining inequity in the United States” (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006, p. 12).

2. “U.S. society is based on property rights” (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006, p. 12).

   Harris (1995) conceives of four primary elements that contribute to the valuation of race as property: right of disposition; right to use and enjoyment; right of reputation and status; and the right of exclusion. Individual rights are so intertwined with property rights that providing for the former without providing for or considering the latter results in little substantive change in the lives of people of color (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006). Social rights—most notably the pursuit of higher education (Robinson 1999)—are firmly encamped with issues of property (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006). This is not to imply that all people of color lack the resources to provide adequate chances for higher education for their children, but the property rights that make attending college a more realistic possibility fall disproportionally in the experience of whiteness. As Harris (1995) notes, the concept of property extends beyond ownership of physical items to individual liberties and human rights. “Property is nothing but the basis of expectation...of being able to
draw such and such advantage from the thing being possessed” (Bentham as quoted in Harris 1995, p. 280).

“The intersection of race and property rights creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity” (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006, p. 12).

Race reflects a right of disposition as behaviors that conform to a norm of whiteness are rewarded whereas nonconformity to the norm is penalized. The right of use and enjoyment is manifest in that those who possess the valued elements of race receive privileges. Rights of reputation and status can best be illustrated by referring to issues of college choice among some students of color and to the fact that students and their families may express a preference for attending a PWI over an MSI due to the perceived higher value of a degree from a PWI. The right to exclude can be seen in a number of ways in U.S. higher education. For example, the continued presence of institutions that were founded for the sole purpose of educating students of color highlights the exclusionary right of whiteness.

The term “predominantly white institution” suggests property rights that are inherent to whites. Consider the racialized labeling of institutions of higher learning in the United States: For funding and other purposes, the U.S. government groups MSIs on the basis of racial stratification. For example, HBCUs are grouped, as are HSSs. There is no official race-based designation “PWI.” This label usually is applied in scholarly works, many of which are critical examinations of race-based issues in U.S. higher education. Through the lens of CRT, a view emerges of the interconnectedness of race, social structures, and social practices. According to CRT, PWIs is more than a simple institutional label in that the word “predominant” reflects an ongoing social practice according to which whiteness maintains a place of supremacy, resulting in the continued subjugation of people of color (Crenshaw 1995).

FORMS OF RACIAL DIVERSITY

Diversity has taken on many meanings and varying levels of significance throughout U.S. higher education. Racial diversity has remained significant as it has been equated with cultural pluralism (Omi and Winant 1986). While cultural pluralism has been celebrated in many ways in the United States, much variance in racial diversity has been reduced to two basic categories: white and racially diverse others. Scholarship has categorized racial diversity in the following ways: compositional diversity (antonio, Milem and Chang 2012), diversity-related initiatives, and diverse interactions (Milem 2003).

Diversity and its attendant racial climate are affected by five institutional practices: compositional diversity, historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, psychological climate, behavioral climate, and organizational/structural elements (Antonio et al. 2012). All five dimensions of racial climate are interconnected, but each is unique.

Compositional diversity reflects the actual demographic breakdown of students enrolled at an institution. antonio [sic] and his colleagues (2012) suggest that an institution’s own history of inclusion or exclusion affects the racial climate that students experience today. A historical legacy could include an institution making desegregation efforts well in advance of government mandates or a state’s governor standing in front of a door to physically block students of color from enrolling. The psychological climate relates to individual perceptions/views of interactions among members of diverse groups as well as perceptions of racial discrimination on campus and of institutional response to issues of perceived racial bias (antonio et al. 2012; Hurtado et al. 1999). Through social interactions, students are immersed in the behavioral climate, and the nature of their interactions with students from racial/ethnic backgrounds different from themselves contributes to the behavioral climate (antonio et al. 2012). Diverse interactions represent “students’ exchanges with racially and ethnically diverse people as well as diverse ideas, information, and experience” (Milem 2003, p. 132).

Organizational/structural elements of an institution’s racial climate can be understood through a combination of diversity- and non-diversity-related initiatives, including the curriculum, admission procedures and practices, and the day-to-day business of the institution (antonio et al. 2012). Diversity-related initiatives are those things that institutions do in order to increase awareness of and exposure to aspects of other cultures and races; most often these represent more formal and organized efforts. Such efforts may emanate from student affairs offices or multicultural centers in the forms of campus programs such as cultural festivals and speakers/entertainers; through curricular ef-
forts to infuse multicultural components into an array of course offerings or to establish entire courses on ethnic studies, women’s studies, and the like; and cultural awareness workshops or training sessions in which a speaker—sometimes a diversity consultant—seeks to engage those in attendance in a discussion of the elements of diversity. The “organizational and structural aspects of universities represent...a dimension that recognizes how benefits for some groups become embedded in these structures and organizational processes” (antonio et al. 2012, p. 385).

On the surface, the PWI label simply reflects the compositional diversity of an institution. However, the day-to-day practices that characterize a PWI are structured around the dominance and normalcy of whiteness (Wille 2003). In the case of PWIs, the label relates to racial composition based on the institution’s structural and compositional diversity. Attempts to address the racial composition of student enrollments have shown little effect on addressing imbalances in racial equity at PWIs (Dixson and Rousseau 2006).

POWER

At times, the compositional diversity of PWIs is referenced with a slightly different term: “traditionally white institution” (Elam and Brown 2005). “Traditionally white” suggests that what is at play is merely a product of historical patterns of enrollments of white students. Sometimes, authors choose the term when drawing comparisons between such institutions and HBCUs (see Stahl 2005). However, there is something much more significant about using the term “predominantly white institution”:

In a scholarly world where many argue that the naming of the subject is a creation of subjugation, it seems obvious that the more likely usage of the white wording, the predominately white institution (PWI), elicits knowledge that confirms not only racial and ethnic differences but also power relations (Hutcheson 2008, p. 43).

As Hutcheson points out, the term PWI acknowledges not only difference but also a relationship between dominance and subjugation. Drawing on the analytic lens of CRT, the term “traditionally white institution” demonstrates a perspective based in ahistoricism (Dixson and Rousseau 2006): that the predominance of whiteness is simply a product of a slow, almost accidental progression over time and not a product of favoring and producing whiteness as the norm while further subjugating people of color.

Power is mediated through students’ interactions in a variety of spaces within the campus culture of a college or university (Bourke 2010). Present in power dynamics is the mindfulness by the subjugated that the dominant can wield their power in myriad ways, which might result in harm. Such harm may be manifest in any number of ways, including but not limited to verbal attacks, physical attacks and intimidation, and stereotype threat (including the internalization of stereotypes), all of which contribute to alienation and isolation among students of color.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR ENROLLED AT PWIS

A great deal of scholarship has been devoted to exploring the ways in which members of underrepresented racial groups experience higher education in the United States (Cuyjet 2006, Hurtado et al. 1998; 1999, Rankin and Reason 2005, Tatum 2003). Members of underrepresented racial groups are underrepresented not only numerically but also systemically through social structures and the ways in which power is situated among groups.

The subordinate member is always aware of the dominant culture, where the world of the dominant culture is presented as the norm and set as the example from which to learn (Tatum 2003). Hooks [sic] (1992) highlights that student subcultures result from a resistance to fitting in with prescribed norms and in turn result in efforts of minority groups to maintain the identities with which they enter the PWI. This opposition is questioned by members of the dominant group (in the case of a PWI, white students) through calls for an overriding campus community in which all community members are expected to abide by established norms. These calls for campus solidarity amount to nothing more than efforts to assimilate members of underrepresented groups into the dominant culture of the campus (Smith and Wolf-Wendel 2005).

Resistance exists not only in opposition to the dominant and its oppressive forces but also as a fight for the oppressed (Butz and Ripmeester 1999). Members of oppressed groups maintain a sense of group identity and solidarity within the campus culture, maintaining an identity in opposition to that of the dominant group. Solidarity may also emerge across oppressed groups who are all rele-
gated to the margins of campus culture under the auspices of the dominant group.

CAMPUS CULTURE AND CLIMATE

A campus’s culture serves a few critical functions: (1) it communicates institutional identity; (2) it serves as a means through which individuals commit to the institution; (3) it facilitates stability of the social system within the institution; and (4) it mediates how individuals make sense of events and situations within and related to the institution (Kuh and Whitt 1988).

Campus racial climates are negatively affected when ethnic minority students feel culturally isolated or unsupported in their exploration and expression of their ethnic heritage and identity. Institutions can easily address these challenges through the development and support of “safe” cultural spaces. Examples of such spaces are racial/ethnic community centers, racial/ethnic student organizations, and racial/ethnic-themed residence halls (Antonio et al. 2012, p. 392).

Institutional culture is relatively stable. Changes to it are gradual and occur over time. Campus culture is a component that shapes the campus climate.

With respect to diversity, researchers have argued that the campus climate and its impact involve four connected elements: institutional context, structural diversity, psychological (perceptual) dimensions, and behavioral dimensions (Hurtado et al. 1998). Schools that are consistent across these four elements are able to enhance student outcomes through the creation of strong, supportive, and unified campus cultures (Dey 2009, p. 10).

Members of the dominant culture have greater access to the spaces in which culture and climate are mediated (Bourke 2010). This is important to note because research indicates that white students generally perceive the PWI campus as being open and welcoming (Rankin and Rea son 2005) whereas students of color perceive the PWI School of American College and University
campus climate to be chilly, unwelcoming, and hostile (Hurtado 1992, Rankin and Reason 2005).

**MARGINALIZATION**

Like other areas of scholarship that have investigated the experiences of members of underrepresented racial groups, the literature is rich with analyses of the ways in which these groups of students experience marginalization at PWIs. As with some aspects of diversity, there is no single agreed-upon definition of marginalization or of what it means to students. However, the varying perspectives of marginalization can be assigned to two categories: (1) that marginalization is the result of self-segregation by members of underrepresented racial groups (D’Sousa 1991); and (2) that marginalization is the result of members of underrepresented racial groups being forced to the margins (Antonio et al. 2012).

Within the perspective of self-segregation is a view of marginalization as being chosen. That is, through their efforts to self-segregate, members of underrepresented racial groups make active choices to live outside of the center and to be disengaged. In contrast, balkanization represents that the occupation of the margins by members of underrepresented racial groups is not by free choice (Chang 2002). Rather, balkanization is an option of no other resort where members of underrepresented groups are forced to choose self-segregation, resulting in what appear to be freely formed racial enclaves.

Through the lens of CRT, the former perspective is both naïve and lacking. The choice of self-segregation seems irrational. Through the lens of CRT, this perspective begs the following question: why would anyone attend at PWI to knowingly and willingly forgo the rights and opportunities associated with participation? Critical race theorists posit that “racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage” (Dixson and Rousseau 2006, 33). Whether self-segregation is the result of free association or balkanization, students of color continue to be marginalized at PWIs. As Tatum (1997) addresses in Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? the observable physical marginalization of students of color can result in marginalization that cannot be seen—namely, exclusion. The right to exclude is one of the key elements of the property rights of whiteness (Delgado and Stefancic 2001).

**IMPLICATIONS**

This article demonstrates that the term “predominantly white institution” means much more than simply the number of white students that are enrolled in relation to the number of members of underrepresented groups that are enrolled. It is important for those working in enrollment management to have a deeper understanding of the ways in which colleges and universities in the United States are labeled and discussed. It can be easy to view the label “predominantly white institution” as simply a reflection of enrollment numbers, but the significance of the PWI label goes much farther.

Despite institutional leaders’ espousing such ideals as democratic education and valuing diversity, students of color continue to experience PWIs differently than members of the dominant culture do. Feelings of alienation may lead some students of color to a variety of responses, ranging from withdrawal from interactions outside of their subculture to withdrawal from the institution. Self-segregation of students of color is often seen as a result of alienation from the dominant culture of the institution. Such self-segregation may result from students of color searching for belonging that they have difficulty finding in a white-dominant world and that is accentuated by the heightened sense of whiteness in the microcosm of the PWI.

Those working in enrollment management at PWIs need to take notice of diversity on their campuses. Knowing the demographic breakdown of each cohort is not enough. Enrollment management professionals need to understand the ways in which race is experienced on campus. Likewise, attending to structural diversity via diverse admissions without addressing organizational elements that can aid student engagement (see Kuh et al. 2006) will result in little that can positively affect student enrollments (Milem 2003). To guide the pursuit of greater understanding, the following questions need to be considered:

- Does the curriculum—particularly general education requirements—reflect diverse perspectives?
- In what ways (and in what places) are students of color engaged on campus?
- To what extent do campus traditions and celebrations reflect the diversity of the student population?

Exploring answers to these questions on individual campuses can serve enrollment management profession-
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as well. Honest answers represent a starting point for understanding the ways in which whiteness is present in the campus culture of a PWI. Further, the resultant knowledge can aid enrollment management professionals in developing strategic plans aimed at fostering more inclusive learning environments and at communicating the ways in which these environments are supported. Inclusive learning environments have been shown to have positive effects on students’ development in personal, social, and intellectual realms (Santos et al. 2007). These positive effects can, in turn, have a positive impact on the retention of students of color (Swail, Redd and Perna 2003). This is significant because a primary goal of enrollment management is to positively affect student enrollments, to include retaining students with the aim of matriculation through graduation (Hossler 2014).

It is important to be mindful of the intricacies of race on college campuses. When crafting race-conscious policies, programs, and services, enrollment management professionals, in collaboration with student affairs educators, need to work closely with faculty to create plans to diversify learning environments through more than compositional diversity. As leaders within enrollment management work to address calls for diversity, they must remain mindful of the ways in which diversity is constructed. It is also critically important to remember that simply increasing the numbers of diverse others can have little effect on the lived experiences of those students on campus.

CONCLUSION

Scholarship related to diversity in higher education has increased significantly in recent years. It is no longer sufficient for enrollment management professionals to build knowledge of diversity. Rather, they have a responsibility to work toward inclusion in ways that relate to the “organizational integration of functions” (Hossler 2014, pp. 7–8) within institutions. Enrollment management professionals—not the development of enrollment management functions—are to blame for the predominance of whiteness at PWIs. This reminder of responsibility is actually a shared responsibility throughout PWIs.

PWIs exist as more than institutions bound by a basic label. This article makes the case that what is predominant at PWIs is not simply the number of white students versus the number of students of color but embedded institutional practices that are based in whiteness. In using CRT as a critical lens for this examination, this article seeks to draw attention to the significance of the term “predominantly white institution”—and to the fact that it is more than a simple label. Rather, “predominantly white institution” signifies the extent to which whiteness is embedded throughout interconnected organizational practices, including those aimed at positively affecting student enrollments.

REFERENCES


About the Author

BRIAN BOURKE is Assistant Professor, Postsecondary Education, at Murray State University. His research is focused on student diversity and professional values of student affairs.
Democratic doctrines of the United States continue to support and strengthen higher education participation rates for underrepresented and underprepared populations. In the U.S. Department of Education’s Strategic Plan for Fiscal Year 2014–18 (U.S. Department of Education 2014), objectives include improving access, affordability, and degree completion by low-income and first-generation students, English learners, individuals with disabilities, and adults without high school diplomas. The current study focuses on the first-generation college student population.

Federal TRIO programs define first-generation students as those for whom neither of their parents or guardians completed a baccalaureate degree (U.S. Department of Education 2011). A challenging aspect of first-generation students is that they are more likely than their non-first-
generation peers to withdraw from college. Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) used the 1990–94 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study data to investigate the attrition behavior of first-generation students and found that they were less likely to persist than their peers at two- and four-year institutions. In particular, approximately 34 percent of first-generation students dropped out of four-year public institutions whereas approximately 23 percent of non-first-generation students did so.

Using the 1995–96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study data, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) continued reporting a lower rate of college persistence among first-generation students (Warburton, Bugarin and Nuñez 2001). Three years after matriculating at postsecondary education institutions, approximately 58 percent of first-generation students were still making progress toward bachelor’s degrees compared to approximately 77 percent of students whose parents were both college educated. Using the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, Chen (2005) reported a withdrawal propensity for first-generation students: Approximately 43 percent of first-generation students left their postsecondary institutions without a degree whereas only 20 percent of students with college-educated parents did so.

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Education has been developing a new college rating system. Its design focuses on key critical measures of institutional performance, such as improving access, affordability, and student outcomes. One metric in this new system is the college success of first-generation students. Institutions that enroll greater proportions of first-generation students receive an incentive. Thus, it is imperative for these institutions to retain and graduate more first-generation students. Given the current federal policy climate, it is vital to better understand how first-generation students persist in college. Coupled with the most recent national data set, this study investigated the college withdrawal behavior of first-generation students.

**FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS**

Scholars and researchers have long documented how first-generation college students differ from their counterparts. Terenzini *et al.* (1996) found that first-generation students
differed from non-first-generation students in fourteen of 37 pre-college characteristics. One of the greatest differences was that first-generation students were more likely to come from low-income families (Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998, Terenzini et al. 1996). Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998) discovered that 23 percent of first-generation students were from the lowest family income quartile whereas 5 percent of non-first-generation students were. Choy (2001) found that approximately 42 percent of first-generation students who enrolled at post-secondary institutions in 1995–96 were from families with annual incomes less than $25,000, compared to 18 percent of students with college-educated parents.

First-generation students were more likely to be non-Caucasian (Chen 2005, Lohfink and Paulsen 2005). According to Chen (2005), approximately 14 percent of African American high school graduates who enrolled at U.S. postsecondary institutions between 1992 and 2000 were first-generation students whereas approximately 8 percent had parents who were both college educated. Approximately 17 percent of Hispanic/Latino students who enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities during the same period were first generation whereas approximately 4 percent had parents who were both college educated. First-generation students also were more likely to be older (Nunez and Carroll 1998, Terenzini et al. 1996), to have more dependents, and to enroll at two-year institutions (Kojaku and Nuñez 1999). Close to 22 percent of the first-generation students who enrolled at U.S. postsecondary institutions in the 1989–90 academic year were 25 or more years old whereas 5 percent of non-first-generation students were (Nunez and Carroll 1998).

Using single institution data, Riehl (1994) found that first-generation freshmen had lower SAT scores and lower high school GPAs than their non-first-generation peers. Nunez and Cuccaro-Alamin’s (1998) findings at the national level were similar: First-generation students had lower achievement test scores. Terenzini et al. (1996) reported that first-generation students had lower levels of reading, math, and critical thinking skills at the time of their enrollment in college. Such differences have the potential to shape students’ educational experiences during college.

Using the National Study of Student Learning, Pascarella et al. (2004) reported that first-generation students were prone to take significantly fewer social sciences, arts and humanities, and technical/paraprofessional courses than were their non-first-generation peers. Despite having lighter course loads, on average, first-generation students also had lower GPAs through the third year of college compared to their peers with two college-educated parents.

First-generation students also spent more time per week working, a fact believed to adversely affect their academic growth during college. Pascarella et al. (2004) argued that students of college-educated parents had a better understanding of higher education and its associated benefits, which provided them with a distinctive advantage over first-generation students.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Over the past three decades, Tinto’s (1975) retention theory has provided a framework for myriad research studies on college student retention. The central notion of Tinto’s model is interactions between students and institutional environments—particularly ongoing interactions in two domains: academic and social integration. According to Tinto (1975), academic integration is manifested in a student’s academic performance and intellectual development during college whereas social integration is developed through informal interactions with peer groups and faculty. Higher levels of integration in the academic and social domains ultimately influence students’ decisions to persist and ultimately graduate from college.

Many studies employed Tinto’s (1975) model to assess the effect of academic and social integration on student persistence. Stage (1988) examined first-year retention and found that a student’s father’s educational attainment had positive effects on the student’s academic and social integration—and persistence to the second year of college. According to Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1992), financial aid bolstered the levels of academic and social integration and ultimately strengthened student’s decisions to persist. Beil et al. (1999) discovered that academic and social integration did not have a direct impact on retention, although both types of integration were strongly associated with students’ commitment to the institution, which in turn had a direct impact on retention. Berger and Braxton (1998) focused on the effect of social integration on persistence at a highly selective private research institution and found that organizational attributes such as fairness in academic and social rules and regulations significantly
influenced first-generation students’ level of social integration. More recently, Swecker, Fifolt, and Searby (2013) found that academic integration as measured by the number of advising sessions in which a student participated was significantly associated with student persistence.

Descriptive statistics at the national level indicated that first-generation students were less academically and socially integrated than their counterparts (Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin 1998). Also using national data, Leppel (2002) found that males and females were more likely to persist when they were more integrated into the college environment. While these studies attest to the positive effects of academic and social integration, others were limited to cross-sectional single-year retention data from a single institution (e.g., Berger and Braxton 1998) while still others aggregated enrollment status without specified timing for withdrawal, e.g., total number of students who withdrew by the end of the third year in college (see, for example, Beil et al. 1999). Further, many researchers failed to incorporate the probable varying effects of academic and social integration on persistence over time. For example, a certain set of academic activities may demonstrate positive effects on student persistence for the first year but not be effective in retaining students to their second year.

The current study utilized an event history, or survival analysis, as an analytical method by which to investigate the time-varying effects of academic and social integration as well as other factors on college persistence.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY
Data were drawn from the 2004–09 Beginning Postsecondary Student (BPS: 04/09) data set sponsored by NCES. The total sample size was 16,700. A group of students who matriculated at either public or private four-year institutions as first-time, beginning students was withdrawn from BPS: 04/09. This selection resulted in 7,568 students who had intact information in the dataset.

“Dropout” was operationalized as a student who left his four-year institution and never re-enrolled at any type of institution prior to the end of the survey observation period (June 2009). Like the TRIO program’s definition, first-generation students were those whose parents or guardians had not completed a baccalaureate degree. Table 1 presents the number of dropouts by parental educational attainment.

Overall, 24 percent of students left their four-year institutions and never reentered higher education during the study period. Approximately 29 percent of first-generation students never finished their college education—a percentage greater than that of students whose parents had earned a college degree. The chi-square test indicated that the disproportionality of withdrawals across different parental education backgrounds was statistically significant.

Table 2 (on page 26) includes descriptive information about the independent variables considered in the current study. The BPS: 04/09 surveyed students’ levels of academic and social integration in 2003–04 and 2005–06.
Table 2. Descriptive Summary for Study Sample

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<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>654</td>
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<td>129</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* = reference group in regression analysis
The academic integration variable was created based on average responses to how often students participated in the following: study groups, social contact with faculty, meeting with an academic advisor, or spoke with faculty about academic matters outside of class.

The social integration variable was derived from the average responses for participation in the following: fine arts activities, intramural varsity sports, and school clubs. Average scores for academic and social integration variables were multiplied by 100 in the BPS: 04/09 data.

Gender and race have been found to be influential in students’ persistence behavior in their first year of college (Stoecker, Pascarella and Wolfe 1988). Approximately 56 percent of the study sample was female. Approximately 72 percent of first-time, beginning students were Caucasian, 9.2 percent were black, 8.6 percent were Hispanic/Latino, 5.9 percent were Asian, and 4.7 percent were multiracial or had unknown ethnic backgrounds. The current study included the family income quartiles derived from parents’ income in the original data. Aptitude test score quartiles were based on the sum of SAT verbal and math scores in the study. ACT composite scores were converted to an estimated SAT score for those who reported only ACT composite scores in the BPS: 04/09.

Previous research found that financial aid influenced students’ decisions to withdraw (Chen and DesJardins 2010; St. John, Paulsen and Starkey 1996). The majority of students received different types of financial aid—including grants, loans, and work-study—from different sources. The total number of different types of aid students received was incorporated to assess its effect on student persistence. Approximately 20 percent of the sample did not receive any type of financial aid; approximately 56 percent received two or more types of aid.

With regard to institutional characteristics, the current study examined the effect of institutional control and Carnegie classification on student persistence. Approximately 59 percent of students were enrolled at public four-year institutions whereas 41 percent attended private institutions. Approximately 46 percent of students were enrolled at doctorate-granting universities, 33 percent percent were enrolled at master’s degree-granting colleges and universities, and 16 percent were enrolled at baccalaureate degree-granting colleges.

METHODS

In previous college persistence studies, researchers typically employed either structural equation modeling or binary logistic regression to validate existing retention theories using a dependent variable that consisted of enrollment status of “enrolled” or “not enrolled” at the end of certain academic years (e.g., first- or second-year persistence). In such cases, findings are applicable to certain years. Moreover, different types of departure—e.g., transfer and stop out—were not controlled and in fact were aggregated with dropouts in a single dependent variable in previous studies. Failure to account for different types of departure leads to spurious estimates of dropout behavior. In order to incorporate different types of departure, the current study utilized an event history as the primary inferential statistical procedure. Event history modeling was designed to study the occurrences and timing of different events.

Given numerous modeling techniques in the event history, the challenge was in selecting the most appropriate model. Cox regression model is far more popular than other models in event history, but it is only concerned with the overall magnitude and direction of the explanatory variable after controlling for time dimension (Blossfeld and Rohwer 1995). Thus, Cox analysis results include one coefficient for each explanatory variable, which fails to reveal possible varying levels of coefficients at each discrete time. In order to overcome this shortcoming, this study used an exponential model with period-specific effects. This parametric modeling technique estimated unique coefficients specific to each academic year rather than using single overall coefficients.

From a theoretical standpoint, a student’s withdrawal is a product of the quality of ongoing interactions with other students and institutional environments. The quality of such interactions is assumed to vary over time. Thus, the period-specific approach used in this study was most appropriate to address time-varying effects of factors such as academic and social integration. Enrollment management personnel and policy makers tend to seek research studies for practical application. (See below for an application of findings from this study.)

While the proportions of dropouts by parental educational attainment level were found to be statistically significant (see Table 1), this finding did not take into
account whether the proportions were statistically significant across different academic years. Thus, prior to the event history procedure, the nonparametric Kaplan-Meier method was administered to determine whether the proportions of dropouts differed by parental educational attainment across academic years. Variance inflation factor was tested and was found to range from 1.02 to 2.15, providing no evidence of imposing multicollinearity issues in the current study data.

RESULTS

Kaplan-Meier Estimates

The survivor function is one of the basic concepts in event history modeling. It describes the distribution of the number of subjects still at risk of dropping out at the end of each academic year. The survivor functions by parental educational attainment were estimated using the Kaplan-Meier method (see Figure 1). At the end of the first year, 88 percent of first-generation students and 91 percent of students whose parents were both college educated were still enrolled. However, at the end of the second year, 81 percent of first-generation students persisted compared to 89 percent of students whose parents were both college educated. This indicates that 7 percent of first-generation students withdrew while only 2 percent of students whose parents were college educated withdrew during their second year of college. Lower retention rates for first-generation students continued until the end of the fifth year.

A log-rank test was used to compute test statistics for the equality of survivor functions over time. A test statistic was found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 107.46, p < 0.01$). Thus, the survivor functions by parental educational attainment differed significantly over time without controlling for other factors.

EXPOSITIONAL MODEL WITH PERIOD-SPECIFIC EFFECTS

Table 3 (on page 29) contains the results of the exponential model with period-specific effects analysis. Students who dropped out were coded as “1.” An odds ratio greater than 1.0 indicates a positive effect on dropout rate whereas an odds ratio less than 1.0 represents a negative effect on dropout rate. For example, the odds ratio for females for the first year was 0.697, indicating that females were less likely to drop out than were their male counterparts. However, 0.697 does not clearly reflect the magnitude of the effect of being female. Alternatively, $\Delta\%$ indicates a change in probability, which is computed as the odds ratio – 1.00. $\Delta\%$ was -0.303 (0.697 – 1.00) for females, indicating that females were 30.3 percent less likely than males to drop out in their first year of college.

First-Generation Students

Event history with period-specific effects revealed detailed withdrawal behaviors among first-generation students beyond findings based on the Kaplan-Meier results. After controlling for other explanatory variables, first-generation students were most likely to drop out of college in their second year. Compared to students whose parents graduated from college, first-generation students were approximately 80 percent more likely to drop out during their second year of enrollment. First-generation students who did not graduate before their fourth year showed a higher dropout rate than did their counterparts. They were approximately 40 percent more likely to drop out in
Table 3.  
Period Specific Effect Estimates by Year

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<tr>
<th>Variable Label</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
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<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5 and plus</th>
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<td>%</td>
<td>Odds</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Odds</td>
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<td>c</td>
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<td>1.152</td>
<td>2.206</td>
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<td>0.401</td>
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<td>0.668</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1St Quartile</td>
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<td>1.851</td>
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<td>2.251</td>
<td>1.251</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>1.248</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* a = p < 0.01; b = p < 0.05; c = p < 0.10
their fourth year. This study also suggests that there were no statistically significant differences in attrition behaviors for the first and third years between first-generation students and students whose parents were both college educated.

**Academic and Social Integration**

This study demonstrated the nature of time-varying effects of academic and social integration on retention. The significant effect of academic integration to reduce student withdrawal was found in the first and fifth years. Every 50-point increase was associated with decreases in the likelihood of departure by approximately 12 percent and 16 percent for the first and fifth years, respectively.

The current study found that the positive and significant impact of social integration was strengthened as students advanced to the third year. Every 50-point increase reduced the likelihood of withdrawal by approximately 10 percent for the first year. For the second year, students were approximately 19 percent less likely to drop out when they increased their social integration scores by 50 points. The effect of social integration on students’ retention was greatest during the third year, when every 50-point increase reduced the odds of a student dropping out by approximately 22 percent. However, the positive effect of social integration on persistence waned after the third year.

**Other Variables**

The effects of the admission test were statistically significant until the fourth year. In comparison to students in the highest quartile, students in the lowest quartile were approximately 3.1 times (odds ratio) more likely to withdraw in their first year of college. The departure risk of this group continued until the fourth year. Students in the second and third quartiles faced notable risks of withdrawal: Students in the second quartile were approximately 2.4 times (odds ratio) more likely to drop out in the first year; students in the third quartile had the highest risk of dropping out in their second year.

The number of financial aid packages had positive effects on retaining students. As the types of aid increased, so did the likelihood of persistence. For students with three or more types of aid, this was particularly evident for the second year: They were approximately 54 percent less likely than students with no aid to drop out. Having any number of financial aid packages was an effective means of retaining students for both their first and second years.

After controlling for longitudinal effects of academic and social integration, admission tests, and financial aid, females were more likely than were males to persist until their third year of college. Compared to Caucasian students, Asian and Hispanic/Latino students were approximately 44 percent and 32 percent less likely, respectively, to withdraw in their first year.

With regard to institutional characteristics, students enrolled at baccalaureate institutions were approximately 31 percent less likely than those who enrolled at doctoral institutions to depart during their first year. However, students at baccalaureate institutions were approximately 2.3 times (odds ratio) more likely to leave their colleges in the fourth year. Interestingly, students at master’s institutions were approximately 71 percent more likely to withdraw in the second year than were students at doctoral institutions.

**LIMITATIONS**

A number of limitations pertain to the current study. Respondents in the BPS: 04/09 data originated from the NPSAS: 04 data, which were cross-sectional data focused on financial aid. Thus, the BPS: 04/09 possessed considerable information on financial aid. However, the data on financial aid were collected only in 2003–04, and there were no follow-ups to monitor students’ financial aid status. Therefore, the current study assumed that there were no changes in the number of financial aid packages that students received over time. Further, the BPS: 04/09 lacked information on students’ pre-college characteristics—for example, parents’ expectations, high school engagement, students’ academic expectations, and the highest math course taken in high school. As a result, the current study was unable to examine the effects of these factors on college retention.

The current study may also be limited by operational definitions of certain variables. For example, the level of academic integration was measured by the average of responses indicating how often students were involved in activities such as study groups, social contact with faculty, and meeting with an academic advisor. Similarly, the level of social integration was operationalized as attending activities such as fine arts, intramural or varsity sports, and school clubs. Therefore, implications based on findings for
academic and social integration are limited to these specific activities and increasing or decreasing frequencies of such activities.

**STUDENT PROFILE SIMULATIONS**

Using point estimates to highlight study findings is a common practice in education research. However, some significant coefficients have positive signs while other coefficients may have negative signs. When a larger numerical value of a negative coefficient (e.g., -1.50) and a smaller numerical value of a positive coefficient (e.g., +1.00) are summed, the overall effect of these coefficients is negative (i.e., -0.50 = -1.50 + 1.00). For that reason, interpretations that rely solely on individual point estimates without simultaneously considering the effects of other variables may fail to capture overall profiles of students with different characteristics.

In order to improve the applicability of collective findings in the current study, longitudinal dropout probabilities were estimated based on two hypothetical students. The characteristics of hypothetical students A and B in two scenarios are illustrated in Table 4. In the first scenario, both students were first generation; however, student A was a female Hispanic/Latino student who had one financial aid package and a third-quartile test score whereas student B was a male Asian student who had no financial aid and a second-quartile test score. The dropout probabilities of these students over time are presented in Figure 2. Due to their being first generation, both students had the highest probability of dropping out in their sec-

### Table 4. Student Characteristics for Dropout Probabilities Simulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Figure 2</th>
<th>Figure 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Student B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
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<td>FG</td>
</tr>
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<td>Family Income</td>
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<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Aids</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnegie Classification</td>
<td>Mater</td>
<td>Mater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Integration</td>
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<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ond year. Student B had a higher probability of dropping out than did student A given his test score and lack of financial aid.

Assume slightly different characteristics for Student B in the second scenario: Student B obtained two financial aid packages, and his academic and social integration scores increased by 50 points. As a result, his dropout probability decreased (see Figure 3).

Such simulations demonstrate the importance of overall risk profiles of students with different characteristics. Different combinations of student characteristics create varying levels of dropout risk at different times that help practitioners and policy makers target at-risk students more efficiently and effectively. This study’s findings should inspire institutional personnel to discuss year-by-year retention rates; to identify unique issues that seem to trigger withdrawals at specific academic years; and to systematically incorporate these issues in their retention efforts.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS
Coupled with the most recent BPS data, this study investigated longitudinal dropout behavior of first-generation students. Myriad studies indicate that first-generation students are less likely than their peers with college-educated parents to persist and graduate from college. However, little is known about the timing of first-generation students’ dropping out during college. The current study was able to successfully identify time-varying effects of being first-generation students on college persistence. After controlling for a number of factors, this study discovered that first-generation students were most likely to drop out during their second year in college. Period-specific findings suggest ways in which education practitioners can support first-generation students’ success in college.

The most critical period for freshmen is their first year in college, as they attempt to confirm whether they entered the “right institution.” According to the 2013 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), approximately 27 percent of first-time freshmen who were enrolled at four-year public and private institutions left by the end of the 2013 spring semester. In response to the large number of students who leave during their first year, colleges and universities allocate significant resources to the development of programs designed to retain more students during their first year (Levitz, Noel and Richter 1999). But after that first year is over, many institutions shift their focus to the next year’s incoming freshmen. As a result, little is known about what happens to students during their second year in college—a time when more first-generation students drop out of college.

Substantial investment in programs developed to retain more students in their first year may prove futile if students leave during their second year because of a lack of ongoing institutional support and engagement. Some of the issues of concern to freshmen may not be important to sophomores (this may be evidenced by findings for academic integration in this study).

According to Gahagan and Hunter (2006), students are more concerned about their academic majors, increasing tuition costs, and housing issues during their sophomore year. Using single institution data, Wang and Kennedy-Phillips (2013) found that first-generation students were less involved with peers during their second year. Although Pascarella et al. (2004) reported that first-generation students were less likely to be involved in extra-curricular activities, athletic participation, and volunteer work during their second year, they gained significantly greater benefits from their involvement in these activities than did students with college-educated parents.

Establishing a group of institutional personnel who design and organize programs to enhance second-year retention is ideal (e.g., Kennedy-Phillips and Uhing 2013); such programs are imperative for first-generation students. In order to develop effective programs to promote second-year persistence among first-generation students, further investigation to explore sources of their particular disenchantment during their second year is needed.

This study also underscored the salience of academic and social integration in the collegiate environment. The time-varying nature of academic and social integration was well illustrated. While the significant effect of academic integration was during students’ first year, the significant effect of social integration extended through the end of the third year. The effect of social integration was strengthened as students progressed in their college careers. The increasing power of social integration over time as it relates to student retention is information that is new to the literature. However, application based on the findings is limited to the items that appear in the data set. In addition to the integration items in the current study,
Managing Academic Space: A Guide for Higher Education Institutions

by Amanda Vásquez and Craig Westman

Space use and management is an integral part of operating a college or university. From scheduling classes to events, understanding how to effectively manage space can result in increased productivity, cost savings, and overall efficiency. Part case study and part how-to guide, Managing Academic Space uses the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) as a case study of how to significantly increase efficiency of space use.

“For those integrally involved in managing space as well as those new to the increasingly important issue of utilization and scheduling, studying this Guide is time well-spent. Exploring the eight chapters and related information will provide leaders with insights on issues of space management currently utilized at their institution and their impact on students, faculty, and the community, as well as a wealth of new considerations — woven together in a publication that you will want to read, share with others, and implement.”

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institutions should seek additional forms of interactions, particularly addressing issues that first-generation students are concerned about during their second year.

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About the Author

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Three major generations are represented in today’s workforce: Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials. Each of these groups has a wide range of definitions, but here they are defined according to their most common definitions: Baby boomers include those born in the decade following the end of World War II and are between the ages of 50 and 70 years. Generation X includes those born between 1963 and 1980—individuals in their mid 30s to late 40s. Generation Y, more commonly referred to as Millennials, includes those born between 1981 and 1994—those in their early 20s to mid 30s.

To frame this discussion, consider where these generations were on September 11, 2001. My father, a Baby Boomer, was established in his career and had a family. Gen Xers were roughly college-age kids or early in their careers. Millennials were in middle school and high school. (I was in my sophomore year of high school.)

Other articles in this series discuss mentorship from the perspective of Generation X and Baby Boomers; this one does so from the perspective of Millennials. (I feel confident speaking on behalf of my peers.) Millennials are one of the largest generations in history—even larger, in fact, than that of the Baby Boomers (Goldman Sachs 2016).

We approach mentorship in a very different way than other generations do. When I started working, I had no idea what a mentoring relationship was supposed to look like. What I did know was that mentoring was important. Like other Millennials, I came of age in the midst of significant uncertainty. My fourth grade class planted a tree in memory of the Oklahoma City bombing victims; the massacre at Columbine High School resulted in metal detectors and armed officers becoming commonplace at schools; my aunt and uncle moved to the hills of Tennessee because of the Y2K scare; 9/11 set the tone for homeland security; and I graduated from college in 2008, just as the great recession was starting. It should not come as a surprise that Millennials like when things are clearly defined. I want to know exactly what I need to do to get from where I am to where my mentor is. Of course, I also recognize that such clarity is not always possible.

Mentorship is a relationship, and as the mentee, I want my mentor to drive that relationship. I need guidance because I want to learn. I do not want to waste my mentor’s time (or mine for that matter). I know that there is a hierarchy and that I am near the bottom of it, so I am sensitive to the fact that my mentor probably has other things he needs to be doing. Nevertheless, I still expect to be treated as a colleague—that is, to be treated with respect.

As much as I want my mentor to take the lead, set parameters, and facilitate the growth of my career, I know
that nobody cares about me as much as I care about me. I know that if I want to make something happen, then it is up to me to make the first move. I cannot allow myself to be paralyzed by fear of an awkward interaction because that will lead to no action at all.

Because of my youth, I have not had as many opportunities to be a mentor as many of my colleagues have, but I have had some. I encourage anyone interested in becoming a mentor to be open to the idea of teaching others. This requires planning but not overthinking. Phil Jackson once said, “Approach the game with no preset agendas, and you’ll probably come away surprised at your overall efforts” (Jackson, n.d.) I have found this to be true in many areas of my life.

Several years ago I had the privilege to lead a local group of kids between the ages of ten and seventeen. I met with them every week to go over their assignments, teach them how to tie knots, take them camping, etc. I was not an expert in the curriculum, but I cared about the kids and was willing to do my best to teach them and to help them where they needed it. School work was not in the scope of this program, but I knew that for some of the kids, it was more important than anything else. I believe that teaching often has a way of leading toward mentoring. Recently I learned that one of the kids I spent a lot of time with is now studying physical therapy in college; I know it is in large part because of the time my wife and I spent encouraging him.

So what do Millennials expect from a mentor? We look for the same qualities that other generations do, but we also look for someone who is confident and who clearly lives the values he professes. We have all known that guy—the one who can do it all, who has so much confidence, and to whom people flock. Unfortunately, having confidence is not enough to be a mentor. This person also has to be transparent in his values. In short, Millennials want a mentor who is ‘real’—whose actions line up with his words.

The other things we look for are accessibility and approachability. We need to be able to access our mentors as needed. Especially if something urgent comes up, I don’t...
want to wait two to four weeks for an appointment with someone who is supposed to be mentoring me. I understand that my mentor is a busy person, but if he agreed to mentor me, then he agreed to devote an appropriate amount of time to me. At the very least, I need to be able to contact him via e-mail.

In *Developing the Leaders around You*, author John Maxwell suggests eight things a mentee can and should do. First, ask the right questions. Think about what to ask before meeting with your mentor; your questions should be strategic for your own growth. One of my biggest personal revelations was that the mentee doesn’t need to ask work-related questions. If you don’t have any work-related questions, then just observe. Or be prepared with questions to get the conversation started— for example, “If your house was burning, what three objects would you try to save? Why?”

Set expectations. Improvement, not perfection, should be the goal, because everyone has room for improvement. Take a learning position: Trust that your mentor has something worthwhile that he wants to share with you. Don’t be a know-it-all, because that will put up barriers and impede communication. Respect your mentor, but don’t idolize him. Remain objective and critical of your mentor; idolizing him will prevent you from adapting his knowledge and experience for yourself. Try to put what you are learning into effect as soon as possible. What you learn should be relevant because, ideally, you want to “learn, practice, and assimilate.” Be disciplined. Schedule enough time on a consistent basis, select the subject matter, and *do your homework*. This will make the time spent with your mentor much more profitable. Reward your mentor. Your growth is the best reward a mentor could hope for. Don’t threaten to give up. If you give up, then your mentor has failed, and you have lost that opportunity for growth.

So what can a mentee do? If I want to be mentored, then I need to set up a specific time. I need to say, “Mentor, let’s get coffee—or breakfast—next Monday before work, my treat.” The venue doesn’t matter nearly as much as simply setting the time. Ask your mentor what timeline is comfortable for him. Does he want to meet once a week? Once a month? For an hour? Whatever you decide, it is crucial to begin and end on time.

Finally, find something your mentor enjoys, and talk about or go do that thing. Whether it is going golfing or grabbing coffee, a joint activity is a great way to strengthen the bond between your mentor and you.

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— Rob Garrett, Managing Director of Enrollment Services, Brigham Young University–Idaho

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At 25 years of age, I experienced the power and importance of mentorship. A recently minted director of a new department, I was one of three young directors who reported to the same vice president. One morning he called us all in to a group meeting. The three of us chatted nonchalantly before our boss arrived. Had we known what was coming, the environment would have been—should have been—much more solemn. He arrived, sat down, leaned into his high-backed chair, and proceeded to give the shortest and best lecture of my life: “You have to own your job,” he said matter-of-factly. “If you do not own your job, you will not be successful at this institution or in life.” Not only were the three of us young and inexperienced, but we also were clueless about leading a department. Our boss had dedicated his time to coaching each of us on specific processes. Yet we had not grasped the importance of one of the foundational leadership attributes: attitude. In a straightforward and non-condescending manner, our boss proceeded to inform the three of us that he was aware of our lackadaisical attitude and apparent view of directorship as license to come in late, leave early, and feel important while doing so. We looked at our boss dumbfounded and unable to respond. He was right, and we knew it.

He did not end the conversation there, though he could have. “I want you to be successful,” he continued, “and part of that success is being present. Therefore, I expect you to be here a full eight hours every day. I also expect that I will know when and why that does not happen. If you do not have enough to fill your hours, let me know, and I will sit with you, and we will identify together how your office can help improve the university. You need to own your job, look for ways to improve what you are responsible for, and create a plan for where your department is going. You were hired because of your abilities. Don’t let the university down.” I left that meeting feeling simultaneously reprimanded and empowered. I mark it as a pivotal moment in my leadership journey—one that continues to inform my thoughts on mentorship.

As a millennial, I cherished four aspects of my boss’s mentorship that day: (1) his willingness to address an awkward situation head on; (2) his understanding of my work (because he had worked alongside me), so I did not feel misrepresented; (3) his leading by example and demonstrating what he expected (he was always at the office at 8:00 a.m. and left after 5:00 p.m.); and (4) his making me feel that I had an important part to play in the institution’s
success. All of these elements have broader applications that appeal to millennial mentees. Specifically, millennials want mentors who communicate, participate, demonstrate, and validate.

A caveat is necessary: one size does not fit all. Some millennials desire different aspects of mentorship. That said, more than any other generation in the work force, millennials desire mentors (Hastings 2012). A noteworthy subset of the millennial generation desires mentors who demonstrate these four characteristics.

COMMUNICATE
Regardless of age or experience, a mentor must be able to communicate effectively, with transparency and genuineness. Communication is key to any successful relationship—not only with millennials. The distinction for millennials is that because we are always communicating via text, social media, and in person, we are communication experts who readily identify disingenuous communication. We need communication that is genuine, honest, and provides a clear sense of direction.

Providing a sense of direction does not equate to micromanaging; in fact, micromangers and millennials are like oil and water. Studies suggest that individuals who work with millennials need to communicate in a transparent and fair way without being overbearing (Holt, Marques and Way 2012). For example, a micromanager might say, “The report due tomorrow needs to close with three paragraphs about the impact of the marketing plan on our business culture, and it must reference the new office goal of social justice in the final paragraph.” This communication is very clear, but there is neither a rationale for the request nor opportunity for personal expression and individuality (which millennials crave).

Millennials want the opportunity to learn by taking charge (when appropriate) and adding a bit of their individuality. As a result, they appreciate guidance but not being required to follow specific steps (unless the process is completely new to them). Millennials prefer to be told, “Regarding that report that you are working on for tomorrow, the committee is asking that we show our shareholders how we are planning to incorporate our new office goal of social justice. Can you incorporate that into the conclusion of the report? If you have questions, I'd be happy to go over that paragraph with you.” The communication is clear, gives a reason for the request, and allows for individuality in completing the task.

In higher education, many processes are prescribed and must be accomplished via specific steps. If a millennial is performing a task that must be completed in an exact and precise way every time, with no opportunity for individuality, all is not lost. Explain why the task must be completed that way. Millennials desire clear and open communication, to include knowing the intended outcome and the rationale for the process (Ferri-Reed 2014). Understanding the reason for a process and the value of the process to the institution enables millennials to assign value to what they are doing, even if they are not able to infuse individuality into the process.

PARTICIPATE
Millennials need leadership, not management. We grew up with parents who allowed us to participate in the decision-making process, and that is how we learn. Studies show that millennials respond well to leaders who are team oriented, inspire involvement, and attribute value to participants (Holt, Marques and Way 2012). To inspire a millennial, encourage her to participate, and explain why her participation is valuable to the team. This can be communicated through words but is best portrayed through action. Do not be afraid to step into the trenches with millennial employees; let them see you demonstrate what is expected of them and that you understand their world. Such demonstrations of leadership foster loyalty and contribute to millennials’ sense of meaning.

Millennials have a reputation for lacking loyalty in the workforce. They are known to “job hop” in search of better opportunities. It is important to identify one of the top reasons millennials leave their jobs: their supervisors (Nolan 2015, Pryor 2015). However, supervisors who actively seek to build trust, invest in their employees through personal development, and include their employees in as many ways as possible become mentors rather than managers. Such behaviors increase trust and are likely to result in loyal millennial employees. This does not mean that millennials will remain in the same job with the same company for years on end but that they will be more engaged during their term of employment and will be more likely to stay longer than they would otherwise.
DEMONSTRATE
Serving as a role model is crucial to millennials. Just as millennials like to infuse individuality into their work, so they like to see others demonstrate individuality in their work (Campione 2015; Holt, Marques and Way 2012). Watching a mentor demonstrate a technique or process with personal flair excites and empowers millennials to do the same. Millennials like to see different methods contribute to different results. Particularly when there is no opportunity for individuality, a mentor’s demonstration of care and commitment lends meaning to the process.

Millennials also seek mentors who demonstrate personal ethics. Research indicates increasingly that millennials value social responsibility, personal ethics, and morality (Leveson 2014). Mentors who openly discuss and demonstrate the ways in which their values impact their decisions and actions command the respect of millennials. Members of this generation want to see not only how to do a process but also how to incorporate their personal values into that process.

VALIDATE
The concept of validation is indicative of millennials’ need for feedback (Ferri-Reed 2014). Whether good or bad, feedback is available all day long via social media and other media channels. Parents of millennials typically set high expectations and routinely advised their children and, later, teens of their performance in relation to those expectations. Millennials seek the same feedback and validation in the workplace. They need to know they are valued; only then can they assign meaning to their work.

Millennials value mentors who know how and when to offer feedback (Nolan 2015). Few individuals react positively to being called out in public for making a mistake; millennials are no exception. However, neither do millennials respond positively to feedback being withheld until the annual performance evaluation. Ideally, any situation would be addressed with everyone involved as it arose. For example, ensure that the millennial employee who does an exceptional job is commended right away in a way he appreciates (this will vary according to the individual’s personality). Something as simple as a sticky note about a job well done can go a long way. When negative or constructive feedback is required, share it as soon as possible—do not wait. But do share feedback discreetly so the millennial can process it privately, without the threat of additional embarrassment resulting from colleagues being aware. An email invitation to “stop by at your earliest convenience” is a discreet way to provide negative feedback. This will not reduce anxiety about a pending negative interaction, but it will be less likely to disrupt the flow of work in the office and will minimize any negative attention from peers. This enables the millennial to focus more energy on the needed change.

Millennials want validation and feedback to infuse communication, participation, and demonstration. In other words, communicate openly, honestly, and with transparency when providing feedback. Allow the mentee to participate in the feedback process—for example, by working together to outline a plan for improvement or to identify how best to show appreciation. Lead by example. These are the behaviors most valued and desired by millennials.

SUPER MENTORS?
These four mentorship attributes—validation, communication, participation, and demonstration—are individually challenging—and much more so in combination. Do millennials expect “super mentors” who do all, know all, and see all? No. What millennials desire most is authenticity. The authentic mentor has high expectations and strives to meet them but is not afraid to admit her limitations (Pryor 2015). She is consistent, tells the truth, and meets challenges directly and transparently. Millennials do not want perfect mentors; they want mentors who genuinely care about them and demonstrate what it means to be a human being striving to contribute to the workforce in a positive and meaningful way.

When I left my boss’s office that morning, I began the journey toward being a leader and mentor in my own right. I was given a charge to “own my job.” And because my boss believed in me enough to provide honest feedback and to present options as to how to improve myself, I took up that charge with alacrity. I continued to watch how he worked, and I modeled his behavior while incorporating my own unique qualities. Now, when my colleague and I find the other still at her desk long after the building has closed or when we have spent a particularly long time grappling with a difficult issue (two of us still work for the same boss at the same institution), we will occasionally say—only somewhat tongue in cheek—“You’re owning your job too much.” Our attitudes changed because...
a mentor valued us enough to communicate, participate, demonstrate, and validate.

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ERIN SEHEULT is Director of University Records at Loma Linda University in southern California. She enjoys learning about leadership and is planning to complete her Ph.D. in organizational management with a specialization in leadership by the end of summer 2016. Once she has time to do things other than write her dissertation she plans to delve deeper into the practical applications of leadership in higher education.

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Generational Mentorship: How to Be a Mentor

By Ismari Altamirano

MY EXPERIENCE AS A MENTEE

A member of Generation X, I would describe my mentee experience as listening and observing. Early in my career, when I was in my mid twenties, the expectation was not to initiate interaction but rather to wait for someone to provide guidance. I would never have thought it appropriate to ask someone to be my mentor. Instead, I did my best to attract my boss's attention and hoped that I would be selected for additional interaction.

My mentoring experience consisted primarily of talks with my boss. Over time, he shared how he had attained his position in the company; his outlook on employee/boss interaction; his thoughts on education; how to ensure that essential work functions were completed; and other insights.

I learned by watching and listening rather than by being an active participant in the mentoring relationship. My mentor had me attend meetings where managers decided how to redistribute employee labor based on employees’ expertise so the day’s production would be completed. This was a great lesson that employees can unite to accomplish goals—and it is a lesson I still use today.

As I have gotten older, I have come to realize that I will not always have the answer and that it is okay to ask for guidance—even from people from different generations.

My boss is a millennial who has been in higher education longer than I have and has held numerous positions. Her knowledge and insights have proven invaluable. When a problem arises, I examine the situation, arrive at a solution, and then ask myself, “How would she respond?” Depending on the situation, I sometimes ask for her advice. When she is running a meeting or addressing an issue, I observe how she interacts with others and take note of how she resolves issues.

MY EXPERIENCE AS A MENTOR

My early experience as a mentor occurred when a millennial walked into my office and asked if I had time for questions not related to work. When I answered in the affirmative, she proceeded to tell me about her goal of returning to school and of her uncertainty as to what program to pursue. She asked how I had decided what I wanted to study. How did I come to be in higher education? How did I know I wanted to be a manager? How did I balance work, school, and family? I asked questions to better understand her situation and then proceeded to share my own experience and thought process. At the end of the meeting, she walked away with some things to think about, and I was glad to have been of assistance.
If you are open to mentoring, those around you will feel comfortable asking you to do so.

To date, the mentorship relationships I have initiated have been informal. The mentoring arises when I notice that a direct report is having difficulty with a specific task. This typically leads to a one-on-one conversation during which we discuss the issue and identify action items. After a specified amount of time has passed, I check on progress; if progress is satisfactory, the mentoring session is closed.

POINTERS FOR MENTORS

Since my first mentoring session, a few others have asked for advice. My direct reports range from millennials to baby boomers, so I wondered how I could effectively mentor them. Each generation looks for something different from a mentoring relationship, but some factors apply to each relationship—including building the relationship, listening, setting goals, providing guidance, sharing stories, giving feedback, and closing the mentoring relationship.

The literature shows that building a relationship with a mentee can lead to openness, trust, and social support, all of which can facilitate mentoring (Dalton, Harp and Via-tor 2012; Poulsen 2013). I have found this to be generally true: that a person who feels that she has a positive relationship is more open to asking questions and accepting feedback. But the relationship does not happen magically; it requires work. This means getting to know the mentee, including what her passions and aspirations are. Getting to know the mentee also provides insight on how best to guide her. Every week, I set aside time to interact with my direct reports in a way that can lead to discussion of what issues they are encountering and how those issues might be resolved.

A mentor must listen and learn what the mentee needs from the relationship (Poulsen 2013). If the mentee is unable to articulate desired outcomes, the mentor can observe how the mentee reacts to interactions and can glean insights as to which areas need growth. The mentor then can provide guidance in helping the mentee set meaningful goals (Keller 2005). For example, new direct reports are given timelines that indicate when competencies should be mastered. In order to help the employee attain competency, training is provided along with a work schedule. As direct reports gain experience and confidence, they are encouraged to adjust the schedule to best fit their individual work style while still accomplishing weekly and monthly goals. This teaches employees how to be accountable and how to prioritize tasks.

Goals can change as a mentee learns and broadens her field of knowledge (Keller 2005). This requires that the mentor be flexible and adapt the way in which the mentee is guided. Guiding does not mean micromanaging but rather providing clear direction as to how the mentee can reach goals. Allow the mentee to be part of the process of determining how to reach goals, and allow her to learn from mistakes. It may be helpful to track the mentee’s progress by recording explicit goals rather than relying on “a gut feeling”; this can also facilitate the measuring of progress. Recording goals and monitoring progress takes time, but doing so facilitates the early identification of negative trends and provides opportunities to modify plans as necessary. Mentees can also view their progress and be encouraged to continue working toward their goals.

Throughout the mentoring relationship, it is crucial to provide feedback (Allen, Shockley and Poteat 2010). Being intentional about feedback allows the mentor to determine what areas the mentee still needs to work on and informs the mentee of her progress. The mentor can adjust goals if she determines that additional time or training is needed.

Include positives even when providing negative feedback. For example, say, “Mary, I notice that you have reached your goal of arriving on time, which is great. In reviewing your progress, I see that we still need to continue working on how to structure the daily schedule so that priority tasks are addressed in a timely fashion.” Providing positive feedback reminds the mentee that even though some deficient areas remain, progress is being made. Feedback can be provided via phone, email, or in person, one on one. One-on-one interaction, in person, provides for clearer communication. Often, I also send a follow-up email detailing what was discussed and next action steps.

It can be helpful to share past stories and experiences when trying to solve a problem (Jones 2013). Stories explain the problem or situation, the thought process underlying the proposed solution, and how the problem was resolved. I often use stories to explain why I do things a certain way and why change is required.

Recently, while trying to incorporate a new process that required additional direct reports to be part of the change, I described how the team was on a cargo ship (figuratively
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speaking) and how it was the team’s responsibility to place the cargo so the ship wouldn’t list and take on water. However, new cargo—the new process—was “heavier” than the rest of the cargo and so required the whole team to work together to prevent damage to the ship. This story helped me explain why everyone’s help was essential to the team’s success. As the mentee acquires skills and knowledge, the mentoring relationship eventually comes to a close (Keller 2005). The status of the relationship may change to friendship, co-worker, or supervisor and employee. Even though the informal mentorship with the millennial has ended, I still ask how she is progressing.

LONG-TERM MENTORING

Mentoring a direct report commences during training but does not end there; instead it evolves over time and can continue over the length of the direct report’s employment. For example, once the direct report has acquired the knowledge to complete the required tasks we begin discussing how those tasks could be performed efficiently. I encourage the direct report to take ownership of her position and think of ways to improve processes. Due to these efforts, our office has been able to adjust processes. In one case, this led to improvement of the service provided to our schools and students. After a direct report has mastered the ability to see the big picture regarding her position I encourage her to then look at the team for areas of improvement.

This commitment to long term mentoring allows for the growth of the direct report, which can lead to other employment opportunities. Even though the direct report moves on to other opportunities, she was able to improve office processes while growing professionally. As a mentor, this is a great accomplishment.

MENTORING BETWEEN CO-WORKERS

A structured mentoring relationship is a formal arrangement, but informal short-term mentoring can also be effective. The mentoring relationship does not have to exist between supervisor and employee but can exist between co-workers. For example, in my office, a baby boomer purchased a cell phone but found it was not as simple to use as she had hoped. She found a willing millennial co-worker who helped her learn how to use all of the phone’s capabilities. The relationship between the two co-workers grew in response to just a few training lessons. It allowed for future relaxed interactions when problems needed to be addressed.

FUTURE MENTORING

Mentoring requires commitment but inures to the benefit of both parties. Think of the positive impact you could have on someone’s future! Even as I continue to grow in the field of higher education, I look forward to future mentoring opportunities. I am only midway through my career, so I know I will need mentoring myself and intend to seek out individuals who will invest their insight in my betterment.

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About the Author

ISMAR ALTAMIRANO has worked in higher education since 2009 and is currently the Associate Director in the registrar office. Ismari received an M.B.A. in Health Care Administration from Loma Linda University in 2014, and she is currently working on a doctorate in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Capella University.
Higher education is more competitive than ever before. New terms for curricular gains—for example, badges and competencies—are becoming the norm on many college campuses. However, not all student experiences are created equal. In the “curriculum of experience,” Elon University has advanced and deepened a 20-year-old general education requirement that students complete one of five designated experiences: study abroad/study USA, service learning, leadership, undergraduate research, and internships. Each of these experiences is mentored by faculty and integrates the traditional liberal arts curriculum—in which students are introduced to concepts, theories, and methods—with knowledge gained through experience. The combination has powerful and transformative results and produces graduates who can think critically and solve problems. The challenge is how to provide meaningful transcripts for students—transcripts that enable employers to readily understand a student’s college experience.

Elon University has been engaged in experiential learning for more than 20 years and offers deep structural support for high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008) that include reflection and record keeping. This provided the capacity in 1994 for the university to launch the Elon Experiences Transcript (EET). During its early years, the transcript was available for students only upon request and was administered through student life. In 2002, as part of an accreditation review, faculty advanced the EET through the adoption of policies and processes to deepen academic connections to experiences. As a result, the transcript became more meaningful and was requested by students more frequently. In 2012, Elon administrators realized that they had missed an important opportunity by not making the transcript available to academic advisors and Elon faculty so they could follow students’ experiential progress in the same way that they followed their academic progress. For the first time, students and their advisors could access a record of students’ full university experience online. The format of the advising session was transformed and raised important questions regarding the academic transcript. As a result of these conversations, student demand for the EET again increased.

This article explores the practical issues related to documenting the curriculum of experience; supporting that documentation structurally; and early assessment of how external audiences of the enhanced EET are responding.

**AN ENVIRONMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

For many years, registrars have been asked and pressured by stakeholders (e.g., administrators, faculty, and students) to include more information on the official academic tran-
script; this introduced new challenges for those who were responsible for ensuring the integrity of the data. One common request is to identify course attributes, such as academic, service-learning, diversity-themed, online, hybrid, and study abroad courses. Many registrars struggle to maintain consistency in the face of demands for a more comprehensive credential that documents students’ university experience versus merely the academic experience in greater depth (McMillan 2015). While student systems historically have limited our ability to document experiential learning on the transcript, universities today have the technology to provide a more robust description of the student experience.

Given the pressure for more comprehensive documentation, some institutions have developed ways to supplement traditional academic transcripts. These include co-curricular transcripts, competency-based transcripts, and data-enabled eTranscripts, innovations that have paved the way to addressing the growing need to thoroughly document the student experience. Pittinsky (2014) notes, “Co-curricular and competency-based transcripts innovate at the level of content and substance, extending the academic transcript.” Such transcripts are having a direct impact on how employers and graduate schools view Elon University graduates. David Blake, chief human resources officer at Oregon State University, argues, “An employer needs to see the ‘experiences’ gained by a potential job candidate and not just a random list of courses taken.” Furthermore, “Traditional student transcripts tell us what kind of classroom learning has taken place, but they don’t capture all the different ways in which a student gains knowledge, skills, and abilities. In today’s work world, experiential learning is just as important as academics” (CUPA-HR 2014). But not all experiences are equal. As experiential learning researcher Moore (2013) notes, the curriculum of experience can be where the transfer of classroom knowledge occurs and can promote self-understanding that cannot be taught in a classroom, such as “how the student handles pressure, deals with authority, works with people different from them, how hard they work, and so on” (p. 82). If a college degree equates to developing a whole person, a ledger of courses and grades alone is a poor reflection of the entirety of the student experience (Pittinsky 2014). In fact, what a college degree signifies today can be so variable across institutions, that even having the degree may no longer hold cultural the significance that it once held (Delbanco, 2013).

Many institutions with well-developed co-curricular programs offer co-curricular transcripts that formally summarize students’ activities. However, because institutions rarely offer academic credit for traditional co-curricular activities, they typically produce these transcripts separately from the academic transcript. While co-curricular transcripts offer means by which to illustrate depth and breadth of experience to future employers or graduate schools, marketing these transcripts to students can be confusing and cumbersome.

THE ELON EXPERIENCES TRANSCRIPT

Institutions have adopted many different approaches to determining the categories for the co-curricular transcript. Created in 1994, the EET seeks to enhance documentation of the student experience by recording participation in five key program areas: leadership, service, internship, global engagement (study abroad and study USA), and undergraduate research. These areas incorporate extensive experiential learning and collectively reflect values that deepen the student experience.

Experiential education at Elon is managed by the Elon Experiences Advisory Council (EEAC). Over the past two decades, in contrast to the national trend Kuh (2008) has identified, Elon has seen considerable growth in student participation in experiential education. While Elon has endeavored to expand experiential education, participation in high-impact experiential practices nationwide has remained constant over the last few years, with only service learning experiencing modest growth (Kuh 2013, p. 5). (See Table 1, on page 49.)

EMBEDDING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN UNIVERSITY CULTURE

At most universities, co-curricular programs are managed within offices responsible for student affairs, engagement, and leadership. These units often house databases that compile information about student activity, and for that reason, they also often have responsibility for record creation and maintenance. However, a stronger connection between academic and student affairs offices enhances the overall quality of experiential learning and facilitates the effective dissemination of these data. For example, while most
universities have an internship program, the university that provides context through classroom learning and facilitates the transfer of knowledge from the classroom to the internship will most certainly help students attain new levels of learning. In turn, the curriculum is enhanced as faculty observes students in the workplace applying the concepts they have learned and as they amend the curriculum as needed.

Leadership in developing academic connections to experiential learning is a central tenet of Elon’s success in this high-impact arena. In 1993, the faculty added one unit (versus a class) of experiential learning to the university’s core curricular requirements. In 2013, faculty voted to double that requirement as a response to internal assessments that indicated that students who had only completed one unit of experiential learning were three times less likely to have secured employment by graduation. In the current higher education landscape, connecting the strength of a liberal arts education to employment and graduate school acceptance is critical to a university’s success.

Each of Elon’s five key experiential program areas is coordinated by a professional staff member in collaboration with a faculty development fellow. Together they recruit faculty and staff with expertise to implement, integrate knowledge, and document the experience. For example, the study abroad area is led by the dean for global education and a senior faculty member who has extensive experience in study abroad course development and intercultural competencies. The faculty member develops expertise among other faculty who are interested in teaching in the study abroad program and conducts regular workshops. Four of the five experiential areas supported by the university replicate this model. The fifth area, undergraduate research, is coordinated entirely by faculty; a faculty director serves as the staff unit head.

Experiential learning is further strengthened through the contributions of the Experiential Education Advisory Committee, which includes the director of the core curriculum, an administrator of a scholarship program dedicated to funding experiential education, and members of the other offices responsible for administering experiential learning requirements. The committee is chaired by the associate provost for academic affairs. (Structural responsibilities for and oversight of the Elon Experiences are outlined in Table 2, on page 50.)

As part of accreditation excellence, in 2002 the advisory committee established a set of expectations and processes for the EET that crosses all experiences, and it established learning outcomes for each area’s respective experiences. Learning outcomes are monitored by the Experiential Education Advisory Committee, which participates in assessment of the core curriculum. Table 3 (on page 51) illustrates the seven common processes and criteria for the Elon Experiences. These draw on the eight conditions later identified by Kuh (2013) and his colleagues as critical components in linking high-impact experiences with knowledge in order to create desired learning out-

### Table 1.

Percentage of Students Participating in High-Impact Experiences (at Elon and Nationwide)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For-Credit Internship</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Research</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
comes in higher education. The eight conditions include performance expectations set at appropriately high levels; significant investment of time and effort by students over an extended period of time; interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters; experiences with diversity; frequent, timely, and constructive feedback; periodic and structured opportunities to reflect and integrate learning; opportunities to discover (and, Elon believes, to confirm) relevance of learning through real-world applications; and public demonstration of competence (p. 8).

The standard expectations and processes for experiential education are communicated whenever new experiential opportunities arise at the university. Faculty and professional staff may propose experiences not encompassed by the five existing experiential areas; these are approved on an individual basis by the advisory committee.

To illustrate the strength of experiential education, an annual report of participation is produced and shared with faculty and staff; it is also featured on Elon’s website and in the university’s admission materials. (See Figure 1, on page 52.)

**CONNECTING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES TO STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

Embedded in the five central experiences is the core curriculum component requiring students to complete two units of experiential learning requirements (ELR). The documented ELRs prepare students for the university mission of “lives of meaningful work and lifelong service.” By engaging students in opportunities that integrate knowledge and experience, the ELR fosters understanding of and appreciation for learning. Students engage in a process that includes preparation, action, and reflection in order to develop the habits of mind required to learn effectively from experience and to commit to put knowledge into action as responsible global citizens.

**LINKING THE EET TO THE ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPT**

As Parks notes in *University Business*, “Students should not have to go multiple places to obtain documents that paint a full picture of their academic experience” (Jackson 2014, 69). In response to such concerns, Elon decided to bridge the distribution gap between the EET and the academic transcript by launching a new ordering system that allows students to opt in to receive a copy of the EET along with their academic transcript at no additional cost. With the new ordering system in place, Elon saw an increase in the number of orders for EET transcripts from three official transcripts in 2012 (students could print unofficial copies) to 727 in 2013—a 1000 percent increase. During fall 2013, Elon began using a national vendor to combine the two transcripts into one certified PDF docu-

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**Table 2. Responsibilities of Experiential Unit Coordinators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiential Area Staff Director</th>
<th>Faculty Development Fellow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reports to vice president of student life</td>
<td>Reports to associate provost for academic affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages student-facing office</td>
<td>Recruits faculty participation in experiential education and manages faculty development workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directs staff who support experiential education</td>
<td>Leads curriculum development and course offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages an advisory council for the experiential unit</td>
<td>Supports faculty with current research in the field, hosts “brown-bag lunches,” and informs best practices in pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collects annual data for the Elon Experiences Transcript</td>
<td>Provides support for faculty in balancing experiential education with other duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports student development in experiential education</td>
<td>Communicates with department chairs and key committees (e.g., promotion and tenure) regarding the value of experiential education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducts assessment with faculty development fellow</td>
<td>Conducts assessment with director of experiential unit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Combining the transcripts presented a number of challenges: Both transcripts needed to be revised to have a similar look and feel, with an appropriate legend on the back (page two of the PDF), and the transcripts needed to be differentiated so the two would not be confused. Different colored backgrounds for each of the two transcripts proved to be the solution; the academic transcript (See Figure 2, on page 54) is maroon, and the EET transcript is gold (See Figure 3, on page 54).

Educating the campus community also became a priority as students and alumni began calling the registrar’s office to ask about the difference between the academic and the experiential transcript. At about the same time, students and advisors were given the ability to view unofficial versions of both transcripts online and were encouraged to “build” their EET (the university had just doubled the requirement) in the same way they would build their academic transcript. Additional changes permitted students to order their EETs independently from their academic transcripts and to use them to market themselves on social media sites such as LinkedIn. (See Figure 4, on page 54.)

**ON THE HORIZON**

In fall 2014, Elon began to market the EET to incoming first-year students through an introductory advising seminar (Elon 101). The registrar’s office has also worked with the Student Professional Development Center to educate students about how to market themselves effectively using the new transcript on social media. The data descriptions...
are being improved, and students are being more proactive in recording information on their transcripts through approved mechanisms. For example, a student enrolled in experiential credit for undergraduate research could post the following notation: “SOC 499: Studies in Sociology.” Elon is enhancing this portion of the transcript so the original title of the research project appears and can serve not only as a documented transcript but also as a conversation point in a graduate school or job interview.

One of the greatest challenges is assessing the response to and value of the co-curricular transcript for employers, alumni, and graduate and professional school admission officers. Administrators often wonder to what extent students submit copies of the EET to prospective employers and what outcomes such transcripts yield. In fall 2014, the registrar’s office began contacting corporate partners and other EET recipients for feedback on the document. The survey is still in the field, but initial responses have been generally positive. One employer writes, “The combined information displays the versatility of a candidate and may display info not covered in an interview that might serve to give one candidate the edge they need to stand out against the other.” A graduate school admission officer writes, “[The EET] shows more of a full picture of the candidate – not just that they get great grades, but that they were interested in various other aspects of life.”

As other institutions begin to consider offering academic and experiential transcripts in tandem, concern about data integrity may arise. Registrars have already expressed concern about relinquishing control over what information is officially stored and released; how information is entered into the student system; who has authority to enter, view, and release that information; and what standards exist to maintain the integrity of official transcripts. These are all significant questions that should be considered carefully by key stakeholders at each institution. What works well for one institution may not be appropriate for all. Nevertheless, these critical questions must be considered; higher education is long overdue to provide a credential that accurately conveys the depth and breadth of student gains in knowledge acquired through experiential learning. Elon University, leveraging its 20 years of high-impact practices, has developed a meaningful experiential transcript, helping to move experiential
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REFERENCES


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RODNEY PARKS, PH.D., is the Registrar and Director of Summer College at Elon University. Dr. Parks also serves as an Assistant Professor of Human Services for the Human Service Studies Department. Dr. Parks led efforts to combine the academic transcript with Elon’s co-curricular transcript, becoming the first school in the nation to bridge the two documents into one certified PDF. Dr. Parks recently received AACRAO’s Emerging Leader Award for his innovative work with academic records and scholarship with undergraduate students.

CONNIE LEDOUX BOOK, PH.D., a professor of communications will begin serving as provost and dean at The Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina in the Fall of 2015. Formerly, Dr. Book served as associate provost for academic affairs and member of senior staff at Elon University in North Carolina. Dr. Book led efforts to deepen and assess Elon University’s experiential learning requirement.
Federal changes to higher education policy are always on the horizon. In recent years, a lot has transformed within the area of financial aid, improving the college selection experience for students and parents and creating a ripple effect for future generations. This white paper examines the history of financial aid legislation and looks specifically at net price calculators, from the 2008 requirement of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, to 2015 and the shift to prior-prior year FAFSA data. Because nothing ever happens exactly as expected—and to avert unintended consequences—it is imperative to look back in order to best prepare for the future. This report provides a framework for higher education practitioners to understand past and future policy related to financial aid.

FINANCIAL AID IN THE HOT SEAT
The rate of tuition increase at U.S. higher education institutions makes it easy to understand why affordability has become a focal concern. Bureau of Labor Statistics data show that college tuition costs have increased 1,225 percent in the past 36 years (Jamrisko and Kolet 2014)—nearly double the 634 percent increase in health care costs (the second highest increase across all reporting sectors). During this same period, housing costs increased 370 percent, food costs 257 percent, and the overall consumer price index 279 percent. To the layperson, the rate of increase for higher education tuition is extremely startling—especially because no end is in sight.

In November 2015, the College Board released its annual “Trends in Student Aid” and “Trends in College Pricing” reports for 2015. It reported a 40 percent increase in average sticker price at four-year public universities, a 29 percent increase at two-year institutions, and a 26 percent increase at four-year private non-profits—all over the past ten years (College Board 2015). However, it also found that over the same time period, the average net price (the price paid by a student after subtracting all financial aid) has not increased at these types of institutions as a whole (for-profit colleges were not included in this particular data point). This is contrary to the story told by the media and many political leaders, who routinely report on the financial aid crisis in America.

While problems with financial aid certainly exist, it is important to consider both sides of the story. The reported student loan debt crisis is a perfect example of the need to dig deeper into data analysis. The College Board (2015) found that the borrowing rate for the 2014–15 academic year actually decreased for the fourth year in a row and came in 14 percentage points lower than in 2010–11. Moreover, nearly 50 percent of the entire U.S. student loan
Financial aid is not new to higher education. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson sought to reform education as part of an effort to increase resources allocated to higher education institutions and financial aid dollars allocated to students. His goal was to increase access to and availability of the newly recognized American dream of a college education for everyone. The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 earmarked more than $800 million in federal dollars to support higher education facilities, library education, training, research, continuing education, and community service (Capt 2013). The act also marked the beginning of low-interest student loans and grants, which became widely available to students from all backgrounds (Burke 2014). Title IV of the HEA established the initial sources of federal funding available to students. Over time, these programs grew to include many familiar financial aid models, including direct student loans, Pell Grants, Federal Family Education Loans, Perkins Loans, Federal Work Study Programs, Academic Competitiveness Grants, National SMART Grants, and Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (U.S. Department of Education 2007). The HEA of 1965 fundamentally tied government to higher education and its initiatives. This relationship would shape the conversation about college and university financing, student loans, and aid for several decades to come.

The Higher Education Act has been reauthorized or amended approximately every four to six years in order to address the changing landscape of higher education and a diverse and volatile economy. The first amendment was in 1968 and was followed by further adjustments in 1972. The initial revision called for the implementation of student support services grants that were designed to help increase retention and matriculation rates. Colleges and universities could apply to receive funding for services such as academic tutoring, help with course selection, assistance with financial aid applications, and more. All of the monies awarded were to support student success (U.S. Department of Education 2015).

The 1972 HEA reauthorization saw the creation of Pell Grants, the establishment of which provided a maximum annual grant of $1,400 to low-income students. Pell Grants have been awarded to more than 60 million students since their inception, with an excess of $350 million in grants awarded over time (Pell Institute 2013). Pell Grants continue to support economically disadvantaged students’ enrollment in college.

In 1978, the Middle Income Student Assistant Act (separate from the Higher Education Opportunity Act and its amendments) was established to extend federal assistance to middle- and low-income students (FinAid 2015). This was the beginning of an effort to expand access to higher education by middle- and upper-class families (Fishman 2014). The following three amendments sought reform and began to shift away from college affordability and access and toward other areas of financial need as institutions and students continued to diversify.

The HEA of 1980 added a section authorizing federal loans for parents of students in postsecondary programs. Parents became eligible to borrow up to $3,000 a year for...
each dependent student enrolled in college. Next, President Reagan signed the 1986 amendment for expanded borrowing limits. The government redefined federal loan delinquency, and the grace period was extended from 120 to 180 days. In 1992, the Stafford Unsubsidized Student Loan Program was established to provide loan dollars to upper-income families with no financial need (as traditionally defined). At the same time, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) was created as a means of calculating need for all families. The goal of FAFSA was to provide students a streamlined process by which to demonstrate financial eligibility for federal aid dollars, including grants, subsidized loans (interest is deferred while a student is in school), and unsubsidized loans (interest accrues while a student is in school).

The addition of the unsubsidized Stafford loan significantly changed the way in which aid was viewed: A family did not need to demonstrate financial need in order to qualify for a Stafford loan. The Stafford loan also played a role in increasing federal loan limits (S. 1150, 1991). After the launch of the unsubsidized loan program, federal financial aid based on need began to decrease, and the number of merit (non-need) scholarships awarded by institutions began to increase (College Board 2001). According to “Trends in Student Aid” (College Board 2001), grant aid increased 64 percent during the 1990s. However, loan debt also increased dramatically—136 percent—and doubled the rate of growth of grant aid.

This marked the start of the era of increased college pricing and tuition discounting. As tuition increased at institutions across the country, families began to take out more loans—in number and amount. From 1981 to 2000, the average tuition at public as well as private colleges and universities nearly doubled while income remained relatively unchanged (College Board 2001). This trend continues to the present day.

The shift in the cost of attendance coupled with increased loan debt for students and families seems to have been a warning about the loan crisis that finally took place in the late 2000s. However, in last two years of the twentieth century, the HEA refocused its initial goal to make college more accessible to the masses. In 1998, an HEA amendment slashed loan interest rates on new college loans, increased the amount of the maximum Pell Grant award, allowed students to refinance existing loans, established a teacher preparation program, founded GEAR UP to provide grants to institutions that worked directly with high-poverty middle schools, and increased loans for distance learners (Office of the Press Secretary 1998). The following case study provides an inside look at higher education policy implementation in recent years.

INCREASING TRANSPARENCY WITH THE NET PRICE CALCULATOR

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 sought to meet needs and challenges associated with present-day college students. The 2008 HEA allowed for Parent PLUS loans to be deferred, expanded the Cleary Act reporting required of institutions, added sunshine provisions regarding preferred lender agreements, and sought to increase the transparency of college cost (American Council on Education 2008). Simplifying the information provided by institutions about the cost of attendance had several components (including standardizing all financial aid award letters), but the largest policy shift for students, families, and institutions was the requirement that every institution provide a net price calculator (NPC).

The college admission and financial aid timeline is counterintuitive, particularly in comparison to most investment decisions (Boeckenstedt 2015). The typical high school senior applies to college by December 1 and files the FAFSA by March 1 in order to meet the May 1 national college selection deadline. Often, out-of-pocket costs of attendance (i.e., net cost) are known mere weeks prior to May 1. In other words, most students must complete the majority of the admission process without knowing the actual cost of attendance at the institution(s) to which she is applying. O’Shaughnessy (2011) likens this practice to buying a high-end television, loading it into the car (or ordering it on Amazon), and mounting it on the wall prior to finding out its cost.

Many applicants set their hearts on an institution only to discover at the eleventh hour that they cannot afford to enroll there. Other prospective students rule out schools from the outset because of their sticker price alone and never learn of the potential for scholarship and/or grant awards that would make an education there affordable. Either scenario can result in an enrollment mismatch and future issues with retention and completion. Congress hoped that the NPC would enable families to compare...
institutions against their financial means in order to help them better understand the real cost of attendance and determine whether it was affordable. The U.S. Department of Education was tasked with creating a template for a net price calculator that could be customized and integrated on institutions’ websites.

Postsecondary institutions that participated in any Title IV financial aid programs were required to comply with the amended HEA of 2008 and to implement a net price calculator by October 2011 (U.S. Department of Education 2010). The goals of the net price calculator were to provide families with the overall cost of attendance at an institution as well as a reasonable estimate of their students’ financial aid packages—and to do so much earlier in the college application process.

The Department of Education required that net price calculators have certain minimum inputs, including data by which to estimate Expected Family Income (EFC). These required inputs included family income, number of family members, other dependents, and those dependents’ status (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance 2011). Required outputs included the estimated costs of attendance, tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation and personal expenses; estimated grant aid (need and merit based); estimated net price (cost of attendance minus grant aid); percent of time enrolled; and any disclaimers that an institution may need to make (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance 2011). However, standardization did not extend to specifying the location of the NPC on an institution’s website, the ease of finding it, or its ease of use. Rather, institutions were free to make their own decisions about placement of the NPC.

Many higher education vendors and service providers eagerly offered NPC consultation services. The College Board and companies such as Student Aid Services (now Cegment) created calculators for purchase by schools that wanted an NPC different from the free one provided by the Department of Education. The government’s calculator was very basic. In contrast, vendor calculators were intelligent and customizable, if expensive. As a result, some institutions may have had to choose whether to spend more money to help families estimate their financial aid than on actual aid awards. This was just one of many issues that arose when the NPC was first required; as NPCs became more than cost estimators, unintended consequences surfaced, as they always do.

**ISSUES OF EQUITY AND ACCESS WITH THE NPC**

Net price calculators were established to ensure that students and their families would be in a better position to understand the total cost of any potential college experience. As the government created the legislation related to the NPC, it sought to streamline the financial aid application process for students and institutions alike.

**Net Price Calculator Data and How They May Influence College Choice**

*Inputs*

The federal government provided and continues to provide a template for the NPC in order to meet the minimum statutory requirements set forth by the HEA. However, the calculator is built on several inputs generated by an institution itself; thus, the data often contain caveats. Ultimately, the calculator is the aggregate of the student information contrasted with institutional financial data. The data the college provides are the first step to a high-quality calculator.

One goal of the free federal net price calculator was to make the financial aid process as simple as possible. The calculator relies on averages and on broad groups of information to estimate student cost (Integrated Postsecondary Education Database 2015). For example, it does not require a family’s specific financial history. The highest income threshold of the template calculator is $99,999 (mirroring the Estimated Family Contribution threshold established in the FAFSA) while the lowest income category is less than $30,000. The rest of the increments are approximately $10,000 each (Integrated Postsecondary Education Database 2015). Financial averages expedite the process but can yield an award estimate that is thousands of dollars “off”—and consequently can radically affect a family’s expectations about the cost of attendance at a given institution.

Cost of attendance is the primary institutional input into the calculator. Data used to determine the cost of attendance are often out of date. The best-case scenario for data is typically the previous academic year’s information (Fallon 2011). Why does it matter if the data are one year old? Any change in tuition can potentially put fami-
lies at a disadvantage. To combat tuition increases, states have mandated that colleges within the state systems may only either freeze tuition outright or increase tuition by a particular percentage (Farkas 2015). State systems and colleges sometimes enact freezes to control the cost of higher education or to create a competitive advantage at a time of unprecedented student choice and market competition (Fuller 2014). Private and for-profit institutions are not bound by state legislatures. With the average cost of college increasing annually, the information used in the net price calculator is typically at least two years old by the time the fall semester begins (National Center for Education Statistics 2015).

Although the percentage differences from the actual cost of attendance may be small, even small percentages represent large amounts—particularly at more expensive and highly selective institutions. For example, if tuition is $14,000, and the increase is 3 percent, the difference will amount to an additional $420. The larger the tuition and the percentage increase, the more inaccurate the initial calculation will be. The age of the data and the potential lack of merit scholarships in the calculation may result in certain colleges seeming unaffordable; even schools with low cost of attendance may seem too expensive for students with financial hardship.

Universities also may determine the other associated costs to be included in the net price calculation. Again, components of the NPC vary greatly, despite the primary reason for it being to calculate the actual cost of college attendance at an institution (as compared to its posted “sticker price”). Some data, such as tuition and room and board costs, are easily calculated. Others—including transportation, equipment, and fees based on program cost—are less likely to be actual amounts. For example, a postsecondary institution may include in its cost of attendance the cost of computers, calculators, or other comparatively expensive items that supplement the classroom learning experience (U.S. Department of Education 2015). Other institutions may not, with the result that their overall costs are quite different—and not comparable. Trans-
portation is another example of a vague cost calculation: its cost is much greater for a student attending school outside of his home state, yet the cost may the same for everyone given limitations inherent in the NPC tool.

**Outputs**

For students trying to determine their specific financial situation, the basic calculator is not enough. The results of the NPC are certainly better than little no non-uniform information, but the student must account for other factors during the college selection process. Such differences have the potential to affect students who are less familiar with the college application process and may influence their final enrollment decision.

Similarly, for numerous institutions with comprehensive financial aid models, the federal calculator could not consider their actual awards. So from the very start, the net price calculator had limitations for all audiences. The basic net price calculator also did not include merit-based award information during the process and therefore ignored academic scholarships a student might be awarded by an institution (Fallon 2011). A student had to use the net price calculator first and then try to identify her individual scholarship eligibility from each institution and factor that into the potential overall cost of attendance. This was a time-consuming process with many opportunities for errors—particularly for first-generation college students and others not familiar with the college admission process. Thousands of possible aid dollars might be “left on the table” with the basic calculator tool. Studies since the implementation of the NPC demonstrate this reality.

Colleges and universities that wish to provide more precise information have options for doing so, though at a cost. Many postsecondary institutions pay to utilize third-party net price calculators (Fallon 2011). These calculators estimate aid with a higher level of detail, include merit scholarships and grants, and more accurately state the cost of attendance. Institutions that rely on the free net price calculator cannot specifically show academic merit scholarships and instead provide more generalized information.

Consider institutional examples to illustrate this contrast: a public access institution (A) versus a small private liberal arts school (B). School A is an open access institution in an Appalachian county in the Midwest. School B is just minutes from the bustling capitol of the same state. School B pays thousands of dollars to provide a robust NPC to give prospective students a personal, in-depth financial analysis. School A utilizes the basic calculator, free of charge. Both tools meet the HEA requirement, but one creates a more complex (and seemingly more accurate) result. This illustrates the aforementioned concerns with the input and outputs of net price calculators and shows the potential advantage an institution with funding to use a paid calculator may possess. This is a prime example of an unintended access consequence of the NPC: The NPC has inadvertently created institutional haves and have nots. Schools can utilize the free NPC and meet the minimum requirement, yet they may not produce comparable results for prospective students. Students considering the private institution may have an advantage over those considering public when it comes to viewing their true aid potential, creating an access issue across students and families.

College Results Online (2015), a website maintained by the Education Trust, collected information from students with financial risk and presented what those students actually paid (compared to the school’s sticker price). The results are staggering as the out-of-pocket cost for some economically disadvantaged students is only 20 percent of the listed cost of attendance. The federal calculator may show this discount for colleges and universities whose students have relatively low average ACT scores, such as colleges with access missions and community colleges that may not have a large population of students receiving merit-based scholarships. In those cases, the estimated net price may be similar to what students actually pay. However, students using the same tool to examine elite and expensive universities with generous scholarship offerings may have no idea how scholarships influence net price, resulting in their being “scared off” by the NPC estimate and choosing not to apply to a possible “strong fit” school.

Finally, time to degree is not factored into the net price of attending college. Net price calculators typically account for how much a student would pay per year, but they do not typically account for the amount of time it would take a student to earn a particular degree. This distinction may seem subtle, but it can add up to thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars over the course of a college career. The basic net price calculator displays the cost of one year at a time. Students from a low socioeconomic background may require additional time to complete
their degrees (U.S. Department of Education 2015c). Also, some degrees require more than 120 credit hours. Despite concerted national efforts to decrease the time required to earn a degree, students have no idea of their total cost of attendance without program-specific information (Complete College America, 2015). The net price of attending a four-year college with a higher cost could be cheaper than that of a five-year experience with a lower net price, but most NPCs cannot prove that. Nevertheless, some colleges are addressing this issue and finding value in creating more realistic financial data for their prospective students.

The University of Findlay recently partnered with Cegment (a paid NPC vendor) to implement a four-year calculator that would provide a more comprehensive overview of the cost of the entire college experience. It is likely that more schools (at least those with funding to do so) will offer similar calculators in coming years.

At the September 2015 annual conference of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), presenters in a standing room only session projected phrases related to the “end times” and the apocalypse. The panelists asked the audience if they knew what these utterings pertained to for higher education professionals: their reaction when the net price calculator was mandated in 2008! The topic of this controversial session was the new Prior-Prior Year FAFSA policy (PPY). PPY moves up the FAFSA timeline and allows older tax data to be used to calculate aid. This policy is likely to have even more impact than the NPC because it is changing actual (not estimated) aid calculation.

**Prior-Prior Year**

To understand PPY, it is important to understand the existing FAFSA timeline for a traditional undergraduate student. Supiano (2015) aptly explains the process in place in 2015:

> Currently, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid becomes available on January 1, and students and families fill it out using the financial information on their taxes from the previous year. That timing is awkward and inconvenient because most people have not yet filed the prior year’s taxes. Families can try to file their taxes early, hold off on applying for aid until later in the year, or apply using estimates and correct their information later (para. 4). Many families have difficulty completing their taxes and filing for need-based financial aid within a two-month period.

Financial aid administrators lobbied for change for a long time because FAFSA dates serve as a roadblock to college for some families and result in missed opportunities for aid if the FAFSA is not filed (Barnds 2015). PPY is changing the game and setting out to address these problems.

Starting in fall 2016, all students will be able to file the FAFSA for the upcoming academic year (2017–18) beginning on October 1 (Supiano 2015). They will also be able to use their parents’ tax data from two years prior rather than just one. (“Back to the future” may have been a more apt name than prior-prior year.) This represents a massive shift for students and parents as well as for college and universities.

**Considerations for Students and Families**

The primary goal of the prior-prior year policy is to facilitate families’ completion of the FAFSA. By fall 2016, everyone who files a FAFSA will have completed 2014 tax data available. There will be no need to file early, to provide unofficial estimates of income, or to choose not to file because of an incomplete tax return. Prior-prior year also will allow more filers to use the IRS data retrieval service to transfer 2014 final tax data to the 2016–17 FAFSA (Boeckestadt 2015). Most students will be required to provide very little additional information, resulting in fewer families being selected by institutions for the verification process. (Though beyond the scope of this paper, the verification process is cumbersome.) The use of older tax data will result in a much smoother FAFSA filing experience.

Students also learn their expected family contribution (EFC) much earlier in the college selection process with PPY. The EFC (derived from the FAFSA) takes into account all federal and state grant, loan, and work-study eligibility as well as institutional need-based aid. The EFC can set the foundation for affordability across many institutions. And now a student will be able to apply for admission already knowing if he will receive need-based aid. This makes costs much more transparent and allows families to budget appropriately early on (Mahl 2015). Applicants will know how much additional funding a college may need to offer in order to gain their enrollment because they themselves will already know how much they would be comfortable paying.
The majority of higher education leaders view PPY as a positive for students and families. The president of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) praised PPY as a win for all involved (Stratford 2015). But as with any new policy (which the net price calculator once was), unintended consequences are likely to arise. Already, discussions of possible negative outcomes of PPY are taking place.

At present, most college admission decisions are “need blind”—that is, decisions are made without awareness of applicants’ financial need. This stems from ethical practice as well as a lack of information about applicants’ finances within the existing college admission timetable. However, beginning in fall 2016, PPY will align the application and the FAFSA submission processes for many students; thus, an applicant’s ability to pay could potentially be considered in an admission decision (Boeckenstedt 2015, p. 4). Even if the best intentions were to inform such consideration, it could counter the intent of PPY to expand access and, instead, adversely affect low-income students’ admission outcomes.

Supiano (2015) also reasons that PPY assumes that families want to file the FAFSA early and move up the college search timeline. Many students (particularly those who are underrepresented and first generation) do not apply for admission to college until the spring of their senior year, and many institutions continue to enroll students well beyond the May 1 deadline—even up until the day classes begin in the fall. Do students want to hasten the process? Do they know how to start it earlier? PPY does not make the college and financial aid application processes any less intimidating to certain audiences. David Hawkins, policy director for NASACAC, has also raised concerns that colleges may pressure students to decide earlier which school to attend and thus hinder PPY’s goal of helping students find the “best fit” institution according to a reasonable timeline (Logue 2015).

Generally, PPY should benefit the majority of students who want to know college costs earlier in the admission process. PPY certainly will help streamline the financial aid process as a whole, even though it does not address the way in which aid eligibility is calculated or misunderstanding of the FAFSA by many families (Boeckenstedt 2015). The high school class of 2017 may experience some “bumps” this fall—and not just because many of its members will take a newly redesigned SAT. They and colleges and universities will experience PPY for the first time.

Factors for Colleges and Universities

All higher education institutions should immediately and carefully plan for the shift to PPY. (If PPY is not yet the subject of conversation on every campus, it should be—now.) Boeckenstedt (2015) identifies PPY as an important opportunity for colleges and universities to be innovative and embrace change. Yet he also recognizes difficulties such as fluctuations in application and yield rates. For example, knowing the actual cost of attendance at the start of the admission process may make it easier for a student to dismiss an expensive school right away because he is not yet connected to it emotionally. Or it may have the opposite effect and cause a family to send an early enrollment deposit to an institution it deems affordable, with the result that the student will submit fewer applications to other schools. Not knowing which of these will be the predominant response is likely to prove difficult for enrollment practitioners.

Accepting fear of the unknown is only one aspect of university administrators’ planning for PPY. Mahl (2015) distinguishes a host of considerations for institutional planning related to PPY. On the technical side, colleges and universities may have to shift the entire timeline for setting tuition and fees; many schools compile their budgets in the fall or winter for the coming year, but this will be much too late given the PPY schema. In addition, financial aid offices will have to adjust their practices and workload and ensure that data systems are updated so as to take in FAFSA forms and begin packaging financial aid much earlier. (If PPY is to work, then state governments and vendors involved in the award of financial aid will also have to note the change and adapt accordingly.) The number of financial aid appeals, defined by Kurz, Scannell and Veeder (2007) as requests from students for additional funding after the initial award package is granted, may increase given the additional time families will have in which to make cost comparisons across institutions prior to the May 1 enrollment deadline.

Moving forward, admission offices may have to adjust their practices even more so than financial aid departments. Admission counselors are often the frontline of communications with prospective students and families regarding all attributes of the university, from academic quality to financial aid. Effectively communicating the institution’s strengths as early as possible will be crucial given
PPY (Mahl 2015). Admission staff may need to focus their recruitment efforts more on high school sophomores or juniors in order to ensure their interest during an earlier senior-year college application timeline. Enhanced training in financial aid policy will also be essential as some families will be ready to discuss their aid awards during the fall recruitment travel season. Conversations at high school visits and college fairs may go far beyond questions about majors and campus climate. “Is this a party school?” may seem like an easy question to answer in comparison to “why is my scholarship [x-amount]?” All schools should be in the planning stages now so they can successfully negotiate the PPY process.

**Total Significance of Prior-Prior Year**

The consequences (intended or not) of PPY will resonate beyond college-bound students and institutions. Higher education is a significant entity within businesses and service providers, federal and state government, K–12 schools, and more. For example, the College Board and ACT may expect more students to test earlier in anticipation of a timelier aid package. High school counselors may need to provide earlier assistance to student advisers. States such as Ohio will need to set grant funding for colleges and universities sooner than two months before school starts.

The federal government should prepare to spend more on financial aid than ever before. If PPY achieves its mission of increasing the number of FAFSA filers, the government can expect to award billions more in grant dollars (Field 2015). Remember those two million Pell-eligible students who did not file a FAFSA? They would have been eligible for $9.5 billion in Pell Grant funding. At the end of the day, being able to look back in time in order to make a sound investment in a future college education is an exciting policy change.

**EMERGING POLICY DISCUSSION**

As institutions prepare for prior prior year and update their net price calculators accordingly, policy makers are busy charting the next wave of change for higher education. The Obama administration clearly plans to leave its mark on colleges and universities. First Lady Obama recently launched “Better Make Room,” a storytelling campaign to spark young people’s interest in pursuing education beyond high school (Supiano 2015). The First Lady hopes that by sharing the success stories of all types of current college students, elementary and secondary students will be able to visualize themselves in college. She has already secured *Seventeen* magazine, Vine, and NBC Universal as partners.

With regard to financial aid specifically, continued simplification of the FAFSA is still a priority for the president and other stakeholders, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In 2008, Obama considered eliminating the FAFSA in its entirety and replacing it with related questions on federal tax forms (Stratford 2015). Clearly this did not occur, but the president has been instrumental in the IRS data retrieval option and the enhanced intelligence of the electronic FAFSA, which allows students to skip many questions not applicable to them. The average student can complete the FAFSA in approximately 20 minutes, though studies by the Gates Foundation and other researchers identify a need for further simplification (such as Obama’s recent proposal to eliminate 30 questions about assets and liabilities (Field 2015). PPY aims to help more families with the filing process.

Finally, institutional accountability is likely not to be limited to Obama’s College Scorecard in the foreseeable future. The suggestion that colleges and universities should share risk in student loan default (or, as some say, have “skin in the game”) has been gaining traction in Washington over the past year (Field 2015). Field, a policy writer for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, defines risk sharing as “the idea that colleges should bear some of the cost when their students default on federal loans” (para. 1). This proposition has been met with enthusiasm and disapproval. Those in favor of a stricter risk-sharing policy believe that it could force institutions to focus more on retention and positive student outcomes after graduation in order to avoid penalties (Webber 2015). Voices against it argue that other methods, such as increasing knowledge about existing income-based repayment programs, would be a better starting point in the loan default conversation (Reed 2015). Regardless, data indicate that student loan default should be an urgent topic for future review.

Institutions whose students have low persistence and graduation rates are disproportionately responsible for student loan default. Students who fail to persist and graduate are rarely in a position to repay their loans; this ultimately affects the universities they attended because the student...
loan default rate serves as a threshold for many regional higher education accreditors. For example, the Higher Learning Commission, the regional higher education accrediting body for most institutions in the midwest, sends warning letters to institutions whose student loan default rates are greater than 25 percent in a three-year period. If an institution has a default rate of 30 percent or more over a three-year period, the commission punishes the university administratively (though few have been subject to this consequence in recent years) (Higher Learning Commission 2015).

The student loan default rate has been particularly high in the for-profit higher education sector. According to College Results online data, most of which derive from federal sources, for-profit institutions enroll students from the most at-risk socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Students who enroll at for-profit institutions as full-time, first-time freshmen have an average 70 percent Pell Grant eligibility (College Results Online 2015). Further, students with high financial risk who are enrolled at these institutions are less likely than their more affluent peers to graduate. For-profit colleges typically estimate the cost of miscellaneous expenses to be thousands of dollars higher, on average, than do their not-for-profit private and public counterparts. Given the degree of risk of the large student population enrolled at for-profit institutions, it is regrettable that there is not more awareness of the collective risk they place on their students.

Just as one can look back in history to lay the foundation for the policy case study presented in this white paper, so the future holds great promise for policy moving forward—promise of revolutionary change and of unintended consequences, both positive and negative. Higher education practitioners have the distinct opportunity to contribute to the understanding of these relationships and to create a lasting positive impact on future generations.

**REFERENCES**


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By Rebel Smith

Recruiting and Serving Online Students at a Traditional University

There have been many drastic changes in higher education in recent years. State funding has decreased, leaving schools responsible for their own revenue growth and for balancing their budgets. Colleges and universities are closing departments and are no longer offering majors that are producing few or no graduates. Small colleges are closing, and some states are reducing redundancy by consolidating programs. The focus of this paper is on recruiting and serving online students at a traditional university. Literature reviewed includes articles relating to the quality of online programs, online pedagogy, academic rigor of online programs, and even how to convert a face-to-face course to an online course. This focus is the online program—the delivery of content—not the student. No research on strategic enrollment management and online education was found. The articles that inform this piece are new; online learning changes quickly.

To understand online learning, it is important to begin with the history of distance education within the traditional university. Current and future trends will be considered before the practical application and challenges of online education are discussed. Online learning has its origins in distance education, which Kentnor (2015) defines as “a method of teaching where the student and teacher are physically separated” (p. 22). Online learning is the most recent evolutionary state of distance education, and it is now mainstream.

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Distance education began in the 18th century with correspondence courses that were conducted through the mail. Its objective was to create educational opportunity for those who did not have access to traditional options because of financial or geographical limitations. On March 20, 1728, Caleb Phillips placed an advertisement in the *Boston Gazette* offering shorthand lessons through correspondence. However, Isaac Pitman is known as the pioneer of distance education. He began teaching shorthand by correspondence in 1840 in Bath, England. In 1873, Illinois Wesleyan College became the first higher education institution to offer a degree program through correspondence. But it is the Chautauqua Movement of the 1870s that is credited with the acceptance of distance education through correspondence. The need for correspondence education grew as demand for college degrees—and as barriers to traditional education—increased. Inevitably, increased demand for distance education inspired growing concern about the quality of the education provided by such programs. In 1915, the National University Exten-
sion Association was formed to develop standards in continuing education (Kentnor 2015).

The advent of the Industrial Revolution brought the next advance in distance education: the radio. The University of Wisconsin-Extension was founded in 1906, and in 1919, professors began an amateur wireless station that later became known as WHA, the first federally licensed radio station dedicated to educational broadcasting. Kentnor (2015) reports that “by the end of the 1920s, 176 educational institutions had broadcast licenses” (p. 24). But radio programs had limited success, and most were eventually discontinued.

Between 1932 and 1937, the University of Iowa began using television broadcasting for education. However, television courses for distance education were not well produced, and viewership waned. Because instructors of basic courses simply read their notes, it was difficult to keep viewers’ attention (Kentnor 2015). By the 1970s, universities were offering courses through closed-circuit television (Baack, Jordan and Baack 2016). Later in the 20th century, the technological impact on distance education was the computer.

**PRESENT PERSPECTIVE**

The University of Phoenix began using CompuServe in 1989; in 1991, when the World Wide Web was unveiled, it became one of the first institutions to offer online education via the Internet. The rapid growth of online education by traditional non-profit institutions did not begin until 1998, with the creation of NYU Online. Western Governors University began that same year, as did California Virtual University. Many of the online programs that were created during this time did not survive. Factors that contributed to their demise included lack of understanding of online pedagogy and online learning styles and a lack of faculty support for online education (Kentnor 2015). These factors continue to impact online learning today.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) emerged in 2008, and Coursera and Udacity entered the market in 2012. They were soon joined by edX, the Harvard- and MIT-based nonprofit. MOOCs are free and are offered asynchronously, meaning that students determine when they interact with the online material (McPherson and Bacow 2015). Typically, the courses are not for credit.

While there continues to be some resistance among faculty toward online learning, interest in blended or hybrid courses is growing. Such courses combine face-to-face instruction with online instruction. The “flipped” classroom is one method that is gaining in popularity. This mode of instruction uses class time for more active learning and interactive exercises. Lectures are recorded and viewed by students asynchronously (McPherson and Bacow 2015). Colleges thus can increase their course offerings by using classroom space more effectively.

There has been significant entry into the online market by non-profit universities. Arizona State University now offers more than 70 degree programs online and has launched an advertising campaign to help expand its role in online learning. Southern New Hampshire University was once a small, private non-profit; now it is a major player in the online degree program market (McPherson and Bacow 2015). As more and more traditional higher education institutions enter this arena, competition is increasing. Students are also becoming comfortable with online learning, and the demand for online courses/programs is increasing.

Integrated Post-Secondary Education System (IPEDS) data indicate that as of 2013, 26 percent of all students took at least one course that was entirely online, and approximately 11 percent received all of their education online. The Babson Survey Research Group’s 2014 data found that one-third of all students enrolled in college take at least one online course. Among traditional institutions, there is greater use of online learning at public research universities and less at liberal arts colleges and private, not-for-profit universities. The greatest use is at for-profit institutions (McPherson and Bacow 2015). Online courses enable students to continue their coursework even if they have otherwise withdrawn from their university and to take summer classes from home during the summer. (Otherwise, they may have taken them at a different institution.)

In *Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States*, Allen and Seaman (2013) provide these statistics:

- Only 2.6 percent of higher education institutions are currently offering a MOOC, and another 9.4 percent are in the planning stages of doing so.
Nearly 70 percent of chief academic leaders report that online learning is critical to their long-term strategy.

The number of students taking at least one online course is now 6.7 million.

The percentage of students taking at least one online course is at an all-time high of 32 percent.

Only 30.2 percent of chief academic officers believe their faculty support online learning.

**FUTURE PERSPECTIVE**

Conflicting opinions about the future of higher education have been making headlines recently. In “The End of the University as We Know It,” Harden (2013) writes, “In fifty years, if not much sooner, half of the roughly 4,500 colleges and universities now operating in the United States will have ceased to exist...nothing can stop it” (p. 55). Several issues are contributing to this crisis, including increasing student debt (a corollary to rising college tuition) and decreasing budgets. Institutions also are being pressed to be more accountable, and college graduates’ employment rates are under increasing scrutiny. To remain solvent, institutions are having to eliminate certain majors and programs.

Harden (2013) suggests that “the college classroom is about to go virtual” (p. 55) and that “major change is coming” (p. 56). In the face of reduced budgets, universities will extend their reach to students around the world. Members of this population already spend much of their time online. Harden goes on to say that soon education consumers will be able to attend (online) any university in the world. Institutions will either adapt and prosper or fail to do so and close. Students will no longer pay tens of thousands of dollars for access to libraries and other on-campus amenities (that are expensive for institutions to maintain) when technology provides comparable benefits for free or for a fraction of the cost of formal higher education. Students will be able to build and customize their education, and universities of all types “will engage each other in an all-out war of survival” (p. 56).

One trend that is anticipated is students’ ability to enroll in online offerings of several different schools. MOOCs, which started as free online courses, are evolving. If a student wishes to obtain a certificate for his learning, he will pay a small fee. Elite institutions such as MIT and Harvard are now educating the masses as well as the select few. Anant Agarwal, an MIT computer science professor and edX’s first president, refers to the fact that the scalability and economic efficiency of online education allow for a new mission for elite universities (Harden 2013).

One concern is that online education is a threat to on-campus programs. However, many online programs are aimed at working adults who are unable to come to campus during traditional class times. Online learning’s target population is students who otherwise would not attend at all; when a traditional institution offers a program online and a student enrolls who ordinarily would not have, the institution’s population and tuition revenue increase.

What Harden (2013) predicts is indeed dire. He warns colleges and universities to take action now, before it is too late. “Smart universities should be investing in online technology and positioning themselves as leaders in the new frontier of open-source education” (p. 59). He goes on to say, “Recent history shows us that the Internet is a great destroyer of any traditional business...” (p. 56). Examples of this include Netflix replacing video/DVD rental stores; book stores closing because of the surge in popularity of e-readers; and the significant impact that downloading songs has had on the music industry. But this does not have to be the fate of higher education.

Twelve years ago, Facebook did not exist. Traditional college-aged students have grown up conducting a significant part of their social lives online. They are very comfortable with technology and are prepared to interact with their professors and classmates in ways their predecessors did not. The traditional model of higher education is increasingly rare. Many students take on-campus classes as well as online classes. They want the freedom and flexibility to design their own degree programs by enrolling in courses at several different institutions. To remain competitive, traditional universities will need to change long-standing policies—for example, the limit on how many credit hours students can transfer from other institutions (Harden 2013). They also might need to reconsider traditional semester start dates. Students want to start taking classes at the time they choose; they don’t want to wait for the start of the next semester, especially when it could be months away.

Harden (2013) cites the shrinking pool of traditional-aged college students as another factor of concern to higher education administrators. Colleges and universi-
ties need to look to other populations if they are to maintain enrollments and generate revenue. Returning adult students and commuter students account for increasing percentages of the college population. “Non-traditional students make up 40 percent of all college students,” showing “that the traditional residential experience is something that many students either can’t afford” (p. 61) or don’t want. By offering online programs, institutions will be able to increase their student population by enrolling students who are unable to (or who will not) come to campus for “the traditional college experience.”

There is high demand for practical and customized education. Harden (2013) writes that “big changes are coming, and old attitudes and business models are set to collapse as new ones arise” (p. 62). He concludes, “But if our goal is educating as many students as possible, as well as possible, as affordably as possible, then the end of the university as we know it is nothing to fear” (p. 62). Most in higher education will not agree with these strong words.

Another catchy headline is “The ‘Disruption’ of Higher Education.” Henry C. Lucas, Jr., author of Technology and the Disruption of Higher Education: Saving the American University (2015), urges leaders in higher education to act quickly if they want to take advantage of emerging technologies rather than be swept aside. A participant in and analyst of the online education revolution, Lucas taught from the outset in the school’s online MBA program, which launched in January 2014. Lucas states:

_I became a convert because I saw the possibility of creating a quality product. Before I taught those courses, I assumed that online education had to be inferior. Once I came to understand the technology, I saw that it was possible to create the same quality of education online as in a classroom_ (2015, p.1).

Lucas would like to convince his colleagues that this technology is not something that can be ignored. Online courses can help address the challenges that traditional universities are facing—including increasing tuition, student debt, and decreasing budgets. Lucas states, “They also challenge virtually every aspect of the modern university” (2015). Harvard professor Clayton Christensen has predicted that as many as half of all colleges will go bankrupt within fifteen years. Lucas does not think the situation quite so dire; while some institutions may close, many more may need to eliminate smaller departments. Also, demand for tenured faculty may decrease.

**THE (HARD) FACTS AND RADICAL APPROACHES**

It is anticipated that over the next several years the number of eighteen- to 25-year olds in the United States will decrease significantly, and competition among institutions for undergraduate students will increase. Many university leaders are looking into online education as an additional revenue generator. This will enable institutions to meet the growing demands of working adults who are seeking advanced degrees and additional certifications (Anastasia 2015). Online programs now provide the opportunity to enroll students who otherwise would not because of geographic location or family obligations.

Stripling (2015) states that for most universities, online education is no longer in question. Rather, the question is how big a role it will play and how soon. Academic leaders already believe that online learning is crucial to their long-term plans. Those wanting to position their institutions for the future should consider Liberty University.

The Reverend Jerry Falwell founded Liberty University in 1971 in Lynchburg, Virginia. Not many would count Falwell among academe’s historic visionaries. However, Liberty now boasts an online enrollment of 65,000 students—more than any other non-profit college in the United States. Its on-campus population is nearly 14,000. The front line of Liberty’s online recruitment operation is its 800+ employee enrollment management division. These employees have one focus: to move prospective students through the admission funnel as quickly as possible (Stripling 2015).

Moody’s Investors Service has a grim view of the financial prospects of many liberal arts colleges; nevertheless, it describes Liberty as a “true outlier”: From 2008 to 2012, when many colleges were feeling the impact of the recession, Liberty’s operating revenues increased by 630 percent. Along with Southern New Hampshire University, Liberty stands out among non-profits for its success (Stripling 2015). This is the result of its robust menu of online courses and programs.

Liberty offered its first online class in 2004. When it went “all in” with online education, there was pushback from faculty. And on most campuses, without faculty support, programs are not adopted successfully. At Liberty, faculty do not have tenure (except in the law school,
where it is required for accreditation) and are not as involved in management decisions as are their counterparts at other institutions. Liberty’s 600 professors develop the curriculum, and then an army of nearly 2,300 instructors teaches the courses online to a worldwide audience (Strippling 2015). This approach is very different from traditional course delivery at colleges and universities.

Another concept that differs radically from the traditional university model is the Minerva Project. The first elite U.S. university to be founded in a century, it has no classrooms, no sports teams, and no fraternities or sororities. Founded by Ben Nelson, former CEO of Snapfish, Minerva students spend their first year in San Francisco and then spend the next six semesters in Buenos Aires, Berlin, Hong Kong, London, New York, and Mumbai. There are no lectures; all teaching takes place in intensive online seminars. Students live together in residence halls, do their coursework online, and participate in educational excursions. They travel the world and learn in a global environment. Minerva offers five concentrations: natural sciences, computational sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, and business. Tuition is $10,000 per year—a fraction of that at other elite institutions (Walker 2014).

Nelson planned to begin with fifteen to nineteen students; however, Minerva received 2,500 applications for its founding class. Sixty-nine were offered admission, and 33 accepted the offer, for a higher yield than five of the eight Ivy League universities. Students hail from thirteen countries and five continents; 20 percent are American, and 66 percent are female. Nelson set out to create a new model for higher education and to return its focus to those who matter most: students (Walker 2014). Many eyes will be on Minerva over the next few years—on its retention and graduation rates, in particular, as well as its employment statistics.

APPLICATION

Having surveyed the history of online learning, the focus of this article now shifts to practical application. Although many universities are adopting online learning, many others are not. The reasons for doing so include: to access a different recruiting pool (e.g., working adults and individuals bound by their geographical location), to increase revenue, and to increase class offerings (particularly those not bound by the availability of classroom space). Institutions that are venturing into online education are using one of two methods: incorporating online programs into existing programs or forming a separate online institution in which admissions and all other aspects of the online programs are handled separately from those for the main campus.

The University of Arkansas’s Global Campus (GC) is an example of an institution incorporating online programs into its existing programs. GC works as a support unit for campus, providing instructional design, video and animation, communications, marketing, recruitment, and retention for online programs. GC is also responsible for the compliance and quality assurance of online courses and programs. Originally, GC provided continuing and distance education; it continues to offer professional development and self-paced online courses (formerly correspondence courses).

The University of Arkansas offers 40 online programs (four bachelor’s degrees, 17 master’s degrees, two educational specialist programs, four doctoral programs, nine certificates, and four additional licensure programs), with more moving through the approval pipeline. While Allen and Seaman (2013) define online courses as those in which at least 80 percent of the content is delivered online, the state of Arkansas considers a course to be online when at least 50 percent of the content is taught online. Similarly, the state considers a program to be online when at least 50 percent of its content is delivered online. Programs must receive permission from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to offer a degree online.

When students apply for admission to an online program offered by the University of Arkansas, they apply to the university, not to Global Campus. Applicants to online programs are held to the same admission standards as applicants to on-campus programs. The online programs and their students belong to the department and college, not to GC. GC offers support and partnership to those academic programs that have online programs and to those that are considering developing one.

One such area of support is recruitment and enrollment management. The Global Campus recruitment team consists of a director, one full-time recruiter, one recruiter who is shared (50–50) with the undergraduate office of admission, a data entry specialist, and an administrative assistant. This team is fairly new, having begun in 2013 with a director and a half-time data entry specialist. On-
line offerings have increased significantly over the last few years, and the team has grown along with it. This team’s goal is to recruit prospective students for the university’s online programs and to assist them with the application and enrollment process.

The first order of business was to purchase and implement a CRM for online programs. Inquiries were coming in through the website (https://online.uark.edu) and were going to each program’s director. With the implementation of the CRM, inquiries are now being captured and recorded, and an automated message written by the program director is being sent to prospective students. GC began recording inquiries to online programs in early August 2013. For fiscal year 2014, 5,585 students inquired about 6,236 programs; for fiscal year 2015, 7,172 students inquired about 7,753 programs; for the first two quarters of 2016, 4,485 students inquired about 5,018 programs (the third quarter typically has the highest number of inquiries; the last two quarters will have larger numbers than the first two). Three things have significantly impacted this growth: (1) the addition of on-demand online programs, (2) additional recruiters, and (3) a digital marketing campaign (handled by the GC communications team).

Once the CRM was in place, recruitment began in earnest. The team works closely with each program director to identify the target population and enrollment goals. Both recruiters have territories while the director focuses on recruiting at the annual conferences and meetings of professional organizations (e.g., nurses, teachers, etc.). The recruiters focus on two- and four-year schools in their territories, not just attending career and transfer fairs, but also forming relationships. A student’s current school (to include his advisor and/or faculty mentor) can have a significant influence on transfer or graduate school choice. The role of the feeder school is appreciated and valued.

Recruiting for online programs is very different from recruiting for on-campus programs. For on-campus programs, emphasis is placed on the campus visit and the university’s facilities. In contrast, for students considering online programs, cost and time to degree completion are two of the most important factors. There is also significant competition in online education. Prospective online students are sophisticated: They “tend to research program outcomes, rankings, price point...” (Anastasia 2013, 18). They have many choices; more and more brick and mortar, traditional research institutions are entering the online education market. U.S. News & World Report now ranks online programs; its list of best online bachelor’s degree programs includes Pennsylvania State University, the University of Georgia, Arizona State University, the University of Florida, and many other well-respected flagship institutions, including the University of Arkansas.

The next step in the process is the application. GC partnered with the undergraduate office of admission and the graduate school to amend the existing application for admission. Now when students apply to an online program at the University of Arkansas, they are assigned an additional code identifying them as online students. This enables the university to account for the enrollment of its online programs, and it also permits online students to have priority registration into online courses. (Previously, online courses were filling with on-campus students, and online students were unable to enroll in the courses they needed for their degree programs.)

The recruitment team receives daily application reports that are entered into the CRM. Now it can track inquiry to applicant. (Applications to online programs were first tracked in June 2014. For fiscal year 2015, 2,566 applications were received.) The final step is enrollment. After the eleventh day of each semester, enrollment reports are run for each online program. This was first done for online programs in fall 2014, when 1,253 students were enrolled; 1,521 were enrolled one year later, in fall 2015. GC also compiles data for students who are on campus and enrolled in at least one online course (7,732 in fall 2015) and for those who are studying exclusively online (whether in an online or an on-campus program).

The University of Arkansas Online website—https://online.uark.edu—is vital to the success of the enrollment growth of online programs. GC has a web designer who ensures that all content is accurate and current. Changes are made daily; the website is ever evolving so as to meet students’ needs. The website lists all online programs and courses as well as self-paced online courses. Tuition for each program is listed, as are application deadlines, and students can request information from each Web page. They can also apply from the site; detailed instructions are provided to guide students through the enrollment process.

A significant challenge in the growth of online programs is the fact that the students who enroll in them are
not on campus, making it difficult to provide services to them. Students who are studying online and who become frustrated tend to quickly switch schools in search of a better experience. This is in stark contrast to on-campus students, who meet face to face with their academic advisor and attend a new student orientation. In order to best serve online students, the University of Arkansas developed a one stop Web site, http://onestop.uark.edu. The site contains all of the information students receive at orientation and serves as a quick reference tool that can be accessed any time, with no log-in required.

To further serve online students, each online bachelor’s degree program has an academic advisor. The advisors work closely with students, though their role is much different from those of their counterparts who advise on-campus students. One important aspect of recruiting online transfer students (most online students bring in transfer credit) is a pre-application assessment. Prospective online students are often considering several different schools. Their enrollment decisions are based on several factors, including how long it will take to finish their degree and how much it will cost. If advisors did not conduct the pre-application assessments, students would be likely to attend a school that did. (After all, there are many to choose from.)

Once a student enrolls, the focus shifts to retention. Global Campus recently formed a retention team to evaluate retention and attrition relative to online programs and to seek solutions to the problems online students encounter. The team’s first order of business was to provide online tutoring for those online classes with the highest percentages of Ds, Fs, and Ws. Its members will closely monitor enrollment in online programs from semester to semester and will examine causes of attrition.

Online programs have enabled the University of Arkansas to extend its reach to rural areas of the state where students have limited access to higher education. As the flagship institution for the state, its mission is to educate the citizens of the state of Arkansas. Online programs have also enabled students to finish degrees when otherwise they might not have.

**CHALLENGES**

While online education is offering opportunity to many who previously had no access, there are challenges regarding recruiting and serving online students at a traditional institution. These institutions serve two different student populations with two different needs. When on-campus students need help, they walk into an office. Not so for online students. Many paper forms need to be completed over the course of a student’s career. For on-campus students, this is not nearly as difficult as it is for online students. Paper forms must be converted to electronic forms. Outgoing messages and communications must be amended for online students. For example, on-campus students are required to submit immunization records and attend orientation, but online students are required to do neither. Newly admitted students need to receive the correct message so they do not become confused and/or frustrated. Registration holds also must be adjusted to reflect a student’s status as online; certain requirements for on-campus students are not required for online students. If online students have difficulty with any aspect of the process (i.e., application or registration), they may decide—quickly and easily—to attend another institution.

Online students often feel overwhelmed; typically, they work full time and have families. Many are older students who may not only be fearful of the prospect of returning to school but who also are anxious about the technological aspects of online learning. Having an advisor or faculty mentor who is available to them and who offers support and encouragement often makes the difference for these adult students. That “connection” with an advisor or faculty mentor is important to student success.

Finally, the focus of higher education has long been first-time, full-time freshmen. Because data have focused on this population, resources have long been directed to it. However, IPEDS has begun collecting data on distance education student enrollment, and Straut and Poulin (2015) highlight their findings. While overall enrollment is down, distance education enrollments continue to increase. IPEDS enrollment data are collected each fall, but online programs start at many different times throughout the year—that is, they are not on a traditional semester calendar. So while Liberty University has an official enrollment of nearly 65,000 students, its own enrollment calculation includes students who enroll throughout the year and thus exceeds 95,000 (Stripling 2015). A more accurate count of an institution’s online enrollment would be the number of unique students who enroll over the course of a year (i.e., fall, spring, or summer).
According to Heraclitus, “There is nothing so constant as change” (Baack, Jordan, and Baack 2016, 105). Higher education is steeped in tradition, and change comes slowly. For-profit, online institutions have the sole purpose of serving online students. From the beginning, policies and procedures were implemented for them. Such institutions are more flexible and are quicker to react to student needs than are traditional universities, which offer brand recognition and prestige. Nevertheless, traditional institutions are beginning to offer online courses as quickly as possible while still guaranteeing the academic quality of their programs, and they are working to amend current practices to best serve the growing population of online students. Competition is fierce in online learning; students have many options from which to choose.

CONCLUSION

Colleges and universities nationwide must determine whether “to go online or not to go online.” Reasons for doing so (pros) include: increase in tuition revenue, increase in student population, no additional burden on classroom space, increased access to higher education, etc. Reasons for not doing so (cons) include: faculty resistance, concern over quality of learning, concern over who is actually completing the work, fear of loss of prestige by the program/institution, etc.

As Casement says, “Online learning is revolutionizing the way colleges do business. Study via the Internet makes more knowledge easily obtainable for more students than ever before” (2013, p.14). He says further, “The availability of the desired product is growing rapidly. Students no longer need to travel to a special location to obtain it. Colleges no longer need classroom space to provide it” (p. 14).

A large percentage of chief academic officers reports that online education is important to their long-term strategy; however, they also say that not all faculty support it.

Online education is in high demand. Those “traditional” institutions that are choosing not to participate are denying themselves a large population of potential students, possibly to their detriment. With the desired population (i.e., high school graduates) diminishing and with states slashing higher education funding, institutions are taking drastic action, including laying off staff and faculty, discontinuing programs, and closing. Almost daily, headlines reference states’ decreasing budgets and the impact such action will have on their institutions. Generating revenue will be imperative. It will be interesting to observe in the coming months how institutions weather these crises (decrease in budget as well as the traditional student population).

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About the Author

REBEL SMITH, ED.D., is Director of Recruitment and Enrollment Management for Online Programs at the University of Arkansas. She received her bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Northeastern State University and both her master’s in Counseling and her doctorate in Higher Education Administration from the University of Arkansas. She has been with the University of Arkansas for eighteen years. The majority of her tenure has been in the area of admissions. She was Associate Director of Admissions for the Walton Graduate School of Business where she recruited and oversaw admissions for their six master’s degrees and seven Ph.D. programs. For the last three years, Dr. Smith has served as Director of Recruitment and Enrollment Management for Online and Distance Education Programs. Her primary objective is to recruit and assist online students through the application and enrollment process. She is passionate about providing educational access to the citizens of the state of Arkansas as well as to prospective students nationwide.
I began my career in higher education on January 1, 1980. I worked in the admissions office at Queen’s University Belfast, where I helped process the thousands of applications for undergraduate admission that were received and processed through the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA). UCCA served as a clearinghouse for undergraduate applications in the United Kingdom from 1961 until its merger with Polytechnics Central Admissions Service (PCAS), to form the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), in 1993.

In the subsequent 36 years, I worked at eight universities in the United Kingdom and overseas and experienced a wide range of higher education environments of various sizes, missions, and cultures. Without doubt, the single greatest change in U.K. higher education during this time was from a selective to a mass system. Enormous growth ensued: the number of students obtaining an undergraduate degree in the UK increased almost sixfold, from approximately 68,000 in 1980 (House of Commons Library, 2012) to more than 400,000 in 2014 (HESA 2015).

Now, in semi-retirement, I have had time to reflect on some of the key aspects of my career in higher education. I hope these personal reflections on my own experience and on higher education more generally will provide some insight into how some aspects of higher education in the United Kingdom have developed. I count myself privileged to have experienced a wide range of institutions in all of the U.K. university mission groups and in a range of positions extending from junior administrative officer to academic registrar and, finally, to university registrar and secretary.

The traditional prerequisites for being a successful registrar—including governance, leadership, and a forensic understanding of systems and processes (and the technology that supports these)—not to mention political acumen—are well known. However, in this article I will focus on one critical area that sometimes is overlooked: the ability to understand and use key data at both the operational and the strategic level. I believe this to be one of the “bread and butter” elements of being a successful registrar. Indeed, analyzing and interpreting data is one of the core proficiencies cited in the Report of the AACRAO Professional Competencies and Proficiencies Working Group (AACRAO 2015).

The facts that I’d been a mathematics teacher for three years prior to starting my career in higher education and that my bachelor’s degree is in aeronautical engineering meant that I was comfortable generating, assuring, and manipulating data in my new profession. Although this paper presents a U.K. perspective, I believe that my ob-
servations and comments apply in the United States, too, particularly with regard to the role and status of registrars within their universities.

It is worth noting that the nearest equivalent to a U.S. registrar in the United Kingdom is an academic registrar, who typically reports to a university registrar/secretary who, in turn, reports to the vice-chancellor (president). For the purposes of this paper, the terms “registrar” and “academic registrar” are interchangeable.

**CONTEXT**

In today’s rapidly changing higher education environment, the requirements of a wide range of internal and external stakeholders are arguably more demanding than ever before. For example, since 1998, the U.K.’s tuition fees increased from zero (fully funded by government) to £9,000 (approximately US$14,000 funded by students) in England and Wales in 2012. Arrangements differ for students on undergraduate courses in Northern Ireland and Scotland, where tuition fees are much less: £3,925 (approximately US$6,000) in Northern Ireland and free to local students in Scotland. That said, the reality today for the majority of U.K. students is that a typical three-year, full-time undergraduate degree program will cost them a total of £27,000 (approximately US$41,000) in tuition fees or well over £50,000 (approximately US$76,000) when accommodation, food, and living costs are included. Students can access government loans through the Student Loan Company (SLC); students eventually pay off the loans as an additional tax whenever their annual salary reaches £21,000 (US$21,000). As a condition of charging the £9,000 maximum for tuition fees, institutions have had to provide a wide range of scholarships and bursaries to suitably qualified students to offset tuition fees.

Nevertheless, the introduction of the £9,000 tuition fee represents a significant change in the financial situation of graduating students in a little more than ten years. (See Table 1 for a summary of the changes in the financial arrangements for higher education students in the United Kingdom since 1962.)

A further development in early 2015 was the U.K.’s Competition and Markets Authority’s (CMA) advice to universities that it “will monitor the sector and commence a review in October 2015 to assess compliance with consumer law” (CMA advice to higher education providers, March 2015). This has significant implications for universities that had argued that the student/institution relationship was not a simple consumer/provider relationship and, consequently, was beyond the scope of consumer law. Clearly, this no longer obtains.

**GROWTH IN DEMAND FOR DATA FROM EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS**

In the United Kingdom, the initial focus on data was to enable institutions to respond to the growing demands of external stakeholders—including the various funding bodies (public and private) and the major statistical bodies, such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), which has been gathering a wide range of student-related data since 1993, and its antecedent bodies.

In 1996–97, on behalf of all the U.K. funding bodies, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
used the student, financial, and staffing data collected annually by HESA to publish the first set of U.K. performance indicators. (HESA itself took on this responsibility in 2002–03.)

U.K. higher education performance indicators (PIs) are a range of statistical indicators intended to offer an objective measure of how an institution is performing. They currently include:

- widening participation indicators;
- non-continuation rates (including projected outcomes);
- module (discrete course element) completion rates;
- research output; and
- employment of graduates.

The stated purpose of the HESA PIs is to:

- provide reliable information on the nature and performance of the U.K. higher education sector;
- allow comparison between individual higher education providers of a similar nature, where appropriate;
- enable higher education providers to benchmark their own performance;
- inform policy developments; and
- contribute to the public accountability of higher education.

The expectation is that these PIs would be of interest to a wide range of bodies, including government, universities and colleges, and U.K. higher education funding bodies. The indicators also are considered to be relevant to schools, prospective students, and employers. This annual exercise has grown in breadth and complexity since its inception and now requires significant input from a wide range of other administrative areas, including finance and human resources.

In addition, since 1983, there have been increasing demands by government for data to assure the quality and standard of teaching in U.K. higher education; this is undertaken currently by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Institutions require a successful outcome from their QAA quinquennial reviews to be able to continue to award degrees. In addition, the squeeze on U.K. public finances has reinforced the government’s desire to see value for money in higher education not only for government but also, increasingly, for students. This has led to very specific key national measures of institutional performance, including the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE).

The NSS is an annual survey in response to which final-year undergraduate students answer a series of questions addressing teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support, organization and management, learning re-
sources, personal development, and overall satisfaction. The DLHE return is an annual survey approximately six months after students leave and includes the type of employment entered or what sort of further study may be engaged in (where relevant).

To further complicate data-gathering matters, since 1999, the United Kingdom has been transformed by devolution, a process of decentralizing government and giving more powers to the four nations of which it is comprised: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. This has resulted in changes in the data gathered to reflect the respective priorities of these devolved authorities.

A further dimension of data gathering and reporting that is proving critical to U.K. institutions was the introduction, in 2009, of the government’s new student Tier 4 visas as part of its Points Based System for Immigration (PBS). This required higher education institutions (HEIs) that wished to recruit students from outside the European Union (EU) to apply for and then maintain a license to sponsor such students. The legal framework for PBS and its reporting arrangements have become even more complex and burdensome since its initial introduction. However, the risks associated with failing to comply are enormous: The loss of a Tier 4 license by a medium-sized university with, say, 1,000 non-EU students could mean a loss of more than £10 million (USS$15 million) per year for a minimum of two years (assuming that a new license was granted).

Tier 4 compliance is particularly fraught because the obligations and requirements keep changing (at least twice a year), and the guidance provided by the U.K. Home Office and the U.K. Visa and Immigration Service (UKVI) can be at odds with current immigration legislation as articulated in “Immigration Rules.” Many U.K. universities have ambitious recruitment targets for non-EU students to offset shortfalls in government funding. (See Figure 1, which shows the growth in this recruitment between 2004–05 and 2014–15.) There is some evidence that the government’s current immigration policy has deterred non-EU students who otherwise would have come to the United Kingdom to study.

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER DEMAND FOR DATA
Whereas the major internal requirements for institutional data initially were finance driven, the growing demands of external stakeholders are mirrored now in increasingly complex internal demands for data. (This is usually to


- Other non-EU
- Total EU
- China
- India
- USA
- Nigeria

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gain some insight into the potential outcome of the various national data-gathering exercises before the results are published.) This approach is still critical to institutions for obvious reasons (i.e., to avoid unpleasant surprises from published national data), but other drivers have also increased internal demand for data.

The financial modeling of student data has always been an important requirement as institutions tried to predict tuition fee income year on year (for many institutions, this was the largest single source of income). As mentioned previously, the recruitment of students to U.K. full-time undergraduate courses is processed through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. UCAS limits the maximum number of applications a single applicant can submit to five and imposes a strict timetable that runs from September, the earliest date that an application can be made, through to the following August and the release of national examination results. The normal application process ends in mid-January, and applicants should have received offers from institutions by the end of March. By early May, applicants are required to have accepted a maximum of two offers: a firm choice and an “insurance” choice to be used in the event their final grades are insufficient for their firm choice. This creates more certainty for students and institutions, even though there is a significant degree of volatility later in the cycle when students who have not met the requirements of their respective offers enter a “clearing” process that extends from mid-August until immediately prior to courses starting in September/October. The vast majority of U.K. undergraduate programs start in September/October and run through May/June of the following year for three years.

As in the United States, U.K. institutions model their student enrollment, retention, and withdrawals (though there is nothing in the United Kingdom that is comparable to strategic enrollment management—SEM—in the United States). Developing a dialogue around recruitment and retention—acknowledging that poor retention is bad for students and bad for institutions, too—is the closest the United Kingdom gets to SEM. In contrast, SEM is a mature concept in the United States, where it is supported by a rich research literature and events such as AACRAO’s annual SEM meeting. These are just some of the many ways in which SEM professionals can keep current with developments in the field and share ideas. In the United Kingdom, the major effort (apart from the key statistical and other returns) has been to process data as part of the quality assurance cycle. In most cases, these data are at the individual degree program level and also at the module (program component) level. Some academic departments are much better at this than others; this can skew institutional data unless there is appropriate institutional oversight.

Initially, these and other modeling data were rarely aggregated other than to provide an institutional perspective—again as part of the quality assurance processes. Indeed, institutions would have struggled to match their modeling data with those produced for quality assurance processes. One of the reasons for this is understandable: At the degree program and module levels, there was pressure to keep the number of students (the denominator) as low as possible (by excluding early withdrawals) in order to optimize/maximize progression and completion statistics. The lack of real integration of institutional data meant that there was no single view of such data; instead, there were several views reflecting the various stakeholder requirements. However, as public funding decreased and demands for public accountability increased, institutions recognized the need for a single corporate perspective on data.

One other interesting aspect of U.K. higher education is the concept of a “market”; indeed, the notion of a true market in U.K. higher education would not withstand much scrutiny. In the first instance, there are the limitations of the UCAS clearinghouse system for full-time undergraduate applications. Then there is the cap on tuition fees, which, when it was introduced, was considered by the government to be a real upper limit. In fact, the vast majority of universities chose to charge the £9,000 maximum tuition fee. Finally, until very recently, there was a national cap on the total number of students entering higher education—a cap that was reflected in individual recruitment caps for each institution. These were accompanied by draconian financial penalties if the caps were exceeded. The government’s removal of student number controls in 2015 left institutions free to determine the level at which they should recruit. This will bring the United Kingdom closer to a real higher education market than it has ever been before.

I have been concerned since the introduction of the £9,000 tuition fee that U.K. students will look outside the nation’s borders for their higher education. There is some evidence of this already: A recent BBC headline read, “U.K.
student numbers surge in Netherlands” and added, “Across the Netherlands, there are 2,600 U.K. students in universities this term—up by a third in a year. And independent school head teachers want Dutch universities to be included in the UCAS application form” (BBC 2015). This trend is likely to grow, especially with the prospect of increases to the current level of tuition fees. In his 2015 budget statement, the chancellor of the exchequer said the government “will allow institutions offering high teaching quality to increase their tuition fees in line with inflation from 2017–18” (U.K. Summer Budget Statement 2015, para 2.204).

ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES
Over the years I have witnessed major organizational changes not only in the institutions where I have worked but also across the whole U.K. higher education sector. One particular aspect of change has been the growth of “specialisms” to address the complexities resulting from external stakeholders’ ever-increasing demands for data/information. Of course, at one level, this makes good sense; there is a need to focus effort in order to ensure that the relevant detail is being dealt with appropriately. However, one unhelpful outcome has been an occasional failure to create routine, effective communication between these specialisms and the more traditional parts of the institutional infrastructure. Indeed, some of the specialisms become so complex themselves that communication problems arise within them. When there is a need to move toward a more integrated approach to data, the existence of these specialisms can present significant challenges, particularly when debates about “whose data?” arise.

Working with the various specialisms to provide data to a wide range of demanding stakeholders requires an enormous degree of tenacity, not least to ensure data quality so that comparative data are truly meaningful. This is a key role for the registrar and means not just being on top of the data but working with key individuals across the university to ensure corporate understanding (as opposed to a narrow specialism focus) and ownership of the data. Each of us bears responsibility for the ownership of institutional data.

WHERE DOES THE REGISTRAR FIT IN?
Registrars have played and will continue to play a key role in their respective institutions in the United Kingdom and in the United States. I agree wholeheartedly with Sau-
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including academic achievement prior to university, curriculum design and delivery, and social and cultural diversity. Institutions have been able to use their student data on the performance of current or previous cohorts and similar analyses to try to predict which future cohorts of students might be at risk of failure and/or non-progression or -completion. Once this is done, intervention strategies can be developed to improve the chances of success of students who might be at risk.

A major drawback of this approach is that it is “post hoc,” requiring the second guessing of which groups of students might be at risk in the future. At one institution, I produced a hefty annual tome that analyzed the previous year’s cohorts of students’ performance against a wide range of variables and included detailed internal and external comparisons. Although this helped the institution to prepare and/or adapt intervention strategies for incoming cohorts of students, it did little to help those from the previous year whose performance was being reviewed.

A key requirement is the acquisition of timely information about students who may be at risk such that there is time to apply relevant intervention strategies in order to enhance the chances of student success. This way it would be possible to reduce the time it takes some students to complete their studies and, even more important—and from a national perspective—it could reduce the likelihood of losing students from higher education altogether.

The advent of 21st-century analytic tools means that it is possible to do this in real time based not only on the traditional measure of academic performance but also on a wide range of physical and virtual engagement measures, including presence in class, access to the library and learning management systems, as well as a wide range of extra-curricular activities. This particular focus on student success provides another opportunity for the registrar to display “big picture” credentials by connecting key teaching and advising staff with real-time information about students.

**CONCLUSION**

A great deal has changed in higher education over the past 35 years; in many respects, the only constant has been change itself. Notwithstanding these changes, I have never been clearer in my own mind about the responsibilities our universities have for their students and their ultimate success in higher education. Higher education is not a commodity, and we should stop treating it as if it were. Hunter Rawlings, president of the Association of American Universities and former president of Cornell University and the University of Iowa, is quite right when he says that “college is not a commodity. It’s a challenging engagement in which both parties have to take an active and risk-taking role if its potential value is to be realized” (Washington Post 2019).

If this endeavor is to be of value, then both parties need to participate. This means a level of engagement between the parties that at times may seem almost impossible given the physical, social, and/or cultural distance between them. One way this gap can be narrowed is by knowing more about each other. Again, it’s the “data/information/knowledge/wisdom thing.” Who better to take a lead in this than the registrar?

**REFERENCES**


**About the Author**

**PHILIP HENRY** is a semi-retired former U.K. Registrar and Secretary with more than 36 years’ experience in higher education. He has been active in staff development in the United Kingdom (Association of University Administrators, Academic Registrars Council, and Association of Heads of University Administration), in the United States (AACRAO and a number of state and regional associations), and in Canada (Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada). Passionate about ensuring that students get the very best experience possible at their institutions, he advises universities and software companies in this regard.
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