



2021 U.S. Registrar

AACRAO Career Profile Survey Results



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Foreword

The daughter of a colleague interned at the AACRAO offices several years ago. At the beginning of her internship, I asked her what her father did as the registrar at a flagship state institution. “I think he does something with grades?” she responded. We laughed. By the end of the semester, she was surprised by the scope policy, practice and technology that her father managed in his role, and how the policies, processes and systems his office oversaw were the foundational scaffolding of the life of the university and the successful progression of students from initial registration to graduation.

This lack of understanding of the scope and complexity of the role of the registrar also occurs at many institutions. The registrar sits at the intersection of institutional academic and administrative policy frameworks. A well prepared registrar has a unique and comprehensive view of the learner pathway from entry to completion and is poised to help the institution understand itself and its learners. Within the role lies both the opportunity and the responsibility to strengthen institutional academic and policy structures in ways that better support student success.

The data in this career profile confirms what previous reports have shown us--that the high turnover rate in the profession affirms our need to continue to grow AACRAO programs and to make them more accessible to a wider number of professionals who need upskilling as they move into new roles and help their institutions navigate the increasingly complex and challenging dynamics of higher education. Our competency and proficiency framework is more relevant than ever, and we will continue to refine and develop resources that fit to the evolving needs of the profession.

The data also tells us that we still fall far short of our goals to diversify the pipelines into these critical roles. We have already begun this work through programs like ASCEND under the umbrella of the LEAD initiative; there is clearly much more work to be done, and AACRAO is committed to the work.

The personal reflections shared in this report are often my favorite part; they help all of us at the national office to contextualize our professional development offerings, giving us insight that ensures we are moving in the right direction. They serve to highlight a role that in many cases is an unsung hero of the academy. And they expose something that data cannot—the thoughtful, dedicated, learner-centric approach to the work displayed by our members as they serve their institutional communities daily with humor and grace.

The global pandemic of the last eighteen months has exponentially increased the professional demands on the AACRAO membership. I am heartened by your dedication to your academic communities and the success of your learners. It’s why we do what we do at AACRAO, and I am honored to be able to serve you in this endeavor.

Melanie Gottlieb, Interim Executive Director

Summary

This is the third AACRAO registrar career profile report; the first and second were completed in [2015](#) and [2018](#). The AACRAO career profile series consists of reports on chief admissions officers (CAoO)¹, chief enrollment management officers (CEMO), and registrars. The two primary purposes of this series of reports are 1) to build a longitudinal understanding of the career profile and position responsibilities for these three positions, and 2) to provide those seeking an equivalent position an understanding of the typical career path for doing so.

We want to acknowledge the 736 U.S. registrars who responded to the survey. Thanks to their willingness to share their time, this report provides a *quantified* look at registrars' functions and career paths.

The survey focused on the following:

- How the registrar is positioned within the institution
- The career path leading up to the current registrar position
- Next steps in the career path
- Current portfolio of responsibilities
- Identification of the most important skills and responsibilities of the position
- Challenges of the position
- Job satisfaction
- Demographic information
- Words of wisdom for those seeking a registrar position

From this year's participants, we have concluded that a typical registrar

- is more likely to identify as a woman
- identifies as non-Hispanic, white
- holds a master's degree
- has been in higher education their entire career
- has been in their current registrar position less than five years
- reports to the academic affairs division
- came to their current position from another position within the same institution, most likely from the registrar's office
- works 45-49 hours a week

The three-cohort data indicate there has been no noticeable shift in the registrar position participation rate by race, ethnicity, or gender in six years despite the comparatively high turnover in the registrar position (Appendix A). There were no statistical differences in gender identity by institutional size, type, or control in this sample.

¹ The abbreviation for the Chief Admissions Officer was CAO in the survey, but it is presented here as CAoO to help differentiate the position from the Chief Academic Officer (CAO)

Two-hundred-thirty-one respondents provide “words of wisdom” (firsthand comments, observations, opinions, and advice) based on their experience in the position, and 29 provide their own story. These have been lightly edited for grammar. From the words of wisdom, personal stories, and data, the registrar position is rewarding and challenging. Registrars need a broad skill set and knowledge base to be successful. Like the 2018 and 2015 results, registrars must be skilled at: systems thinking, leading a team, technology, understanding data, and working across the institution on policy and practice issues. Words of wisdom and a few personal essays are shared throughout the narrative. The other personal essays and words of wisdom are included in the appendices. We hope you take the time to read through these as the registrars have much to share about their path to the registrar position and how to navigate the day-to-day of the job.

Approach

We identified AACRAO members who were most likely to serve as a registrar by their position title. We also selected non-member registrars from the higher education directory. A question in the survey was designed to confirm that participants were identified correctly as the registrar of their institution. We asked the following:

“Do you currently hold the position of an institution-wide or college/school registrar?”

This question was required of respondents, and the survey was discontinued for anyone who responded “no.” A response was minimally incentivized by offering those who complete the survey a chance to win one of 20 \$25 virtual Starbucks gift cards.

Like the other surveys in the series, response choices and questions have evolved to encompass topics captured each year in the “other” response choice or the open-ended responses. Select data points from the previous two reports are included in this report. However, differences in percentages cannot be affirmatively attributed to changes over time because the sample of respondents and institutions changes from one survey to the next.

Prepare to multitask - there will never be just one task on your desk. Be willing to listen and think before responding, whether dealing with students, faculty, or parents. Treat your staff with respect - your office will not be successful on your efforts alone. You must be an educator at heart, with a willingness to help, train, and show how processes work. No two days will ever be the same - embrace the variety of people with whom you will interact. That said, stay true to your work-life balance and encourage/respect that balance with the people around you.

Mary Kincannon
Texas Christian University
Registrar



Characteristics of Current Position

The focus of this research is entirely on registrars from institutions in the United States. The reasoning for such is that the registrar's role at U.S. institutions tends to differ considerably in its portfolio of responsibility from other countries. Like the 2018 survey, this survey captured both university-wide registrars and college or school-specific registrars. Most (88%) of the participants serve as the institution-wide registrar; more than half (65%) are responsible for both undergraduate and graduate students; 11% for graduate students only; and 25% for undergraduates. The most common position title is registrar (n=424), followed by university registrar (n=141).

Educational Requirement

Virtually unchanged from the 2015 and 2018 data, the position typically requires a master's degree (62%), followed by a bachelor's (35%) and a doctorate (1%)². In addition, institutional type and size are statistically related to the minimum education requirement for the position. Institutions under 1,000 students are more likely to require a bachelor's degree than a master's, as are lower-division only institutions compared to other institutional types.

Organizational Structure

In each career profile survey series, respondents are asked about their reporting structure, division, and position relative to the executive leadership team. Unchanged from 2018, 8% of registrars are part of the institution's executive leadership team. Where most have either an informal (45%) or formal reporting relationship (22%) with the faculty senate, fewer than 1 in 5 have voting rights on the faculty senate (13%). More than half report through the academic affairs division (58%), followed enrollment management (19%) (Figure 1). Among the 6% reporting to a division not specified in the survey, several noted that the position reports through more than one division, and eight report through the division of student services. More than half are directly supervised by the institutional equivalent of a vice president or the provost (Figure 2).

² 3% selected "other educational requirement"

Figure 1: Reporting Division

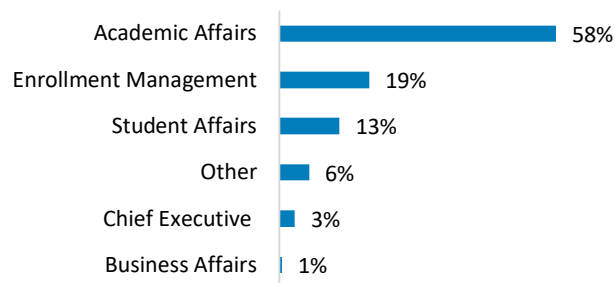
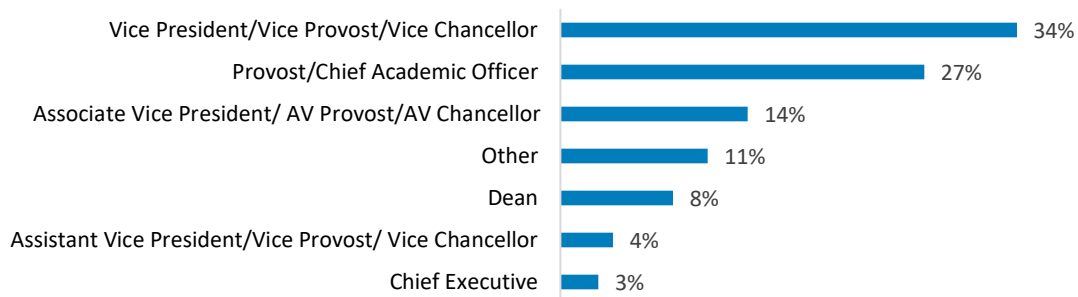


Figure 2: Direct Supervisor



Systems thinking is imperative. I chose this career in higher education because it serves students, alumni, faculty, staff, trustees, and the public. I have learned that diverse needs come with each constituent group, and you must consider the interconnectedness of support and services you provide.

Christine Peterson
Maryland Institute College of Arts
AVP Enrollment Services, Registrar



Have a mentor or support system in place for those times when you need advice on how to handle a problem/situation. Be flexible and willing to think outside of the box as situations arise. Trust your staff to do their jobs and give them feedback regularly.

Regina Cotter
Virginia Wesleyan University
Registrar



Don't be afraid to take on additional responsibility if this is the path you are choosing. Ask questions. Listen with the intent to learn. Get to know not only processes and policies but people who are integral to those processes and policies.

Sandra Hinkle
Southeast Missouri State University
Registrar

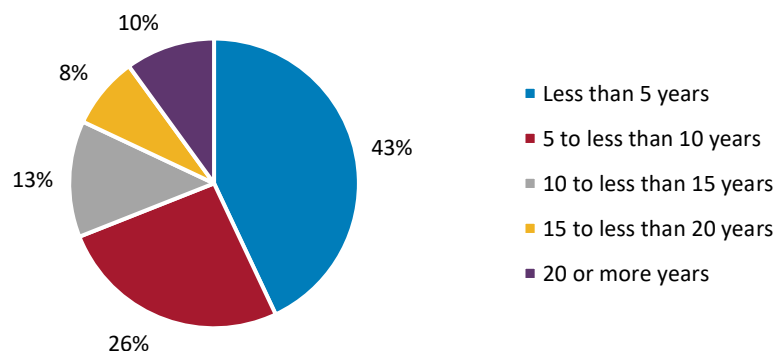


Experience and Education

Registrars were asked: what percentage of their career has been in higher education, from what position they moved, how many institutions they have been employed in, and if they have changed institutional types. The survey also specifically asked if this position was their first position in higher education. More than half have 20 or more years of experience in higher education; 34% have between 10 and 20 years, and 8% have fewer than 10 years.

Like 2018 data, the time-in-position data provide evidence of quite a bit of turnover in the registrar position in the last three years. **Forty-three percent have less than five years of experience in their current position**, and an additional 26% have five to 10 years in their current position (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Years in Current Position

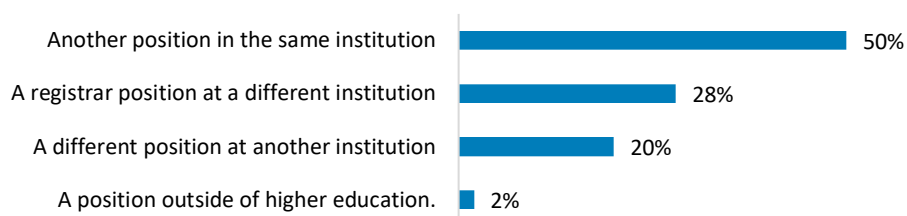


Similar to 2018, 11% of respondents report that the registrar position is their first job in higher education. They came to this position from many other careers, including, K12 education, private business, government entities, non-profit organizations, and the military.

Comparatively, 72% spent their entire career in higher education, and 17% moved in and out of higher education.

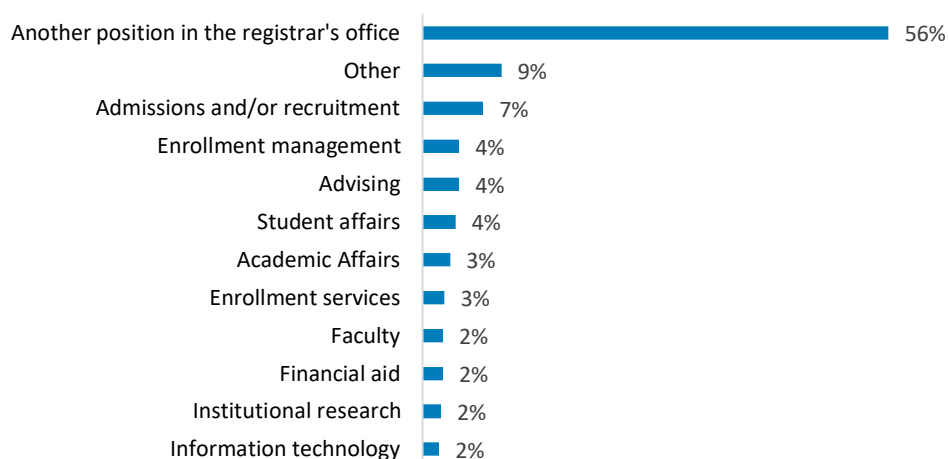
For a large percentage of current registrars for whom this is not their first position in higher education, their career path is straightforward—serving as a registrar at another institution or from a job in the registrar’s office at their current institution (Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4: Employment Location Prior to Current Position



3

Figure 5: Position Prior to Registrar



4

This career appears to require mobility; just 28% have worked at only one institution, 26% at two, 20% at three, 13% at four, and 13% at five or more. Three questions were asked to examine the concept of institutional mobility in more detail and serve as proxy measures of career mobility between institutional characteristics by comparing current institutional type, size, and control with other institutional experiences. The data support that registrars appear to be almost equally mobile between institutional size, type, and control (Appendix C).

³ Among those for whom this is not their first position in higher education (n=656)

⁴ Among those who moved from another position in higher education to this one (n=456)

Personal Essay #1



CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE

A Day in the Life of a Small College Registrar

Tara Arneson, she/her

Registrar

5 AM: I'm singing The Bangles Manic Monday in my head. But it's Wednesday, and I'm daydreaming of Friday. Oh well, I'm trying to get all of my jobs done before I wake up my kiddos in a little over an hour. They are 8 and 10, so it gets a little chaotic (think tiny tornadoes tearing through the house) once they are awake.

7:30 AM: I'm on campus. It's quiet in my building and around campus, which allows me to dive into email. This will be the only opportunity I get today to check and respond to emails.

9 AM: Meeting number one is calling. What's on the agenda for this meeting? Ah, academic policy. We're in the process of reviewing the entire catalog (three, actually). Thankfully, not every policy needs to be rewritten, and many of the policies have innocuous updates. However, it seems the committee wants to spend more time wordsmithing than really considering the policy's intent. There are several instances where I try to reign in everyone with a polite and direct comment, but I'm not always successful. It seems we spend the entire hour tweaking three words in one policy.

10 AM: Discussion with the director of admissions for our online division. There's been some changeover in the department, and the director has only been in the role for about a year. We spend the entire hour talking about how degree audits work, how to apply non-course equivalencies in programs, and how to conquer some mountain bike trails in our area.

11 AM: Last-minute meeting with the director of financial aid. He is truly my partner-in-crime at our college, and there are many things I won't even consider tackling unless he is on board. We are preparing for our 12:15 PM meeting about variable-credit master's degree programs.

11:30 AM: Hold code meeting with the VP of information systems and a programmer. I spent a half-hour chatting about BIO codes in Colleague and whether we should have them display in Salesforce. Sure, why not? A majority of other student data is already in Salesforce, and we might as well have these hold banners show too.

12:15 PM: The variable credit master's degree program discussion (yikes!). We were scheduled for 45 minutes, and the discussion takes 90 minutes, with a second meeting scheduled for a

later date. The conversation is challenging because of both financial aid regulations and accreditation standards. We want to honor the program learning outcomes and the student experience and consider the way the program was designed. It seems there should be a way to make this work in our SIS and make everyone happy, right?

1:45 PM: Drive to the main campus for a 2 PM meeting. Find a Kind bar and a Vermont Meat Stick in my computer bag for lunch. Then, park and run to my next meeting.

2 PM: Meeting with a fellow registrar from another private college in our area. We have a cross-registration agreement with their college, so we are connecting over details for the cross-registration program. Plus, we get to gripe a bit about our recent financial-aid audits, WebAdvisor going away, and the excitement of implementing Self-Service.

3:05 PM: Pack up and head out. Kiddos are in summer camp and need to be picked up by 3:30 PM. From camp, we go to swim lessons, then change in the car and eat a quick sandwich on the way to baseball. We're home a bit after 8 PM, and the kiddos (and I!) are toast. A quick bowl of cereal, a shower, and a little TV before it's off to bed at 9 PM. There have been plenty of nights where I log back into work and try to get to all the emails I accumulated over the day after being in meetings. I'm lucky if I'm in bed by 10:30 PM.

As registrars, we always joke about how no one ever dreams about being a registrar when they grow up (many of us didn't know what a registrar was!). I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up, but I truly enjoy being a registrar. This role has allowed me to use my strongest skills, strengthen my weakest skills, and put together some of the most interesting puzzles. No two days are the same. I've been called the glue of the institution because it seems that everything flows through the registrar's office at some point.

This is just a sample of what a summer day looks like for me. Fall and spring don't look much different. At a small college, we all wear many hats and take on many responsibilities. I'm fortunate I get to collaborate with a great group of people daily, and I experience something different every day.

Create a strong network of colleagues you can contact in times of need. No one else at your institution is likely to have your job, so the only way to get help is to look outside for assistance from peers. Help everyone you can. When you need help, they'll be there for you.

Tim Amyx
Volunteer State Community College
Director of Admissions and College Registrar



Portfolio of Responsibilities

As with the 2015 and 2018 surveys, this year's included questions about the registrar's portfolio of responsibilities. As evidenced by Figure 6, the registrar position typically serves on several standing committees. In addition to the proffered choices, 140 respondents listed one or more additional committees on which they serve. The responsibilities associated with these other committees include academic calendar, academic integrity, commencement, data governance, admissions, accreditation, assessment, appeals, behavior intervention team (BIT), general education, finance, institutional research/reporting, and others.

Figure 6: Committee Service

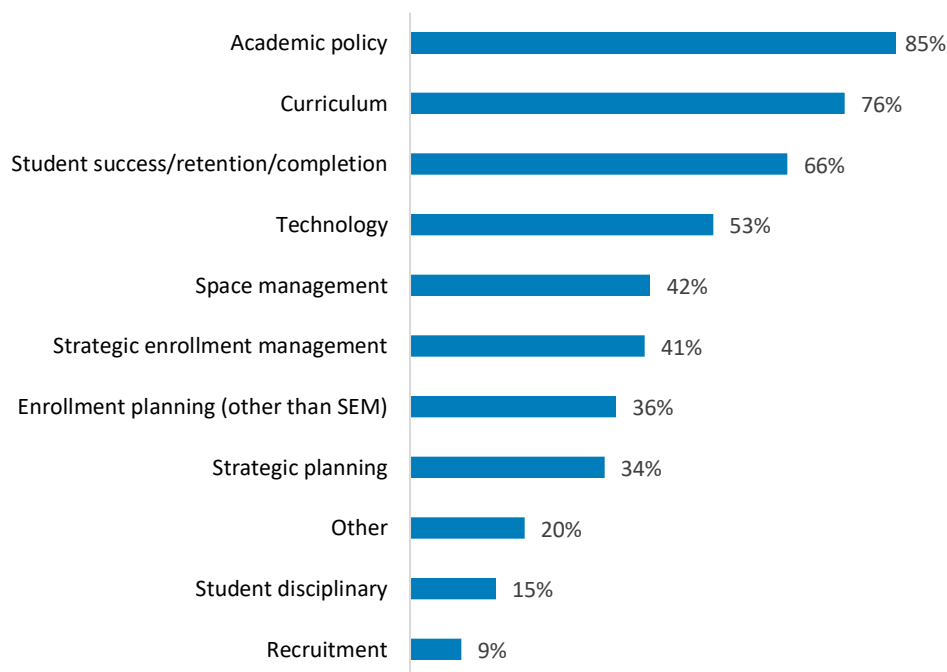


Table 1 represents a portfolio of responsibilities typical to the Registrar position. Each of the column categories was defined as follows for the survey participants:

- **Responsible:** I perform this myself. I do not delegate the activity or responsibility.
- **Supervise:** I have the responsibility, but I have delegated the performance of this activity, and I supervise it.
- **Participate:** I neither delegate nor supervise this activity, but I influence decisions related to that function.
- **Inform:** I have no authority or responsibility for this activity, but I inform others about this function.
- **N/A:** none of these

Table 1: Portfolio of Responsibilities					
	Responsible	Supervise	Participate	Inform	N/A
Academic calendar development	54%	16%	21%	6%	2%
Academic records management	50%	49%	1%	0%	0%
Ad-hoc reporting and research	31%	27%	31%	7%	5%
Advising	4%	10%	44%	29%	12%
Athletic eligibility certification	14%	30%	10%	8%	38%
Budget development	48%	6%	21%	12%	13%
Certifying candidates for graduation	38%	54%	5%	2%	1%
Class schedule development	19%	47%	19%	8%	7%
Classroom scheduling	20%	53%	9%	7%	12%
Commencement/graduation ceremony	23%	27%	34%	10%	5%
Curriculum/program approval and revision process	13%	20%	53%	10%	4%
Degree audit maintenance (coding)	37%	51%	6%	3%	3%
Early academic alert	8%	12%	30%	24%	25%
Enrollment reporting/research	29%	23%	31%	8%	8%
Facilities/activities scheduling	3%	25%	17%	19%	36%
FERPA compliance and training	68%	19%	9%	2%	2%
IPEDS and/or other external reporting	16%	11%	28%	25%	20%
New student recruitment	1%	2%	20%	35%	42%
Non-degree admission	9%	24%	18%	17%	31%
Re-admit processing	10%	30%	25%	14%	20%
Residency determination	12%	22%	9%	9%	48%
Student information system management and development	38%	20%	36%	4%	2%
Student success	8%	14%	58%	13%	7%
Transcript processing	19%	75%	3%	2%	1%
Transfer credit evaluation	19%	57%	10%	6%	8%
Tuition and fees	1%	4%	18%	28%	49%
Veterans education certification and reporting	14%	29%	12%	19%	26%

Personal Essay #2



My Path to the Registrar Position

Amanda Steele-Middleton

University Registrar

“I’d like to be a registrar when I grow up,” said no one ever. At an early age, I am not sure that I would have been able to pronounce the word Reg-i-stR-ar, let alone understand what a registrar does. My path to becoming a university registrar, like many of my colleagues, began unintentionally.

I was not someone who had a set path early on. As a first-generation college student, I floundered. Having earned a year of college credit through dual enrollment, I made my way through the requirements of my degree, majoring in biological sciences, but I did not have a real sense of where I was going. A couple of years after finishing my undergraduate degree, I decided to go to graduate school to work toward an MBA. I was hoping an advanced degree would open new doors (I had minored in business as an undergraduate, thinking a business background could be helpful in any career).

I began looking for ways to finance my education and learned my local mid-size public university offered free tuition to its employees. I searched the many job postings for which I had no qualifications and began to apply. Surely a background as a veterinary technician and a restaurant hostess counted for work experience, right? I was lucky. I was invited to interview for the position of “registration clerk” in the office of the registrar. While I cannot recall any of the questions I was asked during the interview, I do remember the kindness of the people I met during the process. I left the interview hopeful but without a clue whether I would be a good candidate for the open position. I was somewhat shy but friendly enough, and I had been a student at the university. With luck, I was hired and took my place in an office chair at a window (the kind with the metal doors that roll up and down), helping students navigate the university-registration system.

During my time as a registration clerk, I learned about the registrar’s office. I was single with no kids and always eager to lend a hand. Soon, I learned about class scheduling and curriculum management. In those days, course and program changes were made via multipart carbon form, and approvals were kept in large binders that housed all the history of course and program changes at the university. Three years into my job, the university embarked on its first ERP system project. I became part of an “implementation team” and was promoted to

“assistant registrar.” During implementation, I learned a lot about other registrar-y and university processes and data. After completing my MBA, I began looking for advancement opportunities and, somehow, was invited to join a small private college as registrar. While I had learned a lot about the software this small college was using through the implementation of the same software at the first university, I encountered (for the first time) real-time decision-making for transfer credit, athletic compliance, and other university processes and policies. I had the opportunity to bring some of my large university experience to this small college.

I continued to learn a great deal about, and to be involved in, multiple aspects of university processes and policies. It was here, at the ripe old age of 27, I discovered I had A LOT to learn to understand the biology of a university. My key to success? Collaboration. I regularly sat down with department chairs and administrators to learn about the challenges they were facing. This collaboration helped me learn and provided some political capital through building a reputation as a problem solver. I relied HEAVILY on my colleagues in our state organization (shout out to Ohio-ACRAO) and became more active in AACRAO and in registrar communications. The registrar and small college listservs have been valuable resources over the years.

I am now 43 years old and have worked for two small private universities and two large public universities. I love what I do, and more importantly, I cherish the people I work with and the students we support. I recently realized the irony in this unexpected path to becoming a registrar. Much like where I started, studying the structure and function of living things in my biology courses, being a registrar requires understanding the structure and function of the university. As our profession has evolved, we have focused on our symbiotic relationship with students, becoming student-centered and advocates supporting student growth and success.

Workload, Supervisory Responsibility and Necessary Skills

Like the CEMO and CAdO positions, the registrar's is a demanding one regarding the number of regularly calendared meetings, travel requirements, number of direct reports, and to a lesser extent, the hours worked per week. See Appendix C for details related to the data reported below.

- **23% have more than five direct reports⁵**, and among those, the mean is nine, and the maximum is 26.
- **26% attend three or more calendared meetings per day**, and of those, 6% attend more than five.
- **81% report working more than 40 hours per week**, and 8% 55 or more⁶

Among the 13 proffered response choices, the following were selected as the top three⁷ most important responsibilities associated with the registrar's position: **record-keeping and data stewardship, monitoring adherence to academic policy, and registration** (69%, 48% and 37%, respectively). Interestingly, human resource management came in last with just 3%, even with the number of direct reports per registrar.

Communication, problem-solving, and leadership and management were selected as the top three skills⁸ for a registrar (58%, 53%, 41%). No respondent chose budget management, and just 1% selected professional development and contributions to the field or human resource development. Only 4% selected diversity and inclusion.

Time management was reported as the most challenging aspect of the job⁹ (70%), followed by inadequate financial resources (46%) and keeping up with changing policies and regulations (30%).

Never stop learning and stay curious. A little adventure now and then can be a good thing!

James Keane
Haverford College
Registrar



⁵ "direct reports" were defined as those employees who report to no other person.

⁶ Among the 8% who report working 55 hours or more per week, the mean is 61 and the maximum is 100

⁷ Respondents were asked to select only 3 of the 13 responsibilities

⁸ Respondents were asked to select only 3 of the 14 skills

⁹ Respondents were asked to select only 3 of 9 challenges

Personal Perspectives on the Registrar's Position

New for 2021 are survey questions and reaction statements focused on factors important to registrars to remain in their position and other measures of job satisfaction. For example, a work-life balance, fair compensation, and appreciation are important aspects needed to retain registrars in their current position (Table 2).

Table 2: Order of Importance to Be Retained in Current Position					
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Appreciation	23%	28%	27%	13%	9%
Fair compensation	32%	34%	23%	9%	3%
Increased responsibility/enlarged portfolio	7%	7%	13%	27%	47%
Work-life balance	34%	23%	21%	13%	9%
Professional development opportunity	4%	9%	16%	38%	33%

The majority of registrars are satisfied with their current position. When asked to react to the statement, “I am satisfied with my current position,” 20% selected “describes me very well”; 38% checked “describes me very well”; and 32% responded with “described me moderately well.” Three percent are not satisfied with their job, and another 8% feel slightly satisfied.

49% percent feel that their professional and personal skills are appreciated at their institution “most of the time”; 26% chose “always”; 13% “about half the time”; 11% “sometimes”; and 1% “never.”

83% agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I have a great deal of freedom on the job.” A further 12% are neutral, and 5% disagree.

20% percent disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, “Our enrollment goals are reasonable and can be accomplished with the resources available to me in my role as registrar.” On the other hand, 7% strongly agree, 39% agree, and 34% are neutral on the matter.

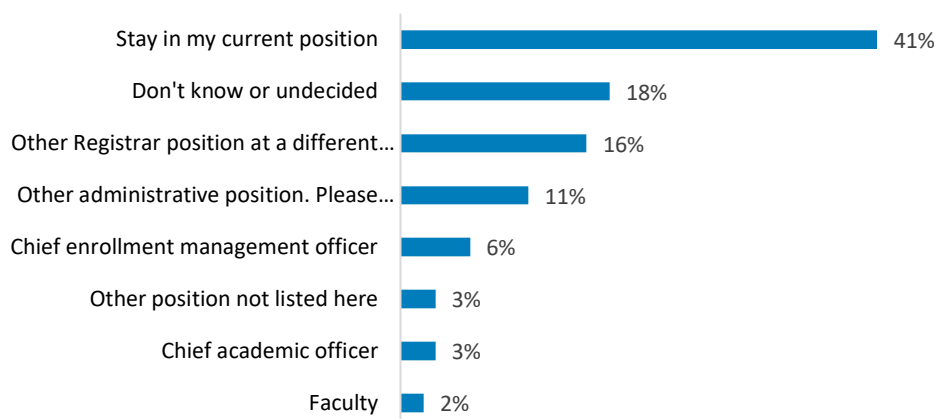
82% feel they are given support for professional development activities “half of the time or more,” while 15% selected “sometimes” and 3% “never.”

Fewer registrars feel pressure to perform always or most of the time than CEMOs (62% vs. 88%). An additional 14% feel such pressure about half the time; 20% feel it sometimes; and just 5% never feel pressure to perform.

Career Aspirations

Respondents were asked about their career aspirations. **Among the 71% (n=520) who have an idea of what their next career move will be, 31% want to retire;** 26% want to stay at their current institution; another 11% want to change institutions; and 3% no longer wish to work at an institution. Within the group who seek to stay in higher education for their next career move, 41% want to stay right where they are in their current registrar position; 16% will seek a different registrar position elsewhere; and 6% want to be a CEMO (Figure 7). Half (n=206) of those who intend to change careers intend to do so in three years or less, and of those, 52 within the next year.

Figure 7: Next Career Intentions Among Those Intending to Stay in Higher Education (n=272)



If you like the idea of working in a very busy office that is essentially a "nerve center" of the institution, then the registrar's position might well be for you. If you have not done it already, you will need to develop soft skills in conflict resolution, personnel supervision, multitasking, superb written and verbal communication skills, and a contextual understanding of higher education (e.g., state and national policies, etc.). In terms of hard skills, you will need to be adept at working with data and the ever-changing technology landscape. That said, this can be a very satisfying career with the right supervision from above and with very professional and competent staff in your office.

Cliff Dorne
Saginaw Valley State University
University Registrar



Personal Essay #3



A Day in the Life

Kelly Brooks

MPA, Registrar and Director, Academic Affairs

Not long ago, I had a particularly challenging Monday. The day ended later than normal because I'm no longer commuting. I marveled a bit at what had been accomplished. And I was exhausted. And it was only Monday . . .

As I started out, I could anticipate some of what would occur that day. My agenda included a normal batch of meetings: four. In the end, they averaged about 45 minutes each, and all but one had takeaways for me requiring some moderately complex and timely actions. One resulted in multiple follow-up emails (of course). The day also included two inquiries from staff about FERPA matters, which entailed some clarifying questions before providing suitable advice. In addition, I had about a half dozen communication exchanges with a new colleague seeking insight in understanding Capella's FlexPath transcript, which reflects no letter grades or credits and is a non-term, competency-based education, direct assessment delivery model. Luckily, I have explained this many times before.

Next, there were at least three email questions about a recent change in law and how we would be altering our processes accordingly. It ultimately required my writing a very long and detailed overview of the solution in progress to level set with all parties and assure the stakeholders our approach would address the matter. I further explained that a technical solution was being developed and was well in hand. Did I mention we were in the midst of hiring a new member of our catalog team? That required candidate materials to be reviewed and rated. Then I communicated back to my direct report, a manager who was coordinating the process.

The provost has delegated to me the review of foreign applicants' requests for an exception to our admissions requirement for proof of English proficiency (TOEFL, MELAB, IELTS.) This request took a few minutes to review, make a decision, and execute the proper communications. I also field exception requests about registration and grading. Naturally, there were a couple of those, too. Each required at least two email exchanges before I could reach a decision. (You realize I'm doing this between my four meetings, right? And somewhere I'm trying to grab some food, which I admit is a bit quicker and easier while working from home. At least I can elect to turn off my camera while I'm chewing).

You may think I don't hear from faculty, but yes, I received a faculty question on extending an incomplete grade for a military learner, which also entailed several emails, a record review, and

a call to our military support team. Then a newly admitted student inquired about starting school (my signature is on the welcome letter). I forwarded that to the student's admissions counselor for follow-up.

As a team, we also had to navigate how to get student materials signed and notarized for an apostille when everyone was working from home. Figuring out the logistics with our staff notary was another task of the day. And, lest you assume the above summary fully encapsulated my Monday, I will share that my inbox ingests about 80 to 100 emails per day. So in my spare time (?), I reviewed the latest organizational health survey results, noted a warning about phishing, browsed *Inside Higher Ed* and learned an associate got married over the weekend. I didn't even know they were engaged!

Do I love my job? Most days. It was a busy and challenging Monday, but thankfully, no two days are the same for a registrar. That may be what many of us appreciate about our jobs. All the loose ends were tied up in the subsequent day (or two), and I got to go into the office for the apostille signature and saw some of my old friends and colleagues in person after many months. In the end, we provided great service and hired an awesome editor! I wonder what next Monday will bring.

Closing and Resources

The registrar position is often described as the hub of the institution. Those seeking the role of the registrar should be prepared for a varied, fast-paced, technologically-complex, data-rich, person-centric career. This career requires systems thinking, analytical skills, persuasion skills, and the ability to lead a team of staff responsible for a wide variety of functions related to academic record management.

In addition, the data indicates that there are likely to be a few hundred registrar openings in the United States in the next three years. If you are seeking a registrar position or new to the profession, AACRAO has several resources that can help you prepare for your first registrar position, including:

Online Learning

- [Reg 101](#)

On-Demand Learning

- [Compliance Corner](#)
- [FERPA Foundations](#)
- Records Management – Coming Soon
- Business Process Improvement – Coming Soon

Further Your Education

- SEM-Endorsement [Program](#)

Publications

- [FERPA Quick Guide](#)
- [AACRAO Guide to Graduation Ceremonies](#)
- [Academic Record and Transcript Guide 2020](#)
- Registrar's [Basic Guide](#)
- And many [more](#)

AACRAO [Core Competencies](#)

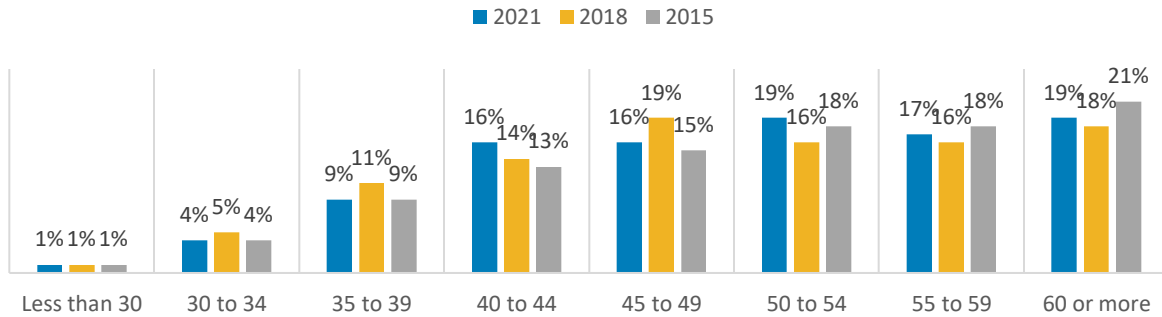
AACRAO [Professional Proficiencies](#)

If you are an experienced registrar and would like to share your knowledge with others, consider serving as a mentor to a young professional or a [Reg 101 or 201 faculty member](#).

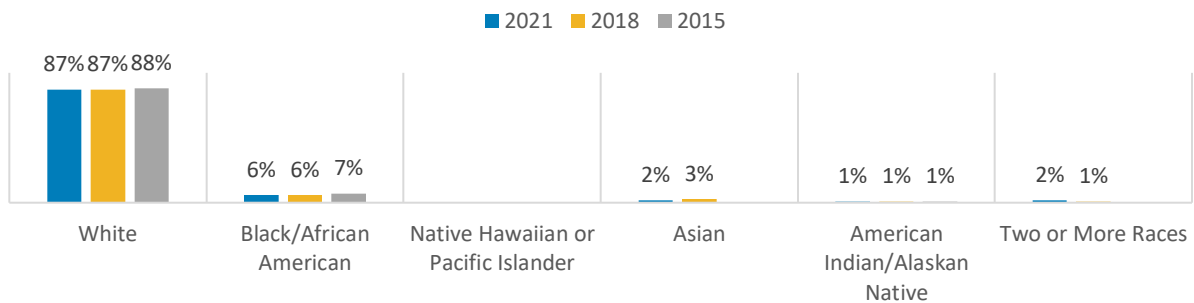
We intend to replicate the survey again in three years, and we welcome feedback on this one. Please direct any questions regarding this or other AACRAO reports to Wendy Kilgore, Director of Research (wendyk@aacrao.org). Finally, we'd especially like to thank all who were willing to share their words of wisdom and personal essays. We find them all compelling and encourage you to read each of them.

Appendix A: Demographics

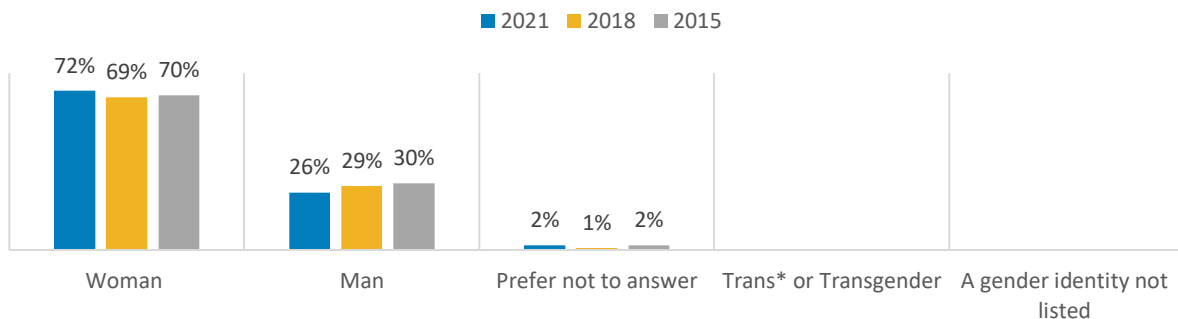
Age of Respondents 2021, 2018 and 2015



Race of Respondents 2021, 2018 and 2015



Gender Identity 2021, 2018 and 2015



Appendix B: Mobility Between Institutions of Different Characteristics

Mobility by Institution Type ¹⁰				
	Current Institution Type			
Previous Institution Type	Lower division only (n=89)	Undergraduate (n=96)	Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional (n=464)	Graduate and/or professional (n=36)
Lower division only	17%	9%	14%	3%
Undergraduate	24%	23%	21%	31%
Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	46%	48%	40%	47%
Graduate and/or professional	7%	10%	9%	17%
State system office	4%	7%	4%	3%
No other type	2%	2%	12%	0%

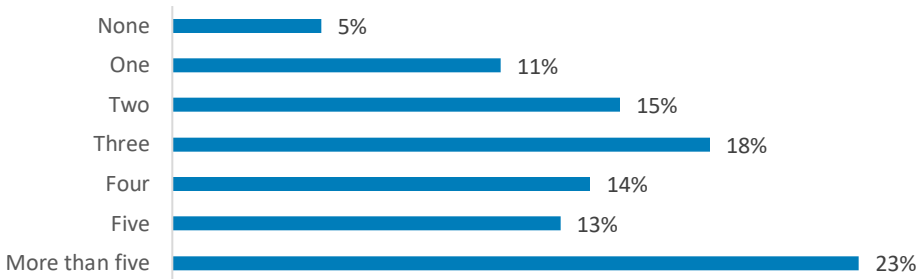
Mobility by Institution Type			
	Current Institution Type		
Previous Institution Control	Public (n=263)	Private, not-for-profit (n=335)	Private, proprietary (n=25)
Public	37%	38%	32%
Private, not-for-profit	38%	32%	28%
Private, proprietary	11%	13%	32%
State system office	4%	5%	8%
No other control	10%	12%	0%

Mobility by Institution Size						
	Current Institution Size					
Previous Institution Size	Under 1,000 (n=149)	1,000 - 2,499 (n=164)	2,500 - 4,999 (n=131)	5,000 - 9,999 (n=129)	10,000 - 19,999 (n=103)	20,000+ (n=104)
Under 1,000	24%	11%	14%	13%	4%	11%
1,000 - 2,499	22%	17%	20%	16%	18%	13%
2,500 - 4,999	12%	17%	19%	16%	18%	22%
5,000 - 9,999	13%	14%	13%	14%	15%	18%
10,000 - 19,999	12%	18%	17%	19%	17%	16%
20,000+	13%	21%	15%	19%	24%	18%
No other size	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	1%

¹⁰ For Tables 1, 2 and 3, column totals may be more or less than 100% due to rounding to a percentage point.

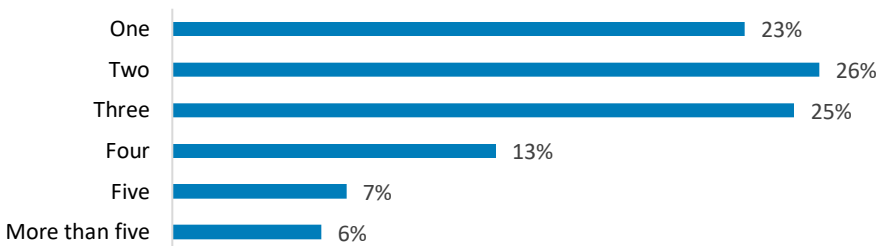
Appendix C: Workload and Responsibility Details

Number of Direct Reports

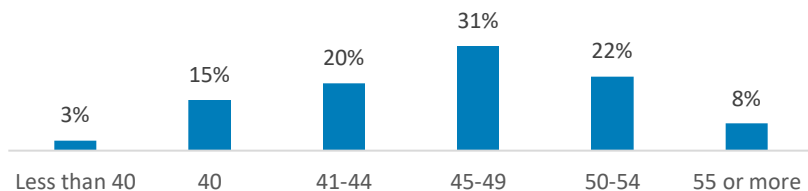


Number of Direct Reports by Institutional Type				
	Lower Division Only (n=106)	Undergraduate (n=97)	Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional (n=487)	Graduate and/or professional (n=37)
None	8%	5%	3%	32%
One	11%	19%	9%	19%
Two	17%	23%	14%	8%
Three	17%	24%	18%	16%
Four	10%	10%	16%	3%
Five	7%	10%	15%	11%
More than five	30%	9%	25%	11%

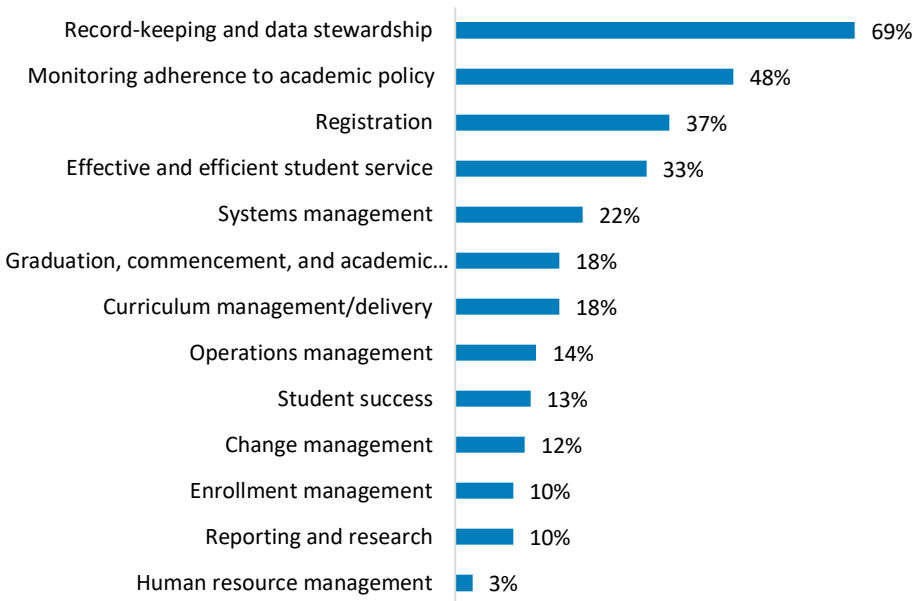
Number of Calendared Meetings Per Day



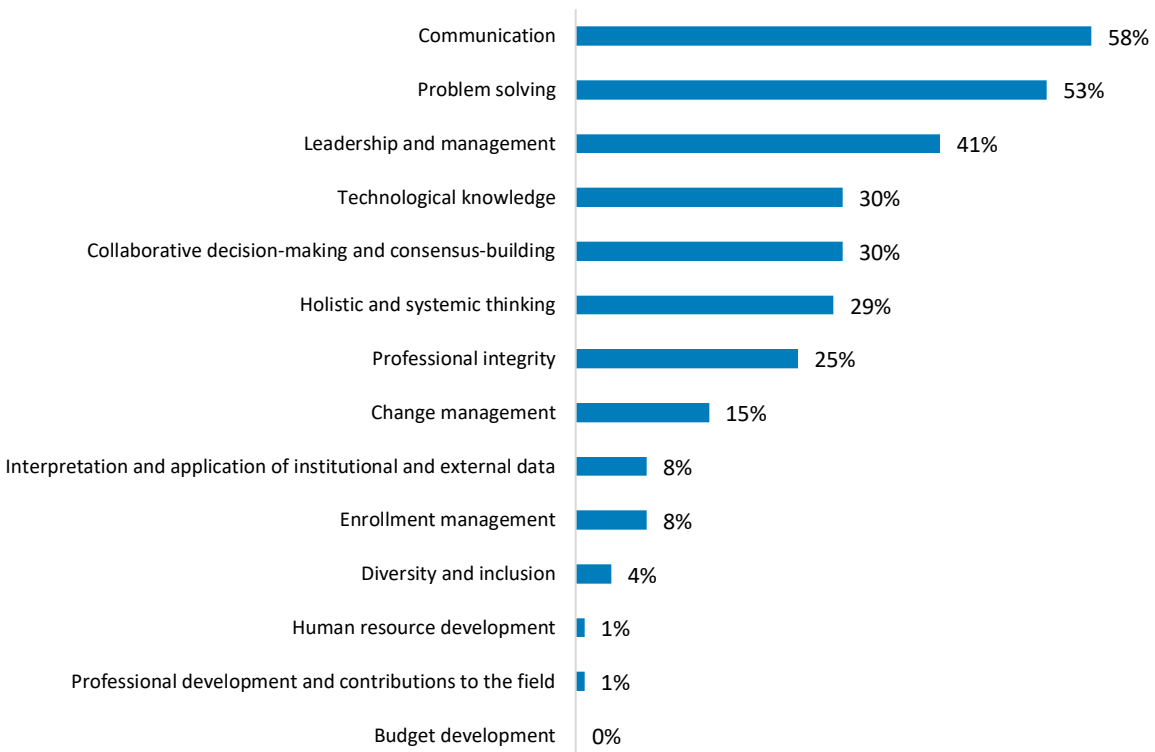
Number of Hours in Average Work Week



Most Important Responsibilities Associated with the Registrar Position



Most Important Skills for the Registrar's Position



Most Challenging Aspects of the Registrar's Position



Appendix D: Additional Personal Essays¹¹



My Path to the Registrar Position
Mandy Euen
University Registrar

I wish my story was full of glamour and intrigue regarding my path to the profession, but the truth is I stumbled into my first registrar job while desperately seeking a way out of my fundraising job for which I had been hired in 1986. I worked for a law school for about six months in a fundraising position I absolutely despised when the director of human resources approached me with, “Hey, the registrar is leaving. Do you think that’s something you would rather do?” When I asked her for details about the position, she paused, then finally said, “Just go down and talk to her, and see if you want the job.” With very little detail from the person leaving the position, I blindly accepted the offer, and 35 years later, I am still in the registrar business, albeit at a different institution. I walked into my job with no training and no one to show me the ropes, but that was to my benefit as I saw everything with fresh eyes and was given absolute freedom to make changes.

I worked outside of the profession twice, once as assistant dean for admissions (at the same law school) and once as assistant vice president for human resources at a community bank. The admissions job was definitely not for me because I struggled with “selling” a candidate on the school when I knew our brand of law was not what the student wanted to practice. However, I was very successful at bringing in classes with higher bar-pass rates because my time as keeper of the academic records showed me the characteristics students needed to succeed in law school. A move back to my small hometown in 1996 necessitated a career change, as job opportunities were limited. I took a job in human resources for a community bank, and in the four years I was there, I moved up to assistant vice president. I loved that job, and it helped me hone my ability to identify the right skill set and the right person for a position. Before I started hiring for the bank, I worked in each of the entry-level positions to have a complete understanding of just what it took to be successful in the job.

In 2001, I was ready to get back into higher education. Miami University hired me as an assistant registrar. This was quite a change from being the registrar at a small professional school. I was fortunate to come into an office where staff readily shared knowledge and expertise. I had to spend the first year learning the elements of my new job *and* the student information system from my direct reports, which was a very humbling experience. I was fortunate to work for a registrar who strongly believed in mentoring, saw my potential, and gave me opportunities to rise within the office. When he retired in 2018, he encouraged me to apply for his position, but I always preferred being behind the curtain rather than on center stage. With a lot of coaxing, I finally agreed to accept the interim registrar position in July, 2018 and the “permanent” position in March 2019. While there have certainly been a few days where I questioned whether I made a serious vocational error, for the most part, I am very happy my career path took this trajectory. I had plenty of time and the opportunity to learn the registrar business at a steady pace and have been given the freedom to make many, many business process changes that allow us to operate with a lean staff in tight budget times.

Now that I sit in the registrar’s chair, I prioritize mentoring the staff and providing opportunities for advancement. We have to “grow” our successors because there are few, if any, programs that prepare someone to become a registrar. I try to instill in staff that the job is really a mash up of many jobs . . . diplomat, lobbyist, chief information/human resources/financial officer, comedian, social worker, teacher and lawyer, to name a few. I hope the variety of responsibilities and “no two days are ever the same” will keep them hooked on the profession, as it has kept me hooked all these years.

¹¹ The essays have been included in this appendix randomly.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Chrissy Coleman
Registrar, Director of Graduate Studies

I am the registrar at the Toyota Technological Institute at Chicago (TTIC). I also serve as the secretary of the board of trustees, am the administrative director of graduate studies, oversee the offices of admissions, student services and communications, and am the accreditation liaison officer for the institute. How does one find themselves at such a unique institute with such a unique grouping of responsibilities?

After working in Asia for a few years for a foreign ministry of education, I came home to Chicago in 2004. I found an opening for an administrative position at a small start-up computer science Ph.D.-granting research institute in Chicago. By “start-up,” I mean there was an endowment, a couple of faculty, a board, and brand new articles of incorporation, bylaws, and statutes. I was hired, and my first task was to aid in the recruitment and matriculation of the first-ever students. Meanwhile, we compiled the Ph.D. curriculum and created student and academic policies. We admitted three students that first year. It was very exciting. We designed the first-ever transcript. My role evolved to include student services and events. I developed the first of many new student orientations. The human resources officer was the registrar at that time, keeping all student records via Microsoft Access. TTIC next began the all-hands-on-deck process of seeking accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission.

TTIC’s computer science Ph.D. takes about six years to complete, and before we knew it, it was time for our first graduation. The “registrar romantic” in me (is that a thing?) still gets a thrill remembering how excited I was to be tasked with designing the doctoral diploma and Ph.D. hood for the institute. The idea that I would be designing a diploma that may be displayed on the wall of an alumnus’s faculty office for decades to come or a TTIC hood they would wear at future graduations as faculty made me very proud. I don’t know how many folks can say they designed a school’s Ph.D. hood, but my hand in creating these artifacts gives me a charge each time I think about it. Planning that graduation was a hoot, too.

Not long after, and with a student body of about 25, the human resources officer/registrar left TTIC, and I was offered the role of the registrar. I would maintain my roles (at that time) in student services, support the board, and create the institute’s annual reports and public relations brochures. I was pleased to accept! The first thing I did was order AACRAO’s *The Registrar’s Guide*. I also joined the Illinois AACRAO (IACRAO). These resources helped me learn more about the critical, traditional, and evolving role of the registrar. I benefited from the collective knowledge of generous folks involved in those associations.

Fast forward to 2021, and I am pleased to say that while busier than ever, I am so happy I took a chance on this small institute, and they took a chance on me. We now have about 50 students and 21 alumni. We’ve implemented a proper comprehensive SMS, assessment plans, big orientations, program traditions, institute culture, diversity initiatives, and graduations with regalia. And we still have *that same original diploma design*!

I grew into this role as TTIC grew. I love the tradition of our charge as registrars, mixed with the newness of TTIC and its start-up-like energy. At a small institution, wearing many hats, I don’t have a big office of staff. I don’t have immediate peers on campus who do what I do and can brainstorm best practices. I very much rely on my amazing colleagues in IACRAO and AACRAO for this. I participate in webinars, training, conferences, publications, and list-serv email threads. With growth and expansion at TTIC, I am using AACRAO’s *Student Records Management* to assist me with coordinating records for all the departments I oversee. I have relied on AACRAO and participating schools for COVID operational guidance over the last year, and I look forward to exploring what the future holds for academia post-COVID.

I know every student who has obtained a degree from TTIC, and I have attended every graduation and orientation since the institute was founded. My role in the office of the registrar allows me to support students through an impactful time in their lives and promote TTIC's mission. In addition, I use any opportunity to encourage others to explore a fulfilling career in higher education administration.



A Day in the Life
Cynthia Suter
Registrar

I've been at three institutions as a registrar. Some tasks are the same, but many are vastly different. I believe you can ask 100 registrars what they do, and all of us will give slight variations about our job responsibilities.

In my current position, my days never go as planned; this is nothing new in this field. From student emergencies, faculty emergencies, and constant pinging in a chat or emails of inquiries, I prioritize my day based on who needs something from me so I can complete the request. Most often, I tackle my personal to-do list after business hours. I've always worked well into the evening, hardly taking lunch and working many weekends, even if it is only for a few minutes here and there to keep up on my emails. By far, my current position has challenged my work-life balance.

My current employer had a very high registrar turnover and had two interim registrars – one internal – before my arrival. The turnover caused many tasks to be ignored, such as data integrity checks, and many staff did not fully understand why they do what they do. I was well informed about what I was walking into and had a sense of direction, but as I learned about the institution's culture and business processes, my intent with the daily tasks was often derailed.

A "day in the life" for me is typically checking academic petitions. Students have been encouraged to petition almost everything, so I learned that I needed to immerse myself in the process early on. Trying to get a handle on the petitions, I coach students on how to write an effective petition so when it goes before the committee, a clear, actionable item can be reviewed. Otherwise, I waste committee members' valuable time. I've also been able to coach faculty and advisors on what is petition worthy and how they can coach students to understand when a petition has no legitimate rationale and when there is a legitimate rationale to petition a policy. One of my tasks was to move all forms to true online forms with workflows. COVID-19 forced me in one weekend to change all PDF forms into true online forms. Much of our business practice has dramatically changed because these forms are online. No longer can a student say they submitted something and lost it because each form, even in draft, can be researched. This has also provided concrete numbers of transactions my staff perform.

I choose to watch my email all day. For me, this is my primary to-do list. I would be at a loss without more than one computer monitor! For me, the interruption helps me feel like I've accomplished something when I can delete the email. As I mentioned previously, I elect to prioritize based on other's needs. I prefer not to hold up others when I can control my own responsibilities.

The remainder of my day is often filled with meetings because the registrar is the project manager for identified challenges, projects, and strategic partnerships. The best part of my day is when I can troubleshoot with

stakeholders, reach a solution, and have a resolution and a process that makes the machine function more smoothly. The best joy for me is when curriculum questions come up, and we figure out how to actualize out-of-the-box thinking.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Clifford K. Dorne, Ph.D.
University Registrar

My path to the registrar's position was relatively unorthodox. Many postsecondary registrars did not originally intend to do this type of work as they planned careers in graduate school. AACRAO survey data might document this further.

Born and raised in New York City, I initially worked in the corrections field. After earning two master's degrees, I earned a doctorate from the School of Criminal Justice at the State University of New York at Albany. My original long-term plan was to join the U.S. Coast Guard, but after working as a teaching fellow in graduate school, I enjoyed teaching to the point I decided to pursue a career as a professor.

After teaching at Texas A&M International University at Laredo and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, I made a mid-career change, arriving at SVSU 23 years ago as the department chair in the criminal-justice program, earning tenure and the rank of full professor. Not long after, I served as the associate dean of the SVSU College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences for six years, the largest of the five colleges at SVSU. Subsequently, I served as an associate vice president for academic affairs; I got involved in strategic planning in the enrollment area in this capacity. I was then invited to work under the vice president for enrollment management, which resulted in an appointment to run the SVSU Office of Institutional Research. After the registrar announced his retirement, I was asked if I would be interested in training for that position. Essentially, I went from a faculty career path to an academic administrator to front-line student services. In his previous capacities as a dean and provost, our university president, Don Bachand, directly provided me with these administrative opportunities at SVSU, for which I am profoundly grateful.

I am going on my ninth year as the registrar and I find the job extremely satisfying. I am very fortunate to work on a beautiful campus with a very collegial organizational culture. SVSU is a wonderful place to work because I can collaborate daily with colleagues I greatly respect and appreciate. But, of course, the job has its challenges. Almost daily, I find myself drawing on knowledge from my previous professional experiences, including how courses are administered and taught, protocols relating to the individual academic departments, the functions of the academic deans' and provost's offices, the work of the dean of students office, the utilization and management of data, and making student referrals for academic-support services (advisement, counseling, tutoring, financial aid).

Perhaps my two favorite parts of this job involve assisting students with the services of my office, which includes helping them navigate the academic bureaucracy and working as a member of a dedicated team to address challenges at both practice and policy levels. I consider myself very fortunate to have traveled this rather diverse professional path and only wish I had known more about registrars' work earlier in my higher education career. With such knowledge, I would likely have gone into university registrar work much earlier.



Wow, I Wish I Knew That before I Became a Registrar

Andrew M. Frazier, Ed.D.

University Registrar

Higher education offers unique, wonderful opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. Each category of individuals is markedly different in terms of roles, responsibilities, and needs, yet there is a sense of commonality in the stimulating, transformative nature of the college experience. While students may be the primary beneficiaries of the hard work and attention of faculty and staff, seeking the well-being of all can foster an environment wherein everyone experiences higher education's educational and professional benefits. Higher education can change lives and holds tremendous potential for all involved, but it can also become a bane when policies, procedures, and relationships are disjointed. What is one thing I wish I knew before becoming a registrar? The registrar is a unique position at higher education institutions, and we have the opportunity to cultivate conditions that benefit the well-being of all and the institution.

The traditional responsibilities include curriculum management, reporting, data analysis, transcripts and grades, graduation ceremonies, FERPA compliance, and other duties. These tasks require professional acumen and industry knowledge. For many of us (including myself), these are often the foci of training and professional development. However, I wish I had known that a registrar is also an intermediary and an advocate who can bring balance and success to an institution's mission and goals. Registrars can see the big picture *and* ground-level view, from striving to help students succeed through their programs of study, to supporting faculty curricular and logistical needs, to ensuring that key administrators and staff have the correct data to make informed decisions. The registrar serves as a link between academics and the rest of the institution and hub of policies and procedures.

Training on the traditional responsibilities was vital to ensuring I completed key tasks and duties. However, had I known the potential for relational influence and leadership in my position, it would have helped me better understand who I was as a registrar and how I fit into my institution. With years of experience behind me, I now see a duty to overcome historical misperceptions of this department. I see opportunities to make connections between people that may have never been made before. These connections can improve policies and procedures and, perhaps, even address those "silos" we never seem to stop talking about. As a new registrar, I was aware of the tasks under my supervision. Today, I know the importance of making time for students, faculty, and staff even more thoroughly. Students deserve our guidance and advocacy. Faculty deserve support and assistance to help bring their institutional ideas to life. Staff and administrators deserve a liaison who can funnel the mission and vision into the policies, procedures, and curriculum that are the cornerstones of the college experience.

Registrars have a lot on their plates. It often feels as though there is not enough time in the day to get things done. Yet if our more isolated year with COVID-19 has taught me anything, it is that my role becomes more valuable when I make time to serve as a bridge between the people and logistics. I wish I had known more about the possibilities to connect and unite the people around me with the policies and procedures I am called on to direct. As I have learned more about this role within my context, I see how crucial it is to understand how a registrar can support and sustain the various intersections of an institution. With this knowledge comes responsibility and opportunity. Registrars can care about policies and people. Balance is the key, and that key can direct our work, which benefits the success and well-being of students, faculty, and staff and benefits the entire institution.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Liz McClintock, MFA
University Registrar

My path to becoming a registrar at Carlow University, a private liberal arts university in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, may be unique. After finishing my undergraduate degree in psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, I returned to school for a master's of fine arts in creative writing at Chatham University. My goal was to work full time in a position that utilized my writing skills. I found a job at the International Poetry Forum, a literary arts nonprofit hosting poetry readings and workshops at the end of my schooling. It was perfect for me. The position showcased my writing skills in the form of grant proposals, newsletters, press releases, and promotional materials. I felt connected to local writers in a meaningful way, and the events we hosted provided an opportunity for people to support the writing community. Unfortunately, this experience was short-lived due to budget cuts, and I found myself on the job market after only two years.

Growing up watching my mom struggle financially made me uncomfortable with the idea of staying unemployed for too long or even collecting unemployment. So, I interviewed for an administrative assistant position in the dean's office at Carlow University. This position is where my higher-education career began, and I have never left. As an assistant, I offered to help in other areas, namely in advising and student support. Eventually, I was promoted to advising coordinator. I am most grateful that my supervisors recognized my abilities and were supportive when I expressed interest in expanding my responsibilities at the institution. As a result, I now do the same for my staff.

I worked in advising at Carlow for two years before going to Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania, to become the advising and disability services director. The disability-services work was an added challenge. I had some background in the area but not in an official capacity, so I immersed myself in training and conferences to better serve students with accommodations. I also met regularly with students in academic difficulty as part of my advising work. After a time, I found myself wanting to move into something more administrative. I recognized that when I wasn't fully satisfied in a job, I would meet people and imagine what my life would be like if I had their job - a constant case of *the grass is always greener*. It was during one of these imaginative journeys I figured out I wanted to be a registrar. I had a close working relationship with the registrar at W&J and found the administrative work and the need for problem-solving skills appealed to me. Figuring out solutions, resolving conflicts, and making processes more efficient are some of my strongest attributes, and they are key aspects of a registrar position. I also missed working at Carlow. There is something incredibly special about Carlow. There is a welcoming culture unlike any I have experienced. I have been working full-time since I was 19 in many different types of jobs and organizations, and Carlow was the only place that felt like home. So when I heard they were accepting applications for the registrar position, I seized the opportunity. Seeing familiar faces during the interview process put me at ease, and I felt confident answering questions because I knew my heart was in it. The prospect of returning to a work environment I loved with good people in a new and interesting role was like a trifecta of satisfaction.

I've served three years as the university registrar at Carlow and could not imagine a more fitting situation for myself. I took a winding path through higher education to get here, but I would not have known how well this fit would be unless I "tried on" other areas of higher education. What confirms this for me is I no longer imagine myself in a different job when I meet people. I wonder if they imagine themselves as me.



My Path to the Registrar Position

Michael Bailey

Assistant Registrar – Compliance

On May 14, 1982, I proudly proclaimed to my fellow students in the third-grade class of a New Jersey suburban middle school that I would be a registrar. Most children settled for lesser aspirations like a doctor, lawyer, astronaut, but not me.

My parents also knew that I had a natural affinity for “the craft.” I had mastered speaking in acronyms at a very young age. Friends who wanted to borrow one of my comic books had to sign an in-out card. I once wrote a heartfelt letter to Santa Claus begging for a notary embosser. My path was one of dedication and destiny.

During my time in the office of the registrar, I’ve shared the milestones of our occupation. I cheered at the creation of the online R2T4 document and wept at the passage of gainful employment statistics. I watched every second of the most recent negotiated rulemaking live in 4K resolution and even ordered the DVD.

With this essay comes the opportunity to impart to future registrars, who have heard and accepted the calling as I have, the single most significant piece of advice to assure both success and happiness close to my own. Ironically, this advice comes when we, as an industry and individuals, have had to endure a long period of isolation from our students and colleagues because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the many graduations I’ve had the privilege of attending during my career, I always wondered why registrars seldom received the greatest praise and applause whenever staff members were called to be recognized. Most often, these accolades were given to the advisors and admissions representatives. The registrar was usually obliged with the stuttered nervous clap reserved for the person no one knew or the graduate whose last name ended with the letter z after most guests had left or collapsed in the summer heat.

I first suspected this was due to the frequency of student encounters. Registrars seldom make mistakes, so it’s not often a student has to visit the office. Surely, the number of times a student visits their advisor to change majors alone cumulatively must amount to a week. Surprisingly both psychological and family research suggests otherwise. I’d cite them here, but I’m a registrar, so you can be assured it is correct. This brings me to the times when the registrar was recognized with a thunderous ovation. It was not due to the successful collection and recording of all transcripts from previously attended institutions, nor for the errorless IPEDs submission, but rather for the simple advice I now bestow upon you.

On every report, at the top of every folder (if you are not yet paperless) and at the bottom of most emails sent to the general mailbox are the names of your students. These names may not all make the commencement program, but each one will cross your desk or email box at one time or another. When you can interact with them, do so as you would a family member. When they are happy, celebrate with them. Be patient and provide that answer when they are lost or frustrated and have a question you’ve heard numerous times (even though it is clearly posted in the catalog). Begin each email with their name, not “Dear student.” When they come to your office, they probably have been to three other offices. Make yours the last stop, or reach out to the right employee yourself and facilitate that conversation. Follow up with the student later to make sure their need was met. In short, go the extra mile. You’ll find when the quality of your interaction with students is meaningful, so is your work.



It looks easy enough, but is it?

Kathy Callies

Registrar

Forty years ago, I walked onto the Dakota State University campus for the first time. Never has there been a more clueless, lost freshman! The assistant registrar recognized me from my hometown and asked, “Kathy, do you have work study?” I responded, “What’s work study?” While I knew my life would take a turn when I enrolled in college, I had no hint of just how much! It turns out I was eligible for work study, and this is how I began my career in the registrar’s office. About mid-semester, the assistant registrar and her family were in a significant car accident. While all were able to recover from their injuries, this left a vacancy in the office. I was asked if I would be willing to work around my classes to help out during this period. This sounded great to me; it would be a chance to tell others what to do and spend the day seeing just how much could be accomplished. I had to ask, “What’s supervision? What makes a great boss?”

Over the next few years, I had the opportunity to take on other roles at the university, including assistant registrar, director of personnel, and purchasing and registrar. In the late 1980s, the university shifted its mission to focus on technology and information systems. With this change, I moved into the director of admissions, records, and financial aid. This meant that most of the “we’ve always done it this way” processes went out the window, and we engaged in real strategic thinking and intentional talent mapping. We found ourselves needing to develop a team to meet the challenges we were only beginning to understand as DSU started to incorporate technology into each of its programs and processes.

It was not easy. Over the course of these experiences, I worked with some great bosses – people who shared with me how involved and dedicated one must be to be a good supervisor and a great boss to a great team. I found there are four steps to great supervision.

- 1) **Show up:** A good team deserves to know when and how to touch base with you as their supervisor. They need to know their good work is going to be noted. They need assurance any criticisms or corrections shared with them are in the framework of making the team better.
- 2) **Listen up:** Listen even when you think you don’t have the time or energy. The team needs to know their ideas are important and worth your investment. Sometimes you will learn things you never wanted to know but needed to understand.
- 3) **Pick it up:** It’s up to you to carry concerns and great ideas forward as the supervisor. If you don’t, input will eventually fade, and the team may simply go through the motions and fail to put their best into tasks you are trying to accomplish together.
- 4) **Repeat:** When you think you have accomplished everything, do it all again. Good teams led by good supervisors are constantly communicating and sharing their thinking.

This work isn’t easy, but it is worth the effort. I still face challenges every day. A good supervisor (and a great boss) is just as essential to a great team within the registrar’s office as it was all those years ago.

Yale

Wow, I Wish I Knew That before Becoming a Registrar!

Meridith Cayer, M.S.

Associate Director of Admissions, Registrar

I wish I knew how varied the role of the registrar would be and how many technical responsibilities would come with the job. When I was hired, the title of registrar was not immediately evident. I actually responded to a posting for a student affairs officer.

I came from an admissions background, so assuming a registrar position required using a different area of my brain. In the past, I had used interpersonal skills, public speaking, and one specific admissions software solution. As a registrar, I use more quiet, “techie” skills and many different types of software and data-management platforms. I was also surprised to learn how much a registrar engages in policy-making and creating procedures.

I’ve been quite thoughtful in decision-making because registrars have a wide-reaching impact, sometimes university-wide. The registrar’s role can be extremely varied, based on where you work. My registrar responsibilities include traditional student affairs (orientation planning, for example) and a significant amount of admissions work. At other institutions, a registrar may have more technical or IT responsibilities. The registrar title tends to be a “catch-all” position. For example, once I was asked to create a policy on hanging the graduation photos on the wall, simply because I was the registrar! It can be a fun, varied job, depending on how your employer defines it.



My Path to the Registrar Position

Ginny Taylor, MA, MFA

Registrar

My journey to becoming a registrar began in 2001 when Hiram College hired me as a part-time receptionist for the Center for Institutional Studies. In the previous 15 years, my undergraduate degree had helped me work as a physician’s assistant, pharmaceutical representative, and small-business owner. But here I was, starting over again, in an entry-level college position where I worked afternoon hours answering the phone, greeting students, and handling mailings. I learned how to use Excel and Access because we kept all student data in those formats. But I wanted a full-time position because, to be honest, I needed tuition benefits for my three teenagers. So in 2003, I took a position in the admissions office as a full-time data processor (at least, I think that’s what my title was). I entered applications and maintained the applicant files. Everything was on paper then. We had just started using a student information system, which we nicknamed Prego, a spaghetti sauce with the tagline, “it’s in there!” In other words, you could put the information in, but you couldn’t get it out in a usable format.

When an admissions counselor position working with transfer students opened up in 2004, I applied and got it. My daughter had just started at Hiram and was grateful to be able to use the tuition benefit. I did a lot of traveling in Ohio that first year, enrolled many students, and met my admissions goals. Most of all, I loved working with

transfer students. Their needs seemed very basic to me, more so than their first-year counterparts. First-year students appeared to need a lot more handholding. I learned that transfer students need to know three main things: what credits would transfer, how long would it take to complete their degree, and how much would it cost. My admissions director, who had decades of experience in enrollment management, suggested I would make a great registrar. Heck, I didn't even really know what a registrar did, let alone wonder why I would want to become one.

So, surprising even myself, when a position as an assistant registrar in 2006 opened at Hiram, I applied. I had become weary of traveling and the increasing need to use social media for communication. I wanted something stable, and records seemed very stable to me. By that time, I had two daughters at Hiram. While working as the assistant registrar, I completed my master's degree at Hiram and graduated with my oldest daughter.

When the registrar resigned in 2008, she recommended I take her position. I remember feeling flabbergasted. Did she really think I could do what she did, which was still a bit mysterious? Nevertheless, she coached me through the transition and to this day, she remains a good friend. And the rest, as they say, is history. I've been a part of the registrar's office for most of the last 15 years. I even left Hiram as the registrar for a few years, then returned as an associate registrar. After life changes, I applied for a new registrar position in a new city. In January 2020, I moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, to begin working at Mount St. Joseph University. I was only in my office for 10 weeks before we began working fully remote due to the COVID pandemic. Life has not been dull!

When people ask me, "How does one get to be a registrar?" I have to chuckle. The path is different for everyone. For me, I think I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Sansu Woodmancy
Registrar and Director of Student Services

I was starting to get restless and bored at my post, and I needed out. These were the feelings I had when I realized I didn't like the politics in the department I moved into after reorganization at the university where I was working. The work I was doing was less demanding than in my previous position. I always kept myself busy, learning new things and experimenting with making assignments worthwhile and straightforward. It became challenging when I was tasked to handle the state-authorizations project, which I really loved because I conducted research and met new people.

I worked at the theological school as an executive assistant to the vice-president of academic affairs for almost 10 years. After considering the institution's financial situation and rumors of layoffs, I made the difficult decision to leave. My boss was very kind to tell me I needed to act soon, short of saying I might lose my post. That was when I began looking for a new job, and I took the executive assistant position to the vice-provost at this university. A year later, there was a reorganization, and my new boss's position was eliminated. That meant mine would be too. However, before that could materialize, I took another job even though it paid less.

During my years at that university, I learned the graduate school and the undergraduate university conducted business differently. I knew my position was not a good fit for me in my heart and mind, so I started looking again for a job at the graduate level. At this time, my former boss, the vice-president of academic affairs, contacted me about an opening for a registrar's position and asked if I would be interested. The school stayed in good shape

after I left, and although it eliminated some positions, it kept crucial posts. I was excited and scared by the proposal because I did not know anything about the registrar's job other than what I had learned as a student. I tried to think about the few interactions I had with the registrar while working as the executive assistant. They were mostly about reports on enrollment and candidates for graduation and awards. When I told my former boss how I felt, she said she knew me too well and that my knowledge of the school, the faculty, and the staff as well as my experience in software development would make learning to be a registrar easy for me. I truly admired her trust and confidence in me.

Two years later, with guidance from the former registrar, I pulled through it. Today I work as a registrar and as the principal designated officer (PDSO), the responsible officer (RO), the school certifying official (SCO) for veteran students, assistant ALO, and the director of student services. It is a lot, but I take it one day at a time. I believe anything can be learned if we put our minds and heart into it. I wonder what is next in my career path.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Marisa D. Darby
Registrar

"There is no such thing as an accident; it is fate misnamed." – Napoleon Bonaparte

If I am completely honest, I don't think any person at the start of his/her career wakes up one morning and says, "I want to be a registrar." This is not to imply anything negative about the position. On the contrary, I believe it is a vastly overlooked and under-considered career goal. This is probably because registrars traditionally are rarely seen, even though their work is so critical.

In 2005, I earned my bachelor's degree in English; a year later was into my master's program. My initial plan was to teach high school then become a professor. However, my plan and God's were not entirely in sync. When I became a graduate assistant in the graduate admissions office, the higher education bug bit me. I was admitting, advising, and recruiting. I loved it. By the time I graduated in 2007 and headed to the classroom, I was a little underwhelmed. I enjoyed teaching, but I knew something was missing.

Eventually, I applied for a student success/advisor position at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Coincidentally, during my interview, the associate registrar told me if I didn't get this position, she had an opening in her office she knew I would be an excellent fit for. In 2008, I became a degree-audit analyst; I had no idea what I was getting myself into. In this role, I was introduced to transfer articulation, served on an implementation team, built degree audits, evaluated students for graduation and, my personal favorite, wrote policy. I was always asking questions. Consequently, I learned more than I needed to know, but it has proven beneficial throughout my career.

In 2012, I relocated and took a position at Huston-Tillotson University as their first associate registrar. It is a small, private HBCU that serves approximately 1,200 students. It was a huge transition going from a large, public institution that serves more than 25,000 students, but it was a perfect fit for me. Little did I know, this would be the opportunity to change my life and set in motion my revised career trajectory. I learned quickly that smaller institutions allow you to wear many hats, which allowed me to enhance my skills or "fill my toolbox," as my former president used to say. I was stretched in ways I didn't know I could be, all while applying the skills I already had acquired. I was able to build personal relationships with faculty and students, have a voice at the tables where decisions were being made, develop partnerships within the community, teach, and gain insightful perspectives on

the inner workings of an institution. In addition, I collaborated on several projects and programs. Here, I learned my “why” and began to see past who I thought I was and allowed myself to become who I was supposed to be. In 2018, after an organizational restructure, the title of registrar was dissolved, and I was appointed the director of records and registration. Under amazing leadership in enrollment management, I was tasked with growing the department, enhancing processes, and revising policy. Additionally, I was able to reimagine the traditional registrar persona and evolve it into something representative of who I was as a woman in leadership.

In 2020, at the beginning of the global pandemic, I took a leap of faith and accepted the registrar position at the University of Dallas, a private Catholic institution that serves approximately 2,700 students. Believe me, there were challenges navigating this new position, a new city, and the rapidly changing landscape of higher education. However, with the support of phenomenal leadership, an amazing team of professionals, and the support of staff and faculty, the transition thus far has been successful. Even as my own worst critic, I must admit my growth over the last year has been astounding. It is surreal when I reflect on it because I never imagined becoming a registrar. Some of my friends call me the accidental registrar because they know this was not my original vision for my career. However, God’s plan is always perfect, and I trust Him.

My advice to anyone considering a registrar position is to learn everything you can in every capacity you serve, take the initiative, build meaningful professional relationships, find professional development, get a mentor, and always be ready to evolve because education is ever-changing. Most important, trust the process. We learn most lessons during the journey, not at the destination.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Paige Bussell, BBA, MBA*
University Registrar

Does anyone ever really know what they want to be when they grow up? I mean, sure, some do, but most probably do not. Who really dreams of becoming a registrar? I did not even know what a registrar was, let alone plan to become one. All I really knew was that whatever I did it would be in some sort of business field. I had worked in fast food, insurance, and a few other temporary jobs. One day, I found myself out of a job when the insurance company I worked for went out of business. I set my sights on finishing my bachelor’s degree and ended up working as a temporary employee in the registrar’s office, processing transcripts until I could decide what I wanted to be when I grew up.

I did a brief part-time job in IT before finally settling in the registrar’s office as an administrative assistant in 1995, processing transcripts and learning to do just about everything there was to do in the office. At the time, I had a five-month-old, and I had no plans to stay there. Nevertheless, I dug my heels in and started learning every process there was, including registering students, processing grades and GPAs, state and local reporting, certifying athletes, processing enrollment verifications, determining academic status, responding to subpoenas, and clearing students to graduate. Eventually, I began serving on committees, became chair of the commencement committee, learned all about room utilization, and became a supervisor. But wait, there is more! I have also been part of several implementations, including two student information systems, catalog/scheduling software, DegreeWorks, scanning implementations, etc. I was involved in the first-ever telephone registration implementation, as well as online registration and online GRADING! What a revolution that was!

I became assistant registrar in 1998, followed by a promotion to associate registrar. I served as the interim registrar for one year while working on my master’s degree and was promoted to university registrar in 2002. This

would have been impossible had I not been willing to put in the time and energy to learn everything I could about the office. I have also been a part of some very successful educational organizations, including TACRAO, SACRAO, AACRAO, and CoHEsion. I have served on various committees and in multiple roles in the organizations, including vice president for records and, currently, president-elect for TACRAO. It will be my absolute honor to serve as president!

I am forever grateful for the things I have learned, and the students I have served. There is nothing better than the feeling of accomplishment. When I retire, I hope I am remembered for the small impact I made, even if it was only on one person. I am proud to be the university registrar at Texas A&M University-Commerce and will always value the friendships and connections I have made over the last 25 years. What a ride it has been!



Speedbumps, Detours and New Construction Ahead

Liesl A. Flower

College Registrar, Assistant Dean

I think I have a pretty good sense of humor. I mean, I don't take myself too seriously. I appreciate a good pun, or a sarcastic quip. I even crack a joke now and then. For instance, I like to joke around a bit when I meet people and they ask what I do. "I am a college registrar!" I say. They tilt their head to the side, and their facial expression abruptly shifts into a cross between the "unamused" and the "ugh" emojis. I can't tell whether they feel sorry for me, or if they are sorry that they asked. There is almost no other response from these people other than, "Oh, . . .really . . .that must be . . .interesting..." And their voices go up slightly at the end, as if they are asking a question. Or maybe they cannot imagine how my work could be interesting, so they are trying to convince *me* it might be. I try to alleviate the awkward tension with, "Well, when I was growing up, I always wanted to be a registrar." They look at me blinking, same blank expression, but now laced with a bit of horror. I laugh to save them at this point and say, "no, of course not," and rapidly change the subject. We talk about our kids, their profession, global warming, the pandemic, world hunger, anything less painful than what they imagine I must do all day.

Okay, so maybe I don't really have a good sense of humor after all. But, like every registrar, I certainly do have a good sense of why I am a pretty darn good registrar and how I got to where I am today.

Speed Bumps

Speed bumps are constructed to force us to slow down, and we do so, even if reluctantly, or we risk an accident. While the speed bumps of my career were inconvenient, they ultimately offered opportunities to reflect and reevaluate my path. I started my career in public education, teaching seventh grade language arts. At the end of my second year of teaching, my teacher's union voted to strike as the academic year was drawing to a close. In order to protect myself and be able to afford the mortgage for the house we had just purchased, I applied to be the NCAA III women's varsity volleyball coach at my alma mater. I was a collegiate volleyball player, but as a 22-year old, I was surprised to be hired in the full-time position. This speed bump led to a career path in higher education that I would likely not have otherwise followed. But more speed bumps lay ahead. Some of them included my husband quitting his job to go law school; taking on the job of assistant track coach to fill a void in that program (which led to eight years of coaching jumpers and hurdlers); and adding the duties of women's athletic director and the chair of physical education and health to my portfolio when one colleague unexpectedly retired and another left for another institution. After a decade of collegiate coaching and recruiting, I was exhausted. I was tired of the "and, and, and" that many of us in higher education learn to accept. We learn if we are just a little bit above average at balancing 10 things, the institution knows we can probably do twelve without much effort, then fourteen with a little more experience. Soon our titles have little resemblance to where we started on our journey.

We add a wealth of knowledge and experience to our resume, but it can come at a price, if we don't watch where we are going.

Detours

The unfortunate thing about a detour is it is almost never a part of the plan. After thirteen years in college administration, I needed a new closet to store all my various higher education hats: coach, athletic director, faculty member, department chair, senior women's administrator, NCAA compliance officer, reading-and-writing center faculty tutor, special assistant to the dean, and campus-speaker-series coordinator. I had almost no time to recruit for my program and was devoting very little time to my two young boys. My life was out of balance. I didn't know it, but in 2004, I was in desperate need of a detour.

Enter baby number three. Facing an increasing workload in athletics and a new baby, I prepared for something I didn't think I would ever do. I composed my resignation letter and got ready to leave higher education. As I met and delivered the news to our dean, another detour was in front of me. She asked, "Don't you really love working in higher education? Don't you enjoy problem-solving and helping students? Don't you have a knack for managing and communicating with people? Don't you want to be our next registrar?" My mind was swimming like those people I now meet. As I stared at her blankly, the only thing in my mind was a floating question, "What does the registrar **do**?"

New Construction Ahead

Seventeen years later, I'm a little closer to answering that question. Most of the time, the question is posed a little differently. Many of you have heard, "Isn't that something the registrar could do?" Regardless of the "that" being discussed—the issue, challenge, or project—the answer usually is "probably." The skills we acquire, the talents we bring, and the gifts that call us make us uniquely fitted for this work. This career isn't for everyone. You have to seek order but be comfortable without it. You have to love the details but understand you may not get them all. You have to respect the rules but know all the ways around them. We are the doers, the worker bees, the ones with our sleeves rolled up. Put me in, coach! Nearly every registrar I have met can say, "I bet we can figure that out," regardless of the challenge. Sure, we bump into DOE regulations or FERPA, or faculty policies, but no one is better situated to figure out how to fix it, solve it, or work around it than we are. The maddening thing about being in college administration is the landscape is ever-changing. It is like a permanent "under construction" sign posted at the door to our campuses. There is an obstacle around every corner, a new issue to face, a problem to solve. But we are up for it. Registrars rarely have a straight path to this work of doing. It finds us, wherever we are hiding, in the corners of higher education. It beckons us. So we crawl out from the financial aid office, our faculty offices, residential life, or the locker room, and we seek it. We find it absolutely fascinating rather than being frustrated with the never-ending challenges our communities present to us. Speed bumps, detours, and all.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Denise Ellis
Registrar

No one grows up thinking, "I'm going to be a registrar someday," so it does make you wonder how people find their place in the registrar's office. As an undergraduate student at the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK), I applied for on-campus employment during summer orientation. I knew I needed to work while going to school for gas and pizza money. Who knew this first job would put me on the registrar's path?

I landed a job in the student union office, providing secretarial support for the union director. The director oversaw student activities, student congress, room reservations, and management of businesses that rented space in the union. During my time at UNK, I also worked as a resident assistant (RA) and volunteered with student activities and orientation. These opportunities exposed me to the field of student affairs.

After graduation, with my new degree in organizational communication, I went to work as an administrative assistant in the marketing department at a bank in downtown Omaha. I coordinated advertising efforts for the state, donation requests from area nonprofit organizations, and the United Way annual drive. This position was what I thought I wanted to do “when I grew up.” After a year, I grew restless and was unhappy with the formal, suit-wearing atmosphere at the bank. Around this same time, I attended a graduation ceremony for my best friend at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). While looking through the graduation program, I saw students getting degrees in counseling and specializing in student affairs. I went home after that ceremony and told my husband, “That’s what I want to do; I’m going back to school.”

In August, I started my master’s program at UNO and began looking for employment in *any job* related to student affairs. I interviewed for many positions until one became available titled “articulation assistant/academic advisor” at Metropolitan Community College (MCC) in Omaha. I remember looking up the word “articulation” in the dictionary to see what the job was about, but it was not helpful. So even though I wasn’t sure what I was applying for, I knew I had to get my foot in the door.

Miraculously, after an intimidating group interview, I was selected for this position, even though I hadn’t articulated myself. During my seven years at MCC, my role evolved from articulation assistant to articulation coordinator, and then special projects were added, including managing learning communities and orientation. During this time, I graduated from UNO with my master’s and decided I wanted to find an area that had career advancement opportunities. While I had not worked in a registrar’s office, I completed many course reviews for articulation agreements. This skill aligned well with the associate registrar position at Doane University, where I went next. Half of my work was reviewing transcripts for transfer students, my MCC job in reverse. It also helped that MCC and Doane used the same student information system, so I knew the basics for data entry. When I interviewed for the associate position, the HR manager had told me the current Doane registrar would be retiring in the next few years, so if things worked out well, I would have the opportunity to move up. It was the career ladder I was looking for! Things worked out, and when the previous registrar retired, I interviewed for, and received, the registrar position I have now been in for 15 years. Who knew the need for gas and pizza money at 18 would prepare me for what I wanted to be when I grew up!



A Day in the Life
Mary W. Kincannon
University Registrar

My day begins early because I relish the quiet time in the office before the rest of the staff starts arriving and because I can get more accomplished when no one else is here. The early arrival is just one of few constants in my day-to-day work life. Another consistent fact is that no two days are ever alike. Yes, there are repetitive tasks – the activities that occur every term at the beginning, middle, or end of the semester, such as creating the class schedule, assisting students with enrollment, posting transfer credit, and posting grades. But it is the interactions with our students, staff, faculty, alumni, and parents that ensure there is a great variety to our days. Learning to *listen* to our visitors and callers, or read office emails *carefully*, is an essential skill set. As a registrar, you can

attempt to plan your day with the tasks you hope to accomplish, but the reality is that a call from the provost or a dean can send your day in a very different direction.

To be successful in the registrar's office requires the office staff to embrace the role of an educator. We need to teach students how to navigate the records system to add and drop classes or find degree requirements. Departmental staff must learn how to use the tools provided to them. Advisors and instructors need to know a different set of tools. Then there are the parents who must understand institutional policies. Sharing this information falls to the registrar and staff. Patience and good communication skills are always a must, along with a willingness to work with people.

A day as a registrar would be incomplete without meetings – either virtual or in person. There were days early in the pandemic when one meeting ended just to log in to the next one. Five hours meant five meetings, with different tasks to complete from each meeting. Some meetings directly relate to your office responsibilities; for other meetings, you are included because of your role on campus. Regardless of the focus of the meeting, all meetings take time out of the day.

The registrar is uniquely positioned on campus to build and maintain strong relationships; these relationships are critical for a registrar to be successful. The registrar works with many people in many different capacities from all over campus – academic affairs, admissions, student affairs, financial services, advising, IT, and many others. A successful registrar will cultivate and appreciate these campus relationships; broadening his or her network makes it possible to tap those resources when assisting students, instructors, and others trying to resolve an issue. As a unit head or director, the registrar also serves as coach, mentor, counselor, and, yes, sometimes a referee. A registrar's office staff works hard; it is a team or a family, and, as with any family, disagreements can arise. Resolving personnel issues quickly is essential but time-consuming. The principle to remember is the success of the registrar's office is not determined solely by the efforts of the registrar but by how well the office functions and how well information is shared. A dysfunctional office does not serve the campus community well. By the end of the day, frequently well after 5:00 pm, as I review the day, I hope I have served my community to the best of my ability, that I have provided wise counsel and compassionate assistance to whoever has come my way and that I am viewed as a true resource on campus.



My Path to the Registrar's Office
Sheila Jurnak
Registrar

In many ways, my path to the registrar's office has been nontraditional. I joined the Army after high school, then served as a Department of the Army civilian in the National Guard in the Inspector General's Office. My responsibilities included investigating and resolving complaints based on evidence, policy, regulation, and law. It's an odd starting point to a tour of duty as the registrar at the university level, but I believe that's where it began.

When my military spouse retired, I got a job as the associate registrar at a private six-12 school. I thrived in that educational atmosphere. My communications were primarily with faculty and parents. During my time there, the school moved from using a home-grown student information system (SIS) to implementing Blackbaud. Being on the implementation team enhanced my basic understanding of the relational database system behind our enrollment. Fueled by the good things education was doing there, I returned to college part-time—26 years after I left. With the encouragement of that community, I earned what I call my 30-year degree, a bachelor of science. In

addition, I taught seventh and eighth graders Microsoft Office, where our registrar shared that the secret to success is staying one day ahead of the students. My practical writing and communication skills were required in my job, but I also loved writing – especially poetry—and that matured in that setting. I introduced the concept of the poetry slam. It was rewarding deeply to think I was influencing students to love something I loved, and the notion I “made a difference in the life of a child” felt like a continuation of the Army value of “selfless service.”

Circumstances changed. I moved on to become the associate registrar at a small public college that has since closed its doors. Our registrar’s office was a staff of two. With my military background, I proposed that the school participate in the Yellow Ribbon program. The registrar, provost, and president agreed, and we signed on for the principles of excellence and the Department of Defense (DoD) Voluntary Education Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (DoDMOU). Next, I became the school certifying official. This school used Jenzabar for its SIS. Our processing of adds and drops was paper-based. Waitlists were manual. I had face-to-face interaction with students and communicated with them daily by email.

Faculty trusted that if I said I would have something done, it would get done. It was a lot, but I still wanted more. I asked for the opportunity to work in the IT department to keep my hand in on the technology side of the house. The provost agreed, and I split my time between the registrar and IT. My responsibilities on the IT side included report writing and assisting with the active directory and on the registrar side, setting our schedule for enrollment reporting to the National Student Clearinghouse, and working on the enrollment error reports. I attended regional and annual user-group meetings, which further developed my understanding of the SIS and allowed professional development and networking. During this time, I earned an MFA in creative writing while sharpening the basic writing skills I had used in the Army, starting with the philosophy of KISS - “keep it simple, stupid.” When our school implemented mobile registration, I created a series of video tutorials that walked students and faculty/advisors through the registration process. I cherished the idea that I was influencing students with my “how can I be of assistance” greeting to them and my sincere belief that by finishing their education, they were improving themselves and their families and communities. They were empowered to go out and make the world a better place.

Yet again, circumstances changed. I wanted more. I began to explore opportunities outside my region – outside my state – outside my comfort zone. Then one day, I took a call at home. The caller identified himself as “Alex.” I thought he sounded young, and I would have bet he was going to solicit me to buy something. So I said in my best registrar’s office voice, “This is Sheila. How can I help you today, Alex?” As it turned out, he was the registrar at the University of New Mexico, calling me to set up an interview for the position of associate registrar for records and registration!

I learned a great deal from Alex Gonzalez. He was an alumnus of UNM and a champion of the underserved. We had weekly one-on-ones. I kept a running list of things to ask him, and he deepened my understanding of the workings of a university system instead of the small college from which I came. I was involved in the testing process as we partnered with a new transcript provider, underwent software upgrades, added an academic partnership, worked with local business partners, and certified our eligible athletes as well as our graduates. I served as a backup for him at leadership and operations meetings, took over FERPA training, and fielded as many troubleshooting calls as possible to free him for the meetings and decision-making that comes with the registrar position. He was a great leader who exemplified selfless service, representing students and the institution both internally and externally, even at the state and national levels. Alongside our community, I mourned him when he died unexpectedly.

I leapt further into the field as interim registrar, picking up and being led into the details of all the things Alex hadn’t shared – from inventory and budget and changing the signature block on transcript paper to subpoenas and getting access to, and taking responsibility for, grade entry on GoArmyEd. I had to create and get faculty approval for an updated 10-year academic calendar and learn to add the approved courses for dual and concurrently enrolled high school students. These were the tip of an iceberg. One month I was canceling the committee meeting responsible for considering requests for exceptions to policy because Alex couldn’t be there. The following month, I was facilitating it. I engaged at a new level with constituencies internal and external to the university, participated in policy discussions resulting in changing the institution’s FERPA directory information categories, and

implemented the use of a preferred first name. It was terrifying and exhilarating. For help, I reached out to listservs, PTAC, AACRAO, NMACRAO, and my knowledgeable colleagues and fellow registrars.

I will be starting my third official year as the registrar this fall, with five years in the job, if you include my tour as interim. In that time, we have outsourced diploma production, upgraded to self-service registration, implemented a schedule planner, and gone mostly electronic with our forms and processes. I have utilized networking and collaboration, leaned on my colleagues' support and resources, and learned to pivot and move on. My path has been nontraditional, but some things never change. I still say, "How can I help?" I still believe what I do makes a difference in a child's life – after all, we are all somebody's child. I still believe it's not about the "expensive piece of paper," one student said to me. It's about taking the education – whether it's one course or a Ph.D. – and improving oneself or one's community and one's world. Sometimes I smile in the hope that Alex might think I am doing a good job.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Joni Krueger, M.S.
Registrar, Associate Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies

My higher education career began during my senior year at Calvin College (now University) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I was a business and psychology double major. My human resources internship was nothing like I had expected it to be. After a courageous discussion with my advisor, I changed my internship to work in the admissions office. A part-time person was going on maternity leave, and I was hired to cover her responsibilities. These included finding alumni to cover college fairs that the full-time admissions counselors could not get to and arranging for on-campus housing for the overnight visits. I was hooked.

My parents moved to South Dakota while I was a student, so during spring break, I set up conversations with the head of admissions at the two colleges in the town where my parents lived. I graduated from Calvin with no clue about what I was going to do. Luckily, in June of that year, just a few short weeks after moving to a town in South Dakota I had never lived in, the vice president for enrollment at Augustana College reached out to me as a follow up to our conversation over spring break to let me know a job was available! After interviewing, I was fortunate enough to be hired for the position.

Working with students and their parents to help determine if Augustana was a good fit was very rewarding. In addition, I was able to spend the next five years traveling regionally - and even internationally with a group of students for a spring break course.

Deciding to leave Augustana was not easy, but the opportunity to serve as the director of retention and academic advising at the University of Sioux Falls was too good of an opportunity to pass up. It felt like a natural next step for me. I could work with students in the next stages of their academic journey—seeing them through the struggles of transitioning from high school to college, helping them see how they could still accomplish their goals. In this role, I had the opportunity to work with one of the best mentors I could have asked for, Phyllis Thompson, the registrar. She encouraged me to get involved with UMACRAO and even took me with her to AACRAO in Las Vegas!

A day or two into the conference in Las Vegas, Phyllis and I were enjoying the buffet dinner at the Luxor one evening when she said to me, "You will be a registrar someday; I just know it!" I sort of laughed at her. Before

meeting Phyllis, I honestly didn't even really know what a registrar was, let alone what one did, and I certainly didn't major in "registrar" in college!

A short time later, due to a family change, I found myself in Vermillion, South Dakota and was lucky enough to be offered a position in the registrar's office as a degree auditor at the University of South Dakota. I jumped at the chance to work in the office Phyllis had said would be great for me. It provided me the opportunity to meet and work with another mentor Carmen Howard. Carmen was an inspiration. She was hard-working, kind, yet firm. She was the queen of documentation; "start from step stupid," she would say. To this day, I encourage my staff to document every single process from start to finish, use that documentation, and update it regularly. Sadly, Carmen left us too soon. Cancer was probably the only thing that could ever win a battle with that strong, small force of a woman! Before she got sick, I was promoted to the assistant registrar.

Then the opportunity to return to Augustana as the registrar became available. I finished my master's degree at USD and have been serving as the registrar since 2006. During that time, my job had changed so much due to technology and innovation that hardly anything looked the same as when I started. Yet, we roll with the changes and try to innovate and improve daily.

I am thankful for the collaboration I've had with friends from around UMACRAO and the chance to serve in leadership in this amazing organization. I also do not think I could do my job today if not for AACRAO and all I have learned from attending conferences and gathering contact information from others. They have taught me how to navigate the ever-changing landscape of the registrar's world.

Little did I know my internship 25 years ago would lead to a career in higher education, a passion for helping students find the right fit—which institution to attend and which programs to complete—and a group of friends and colleagues whom I treasure. That decision to switch internships was indeed life-changing, and I am thankful every day for the opportunity I had to learn about a career in higher education during my senior-year internship.



Kenyon College

My Path to the Registrar Position
Ellen Harbourt
Registrar

Studying journalism in college prepared me for the work of a registrar because I learned how to look at situations from multiple angles, ask questions, follow up, and care about the details. My first job in higher education was as a temporary operator in the Ohio University telecommunications office. That assignment was followed by a stint in accounts payable and one in the admissions office before being hired to be a member of the temporary employment agency staff.

When the temporary employment agency decided to convert our paper-file system to a database, I was assigned to research systems. I spent six months learning about systems explicitly written to support the industry and then made a recommendation. Once the agency chose the system, I implemented the system, wrote documentation, and trained others in the office how to use the system.

My husband and I moved to a new town a few months later. I registered with the local temporary employment agency while applying for jobs in the area. After a couple of short-term administrative-assistant assignments, I was assigned to do data entry for the Kenyon College conversion from their old SIS (Poise) to the new system (Banner). I worked in accounting, residential life, and the registrar's office before the Y2K cliff arrived.

After meeting with me, seeing my resume, and answering the many questions I asked about Banner, the associate registrar insisted they create a position for me to lead the implementation for the office. During the 10 months in that position, I learned what processes were based on the limitations of the old system and which were based on policy. At the end of that temporary position, I was offered the position of assistant registrar. With the help of the IT staff, I completed the implementation, wrote documentation, and learned how to write standard query language (SQL) to pull information from the system.

The associate registrar took me under her wing; she was determined to share her knowledge with me before she retired in two years. At her retirement, I was promoted to associate registrar. I helped create new procedures and had learned much about the history of policies at the college.

Within a year, the registrar was asked to serve as an interim associate provost, and I was offered the position of acting registrar. The following spring, I was named as the registrar, a position I still hold.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Debra Zavatkay, Ed. D.
Registrar

My path to becoming a registrar was much like my path to completing higher education – nontraditional and perhaps a bit unconventional (although the path to becoming a registrar is often not traditional or conventional). I doubt there is a person anywhere who, as a child, ever said, “When I grow up I want to be a college registrar.” I, for one, certainly have never said that. I ended up a registrar by accident, as well as by luck.

My path into higher education and becoming a registrar began at the same place but at different times in my life – at my local community college. Upon completing high school, I enrolled at my local community college as a business administration major and not as a psychology major as I had planned. Because my mother was paying for my tuition, she felt it was her right to dictate my major. Her stance was that no matter what field I ultimately chose, one always needs a business background to be successful. I was upset about this then, but it turned out my mother was right, as usual (but please don’t tell her that)! My business background has been valuable to me as a college registrar.

While attending my local community college, I worked as a student worker in the dean’s office. After graduating, I went to work full time in a law office as a legal assistant for nearly five years. I worked on my bachelor’s degree in psychology part time at night. At the end of those five years, I had gotten married and was lucky enough to be in a position where I no longer needed to work full time. I quit my full-time job to pursue my bachelor’s degree full time and only work a part-time job.

There was a job opening at the same local community college I graduated from, working part time in the evenings reporting to the academic dean. I was one of many candidates for this job, but I believe what ultimately helped land me the job was the academic dean’s assistant remembered me as a student worker and asked my former boss about me. I was selected for the position of evening assistant. I held the job for the next 7 years, during which time I graduated with my bachelor’s in psychology, began working on my master’s degree in psychology, and had two children.

After those seven years, I was nearing completion of my master's degree; my children were nearing school age; and it was time for me to find a full-time job. I gave a month's notice to my community college. Around the same time I gave that notice, our state gave a "golden handshake" to current state employees and both the registrar and her secretary planned to retire. Roughly a week after giving my notice, our college's president called me into her office. Believe me, this was equally as nerve-racking as being called into the principal's office as a child. I was scared!

Turns out, I was scared for no reason. Instead, the president said to me, "I know you are nearly finished with your master's degree, and I know you gave your notice. I think it's time for you to get a real job." I jokingly asked her if she had been talking to my husband because just the day before, he said something very similar to me. She laughed and said no, but she had a proposition for me. She asked me how I would feel about taking on the role of the registrar on an interim basis. She couldn't appoint a permanent registrar because she and the academic dean were retiring, so those positions had to be filled first. The new academic dean would be in charge of hiring the permanent registrar.

She also felt this would give me time to complete my master's degree (a requirement for the job) while gaining valuable experience that would likely help me land the job permanently. I served as interim registrar for two years, during which time I completed my master's degree in psychology, the new president and academic dean were hired, and the search for a permanent registrar was conducted. I was chosen for the position and have held the same job for more than 18 years now. In 2014, I completed my doctorate in educational leadership.

I am heavily involved in our state. I serve as a co-chair of the Connecticut Community College Registrars' Council and as past-president of the Connecticut Association of Collegiate Registrars. I also remain an active member of AACRAO and currently serve on the Public Policy Advisory Group and attended AACRAO's Annual Hill Day in 2019. I will be attending the virtual Hill Day this year as well. So while my path to becoming a registrar was nontraditional, it has been the most rewarding 18 years of my career. I put my education in business, psychology, and educational leadership to use every day.



My Path to the Registrar Position
Linda Drexel
University Registrar

Does anyone plan to be a university registrar? I don't remember anyone advising me on higher education careers or "registrar" coming up on my interest inventory results! I think most people happen upon it, build up to it, default into it . . . that's what happened with me.

I majored in business because my dad said, "You can't go wrong with business." I focused on human resources because I like people. I had not researched the major nor put great thought into career options. Despite my lackadaisical approach, I found my passion for higher education while in college in a very practical way.

I worked nearly full-time while going to school, so I approached my college advisor about getting credit for my work experience. He advised me about the cooperative education program. I received nine credits and an appreciation for how work and higher education are intertwined.

Upon graduation, Camden County College (CCC) had a grant position available for a job developer for the Cooperative Education program, which entailed finding jobs for students related to their majors. How perfect! This was human resource-related, but it did not include employee handbooks, benefits, or employee appraisals. It was working in higher education helping students have the same great experience I had!

This entry into higher education led to various positions at Camden County College as a grant manager, advisor, and director of the testing center. Then there was a five-year interlude in Colorado where I was the assistant to the VP of academic affairs. I returned to CCC in marketing, academic affairs, and ultimately, the assistant dean of enrollment services where I supervised the registrar's office, among others.

When the position of university registrar was posted at Rowan University, I felt like it was the culmination of all of the skills I'd honed throughout my career in higher education. But it was still terrifying because I had never actually worked IN the registrar's office. The registrar is responsible for all student records, FERPA, registration processes, graduation, transfer credit, implementation of curriculum changes in Banner and Degree Works, and so much more. It's the hub of the university! Did I have the knowledge and experience to do it well?

I asked the only person I trusted to tell me the truth, the truly iconic 40-plus-year veteran registrar at CCC, Bunny Kohl. (I hope you had the pleasure of knowing her before she retired in 2020!). Bunny had complete confidence I would be successful. She knew my work ethic, my leadership style, and my technological skills. She felt my advising background would bring a unique perspective to this position, along with my knowledge of testing and our information system. I took the plunge!

It has been two and a half years and it is, hands down, the most fulfilling job I've ever had. I love the variety of responsibilities, the many puzzles that must be solved, the dedicated professionals with whom I work, the ability to streamline processes, and the real impact we make on students' lives. Lessons learned along the way for those considering the profession include the following:

- Don't be afraid to take a risk. Take jobs that will stretch you. You should never be proficient at everything on a job posting.
- Make collaboration your hallmark. Be known as a team player, approachable, and reasonable when a situation is sticky and even when it's not.
- Expand your territory. Serve on committees, volunteer at events, and get out of your office. Build relationships across the institution. You'll grow your knowledge of the college or university and expand your network.



THE UNIVERSITY
OF ARIZONA

A Day in the Life
Alex Underwood
Registrar

One of the things I love most about my role is the challenging and varied nature of the work. I am also fortunate to receive full support from university leadership as I realize my vision for how the office of the registrar can best serve the institution.

Although my duties pull me in many directions, I try to spend about half of each day meeting with my team to coordinate our goals and confirm we are making progress toward improving the student experience. In a perfect world, I would dedicate more of my day to *thinking time* or *project time*. *Still*, I continue to be grateful for this opportunity and the colleagues I work with to support our students and the university's land grant mission. Here's how a recent day looked for me.

July 1, 2021 – Thursday

6 a.m.: **Morning routine** | Goal: Wake up, check emails to make sure there are no bombshells when I get to the office, review my calendar for the day, find matching socks.

7 a.m.: **Commute to campus** | Goal: Get Starbucks, drop dogs at daycare, sing loudly in the car.

7:30 a.m.: **Self-work time** | Goal: Respond to emails and ensure all deliverables for today's meetings are complete.

8:30 a.m.: **Deliver something to a team member across campus** | On the way, run into the provost's chief of staff who inquires about a diploma complaint in which a student's family member called the president's office.

9-10:20 a.m.: **Weekly registrar management team meeting** | *Participants: senior associate registrar, two associate registrars and three assistant registrars* | Goals: Weekly meeting to align our management team, approve and prioritize work for the office. Discussion points include approving flexible work arrangements submitted in line with the framework our office designed for our staff and planning the next steps for filing the appropriate paperwork with HR.

10:30-11:30 a.m.: **Twice-weekly retention meeting** | *Participants: provost, senior vice provost academic affairs, vice provost undergraduate education, vice provost student success & retention innovation (SSRI), AVP SSRI, associate director SSRI strategy, manager student data university analytics and institutional research (UAIR), AVP diversity and inclusion, vice president enrollment management, executive director scholarship and financial aid, two faculty members.* | Goals: Identify strategies and roadblocks for our retention efforts approaching fall 2021.

11:30-11:50 a.m.: **Introduction meeting with new team member** | Goal: Welcome new team member to our office, ensure they have everything they needed to be successful during their first week on the job.

12-1 p.m.: **Sex/gender pronoun leads** | *Participants: senior project director university initiatives, AVP UAIR, chief privacy officer, director HR workforce systems, assistant director UAIR, manager student information system, director LGBTQ Affairs* | Goal: Make progress with workgroup leads to implement gender information for students and employees, pronouns for employees, and ensure appropriate use and access to sex for reporting information and security of student information.

1-1:15 p.m.: **Eat!** | Goal: Not being cranky in my afternoon meetings.

1:15-2 p.m.: **Digital wallet discussion** | *Participants: AVP SSRI, director operations and strategic initiative for provost office, AVP auxiliary services, executive director student unions, executive director parking and transportation, associate director bookstore IT, associate director student union IT* | Goal: Discuss with auxiliary services division an initiative to create a rewards program that would incentivize desired student behaviors.

2-2:45 p.m.: **Transparent advising records** | *Participants: provost, senior vice provost academic affairs, VP undergraduate education, VP SSRI, chief technology officer* | Goals: Identify structure for broad and direct student access to advising notes and plans.

3-3:50 p.m.: **Weekly check-in with associate registrar for graduation, records, & certifications** | Goal: Sync with AR. Discussion points include a review of FERPA training content and coordination with professional college registrar functions.

4-4:50 p.m.: **Military-connected benefits and certifications (MCBC) coordination** | *Participants: associate registrar, senior coordinator MCBC* | Goal: Ensure unit leader and management are aligned. Discussion points include an issue with the Army tuition assistance process and hiring new staff members.

5-5:45 p.m.: **Closing work** | Goal: Respond to emails, figure out what I missed during meetings.

5:45 p.m.: **Commute home** | Goal: Pick up dogs, unwind, perfect vocal run from the morning.

6:15-7 p.m.: **Finish must-dos** | Goal: Work to finish publishing PACRAO conference information.

7-9:30 p.m.: **Evening Routine** | Goal: Eat, wine, and unwind, chat with husband, catch up on TV.

Issues/things worked on during the day when I was *definitely paying attention* in meetings:

- Work to launch the registration and associate website for the PACRAO 2021 conference in Tucson (I am the local arrangement chair); coordinate with the president and the programming chair on details/updating website.
- Resolve a plan around undergraduate honors convocation coordination because it has been two years, and many of the previous players on campus are no longer with the university.
- Provide feedback/guidance to the institutional review board/human subjects protection program about access for a principal investigator who has a D2L (learning management) course site and notifications necessary to protect student privacy.
- Resolve issues around an event space requested for one of our centrally scheduled classrooms.

A Day in the Life
Tracy Jackson
Law School Registrar

Earning the position of Law School Registrar was truly one of the happiest moments in my career. I had so many dreams and ideas of how to make the office run more efficiently. It's almost five years later, and I have absolutely no regrets. To reflect on a day in life depends on the day and the semester I am reminiscing about. There are so many pivotal moments in this role that have significance in the lives of my students, the faculty, and staff. However, the day that shines the greatest light for me is the day of commencement.

Commencement, for many, is a couple of hours on a particular day in the year. In my role, it is the culmination of three years with a class who either doubted themselves or thought entirely too much of themselves and an intense five months of preparation for the bells and whistles of that coveted day to appear seamless and perfect. We celebrate one commencement each academic year, and planning begins in December for the May celebration. The month of January holds no dull moments as I work on getting speaker info while receiving and processing fall grades (being mindful of the curve, of course). I am also managing my staff as they set up online registration for our week of spring drop/add and finalizing degree audits with updated fall course completion for the 3L class, so they know what they need to do to complete in May. They can make any adjustments to their schedule during drop/add to meet the 89-hour mark in their final semester.

With all of the important needs that each day holds, I still manage to attend my monthly senior staff, registrar, and faculty meetings. In addition to those meetings, I am privileged to serve as the advisor for BLSA. I am a member of the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council with the university and the Student Advisory Committee with the university, as well as serving on a few advisory committees at the law school. While meetings with these groups are typically planned, students' needs don't necessarily subscribe to the same scheduling. On any given day, even while working on the commencement script, the line of march, preparing the diploma order (with absolutely no errors), making sure rental regalia is in timely, or touching bases with the university organist, students may need me. During these times, my office sofa becomes their place of serenity, and my ears, tissues, and arms (if needed) are available to them.

The morning of commencement has so many behind-the-scenes details (refreshments for grads and the platform party room, flowers, seating, programs, correct cap/gown/hood, holding the hand of our speaker, and so). However, when the organist looks for me to signal when he is to begin playing, and the marshal and graduates listen for the music and watch for my cue to begin the processional, nothing else matters. Although commencement is a day in the life, there's so much more to the day than those two hours the world sees in person and via live stream. It always fascinates me how little one thinks about the amount of effort, time, and prayer that goes into those few hours. It is incredibly challenging to speak to a day in the life of a law school registrar because so much of what one sees on any given day is in preparation for a new day. It would be more fitting to speak about an event in the life because there are countless events that lead up to any single eight-, 10- or 12-hour office day of a registrar. And through it all, I am here for every single moment in every single one of those days. I wouldn't change a thing.



My Path to Becoming a Registrar
Susan Weisman
Registrar

What do you want to be when you grow up? FIRE FIGHTER! POLICE OFFICER! TEACHER! DOCTOR! NURSE! REPORTER! Registrar? Few young people (unfortunately) ever consider higher education administration as a career path. Even fewer think about becoming a registrar. As with many of my colleagues, my road to leading the Office of the Registrar at St. Francis College was not a straight one. I have worked as an editor of a financial newsletter, reported for a newspaper in Westchester, New York, and managed alumnae records at a women's college prior to working as a registrar.

After graduating with a journalism and history degree, I worked as a crime reporter, which was at times exciting but not exactly fulfilling. A friend of mine was working at Barnard College at the time and let me know of a job opening for an administrative assistant. I had the idea I could work at the college and take advantage of benefits, such as tuition remission. I wanted to explore options.

Barnard College was an amazing place to work, and while I had a great editor at the newspaper, the guidance I have received in higher education has been amazing. My co-workers have supported, challenged, and pushed me, beginning at Barnard and continuing to my current position. Although I didn't have a significant information technology background, so much was happening in the early 1990s with technology, and it was transforming everything. With my background using word-processing programs, I was able to work closely with alumnae officers and help them format their class newsletters. One alumna gave me her version of a word processor: a personalized pencil. Using the college's alumnae database, I set up events in the database, tracked data on alumnae, and developed reports, among other projects. I followed through on my idea to take classes, but the more I explored and saw the world changing around me, the more my career goals evolved. I decided to pursue a master's degree in information technology to pursue a career in database management. My mentors at Barnard provided so much more than a paycheck. Irma Moore, the director of Alumnae Affairs, had amazing class, patience, and knowledge. Martha Valerio, my predecessor in Alumnae Affairs, helped me learn the ropes technically, and more than once, as our career path coincided for some time. And Barbara Lewis, the director of Advancement Services, pushed me to widen my career outlook and suggested I look into a registrar position. While I was not ready to make a move, the data I managed as the manager of alumnae records set the stage. I loved working in higher education administration because I believe in the mission of higher education and being the custodian of the alumnae data was greatly satisfying.

Drawing on my background in communications and data management, I altered my career. At this point, I was ready to make a move to the office of the registrar. Judith Ehren, the registrar at New York Medical College (NYMC), hired me as associate registrar. Ms. Ehren was looking for an individual with higher education and information systems expertise because the college had gone through an update in its student information system. Having decades of experience at multiple institutions across the country, she was able to teach me the world of the registrar's office. As a result, I was immersed in the world of data, scheduling, grading, degree audits, and graduation requirement verification for the three graduate schools at NYMC.

From NYMC, I went to St. Francis College (SFC), an undergraduate, private college in Brooklyn, New York. There I met another exceptional mentor, Ms. Roxanne Persaud, who is now a state senator in New York. In addition to all of the standard registrar duties, Ms. Persaud continually led initiatives to develop the staff members in the registrar's office and increase the use of technology at SFC, both of which I continue today. Again, I am lucky to have excellent co-workers at SFC, both within my office and throughout the administration—too many to name

individually. Fortunately, SFC recognizes and supports personal development, which is essential because so much changes in the way we do our work. Throughout my time in the world of higher education, I've learned that the stewardship of institutional data is fundamental. I always try to keep the individual behind the data in mind. In addition to this fundamental calling is the technology we use. We must continually protect the individual as we work with students, graduates, faculty, and the extended college community. To do this, we must always keep learning.



My Path to the Registrar
Sarah D. Baker
University Registrar

In high school, I was an honor student. But the thought of attending college did not cross my mind because I knew my parents could not afford to send me. When asked by one of our high school guidance counselors if I was attending college, I informed them I did not think I would be because my family could not afford it. She replied, "You are too smart not to attend college." So she started the ball rolling, pulled together the financial aid packet, and informed me of the SAT dates.

My college experience was a family affair. I am a first-generation college student. My mother graduated high school as valedictorian of her class, and my father stopped out in the fourth grade. My parents and four siblings were so excited to be a part of my college life. My experiences were now their experiences. I graduated from Fayetteville State University in May 1984, with a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics, with a concentration in computer science.

Shortly after graduation, I was hired as a temporary data entry operator in the Office of Personnel, now Office of Human Resources. My temporary position turned into a year-long permanent offer as a personnel assistant. In 1987, I was hired as a computer programmer in our Computing Center, now Information Technology and Telecommunication Services (ITTS). I progressed from programmer to analyst to manager to assistant director to director. Between progressions, I earned my master's of science degree in mathematics. While in ITTS and as a program analyst, I worked behind the scenes in every major unit on campus including: Office of Admissions, Office of Financial Aid, Office of the Registrar, University Testing, Alumni Affairs, and Student Accounts. I loved working with the various units, resolving issues, implementing new programs, writing programs, analyzing processes for efficiency, and meeting the needs of the customers.

I felt it was time to move forward and use my skillset in a different arena. The registrar's position became available, and I saw this as my opportunity. I applied, interviewed, and was selected for the position. I absolutely love what I do. It is not just a job I perform every weekday and on some weekends. I love working with students, faculty, staff, and alumni. I get to talk with students, hear their stories, resolve issues, assist in improvements, analyze processes for efficiency and effectiveness, create and enforce policies, work with other units, and make a difference.

Appendix E: Further Words of Wisdom

Included below are all the voluntarily-provided comments, observations, opinions, and advice shared by survey respondents in their original format. They have been lightly edited for spelling and grammar.

The challenges of being a registrar will require a much higher degree of technical proficiency in the future.
Staying informed of compliance and regulatory requirements, as well as good practices, are essential.
Communication
Be wary of the advice of other registrars; lead with a vision; don't micromanage; take care of your staff and don't be stingy with equipment, vacations, morale building, etc.; have high expectations of your staff, make them clear, and hold them accountable; don't be afraid to admit what you don't know or to ask for help; hire the best of the best for every position (it's better to hire someone overqualified and have them leave after a couple of years than a ho-hum lifer); hire people smarter than you and get out of their way; hire people different from you - with different skills, ideas, backgrounds, and experiences; be a 'yes' person and find the other yes people across your institution; don't let yourself be dragged down or constrained by the 'no' people or the limitations they try to put on you; be creative!!!; be honest with your staff and colleagues; show vulnerability; build relationships; don't sweat the small stuff; have fun!
Love what you do.
It's not a path I thought I would be in forever, but I have found it very rewarding working with students to help them achieve their goals. So, if you are looking for a position that doesn't pay much but gives you the ability to assist students, then this is for you!
Build relationships with other Registrars. Look for information to help you be successful at your job.
Connect with your colleagues locally, regionally and nationally. This is the best way to continue to learn when you can discuss topics knowledgeably with a group of people with whom you enjoy talking and spending time.
Accept on-the-job training/learning and personal development every single day even after you have years of experience. Your ability to work well with others, think on your feet, and stand firm on your ethics and integrity will be required. You will be pushed to do things that are not aligned with policy and institutional values. Often this comes from the top down. Document these well for auditors. Institutional and external auditors and accreditors are your partners in keeping the integrity of the academic policy alive and well.
Learn all you can about the work of the Registrar's Office, then uphold policies and your principles with grace, reach out to AACRAO colleagues for advice, stay current, and keep a good sense of humor.
We need to remember to be nimble, open to criticism and advice, and always be looking to the far, far future - not just next year or five-ten years away but decades ahead. Our job is to help our institution not only be here today but 100 years from now. We can't be the NO because a system won't do something but instead the person who identifies the pressure points and thinks of ways to make everything work, regardless of the technology.
Stay the Course!
There is not a school or degree for registrars, but becoming a registrar is a continual learning experience.
Being a Registrar is as much about organization and time management as it is about having high functioning emotional intelligence and understanding how to connect with people. It is a ministry in itself.
Learn as much as you can. Facilitate relationships with other registrars so that you have people to go to for advice and direction. Try and get a mentor. Get on various listservs to ask questions.
Be ready for constant change. Between institutional initiatives and technology changes, there is always something to work on. Developing good relationships with others on campus is essential to making easier progress. Most of all, be authentic, kind, and a safe space for communication; this helps foster those needed relationships.

Things may seem impossible for many reasons, but you as registrar may just be the only person who can achieve the impossible in a world of chaos. Dream big and work hard!
Listen fully, patiently, and completely - then offer options.
1. Focus more on what is in a report and why that report is needed instead of simply accomplishing the task of completing the report. 2. If you must direct a student to another employee/department, tell them to contact you again if they do not get an answer by x date. By the time a student has made it to you, they most likely have been through a few other people/departments. 3. When implementing or assigning something, always follow up to ensure it has been done.
Take advantage of shadowing a Registrar. Spend time asking about the needed skills/training for someone to be an Excellent Registrar. . .not just a good Registrar.
Must have the ability to pivot at any point in time.
Communicate, collaborate and celebrate the little things.
Serving as a registrar at an institution that values you is the best job in the world!
To be a Registrar, you should begin working in a Registrar's Office and work your way up. This is the only way to "learn" how to be a successful Registrar. In a Registrar's Office, you cannot lead successfully or supervise activities that you personally do not know how to perform. Staff will appreciate that you have performed the tasks and will respect your decisions when they feel you have that experience. Communication with your team is also critical, and being transparent to teach and provide any information you can to your staff. Teach them your knowledge.
Be flexible with changes, and have an internal drive to continue to move your institution forward academically and technologically.
Follow our passion in this unique career path that opens a wide array of opportunities to learn and grow in this profession. Collaborating with various entities in the institution makes it an ever-evolving experience of creating opportunities for process improvement utilizing technology. The rewards of this job come from the appreciation of colleagues across divisions and making a difference in our student's lives.
Knowledge of technology is a huge contributor to success. Everything else follows.
Pay attention to detail, document processes, plan and keep processing calendar, find time to appreciate staff both as a whole and individually
Remember that your customers are faculty, staff, and students. Therefore, creative thinking and problem-solving are essential to be successful in this type of position.
Work at a variety of institutions to build a very rich and broad professional and skillful foundation; embrace order, rules, and technology! Strive for fair and equitable academic policies to benefit students.
It can be challenging but also very rewarding. I feel like I make a difference for faculty/staff/students.
Reach out to someone with years of experience when possible. I'm noticing more young registrar's with no experience making common mistakes.
Maintaining compliance within the institution, local and state policies when others are in doubt.
Creating a team built on trust and strong communication is critical so that staff support and respect each other. In addition, interdependence among staff and all relevant departments and offices that the reg office works with is vital to a smooth and efficient running office.
Use the tools and resources available to you through the regional, state and national associations such as AACRAO. Network, and don't be afraid to reach out to your colleagues for guidance and support.
The position of registrar has always been "in flux" regarding responsibilities. Over the past five to 10 years, the definition of a registrar has changed exponentially and will require a malleable understanding of the role of each institution of higher education.

Don't be afraid to advocate for yourself. The registrar is one of the most important positions at an institution and intersects with almost every stakeholder and touches almost every policy. You deserve respect, equitable pay, and resources. Be prepared to fight for them from the beginning.
As in any capacity, hire good, hardworking people who believe in teamwork and supporting each other.
The registrar's career field is very similar yet holds vastly different responsibilities at each institution. For me, this career path pairs everything I love, including student success, project/change management, faculty support, and team leadership. Surround yourself with a great team and always keep the student at the forefront of your mind in everything you do.
A Registrar's Office functions on integrity and availability to assist the community.
The role of the registrar is rapidly evolving into more of a compliance position. Develop and maintain a good working relationship with your financial aid director, internal auditors, and compliance officers/general counsel.
I truly started in an entry-level position and worked my way up to a University Registrar position. I feel it is important to understand all the positions in your area and how they work, even if you do not experience them as one of your positions to get you to the registrar position. In addition, I would advise working at several institutions versus just one to help build the breadth and depth of the position.
Listen, influence, first seek to understand campus partners and students.
Find work-life integration. It is vitally important in order to not burn out.
Embrace change and ask LOTS of questions.
I worked in Admissions and Financial Aid before joining the Registrar's Office. That experience was critical to making me a good registrar as I now understand how the parts must work together.
Managing relationships with faculty and staff is key - bring a collegial/collaborative mindset. Leverage your relationship skills with as much technical training as you can get (database management, SQL, software skills, hardware skills, data files). This is middle management, so don't ever say "no" outright; instead, redirect and collaborate on requests based on the unique insight you can provide as registrar. Work hard. Enjoy the environment. Know that you can have a significant impact on your institution.
The work of the registrar is never done. All you can do is give it your best effort every day, and that has to be enough.
Keep it focused on student success.
Registrars are the hub of an institution. They have more opportunities to see the intersections of various policies and systems than anyone else. They must be prepared to be a resource for anyone and everyone at their institutions.
A wonderful profession that is challenging but so rewarding!!
Learn about reporting (IPEDS, etc.) as early as possible, and do not procrastinate once surveys/reports open.
Know that the Registrar role is extremely varied based on where you work. My registrar responsibilities include traditional student affairs (orientation planning, for example) and a significant amount of admissions work. At other institutions, a registrar may have more technical or IT responsibilities. The registrar title tends to be a catch-all position. I once was asked to create a policy of hanging the graduation photos on the wall simply because I was the registrar! It can be a really fun, varied job. Just know how your employer defines it.
Resource management, especially staff and technology, are a key to continued success. Strive to support student success on your campus. Say "no" to some assignments.
Find yourself a mentor (someone currently in a Registrar position) and learn everything you can from them. The rest will come naturally. Definitely stay up to date with FERPA, and know your programs inside and out.
I urge young colleagues to find the best mentor they can and seek the opportunity to work with them; real-life exposure and access to understand their thinking processes and approaches are invaluable.

The registrar role is involved with multiple departments. Therefore, gaining exposure to academic requirements and the admissions process is beneficial to the role.
Experience as much as you can. The registrar touches every part of the institution.
It is imperative to success to have an interest in growing and developing professionally. Registrars need to be willing and able to find the balance between policy and structure with the flexibility and agility necessary to support academic innovation.
Keep an open mind. Explore all options, and think things through to the end. Try to identify any "gotchas" ahead of time, but know that you will never think of all scenarios. Have a plan written down and accessible to others. Hold others accountable to the plan. Revisit and revise said plan regularly and be willing to shift pathways. Know who you can count on and lean on; reciprocate when possible. In the registrar's office, timing is absolutely everything!
Build relationships across the institution!
Making mistakes makes you human, but learning from your mistakes makes you smart!
Use all the resources you have at your disposal - AACRAO, your regional office, fellow Registrars-and soak in information. Never be afraid to ask the question, "How do I...?" Have been in the field for 18 years, I would have been lost without my colleagues and friendships built in our close-knit field. Registrars are not classically trained at University and College institutions. We all have an interesting story of how we became a Registrar, and the most unique piece is where we started that journey.
It's changing fast. Hang on tight.
This is a challenging and rewarding job. There will always be more work to be done, so remember to pace yourself and be sure to set the proper expectation given the available resources.
Avoid bureaucracy. It is very easy to say no. It is harder to find compliant ways to say yes, but the latter is far more fulfilling. If you do not find service its own reward, this is not the field for you. No one who has not worked in a registrar's office will have an understanding of what you do all day. Get used to it. If you love a job that is different every day, that allows you to work with every member of the campus community, that requires your attention to minute detail within a whole-campus perspective, that stretches your creativity and analytical/problem-solving skills, then this is the BEST job on campus.
Consider a mentor to help open opportunities to a faculty-level position (assistant dean) - or how can a registrar transition to such a level?
The key to success as a Registrar: conduct yourself as if every record will need to be retrieved, every transaction will be audited, and every email you send will be forwarded to your mother.
As you grow into the position, don't be afraid to ask questions. Take stock of what is working well. Once you have the knowledge, and institutional cache, don't be afraid to suggest innovative solutions. Finally, remember higher ed institutions work at very different paces, so what constitutes "innovation" could be different from one school to the next, so enjoy the victories no matter how small they may seem!
A registrar needs to solve problems creatively, influence others, collaborate, face and resolve conflict, stand firm in decisions, take a lot of blame, think systemically, and overall, be gently tough.
The registrar position is demanding and requires a broad base of knowledge and understanding of higher education policies and practices. It is extremely rewarding for those who enjoy the variety of responsibilities, opportunities, and challenges associated with the management of the registrar's office. If the nature of this position does not resonate early, it will likely never be a fit.
Be a good listener and problem solver, and learn how to say someone cannot do what they are asking to do without making them feel like you are saying no, but rather because of institutional policies or system limitations.

Higher education is evolving faster than ever before, and change management is a crucial skill for succeeding in this environment these days. In the past, strict adherence to policy and rigid inflexibility seems to have been defining characteristics of many registrars in the past, but in the current age, those attitudes can drag an institution down. The most important skill that I've developed is recognizing when a policy, procedure, or practice is no longer serving its purpose and proposing alternatives to the administration. As the face of higher education changes, we cannot get stuck in our ways.
The Registrar's Office is unlike any other office on campus in that we service the student for their entire life. It is our office they come to for official transcripts as they move from job to job or seek further education. Therefore, I feel it is vital that the registrar's office prioritize customer service and relationship building. We are the most enduring face of our institution!
If you want a career where every day is different, the registrar's position is perfect for you.
My experience as a registrar so far has been similar to a middle manager. I manage staff and their goals while also managing requests from my Associate Provost. Not having a management background, this realization has helped me better understand my role within the university.
Sign up to the Regist-L. There is a wealth of information. Stay current with laws and policies. Get friendly with your faculty. You will need their support. Don't stress about making system errors. Remember, as long as you are alive, you can fix them. Your Atta boy is knowing you assisted a young person reach their goal and watching them walk across the stage.
Continue to make the job your own, never be afraid of the politics, and even though we might not teach courses, we are educators.
It is a Registrar's responsibility to: ensure the success of the student, create a harmonious melding of policies & procedures congruent with the values of the university, and assist in shaping institutional decisions in ways that serve the core mission of the university.
Don't be afraid to make a change or try a new procedure or process to achieve your goals in life.
Don't be afraid to take on extra duties if you want to move up, but also keep in mind this tends to erode work-life balance. Assume that anything you take on and do well will remain with you.
Be confident in your knowledge, skills, and abilities. There will be individuals who will challenge you on occasion. Also, embrace communication and make yourself readily available and accessible. Collaboration with those outside of the registrar's office will go a long way.
As I look at the registrar's job today, I would say two areas continue to increase in importance: compliance/legal/government affairs and technology management.
It's important to be comfortable in your leadership role and your responsibilities. This means that you may have to say NO a good bit of the time to faculty, your Dean, students, faculty, and other leadership in the university. As long as you are certain of your fiduciary responsibilities as the one in charge of adhering to the Department of Ed, ABA, University, faculty policies and FERPA guidelines, you will be fine. People look to you to be the subject matter expert to prevent audit findings. Take the time to learn what you need to know to keep your university compliant. And in all things, maintain confidentiality, protect your students' data (grades, rank, personal details), and remain kind.
Campus relationships are important to a happy Registrar, and strong proactive communication is key. Prioritize networking with deans, faculty, and administration with the goal that these campus leaders will consider you a trusted colleague to consult on the front-end of strategic planning conversations.
Nobody grows up to be a Registrar; it happens to you. My greatest strength has been bringing up conversions to new data systems and workflow management objectives that bring all offices to their best efficiency in using the system. Much of this is an organizational management focus with a customer service base with information readily available to the academic community.
It's a fantastic opportunity to understand how institutions of higher education run, as well as the student experience from start to finish. Very rewarding.

A registrar's position needs someone who can be collaborative, solution-oriented, and a valued thought leader. It is the quality of your work and the work of your team that will create the reputation of the Office of the Registrar on your campus and lends to the willingness of others to come to you to be part of complex solutions.
Keep your head down; do good work. People eventually notice that they can't do without you. This strategy has served me well.
Today, the Registrar role is more of a project manager role, identifying changing needs and resources and prioritizing the vast number of projects currently in the hopper. That's what makes working in higher education great...no day is ever the same.
Rather than "no," always try to get to "yes, if...". And get to know as many people on campus as possible BEFORE you need to ask them for something.
Stay strong in your ability to keep things in perspective, be data-driven in your approach, embrace technology and the work it can do for us, and laugh often.
The ability to remain flexible and to be able to work with different individuals from different backgrounds, opinions, perspectives, and preferences is key not only to one's success but also to a satisfying career.
Change management, adaptation, and creative thinking are more important than you may realize. Cultivate opportunities to observe senior leaders who exhibit these skills and characteristics.
As a Registrar, you must be adaptable to change and not afraid of making a tough decision.
Be open to opportunities. I don't know anyone who went to school to be a Registrar!
Registrar is directly connected to supporting the academic endeavor of the university; mostly, in a "behind-the-scenes" capacity. So, it can be very rewarding as you work with many areas of the university, juggling many overlapping cycles and projects. But likely, you will be unnoticed if you do things well.
The role of the registrar is a varied one, where something is continually learned. Your work is never done, but the rewarding part is seeing the students attain their academic goals and graduate! While high energy and a lot of work, the commencement ceremonies are very fulfilling and glorious days making it all worth it! While I do not achieve this like I should, I try to maintain an appropriate work/life balance while serving in this role.
Be able to work with and understand different personality types. Do not take actions/reactions/decisions personally. Focus on student success.
Learn to write data mining queries in SQL and/or other code and plan on reporting enrollment data in ever-changing forms to multiple agencies.
Do your best to develop a network of those who have experience and best practices.
You have to maintain a sense of humor.
Be consistent and fair to students in policy development and enforcement.
The work and role of the registrar continue to evolve in higher education. It is important for those seeking a career in this area to be flexible in how operations are managed yet maintain integrity for the work being done.
Be open to change, and don't be afraid to delegate. Develop strong relationships with faculty and administrators.
Get involved/stay involved with AACRAO! By far the best professional organization that I have been a part of.
Take the time to meet your campus colleagues and constituents. Listen closely and carefully to their concerns. Be a campus partner. And through it all, remain calm.
Believe in yourself, be open to ideas, be strong in your knowledge, listen, keep improving your skills
I love being a registrar, but it is not a position for the faint of heart!
Be aware of our many roles as registrars and stay connected with your peers for support.
Allow academic integrity to guide your decisions and practices.
Get involved with your regional registrar's associations and with AACRAO. You will find the networking and professional development opportunities to be invaluable in your career growth. And most importantly, have fun! Maintaining a positive, can-do attitude will prepare you to go far in this wonderful profession.

Being a registrar is a challenge in a new way every day. It is a rewarding career path with challenges in technology, personnel management, students, and change management.
Being a Registrar is a role in which your skills in problem-solving are key to your success. The adaptation of this role and its associated responsibilities ensures that those who embark on such a journey are in for what some could consider a great journey. Believe in yourself and believe in the knowledge and experience that you bring to your institution. That's why they hired you!
Develop relationships with your peers at other institutions! Use state and AACRAO resources.
Get to know other registrars in your city/area; they are a great resource--or someone you can commiserate with.
The job of the university registrar chooses YOU.
While the registrar position is not often someone knows of or aspires to, it can be extremely rewarding, and responsibilities can vary widely between institutions.
Make connections/network with professional development organizations like AACRAO- or your regional CRAO. It really makes a world of difference both professionally & personally.
It is ok to figure things out as you go along. You don't need to have all the answers at the outset. Ask questions - of colleagues, on the listservs, at meetings. Know that you will always have a to-do list ---you may cross things off, but other things will always be added. It is ok. It is the nature of our work. It does not mean that you are doing a bad job. Be open-minded, learn things --it is ok to change your mind.
I found that having good relationships with my peers outside of my office has been a key to the success of my department.
Stay true to who you are. Understand you have to make tough calls, but if that is for the betterment of your staff and/or the institution as a whole, you need to stand by that decision even if it is unpopular with some. If you gain the respect of others, that is what is most important, not being the most loved staff member.
Even if not currently in a Registrar's office or related role, seek out mentorship from those who are. I was helped to move from Admissions to Registrar by a mentor who was willing to meet with me regularly when I wasn't part of the office.
Find ways to connect with other Registrars. Being able to share best practices and have others who understand your job is invaluable.
Be curious - assess the current processes and make them better. Just because it has been done a certain way for a long time doesn't mean it is the best nor most efficient way.
Love what you do, and do it with a smile!
The Registrar position is evolving toward data and business analytics. This is a skill set that is very valuable and needed in the profession.
The registrar career path is a good choice for those with a deep respect for higher education and the change it can bring to students and the communities they take that education back out into. It is a commitment to service and the higher good. It requires the ability to troubleshoot and network, to administer and influence policy. It benefits from understanding and leveraging technology. It is future-oriented in the time of now.
I started out working in the Admissions Office, which I think was a great foundation for moving on to the Registrar's Office.
Ensure you have a good relationship with your supervisor. A relationship that lends itself to honest communication, feedback, and the ability to set boundaries to avoid burnout.
Your team needs you to bring your best self to work, not your stressed self.
It can be very stressful but also quite satisfying. Be prepared for a wild ride.
Strive to understand the bigger picture in how your department supports the students and the institution as a whole. Having a bird's eye perspective and knowledge on all or most aspects of the institution supports your understanding of how to best support yourself, your colleagues, and most importantly, the students.

Stay relevant within higher education, and stay connected with other Registrars.
Understand your strengths and weaknesses, determine if they fit the role of the registrar at the institution you are interested in before committing to the position. Once you do, make sure you give that position your best effort whether you intend to stay or move on!
Always say "yes" to learning new things. Be involved on campus and seek opportunities to interact with students and faculty outside of your office. Build relationships.
Keep the student experience and your team in mind.
Be nimble, collaborate with other departments as you are the institution's hub interacting with all other departments. Stay current on regulations. Participate in professional organizations to remain current, build relationships and be a part of the community.
Registrar work is surprisingly fulfilling--requiring a good combination of knowledge and skills related to academics, systems, technology, administration, and relationship building. I wouldn't have guessed that as a young student affairs professional.
I find being a registrar the right balance of numbers/policy and people.
As a registrar in higher education, you will need to know the policies and regulations in enrollment management. But perhaps more important will be your ability to work well with other directors and executives to create positive change that leads to a safer/better experience for students and staff, even when they don't know they need the change or are resistant to it.
As a child, I would have never thought I would want to grow up and become a Registrar. I am glad I figured out what a Registrar is and became one. It can be frustrating, but it is also rewarding.
Become adept at technology and stay agile. Like most industries, higher education is moving forward using "big data." You must know how to capture and analyze data and present it for use in institutional strategy.
You will work in the background, and many people may not be entirely clear on what it is you do. But the work of the registrar's office is integral to the functioning of the college. Build a strong team around you and strong relationships with the departments you'll need to develop buy-in from.
Ask to be included in committees that the registrar's office may not automatically be included in.
Be flexible. Expect change and the unexpected to be the norm. You'll always be trying to balance upholding academic policy while not being a barrier to progress and academic innovation. Utilize available networks for support and counsel.
Being a strong registrar means you have to have a great team to support your work.
If you focus on student success and view your work as helping people change their career path by helping them achieve the academic credentials they need to do so, your work is never mundane but always inspiring.
Seek to become well-rounded in all areas of the registrar world. It will serve you to know as much as you can about every single area under the registrar umbrella.
Communication, collaboration, and relationships are key.
The people on your team and those who interact with you in other offices make coming to work worthwhile - certainly not the money nor the appreciation or support from above.
I would recommend taking a close look at your senior administration and political climate before progressing. They can be one of your biggest assets or your greatest hurdle in accomplishing your goals in the Registrar position.
Invite, nudge, or force your way to the table of important campus decision-making processes. Most on campus have no clue about the breadth and scope of responsibility of a registrar. Once they do, they find our input invaluable.
The Registrar position is one of the most rewarding and challenging positions at an institution. The positive impact you can have on student success and academic operations make all of the difficulties worth it! Asking why before how has helped me be a better registrar.

Be willing to work with others and to help them succeed. Remember the institutional mission and work toward it. Be true to yourself. Expect the best from others, and don't be disappointed if they don't rise to the occasion. Trust but verify.
It is sincere, genuine value in your work as a Registrar. We, as registrars, need to overcome the historical view of this department being a stuffy, prim office. Rather, our participation in the holistic success and well-being of students, faculty, and the institution as a whole carries significant responsibility and fulfillment. Be an active team player, and be confident in your contributions and your role as an influencer. Foster a student-facing department that is known as an advocate (to faculty as well). Registrars wear many hats, but learning to synthesize these roles into a unified whole can set you up as a key institutional administrator.
While registrar duties require precision, structured thinking, and adhering to policy, the truly successful registrar will adhere to the "spirit of the law" rather than the letter, collaborate successfully with institutional partners, and continually innovate to provide the best possible student experience.
Memorize your catalog(s) and academic policies; Have an open door; build inter-departmental relationships; look for the yes before assuming it is a no.
Keep good documentation and maintain a good relationship with faculty members.
Keep learning not to take everything so seriously. Learn to provide the needed information, and let things go that don't make sense to you. You will be happier, healthier, and will stay around longer.
You cannot be successful in this position if you do not effectively communicate and are not willing to collaborate. Relationship building is essential to the success of any registrar's office.
Delegation is key to getting a lot done and getting it done right. Train/manage your staff and let them become experts in their area and trust them. They will make your office work well. Teamwork is everything.
The most important part of being a registrar is building relationships. Get to know the other registrars in your state or region, so you have a support network when you need help or advice with a project or policy change. You will need these people. Develop relationships with various stakeholders across campus, including dining and facilities staff, academic deans/chairs, faculty senate leaders, public safety, administrative assistants (especially in the academic units), and financial aid. All of these people (and many others) are important to the work we do, whether it's planning commencement, building support for a desired policy change, trying to get grades turned in minutes before the deadline, or reeling in a faculty member on an idea they have without having any knowledge of student records processes or policies. You will need all of these people, likely more often than you anticipate. Additional advice: 1) You will have to say "no" a lot. When you do so, always give a reason, and make sure the reason is legitimate and easy to understand. 2) There are exceptions to every rule. Be consistent with exceptions, and learn to live in the gray.
Keep open-minded and flexible within regulatory guidelines, in tune with changing expectations of future students, and manage time wisely with a small staff.
It is helpful to stay abreast of all federal and state regulations
Always look for a position that will offer you new challenges and experiences. The route to promotion and success is by doing the uncomfortable and diversifying your experience, not by staying in one position, office, or school your whole career. My experience at both private and state schools and my previous work in Student Affairs/Activities, Housing, and Professional Studies has made me a more well-rounded Registrar because I understand the fuller student experience. Finally, do your research to see where the registrar stands in the Academic Leadership hierarchy. If the Registrar position/office is seen solely as an administrative office and not as a campus-wide strategic partner with a holistic view of the student experience, look elsewhere. Since the Registrar's Office is typically one of the few offices that every student and faculty member interacts with, the registrar should serve as a bridge between divisions on technology, strategy, student success, policy, and curriculum development. This requires the Registrar/office to be viewed as a partner in decision-making and planning.

Education, personal, and professional skill development is essential in this profession. Never stop learning. The road can be rough, but stay strong and focused on your goals. The opportunity to speak into the lives of students and support them is rewarding and worth the battle.
The expectations of the registrar are high and very important in the functioning of the institution. The leadership does not often grasp this. The registrar MUST be self-motivated, a critical thinker, situationally agile, and should be able to identify best practices for her organization to keep her work current and accurate.
My advice is to devote the time necessary to learn the regulations and policies of your institution. This may mean doing it during off-hours, but it will pay dividends later. The role is expected to be well versed in the policies and procedures of the institution. Prepare and lead your office from the front.
This is a demanding field, and your staff or colleagues will look to you for advice, policy clarification, and support. Be the expert they seek out.
Definitely learn technology. That is the backbone of much of what is done today. Know more than your job and how records/registration plays with all other institution functions.
While the role of the registrar is challenging, it is very rewarding, and no day is the same.
Try to maintain a healthy work-life balance because your family is what really matters when it comes down to it. Don't miss out on your life because you are worried about getting the work done. There will always be more that needs doing.
Learn as much as you can about as much as you can. Ask questions, read documentation, read policies, be familiar with your office's procedures. The registrar's office is responsible for a wide variety of tasks and functions, and it's easy to learn about the institution just from exploring a different set of responsibilities (even informally) within your own office. Make friends with faculty. Always retain a student-centered focus. Use the AACRAO resources available to you. Get involved!
Find some trustworthy colleagues who have been in this business for a while to help you. Always ask questions if you are unsure before making decisions that could impact students and other areas within your institution
Network and communicate with your counterparts; they will be your most valuable resource as you grow in the profession.
It is extremely important to have the soft skills to develop relationships with the various constituencies within your institution. Collaboration and collegiality are what makes the difference when working on any project. Additionally, it is key to be able to be creative in approaching challenges. It allows you to solve problems without compromising values.
I love this role. It is fundamental to the university's operations and to student success.
Always be willing to take on new projects and surround yourself with good people. Both will ensure you are seen as the "go-to and get it done" collaborator and leader.
If you like challenges and to be of service, this is the career for you!
Don't be afraid to ask for help and learn from your colleagues or the wonderful people on your listserv. They often serve as a great ally in the battle that is being a registrar, and believe me, it can feel like a battle. From delinquent students trying to register for classes... on the day before classes start.... to working with faculty and explaining why we "Can't just make changes to the catalog" willy nilly. It is a battle, and with every battle comes losses and victories. While the examples given may seem like losses, there are victories as well. Planning graduation and seeing all the hard work of these young adults come to fruition is truly something special. Creating and developing relationships with the student body, faculty, and staff is a victory among itself! The position has been described as a lynchpin between the students, faculty, and staff. You wear many hats, so don't be afraid to turn your cap backward, think outside the box and don't be afraid to be vulnerable.
Don't be afraid to ask questions and lean on your support network. Join listservs and other groups of registrars - their knowledge and experience are invaluable.

I believe the registrar's job mainly exists to enforce and interpret academic policies, though sometimes I feel that I am the one who then has to explain these academic policies to PhDs who created them. We keep the Admissions Office in line and advise the advisors. We are the scapegoat and the ones who get blamed by students when they can't graduate! But, what we do is important, and a Registrar must always have integrity, be forward-thinking, and be patient as policies and procedures are ever-changing.
Know your strengths and weaknesses and work to maintain and improve on them. Time management and organization are critical as this position wears many hats and is very demanding.
For those planning to become a Registrar, be careful to adequately evaluate registrar offices at institutions you are considering applying to be hired as the registrar. The previous registrar may have done things very differently, and, believe it or not, that can greatly impact your ability to be effective. Also, during an interview, you can glean a lot about a place's culture from the questions you are asked (and those you aren't asked).
This can be a tough position. I would recommend making and maintaining good relationships with various stakeholders. In addition, I would advocate for having a large budget so that you can keep on the front lines of the technology in your area. By doing more with technology, you can cut back on staff. In addition, I would learn how to engage with faculty at a level and in a way that they understand. Present them with logical arguments and numbers. Validate everything and never give up when you feel something needs to be changed.
If you can be truly service-oriented, organized, forward-thinking and able to multitask and juggle competing priorities in a sometimes fast-paced and changing environment, you will do well. Finding and adhering to a work-life balance from the get-go will enhance personal well-being and job satisfaction.
Maintain good relationships with faculty, staff, and administration. Be positive in your thoughts and processes daily. Delegate, but follow-up. Give deadlines for the completion of projects. Don't neglect your well-being.
As a registrar, you are often sought out to interpret policy. Sometimes things are not black or white. Frequently you need to be a moderator and negotiator. You need the ability to think outside of the box.
Thick skin and adaptability are key components and essential skills of a registrar.
Be ready to move fast and change often.
Being a registrar is about building and maintaining relationships between entities: between students and the institution, yes; but also the institution and the public, one's office and the faculty, inter-departmental relationships, and regulatory agencies accreditors.
Communication is key in all things, no matter how big or small.
I think the best advice is to build relationships with constituents on campus. This will go a long way to establish positive collaboration and achievement of university goals. Always take the time to stay up to date on new and innovative ideas and technology. Use your expertise to foster communication to help achieve those goals with institutional support.
This is a wonderful profession. I have never regretted the decision I made to become a registrar. It is interesting and challenging work, and it's a position where you can make a difference for your students, faculty, and staff on your campus.
Do not consider yourself on equal footing with the faculty. You are a support system and problem solver for them, not a true academic colleague.
Registrars need to continue to evolve with the times and adjust to the educational environments they serve, creating value for the academy.
Be ready to do almost anything that might need to be done to help a student matriculate. "Not my job" can never be part of your vocabulary.
Set boundaries and be realistic about how much you can do when accepting a combined position.
Always look for ways to learn more and take on additional responsibilities. Build a strong and talented team and don't micro-manage (and give credit to those doing the work). Understand the landscape in higher education is changing rapidly and look for ways to be viewed as an enabler and supporter of change.

Interdepartmental relationships and communication are key.
A positive attitude and quality collaboration skills have been the most important attributes to my success. Situate yourself as a problem solver (instead of a complainer), and you will go far!
One rarely chooses this path. Instead, we fall into it by accident or serendipity - and then we either fall in love with the work, or we run screaming into the night.
I wish you love.
Or, if you are a running screamer, please do it quickly to minimize the inevitable damage.
You can never be too organized. Document everything. Question everything.
Good registrars are institutional leaders and are recognized as such. So if you're being considered for a registrar position that sees the role as a senior clerk, keep looking because they don't know what they're really looking for.
I would highly recommend seeking a mentor. Be empathetic, responsive, and quick on your feet. Building relationships with the faculty and administration is extremely important.
Learn to love meetings. Many of your colleagues will not understand how your role influences so many projects on campus. Meetings are where you collect information about your job that people forget to tell you.
Be open to the tasks and committees no one wants to do. They often can provide an opportunity to be a leader and interact with leadership.
Be kind and help everyone you can. You never know where your next job opportunity will come from. You want to be someone that others want to work with that brings out the best in everyone.
Being ethical can take brass. Be ethical anyhow. You are the institutional integrity.
Learn everything you can about your institutions; it will be helpful when collaborating with other departments and areas.
In general, if your boss has had some responsibility in managing student services offices, this should work in your favor. If your boss has only had classroom experience, it is difficult to understand the Registrar's Office.
Attend state, regional AACRAO Get involved Learn all you can about the latest technology
Connect with your peers. Be relentless with your goals.
Take advantage of the professional resources and colleagues at other institutions. When something feels unethical, document, place in a file, but more importantly, speak up to encourage change. Thank your employees - snacks, skip out early, say thank you. Remember to do the same for those who support you so you can be successful. Be appreciative. Lead by example. Have confidence when speaking about something you are well versed in. Be ok to say you are not sure, but you will find the answer. Most importantly, there are rarely standard practices in higher ed. Someone always throws the answer, we do not do that. But most often, you can find like practices to build a case or make a change. This is a great profession!
The "Registrar and team" is what makes it so the college/university can even function. No Registrar and team, no class schedule, no registration, no commencement, no transcripts, etc., and so no college/university. You have the unique role of regularly interacting with administration, faculty, staff, and students. I love it because it's where the rubber meets the road.

Be a safe place for others to come with problems and for advice with student issues - don't judge, be kind, keep confidences, and always explain the "why" (especially if the answer is no).
Set boundaries early on, or you'll never have any work/life balance. The job can be all-consuming, and lots of extra things get tacked on if you're not careful. Learn to say "no" to things that are not related to your core functions.
Learn to delegate and trust your staff. You do not need to be a master of all things.
I've always thought Registrars are born, not made. We seem to find our way to this work from a variety of walks of life. Our passion for problem-solving, attention to detail, ability to communicate, and adaptability make us unquietly situated for this work. If those characteristics describe you, you will always find challenge and satisfaction in your work. If those are not appealing, it is probably not a good fit. I also find the registrar community some of the most selfless, compassionate and giving people I have known. I came from the world of athletics to this work, and my life was highly guarded and secretive from fellow coaches or athletic administrators from other institutions. Not so in Registrarland! They share freely, are eager to help others from any institution, and they do this without reward. They truly are amazing.
Champion your academic colleagues' ideas and work to strengthen them with your administrative expertise.
No one dreams about becoming a registrar. Once you start that career path, take the time to learn, observe, ask questions, and network. Better yet - ask your fellow registrar if they would be a mentor for you.