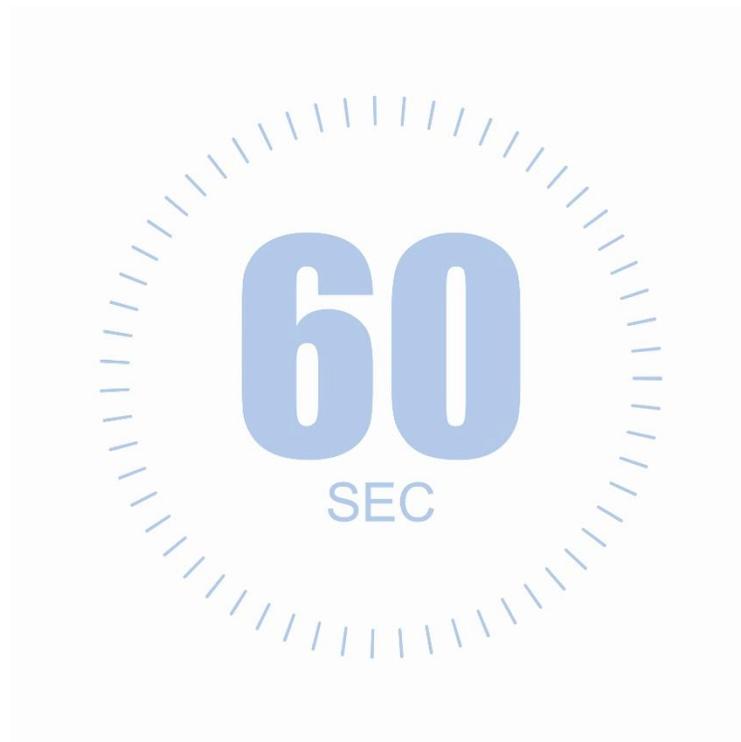




**Perceptions of and Expectations for the  
Role of the Registrar**  
Results of the June 2022  
60-Second Survey





This research has been made possible in part by sponsorship from [Modern Campus](#).

Modern Campus is a trusted partner of registrars, academic affairs professionals, and enrollment management leaders—ensuring their critical work is done with high efficiency and with an eye on student success. Modern Campus is obsessed with empowering their 1,800+ higher education customers to thrive when radical transformation is required to respond to lower student enrollments and revenue, rising costs, crushing student debt, and administrative complexities.

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## Introduction

The June 2022 60-Second Survey invited all AACRAO members to provide their perspectives on what the role of the registrar *should* be at their institution. Particular attention was paid to what the role of the registrar *should be* for student engagement and enrollment management. These data will be used to shape a roundtable discussion this summer, a white paper, and professional development opportunities by AACRAO.

If you are interested in a look at the current role of the registrar as reported by registrars, [the career profile report linked here](#) is focused on the current role and career path.

The survey was open to all AACRAO members. There are 922 responses representing 731 institutions or systems of higher education in eight countries (Appendix A). Eighty-five percent of respondents held positions in the registrar's office or institutional equivalent. Among the 783 from the registrar's office, 603 held the position of registrar or institutional equivalent. Academic affairs, enrollment management, student affairs, and enrollment services had the highest representation (48%, 24%, 12%, and 9% respectively). Seventy-four percent self-identified as middle management, 13% as first-level management, 7% as executive-level management, and 3% each as front-line staff and individual contributors.

### Key Data

- 88% agree that registrars should be actively engaged with strategic enrollment management efforts at the institution
  - Front-line staff members are less likely to hold this perspective than executive-level management
- 79% agree that registrars should be actively involved with student engagement across the student lifecycle
- 86% selected academic records management as the most important function for a registrar
- 34% believe that “inadequate positional power/authority/influence” is the most significant obstacle registrars face when implementing change to support student success
- One in ten respondents say technology is their most significant obstacle when trying to implement changes that support student success

Data are displayed in aggregate figures on the following pages. If you have any questions or would like to see the data disaggregated by institutional characteristics, please contact Wendy Kilgore, AACRAO Director of Research, at [wendyk@aacrao.org](mailto:wendyk@aacrao.org).

## Perspectives on the Modern Registrar – quotes from respondents

These quotes are a subset of the data. The full list of responses are included in Appendix B.

“Academic records are our core function and responsibility as registrars, but the scope and scale of this work is evolving rapidly - far more than SEM too - as it makes way for a significantly heavier emphasis on data analysis/management/governance and policy engagement. We are advocates and negotiators, not just record keepers. We have a stake in student enrollment, learning space management, compliance requirements, system vendor relationships, health care process, international study, and ever-expanding, innovative curricular offerings, just to name a few bits. Set into challenging hiring and staffing environments, against an erratic political landscape, and we must be masters of constant change too.”

“I am noticing a trend for the registrar title to also carry the assistant provost title. Larger schools appear to have moved in this direction. Why? Is this to elevate the role and to be able to be at the table more often when discussions are taking place? Is this a trend that is expected to move to other schools?”

“I find that Registrars are brought into so many institutional conversations about recruiting, admissions, and enrollment events it can leave little time to manage actual registrar position description duties.”

“I spend the most of my time now on policy and implementation of practices that will lead to retention and completion with a focus on belonging, equity, and inclusion. My staff and I spend increasingly less time on records management and more time with students helping them attain the goal of degree completion. It is more important than ever to look at our systematic structures (academic calendars, class schedules, registration processes, enrollment practices, degrees, and credentials, etc.) to make sure they are student-centric and supportive of the student needs of today.”

“It is so much more than a glorified filing clerk! The office of the registrar needs to be engaged across the spectrum of the college, academics at all levels, enrollment, student life, special programs.”

“Registrars continue to sit at the hub of institutional activity that revolves around the student learner. A successful registrar is adept at coordinating conversations with data and technology experts while also creating an organizational culture that is centered on student success and values continuous improvement. A modern registrar must maintain priority for student success, persistence, and completion while also preserving (improving) the quality of life for faculty and staff by leveraging technology, providing transparency, and promoting operational efficiency.”

“The modern registrar has had to become much more than just the steward/gatekeeper of records. Their generalist skills need to encompass technical/data reporting knowledge, state, and federal government regulations (not just FERPA), They need to be able to work effectively across many areas including financial aid, IT, academic affairs, and student services. Those working in larger schools are able to delegate, but those working in smaller or less resourced schools are often required to have deeper skill sets across these areas than in past years because of staffing - and the challenge is to hold all the responsibilities and expectations together.”

“The operative phrase is "modern registrar." How the role functions at various colleges and schools is highly dependent on the type, size, and financial model of the institution; its enrollment management structure, sophistication, and enactment; and gravitas of the registrar role over time at an institution vis-à-vis the chief enrollment officer. See section *‘Finding and Repositioning the Registrar in the SEM Context’* in the following SEMQ article for additional thoughts. Snowden, M. (2016). Refocusing| Losing| Finding: Beyond SEM Structures, Functions, and Administrative Contexts. Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 3(4), 240-260.”

“The registrar should provide behind the scenes support for the academic mission of the university. They must be allowed to focus on those mundane, not so glamorous things like FERPA compliance, records redundancy, records management, etc. They must be unbiased in their work. They should not be influenced by the need for increased enrollment or a student athlete's eligibility, etc.”

“The registrar role has shifted from a records-keeping function to one of operational management in implementing institutional and academic goals, but RO staff are unfortunately still seen, in some cases, as being bureaucratic obstacles and/or administrative servants, rather than allies and facilitators. Visible executive support for the work on the RO is critical to shifting this, and necessary to secure adequate funding for improvement initiatives. The registrar's connection to data, records, core systems, and academic policy means an institution is forfeiting critical insight/input if the registrar is not a regular, key contributor to almost every institutional strategic objective and function.”

“The Registrar's Office has always been an important hub of the institution. However, the modern registrar is more than a hub, it is the center of the wheel to which the spokes connect. This requires a strong registrar who not only cares for the academic record details with excellence but is also committed to keep current on evolving best practice, strives to continually improve the student (and faculty) experience, and is a trusted and respected partner across campus, which leads to increased interdepartmental collaboration and communication.”

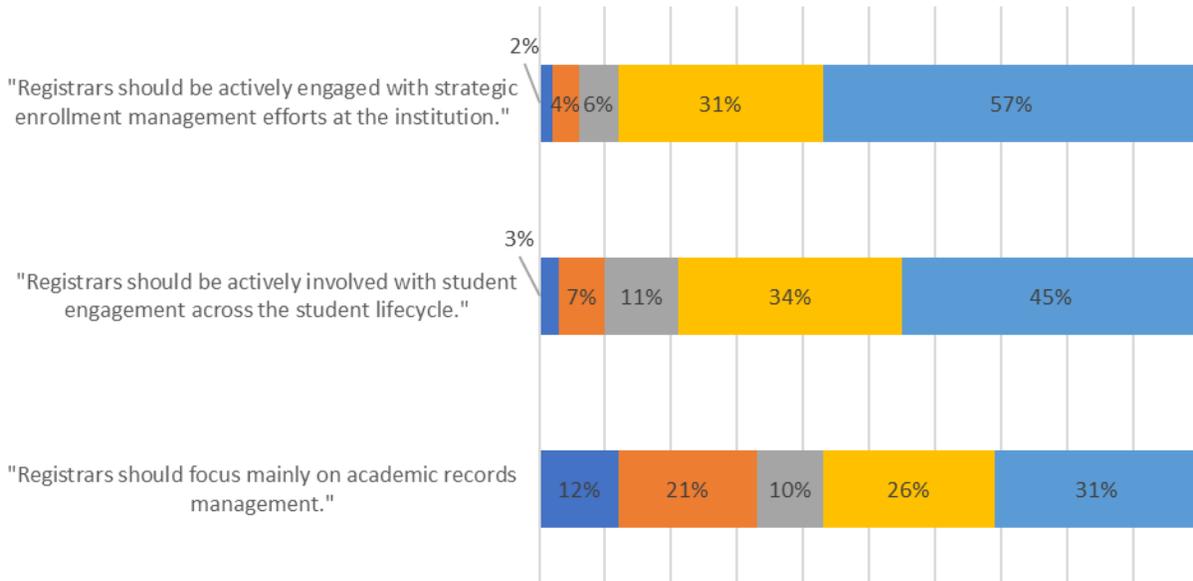
“The role of the registrar has changed dramatically in the last 50 years, from simply coordinating the schedule of courses and registration, to partnering in student success, retention, facility management, and strategic academic affairs (e.g., curriculum, credentials, policy).”

“The role of the registrar has drastically changed over the last 5-10 years as more of my focus has needed to shift to enrollment management and retention efforts. This has been in conjunction with additional director-level positions being hired under academic affairs to handle oversight of what was previously under the registrar, such as curriculum management and reporting.”

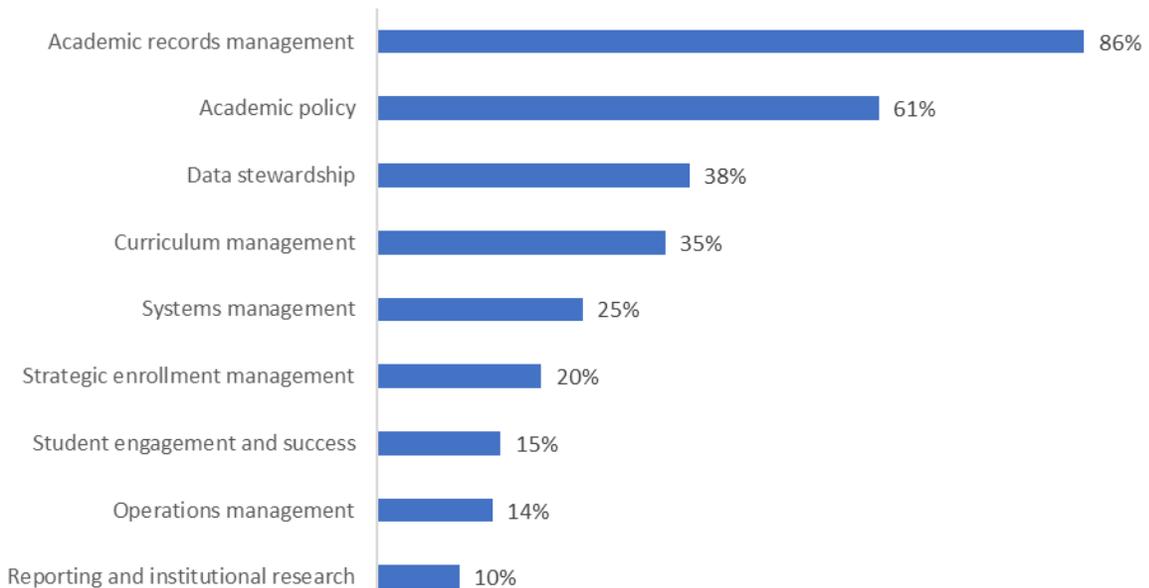
“The role of the Registrar has evolved and perhaps the training of engaging them in EM has fallen behind. They are uncertain of their role in EM.”

### Level of Agreement with Statements About Registrar Engagement

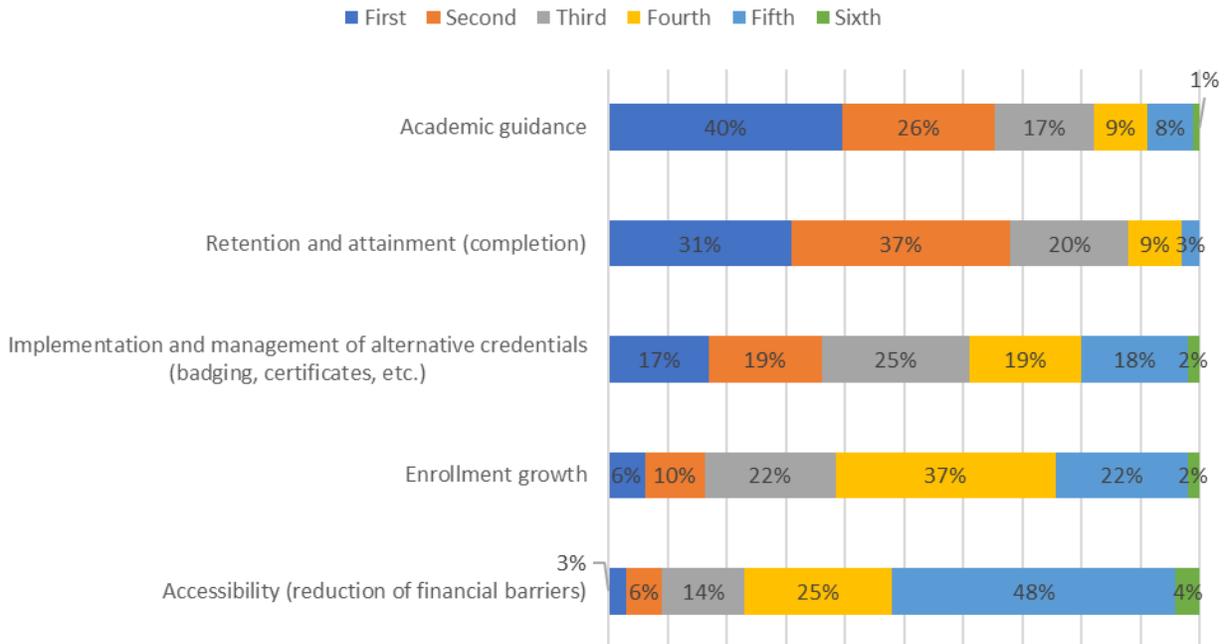
■ Disagree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Agree



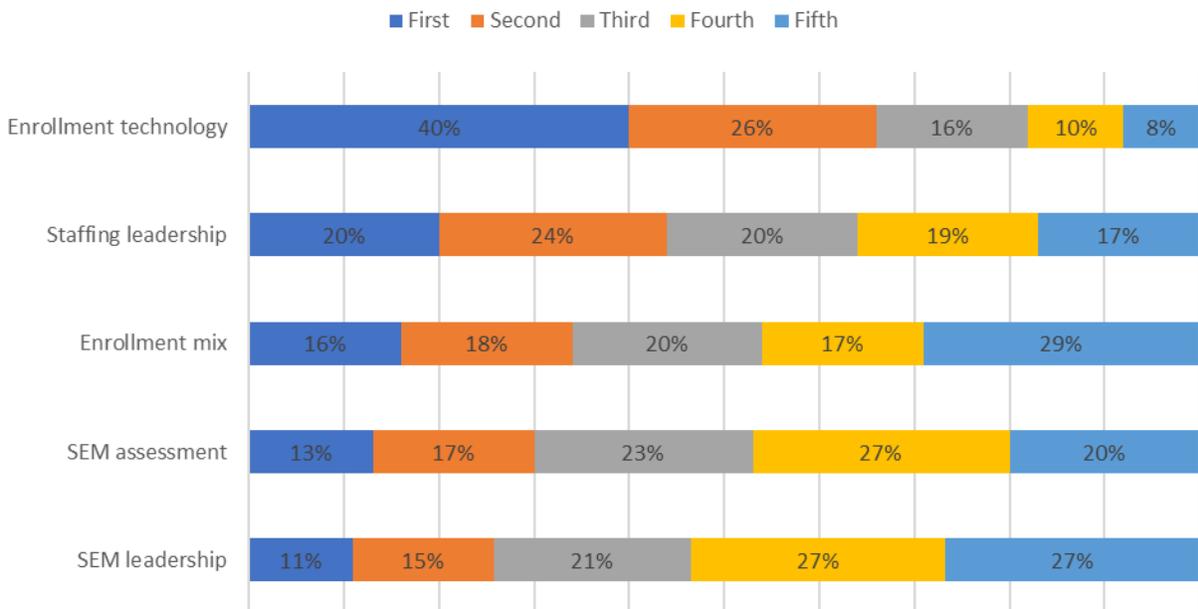
### Most Important Functions for Registrar's to Focus On (respondents asked to select only 3)



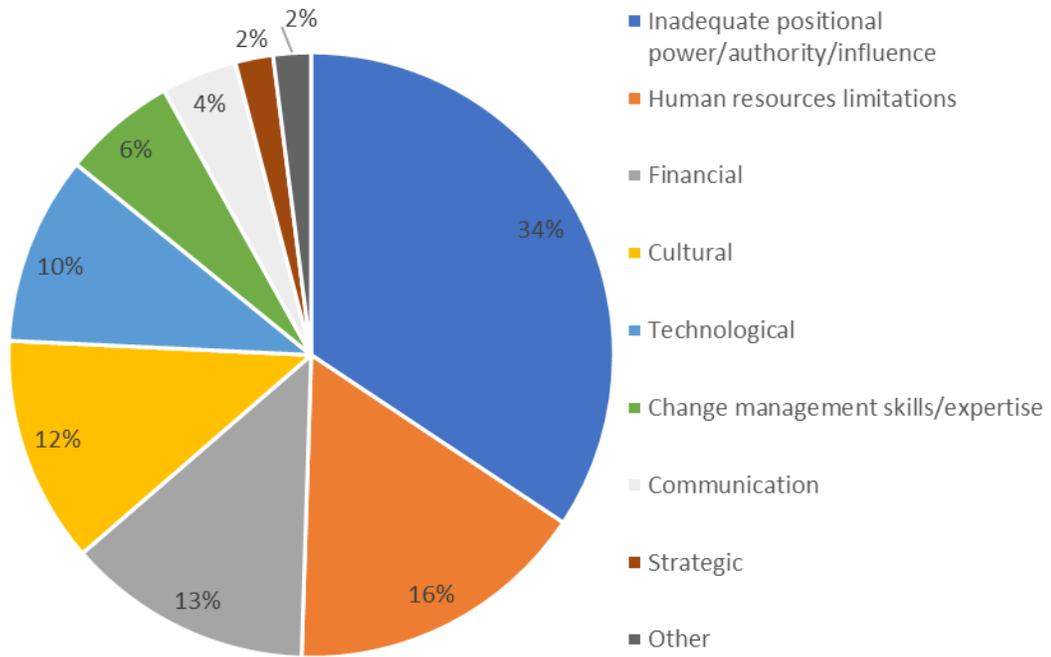
### Ranking Areas Where Registrar's *Should* Have the Most Impact



### Ranking Enrollment Management Areas Where Registrar's *Should* Have the Most Impact



Most Significant Obstacle Registrars Face When Implementing Change to Support Student Success



## Appendix A: Unduplicated Institutional Characteristics

Country	Count
Bahamas	1
Canada	26
China	1
France	1
Kazakhstan	1
Singapore	1
United Arab Emirates	1
United States	699
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>731</b>

Size	Count
Under 1,000	128
1,000 - 2,499	167
2,500 - 4,999	142
5,000 - 9,999	114
10,000 - 19,999	82
20,000+	91
Not Applicable	7
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>731</b>

Control and Type	Count
<b>Public</b>	<b>354</b>
Lower Division Only	109
Undergraduate	25
Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	214
Graduate and/or professional	5
Other	1
<b>Private, not-for-profit</b>	<b>348</b>
Lower Division Only	8
Undergraduate	66
Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	250
Graduate and/or professional	22
Other	2
<b>Private, proprietary</b>	<b>25</b>
Lower Division Only	5
Undergraduate	6
Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	10
Graduate and/or professional	3
Other	1

<b>Not applicable</b>	<b>4</b>
Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	1
Graduate and/or professional	1
Other	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>731</b>

## Appendix B: Additional Comments About the Role of the Modern Registrar<sup>1</sup>

A key aspect of the role of the registrar or a balance between service delivery and partnership development across the university.
A lot of registrar roles consider themselves "gatekeepers." While important to protect student records, we should also expand beyond that saying and be at the forefront of leading strategic initiatives and creative ideas to enhance the student experience, enrollment initiatives, and student academic success.
A modern Registrar should work collaboratively across the institution, and with campus System partners, to consider how existing academic policies may negatively impact student retention, graduation, and other enrollment management initiatives of the university. The ability of the Registrar to understand (and be flexible) on how their SIS can be utilized to best support a diverse array of program offerings (badges, certificates, non-term, CBE, etc.) and learners (i.e. online, adult, and EDI) will put them in an ideal position to further support the enrollment management efforts of the institution (which should include the full student lifecycle from matriculation to retention to graduation and beyond).
A Registrar must be multifaceted and involved across the campus on academics, enrollment, engagement, retention, graduation, and student progression.
A Registrar serves as a nexus, connecting all departments while seeing as a direct student interface. As such, a Registrar must combine a broad understanding of all aspects of the institution's cycle that touch a student with a detailed and deep understanding of things specifically within the registrar's control to be effective.
Ability to partner with key institutional change agents.
Academic records is our core function and responsibility as registrars, but the scope and scale of this work is evolving rapidly - far more than SEM too - as it makes way for a significantly heavier emphasis on data analysis/management/governance and policy engagement. We are advocates and negotiators, not just record keepers. We have a stake in student enrollment, learning space management, compliance requirements, system vendor relationships, health care process, international study, and ever expanding, innovative curricular offerings, just to name a few bits. Set into challenging hiring and staffing environments, against an erratic political landscape, and we have to be masters of constant change too.
At my institution, the registrar's office does not have adequate staff, technology, or processes to allow for efficient use of time. Therefore, the position is very stressful. Managing student records and registration is enough, without adding enrollment, retention, and financial duties into the mix.
At our institution, the leadership lacks an understanding of the broad influence of the registration staff, while i feel that i push out that information, i don't think it is heard.
Authority varies depending on the institution.
Collaborative projects or participation with faculty groups are important because faculty drives change more so than students at many institutions. "Administrator" is often a bad role according to faculty.
Continue to be an advocate for students.
Registrar struggles with keeping up with technology and students.
Currently many senior management leadership changes. This makes it difficult to address ongoing issues we face to support our students and the mission of the intuition.
Don't know about the "modern" registrar. Observed registrar role to be focused on records maintenance and compliance, not on enrollment management initiatives.
Due to the numerous vendors and products that claim to support the 360-degree student journey, it is extremely important for registrars to have some education and background in technology. This helps the registrar remain the steward of student data and best practices.
Each school operates differently -- would like to see the role of registrar more consistent across the board
Enrolment management is not the optimal "location" for the registrar. It leads to conflicts of interest.

<sup>1</sup> These responses have been lightly edited for grammar and to remove any identification of a specific institution.

<p>Every registrar needs to promote change, scalability, and efficiency. Too often, they're seen as the defenders of all things contrary to them. The registrar, in some sense, represents the operational element of an institution's mission; if they aren't changing their own ways to better serve the mission (i.e. students), then they could be failing the institution. Every registrar needs to consider, too, the enormous potential they have to drive and support social good at their campus, whether that be DEI, student financial well being, or otherwise.</p>
<p>High turnover in upper management challenges progress and innovation. Difficult to work in environments that do not support education. Staying on top of changes in regulations and developing relationships with key partners can also be challenging.</p>
<p>I am noticing a trend for the registrar title to carry also the assistant provost title. Larger schools appear to have moved in this direction. (Kansas, UT San Antonio, UC Boulder, etc.) Why? Is this to elevate the role and to be able to be at the table more often when discussions are taking place? Is this a trend that is expected to move to other schools?</p>
<p>I believe I've seen the hardest transition in the registrar is the ability to adapt leadership and staff, who may have limited technology background, to evolve and be more strategic in how to leverage new systems allow for enhanced ways to manage curriculum, scheduling and degree auditing etc, registrars need to evolve their teams and staff skill set to keep with moving from manual based processing to more strategic oversight and management of these tools</p>
<p>I believe that over the past decade, the role of the Registrar has evolved and changed and is more than keeping track of records and traditional roles in which this job has been tasked with in the past. The Registrar literally touches every facet of the college and is a resource and hold valuable information to assist with major decisions facing the college due to many different touch points that a Registrar interacts with daily. I know that I am called upon by senior leadership as well as my faculty and administrative colleagues to provide insight on enrollment management, records, degree attainment, new programs, financial barriers, resolution of student barriers, retention, admissions and so forth.</p>
<p>I believe the role of Registrar depends on the institution. At my institution, we mostly work with records, back end enrollment processing, transcript processing, transfer credit, and course/faculty scheduling. We do not have a role in front end enrollment processing or strategic enrollment management.</p>
<p>I find myself involved a lot with academic policies review, development and implementation due to DEIB efforts. A large part of my role is working with systems, identifying the right systems, evaluating systems, change management, implementation, and maintenance. Developing and maintain good working relationships is becoming harder due to the amount of work that is on everyone's plate. Less time for in person interactions. Leading and managing staff is becoming harder with the current environmental issues that we all are experiencing. It is becoming harder and harder to find staff and good staff.</p>
<p>I find that Registrar's are brought into so many institutional conversations about recruiting, admissions and enrollment events it can leave little time to manage actual Registrar position description duties.</p>
<p>I have been a registrar for a couple of decades. So much of the job now revolves around technology. Some of that is finding new software and products to aid in processes and provide better (or expected) service. Then there is the part where we have to make the SIS work with our institution's data and policies. And we have to be able to get data out of the system for various constituents. So, it has become much more geeky. :)</p>
<p>I have been a Registrar or an Associate/Assistant Registrar all my adult life. My ability to influence policy making has always depended on what the Senior Administration believes is the function of the Registrar. I have been on Dean's Council and I have been off Dean's Council, on Strategic Management Committees and off of them. I have had tenure opportunities and been an at-will staff member. Always dependent on who is my current boss/Provost. I have had @ 10 Provosts in my years and each has treated the Office of the Registrar differently.</p>
<p>I have presented a number of times at AACRAO and MAACRAO on the "modern registrar". Harnessing technology to better server our students is key.</p>
<p>I have seen many registrar roles mixed with student affairs. It is my opinion that while both should and do collaborate, registrar position would better fit into to enrollment management area (admissions and registrar work are far better suited for hybrid roles from a systems perspective and overlapping needs).</p>
<p>I need additional help in having my institution value the role of the Registrar on my campus.</p>

I often hear in meetings that the registrar's office (and other administrative) processes should disappear into the background of the student experience. Often this is said in response to concerns about excessively complex administrative processes or deadlines that require expert navigation by students in order to successfully complete, but I think it leads to a misguided philosophy that administrative processes should be invisible to students so that they can exclusively focus on classroom and student experiences. While processes and policies should never, of course, be overly burdensome or be a hindrance to academic progress, I do think there is extracurricular value in seeing it as a safe but meaningful space for students to learn to navigate the complexities of what is often fairly mundane but necessary administration. For many (most?) students who may be out on their own for the first time, and who may not have had to deal with their own business transactions before, registrars and student financial offices set certain expectations that are comparable to navigating the kind of exchanges that happen in government and legal offices, financial institutions and more, and with students at the helm of working with our services we can also play an active role in setting them up for success beyond the classroom as part of a comprehensive student experience model.

I spend the most of my time now on policy and implementation of practices that will lead to retention and completion with a focus on belonging, equity, and inclusion. My staff and I spend increasingly less time on records management and more time with students helping them attain the goal of degree completion. It is more important than ever to look at our systematic structures (academic calendars, class schedules, registration processes, enrollment practices, degrees, and credentials, etc.) to make sure they are student-centric and supportive of the student needs of today.

I think it's important for the Registrar to have a seat at the table when it comes to curriculum decisions and retention decisions. We are the office that everyone turns to for answers, even if it is not something that is handled in the Registrar's Office (RO). We also understand the need for technology to meet the students where they are at in how they want to interact with the RO.

I think our options in this survey were very limited and led towards a specific desired outcome. I do believe Registrar should take a more active role in retention. Counseling on adding/dropping courses, withdrawing from a course, and similar behaviors. Serve as the check and balance system for appropriate academic advising on an annual basis by auditing degree progress. In regard to the enrollment process - transcript articulation for prospective transfer students either through human capital or technology.

I think this role is so varied from institution to institution that a modern registrar is a blend of advising, policy, SEM and technology innovation. It's really all over the board!

I think we continue to struggle with people understanding the complexities of what we do. People may have a general idea of Records Management, Graduation, Schedule of Classes, Registration, etc. What people don't necessarily understand is the complexity of what it takes to manage these systems, and the skillset required. I think there is an opportunity to educate the transformation that the Registrar's Office has seen over time.

I was just having this conversation with my supervisor, we agreed: the role of the registrar has changed dramatically in the last three years. There's an expectation to understand data architecture, software integration, project management, change management, adaptive and compassionate leadership, SEM, and all things political inside and outside of the institution. During the height of the pandemic Records and Registration offices had to continue on without a break, the academic year didn't stop, and students were in fact still graduating. We moved many business processes to an online format and made massive updates to our SIS while working a combination of face to face and remote. There's been a lot of positive outcomes but many of us are burnt out because we have been toiling for a couple of years now and working at a pace that was unsustainable to try and get us through, now we're through the worst of it and expected to keep the same pace. I think the next phase is to adjust expectations and get clear about essential processes--start cutting out the noise even more and focus on what students and the campus community really need.

I would like to clarify my response to the previous question in that I mean "human resources limitations" not to be a reflection on the abilities of staff but that there aren't enough staff due to position reductions and institutional financial pressures.

Ideally the registrar should be a bridge between academic and student affairs. We must remove the barriers and silos that have existed in higher education for far too long.

I'm an Assistant Registrar at a State Medical Professional/Graduate only university. I feel like the registrar's office at our school is not valued for our role in adhering to academic policy or maintaining the curricular record. Often we are treated more like "administrative support" instead of integral participants.
I'm not convinced that registrars should be SEM leaders. I think of myself as only a stakeholder on that topic and am glad for it.
In a successful institution, the registrar role would commonly interact with executive leadership to inform strategic enrollment and student experience decisions, which requires a removal from the day-to-day tasks and greater focus on broader human, system, and data resources.
In my institution, there is still the feeling that the Registrar's Office is clerical, which creates an imbalance and impacts our effectiveness. We are working through this slowly, but the ripples of this belief impact the student experience daily.
In our educational institution of higher learning, there is very little to no legal assistance provided to the registrar's office regarding federal regulations and policies. The registrar is completely on their own to determine, interpret, and comply with the appropriate student-information-related rules.
In our registrar's office we implement the policies that the school has. We work on data entry, degree progression, changes in the students' academic record, transcripts, transfers and VA.
Institutions seem to be creating redundant roles outside of the Registrar's office. As the office that centrally provides support to academic policy, scheduling, and enrollment systems. More should be done to connect the work.
It is no longer about record keeping, the Registrar's must do data analytics, resource investigation for enrollment and must be true partners to all other departments to enhance enrollment at the college.
It is so much more than a glorified filing clerk! The office of the registrar needs to be engaged across the spectrum of the college; academics at all levels, enrollment, student life, special programs.
It seems to me that the role of the registrar has been slowly eroding through time in the last forty years here in Canada. It seems to be seen, altogether too often, as little more than an academic records manager.
It's a much more technical role than it was in the past. It's important to understand and improve one's systems, data, and the consistency of experience.
Lack of resources for Registrar development and professional training (i.e.: webinars, training sessions (virtual & in-person, etc.)
Leadership understanding and supporting strategic enrollment management is key to registrars being able to influence and support change on campus when it comes to enrollment management. Relationships with others is also important to the success of this work.
Limited resources and many want education to be like an amazon experience...
Modern day registrars are at the center of compliance, data and technology. This includes security, innovation, and data-driven decision making. In addition, advocacy, leadership and staff development are huge components of our work.
Modern registrars have to develop more and more technical expertise and are often called upon to serve as an institution's memory for changes in technology, academic policy, curriculum, and academic programs. A Registrar's primary function has to continue to be one of focusing on the integrity, privacy and perpetuity of each student's academic records. We cannot set this aside when we are called to wear many hats -- as trainers, curriculum manager, and strategic partner in enrollment management. Most often, Registrars are the only voice in the room representing a student's perspective and rights of their academic records.
My feeling? Registrars should enforce academic policies and ensure quality service to students across the full range of registration and records processes. Focusing on recruitment and retention efforts seems outside the scope of the registrar and leads to conflicting principles.
Not recognized by the rest of the university
Operating a Registrar's Office as a "student-facing" office is key. Registrars and staff need to be able to accommodate students and their needs, as well as be a welcoming department to help students understand curricular requirements, policies, success strategies, and more.

Ranking the THREE most important focus areas was very difficult, since most of the issues listed are interconnected. Academic policy-making that doesn't take into account systems management or data stewardship will create issues down the road when IR needs to run analytics, etc. The need for focusing on collaboration across institutional units is key to anticipating needs as well as guiding mission.
Registrar currently leverages technology to implement work processes. Therefore, the skill sets needed to perform
Registrar does not manage class schedule or classroom assignment at my institution - this seems to be uncommon, as I've looked at openings other places.
Registrar functions become more and more technical each year. Having the experience to navigate technical changes, project management, and change management, while also ensuring the security of student data and its strategic use for data-informed decisions is very important for today's Registrar.
Registrar offices should be included in all enrollment management and recruitment strategic planning, not perhaps because recruitment is a registrar's main concern but because marking, administration, and enrollment management often make decisions which will impact registrar offices. For example, if transfer credit processing is in the registrar office and the admissions office decides to implement admission cycles where they let so many students in, pause, and let more students in, this change would impact staff in the registrar office because transfer credit processing could be bottle-necked by the cycle.
Registrar's a much more than record keepers these days. We have the pulse of the entire campus as we cross all areas. The most difficult issue I face is not being heard at my institution. While it makes it difficult, I have found other ways to make my voice heard and will continue to do that.
Registrars are asked to play both roles -- Successfully oversee the daily operations of a Registrar's Office, while being a leading partner in Strategic Enrollment Management.
Registrars are taken for granted. On one hand they are expected to be content experts, but then others feel like it's ok to treat them like the village idiot.
Registrars continue to sit at the hub of institutional activity that revolves around the student learner. A successful registrar is adept at coordinating conversations with data and technology experts while also creating an organizational culture that is centered on student success and values continuous improvement. A modern registrar must maintain priority for student success, persistence, and completion while also preserving (improving) the quality of life for faculty and staff by leveraging technology, providing transparency and promoting operational efficiency.
Registrars have a huge job which has gotten more challenging with declining enrollments. They are now being asked to play a role in enrollment mgmt. while continuing to register and graduate students, prepare course schedules and catalogs, provide transcripts and verifications, FERPA compliance and on and on and on. The role seems to be changing with little to no support for the technology and staffing needed to do it all.
Registrars often understand technology better than most folks at institutions. Use that expertise.
Registrar's wear many hats and the role is vital to the operation of the institution.
Retention strategies needs as much emphasis and funding as do recruitment strategies.
Scaling a personalized experience to minimize barriers for students. Taking a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to engaging learners across different parts of the institution. These days, a modern registrar's office is an IT division more than the traditional processing offices we were in the past. These days, we are asked to provide an immense amount of data to faculty, staff, and students, as well as innovations and initiatives. How we store data, report, keep it accurate, and connect it to dozens of disparate systems are key components we often see registrar's offices handle. Additionally, investigating and testing new software, managing projects, rolling out new technologies and hiring are critical components. Being able to provide and support strategic enrollment initiatives is also an area of growth for registrars. The data we provide should be able to paint that picture of what a successful institutional student looks like, how we retain current students, what challenges institutional students to face, and what changes we need to make to improve retention.
Struggle with the college's board of trustees on what should be the optimum recruiting attainment each term (realistic number of incoming students each term based on available resources).

Systems management decision making ability and a strong partnership with IT are key to the success of the modern registrar.
Technical based. Systems-based. Data-driven. Collaborative.
Technology and student demands have required the registrar to innovate and support multiple systems to meet the highly transactional nature of registration, transcription, and degree clearance. The registrar can be an effective (back office), ensuring systems are operating and often serve as "tech-support" when they are not.
Technology is key to the role of the Registrar's office.
Technology to support the student experience from first enrollment through graduation.
The ancient role of the Registrar has become disaggregated with administrative growth at universities, to the detriment of university management.
The challenges of the modern registrar vary greatly based on the size, type, and financial status of the institutions they serve. As the registrar for a small, private, financially struggling, liberal arts institution in the southeast, some of my challenges are much different than those of my counterparts at large, state-funded research institutions in large metropolitan areas.
The connection to IR and accreditation / institutional effectiveness and assessment is becoming increasingly important because of the proliferation of 3rd party systems for managing data and delivering education.
The effectiveness of the Registrar's role is dependent on how closely they report to the President . . .
The initiatives keep coming but we have staff with job qualifications from the 80's and leadership that doesn't know what we do or all that we are responsible for.
The level of influence seems to vary widely depending on the type and size of the institution. We can all learn more about ways to increase our involvement and be a valued contributor that is included in any discussion related to records, enrollment, curriculum, and data governance/management.
The modern registrar has evolved into more of a information systems manager due to the array of technologies used to provide high level service to all constituents.
The modern registrar has had to become much more than just the steward/gatekeeper of records. Their generalist skills need to encompass technical/data reporting knowledge, state and federal government regulations (not just FERPA), They need to be able to work effectively across many areas including financial aid, IT, academic affairs, and student services. Those working in larger schools are able to delegate, but those working in smaller or less resourced schools are often required to have deeper skill sets across these areas than in past years because of staffing - and the challenge is to hold all the responsibilities and expectations together.
The modern registrar has transitioned into an advisory role. Registrar's have become like collegiate guidance counselors helping solve the issues of the complex student. Gone are the days where students simply need to find a schedule. The "why" in our jobs has never been more important. Why cant the student do an 8am? because they work full time and need to sleep. Why is the student not attending class? Student isn't sleeping, depression, anxiety etc. Registrar's serve the students humanistic needs.
The modern registrar is faced with unique moral and ethical decisions given a trend towards reporting lines in enrollment management. The high pressure and numbers-driven world of enrollment management can lead to deceptive practices that challenge academic policy and the academic integrity of the institution. These are two areas registrars have traditionally been uniquely positioned to protect, but that ability is at risk due to reporting lines that fall outside of academic affairs units.
The modern Registrar is more than the clerk of educational records and keeper of policy. The Registrar serves as a critical data analyst, technology supporter, link between faculty, administration and students through critical knowledge of processes, policies and appropriate authority to adjudicate any of the afore mentioned audiences when there are impasses.
The modern registrar must be comfortable with enforcement and flexibility, report to and/or work closely with Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management, and simultaneously be data-focused, systems-focused, and student-focused as many of these focus areas intersect. The modern registrar wears many hats!
The modern Registrar must be competent in areas of DEI and should lead with equity-mindedness to ensure systems, policies, and practices are being configured and implemented in a way that promotes the institutional values (regarding DEI).

<p>The modern registrar must be nimble capable of wearing multiple hats and accomplishing many different competing priorities with falling budgets. We are asked to do more to support the institution but not with an equal amount of staffing that another singular focused department are able to garner. I would also say the modern student has changed and Registrars need to find ways to stay current with them.</p>
<p>The modern registrar must be well informed on all aspects of enrollment management, strategic planning, and student success initiatives. S/He must be have the authority to write and recommend policy to address the ever evolving needs of the university and students. Furthermore, we must be collaborative, well-staffed, and empowered to the job that needs to be done.</p>
<p>The modern registrar needs to be a part of all academic discussions and planning. It is not so much involved in the enrollment portion of the student life, but everything that follows that enrollment.</p>
<p>The modern registrar needs to be all things. Because one person cannot be all things, developing and leading a balanced team is essential to meeting the objectives of the institution.</p>
<p>The modern registrar needs to be willing to take initiative on understanding the full picture of how to best support students through their academic journeys. They must be leaders and be willing to collaborate with other departments to understand how to best support the students, the institution, and their departments. Institutions must also recognize the key role of the registrar and how their skills can be leveraged to support the mission.</p>
<p>The modern registrar role is a bridge between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs yet currently has no seat at the table.</p>
<p>The modern registrar role should be "marketed" in the industry as industry standard to support university leadership in understanding the changes and support registrars need to make this transition.</p>
<p>The modern registrar should be a partner in curriculum management and academic policy as well as records and retention maintenance, not the last to find out about program changes/policy changes/institutional changes. The Registrar is the bedrock of the institution and more and more that fact gets lost due to lack of communication and increasingly siloed work environments.</p>
<p>The modern Registrar should be an integral part of an institution's executive team.</p>
<p>The modern registrar sits at the nexus of the campus structures, and as such must be able to function effectively in a variety of contexts. Expertise with technology (SIS, LMS, etc.), policy, curriculum, SEM, leadership, change management, communication, and networking are all critical. A registrar needs to be able to wear a whole stack of hats, all at once, and make it look good.</p>
<p>The modern registrar's office has become more of a specialized branch of IT Services, with automation and online registration/academic processes as the most important interface that a Registrar and team can have with students.</p>
<p>The modern registrar's office is a complex data processing IT operation. All necessary activities should be available online and operating 24x7 for students and instructors.</p>
<p>The operative phrase is "modern registrar." How the role functions at various colleges and schools is highly dependent on the type, size, and financial model of the institution; its enrollment management structure, sophistication, and enactment; and gravitas of the registrar role over time at an institution vis-À-vis the chief enrollment officer. See section "Finding and Repositioning the Registrar in the SEM Context" in the following SEMQ article for additional thoughts.</p>
<p>Snowden, M. (2016). Refocusing  Losing  Finding: Beyond SEM Structures, Functions, and Administrative Contexts. Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 3(4), 240-260.</p>
<p>The position has become highly specialized and requires the person in the position to be able to see the large picture of what is happening all over the university. Unfortunately the registrar position is often overlooked by administration as few know what the registrar actually does.</p>
<p>The registrar acts as a representative of student interests as well as guardian of institutional policies and fairness.</p>
<p>The Registrar can improve student retention and success by 1) driving change to academic policies that are barriers for students; 2) identifying and implementing technology solutions, especially those that allow for student self-service; 3) encourage standardization and consistency of administrative functions across campus; and 4) identify opportunities for improvement by analyzing operational data.</p>

The registrar can't want to work in silos.
The Registrar has always been the spoke in the wheel that keeps things moving across the University, but the cross-functional nature of the position has never been more apparent. The Registrar's Office can and should be involved in just about every decision made in terms of enrollment growth, program changes, advising, and retention.
The registrar has significant insight and knowledge across departments/policies/curricula that help others understand the importance of policy, business processes, and most importantly that impact the student.
The registrar is a major support pillar within the academic community - unless we learn/know of pending changes being discussed or considered we have little to no opportunity to influence decision making which moves the registrar from the potential of an important resource to simply a reactive agent.
The registrar is often consulted as an expert, but rarely empowered to make choices that will influence significant change outside their area. Many changes and adjustments that affect the student experience require technological or financial support. Resistance to change from other departments is often significant. When given the correct support, a Registrar is a great person to lead projects that will make things better.
The Registrar must be viewed as a strategic partner in helping the institution achieve its enrollment (recruiting and retention) goals.
The registrar needs to be willing to learn new things and be a leader in promoting and developing systems for the campus.
The Registrar Role has evolved and our array of services is varied and extensive. We find ourselves at many intersections in the academic and administrative life cycle. From catalog production to showcase our degrees and majors to students, to protecting student information with data governance, to optimizing operational processes to move students from enrollment to graduation, the Registrar's Office is involved from start to finish.
The Registrar role is a balance between operations and forward thinking/problem solving for current and future needs. The core functions of academic records, curriculum, enrollment and other assigned tasks need to be completely in a timely, accurate, and efficient manner. However, to stay relevant, the Registrar needs to be able to collaborate with other departments to work towards solutions for existing challenges and upcoming opportunities. COVID taught us that when the Registrar and other key directors for student enrollment were brought together to review and make recommendations to higher level leadership, change could be quick and effective.
The Registrar Role sits at the intersect of more areas of the college than I believe any other role (academics, policy, finance, enrollment, financial aid, advising, etc). This requires exceptional relational and communication skills. Those coupled with the technology, data management, and records management requiring skills that are very technical and analytical makes the role and competencies of a modern registrar very difficult. Also, depending on who you ask across campus they should be 6 different things causing even more confusion and often frustration when the position does or focuses on something else perceived by different campus areas/positions.
The registrar should be a strategic leader on campus, not just the keeper of academic records.
The registrar should be included in discussions in all curricular, scheduling, records management, and enrollment decisions. The registrar should be the primary decision maker for technology and staffing that supports these efforts.
The Registrar should provide behind the scenes support for the academic mission of the university. They must be allowed to focus on those mundane, not so glamorous things like FERPA compliance, records redundancy, records management, etc. They must be unbiased in their work. They should not be influenced by the need for increased enrollment or a student athlete's eligibility, etc.
The registrar should remember to remember implicit bias in policy making and review.
The Registrar supports the academic mission of the university by facilitating the delivery of the education (primarily by faculty) via centralized, operational methods, while adhering to governing policies and procedures in conjunction with professional best practices (thank you AACRAO for this part).

<p>The registrar role has shifted from a records-keeping function to one of operational management in implementing institutional and academic goals, but RO staff are unfortunately still seen, in some cases, as being bureaucratic obstacles and/or administrative servants, rather than allies and facilitators. Visible executive support for the work on the RO is critical to shifting this, and necessary to secure adequate funding for improvement initiatives.</p>
<p>The registrar's connection to data, records, core systems, and academic policy means an institution is forfeiting critical insight/input if the registrar is not a regular, key contributor to almost every institutional strategic objective and function.</p>
<p>The Registrar's Office has always been an important hub of the institution. However, the modern registrar is more than a hub, it is the center of the wheel to which the spokes connect. This requires a strong registrar who not only cares for the academic record details with excellence but is also committed to keep current on evolving best practice, strives to continually improve the student (and faculty) experience, and is a trusted and respected partner across campus which leads to increased interdepartmental collaboration and communication.</p>
<p>The registrar's position sits at the crossroads of the institution. The registrar has to be aware of and to some extent, understand every other area's functions and how those functions interact across the entire campus. Too often, registrars are characterized as the 'no person', and not as the deeply knowledgeable, involved, and caring professionals that they are. Because the majority of their work is behind the scenes and should lead to flawless processes as seen from the outside, registrars' work is very often overlooked and underappreciated.</p>
<p>The registrars, likely, more than others understand how important it is to have all the players at the table when long-term decisions are made, because they know the software, staffing, timing and ultimately, success of any implementations will be affected if finance, IT, Fin aid, admissions, facilities, etc. are not in the loop early on to be geared up for the change.</p>
<p>The role has evolved to be technology manager, customer service advocate, reporting and metrics guru, schedule planner, FERPA protector and student behavior forecaster. They hold a great deal of information but culture and lack of understanding of the role may prevent them from being fully and appropriately leveraged for the betterment of the institution.</p>
<p>The role in maintaining, testing and managing technology systems doesn't seem to be fully appreciated or understood within the institution or leadership. Even when explained, it is often not considered a priority yet these systems are core infrastructure items ie register students, present to schedule of classes or graduate students.</p>
<p>The role is critical, yet nobody seems to understand exactly what a "Registrar" does. As a CC Registrar I also have responsibilities for recruitment/admissions - it all seems too much to do any of it very well, however limited resources force us to try and squeeze it all in.</p>
<p>The role is ever evolving and always exciting. :)</p>
<p>The role of the registrar continues to evolve and expand--we are many things to many people. It is a complicated blend of technology, process, politics, professional development (personal and staff-directed), management, and collaboration, all with the students' needs at the center.</p>
<p>The role of the registrar has changed dramatically in the last 50 years, from simply coordinating the schedule of courses and registration, to partnering in student success, retention, facility management, and strategic academic affairs (e.g., curriculum, credentials, policy).</p>
<p>The role of the registrar has drastically changed over the last 5-10 years as more of my focus has needed to shift to enrollment management and retention efforts. This has been in conjunction with additional director-level positions being hired under academic affairs to handle oversight of what was previously under the registrar, such as curriculum management and reporting.</p>
<p>The role of the Registrar has evolved and perhaps the training of engaging them in EM has fallen behind. They are uncertain of their role in EM</p>
<p>The role of the Registrar has moved from a "keep files accurate" position to a Systems Administrator, Student Advocate, Operations Manager---Enrollment Czar. We are the catch all for all problems, and are requested to resolve any issues that arise. This includes something wrong with the SIS (or any system attached to the SIS), curriculum issues, to the toilet paper is out in ABCD building. The Registrar's Office is the center of the University.</p>

<p>The role of the Registrar is very dependent on the size of the office and the institution. At large institutions the Registrar is not involved as much in the day-to-day operation but more in policy. In small institutions with small staffs the Registrar must be a technologist, a policy specialist as well as being able to do the hands-on work of the office. It is imperative that even in small institutions that the office have adequate staffing. As an industry we also need to be thinking about how we bring people into the field, retain them and prepare for how many Registrars are on the brink of retirement.</p>
<p>The role of the Registrar should be respected as the Institutional Compliance Officer on campus. This person should be responsible for making sure the institution is following FERPA regulations and oversee the integrity of anything that appears on the student's college transcript.</p>
<p>The role, operations and needs greatly vary by institution. Small private colleges vs larger public colleges can have a huge difference in funding, priorities, staffing and operations. I've been at multiple colleges and the role was unique at each one. They were all under 5k students and none connected enrollment management with the registrar office yet.</p>
<p>The technical skillset gap is tremendous on our campus. We have incredible people with innovative ideas - and still can't get a simple automated workflow established. We want our websites to be more transparent and dynamic, but we can't pay enough to compete with tech sector. This leaves universities with 'regular people' trying to learn very technical things.</p>
<p>There is significant growth coming in the technologies that underpin a learner record. We need to be anxiously engaged both in learning about the technology (blockchain, NFT, Web3), but also hyper focused on defining what a learner record is.</p>
<p>This position has changed over the last few decades to be a systems leader on the campus.</p>
<p>This role had changed and demands professional development and more training in different software platforms.</p>
<p>To be forward-thinking - beyond our current century and into the future which means we have to not only think outside the box but push the boundaries of what others see as possible while maintaining and living within the confines of the rules and regulations that we serve.</p>
<p>Today's Registrar actively has the majority of the data and experience to gauge retention needs at an institution. Registrar's track student problems and can correlate these to poor advising, curriculum rollout or sunset, lack of course offering, graduation policies, transfer credit data standards, etc.</p>
<p>Today's registrar has evolved to be more ubiquitous than is case historically. While this role still includes records, curricular, room/event classroom scheduling, registration, certification responsibilities, our role in enrollment management has increased. By the same token, our influence and voice have waned over the course of time.</p>
<p>Twenty years working as a registrar, I've seen the position evolve into a systems manager (document imaging, SIS management, LMS integration, student portal customizations, reporting protocol, etc.). Direct work with students happens very rarely these days - I work mainly within the systems to create efficient electronic interactions. From an enrollment management perspective (which was mentioned a few times in this survey), my work is felt mostly on the retentions side improving the experience of enrolled students, reducing obstacles, and pulling them down a clear path to graduation.</p>
<p>Understanding the relationship of non-traditional placement variables that may impact courses. Also, understand the enrollment funnel and familiarity with CRMs and degree audit software usage.</p>
<p>Unfortunately, I'm not sure our college is a good example of what may be considered the modern-day Registrar. We are a small college with limited resources and staffing. The Registrar's office is terribly understaffed (office of one), and Enrollment is totally separate and independent from the Registrar's office. As such, the Registrar's office has very little say in the formation and implementation of Academic and/or Enrollment policy and procedure.</p>
<p>We are an institution of around 2000, mixed graduate and undergraduate. I have never really considered my role as registrar within SEM. I have not been brought into any conversations. I'm not sure what I have that would contribute. If this is the role of the modern registrar, then I need to learn more.</p>
<p>We are continually asked to do more but with less resources and less support.</p>

<p>we balance living in multiple realms...</p> <p>academic (with policy, history, guidance)</p> <p>technical (with services, technology solutions, interfaces)</p> <p>enrollment management (instnl capacity, student success, new program implementation &amp; support)</p> <p>all while trying to do so with our staff while growing their skills &amp; expertise and advocating for new solutions, which often involve vendor partnerships (a growing role to manage those relationships and to stay current).</p>
<p>We have many responsibilities but no authority.</p> <p>Recently, an academic dean told me that his degree programs do not need to be "managed," and he resented any interference by "staff."</p> <p>There is a refusal to acknowledge Registrars are subject matter experts, and our office deals with students and their issues over the long haul. Our service to students starts when they become students and continues for the rest of their lives.</p> <p>Surveys like this are great, but until the upper administration acknowledges that circumstances have changed, Registrars will continue to be seen as record keepers and policy enforcers.</p>
<p>We must be able to understand and implement the technology that provides the best service to students, support the need of our staff AND our leadership while maintaining the integrity of the student record</p>
<p>We need to be able to adapt to changes in our culture and environment that is conducive to students and staff. We need to be the change that focus on empowerment for All and be transparent will doing it.</p>
<p>With 23 years of registrar experience at three different institutions in disparate regions of the U.S., I am convinced that a registrar is most effective when s/he has faculty status and is therefore viewed as a peer by the faculty. I'll be the first to admit that it requires effort to earn the faculty's trust, but once in place, the registrar's ability to work alongside the faculty on matters of academic policy, curriculum revision, faculty advising, etc. are greatly enhanced.</p>
<p>With regards to the question: "What is the most significant obstacle registrars face when implementing changes that support the learner experience?" It is really all of the options listed. Because of financial constraints we are not able to hire people. With so many vacancies, it is hard to manage change. Without the power to leverage change and hire qualified staff, we lose the ability to manage our technology.</p>
<p>With the changes in technology and the accessibility to data, the Registrar's role has transformed from being the record keeper. We now have to understand the data throughout the whole college and have the skills to write our reports. In addition, any system implementations have put us at the forefront and have transformed us to project managers and even tech support for the pillars within the system we oversee.</p>
<p>Your question asking which 'three' areas of focus was difficult to answer as there were several choices that I felt were all equally important. In fact, the only selection that wasn't(in my opinion) important to a modern Registrar was the identification and retaining of revenue streams. Even that is sometimes part of the responsibility. So many aspects: systems, policy, curriculum, staffing, strategy - all work together in a Registrar being successful. Or maybe....I'm just over-tasked?</p>