



# AACRAO

## 2020 Chief Enrollment Management Officer

Summary of the AACRAO Career Profile Survey



**Contents**

Foreword..... 1

Summary ..... 2

Approach..... 3

Characteristics of Current Position ..... 4

    Organizational Structure..... 5

Experience and Education ..... 8

Portfolio of Responsibilities ..... 11

Workload and Supervisory Responsibility ..... 14

Personal Perspectives on the CEMO Position..... 15

Career Aspirations..... 18

Demographics ..... 19

In Their Own Words ..... 21

Closing and Resources ..... 28

Supplemental Data: Impact of 2020 on CEMO’s ..... 29

Appendix A: Preparations for Next Career Move ..... 31

Appendix B: Challenges to Career Aspirations ..... 37

Appendix C: Further Words of Wisdom..... 42

## Foreword

As we considered whether this was the appropriate time to take the pulse of our profession, it was clear that there was perhaps no better time to do so. The pandemic and social unrest of 2020 have created one of the most stressful and complex periods in our careers. That has the potential to create an outlier in historical comparisons. Ultimately, measurement of our profession under these intense circumstances may be a unique opportunity, as we hope we never again see the convergence of so many challenges. We will have to let history and future measurements tell us if 2020 was an outlier or not.

When we consider that enrollment management did not exist as a profession just a few decades ago, its rise into the institutional C-suite is meteoric. The steady progress of reporting to the chief executive in even these past six years is surprising. While CEMOs are certainly nomadic (again the largest group move from one institution to another), this data shows a significant number come from within their own institutions. That may portend a greater trend toward career pathways within enrollment management and is certainly one to watch in the future.

This report is another important chapter in the short history of our young profession. It provides longitudinal information about our backgrounds, our mobility, to whom we report, and who reports to us, among other data points. The next generation of CEMOs will have a rich trove of information to “apply SEM to SEM” (to quote Clayton Smith).

Tom Green, Ph.D.  
Associate Executive Director, Consulting and SEM  
AACRAO



## Summary

This is the third AACRAO chief admissions officer career profile report; the first and second were completed in [2014](#) and [2017](#). The AACRAO career profile series consists of reports on chief admissions officers (CAAdO)<sup>1</sup>, 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 would like to acknowledge the 299 CEMOs who responded to the survey during this time of extraordinary disruption and change. Thanks to their willingness to share their time, this report provides a *quantified* look at the functions and career paths of CEMOs.

The survey focused on the following:

- How the CEMO is positioned within the institution
- The career path leading up to the current CEMO 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 CEMO position

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

- is more likely to identify as a man
- identifies as non-Hispanic, white
- is at least 30 years old with a median age of 45 to 49 years old
- holds a master's degree
- has been in higher education their entire career
- has been in their current CEMO position less than five years
- reports to the chief executive of the institution
- came to their current CEMO position from another position within the same institution, most likely from the admissions and/or recruitment area
- works 50 hours or more a week
- has four or more direct reports

A few dozen provided “words of wisdom” (firsthand comments, observations, opinions, and advice) based on their experience in the position, and three provided their own story. From the

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

words of wisdom, personal stories, and data, the CEMO position is comprehensive, rewarding, and challenging on many levels. CEMOs need a broad skill set of knowledge and professional experience to be successful. It is also a position that most do not stay in exceptionally long.

## Approach

We identified AACRAO members who, by their position title, were most likely to serve as a CEMO. To confirm the validity of the selection criterion, the first question in the survey was designed to confirm that participants were identified correctly as the CEMO of their institution:

*For the purpose of this survey, the chief enrollment management position is defined as the position responsible for developing and implementing comprehensive strategic enrollment management efforts focused on retention, recruitment, and admissions. The position often has direct managerial responsibility and oversight for key enrollment units and enrollment services of the institution and is responsible for strategies that focus on retention and completion, recruitment, and student success.*

*Based on the description above, do you currently hold the position of chief enrollment management officer (CEMO)? This position may or may not be the same position as the chief admissions officer (CAO) at your institution.*

- Yes
- No

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

Over the course of developing the 2014, 2017 and 2020 surveys, response choices have evolved to encompass those captured each year in the “other” response choice or in the open-ended responses. Select data from all three surveys are included in this report. However, differences in percentages over time in the report cannot be affirmatively attributed to changes over time because the sample of respondents and institutions changes from one survey to the next.



## Characteristics of Current Position

Some institutions do not differentiate the responsibilities of a CEMO from a CAdO position, or they have one position but not the other. Therefore, to better understand the relationship between these two positions, the 2020<sup>2</sup> survey was updated to include the following:

Some institutions do not differentiate between the Chief Enrollment Management Officer (CEMO) and the Chief Admissions Officer (CAdO) - they are one in the same. AACRAO has defined the responsibilities of the CEMO position as follows:

The CEMO is responsible for the admission of undergraduate and/or graduate students, may also be responsible for recruitment, scholarship administration, and other related functions. This person should also have direct oversight of the staff of the admissions office, even if the title is dean, AVP or VP. This position serves at the institutional level not the college/school level – unless the college or school makes admissions decisions and processes its own applications.

**Based on the description above, which of the following best describes your institution with regards to the differentiation between the CAO and the CEMO?**

The CEMO and CAdO are ONE position

The CEMO and CAdO are SEPARATE positions

Each college/school has a CAdO and the institution has a single CEMO

This institution only has a CEMO, not a CAdO

Other

In this sample, 55% of institutions differentiate the CEMO and CAdO positions; 35% of CEMO and CAdO positions are one in the same; 9% have a CEMO and no CAdO; and one indicated that each college/school has a CAdO and the institution has a single CEMO. Public institutions are more likely than private to have both a CEMO and CAdO (Figure 1)<sup>3</sup>. Respondents were almost evenly split when asked which student population they served as CEMO, with 51% serving undergraduate only, 48% serving both undergraduate and graduate, and 1% serving graduate and/or professional students only.

Like the previous surveys, a master's degree is required for most CEMO positions (75%); 13% require a doctorate; and 12% require a bachelor's degree. In addition, the top five most common position titles for CEMOs in this sample are:

- Vice President for Enrollment Management<sup>4</sup>
- Chief Enrollment Management Officer
- Dean of Enrollment Management
- Vice Provost for Enrollment Management
- Associate Vice President for Enrollment management<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The 2019 CAdO AACRAO survey was similarly updated.

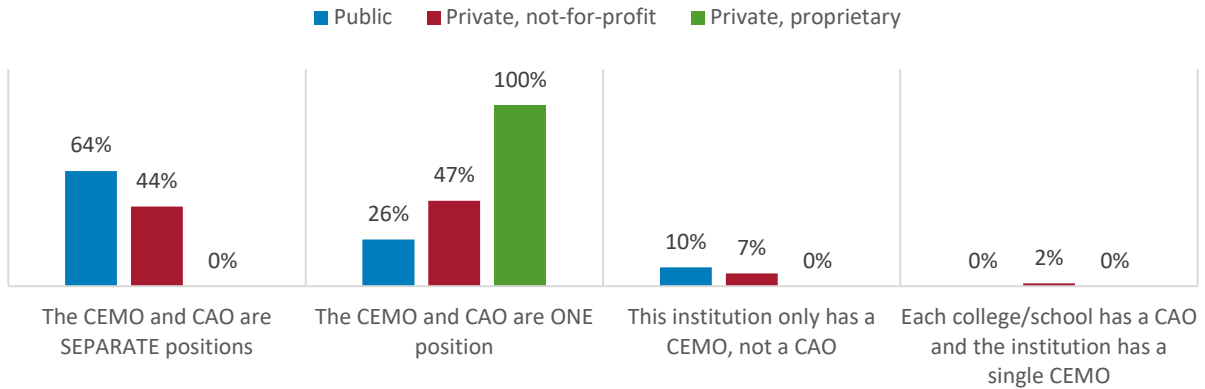
<sup>3</sup> Please note, this sample includes only one 'private-proprietary' response. All figures and data disaggregated by institutional control will show "100%" in one category for this single response. The data is not representative of "private-proprietary" institutions.

<sup>4</sup> Includes Vice President of Enrollment Management and Vice President Enrollment Management

<sup>5</sup> Includes Associate Vice President Enrollment Management



Figure 1: Relationship Between CEMO and CAo by Institutional Control



### Organizational Structure

In each career profile survey series, respondents are asked about their reporting structure and division. This year, 73% of CEMOs are part of the institution’s executive leadership team. Figure 2 charts the position to which the CEMO reports for all three iterations of the survey, and Figure 3 details this year’s data by institutional control.

Figure 2: CEMO's Supervisor 2014, 2017 and 2020

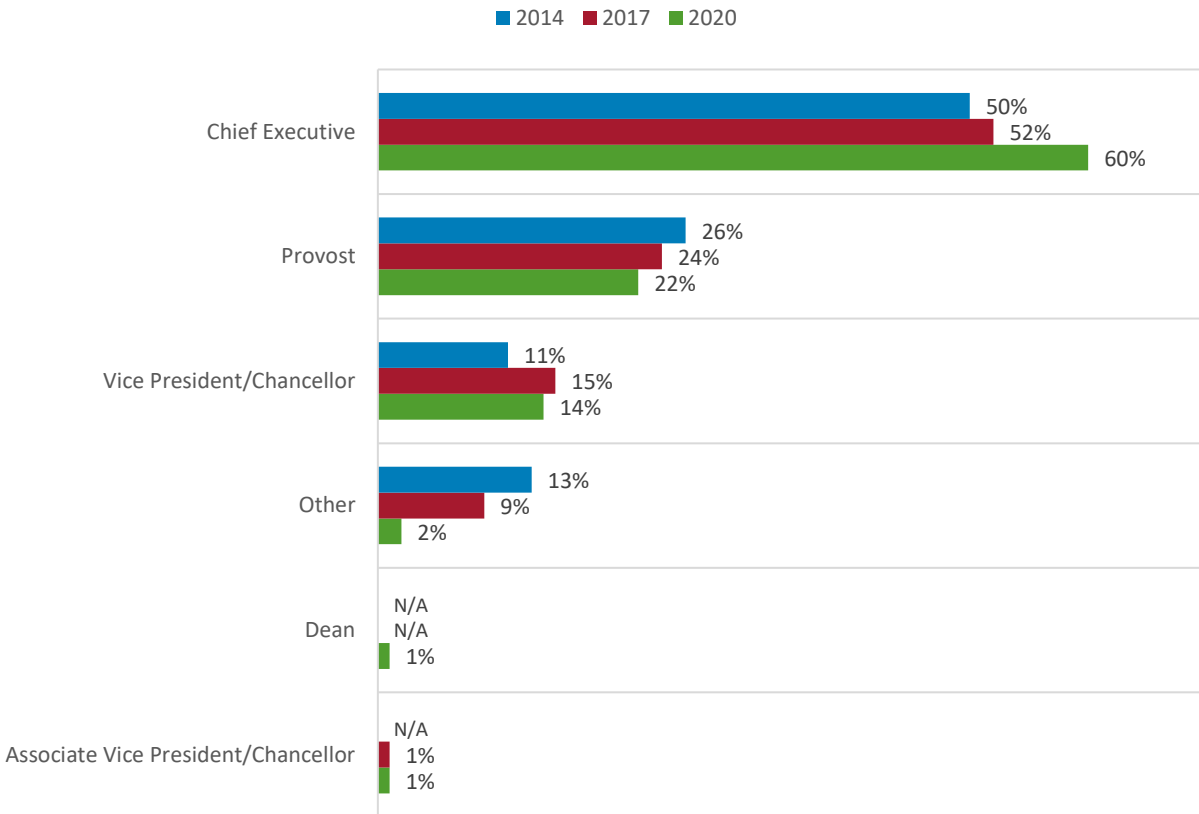
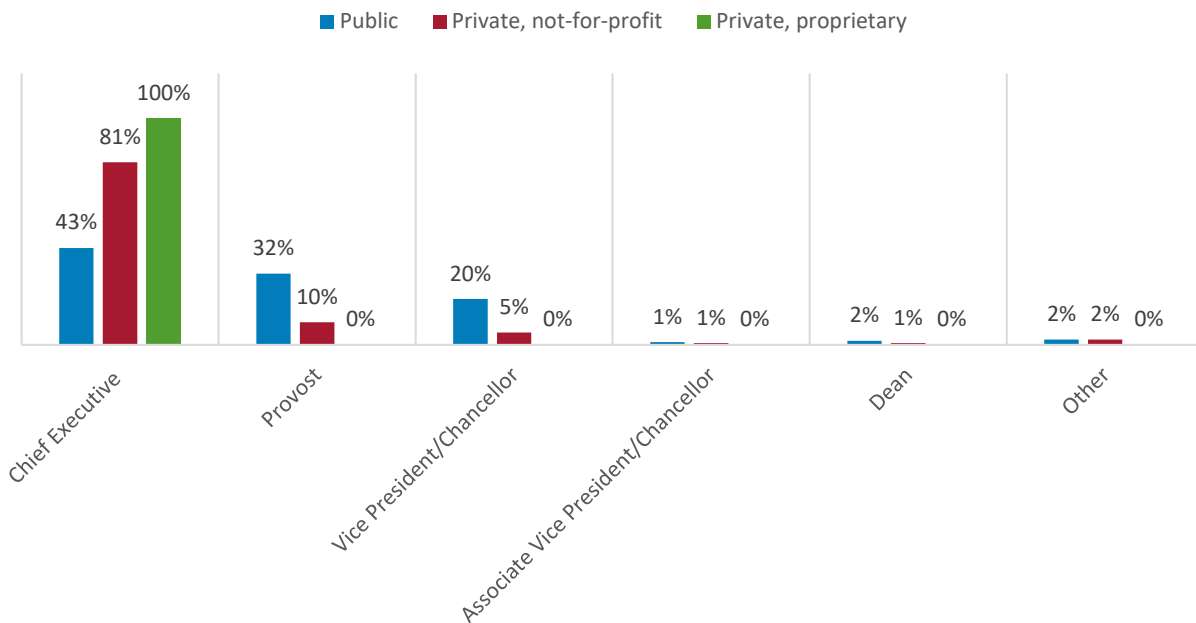


Figure 3: 2020 CEMO Supervisor by Institutional Control



2020 is the first year we asked about the name of the division in which the CEMO position resides. We found that more than half (55%) of CEMO positions reside within the division of enrollment management, followed by 19% that reside in academic affairs, 8% in student affairs, 6% in chief executive divisions, 5% in student services, 3% in enrollment services, and 4% other..

We also asked to which division the CEMO positions reports, and this year, most report to the division of the chief executive. Figures 4 and 5 display the data by year and by institutional control for 2020. A small percentage report to other divisions, including student services and institutional advancement. Figure 4 shows an apparent elevation within the organization of the CEMO role over time, which is not surprising given a growth in emphasis on enrollment management as well. These data may reflect a true change but would need to be compared on an institutional level over time to confirm.





Figure 4: CEMO Reporting Division 2014, 2017 and 2020

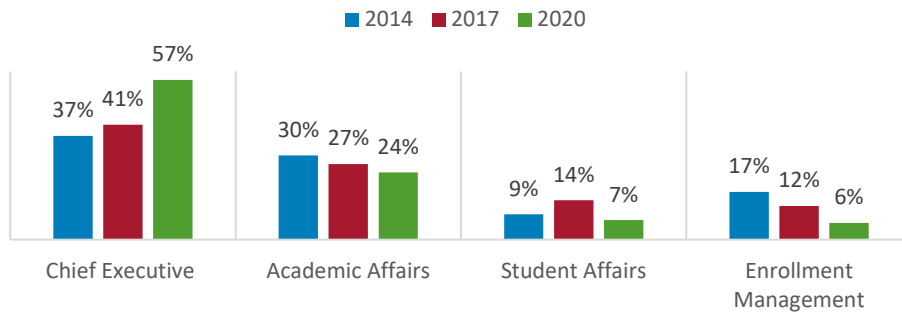
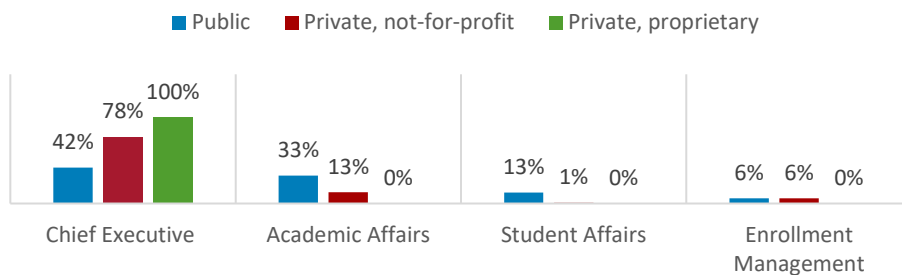


Figure 5: 2020 Division to which the CEMO Reports by Institutional Control



*Be an excellent collaborator. Be an excellent critical thinker. Be creative. Develop strong emotional intelligence. Be an excellent communicator. Be comfortable with numbers and develop an ability to use data to understand problems and create solutions. Care deeply for the people and the institution you work for. Be just in your work and protect your integrity. Be willing to dive into difficult challenges without fear. Listen deeply to those who offer you their opinion. Lift your head and look around at other institutions that are doing well. Learn from others. Don't be a know-it-all because you don't know it all. Understand what motivates others - faculty, staff, CFO, students, president, board, etc. Support others in their work because you will likely need them to support you at some time in your career. Get sleep and exercise. Get a professional coach/mentor. Find a wonderful spouse or partner to keep you grounded and sane.*

Karl Stumo  
 Vice President of Enrollment and Marketing  
 Concordia College at Moorhead

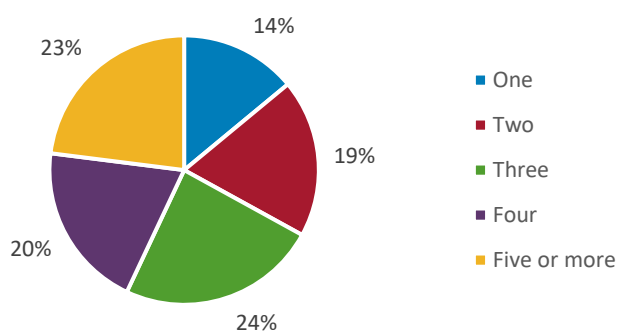


## Experience and Education

CEMOs were asked what percentage of their career has been in higher education, from what position they moved, at how many institutions they have been employed, and if they have changed institutional types. The survey also specifically asked if this position was their first position in higher education.

Consistent with 2014 and 2017, **more than half (56%) of CEMOs have been in their current position less than five years**; 29% five to less than 10 years, 8% 10 to less than 15 years, 4% 15 to less than 20 years, and 3% 20 or more years. From this series of data, it appears that individuals do not stay exceptionally long in any single CEMO position, which is similar to CADOs and registrars. Given that the CEMO is a senior level position and most come from within higher education, it is not surprising that 68% of respondents have 20 or more years of experience in higher education. Of those, 47% have 25 years or more, and just 3% have been in higher education less than 10 years. Most current CEMOs have changed institutions, with 67% having worked at three or more schools (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Number of Institutions in Career



Three questions were asked to 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 CEMOs appear to be almost equally mobile among institutional sizes but less mobile across type and control (Table 1-3).



Previous Institution Size	Current Institution Size					
	Under 1,000	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 4,999	5,000 - 9,999	10,000 - 19,999	20,000+
Under 1,000	18%	15%	19%	16%	5%	5%
1,000 - 2,499	24%	37%	28%	20%	27%	13%
2,500 - 4,999	18%	31%	26%	26%	15%	10%
5,000 - 9,999	18%	21%	34%	30%	34%	25%
10,000 - 19,999	35%	20%	19%	20%	27%	40%
20,000+	15%	16%	26%	24%	32%	35%
I have not worked at an institution with a different size than my current institution.	0%	1%	0%	6%	0%	10%

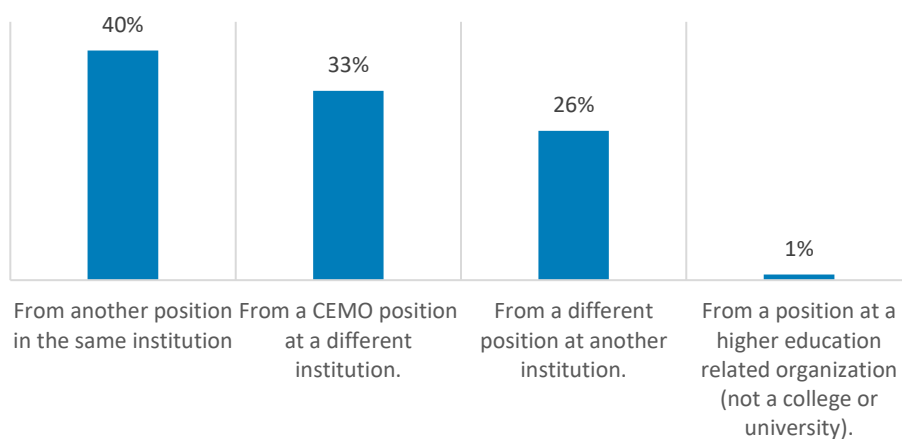
Previous Institution Type	Current Institution Type			
	Lower Division Only	Undergraduate	Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	Graduate and/or professional
Lower division only (primarily 2-year institutions)	32%	15%	9%	50%
Undergraduate only	15%	25%	9%	0%
Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	51%	56%	62%	0%
Graduate and/or professional only	2%	4%	3%	0%
State system office	2%	10%	2%	0%
I have not worked at an institution of a different type than my current institution.	2%	2%	13%	0%

Previous Institution Control	Current Institution Control	
	Public	Private, not-for-profit
Public	46%	25%
Private, not-for-profit	33%	45%
Private, proprietary	2%	5%
State system office	3%	2%
I have not worked at an institution with a different control than my current institution.	15%	15%



Eighty-one percent of CEMOs have been in higher education their entire professional career; 16% have moved in and out of higher education; and 3% started their higher education career with their current CEMO position. Among those whose career has not been entirely in higher education, 73% have spent more than half of their career in higher education. The few who came to the CEMO position as their first position in higher education came from positions such as a vice president of a nonprofit focused on higher education access, an electrical engineer in the energy sector, and professionals in the fields of law and marketing. ***A third of CEMOs who were already in higher education moved into their current position from another CEMO position at a different institution, and 40% previously held a position within the same institution*** (Figure 7).

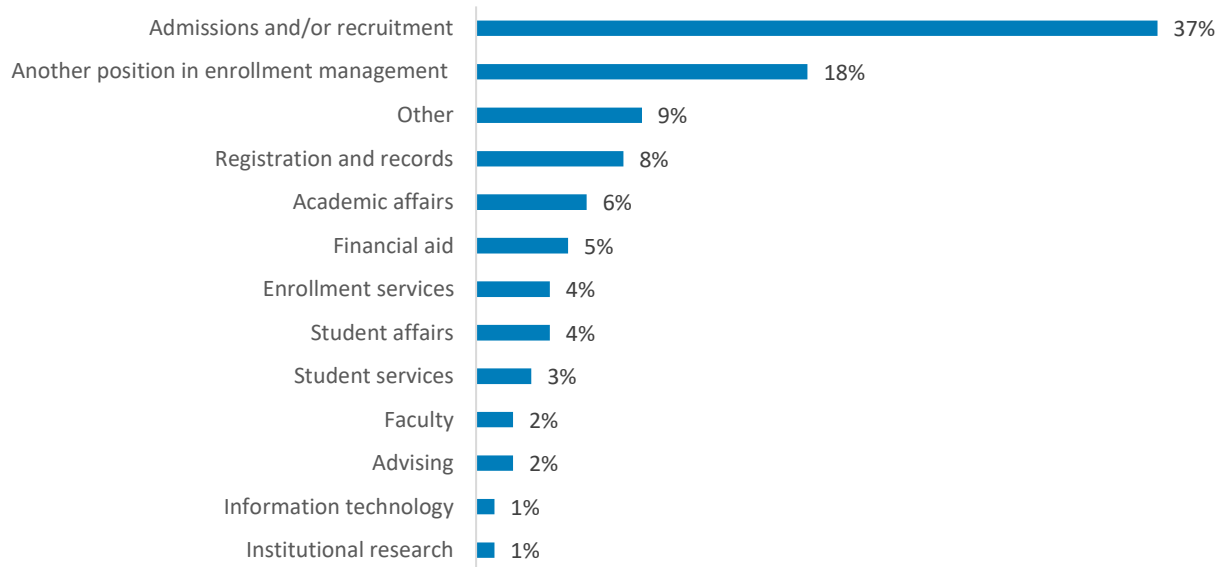
Figure 7: Position Previous to CEMO



Nearly a third of those new to the CEMO role were employed beforehand in an admissions and/or recruitment position (Figure 8). Other areas of employment included continuing education, marketing, chief of staff, auxiliary services/housing, and retention.



Figure 8: Previous Area of Employment in Higher Education if not a CEMO



## Portfolio of Responsibilities

As with the 2014 and 2017 surveys, this year's included questions about the CEMO portfolio of responsibilities. The list of committees was updated for 2020 to include seven new response choices<sup>6</sup> based on the 2017 "other" response choices and open-ended data (Figure 9). Some CEMOs also participate in committees such as summer bridge, academic leadership, transfer, campus safety, critical incident management team and diversity, among others.

Figure 9: Committee Participation

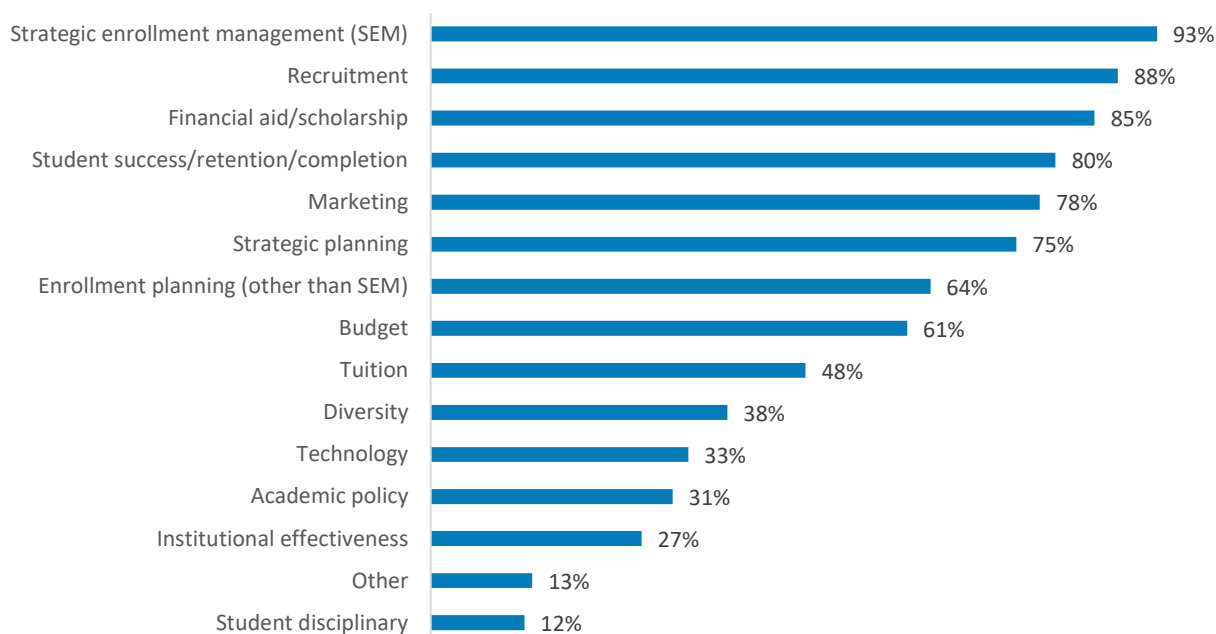


Table 4 represents a portfolio of responsibilities typical to the CEMO position. Each of the column categories was defined as follows for the survey participants:

- **Responsible:** I perform this myself. I do not delegate the activity or responsibility.
- **Supervise:** I have 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

<sup>6</sup> Financial aid and scholarship, marketing, enrollment planning other than SEM, budget, tuition, diversity, and institutional effectiveness.



Table 4: Portfolio of Responsibilities					
	Responsible	Supervise	Participate	Inform	N/A
Identifying institutional enrollment goals	<b>72%</b>	12%	14%	1%	1%
Evaluation and analysis of marketing and recruitment effectiveness	<b>42%</b>	36%	19%	3%	0%
Target market identification	31%	<b>52%</b>	12%	4%	1%
Identifying academic college/department enrollment goals	26%	13%	<b>32%</b>	19%	10%
Managing technology solutions	13%	<b>43%</b>	30%	11%	2%
New student recruitment	11%	<b>83%</b>	5%	1%	0%
Institutional marketing	10%	27%	<b>49%</b>	12%	2%
Retention/student success/completion	9%	29%	<b>48%</b>	11%	2%
Territory management	8%	<b>70%</b>	9%	5%	8%
International admission	7%	<b>67%</b>	12%	6%	7%
Admissions processing	5%	<b>82%</b>	11%	3%	0%
International recruitment	5%	<b>63%</b>	14%	7%	12%
International student services (current students)	4%	25%	26%	<b>27%</b>	19%
Institutional research	4%	6%	<b>47%</b>	35%	8%
Financial aid	3%	<b>76%</b>	12%	6%	2%
Records and registration	2%	<b>55%</b>	18%	17%	7%
Veterans education certification and reporting	2%	<b>40%</b>	17%	21%	20%
Academic advising	2%	18%	25%	<b>35%</b>	20%
Academic planning	1%	3%	<b>41%</b>	<b>41%</b>	13%
Academic skill support (e.g., tutoring)	0%	13%	15%	<b>39%</b>	33%
Career services	0%	12%	13%	37%	<b>38%</b>



Never pass up an opportunity to increase your understanding of how other units in the EM division operate. Don't wait for someone to "train" you. Get in there and start learning on your own. Don't think of yourself as just an admission person, or a financial aid person, etc. You're a member of the enrollment "team!" Your job is to recruit and retain the best students possible, and who will be successful at your university, period. It doesn't matter which office you report to; all are working toward the same goals.

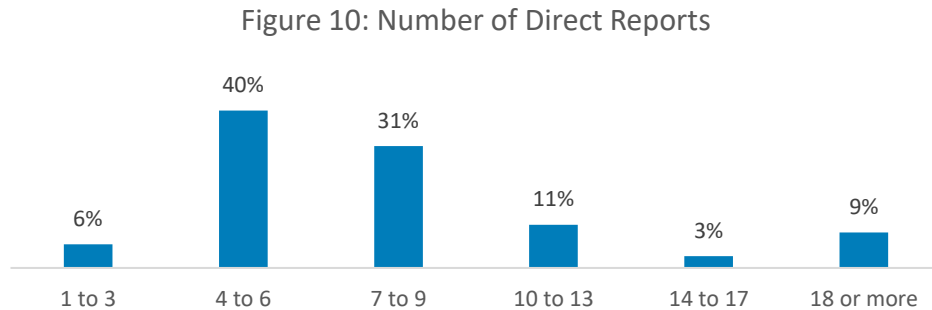
Mike Scott  
 Associate Provost for Enrollment Management  
 Texas Christian University



## Workload and Supervisory Responsibility

The CEMO position is a demanding one regarding the hours worked per week, number of regularly calendared meetings, travel requirements and number of direct reports.

**71% indicated they have four to nine direct reports, and 9% reported having 18 or more** (Figure 10).



**10% attend more than five calendared meetings on a normal business day;** 19% attend five meetings; 29% four meetings; 32% three meetings; 7% two meetings; and 2% just one meeting.

**33% work 50-54 hours a week on average.** A fifth work 55 or more hours a week, and in that group one reported working 80 hours; the mean was 61 hours. 31% work 45 to 49 hours; 12% work 41 to 44; and 4% work 40 hours a week.

**More than half (53%) travel for work excluding travel to professional conferences and other professional development activities.** Among those, **26% spend more than 20 business days a year on travel**, 28% spend 16 to 20 days, 22% 11 to 15 days, 18% 6 to 10 days, and 6% one business week or less. CEMOs travel less than CAdOs.



*Don't chase the dollar. Do your homework... if the position is looking for a miracle worker... ask yourself if their goals are realistic*

Bryan Terry  
Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management  
Arkansas State University - Main Campus





## Personal Perspectives on the CEMO Position

From a list provided, respondents identified the top three roles/responsibilities and the top skills/attributes they believe are most important for the CEMO position (Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11: Most Important Roles and Responsibilities

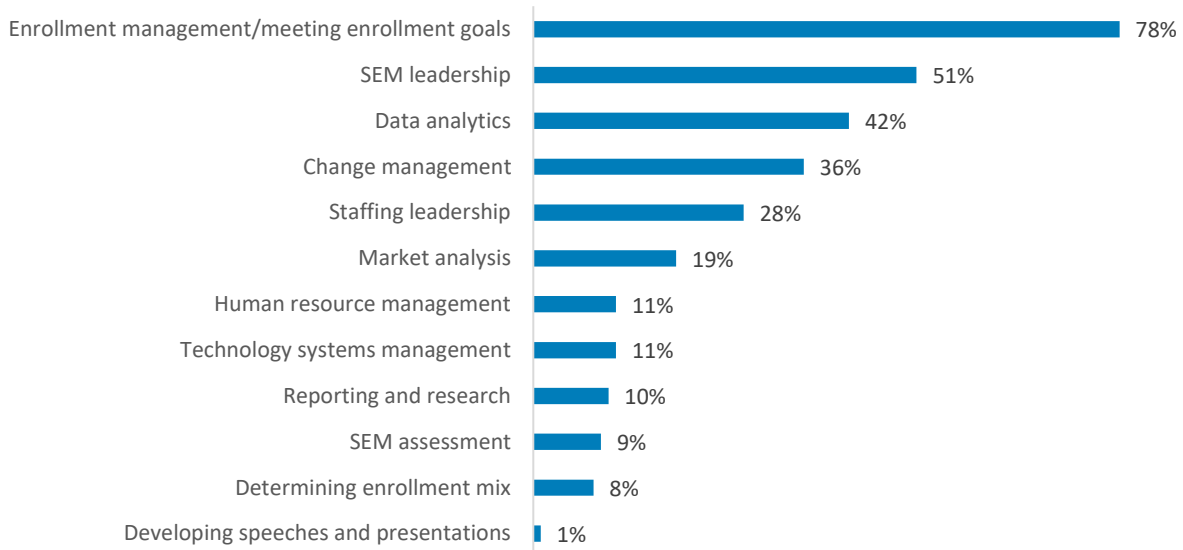


Figure 12: Most Important Skills and Attributes



CEMO’s identified budget limitations, meeting enrollment goals, and time to get things done as the top three challenges of the position (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Most Challenging Aspects of the Position



New for 2020 are survey questions and reaction statements focused on factors important to CEMOs to retain them in their position and other measures of job satisfaction. Of the choices proffered, a work-life balance was ranked as number one by almost a third, followed by fair compensation (Table 5).

	Appreciation	Fair compensation	Increased responsibility/enlarged portfolio	Work-life balance	Professional development opportunity
Rank #1	21%	26%	16%	<b>31%</b>	6%
Rank #2	24%	<b>31%</b>	13%	19%	14%
Rank #3	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	15%	18%	19%
Rank #4	18%	13%	20%	15%	<b>35%</b>
Rank #5	13%	7%	<b>37%</b>	17%	26%

**The majority of CEMOs are satisfied with their current position.** When asked to react to the statement “I am satisfied with my current position,” 25% selected “describes me very well”; 35% checked “describes me very well”; and 27% responded with “described me moderately well.” Four percent are not satisfied with their job, and another 9% feel slightly satisfied.

**56% percent feel that their professional and personal skills are appreciated at their institution most of the time;** 22% said always; 13% about half the time; 9% sometimes; and 1% never.



**88% agree or strongly agree with the statement “I have a great deal of freedom on the job.”**  
A further 9% are neutral, and 3% disagree.

**26% 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 CEMO.”**  
On the other hand, 10% strongly agree; 44% agree; and 19% are neutral on the matter.

**85% feel they are given support for professional development activities half of the time or more,** while 13% selected sometime and 2% never.

**88% feel pressure to perform always or most of the time.** An additional 6% feel such pressure about half the time; 4% feel it sometimes; and just 2% never feel pressure to perform.



*Take advantage of every professional opportunity. If someone sees something in you, do not shy away. Receive it, and use that experience to springboard you into other avenues. This profession is ever changing. No two days are the same, and that is what makes it challenging yet rewarding.*

David Page  
Vice President for Enrollment Management  
Dillard University



*I think it is important to be realistic with optimism. This is a stressful job with a lot of pressure, but you must be able to speak to the reality of the climate and know that the pendulum will swing the other direction. It just might take a decade.*

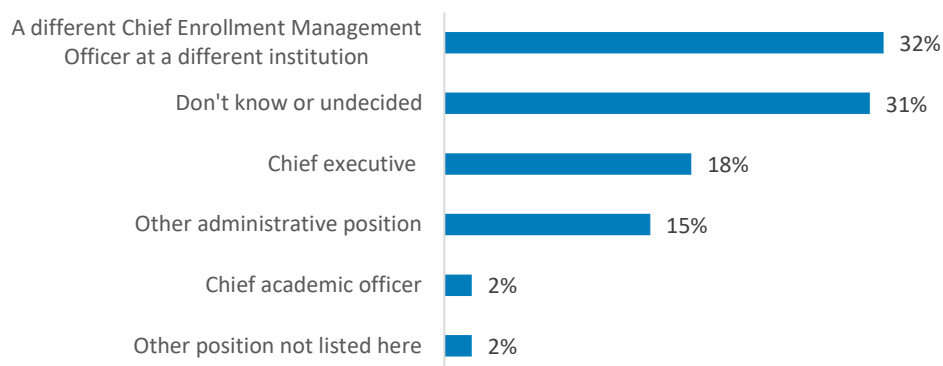
Carrie Vath  
Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management  
Montana Technological University



## Career Aspirations

Respondents were asked about their career aspirations. Among the 66% who have an idea of what their next career move will be, 28% want to change institutions; another 16% want to stay at their current institution; 18% want to retire; and 3% no longer want to work at an institution. Within the group wanting to stay in higher education for their next career move, 32% want to move to a different CEMO position (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Next Career Move in Higher Education



**50% percent plan on making their next career move in one to three years.** An additional 22% plan to move to another position in four or more years, and 27% remain undecided. When asked about what, if anything, those who are not retiring are doing to prepare for their next career move, common responses included pursuing a doctorate, gaining broader experience, and fostering professional connections (Appendix A). They were also asked what their perceived challenges are for making their next career move. Completing an advanced degree, getting the right skillset, finding the right fit, and addressing place-bound issues were among the many challenges facing CEMOs who want to make a career move (Appendix B).



An enrollment manager should provide leadership in change management, systems thinking, quantitative assessment, data exploration, human capital development, and collaborative goal development. This type of leader should come into the field with (or develop quickly) a love for learning and the feeling of being committed to a mission. If you have can manage this emotional commitment to growth and mission, you can acquire the leadership skills and tendencies as you progress through your career trajectory.

Kevin Coughlin  
Interim Vice President Enrollment Management  
Florida International University

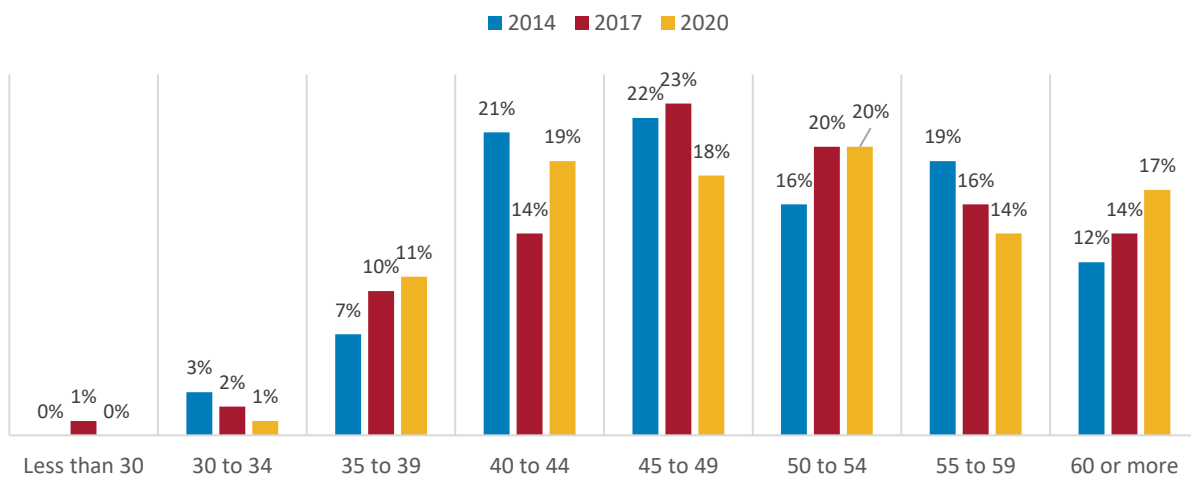


## Demographics

Most CEMOs held a master's degree when they assumed their current position; 7% held a bachelor's; and 34% held a doctorate. These data are like the 2014 and 2017 cohorts. Twelve percent have completed another degree or professional certification since they assumed their current CEMO position, including a doctorate, certificates in strategic enrollment management and a master's in enrollment management.

Age data from the three surveys shows little change from cohort to cohort, which supports the understanding that this is a senior level position (Figure 15).

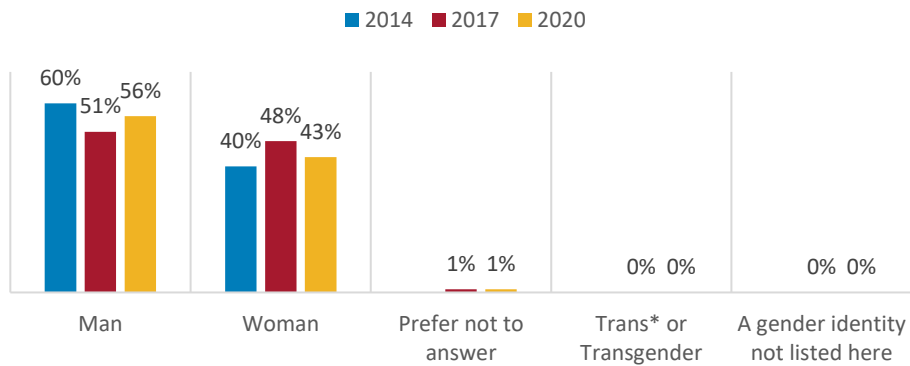
Figure 15: Age of Respondents 2014, 2017 and 2020



**The three-cohort data indicate there has been no noticeable shift in CEMO position participation rate by race, ethnicity, or gender in six years despite the comparatively high turnover in the CEMO position.** There were no statistical differences in gender identity by institutional size, type, or control in this sample. In addition, there were no statistical differences in gender identity and/or racial/ethnic identity by age group. However, gender identity skews toward self-identifying as a man for all three cohorts (Figure 16).



Figure 16: Gender Identity



Self-reported race and ethnicity remain virtually the same across all three cohorts. In this year's data, 6% identify as Hispanic or Latino; 82% identify as white; 12% identify as black or African American; 3% preferred not to answer; 1% identify as multi-racial, and 1% identify as Asian. There is a statistical relationship between race and institutional control. CEMOs who identify as black or African American are statistically more likely to be employed at public institutions than private institutions. On the other hand, CEMOs who identify as white are more likely to be employed by private, not-for-profit institutions.



## In Their Own Words

### My Path to the CEMO Position

Kasey Urquídez, Ed.D.

Vice President, Enrollment Management & Dean, Undergraduate Admissions  
The University of Arizona

Growing up, I knew I wanted to work with students. I planned to be a teacher. Never in my wildest dreams did I think about a career in higher education. I especially never considered becoming the Chief Enrollment Officer at the University of Arizona, a large, public research university.

As a first-generation college student, from a small town in southeast Arizona, I moved to the big city of Tucson to attend college at the University of Arizona. While serving as a federal work study student, I met my mentor, Patti. She helped me see that career opportunities supporting college students was a good fit for my passions and strengths.

When I graduated with my bachelor's degree, Patti encouraged me to apply for positions at Arizona. I was hired as an academic advisor. I liked it, but I was drawn to enrollment work. Patti encouraged my interests and helped me find positions to apply for in Undergraduate Admissions (you know, in the Sunday newspaper under "Admin Prof" ... times have changed!) I applied and interviewed four times! I bought my first suit, practiced and prepared, and after each admissions interview, I got the rejection call.

Figuring it was not meant to be, I stopped applying for admissions roles and continued to work with college students in other ways. Six months later, out of the blue, a call came asking if I was still interested in an admissions role. I took a chance, resigned from my advising job, and became an "interim" coordinator. I reapplied for the permanent position a year later. Finally, two years after my quest to work in admissions had started, I succeeded. I fell in love with admissions and enrollment work! I found passion in supporting students on finding the best "fit" for them to meet their future goals.

While I loved working in admissions, I pushed on with my original goal to become a teacher. I had a plan (or so I thought), and I was going to stick with it. I earned two masters, teacher education and curriculum & instruction. After graduation, I was offered a teaching position. I thought this is what I always wanted – but I just could not accept. My heart was called to my work in enrollment. I am grateful for that difficult decision and that I continued my higher education path.

I am a competitive and hardworking person. Over the years, I earned positions at different levels in the admissions office at Arizona. As I took on the director of recruitment role, I decided to continue my education so I would be more marketable for career growth. I was constantly told I needed to "move out in order to move up" and that it was unusual to progress to an AVP or VP role at the same institution, especially your alma mater. I entered a doctoral program and began taking calls when search firms reached out. I started getting more involved in organizations like the College Board and NACAC and grew my network in regional and statewide organizations. I am very grateful for these opportunities because the people I have



met have truly impacted my life for the better, personally, and professionally. I could not do this work without my friends in education.

In 2010, as I was entering dissertation phase for my doctorate, my boss announced he was moving on to a new institution. I did not know what that meant for me, but I knew it was a make or break moment. I was director of recruitment and I wanted to be director of admissions! Little did I know, I was not thinking big enough.

I was called in to meet with my boss's boss and she said, "do you want it?" and I said, "yes, I want to be director of admissions!" and her reply was, "no, the whole thing!" *What does that even mean? The whole thing? Enrollment Management? Am I capable? I didn't know financial aid policy. I didn't know the detailed work of the Registrar.* I almost let an amazing opportunity pass me by due to fear. Again, my mentors stepped in to encourage me and push me to levels I never imagined.

A few weeks later, I was offered the position of Interim Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. Our university president shared that if I completed my dissertation by December, he would officially make me the AVP. I have never worked so hard in my life – not only learning and leading in a new role but completing and defending my dissertation while being a mom to two young kids. Extreme credit goes to my loving husband for working around the clock at work and home to ensure my success.

Since then, my job has changed significantly. Units moved in and out from under my direction as I moved to Associate Vice President and today, as Vice President of Enrollment Management and Dean, Undergraduate Admissions. I have always managed core enrollment management functions and accepted new opportunities to learn and combine efforts with student support units. Change has been the only constant. I am grateful for the work I do each day, serving students I care about and advocating for a university I love.

I encourage those who want to pursue a Chief Enrollment Officer role to work hard, grow their networks, and accept new opportunities and challenges. This is truly a rewarding career path.





## My Path to the CEMO Position

Shelly Gehrke, Ph.D.

Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management and Academic Success  
Emporia State University

As the studious, leader-type kid in school, everyone thought I would be a lawyer or maybe even president. Ironically, I was undecided until my junior year of college. I made good grades in science, so I kept taking science classes and finally decided on environmental science. After I took a public relations class for general education, I added a second major. My co-curricular background is stereotypical of a higher ed professional, though. I was president of the Residence Hall Association (RHA), a senator in student government, a residence assistant (RA) and I worked in admissions and led campus tours. Of course, I believed no one did the tour as well as I did. Recruiter #1!

Similar to my start in college, my professional start was also a question mark. I didn't want to spend my days outside, especially getting dirty, nor did I want to be in a lab. Really, I wanted to [environmentally] "save the world" using my PR skills and science knowledge. Unfortunately, an oil tanker had spilled in Alaska, and the only environmental warriors hired had extensive experience beyond tour guide extraordinaire skills. Finally, I was able to put some of my PR skills to work as a graphic designer and event planner in continuing education for Texas Woman's University. One day, while eating gummy bears that I bought from the student union with a colleague, I realized I wanted to work on a college campus for the rest of my life. But in what capacity? I had no idea.

As luck would have it, soon thereafter I was offered the director of admissions position for a tiny, residential, two-year, private, religiously affiliated college. I probably shouldn't mention that the institution doesn't exist anymore; however, during my time, we were recruiting student-athletes right and left. One year we had enough baseball players for two full teams (poor coach). We also had students from churches who supported the institution, and of course, everyone had a "scholarship."

Small, private, two-year colleges that are completely enrollment-based (a.k.a. no real endowment) are tricky, and the pressure was always on. The college president would frequently come into my office, pound on my desk, and want to know what the numbers were at that very moment (sometimes he spit when he talked). There were successes and great colleagues; however, when I left to start graduate school, I swore I'd never do admissions again—famous last words, of course.

In graduate school, I learned that my true love was working one-on-one with students. Academic advising became my new home. I even did my dissertation on the impact advising had on students who were on academic probation. Graduate school was wonderful and affirmed my home in higher ed!

Fast forward, you grow and learn with each position and institution until you find the place that truly allows you to blossom. Emporia State University is a small, regional, affordable institution that offers a student experience similar to that of a private institution. I arrived as director of the advising center but soon the position grew to assistant vice president of academic success. With retention numbers improving, I was given the opportunity to add



undergraduate admissions. Many flashbacks to my previous experiences caused me to hesitate, but I decided to take the step. Unfortunately, that step didn't include a director; so, for two years, I was director of admissions (along with another small position as assistant provost for enrollment management and academic success). My big challenge was to fund a director position appropriately and competitively. Resources are unfortunately a frequent challenge in higher education, but this was a special problem. The secret was to tie the salary to the incoming applications. If for salary only, the director always has incentive to bring in lots of applications. Fortunately, I did hire a great director and added him to my already amazing leadership team. They do great work and make me look good frequently! Every day we tackle recruitment, enrollment, and retention, but what that really means is that we get to work with students to help them find their university home and walk with them on their journey to graduation.

CEMOs are lifelong learners, though sometimes we learn the hard way. What has been true throughout my entire career is that the most important key to success is people and relationships. They are essential in achieving your goals and your professional happiness. Communication, transparency, and trust are also invaluable to building those important relationships. Don't forget to always be willing to listen and learn. And do not let initials behind your name or titles in front of your name allow you to think that you can't cold call, label postcards or stuff packets. Just like it takes a village to raise a child, it takes the university community to graduate a student.



## My Path to the CEMO Position

Jason S. Trainer, Ph.D.  
Vice Provost for Enrollment Management  
Indiana State University

A career serving as a chief enrollment officer is stressful, turbulent, and increasingly challenging. If you are seeking this position, beware that the seat is often hot and lonely. However, this position is likely an institutional change agent. For those professionals aiming to make a meaningful difference, your influence can be transformational for both the institution and its students.

My path to this seat has been an incredible journey. I have been fortunate to have experienced both success and failure along the way. As I stepped into the role of Vice Provost for Enrollment Management at Indiana State University, I was confident in my ability to succeed. My previous losses served as a humbling reminder of the difficulty of this career path, along with the need to continually improve and get better.

After being around a few great leaders in my career, I focused my attention on implementing a routine that supported performing at a high level for extended periods of time. My daily routine typically runs from 5 AM to 5 PM. I usually have worked out, reflected, and strategized about my day prior to anyone else arriving on campus. When I leave the office, my goal is to disconnect, recharge, and focus on my family. As you can imagine, every day is unique with varying obligations, so this is more of my ideal day. Intentionality, boundaries, and self-care are the secret ingredients to the success of this routine.

My daily routine establishes a healthy and stable foundation to complete a chief enrollment officer's difficult work. Although every institution and enrollment scenario is unique, I have experienced a pattern of demands to complete this complex work. This role requires the ability to 1) cast a compelling vision, 2) operationalize best practices, 3) conduct regular assessments utilizing data analytics, and 4) develop and leverage your entire team. These four critical activities are likely intertwined, on-going, and non-sequential.

Furthermore, the ability to communicate these efforts to various stakeholders is essential. Chief enrollment officers often need to inspire, persuade, and compel stakeholders to support enrollment initiatives. It's tiring and challenging work that is often complicated by shared governance and bureaucracy. As higher education enters an era of declining demographics and increased financial insecurity, our work has never been more paramount. What we do matters, and that is why we do it.



## **The Most Rewarding Part of My Job is . . .**

Will Brantley, M.A., MBA  
Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing  
Hannibal LaGrange University

It has been said, “If you love your job, you’ll never work a day in your life.” This is a LIE! I absolutely love my job as vice president for enrollment management and marketing, but I work and work hard every day. And let me tell you, I don’t love every day. And I’m OK with that. There are some days that are hard, and the challenges of enrollment in today’s world are seemingly overwhelming. However, I still love my job and the work I’m doing, even among the challenges. But it is work!

Answering what the most rewarding part of my job is like asking me which of my children I love the most. It is really hard to pick. I love challenges and puzzles and strategy and being a chief enrollment officer hits all those things. I love leading and developing the people around me and being CEMO allows me to do those things. I love fixing things or seeing how something can be done better and being CEMO allows me to do that. But I think more than any of those, being around high school and college-age students and watching their lives transform in the four years they are on campus is the most rewarding part of my job.

I think too often we get caught up in the strategy and challenge and obstacles and business that comes with being CEMO. I think too often we forget that what we do affects very real people at a pretty stressful time in their lives, and the experiences they have during their time in college will literally shape and mold the rest of their lives. Going to our school cafeteria or coffee shop and interacting with our students is like breathing fresh air for me. Yes, we have our share of students who make poor choices, but overall, our campus is full of great young men and women who are just trying to figure out this transition from childhood to adulthood. Watching them grow from wide-eyed, overwhelmed freshmen to mature adults going out into the work world or graduate school is amazing.

Keeping up with these students as they marry, have babies, and advance in their lives is a privilege. I may not know every one of our students personally, but I can take a small bit of satisfaction in the fact that my job and my work has played a small part of their story. And that is the most rewarding part of my job as a chief enrollment officer.



## Wow, I Wish I Knew That Before Becoming a CEMO: Small Schools are Different?

Kirk Fatool  
Dean of Enrollment Management  
Faith Bible Seminary

I am the product of large universities. Sprawling campuses, large alumni bases, and lots to do in towns where the school is located. In other words, the types of places that I assumed students would flock to as I did all those years ago. What I wished I knew, was that small schools are different. Large, well-established schools create their own gravitational pull in the constellation of higher education. That doesn't mean that creative and consistent work in SEM is unnecessary, but the job is different. The school I work for, then as now, is primarily online. There are two programs with minimal on-campus time required. Still, when I began my work as CEMO in 2015, I assumed much of the job was going to be guiding students through the admissions process. I would simply stand back and wait for students to come to me. I hate rhetorical questions in writing, but now it seems apt; do I have to tell you what happened next?

For approximately the next year, I was frustrated by the fact that, even in the school's home state, at a conference less than 60 miles from campus, potential students would look at me, bewildered that our school even existed. I don't think Harvard has this problem...I very quickly realized that my job was not just to enroll students, but also to convince them our school existed. According to a *U.S. News* article from 2018, the average campus enrollment across the United States is 6,365, but the average at the ten largest schools was 45,807. However, because of the way averages work, I would guess most of us work at a school with an FTE of 2,000 or less. As such, we will never have the pull of the big guys. It is hard to compete using the methods of big schools. This lesson finally took hold about three years ago when I went to a large conference (also less than 60 miles from our campus) and dealt with the same issue of no one knowing who we were. That is when I realized I can't have the same marketing strategy as the big schools, with their amazing campuses, centuries of history, and large workforces. I began to think of what I could do. I started to think about our current student body, and I did some data analysis about our students' average age, income, geography, etc. It was then that I began to see what made my school different. I realized that our little school was unique and offered unique degrees that appealed to a specific demographic. Once I started focusing on that demographic, our recruitment and enrollment became much more efficient and effective. Targeting the right students freed me up from taking a shotgun approach and netting only about 10% of everyone I talked to. Little schools don't have the time, money, or people to operate that way. We started going to the right conferences, advertising in the right places, and talking to the right people. While they could be lured by the big guys, we still had something to offer. Knowing what we had to offer and how to present it was a huge turning point in my career. I wish, when I had started, someone told me, "Listen, your school is small with a small staff and an absurdly small marketing budget. Additionally, no one knows who you are. Had you heard of us before you moved here? Keep all this in mind, go to the right places, and be sure you are talking to the right people."



## Closing and Resources

As stated in the summary, this is AACRAO's third CEMO career profile report, and we received 299 responses. From these, it can be concluded that a typical CEMO:

- is more likely to identify as a man
- identifies as non-Hispanic, white
- is at least 30 years old with a median age of 45 to 49 years old
- holds a master's degree
- has been in higher education their entire career
- has been in their current CEMO position less than five years
- reports to the chief executive of the institution
- came to their current CEMO position from another position within the same institution, most likely from the admissions and/or recruitment area
- works 50 hours a week or more
- has four or more direct reports

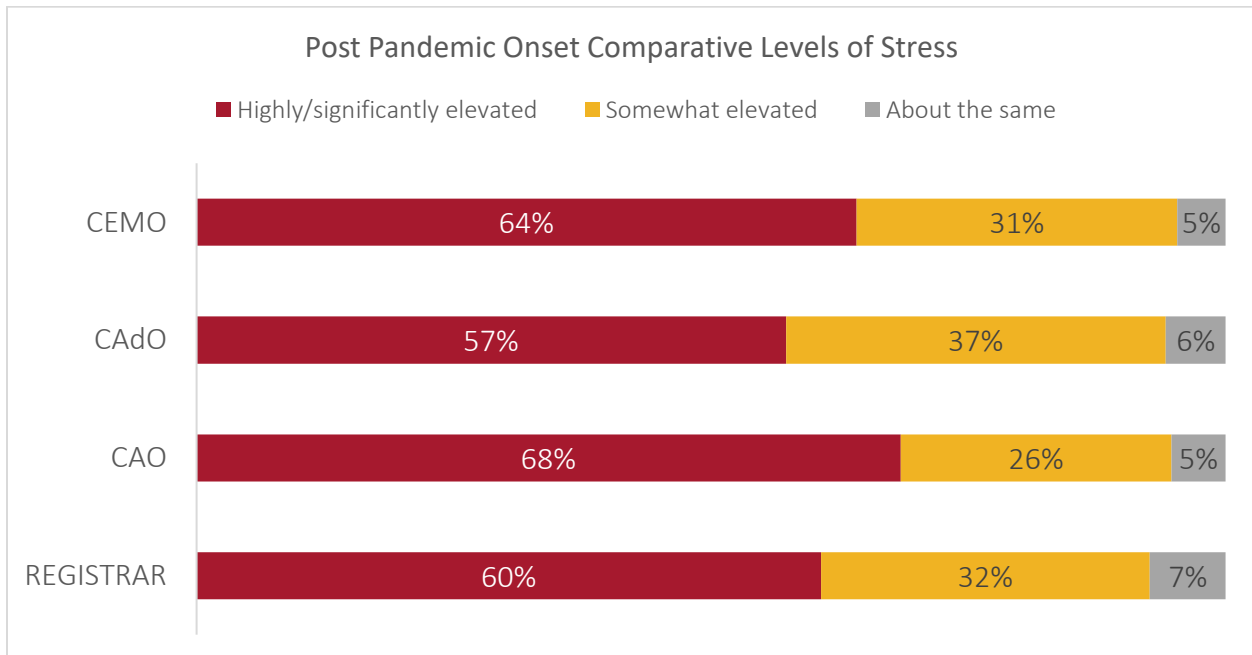
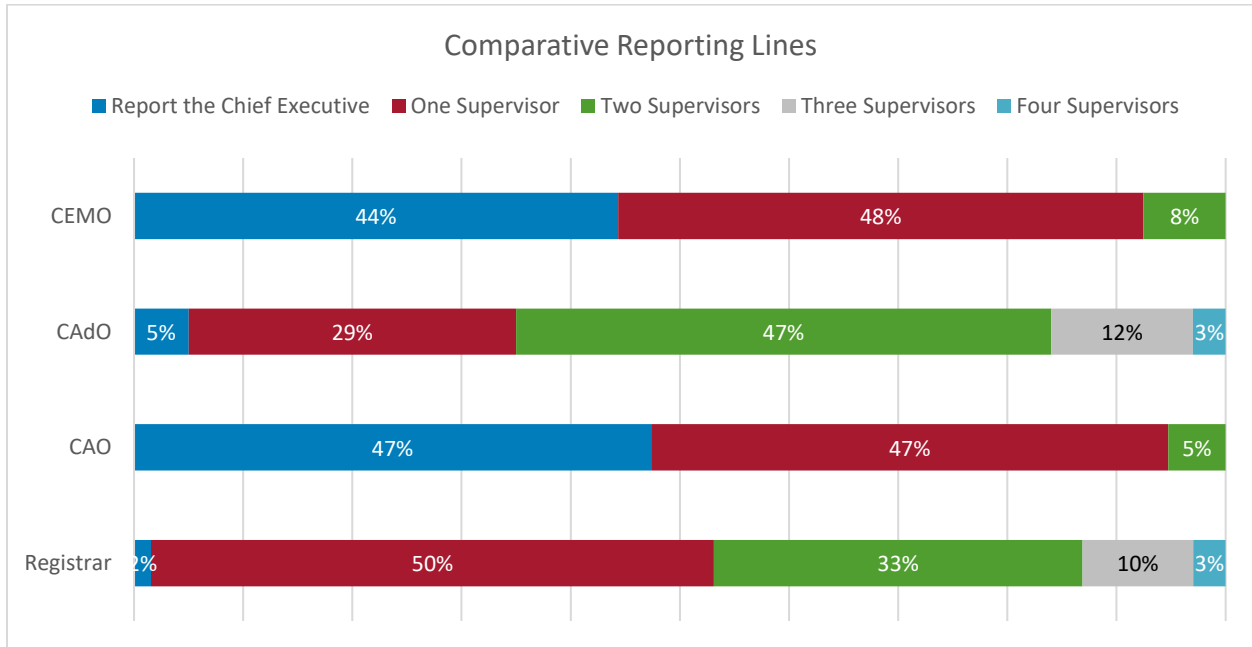
In addition, the data indicates that there are likely to be several hundred CEMO openings in the United States in the next three years. Current CEMOs shared that there are multiple challenges to moving on from their CEMO role including, among others: the time and ability to complete further education, the willingness and/or ability to relocate, and the ability to find a good institutional match. Their words of wisdom include similar recommendations for those seeking their first CEMO position. AACRAO has several resources that can help you prepare for your first CEMO position including:

- SEM-Endorsement [Program](#)
- SEM professional [proficiencies](#)
- Essentials of SEM [online course](#)
- [Core Concepts of SEM](#) book
- [Handbook of SEM](#)
- *SEM Quarterly*
- SEM [Conference](#)

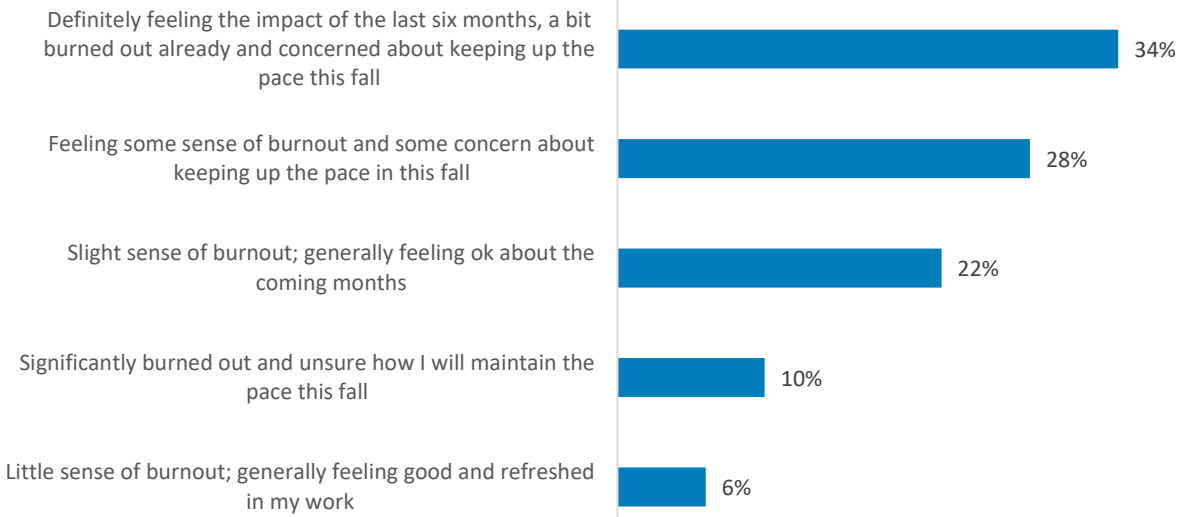


## Supplemental Data: Impact of 2020 on CEMO's

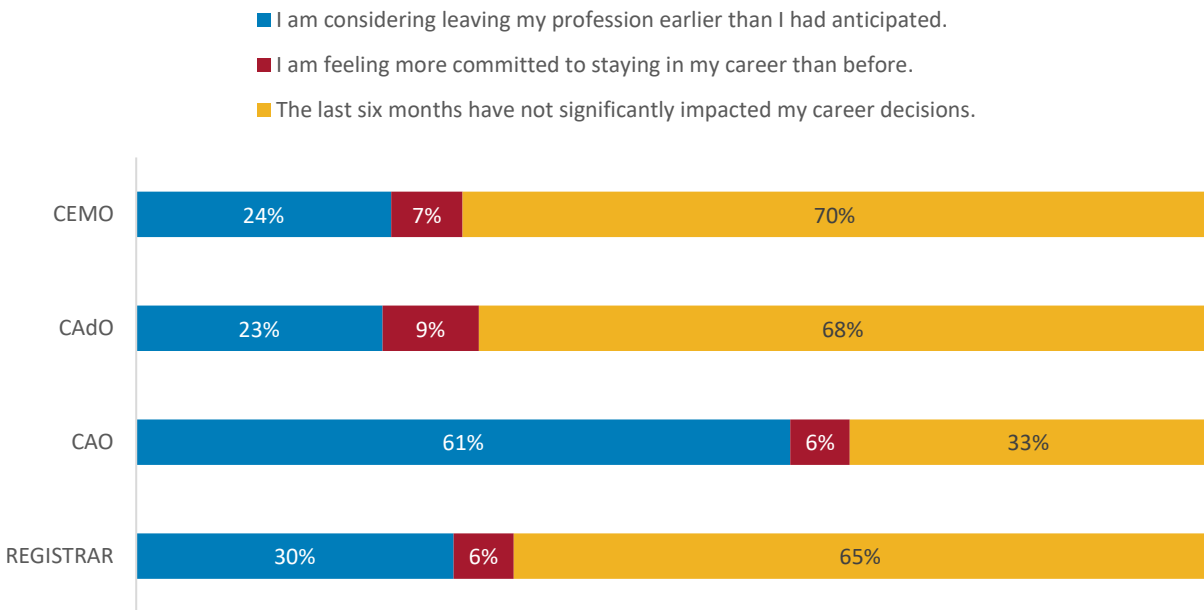
AACRAO recently completed a survey on the impact of 2020 on our members. Members were asked to self-identify as a CEMO, CAdO, CAO, registrar, or other position. Some of the data from that survey is presented here. Please keep in mind that CEMOs who responded to the career profile survey may not have been one of the 105 who responded to the impact survey and vice versa.



### Post Pandemic Onset Level of Burnout Among CEMOs



### Comparative Post Pandemic Anticipated Changes in Career Plans





## Appendix A: Preparations for Next Career Move\*

\*raw data

Increase participation in fundraising case development Increase University visibility in student success Executive leadership development
ACE fellowship
Achieve doctorate
Ad hoc consulting, conference and workshop presentations, and professional blogging / articles
Adding more technology skills
ALWAYS learning
Applying for Jobs Non-Curricular Training (conferences, webinars, etc.)
Assuming presidential responsibilities Acquiring certificates consulting national presentations/advisory boards
Attending Leadership Institutes, focusing on my current CEO role which requires oversight duties and responsibilities for a smaller campus.
Attending professional development opportunities especially related to teaching and leadership
Attending webinars and conferences on subject appropriate topics. Lots of training on technology.
Basic research, networking.
Beginning a doctoral program (EdD)
Being intentional regarding selecting an institution that is viable and one that is in a geographical area I would like to reside
Being successful at what I do and establishing myself as a leading professional in enrollment management.
Broader professional involvement - increased attendance at key meetings with peers - more reading etc.
Building savings and retirement funds
Building Success in Enrollment Management and Student Success
Building the record that would allow for it as well as looking for opportunities to expand my experience outside of current role
Chatting with headhunters/search firms about the next move that makes sense based on my experience, skills, and interests.
Committee and faculty work
Community relations/board work; expanding skill set and network beyond EM; have participated in professional development for next level
Complete a Doctorate Degree
Complete more training related to data analytics
Completed a doctorate in addition to existing J.D. Assuming leadership roles in partner community organizations. Writing articles and making presentations.
Completed Doctorate and work with student success.
Completing a Master of Education



Completing another degree. Working to develop and build out key strategic efforts and areas to make a positive impact on the outcomes for my current institution and our students. Engaging with professional opportunities through AACRAO and other professional associations.
Completing my doctoral degree
Completing my doctorate at the end of this year. Exploring the vendor/consulting side of higher education.
Completing Ph.D.
Completing some certificates.
Constant learning through professional organizations. Understanding the landscape of higher education.
Consulting with current CEMOs and retired CEMOs. Finishing my doctorate.
Consuming trends and research
Continued education/coursework
Continuing education in other areas such as data analytics and marketing. Networking is also important as I continue to do so via events or sitting on advisory boards, etc.
Continuing engagement with organizations in the higher education and non-profit sector, as well as public visibility in addressing educational issues.
Continuing training and professional development. Maintaining national engagement in associations. Fostering networks with institutions and colleagues at other institutions.
Create template models of EM divisions for comparison.
Currently completing a doctoral program.
Diversify my experience and become integrated in other areas of the college.
Do the best job I can in my relatively new role at my current institution.
Earn my doctorate
Earning a doctoral degree; considering AACRAO's enrollment management certification and project management certification.
Earning a doctorate
Earning a doctorate degree in higher education
Earning a terminal degree and attending professional conferences.
Ed.D. program enrollment
Ensuring enrollment growth at my current institution
Ensuring that I meet/exceed enrollment targets and develop broader relationships with other offices. Additionally, observing how the President handles both internal and church-related politics as I desire to stay within the faith-based community of higher education institutions and both skill sets will be necessary. Finally, I intend to gain greater understanding/proficiency in fundraising as I understand that to be a skill set, I currently lack but is something greatly desired in a chief executive in higher education.
Establishing leadership profile at current institution Professional networking, symposium, conferences
Expanding my networking/mentoring space outside of CEM into other areas of academic affairs and higher ed related areas.
Expanding role beyond EM boundaries at current institution and attending various professional conferences.
Exploring PhD/EdD programs



External professional development opportunities and taking on as much responsibility outside my division as possible.
Finished doctorate, presenting at conferences
Finishing my doctoral work and went through the Executive Leadership Academy.
Finishing my doctorate
Finishing my PhD.
Focusing on professional development, establishing networks, reviewing position descriptions sent by search firms.
Gain more experience in financial aid leveraging and data analytics.
Gaining knowledge in other areas of Student Services.
Gaining more breadth of experience at the institution
Gather more experience in facilities, auxiliary services, and finance
Getting Results.
Giving professional presentations, doing consulting.
Groomed a successor
Have maintained my professional network and have maintained current knowledge and engaged in strategic planning.
Helping with plans for transition. Considering part-time assistance during first year of retirement.
I am becoming more active in my role as a graduate faculty member. I will be serving on several doctoral committees, and (if all goes well) I will be restarting my research methodology presentation and publication schedule. I am also diversifying my technical skill sets
I am currently conducting research on best practices to retain low-income and first-generation students. This is my passion and I want to dedicate the rest of my career to impacting student success through coaching, mentoring and developmental programming.
I am taking on more responsibility in my current position.
I am using my current role to gain exposure to new areas of higher education focus. I'm presenting at national conferences and building a network that will help enhance perspective.
I believe that taking advantage of the opportunities at your current institutions should prepare you for your next career move.
I have enrolled in the AACRAO SEM Essentials course to brush up on best practices in the field.
I have recently added development and alumni relations to my portfolio to see if fundraising is an area I want to pursue in the future. Fundraising seems to be the top quality for presidents so this will help me explore if a presidency is something I hope to consider in the future.
I just started this position in January, so I'm more focused on developing myself here than I am on preparing for the next move.
I would like to do more public presentations.
If I move, it will be the same type of position. I will take my experience and skill and see if I can market it elsewhere.
I'm very invested in my current role and am studying trends in higher education enrollment.
Increase enrollment
Increase knowledge of the area that I will oversee
Increasing networking opportunities, contacts, etc.
Interim CEMO
Investigating best practices, developing network opportunities, creating collaborative services within the institution



Involvement in AALI professional development institute; speaking with colleagues who've transitioned out of higher ed into foundation work; considering terminal degree options
Involvement in professional organizations such as AACRAO
Keep exposing myself to new information and opportunities to learn and grow.
Keeping my eyes open. Getting resume-worthy experiences in the academic arm of the college.
leadership conferences, SACS consulting, mentorship by other Vice President and Presidents
Leadership Development program; shadowing mentors; researching data.
Leadership training, learning the academic side of the college
Leadership training, pursuing a master's degree
Learn new skills to possibly shift areas within higher education
Learning about Financial Aid regulations.
Learning as much as I can about discounting and tuition pricing optimization.
Learning every day and equipping myself with the tools to be fragile and mobile in this ever-changing environment.
Learning from colleagues. Going to Presidential leadership conferences
Learning related enrollment offices (Fin Aid, Registrar)
Learning to think differently and balance the chaos of daily interactions with the action of needed interactions.
Master's in Education, Board Member Chamber of Commerce
Maximizing my impact on the progressive and evolutionary work we are doing to recruit, enroll, retain, and graduate students.
Mentoring experience, professional development experiences, interview, and vita coaching.
Mentoring staff: training staff on my current duties which include Financial Aid, Registrar and Enrollment.
My current position is interim via The Registry. I will seek a consecutive interim or consulting position when my current contract ends. I am talking with recruiters, monitoring CEMO openings and cultivating my network to prepare myself for my next opportunity.
Network, terminal degree
Networking
Networking and exploring other opportunities
Networking and professional association career development workshops.
Networking conversations, serving in leadership roles in external associations, professional development
Networking like crazy. Being super specific about what kind of institution I'm considering for my next move
Networking, reviewing open positions
Networking. Keeping up to date on current trends, technologies, and strategies in Higher Ed.
Networking; Gaining experience/knowledge in other facets of university business such as fund raising; Executive Board Role/Community Service
networking; pursuing an additional degree
Not enough. Only recently felt like I might not stay at current institution and need to start preparing for possible career move.
Nothing active
Ongoing professional development; Working with career coach



Organizing my division to be in a healthy position from an operational standpoint for a transition and by immersing myself in studying different institutions, accrediting bodies, and regional educational consortiums.
Participation in other professional organizations.
Performing the responsibilities of my current position is by itself a process of preparing for my next career move.
Planning on doing the SEM certification, graduate coursework, conferences
Presenting and attending as many professional networks as possible. Private consulting to gain exposure and experience.
Prior to the pandemic my plans were to attend various leadership academies.
Professional development and an earned doctorate.
professional development and networking; skill enhancement; expanded experiences
Pursuing a doctoral degree
Pursuing a PhD
Pursuing a terminal degree
Pursuing an EdD, receiving mentorship from the President, and participating in professional development opportunities beyond enrollment management.
Pursuit of doctoral degree, possibility.
Read, volunteer and train in all areas that I need growth.
Reading enrollment management literature outside my strength areas; workshops in areas outside of my strength areas; possibly certificates in other areas
Reading professional journals and articles. Trying to remain current on technology.
Refining various skills, for which I know I can improve. Really placing greater emphasis on leadership and strategy, rather than management and tactics.
Relationship building
Remaining professionally engaged with regional and national organizations.
Research
Research and study both within an institutional setting, as well as outside of an institutional setting.
Researching a move to become the President of a college / university.
Retirement is the next step for me.
Reviewing current opening and trying to broaden my portfolio to become more desirable.
Reviewing job descriptions of positions, I might be interested in to identify gaps in my experiences, consulting with mentors about what next steps should be
Reviewing job postings.
Senior Leadership Training
Sharpening analytical skills. Achieving ambitious goals.
Solidifying my skills
Start current with changes in the landscape and student behavior
Start reading up on being a better fisherman, golfer, carpenter, and husband.
Started a doctoral (Ed.D.) program.
Stay current in the profession. Attend training as possible
Staying current on policy, technology, and trends in higher education.
Staying in touch with colleagues and reading position announcements to keep current on job qualifications and expectations.



Staying on top of trends in higher ed
Staying relevant on current higher education trends, topics, and technology. Learning more about the Millennial and Gen Z work force and the increasing role of social media in enrollment management.
Staying up on current and upcoming expectations for higher ed, staying involved in organizations nationally and statewide related to education overall
Successfully manage enrollment metrics (increase new student enrollment, improve retention, improve 4-year grad rate, decrease average debt of grads).
Taking on new responsibilities within my organization that do not typically fall within Enrollment Management, leading change, building strategic relationships with cross-divisional and statewide partners...
The best way to prepare for the next move is to have total success in the current position.
Took the AACRAO SEM online institute. Keeping abreast of trends. Also honing my skills on the student affairs side since I have both responsibilities as my next move could involve that area.
Training, development, and licensing
Trying to complete my dissertation.
Trying to gain more experience with fundraising, joining statewide committees, and making sure the initiatives I am in charge of have a positive outcome.
Updating resume, applying, and interviewing for positions.
Utilizing a life coach. Also, training my current team to fill the gap when I am gone.
Vice President of Enrollment Management
Watch and read about high ed industry and trends and innovations.
Watching my retirement portfolio
Work very hard to implement strategies to stabilize enrollment at my current institution. Take advantage of as many professional development opportunities as possible.
Working and building relationships in the higher education community and seeking to expand my skills and experiences each year.
Working towards Ed.D., Leadership, and Innovation, continued professional development.
Working with as many people, programs, and financial projects as possible to gain even further breadth of knowledge of college administration.



## Appendix B: Challenges to Career Aspirations\*

\*raw data

I came into the profession when the major technologies were just emerging. That continues to be my weakest area.
7 handicap - seriously, today's educational leaders seem to be trust into their current positions without any true understanding how to run a campus. The changing demographics aren't buying the traditional approaches of the past and I foresee many of these current leaders failing.
Ability to provide growth in a declining market before making the move.
access to positions and appropriate compensation   benefits
Achieving either a fundraising certificate of some sort or gaining outright experience I can tout on my resume showing appropriate results.
Affordability for small to medium-sized private C&U
Age discrimination
Age will be a factor
Age will be a significant issue
Aging Faculty, Declining state budgets, demographic shifts in higher education.
Balancing family and work
Being able to produce the necessary enrollment results to remain in this position for six more years.
Better understanding the role of the consultant
Certificates or a degree
Challenges are timing and finding the right institutional fit. Prefer to stay at current institution, but if not chosen for next position (president) would look elsewhere.
Challenges would be the changing enrollment trends of the nation, the need to improve access to higher education and the value of it, and to finally figure out a way to accurately model student behavior.
Changes in both curricular offerings by universities and enrollment management in response to both the new normal and the growth in online degree completion that meet market demand.
Confidence
Considerable changes in how we effectively recruit students
Consideration of family needs
Consistence employment at my current level
Continue my education and obtain a PhD
continue to learn
Continued success maintaining or growing enrollment
Convincing committees that an enrollment manager does indeed have the requisite knowledge skills and abilities to be a chief executive.
COVID
COVID-19, salary expectations, work from home opportunities
Current climate in higher education--spending time to understand fit and where/in what environments I can most contribute. Also navigating so much change in student needs, demographics, education delivery--and change at executive levels across higher education.
Declining Enrollment
Declining enrollment trends.



Demographic challenges and experience with financial aid optimization
Demographic cliff!
Demonstrate an ability to stabilize enrollment.
Demonstrating relevance.
Design/implemented strategic enrollment development and demonstrated student success.
Develop and execute strategic enrollment strategies to change by current institutions enrollment in a declining market
Education
Education. I have a master's level. Will likely need a PhD to move upward
Ensuring a good succession plan for current institution and role
Ethnicity and age.
Experience in fundraising. Breaking out of the mold to something new.
experience in student affairs
Family integration Public speaking Leadership development
Financial stability
Finding a position where an advanced degree is not required
For a move to another CEMO job, nothing. For a chief executive role, the lack of being a true "academic".
Fundraising, political acumen to navigate shared governance and board of director issues.
Gaining experience in fundraising and understanding the needs and politics of academic administration.
Gaining trust in a new role.
General six-month learning curve
Geography, Spousal Commitment
Having enough time to prepare.
Higher education is itself a challenge. The future for small, private colleges is bleak. It's a tough time to be looking forward with any confidence.
Holding a doctorate seems to be more important in searches than 20+ years of experience, based on feedback from search committees.
I am working on stabilizing all the offices I supervise to make sure they are ready for the transition to a new supervisor.
I believe my major challenge is the lack of a Ph.D. I have a J.D. as my terminal degree.
I do not have a graduate degree. This has been on my bucket list for some time.
I do not perceive any challenges at this time.
I don't anticipate any challenges other than finding the right institutional fit.
I don't have a terminal degree so it will be more difficult to qualify for a Presidential position.
I fell well equipped for my next move. I am working on the doctoral degree to enhance my resume and for professional growth, but at most institutions a doctoral degree is not required.
I have a job title that doesn't really match my actual skill set and experience. Have become such a generalist and supervisor of others that I don't really feel I have in demand practical skills and knowledge any longer
I seem to be encountering three obstacles: institution size (given that my current institution is small), institution type (given that I have only private experience), and my age. I need to show that the skills





used in a small, private environment can be advantageous at a larger institution. I also need to demonstrate that more experienced leaders can be of value and can adapt to a constantly changing world.
I will need to pursue a doctoral degree and I find that to be challenging in my current position with the recent rate of change/fluctuation in addition to family/child-raising balance.
I will need to show success in coordinating our strategic enrollment management efforts.
Identifying staff who can move upward to assume more duties.
if moving beyond EM, develop fundraising capabilities, better understanding of financials
Improve fundraising acumen
In the short term, I would encounter two challenges as I pursue my next career goals: (1) Uprooting my family and (2) I find my current position to be very gratifying in its scope and my colleagues. Moreover, I would like my next position to include both Enrollment Management and Institutional research, and I perceive these positions to be rare. I would also insist that my next position provides me with the opportunity to work with graduate students as a credentialed faculty member.
Increased comfort with financial analysis and projections for the institution outside of enrollment-related budgeting and operations.
Increased exposure to Student Affairs areas outside of enrollment management
institutional buy in (the role does not currently exist)
Institutions expect CEMO to work immediate miracles with high expectations.
It is challenging to move into a presidency when you are not part of academic affairs.
Lack of awareness (not universal) of campus leadership the scope of EM and the potential benefits of an expanded EM model.
lack of professional development support in current role.
Lack of understanding of the academic unit's decision-making processes
Learning how to relax!
Limited financial and structural resources to support growth opportunities.
Longevity
Looking to move from a smaller private to a larger regional public, so my challenge will be overcoming the perception that the transition will be difficult.
Managing stakeholders without enrollment experience, or admissions only perspective
Market goals
Maybe education. Considering a PhD program.
more experience in student conduct issues and accessibility for students with disabilities
Most schools are looking for enrollment growth during a time of market contraction in higher education. I will need to manage expectations while striving to optimize enrollment and net revenue results. Another challenge is that enrollment results require more than effective recruitment and marketing, which is not always recognized by campus stakeholders.
Moving to a new state
My age and ethnicity.
My biggest challenge will be learning a new campus and market. I have worked in the same market for two decades.
No private institutional experience and that a doctorate is becoming more important in enrollment management.
Not having a PhD, not having very much academic experience
Obtaining the PhD



Opportunities for Diverse Applicants
Opportunities to explore higher educations from a CEMO perspective
Overall enrollment declines in higher education
Overcoming concerns over age and experience
Overcoming the strong emotional bond, I with my current institution. My alma mater.
Perception of EM as Admissions and perception of Admissions as non-academic.
Perceptions of my current institution
Performance as CEMO will impact the move. Unfortunately, COVID has created significant challenges on enrollment trends.
Place-bound
Politics of institution
Positions available in my geographical area
Prefer not to move as a working mother with kids in middle and high school. Aging parents nearby. Professionally, I feel well equipped for the next step. (though I am constantly learning).
Preparing myself to address declining funding for higher education, which puts more pressure on enrollments. Have a firm understanding of the changing demographics of colleges students in the United States. Increase technical skills to leverage systems and software to enhance the enrollment process.
Proof of ability to manage enrollment in difficult circumstances; fundraising opportunities.
Proving my ability at a bit larger institution
Quantifying the transferable skills that come from years of higher education, getting up to speed on 'buzz words' and business language if I move outside of higher ed.
Rapid changes in technology deployment in enrollment management
Resisting the urge of getting in the weeds! :)
Responding to the quickly changing environment of higher ed post-COVID.
Shifts in higher education landscape
Shrinking Enrollment Population with increased competition
Since I am in a very niche grad/professional market I need to illustrate transferrable skills if I want to be a competitive applicant in the undergrad world.
Since so much of my career has been enrollment related, having an opportunity given my limited background on the academic side is a concern.
Slow down, lack of need-based activity, less influence, ???
Smash the patriarchy.
Stagnant/declining enrollment at current institution.
Success. Hard to get the new job if I don't succeed at this one.
Terminal Degree
The ability and desire to move a family. That'll be the struggle and biggest concern. Also, the higher education marketplace and changing demographics and the appetite for change in this environment.
The ability to let go and walk away from a good group of people trying to do the right thing.
The challenge of working at a small, regional, non-competitive institution.
The changing marketplace match appropriate experience with said institution
The climate of Higher Ed. is changing and the length of time for presidents is declining. I am nervous to jump into the fray but feel I can make a positive difference.
The continued battle of gender imbalance at the executive level.



The economic environment in the next 5-7 years.
The next move will likely be suffering from declining enrollment or net tuition revenue and that will need to be addressed.
The position is too often perceived as a glorified admission director, not taking into account that it's a \$70M/year budget and 400 employees. Hiring groups sometimes have to be helped to understand how the role is analytical, people oriented and highly complex, preparing CEMO job holders for various leadership roles.
The rapidly shifting demographics of prospective students.
There are not a lot of Enrollment Management professionals that move from CEMO to President. Understanding this trend and overcoming it will be my challenge.
Time
Time management
To me, it is about finding the right opportunity at the right time, and institutional and location fit matter. So, those are all challenges to address.
Translating current skills to desired skills in other industries
Travel and financial resources
Trying to decide on a direction
Trying to relax!
Tuition and financial aid. Too much uncertainty across higher education -- around enrollment, population, new student patterns.
Vacancies close to home.
Weathering declining demographics and a reduced demand for liberal arts education
Well, COVID-19 has clearly created some major challenges for the Enrollment Management Executives. Direct experience with program development, administrative restructuring, and the development / scaling of alternative learning modalities will be highly sought after as Colleges try to reposition in this turbulent market.
Working in a post-COVID world
Writing effective long-term planning documents.



## Appendix C: Further Words of Wisdom

Included below are all the voluntarily provided comments, observations, opinions, and advice shared by survey respondents in their original format.

You are the voice of the students. Act like it matters!
You have to be flexible and acutely aware of the environment in which you work.
ask veteran question for rising directors aspiring to the CEMO strive to work with a CEMO who mentors you, challenges you, empowers you, and awards you! Strive for an even work/life balance. Support all decisions with data. Develop a sense of humor. strive to become a great servant leader.
Surround yourself with a strong team; stay aware of trends that will impact your ability to attract and enroll students; have a solid understanding of technologies that can support your work
Find a mentor and be a mentor. Put in writing your own philosophy on Admissions/Enrollment matters. Know why you do what you do.
As a Chief Enrollment Management Officer, one of the most important skills is the ability to navigate complex problems in a collaborative manner that engages the campus community in the solution.
Be multifaceted
Take advantage of as many professional development opportunities as possible early in your career when you have a bit more time.
Diversify your experience across operational units.
It is imperative that you find the most appropriate position and mentor/supervisor who will grow you and teach you the art and science of strategic enrollment management, best recruitment practices and technologies, and effective leadership practices.
Don't chase the dollar. Do your homework... if the position is looking for a miracle worker.. ask yourself if their goals are realistic
As more and more demands are being placed on the CEMO and enrollment management becomes more competitive and stressful, I would advise those in the profession for the long haul to develop strategies for work-life balance, adhere to a healthy life style to sustain themselves, and develop a strong support network. Hire staff with a diverse skillset, including skills that you either do not have or where you have limited knowledge. Keeping up with technological changes is a challenge; take time to learn new skills in this regard.
Gain a firm understanding of Strategic Enrollment Management so that you can utilize principles from that training at whatever institution you find yourself. There is no one-size fits all solution so broaden your collection of tools and learn from every interaction. Always remember that while data is important, at the end of the day your job is to assist students.
Directors of Admission are not always the best CEMO - if you are sitting outside of admissions, take the view you are receiving and turn it into the vision you want for a university.
There are many areas of focus that are deemed a priority in this role as it is responsible for the full student life cycle. Staying grounded while keeping the end in mind for the student will always lead the department and institution towards the top priorities.



Never pass up an opportunity to increase your understanding of how other units in the EM division operate. Don't wait for someone to "train" you. get in there and start learning on your own. Don't think of yourself as just an admission person, or a financial aid person, etc. You're a member of the enrollment "team!" Your job is to recruit and retain the best students possible, and who will be successful at your university, period. It doesn't matter which office you report to; all are working toward the same goals.
A willingness to think outside the box and a need to be able to change quickly to meet market needs and desired student outcomes.
Take of advantage in working with or in other office across the EM spectrum. Don't stay within one department/area your whole career.
Get a doctorate, find a president with vision
The importance of building strong relationships as a foundation to any SEM work you do cannot be overstated. Those positive relationships are the capital you will need for buy-in and support.
Master at least one skill within the Enrollment Management field. In mastering the one field you will learn countless other skills within the different areas of EM that will benefit your growth and ascension within the field.
Be prepared to lead, listen & resolve problems on a daily basis!
Enrollment informs the budget and NOT vice versa. Clear and upfront communication with the Cabinet and other important stakeholders is critical.
Always will be depended on but never will be appreciated.
In the next 10 years hundreds of universities will close their doors because their leaders have failed to understand the need to do enrollment planning tied to their strategic planning and budget efforts. Industry is no longer waiting for higher ed to produce students and instead will educate their own!
I little productive paranoia is helpful because it keeps one in constant preparation mode.
The most effective and influential environment for a CEMO is to have a seat on the president's cabinet.
Take advantage of every professional opportunity. If someone sees something in you, don't shy away. Receive it and use that experience to springboard you into other avenues. This profession is ever changing. No two days are the same and that's what makes it challenging yet rewarding.
For those in the CEMO career path there are times when professional development is horizontal rather than vertical. It is invaluable to not just progress up the ranks from assistant to associate to director, etc. in ONE aspect of enrollment. Explore across the university is critical for personal and professional growth.
Maintain your integrity and professionalism above all else, and the respect you achieve for the incredibly important job you do for your institution will solve most of the problems that will ultimately come your way.
Seek out a support network of professionals both on and off campus. Don't be afraid to try bold things.
Listen well; work well; know the data and research
Choose who you work for carefully. The best path is still that line with expertise.
I would seek a role where you report directly to the Chancellor and serve on the Chancellor's Cabinet.
The faster you can develop a systems approach, the faster you will gain influence among departments that need to be in support of your enrollment strategies. They will be supportive if they feel that you have their best interests in mind instead of just growth.
Have the full support of your President



Be prepared for a challenge when pursuing a career path in Enrollment Management. As with any challenge, the reward is much greater once you achieve success.
Reconsider the path unless in an organization that has strong leadership that is willing to support the collaboration of all divisions in the implementation of the enrollment management plan. Too often, enrollment leaders are left with all the responsibility to grow enrollments but lack the support of their colleagues to implement new programs. SEM concept works in theory but does not work if other divisions do not buy in. Unfortunately, this happens more often than not.
Learn to supervise and manage and motivate your staff, they are the most important people in your success.
I am losing my joy for enrollment management because of the constant emphasis on growth and revenue generation. I would advise others considering this career path to choose an institution with realistic enrollment goals and a mission that aligns with their personal values.
Be able and willing to embrace technology. Early in your career, have a job that requires you to use and understand the technologies necessary to do this work. I understand what the different technical solutions we are, and what they do, but I cannot do most of them. The disadvantage of starting in the profession some time ago. The more you know, the quicker you will progress.
I think it is important to be realistic with optimism. This is a stressful job with a lot of pressure but you have to be able to speak to the reality of the climate and know that the pendulum will swing the other direction it just might take a decade.
Be prepared to be defined by enrollment numbers and revenue on a daily basis. If that is not attractive, this is not the field for you
Focus on the journey not the destination!
Get clarity around institutional data, who defines it, where it's captured, and how its history can be captured. Build rapport to through relationship and knowledge. Always continue learning--what worked before may not work again. You can be energized by this role if you enjoy constantly pushing toward the next goal and constant change!
Surround yourself with the most creative and talented people you can cultivate. Find those who love data and the use of technology to understand people's interests, behavior patterns, and decisions, and thrive on providing a great customer experience for all constituents.
Connect with as many areas across your institution as possible and network and connect with local partners, higher education partners/associations, and state and federal education departments as possible.
It is critical to be agile and continuously scan the higher education trends to inform our initiatives and position our institutions to tackle the challenges head on.
Become a higher ed generalist. You need to understand the workings of all the areas at your institution.
An enrollment manager should provide leadership in change management, systems thinking, quantitative assessment, data exploration, human capital development, and collaborative goal development. This type of leader should come into the field with (or develop quickly) a love for learning and the feeling of being committed to a mission. If you have can manage this emotional commitment to growth and mission, you can acquire the leadership skills and tendencies as you progress through your career trajectory.
Unless you love your job, don't do this. It's not for the faint of heart. :-)



If your institution represents what you believe in, your career will be fulfilling. It may take some time to find the right fit!
I do not consider a student truly enrolled until they walk across the stage at graduation. That is the guiding principle that I work towards each and every day.
Learn the technology as you go. As a professional in my early 60's, the technology changes have been the most time consuming. It does not come naturally to me. Younger professionals raising through the ranks, will be better than I am, as they are native speakers of it.
Regardless of who you directly report to, you should also interview (investigate) the President and Board because they will have great impact on your professional world.
Have thick skin and a creative mind
The CEMO career is an rewarding, but with the increasing political/social headwinds and growing environmental uncertainties, your success as an Enrollment Manager will hinge on the College leadership team's ability to work together toward a clear and well established vision. Before making your next move, make sure you have a clear understanding of the position's expectations and what resources will be necessary to meet those expectations. Understand that, in most cases, the CEMO will need to work with a range of different college stakeholders toward broad institutional changes. This will require an ability to operate with a high degree of humility, compromise, and a willingness to lean into difficult situations. When interviewing, ask questions that will help you better understand the College culture and politics.
balance. Be fair and be good
Focus on the signal, not the noise.
Enrollment Management is a team sport; success is truly the result of the combined effort of many people across divisions at an institution. Relationship and consensus building within the institution is as important, if not more important, for a CEMO to be successful. Understanding elements outside of a division of enrollment management (i.e., the administration of the institution across academic, operational, and administrative roles) is necessary to understand the relationship of enrollment and retention to the success of an institution. It is both the most challenging and most rewarding work I've had the privilege of directing at an institution of higher education.
This work requires a true passion for student access, retention, and success. Keep students first and at the center of the work and give yourself and those around you some grace.
Be an excellent collaborator. Be an excellent critical thinker. Be creative. Develop strong emotional intelligence. Be an excellent communicator. Be comfortable with numbers and develop an ability to use data to understand problems and create solutions. Care deeply for the people and the institution you work for. Be just in your work and protect your integrity. Be willing to dive into difficult challenges without fear. Listen deeply to those who offer you their opinion. Lift your head and look around at other institutions that are doing well. Learn from others. Don't be a know it all because you don't know it all. Understand what motivates others - faculty, staff, CFO, students, president, board, etc. Support others in their work because you will likely need them to support you at some time in your career. Get sleep and exercise. Get a professional coach/mentor. Find a wonderful spouse or partner to keep you grounded and sane.
Keep an online notebook of your thoughts and to-do lists - so you can refer to them if needed.
Be the best person in your current role and additional responsibilities will find you.
Have a plan but remain open to the journey. In the field of higher education change is constant.
Focus relentlessly on achieving what's best for students first, the institution second, and yourself third. You'll find opportunities and success to the extent you prioritize what you're doing and learning rather than thinking too much about your status.



I encourage those on the CEMO career path to seek positions at institutions where the executive leadership is active and involved in the SEM process. There is a heavy burden that comes with being the enrollment expert on a campus with others who do not understand the field or the challenges that we face today.
People support what they help to create, not what you tell them they have to do.
Be proactive in gaining knowledge and experience that is broad based.
Those who lead should do so with a passion for students and an attitude of servanthood; they should seek to learn from their subordinates so as to promote mutual understanding and respect; and should continue to seek ways to create and support a team spirit within all related service departments with the goal of advancing the institution to a level of excellence that other institutions seek to emulate.
See your staff as a TEAM...remember when one Fall...we all fall...however, if one rises....we All rise.
Stay the Course, rely on advice from other colleagues and empower those working under your leadership to be great and not easily discouraged when times are hard.
Take every opportunity to elevate your educational attainment and knowledge base in the EM area
Diversify your skill set. Invest just as much time in SEM training as leadership training. Get experience outside of SEM to ensure you have a full view of the college ecosystem.
be open to learning and new experiences/challenges
Be selective about the institution you choose to work for.
None at this time.
Data is super important but doesn't tell the whole story. Try to understand the students and community to make good long-term plans.
Although you need to accept full responsibility for enrollment growth and student success, never try to succeed on your own. Continue to build relationships and inspire others while never losing focus on institutional goals.
I have served as a Dean of Students and VP of Student Services and I think that has contributed to my success in enrollment services as it gives me a broader perspective of how the campus can work together to help with recruiting and retention efforts.
Practice teaching about realistic expectations!
Build a great team around you and don't stress over factors out of your control.
Think of yourself as a coach. Recruit and retain a great team, surround yourself with specialists and respect their expertise, be transparent with the owners, share a clear vision with the players, adjust when your opponents are ahead or the plays aren't working, celebrate the wins, and never, ever, take the job so seriously that you lose appreciation for the fans or forget your love of the game.
This is a very challenging but potentially very rewarding career. Find an institution whose Mission aligns with your values and who lives its mission every day. Make time for yourself every week. You cannot be at the top of your game if you are not taking care of yourself first. Foster connections with colleagues and develop a network that can be supportive and encouraging. You will need them in the darkest parts of the cycle.
Have the courage to be true to yourself and your convictions. Find the place that appreciates you for who you are and what you bring to the table. Never shrink yourself to make someone else more comfortable.
Be open to opportunities and develop your network of colleagues in your area of work across the country. Seek opportunities to grow at your current institution and in your current role. Change is the one thing that is constant, and we must always work to adapt to the change; consider what change in your work can do for you instead of to you.





Find friends in the same role regionally and nationally. There is far more to gain than to lose by idea-sharing and collaboration.

Choose an institution where the CEO's view of EM matches your own. Without the highest level of support EM efforts can not come to fruition.

