



# AACRAO

*Advancing Global Higher Education*

## 2019 Chief Admissions Officer Summary of the AACRAO Career Profile Survey



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**Acknowledgement:** We would like to recognize the participation of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) in this project. NACAC provided additional content expertise for the survey and shared a subset of their membership list with AACRAO to support reaching as many chief admissions officers as possible.

### About NACAC

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), founded in 1937, is an organization of more than 15,000 professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education. NACAC is committed to maintaining high standards that foster ethical and social responsibility among those involved in the transition process, as outlined in the association's [\*Code of Ethics and Professional Practices\*](#).

## Executive Summary

This is the second AACRAO chief admissions officer career profile report; the first was completed in [2016](#). The AACRAO career profile series consists of reports on chief admissions officers (CAO), 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 those who responded to the survey. Thanks to their willingness to share their time, demographics, career paths, career aspirations and current responsibilities, this report provides a *quantified* look at the functions and career paths of CAO's.

The survey consisted of five sections:

- Current position
- Career path
- Career aspirations
- Current portfolio of responsibilities
- Demographic information

This year, 435 individuals participated, and from them we have concluded that a typical CAO:

- is nearly equally likely to identify as man or woman
- identifies as non-Hispanic, white
- is at least 30 years old with a median age of 40 to 44 years old
- holds a master's degree
- has been in higher education his/her entire career to-date
- has been in their current CAO position less than five years
- reports to a vice president or equivalent position
- came to their current CAO position from another admissions related position in the same institution
- travels for work more than 20 business days a year
- has an average work week equal to, or more than, 50 hours
- serves on a wide variety of committees
- has more than 5 direct reports

More than 100 provided “words of wisdom” (first hand comments, observations, opinions and advice) based on their experience in the position, and seven provided their own story. From the words of wisdom, personal stories and data, it is clear that the CAO position is complex, often relationship-centered, enrollment goal driven, ever changing and, ultimately, personally rewarding. Further, it appears that it is highly unlikely that someone starts young or even in college thinking, “I want to be a CAO!”



## Approach

AACRAO and NACAC partnered to distribute this survey to members who, by their position title, were most likely to serve as a CAO. 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 CAO of their institution:

*“The person completing this survey should be 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.*

*Q1 Based on the description above, do you currently hold the position of chief admissions officer (CAO)? This position may or may not be the same position as the chief enrollment management officer at your institution.”*

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 Visa gift cards.

## Characteristics of Current Position

We know from practice and related research that some institutions do not differentiate the CAO and CEMO positions and/or have one and not the other. Therefore, to better understand the relationship between these two positions, the 2019 survey was updated to include the following:

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

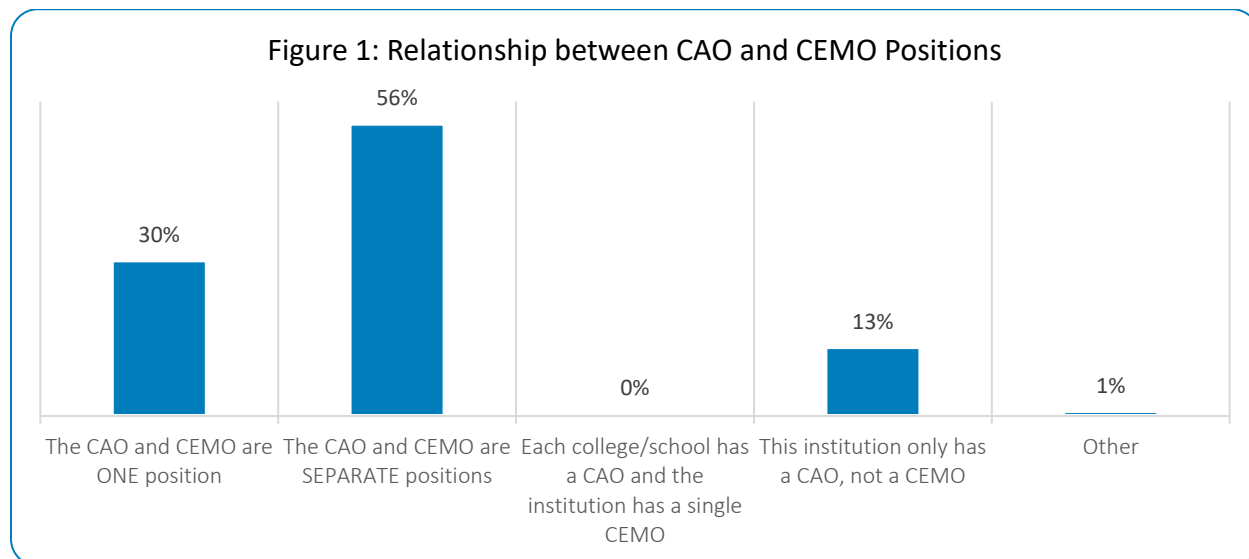
*‘The chief enrollment management position is defined as responsible for developing and implementing comprehensive strategic enrollment management efforts focused on retention, recruitment, and admissions. The position often has direct managerial responsibility and oversight for key enrollment units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

*Which of the following best describes your institution with regards to the differentiation between the CAO and the CEMO?*

- *The CAO and CEMO are ONE position*
- *The CAO and CEMO are SEPARATE positions*
- *Each college/school has a CAO and the institution has a single CEMO*
- *This institution only has a CAO, not a CEMO*
- *Other”*



Almost one-third of CAOs also serve as the CEMO of the institution; more than half have both positions; and 13% have a CAO but not a CEMO (Figure 1). Public institutions are more likely than privates to have both a CAO and CEMO, and the same is true for the larger the institution.



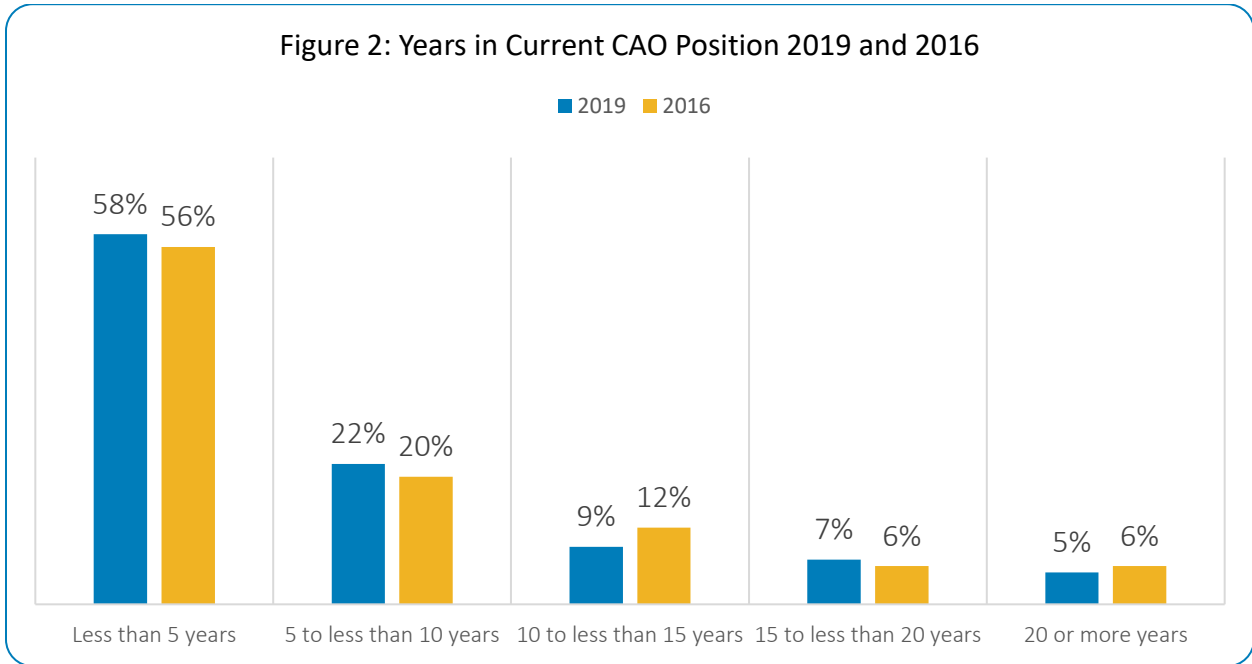
This survey encouraged responses from institution-wide CAOs and college-specific CAOs *if* the college made admissions decisions. Most (93%) of the participants serve as the institution-wide CAO; more than half (69%) are responsible for undergraduate admissions; 29% for both undergraduate and graduate; and 2% for graduate admissions only. Ninety-six different position titles were reported by 155 of the respondents; the most common is director of admission/admissions. The organizational level of the position is also most likely to be a director, followed by vice president and dean.

Most of the CAO positions require a master’s degree (65%), followed by a bachelor’s (34%) and a doctorate (1%)—similar to that of a registrar (67%, 30%, 1%) but quite different from those who responded to the [most recent CEMO survey](#) (75%, 10% and 14% respectively). Private, not-for-profit institutions are less likely to require a master’s degree than other private or public institutions. Most CAOs had a master’s when they assumed their current position (70%); 12% had a doctorate; and 17% had a bachelor’s. Some (13%) had completed another degree or professional certification since starting the CAO position, including: doctorate (30%); master’s in enrollment management (2%); a master’s degree in something other than enrollment management (32%); and a certificate or endorsement in enrollment management (21%).

In 2016, 52% had been in their current CAO position less than five years, and 6% had been in the position 20 or more years. This year, the percentage who have been in their current position less than five years increased slightly to 58% (Figure 2). Similarly, the 2019 College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR)<sup>1</sup> survey found the median

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cupahr.org/>

time in position to be five years. This short-term data trend appears to indicate that individuals do not stay very long in any single CAO position.



Nearly half of CAOs directly report to a vice president, or institutional equivalent, through the division of enrollment management (Figure 3, 4 and Appendix A). Among the 7% reporting to a position not listed in the survey, a few report to the “chief operating officer” or a “director of some type.” CAO’s from private, proprietary institutions are less likely to report through enrollment management than others, as are CAOs at institutions with fewer than 1,000 students. Lower-division-only institutions are less likely to have a division of enrollment management, and this is assumed to be the reason a smaller percentage of CAOs from this group indicated they report to this division. About one-third (31%) of CAOs are part of the institution’s executive leadership team—more than registrars (8%) and less than CEMOs (67%).

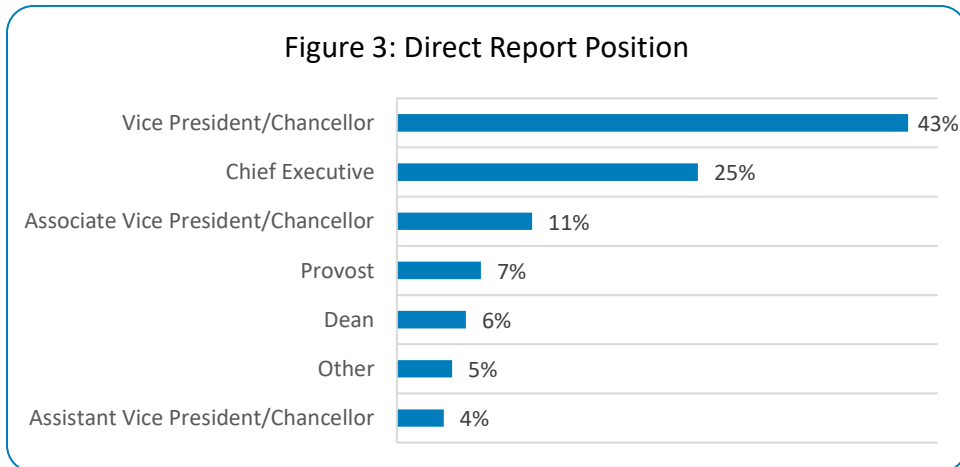
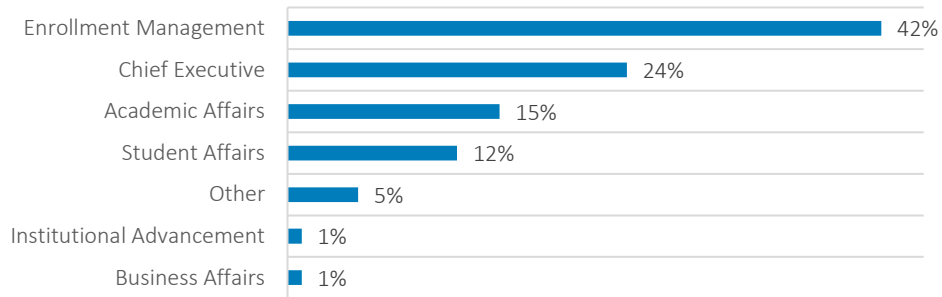


Figure 4: Reporting Division



*Senior roles in admissions and enrollment require a distinct set of leadership skills and a level of accountability that earlier roles often don't provide an adequate foundation for. You should be prepared to stumble, find yourself in uncomfortable positions, and even fail in your role as a leader. How you carry yourself and lead when things are most difficult, is the best measurement of your efficacy as a leader. Be humble, have integrity, and lead with a focus on service to your team.*

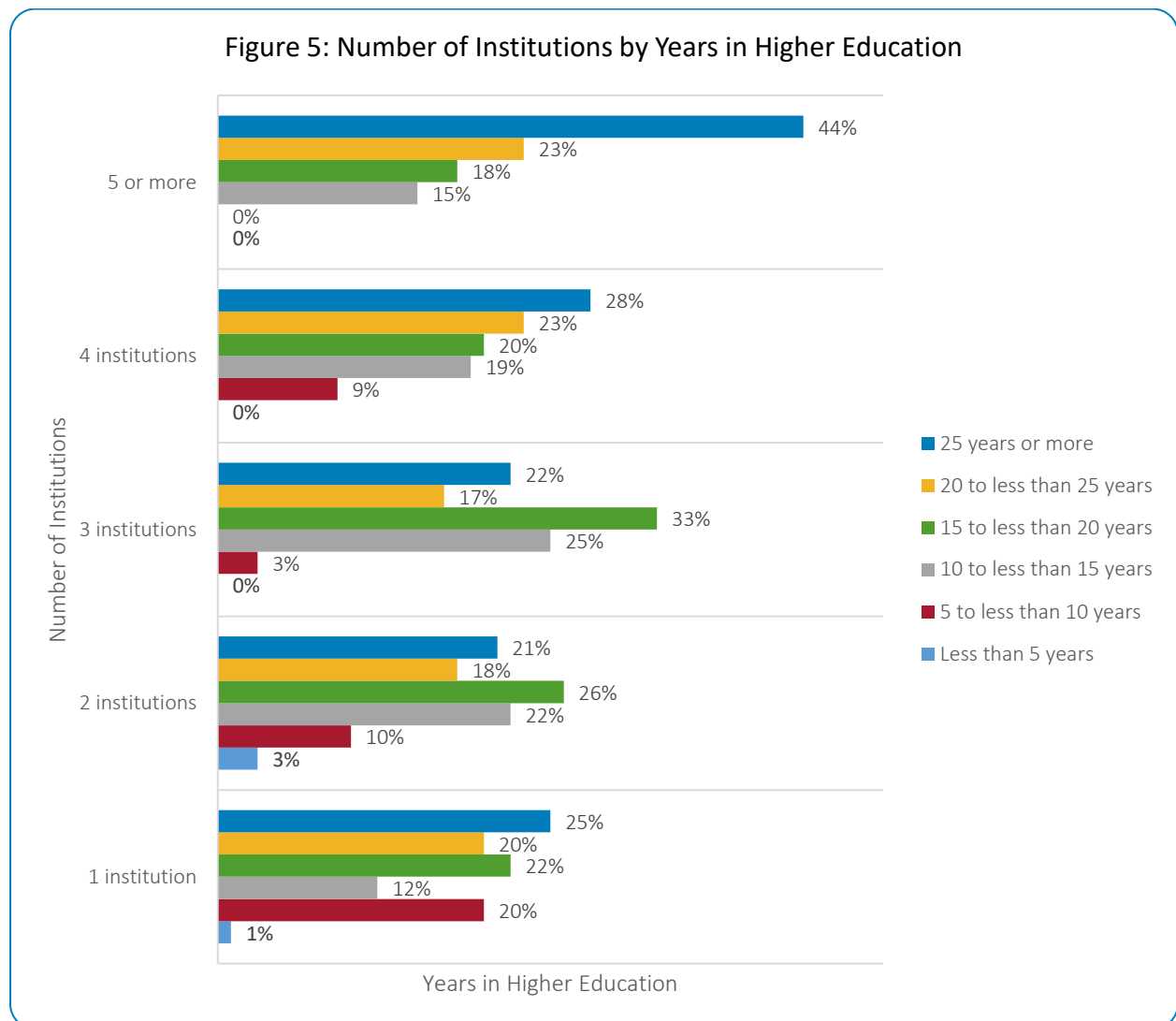
Kim Medina  
Director of Admissions  
Colorado School of Mines



## Career History and Mobility

CAOs 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 whether or not the size, type and control of institutions varied from their current institution. We also specifically asked if this position was their first position in higher education.

**More than three-quarters (77%) report that “My entire career experience has been in higher education”**—up from 68% in 2016. Eighteen percent have moved in and out of higher education, and 5% report that this position is their *first* in higher education. CAOs come from a highly transient population as captured by the relationship between years in higher education and number of institutions at which one has been employed (Figure 5). Interestingly, there is no statistical relationship between age of respondent and this being their first CAO position; in other words, there does not appear to be a particular age group that is more likely than others to assume the CAO position.



Similar to the CEMO and registrar positions, many current CAOs came from another CAO position (Figure 6). Not unexpectedly, there appears to be a fairly strong career track to assume a CAO position after already being in an admissions position (Figure 7).

**19%** of current CAOs moved from another CAO position.

**49%** came from another position in the same institution with most coming from an admissions related position.

Figure 6: Position Immediately Prior to Current CAO

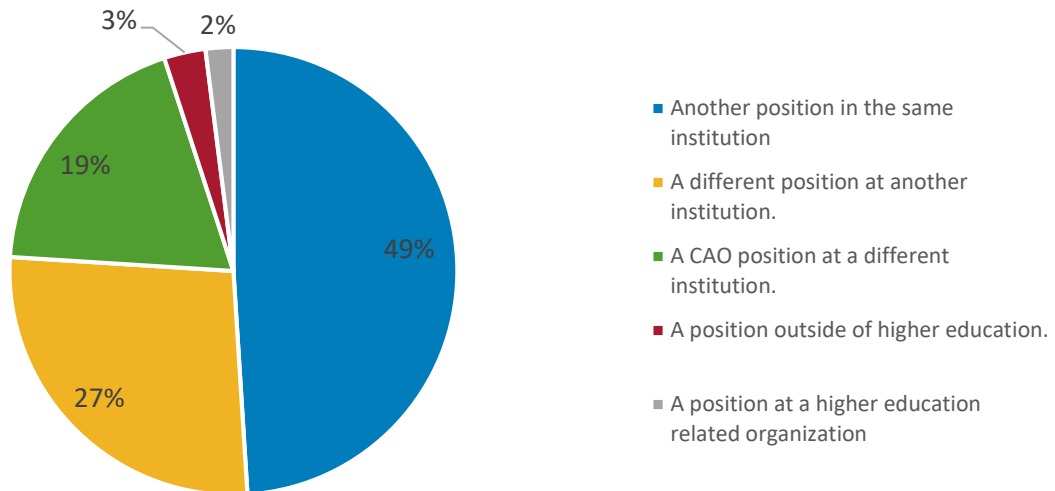
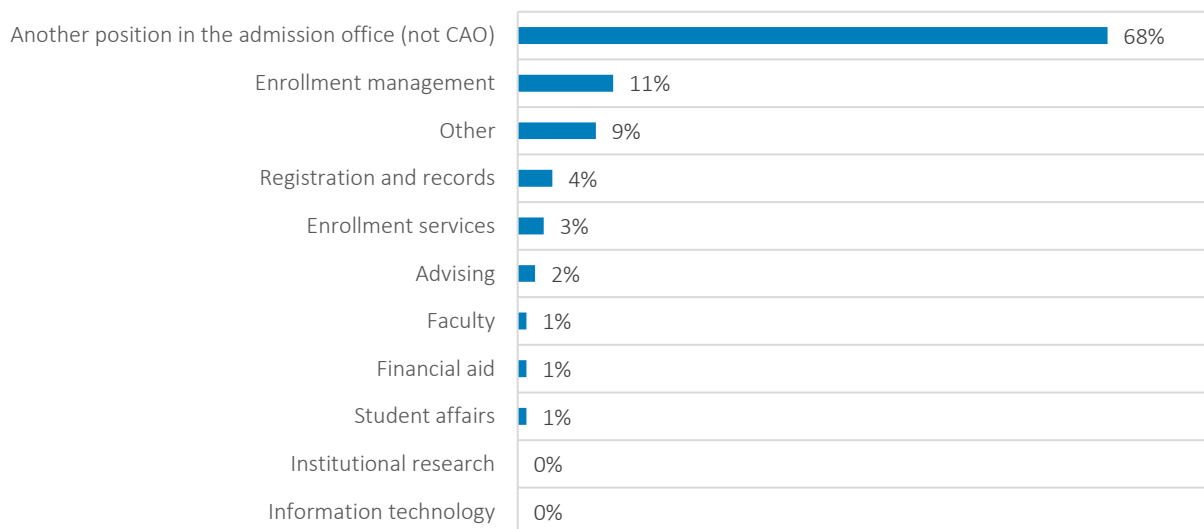


Figure 7: Previous Area of Employment in Higher Education if not a CAO



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 2019 and 2016 data both support that CAOs appear to be almost equally mobile among institutional sizes but less mobile across type and control (Appendix B).

*Be intentional about learning broadly from other institutions. Ask questions that move beyond your current scope and don't apologize for asking them. Make sure you know who you are and define your own value outside of your job so that when the job is tough it is not impacting who you are as a person.*

Andrew Johnson  
Vice President for Admissions  
Bethel College

*As a leader the hardest thing to do is to show vulnerability and humility; but your people will respect you more for being a human being. The most important lesson I learned is that there are days where you will lead, days you will follow, but mostly you'll walk side-by-side together. Finally, you are not "too busy" for the needs of the students you serve or subordinates. Being a leader is putting "we" before "me."*

Jody Glassman  
Director of University Admissions  
Florida International University

*Say yes to challenges and opportunities as they present themselves. Listen to ideas and share your own. Give credit where credit is due (always). Lead your team, but don't be above following. Servant leadership goes a long way. Never ask your staff to do something you would not do yourself.*

Allison Carter  
Director of Admissions  
Michigan Technological University



## Portfolio of Responsibilities

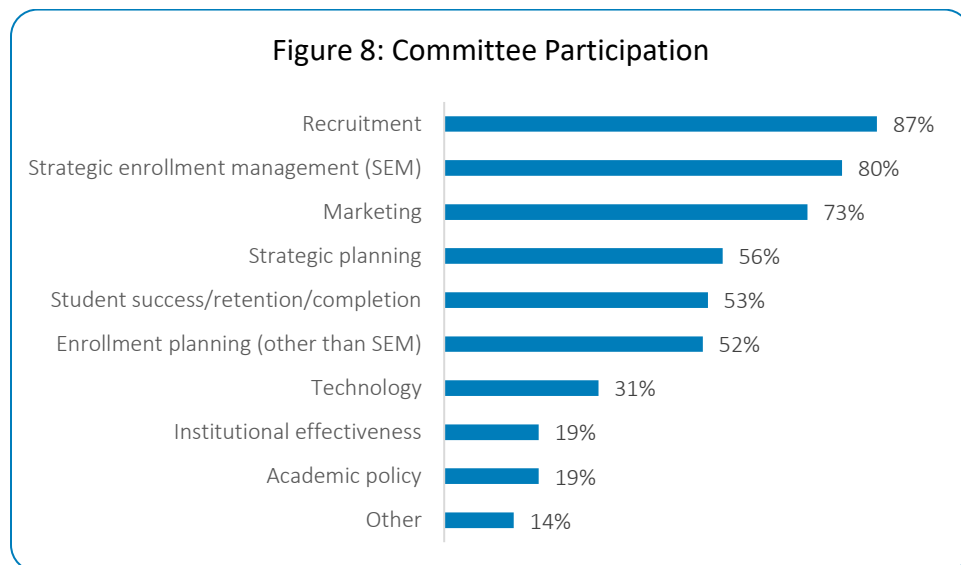
Similar to the 2016 survey, this year's included questions about the CAO portfolio of responsibilities. In addition, the survey included a question that related to the CAO span of control in the admission funnel. In this sample,

**87%** are responsible for both "recruiting applicants and applicant to matriculation operations,"

**7%** for "recruiting"

**6%** for "applicant to matriculation operations."

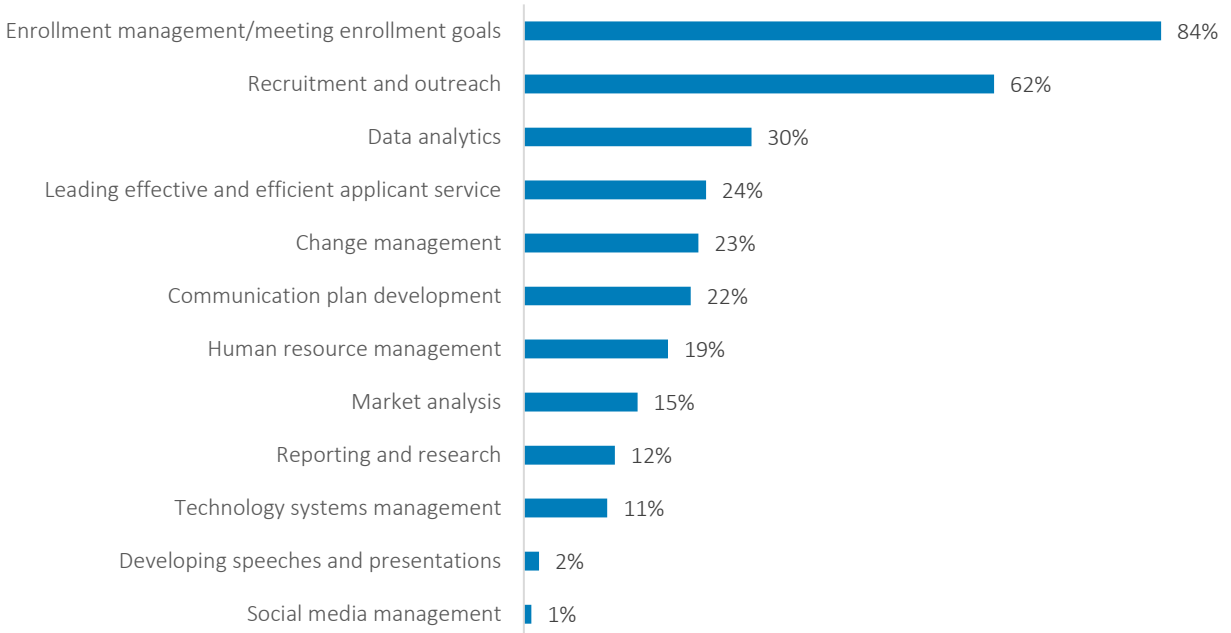
A one-to-one 2016 to 2019 data comparison of committee participation is not feasible because the list of committees was updated this year (Figure 8). However, for the committees listed in both surveys, the participation rate is similar (i.e., SEM, retention, success, and technology). This year, other committee engagements include: financial aid/scholarship; "admissions;" diversity and inclusion; and Title IX.



From a list provided, respondents identified the top three roles and responsibilities they felt are most important for the CAO position. Although the response choices were also updated this year, enrollment/yield management remains number one, followed by recruitment. However, data analytics moved from the fifth spot in 2016 to number three today (Figure 9).



**Figure 9: Most Important Roles and Responsibilities**



Slightly more than half “agree” or “strongly agree” that their institution’s enrollment goals are reasonable and can be accomplished with existing resources but a quarter disagree (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Level of agreement with "Our enrollment goals are reasonable and can be accomplished with the resources available to me in my role as CAO."**

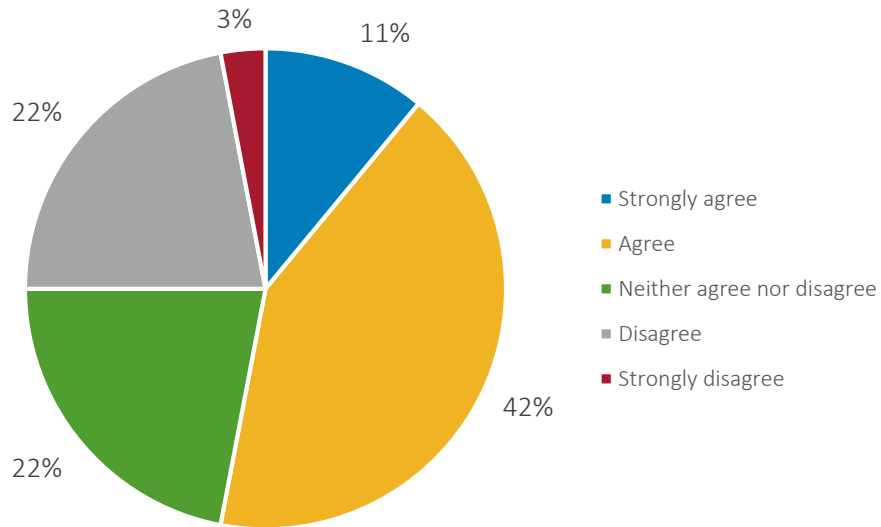


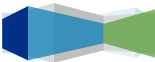
Table 1 represents a portfolio of responsibilities typical to the CAO position. Each of the column categories was defined as follows for the survey participants:

- **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

Table 1: Portfolio of Responsibilities	Responsible	Supervise	Participate	Inform	N/A
New student recruitment	21%	69%	6%	3%	1%
Enrollment reporting	51%	27%	18%	2%	0%
Ad-hoc reporting and research	37%	29%	27%	6%	2%
SEM plan development	50%	7%	36%	3%	3%
Budget development	57%	14%	21%	5%	2%
Non-degree admission	9%	47%	10%	11%	22%
Re-admit processing	11%	51%	11%	10%	16%
Yield management	39%	50%	5%	2%	3%
Evaluation and analysis of marketing and recruitment effectiveness	53%	24%	18%	3%	2%
Social media posting and management	2%	50%	25%	17%	6%
International admission	16%	55%	11%	9%	9%
Residency determination	9%	30%	14%	14%	32%
Campus visits (in-person and virtual)	9%	76%	9%	4%	2%
Transfer credit evaluation	4%	43%	22%	21%	10%
Orientation	6%	16%	34%	31%	13%
Veterans education certification and reporting	1%	14%	18%	32%	34%
Territory management	21%	66%	5%	2%	7%
Related website development and maintenance	9%	35%	37%	17%	2%
Target market identification	45%	29%	18%	3%	4%
Managing technology solutions	22%	42%	27%	7%	2%

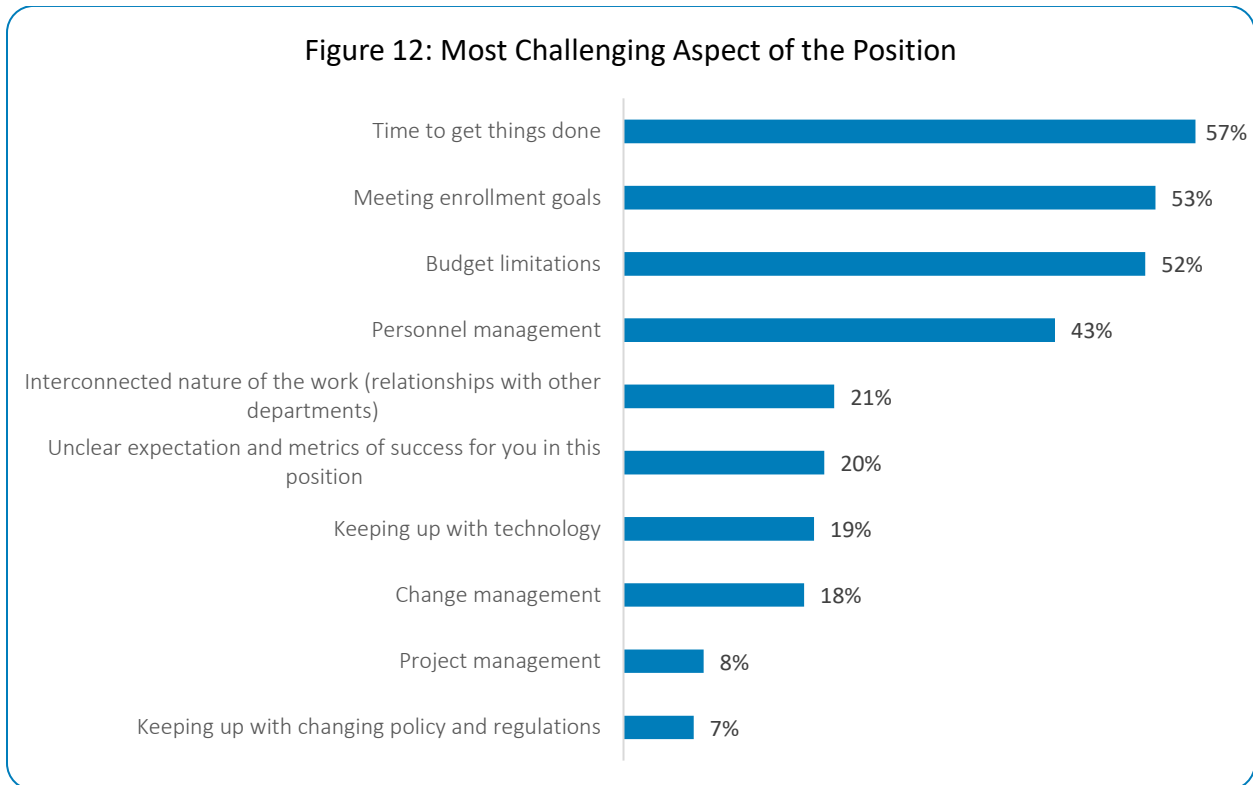


Leadership and management, communication and enrollment management are the top three skills and abilities identified by CAOs for the position (Figure 11).



## Challenges, Opinions, Workload and Supervisory Responsibility

Little has changed between 2016 and today in the ranking of the most challenging aspects of the position. Time to get things done remains the number one challenge for CAOs among the response choices proffered, followed by meeting enrollment goals (Figure 12). Budget limitation moved up from fourth to third.

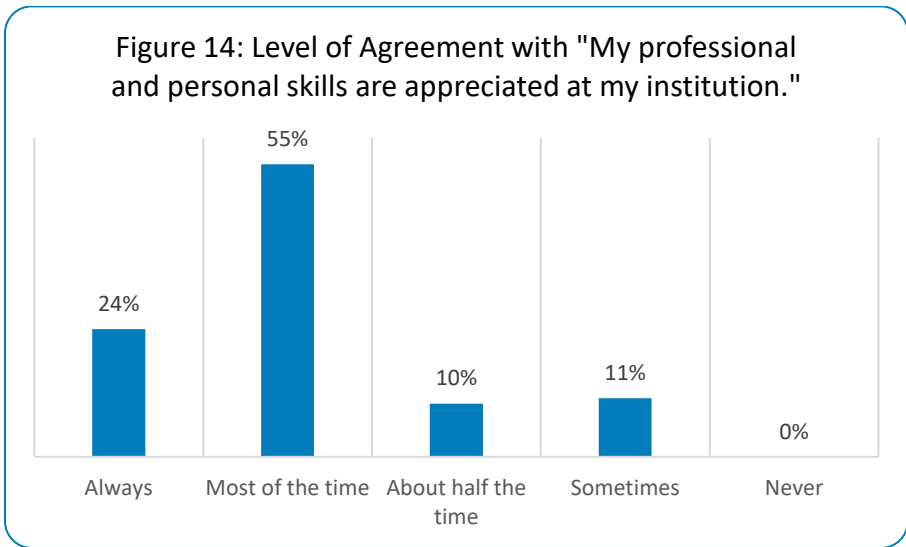
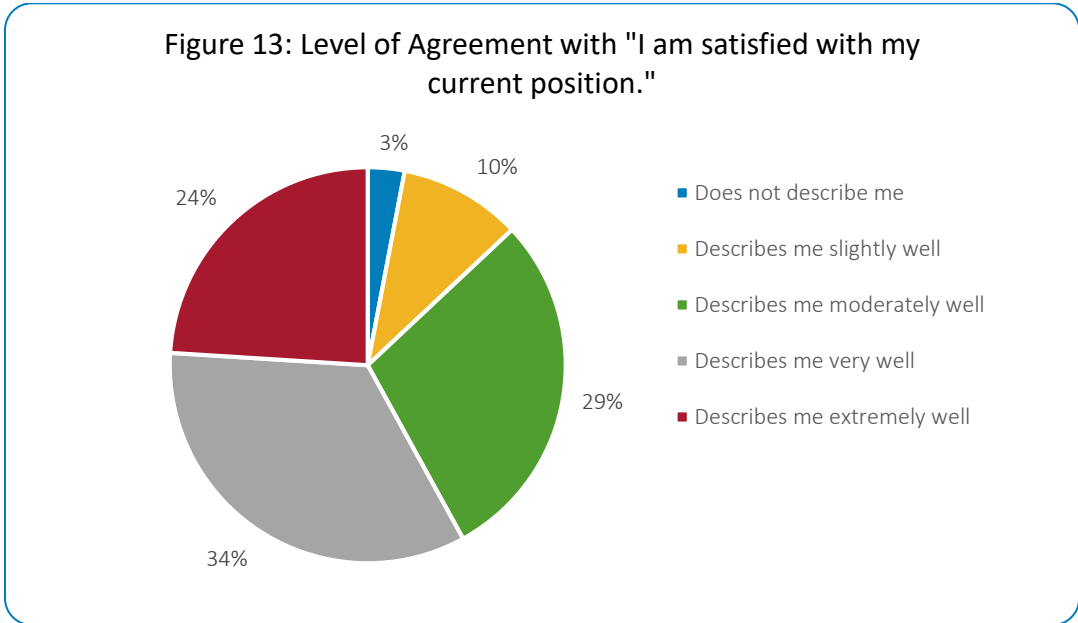


Appreciation and work-life balance were ranked number one by 26% and 24%, respectively, in order of importance to keep CAOs in their current position (Table 2). CAOs were least likely to seek an enlarged portfolio of responsibilities as an incentive to stay in their position.

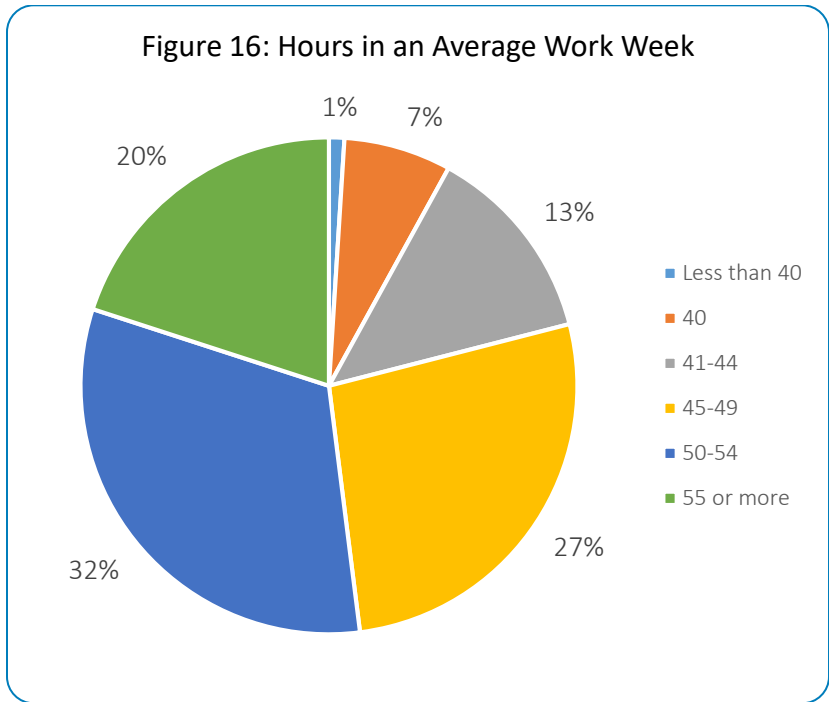
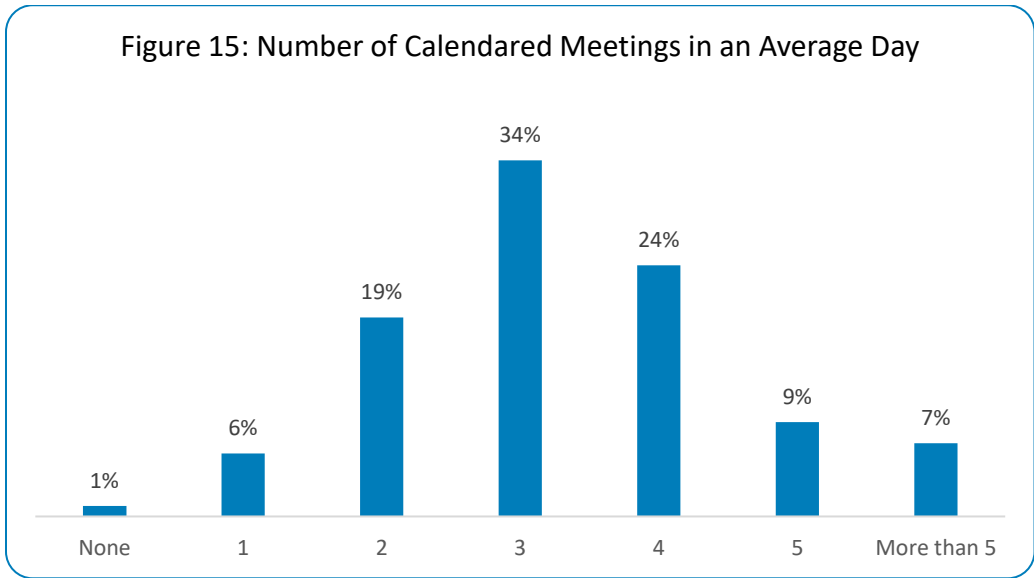
Table 2: Order of Important to Retain in Current Position	Order				
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Appreciation	26%	22%	22%	13%	16%
Work-life balance	24%	21%	21%	17%	16%
Fair compensation	29%	33%	21%	11%	6%
Professional development opportunity	7%	11%	21%	36%	24%
Increased responsibility/enlarged portfolio	14%	12%	14%	23%	37%



Most are satisfied with their position, with just 3% selecting “does not describe me” in their level of agreement with the statement “I am satisfied with my current position” (Figure 13). Although more than half feel their professional and personal skills are appreciated at their institution, 11% feel this is only true “sometimes” (Figure 14).

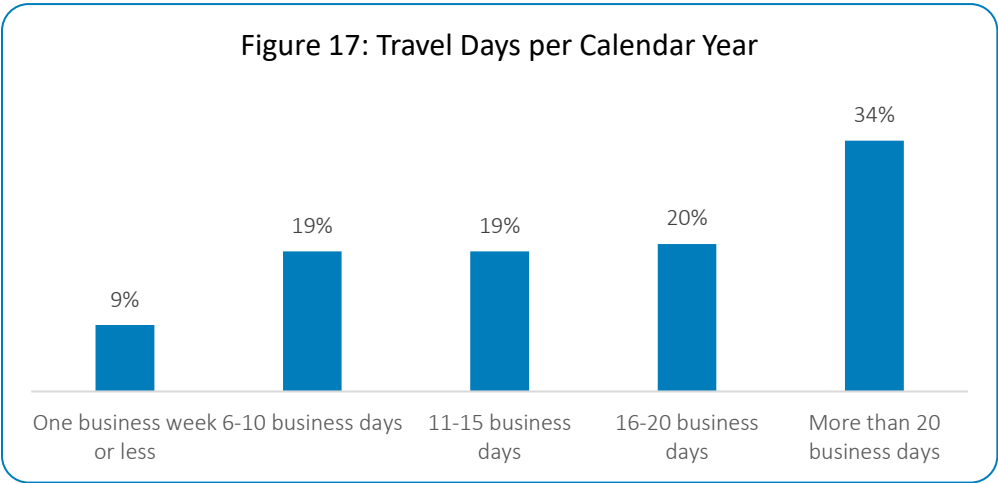


One-third attend an average of three calendared meetings a day, 9% attend five, and 7% more than five (Figure 15). More than half work at least 50 hours a week, and 20% work 55 or more hours (Figure 16).

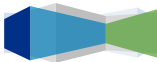
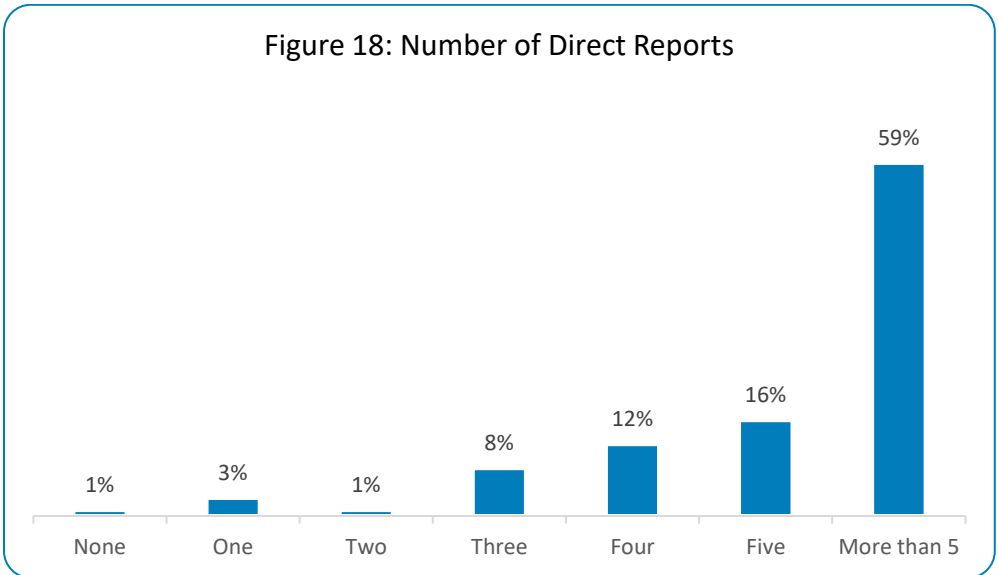


Excluding travel to professional conferences and other professional development activities, nearly three-quarters (71%) travel for work. More than one-third of those who travel for work report traveling more than 20 business days a year (Figure 17) and the median reported number of travel days for this group is 45 with a standard deviation of 32.



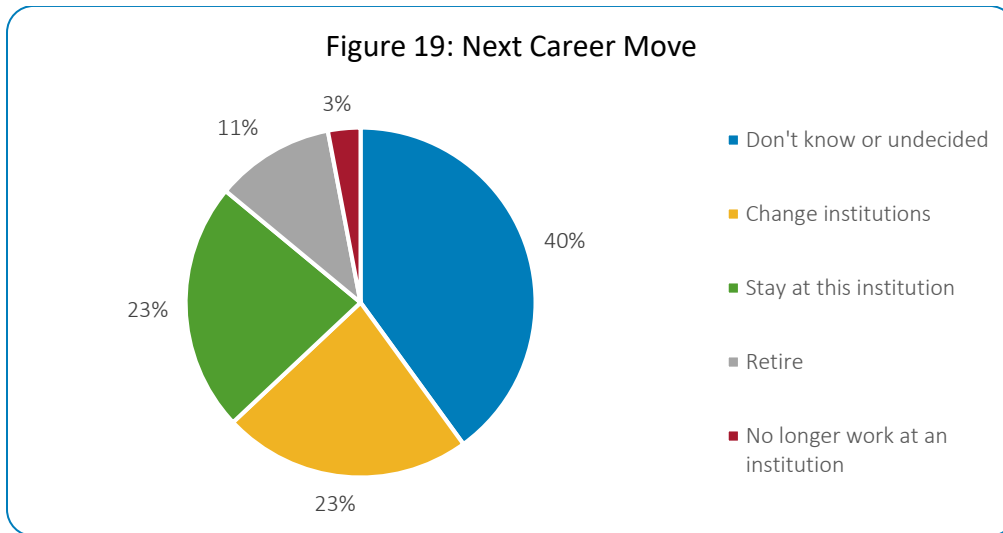


The number of direct reports was defined for the purpose of this survey as an employee who reports only to the CAO and excludes student workers. Most CAOs directly supervise more than five employees, and this does not differ much by institutional size, type or control (Figure 18). As a general rule of thumb, there should be fewer direct reports when: 1) there is a high need for cross-organizational coordination; 2) the field of work is dynamic; and 3) the degree of complexity in the work increases. Given the data in this report about the complexities and span of responsibility associated with the CAO position, CAOs with more than five direct reports should investigate reconfiguring so as to have fewer. A reduction in the number of direct reports could help meet two objectives: 1) reduce the workload of the CAO; and 2) provide personnel management experience to more people in the CAO career pipeline.



## Career Aspirations

Among the 60% who have an idea of what their next career move will be, 23% want to change institutions; another 23% want to move to a different position in their current institution; and 11% want to retire (Figure 19). For those who intend to no longer work at an institution, 40% want to consult in higher education, and 40% want to work outside of education altogether.



Nearly half who wish to stay in higher education will seek a CEMO position next (Figure 20), and some report intending to do so at their current institution (Figure 21).

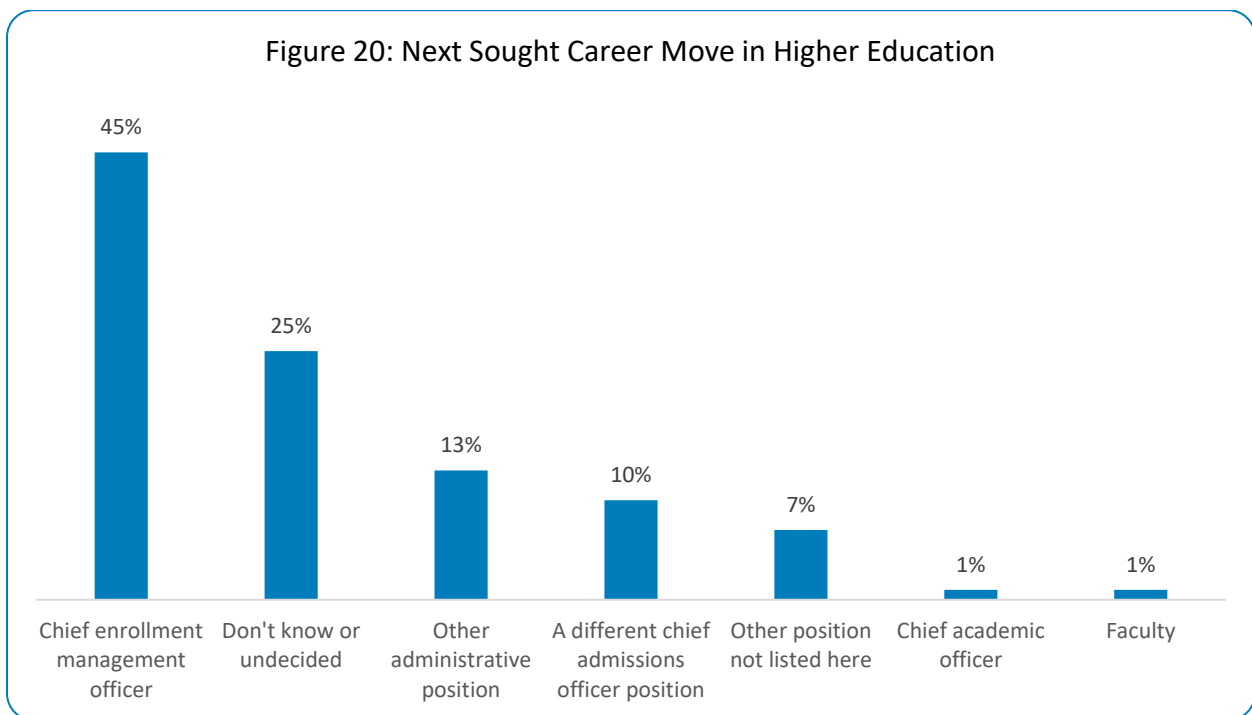
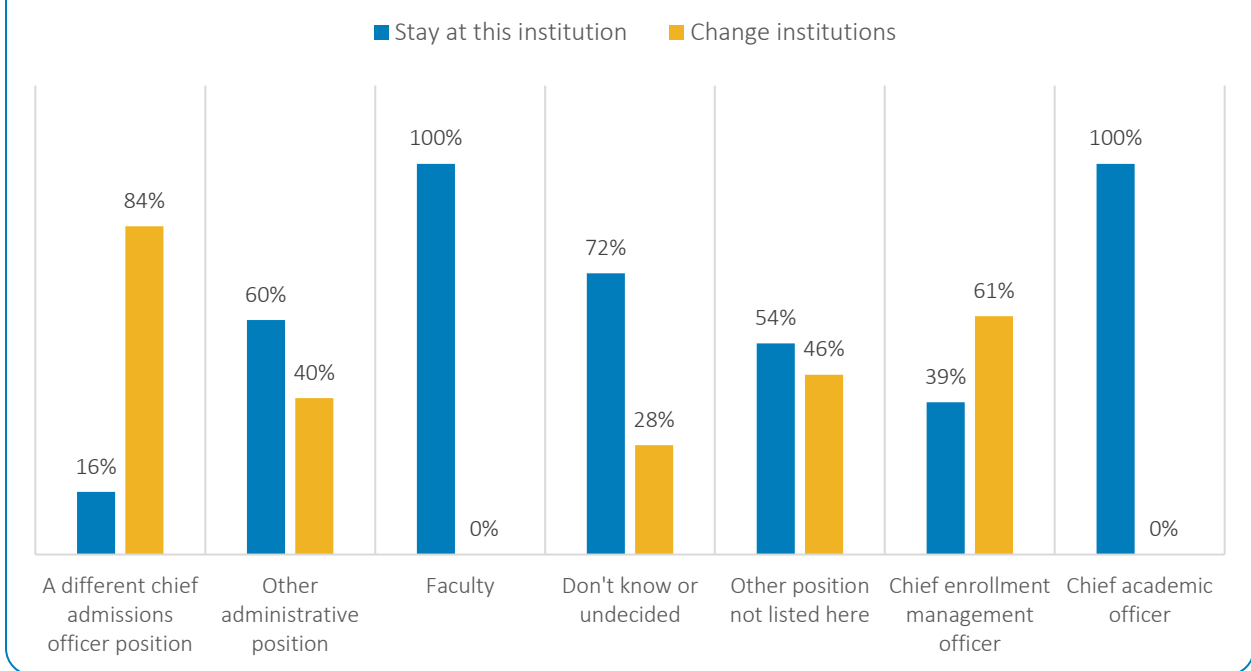


Figure 21: Next Higher Education Career Move by Location

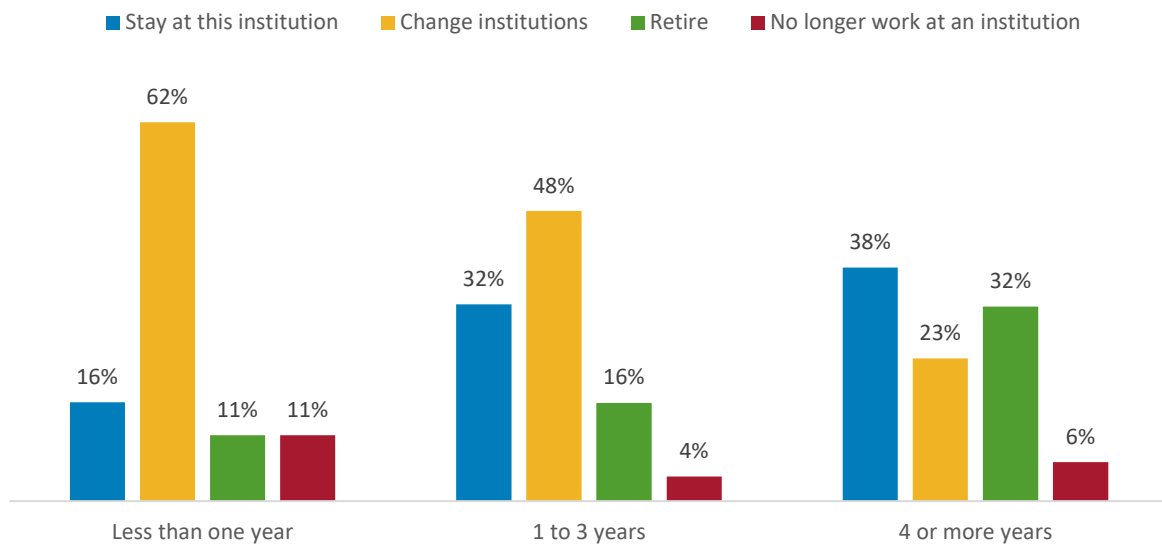


Forty-one percent plan on making their next career move in one to three years; 10% in less than one year; and 19% in four or more years. Figure 22 summarizes when current CAOs intend to make their next career move and where they intend to go. All in all, a fair percentage of current CAOs intend to change jobs in the next few years which is similar to the data in 2016. One respondent noted that the survey did not include a response choice for those who are content to stay where they are, a good point and an oversight that will be corrected in the next survey.

***Using the data from this survey, it is anticipated that there will 2,097 CAO vacancies over the next three years.***



Figure 22: Time to Next Career Move by Next Move Location



New this year are two open-ended questions asking about perceived challenges to career aspirations (Appendix C). Some general themes are present in the responses, and challenges to career aspirations included the following:

- Perceptions of age, gender and race discrimination
- Gaining the appropriate breadth and depth of experience/knowledge for the next level
- Geographic limitations by choice
- Being able to complete a doctorate or other graduate degree and/or not having a graduate degree
- Family commitments
- Financial challenges
- Meeting enrollment goals
- Navigating the choices
- Finding the right fit

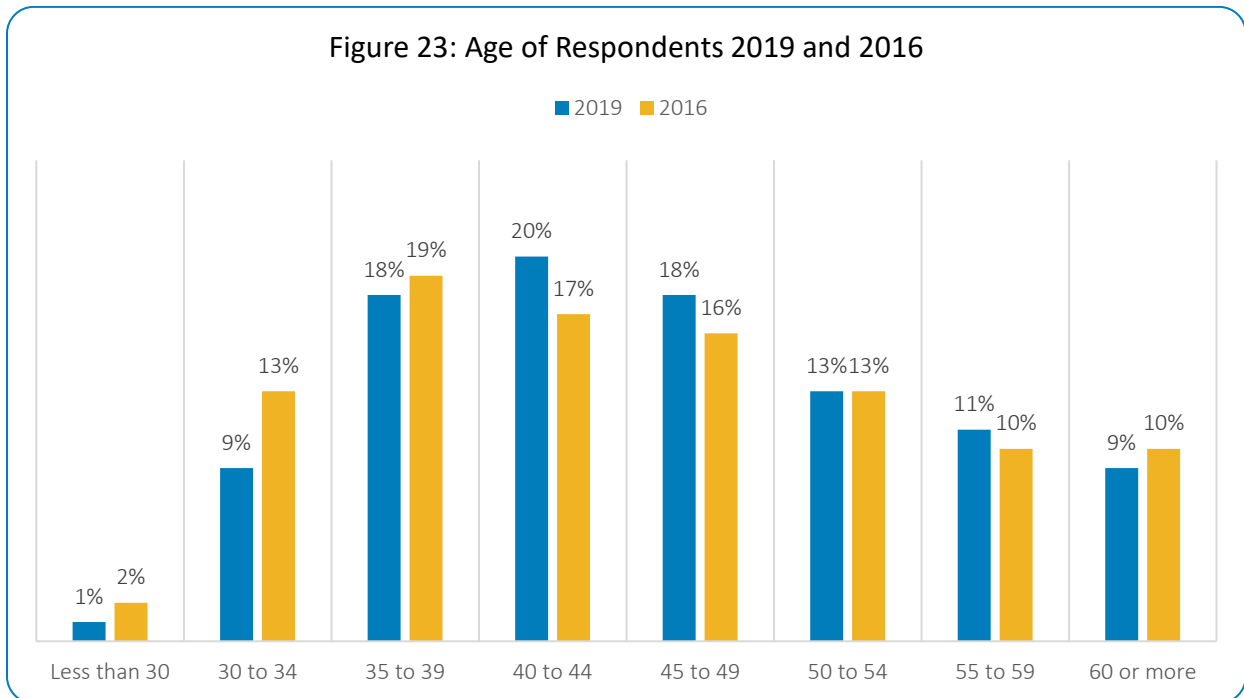
Respondents also indicated what they are doing, or intend to do, to assist in making their next career move (Appendix D), and response themes included:

- Expanding skill and knowledge base in areas outside of admissions
- Completing a graduate degree or relevant certificate program
- Meeting enrollment goals
- Consulting with current mentor or finding a mentor
- Networking and professional development



## Demographics

The 2019 cohort of CAOs are similar in age to the 2016 cohort (Figure 23). College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR)<sup>2</sup> found the average age of registrars to be 45 in its 2019 survey.

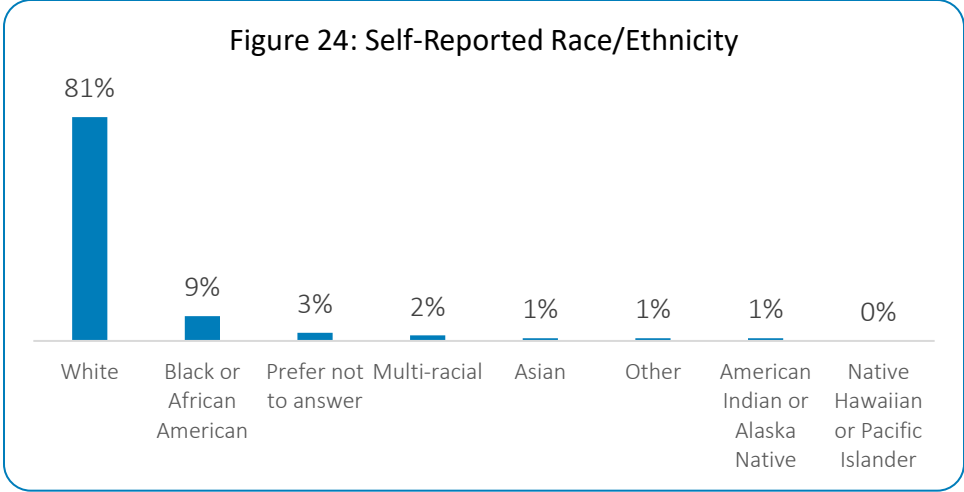


About half-and-half identified as a woman (52%) or man (47%); and five selected “prefer not to answer.” These values align with CUPA data (54% and 46% respectively). At lower-division-only institutions, it is more likely that the CAO identifies as a woman than at other types of institutions where the percentages are about equal. In this sample, women were also represented more as CAOs of private, proprietary institutions.

Self-reported race and ethnicity captured in this survey (Figure 24) is similar to CUPA data. In addition, the ethnic and racial profile of the 2019 cohort is very similar to the 2016 cohort (81% identifying as white in 2019 vs. 85% in 2016).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cupahr.org/>





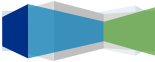
AACRAO intentionally does not gather salary information for administrative positions because CUPA completes annual comprehensive salary studies. Their 2019 *Administrators in Higher Education Salary* reports the median salary for a CAO is \$95,622.

*The strength that served me the best was the ability to look beyond my desk and to build relationships with other leaders/departments. Cultivating influence has led to many significant decisions being quickly approved by those outside of my department. I have built trust by displaying empathy to the goals and needs of others. This trust was then leveraged for the mutual benefit of the students we serve.*

Bradley Jackson  
 Vice President of Enrollment Management  
 The Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences

*You can do anything, but not everything. Delegate. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Just because you are the Director doesn't mean you have all the answers, but you can empower people to find the answers. Draw a line in the sand in terms of work you do outside the office and encourage your staff to do the same-- set good examples for them. Keep learning what you can about the profession. Encourage and support professional development for your staff and advocate for professional development for yourself. Use your vacation time!*

Lauren Wilshuser  
 Director of Admissions  
 Massachusetts College of Art and Design



## In Their Own Words

The stories that follow are from current CAOs.



Ms. Jody Glassman  
Director of University Admissions  
Florida International University

Have you ever stopped and wondered how someone got to where they are? “How did that person make it to be a dean, a director or the supreme chancellor?” Someone once said to me, “So you’re the director, always pictured you differently.” Interesting, never knew there was a standard “look,” and I’m guessing neither did you.

With me, people have learned to expect the unexpected. Let me put it to you this way, I worked for ten years as an entertainer at the Magic Kingdom before earning a bachelor’s degree. I’ve often said that at some point people have had to come to terms with the fact that you don’t have to be the most boring person in the room to be an expert in the field. I am the director of admissions at one of the largest universities in the country, and I started my education at a community college. I may be a lot of things, but working with me is never boring. I’ve earned my place at the table, and I did it through hard work. Everyone has equal opportunity to shine; I made that my priority in life, and I did so unapologetically. I didn’t need to climb over people. We all had the same chances, and I took mine; you may have chosen a different path. It’s all about choices and living with the ones you made.

You have to admit, I was destined for something big in the admissions profession when during my first trip, I ended up in Connecticut on my way to Long Island from New Jersey; and my luggage went to Moscow, Russia instead of Tampa. Making it through that level of crazy was just the beginning of my nearly 25-year career. I have made my way to chief admissions officer by making mistakes, asking a lot of questions and by finally realizing that meaning in life is way more important than the meaning of life (thank you Austrian Psychologist Viktor Frankl).

It hasn’t always been easy, and no matter how many books I’ve read or podcasts I’ve listened to, I regularly learn something new or feel validated that there is someone else out there with similar quirks, habits and non-verbal communication skills. Just like Kristen Hadeed, I was getting it wrong as much as I was getting it right, and I owned both. But it’s become increasingly harder to be a chief admissions officer in this climate, even if you are someone with the skillset of Gates, Churchill and the Dalai Lama.

Most recently I, like so many, have had to learn how to address, and in some cases defend, my career and my ethics in the light of scandal. I’ve had to learn how to make it known that most of us operate with the utmost integrity without sounding defensive, belligerent or nefarious. I know that the vast majority of us in the admissions profession hold at our core the value that everyone deserves equal access and opportunity when it comes to a college education. We know the field is not equal, and we are well aware that there are people out there with errant intentions.



When we make mistakes, they are front page news. We are judged by our success of attracting a 17-year old to our institution and keeping them there for four years. In some states, our institutional budget is measured by not only the class we bring in, but their persistence from first to second year as well as the four-year graduation rates. Our job is stressful, and I haven't been to a CAO meeting lately where someone hasn't asked, "So, what keeps you up at night?" Who hasn't been told, "You know what you should do..." like someone is going to come up with some magic plan (visit high schools) to help you achieve your goals. And you laugh or roll your eyes or take a pause. Whatever. It's the nature of this job.

This job of chief admissions officer is both rewarding and frustrating. It's not a "job," it's a career. It's a chosen field. Look beyond the headlines, the sleepless nights, the emails from angry parents and weary counselors; and understand that there is risk, and there is reward. So I leave you with my advice to anyone looking to join us, the few, the proud, the principled:

1. Learn to mine your own data.
2. Roll up your sleeves and pitch-in.
3. Eat lunch with your team at least once a month.
4. Never be "too busy."
5. Let your staff have an active role in the office.
6. Trust the people you hire.
7. Be involved on campus.
8. Stop worrying about getting fired.
9. Don't be so quick to react in the moment.
10. Be empathetic, be kind, and above all be humble.





**“If I Could Do it Over Again”** - I wouldn't change a thing!

Scott J. Goplin  
Vice President of Enrollment Management  
Trine University

From that fateful day in May 1978 when my alma mater's dean of admission sat me down in her office to ask if I might be interested in an admissions position, I have been in love with this profession. How many professions can lead to worldwide travel, dinner with famous celebrities, meeting politicians and future presidents, being a witness at a murder trial (really!) or the opportunity to make a real difference in literally thousands of young people's lives? What job allows an individual to professionally interact with multiple constituencies including learned college faculty, administrators, coaches, alumni, current students, high school students, parents of both, guidance counselors, teachers, principals, national organizations and their staff and leadership, marketing and advertising firms and literally countless vendors...countless?!

From an entry-level admissions counselor to a chief enrollment officer, this profession has been amazingly good to me. In my fifth year of admissions, I was fortunate enough to ascend to my first chief enrollment position, never having to again live paycheck to paycheck, but never expecting or receiving a corporate bonus either. For you admissions counselors, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. After nine years in the profession, I met the most amazing woman and started a family that ultimately included four equally amazing children. Despite the philosophy of my single, long-time mentor and the woman who introduced me to the admissions profession, you can balance an incredibly intense and challenging job with a family that anchors you to what's important!

Has my job been without strife and challenge? Ha! After all, we are talking about a profession that is ever changing, increasingly competitive, remarkably intense, and entirely quantifiable... accountability is largely (not entirely) measured by the size and quality of your last freshman class. In 41 years, I have worked for 11 presidents, six of them more intoxicated with being a president than a student advocate. On the other hand, I rank three of them as the finest examples of college/university chief executives possessing the professional qualities, vision, fundraising, student-centeredness and leadership abilities to make any school proud. I currently lead and have led enrollment management teams that have entirely contributed to the success of their dean and the schools they represent. Many have even made enrollment management a career, rising to the top of our profession. There have been a few personnel disappointments along the way. I take full responsibility for each. I can only hope I adequately prepared them to grow and succeed in their new professions.



One of the most satisfying aspects of my job has been the relationships I've built over four decades with my colleagues at other colleges, universities and secondary schools. Most have possessed exceptional integrity, remarkable strength of character, leadership skills many times surpassing their bosses, and a sense of humor that is so often found in the DNA of the special people who choose to make admissions, financial aid, retention, student services, marketing and other related enrollment management areas their lifetime passion.

Thank you \*Shirley Hilger. I write this brief essay as a tribute and memorial to you, my mentor for so many of those early years. Everyone should have a mentor who possesses almost super-human qualities, but personal flaws only discovered after years of learning from the very best in our profession. An individual who teaches you to never forget why you are here in the first place... not on the notion you will be rewarded with the riches gained by a career in higher education, but the personal enrichment in assisting a young person on the path to success in their career, community and life. You have to love it!

\*Shirley Hilger '43, Dean of Admission, Carroll College, Waukesha, WI (1951-1984)





## Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride: Taking Advantage of Unexpected Opportunities

*"When I grow up, I want to be a chief admissions officer."* - No six-year-old ever

Andrew B. Palumbo

Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management & Dean of Admissions & Financial Aid  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
Worcester, MA

I'm not aware of a single kindergartener who dreams of being a college admissions officer - let alone the chief admissions officer - when they grow up. Heck, my own five-year-old already has a list of careers that she's planning on - astronaut, rock star, teacher, scientist, baker and robot designer to name a few - but not once has she suggested she wants to follow in her dad's footsteps.

More often than not, as admissions professionals, we fall into our careers. While leading admissions teams, I've worked with professionals with a range of backgrounds from recent college graduates to entrepreneurs, bartenders to MBAs, and talented musicians to junior Olympians. I'm not sure any of them anticipated making admissions a career when they started out, but they've all found their place in work that can be both challenging and rewarding.

My experience is a perfect example of how many of us fall into admissions work. I graduated from Union College in 2005. After nine months working a corporate sales job that I despised, I had the same realization as Lloyd Dobler in *Say Anything*:

*"I don't want to sell anything, buy anything, or process anything as a career. I don't want to sell anything bought or processed, or buy anything sold or processed, or process anything sold, bought or processed, or repair anything sold, bought, or processed. You know, as a career, I don't want to do that."*

Before I could leave my career in sales, it left me; like many others in my training class, I was fired after missing a monthly sales quota. Not even a year out of college, I was out of a job and lacking clarity about what I wanted to do. This was demoralizing and, without a doubt, the lowest point in my career.

A few weeks later, in the midst of my frantic job search, two friends working at my alma mater called me about an opening in admissions. Two months later, I started my career in higher education.



That was the first of many unexpected opportunities presented to me in my career. Despite the allure of crafting a plan for my future career, I've found the most success when I've taken calculated risks as various unforeseen opportunities emerged. It might not be the right path for everyone, but it's served me well and helped develop a breadth of skills and experience that I never could have imagined when I took my first admissions job.

A second career-changing opportunity came when my former dean and mentor from Union hired me away after just two years to become director of admission at The Sage Colleges where he had recently taken over as vice president. Over the next five years, I led a dedicated team of young professionals who reversed an enrollment downturn and achieved several institutional enrollment records. This experience provided me the opportunity to lead through adversity, gain experience in organizational restructuring, and grow my understanding of enrollment strategy. Most importantly, as a young director, I learned the value of humility and integrity as a leader. I was blessed with a patient and supportive team that helped me grow as a person and a professional.

The third major career opportunity was one that I made for myself. I knew that I aspired to be a chief admissions officer and, eventually, a dean of admissions and financial aid. I also felt the need to prove myself and to lead a team in a new environment. While my vice president at Sage, Dan Lundquist, was an incredible mentor and leader in my first two admissions roles, I felt that it was time for me to "leave the nest" and strike out on my own.

I was hired by Plymouth State University in the White Mountains of New Hampshire to redesign their enrollment operation and reverse a trend of declining enrollment. Again, the dedicated people I had the privilege to work with were at the core of my continued growth and our team's successful efforts. In my final year at Plymouth State, we reached a record-breaking first-year class despite abysmal state funding and declining interest in rural schools.

In 2015, I achieved the major career goal that I set early in my career: to become a dean of admissions and financial aid. I was grateful to return to my hometown to lead an incredibly talented group of high-achieving higher education professionals at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The challenges in this role have been new and, in many ways, unexpected. When I started this role, my dream job, I was less than 10 years removed from the day that I lost my first job and saw no clear path forward for myself.

I'm now assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management & Dean of Admissions & Financial Aid at WPI and work with a truly remarkable team whose responsibilities span pre-collegiate outreach programs, undergraduate admissions, and student aid and financial literacy. In my career I've been blessed to experience a broad range of institutions: public and private, single-sex and coed, liberal arts and STEM, less selective and highly selective. There is a common thread, however, that ties all of these experiences together; investing in relationships with the people you work with – your mentors, your team members and your professional network – has always been the key to my teams' greatest successes and has led to a few fortunate opportunities that have come my way.



My advice for those of you who aspire to be a chief admissions officer is to invest time and energy in your professional relationships, and when an unexpected opportunity comes your way don't overthink it. Take a chance; you never know what it might lead to.



# Augustana College

**The challenges have been great, but the rewards are more than I imagined.**

W. Kent Barnds  
Executive Vice President of External Relations  
Advancement | Communications | Enrollment | Planning

Today I begin my 28<sup>th</sup> year working in higher education in the field of admissions and enrollment management. Have I loved every minute? It does seem like it.

But while I love what I do and have met some success, I also have faced challenges that I wish I'd anticipated. If I had had the chance to advise myself when I was 27 and taking on my first leadership role at Elizabethtown College, I would offer the following:

*You might be a great admissions officer, but that doesn't mean you can lead people.* Like many who find themselves in admissions leadership positions, I was a pretty good recruiter and wanted to be a boss, so I stuck with the job. But while I knew what it took to connect with 17-year-olds during their college search, I didn't know anything at all about leading a multigenerational admissions/enrollment team. I've had to learn on the job. I've had to come to appreciate differences in style and methods. I've also learned that leadership is not about the position you hold. A master's degree in management and certificate in organization leadership helped. But the most effective masterclasses have been listening to and observing other leaders and never being afraid to ask a mentor for help in navigating a difficult "people issue."

*Your job is to make sure others succeed.* Early in my leadership journey I reacted very poorly when a colleague took a job with a competing college. I was angry and showed it when I heard the news. By the next morning, I recognized how foolishly I had acted; I only made that mistake once. Since then, I've learned that part of a leader's job is to prepare people to do the important work we do, and I've taken pride in preparing people for their next job.

*There are other people on campus who are better at your job than you are.* While attending one of my first NACACs, a chief admissions officer told those attending her session that as admissions/enrollment professionals "we work for the faculty." She reminded us that they did our job first and are still more credible than we are. I've never forgotten that comment, and I remind myself daily that my work is to attract deserving students for our amazing faculty to teach.

I didn't yet know these things when I started my career in higher education in July of 1992. I also couldn't have imagined how rewarding this work could be. Each day, I am challenged to adapt and come up with fresh ideas. The work rewards reinvention and hard work, discipline



and taking the long view. I feel like the work I do is respected, and the input I provide to inform the college's plans is valued by key decision makers. These are the conditions that make a job a fulfilling vocation.

But the on-the-job lessons also have been very valuable. In fact, I think the learning through doing that is so often required in admissions/enrollment leadership is what makes this work as rewarding as it is.





## **I didn't want to be a chief enrollment officer when I grew up.**

Ken Anselment  
Vice President for Enrollment & Communication  
Lawrence University  
Appleton, Wisconsin

Like most of the kids in my Milwaukee neighborhood, I dreamed of becoming Spider-Man. Or Batman. Or Superman. It wasn't until I met with my college guidance counselor at Marquette University High School late in the spring of my junior year that it became clear I should start exploring other options.

After a very brief period of discernment, I decided to apply to two colleges: Notre Dame and Marquette. Like many of the college-bound students I would work with later in life, my final decision was a financial one: Marquette made me an offer that evokes a familiar line from *The Godfather*—and I accepted.

But it wasn't just about money. My Marquette University admissions counselor, Jane Eddy Casper, was the difference maker. Never before had I met a complete stranger who knew more—and, astonishingly, seemed to *care* more—about who I was, what I thought I wanted, and how Marquette and I had this thing called “fit.” Vocations rarely come with shining lights and blaring trumpets. More often they come as quiet whispers or gentle nudges, which is why I did not realize until many years later that Jane was instrumental not only in helping me choose my college, but also in easing me onto a real career path.

Just before Christmas break of my first term at Marquette, Jane helped me land a gig as a tour guide. I would spend the next three and a half years providing information for prospective students and their families while walking backwards. When I wasn't giving tours, I worked on projects around the admissions office: stuffing search mailings, taking care of daily mail and running errands across campus. It was great career preparation for someone thinking about working in higher education.

However, at that point, I was more interested in becoming a “captain of industry.” Graduating from college in the early 1990s meant graduating into a lean job market for freshly-minted marketing and English majors. After interviewing with advertising firms, insurance companies and management training programs (none of whom wanted me to be a captain in their particular industry), I applied for a job at the place that knew me better than anybody: the Marquette Admissions Office. However, unlike four years prior, I was not accepted, so I had to pursue an alternative, which found me working in my alma mater's alumni relations office.

A year later, I jumped at the opportunity to apply for a newly created job in the admissions office for a hybrid alumni-admissions position. With more than a year of experience in alumni



relations to go along with my undergraduate tour guide experience, it seemed to be a perfect fit, but I lost to another internal candidate. To my surprise, shortly afterwards, I received a visit from Ray Brown, then Marquette's dean of admissions, who asked if I'd be interested in filling the position vacated by the internal candidate. I felt like a minor-leaguer who had just been called up to the majors, and I accepted the offer. After three years on the job, I received a not-so-gentle nudge from the dean, who told me that if I wanted to advance in an admissions career, I needed to get a graduate degree. He also urged me to, "Get it in something you love because it'll be harder to quit it when you want to quit," to which he added, "And you'll want to quit."

I took his advice and began working on a master's degree in British and American literature while continuing my full-time position. The process took seven years, because full-time admissions work has a funny way of overtaking one's life. I loved the program, which helped, because Ray was right: I wanted to quit on several occasions. But I persisted, which is why I have had few prouder moments than on that Sunday afternoon when I waved from the commencement stage to our two children who had been born during my long educational journey.

On a Friday afternoon in June 2004, Steve Syverson, then dean of admissions and financial aid at Lawrence University, left me a voice message that would change my life. He told me that Lawrence was conducting a search for an admissions director and that Ray Brown (who just 15 years earlier was, himself, Lawrence University's admissions director) had recommended that Steve call me about the job.

I answered the call and, a few months later, found myself moving 90 miles north to Appleton, Wisconsin, where I learned how to lead a team of admissions professionals who would challenge me to become the leader others seemed to believe I would always become—long before I ever believed it of myself.

For seven years, I would learn from one of the best in the business, never thinking that, when Steve would retire in June 2011, the university would look to me to put on the Olympic pool-sized shoes he left behind after 28 years at Lawrence. It's a role I cherish—not so much for the sleepless nights, but for the opportunities it gives me to help others see themselves on the circuitous path that is unique to each of us who have traveled this far.

The boy who would be Spider-Man, the college student who would be a captain of industry, was now—fully, deeply and unmistakably—the chief enrollment officer he never thought he wanted to be when he grew up.





## My Path to the CAO Position

Dr. Heather Shalley  
Vice President of Student Enrollment Services

The path to becoming a Chief Admissions Officer seems to have a fairly traditional path. Get a student work study job as a tour guide your second semester freshmen year, work your way to a part-time office position and then snag the recruiter job that comes open as you graduate. Work a for a few years, do a good job as a recruiter, start looking for an assistant director position, work for a little bit, and start looking for the director of admissions job (assuming you did not wake up one day and get told “congratulations you are the new director of admissions,” as you walk in and are directed to your “new” office and updated calendar now filled with more meetings than you knew could even fit in a day). I am excited that my path was different, and I believe one of the more unique paths into the chief admissions role.

My path had a few more twists and turns. I had a work study job in the library (a bit of a quiet place for most of the admissions people I meet). I majored in elementary education and thought I was going to teach. After graduation, being recently married, I needed a job before the school year, so I started in my first official full-time job after graduation as a door-to-door sales representative. I enjoyed meeting the people but needed something that was not commission based. I then transitioned into an office manager role, and in a couple of years, I became an office manager at an accounting firm. This definitely does not seem like a career path for someone in higher education. It was during this time that I was contemplating what to do in the long term; I still really liked education but did not necessarily want to be an elementary teacher. I did, however, talk about my college experience and was helping my bother go through the application process. It was at that time I decided to start my master’s work and specialized in higher education administration. With about a year left in my program, my husband was transferred to Pennsylvania for his work. This will work out wonderfully, I thought; I will now get a job in higher education (hint: they really like people with experience in admissions, academic records or financial aid). As I studied the industry, I knew I was making the right move. So, I bet you are thinking, now is when you get the recruiter job and then you get the assistant director job and are on the traditional path. Not a chance. I took a job in the financial aid office (yes, the financial aid office). As I learned about financial aid, I came to realize how closely they worked with basically EVERYONE on campus. Over the next 13 years I worked my way from front desk to director of financial aid at a couple of institutions. All this time I worked closely with student accounts, academic records, career services, and admissions. My opportunity came when there was a need for a director of admissions at the school where I was serving as the director of financial aid. The vice president at the time decided that I could pick up what I did not already know about admissions as I started managing the team, and so I started managing the admissions and financial teams. There was yet another transition when



the director of marketing took another opportunity, and I had the occasion to have more of a front seat with the marketing supervisor. There was almost a year of transition, and at the time I had 13 years of financial aid experience, plus two years of admissions experience, the vice president of enrollment took advantage of a great offer, and I stepped into that role. Now, I am mentoring and raising up the next director of admissions.

While my path might have been a little more jagged than others, I love the adventure and believe the experiences have positioned me to help others who also might not have been able to start their path to CAO their freshmen year in college. There can be less traditional ways to becoming the person everyone seeks out to ask the all-important question, “How do the numbers look?” If you want to become that person, along with the responsibility, then I would say work hard at the tasks you are given, do them well, walk across the campus, the plaza and the cafeteria to make sure you find out just how each area helps and depends on admissions to accomplish the mission of their institute. Being a CAO is exciting, changes with the generations, and is extremely rewarding when you see your students walk across the stage at graduation.

Good luck on your path!





### **My path to the CAO position.**

Tiffany Blackwell

Director of Recruitment, Admissions, and Orientation

I think my story is most likely similar to others in my position. No one majors in admissions when they go to college. I did my undergraduate studies in mass communications and theatre, which helped as I entered the field of admissions, as I certainly knew how to talk to people. But, in complete transparency, my path was stumbled upon.

I saw a posting for an admissions counselor position at a small, private, four-year university in my town, while trying to decide what to do with my life upon completing my master's degree. As I read the job description, I thought, I love people and I love to travel—why not apply?

I started my career as freshmen admissions counselor, traveling across the United States meeting with families, going to college fairs, building relationships with school counselors. I really, really loved the work! I remember going to a national new admissions counselor training where one of the facilitators said to the group, "If you make it two years—you will be a lifer!" I quickly made road friends—friends I traveled circuits with for years to come. I became very active in CACRAO serving as School Counselor Conference chair, Ed-Op chair, and VP of Admissions for South Carolina.

After four years on the job, and as my husband and I discussed expanding our family, we had to discuss my travel. He knew how much I enjoyed the work, so he told me we would make it work. And we did! For nearly two years after our son was born, I continued my aggressive travel schedule. Then, an opening for the transfer coordinator position came open on campus. I leapt at the chance! It was a promotion, and it was all regional travel that I coordinated myself. Not to mention, I would oversee (and write) all my recruiting materials!

I think, while working with adult and transfer students, I really found my calling in higher education. The resilience adult (and sometimes transfer) students must have in order to achieve their educational goals are what marketing directors dream of when it comes to storytelling higher education attainment.

I met with hundreds of adults trying to make their lives better through education. I visited with people at businesses and industries and helped them figure out the best way to fit college into their lives. I have always said adult and transfer students have every reason not to enroll; you have to find the one reason, the one motivating factor, that makes them need to enroll! I always looked for that reason to help them continue their educational journey.



The transfer admissions world is pretty tight in SC, we travel to the same programs at technical colleges across the state, and we become like family with one another. One day, my friend at Clemson University called me in the middle of the work day. She said, “Tiffany, you have to apply for the job TCTC! You are perfect for it!” TCTC is exactly seven minutes from my house. I had been recruiting students from the college for nearly four years, and I was very familiar with the population. So I applied. After a four-month interview process, I received the offer and accepted!

When I started at TCTC as the CAO in the winter of 2015, I knew my experience, hard work and commitment to helping students succeed would serve me well in my new role—and it has. While my direct student interaction is limited these days, I still get to meet and talk with students at events we host, orientation sessions, and when I see a nervous student attempting to find something/someone/some building on campus.

My outlook on admissions work hasn’t changed since I started, though my actual work has. I want to help people use education for a catalyst to better themselves. I beam with pride every time I see a student with their acceptance letter, and my signature is on the bottom. I know that letter is the first step toward meeting their educational goals, and I don’t take that responsibility lightly.

I firmly believe that had I not worked with freshmen students, with transfer and adult students, developed my own recruitment pieces, and become so active in CACRAO, I would not be where I am today in my career. So while my initial path into the career field was stumbled upon, I look back and think it has been a well laid out path along the way.



## Closing

This is AACRAO's second CAO career profile report, and we received 435 responses. From these, it can be concluded that a typical CAO:

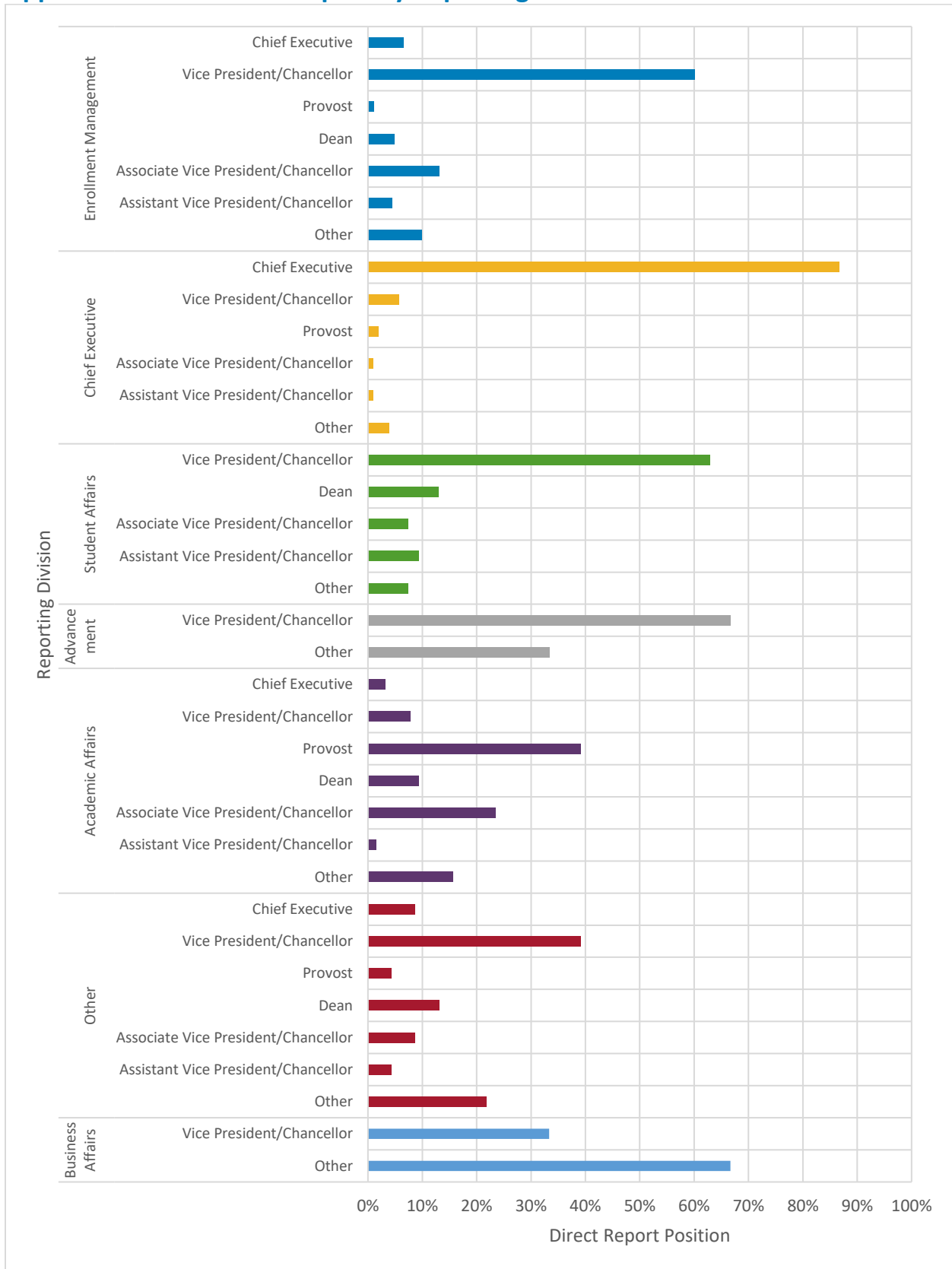
- is nearly equally likely to identify as man or woman
- identifies as non-Hispanic, white
- is at least 30 years old with a median age of 40 to 44 years old
- holds a master's degree
- has been in higher education his/her entire career to-date
- has been in their current CAO position less than five years
- reports to a vice president or equivalent position
- came to their current CAO position from another admissions related position in the same institution
- travels for work more than 20 business days a year
- has an average work week equal to, or more than, 50 hours
- serves on a wide variety of committees
- has more than 5 direct reports

In addition, the data indicates there are likely to be over 2,000 CAO openings in the U.S. in the next three years. However, current CAOs shared that there are multiple challenges to moving on from their CAO role. These challenges include: needing experience, or at least an in-depth understanding, of operations typically outside the responsibility of CAO; the time and ability to complete further education; and the willingness and/or ability to relocate.

We intend to replicate this survey and report every three years, and we welcome feedback on this one. Please direct any questions regarding this or other AACRAO reports to Wendy Kilgore ([wendyk@aacrao.org](mailto:wendyk@aacrao.org)), Director of Research.



## Appendix A: CAO Direct Report by Reporting Division



## Appendix B: Mobility by Institutional Characteristics

Mobility by Institution Type				
Previous Institution Type	Current Institution Type			
	Lower Division Only	Undergraduate	Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	Graduate and/or professional
I have not worked at an institution of a different type than my current institution.	0%	10%	11%	0%
State system office	0%	5%	4%	0%
Graduate and/or professional only	3%	10%	4%	0%
Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	67%	76%	72%	75%
Undergraduate only	21%	19%	30%	25%
Lower division only (primarily 2-year institutions)	36%	10%	9%	25%

Mobility by Institution Size						
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+
I have not worked at an institution with a different size than my current institution.	2%	3%	1%	4%	7%	6%
20,000+	13%	23%	16%	31%	24%	46%
10,000 - 19,999	21%	26%	28%	25%	27%	25%
5,000 - 9,999	19%	21%	19%	31%	22%	21%
2,500 - 4,999	21%	24%	29%	29%	17%	17%
1,000 - 2,499	33%	43%	50%	42%	27%	19%
Under 1,000	35%	16%	19%	12%	12%	12%



## Appendix C: Challenges to Career Aspirations\*

\*raw data

What, if anything, do you perceive are challenges you will need to address to meet your next career goal?
20 years of experience and age
Absolute dearth of professional development opportunities supported for last 15 years.
Accumulating significant experience working in retention and financial aid areas.
Additional expertise in institutional budget setting as it relates to financial aid budgeting.
Additional teaching experience
Adjusting to a new culture.
Age
Age and experience.
Age discrimination
Age. Gender. Race.
Age; deemed overqualified
As the pressure in meeting enrollment goals increases, I see maintaining a healthy work-life balance as a major challenge. In addition to demographic declines, financial concerns, society's changing perception of higher education, I see stress/pressure as the biggest challenge. We potentially face a burn-out problem.
Autonomy is lacking in my role, and it is stifling my growth
Availability of positions in geographic region.
Aversion to risk.
Balance work, life and education.
Be open minded to change; willing to relocate.
Becoming more politically savvy, learning international enrollment without the direct experience I have in first year or transfer admission, managing a larger team with less direct oversight
Being at one institution for so long; staying in one position for 15 years
Being successful in a declining market, staying current with declining budget. Depending on what I decide as next career level, perhaps not having an earned doctorate.
Better understanding market conditions as they change rapidly.
Better understanding of 2nd and 3rd tier institution priorities and how to achieve them.
Better understanding of student retention theory/practice
Broaden knowledge of college functions including Financial Aid and Advising.
Broadening experiences outside CAO position
Challenges that need to be addressed before I meet my next career goal include Implementation of a Freshmen Year Experience model; Admissions & Recruitment personnel restructuring; CRM prospective, admitted, and enrolled student communications overhaul.
Changing demographics of high school students, growing use of technology over multiple channels and overall ability to meet enrollment targets with the rising cost of higher education.
changing demographics on who will be accessing higher education and how higher education is prepared to serve those students effectively
Changing landscape that seems less predictable and/or contingent upon experience
Competitive job market; Looking for specific location
Complete the EdD, and success in my current role.
Completing doctoral program



Completing graduate degree, and current experience limited to one institution.
Completion of my Master's degree.
Continue to build on my data analysis skills, learn more about retention data and strategies.
Continued Education in other areas of SEM.
Continued increase in Enrollment & Net Revenue for Our Institution
Continued pressure to maintain enrollment with various challenges. Also, keeping up with changes in technology and admission demands.
Continued understanding of market changes and population shifts.
Continued work with financial aid leveraging and advanced marketing techniques to address the impending demographic shifts.
Continuing to build a broad network.
Continuing to keep up with changes in our industry's technology, as well as ways of communicating with the populations we are trying to reach and educate/influence.
Continuing to learn to adapt to the changing landscape and always reflecting on my leadership philosophy so it remains relevant (hard to find time to do this), location-I want to remain in the Midwest
Continuing to remain entrepreneurial, creative, fresh in an ever changing and competitive market place.
Cost of education. Willingness to move family.
Cost of living
Current institution's budget
Declining enrollment, money allocated to professional development
Declining high school population and institutional budget challenges.
Declining student demographics in region of preference
Demographic changes
Demographic shifts
Demographic shifts and reduction of high school aged students; rapid industry shifts from the traditional, brick and mortar experience to identifying and enrolling older students who need to balance education with life; non-tuition driven revenue streams
Demonstrate that I can turn things around at an institution facing severe challenges. I will also need to learn how to best navigate the politics of faculty, alumni, and board constituencies in order to be successful at the next level.
Determining the new direction and training for a position outside of Admissions
Developing effective management techniques, motivation strategies, and staff development.
Development of Innovative approaches
Do I want to continue to enrollment management leadership or take a step back?
Dual income household in two different fields. It's difficult for 2 high-level professionals to relocate together.
Employed too long at current institution
Enrollment trends, changing demographics, accessibility of higher education, student success outcomes, and national perception of higher ed
Ensuring the school that I move to has a road to success.
Expanding on a diversity action program for undergraduate admissions.
Experience
familiarity with financial aid policies/practices/regulations
Family commitments



Family obligations
Family obligations.
family relocation; current institutional issues/reputation; patience
Finalizing retirement funds/investments.
Financial aid modeling, especially for returning students. Deeper knowledge in statistics and data analytics and the role each plays in strategic enrollment planning.
Financial security
Financial sustainability, access, demographics.
Financial; Fast growth problems; raising enrollment while raising ACT averages; Housing shortages; Clerical positions have not kept up with growth.
Finances
Finding an institution for which I am match for mission and vision.
Finding an institution that is a good fit for me.
Finding pay equality based on gender.
Finding something where I am located that offers the work/life balance I desire along with a salary that supports my family.
Finding the right environment where my talents can make a difference.
Finding the time to complete my dissertation
Gain more familiarity with financial aid cost-leveraging.
Gaining development experience
Gaining experience with the board of trustees and the president's cabinet.
Gaining exposure so that I am thought of a potential candidate
Gaining teaching experience
Gaps in knowledge over leveraging financial aid, discount rates, compliance. Navigating politics with deans and other university leadership
General challenges associated with serving at one institution for a long time.
Geographic limitations largely driven by chapter of family.
Geography limitations, age discrimination, and self-doubt
Get my financial things in order.
greater knowledge in data, analysis, and looking at current students in relation to new students
Have evidence that we can still market and have a demand for private higher education given the rising cost.
Have not met enrollment goals at current institution
Having enough money to retire comfortably
Having only worked at one institution, prospective employers will look negatively at this.
Helping constituents better understand enrollment pressures and competition.
Higher education is in crisis and knowing what institutions will need to help lead is challenging.
hiring/training/restructuring to ensure replacement/continued functioning
How to better navigate the political climate of higher education, big data analysis
How to know when to retire.
How to stay challenged-finding right fit for next move



I am interested in working for a research university or top-tier liberal arts college - my experience to date is exclusively in small liberal arts environments, and my degrees are not impressive in a very brand-conscious industry.
I am moving to another state, so I need to re-establish a new network.
I cannot move up unless my supervisor leaves or is promoted
I do not have my Master's degree and find that it would be very difficult to earn this degree due to the cost and time commitment.
I have been unable to convince public institutions of the value of my experience at private institutions.
I have extensive admissions experience, some financial aid experience and some advising experience. I lack Registrar experience and don't have the technical expertise or systems expertise that some position may be looking for.
I have moved from the state's flagship institution to a junior college. This move has allowed me more insight into the inner workings of an institution, but it may be perceived as a step back in my career.
I hope to become a college president. To achieve that goal, I will need to demonstrate my ability to fund raise effectively and deal with financial challenges. I am also interested in association management. To do that, I will need to demonstrate that my skills are transferable.
I love my current role, so leaving my department to leading a larger group of managers will be a challenge. I struggle with not having daily connection with my staff and being even more removed from actual student interaction is something I will miss.
I need more experience overseeing graduate and international recruitment/enrollment.
I need to build my confidence in speaking to Trustees and others. My VP has been great at including me when it comes to search strategy and I feel very knowledgeable of the process. However, I feel that I would lack the confidence to speak to Trustees and other higher-ups if questioned on our strategies.
I need to determine if there is a future in this profession. Enrollment specifically is a fickle and increasingly impossible function to successfully perform.
I need to grow more in the areas of technology, process development and improvement and financial aid leveraging.
I spent the last five years intimately involved with recruitment. I now need to learn everything I can about retention. Just not knowing what I don't know, and how to figure out what I need to know.
I think that'll depend on my next move. I don't feel I ever stop learning so I feel I will continue to grow in my field.
I would like to stay in the southeast region and VPEM positions are limited in this region. The practice of promoting from within is also a challenge in looking for positions. Honestly, the demographic challenges and the competitive nature of enrollment have me considering moving to the consulting side working with a vendor. I don't know that I want to continue to spend the next 20 years of my career having my professional future determined by a number and the decisions of 17/18 year olds.
Inability to relocate at this time due to family obligations.
Increasing awareness of current trends and tactics in marketing - particular digital; increasing knowledge of larger and/or more complex institutions
Increasing competitiveness of the market and school closings.
Initiatives being blocked by a lack of faculty participation and/or support.
Institutional structure/political structure and perhaps level of education.
Insurance coverage
It will be a larger budget and I need to prepare for the larger financial responsibility.
It's challenging to focus on/give time to any other areas of the college I am responsible for outside of admission because we are a tuition driven school whose operating budget depends on our success in recruiting.
Just navigating the wide array of available paths.
Just need to find the right fit. I believe I am ready and qualified.



Keeping current on digital marketing and understanding the demographic changes coming.
knowing my next position may be outside higher education, although not knowing what are it will be
Knowledge and experience, Diversity of institutions, Changing scope of college admissions
Knowledge in other enrollment related areas
Lack of a PHD or EDD
Lack of corporate experience. I previously worked as an attorney and transitioned into higher education.
Lack of experience in academic/faculty affairs, limited financial aid knowledge, limited network
Lack of experience in the field
Learn more about graduate and part-time recruitment.
Learning a new industry will be a big learning curve.
Learning how to relax and let go "not my circus, not my monkeys"
Learning more about the industry and trends.
learning specifics about corporate program management
Learning the university as a new employee.
Learning to delegate tasks and to assert myself.
Learning to fish.
Leaving my current team
Letting go -
Limited experience in financial aid and academic advising
Limited opportunities in the career path I want.
Limited positions available in my field in my geographic area
Location
Location (in state or out of state), industry challenges like declining enrollment nation-wide.
Making time.
Managing expectations of what I am able to achieve.
Many schools are looking for the silver bullet that does not exist. The challenge is finding the right school that will be a good fit for my skills and personality while allowing me time to turn the enrollment dials.
Master's degree
Meet enrollment goals and help make enrollment 70-80% of Institutional Strategic Plan
Meet enrollment goals, or, explain why enrollment goals were not met and how I would be able to help their institution meet their enrollment goals.
I would also say limited resources to compete equitably in a highly competitive higher education market.
Meeting current enrollment goals.
Meeting enrollment targets. Meeting net tuition revenue goals. Growing applicant pool.
More broad portfolio including other EM areas, student success areas; working with different student populations
More connections with decision makers
More direct management experience - stuck in middle management currently.
more exposure to other recruitment audiences
Moving from small schools to large, more prestigious schools (hopefully!).
Moving up from this position may require me to move. This is a family decision.



My biggest fear: working for a president I don't like. My second biggest fear: losing the work/life balance I have fought so hard to achieve in my current role as the #2. I'm worried at the next level I'll have to give up more of my personal life, which I am sad about.
My own willingness to relocate if positions are not available in my current metropolitan area; gaining more facility with data analytics and display
National trend of declining high school graduates
Navigating a work culture that has favored personality over principle.
Need to get my Master's Degree
Networking and taking on additional responsibilities.
No professional challenges
No SEM chief at current institution; limited experience doing vs theory
Not enough support from leadership to support work-life balance.
Not having a doctorate degree
Not having a PH.D/Ed.D
Not having a terminal degree.
Not having experience at larger institutions
Obtaining a PhD
One main challenge that I can't change is that I am a female. My next career goal position does not have many females in leadership.
open to looking outside of the industry or to look at more grant funded opportunities
Perception
Perception is one of the biggest challenges we all face in this profession.
Personal/family challenges related to relocation.
Personal--the right opportunity aligning with what works for my family
Persons currently holding positions that I may be interested in and are not at the retirement stage yet.
Planning for retirement
political infrastructure of current institution
Possible transition out of higher education into a new field.
Potential change to leadership in near future
Potentially will need an additional degree (PhD). Not sure how this would fit current work and family commitments.
preparing leadership transition ready subordinates in an environment of constantly replacing associates with who stay less than 5 years in the industry
Private Nonprofit College closures will CAO positions within the industry more competitive.
Problems with a campus move may reduce enrollment.
Professional association participation/volunteerism and contributing literature to the field are both time commitments which are difficult to manage with existing professional responsibilities.
Professional development, data analysis, marketing intelligence
Remaining current in a fast paced, highly competitive and ever changing environment.
Results
Right opportunity at the right time, fit is important
Room for advancement at my current institution. While I don't want to leave I may not have a choice.
Save as much as possible



Securing a position in a business that is as flexible as my current employer.
Short tenure in current position.
Show consistent work at my current institution.
Since I have been at the same institution for almost 19 years, changing institutions may be a challenge for me and a perceived challenge for the new institution.
Size of institution, perceived assumptions from other universities about enrollment management at different population sized universities; continued use of data to make informed decisions.
Solving challenges that exist everywhere.
Staying busy
staying current with technology and business process methodologies
Staying employed so that my children can received educational benefits until I change careers to self-employment
Staying up with the current regulations
Supervisors with experiences/expertise in areas other than student services/affairs who do not fully understand the specifics/scope of enrollment management and HE factors/challenges.
Technology
The unrealistic enrollment expectations within a declining market and how I've approached handling the expectations.
The biggest barrier seems to be not already having an AVP title. Schools seem to want people who've already done the job, even if their scope and experience is in a smaller or different institution type. I'm trying to get as much hands on experience at the next level up as possible.
The biggest challenge is the demographic slide in the northeast. Find ways to stay relevant to in our primary market while expanding to new markets.
The competitive landscape associated with college admission
The fact I do not have a master's or PhD in a sea of individuals with these now common and expected credentials. If a position is not listed as or equivalent combination of education and experience, I'm out of luck. I will likely not look for positions within higher education.
The fear of the unknown challenges at another campus.
The lack of experience in other departments and institution types.
The many threats to higher education at this time are the biggest challenges I perceive.
The pressure on CEMOs to meet the many demands that a tuition dependent institution presents.
Sitting on a President's Cabinet for the first time and the politics that go with that part of the role.
the short stay in my current position
The two challenges that are most relevant are (1) relocating to another position and (2) having the release time to complete a Ph.D.
Time --- do I have enough free time to commit to helping others.
time and affordability
Time because I have a family and they are my priority, as well as money for the Master's Degree.
Time. We have a new president and vice president at the institution.
Understanding departments outside of admissions.
Understanding how data are analyzed in other units within enrollment management.
Understanding the local community, environment -primarily addressing the perceptive and real barriers to securing a post-secondary degree. Most adult learners do not always see the value of getting another degree/certificate. Unless there is a demonstrated value in doing so such as financial gain or other incentives



there are many barriers to overcome. The intrinsic nature of continuous education is in jeopardy.
We will need to work on staff development and enhance the overall experience of the students.
When I retire, I will consider consulting on a part time basis. Difficult to get consulting experience while working at an institution with extreme enrollment pressures.
Whether I am prepared with enough experience in management to move onto a different campus.
Will need to expand my experience and possibly my education.
Work for a single purpose institution. If I was to move to another institution the structure and job would be so much different.
Work/school balance
Years of experience and age.



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

\*raw data

Q27 - What, if anything, are you doing to prepare yourself for your next career move?
403B and retirement savings
Achieve my goals - get big wins!
Adding more strategic enrollment management responsibilities into my portfolio and increasing leadership involvement within NACAC and my state ACAC
Admitted in to the EdD program at USC.
Advanced education
Advanced education, professional development, seeking mentors.
Advocating for broader experience and authority.
Apply for MBA
Applying for a Doctoral Degree in Education at U Penn
Asking for advice about retirement!
Assuming new and additional responsibilities both inside and outside of my institution, but related to the field.
Assuming new responsibilities at the college to broaden my experience.
Attempting to achieve enrollment goals.
Attending conference for positions higher than my current position and in areas I do not currently oversee (i.e. financial aid); volunteering to serve on committees outside of Admissions
Attending conferences, trainings, and taking on various committee lead roles at the institution.
Attending professional development opportunities, mentoring programs, building relationships
Attending workshops on retirement.
Be a lifelong learner.
Be more familiar with financial aid, learn more about marketing.
Becoming as proficient as possible utilizing Slate/Technolutions products
Being as successful as possible and open to learning in my current role.
BMC has grown 34% in the last four years. I am trying to stretch into other areas, to broaden the territories recruited and raise the institutions image in the region.
Breaking institutional Enrollment Records
Building my network. Writing more. Reading more trade publications and news. Considering online coursework in statistics and change management.
Building my resume of responsibilities, involvement in committees, and improving my dept's efficiency with the limited resources we have.
Building successful portfolio of enrollment growth; professional learning; attending professional development; planning to start a doctorate program.
Building up skills; networking
Career exploration
Certificate program
Certificate Program in Enrollment Management at USC Rossier School of Education (online)
Choosing strategic committees to serve on throughout the institution
Complete my Ph.D. in Higher Education and get more collegiate teaching experience.
Completed doctoral program, seeking publication opportunities, participating in scholarly research.



Completed Leadership in Enrollment Management Certificate. Involvement in professional organizations. Participating in various committees at my institution.
Completing a EdD in Higher Education Administration
Completing a Leadership Certificate Program
Completing a PhD in Organizational Leadership
Completing doctoral degree
Completing doctorate and professional development in SEM
Completing Masters and continual research/development
Completing master's degree.
Completing my master's degree and gain more experience in financial aid.
Completing my PhD.
Completing PhD
Conferences, department collaboration, networking
Considering all options in and out of higher education. Striving for a healthy work/life balance.
Considering going back to school.
Considering moving to the high school side or consulting
Consulting in the business sector to diversify skill set and be ready should anything change in my current role. I currently work at my alma mater and have no intention of leading. Consulting business has steadily increased and focuses on leadership development and organizational development.
Consulting with mentors and sponsors, engaging in learning and a focus on trends and data analysis
Continue to be involved with professional organizations, stay current in the field via professional articles and conferences, network, implement successful initiatives at current institution.
continue to build skills in recruitment and retention areas - always learning
Continue to develop strategies that support enrollment, work closely with faculty, continue to review data and report in a user friendly way
Continue to follow the trends in the field of Enrollment Management. Continue to seek growth by attending conferences and networking whenever possible.
Continue to work on my doctorate and shadow my Vice President to get a better understanding of the role.
Continuing to build experience in financial aid, marketing/communications, graduate enrollment and strategic planning
Continuing to build my network in the world of enrollment management as well as other community based organizations.
Continuing to expand my knowledge and skill set through professional development and learn as much as possible about higher ed best practices and trends at multiple levels (e.g., institution, workforce, state, national, etc.).
Continuing to learn more about the university operations in areas outside of my own
Continuing to learn new things by attending professional development opportunities and presenting to share my knowledge and network
Continuing to learn via professional development and connections with colleagues.
Continuing to stay on top of trends and research.
Cross training in registrar's and financial aid office
Cross-training at current institution, mentoring from current CEO
Currently interviewing and exploring options.
Currently researching options.



Developing a bucket list!
Discuss professional aspirations with search firms.
Doctoral program
Doing a great job at my current job.
Earning a certificate in higher education leadership
earning a doctoral degree
Earning an EdD degree
Engaging with search firms and consultants, and networking.
Enrolled in Ed.D program
Enrollment management is a people business so I am conscious on the continuous need to expand my professional network.
Ensure that I establish a strong operation at my current institution (including training up younger professionals to take my place) then seek appointment as President of an institution of similar size to my current one.
Establishing success in my current position, Expanding knowledge beyond enrollment to include retention and innovation, Staying current with professional development, and active in my professional organization.
Excelling in performance
Expand my skillset in doing a SEM for the institution.
Expand responsibilities at my current institution to gain further exposure to marketing, modeling, and financial aid.
Expanding my knowledge of academics, curriculum, and seeking additional personal education.
Expanding my portfolio by overseeing other areas of higher education and building skills in fundraising, etc.
Expanding portfolio, gaining academic experience through teaching, networking in leadership circles, responding to search firms,
Expanding professional network, publishing research
Expanding skillset and experience to balance my portfolio
Experience, Training, Collaborations
Exploring graduate school options
Exploring options and deciding which route would best allow me to be intellectually stimulated, yet have less pressure.
Exploring options in the non-profit sector outside of higher education.
Exploring potential doctoral programs to apply to within the next two - three years.
Extensive research into higher education trends, growing expertise in key areas that will be beneficial to my university over the next 5-10 years, and regularly reading a diverse range of books and articles relating to higher education and leadership.
Figure out how to ease down without retiring cold turkey
Fin aid certification
Finished doctoral program
Finishing my master's degree. Attending conferences. Seeking opportunities within the institution to influence strategic decisions.
Focusing on strategic decision-making and activities that will benefit admission outcomes, involving both internal and external entities, thus developing my negotiation skills and expanding my network.
For my next career move, I would be interested in considering a Senior Vice Presidency or an Executive Vice Presidency in an Enrollment and Strategic Planning role. Eventually (within 10 years) I would like to develop as a candidate for a Presidency at a Small, Private Undergraduate Liberal Arts college. However, in order to achieve



that goal, I will need to be able to complete a Ph.D. Within the next year, I plan to apply to a Ph.D. program and spend the next 5-6 years completing my Ph.D.
Gaining additional experience that would broaden my portfolio of experience outside of admissions where possible while successfully performing in my current position
Getting a PhD
Graduate degree
higher end [sic] professional development
I am a tenured faculty member in engineering. I will return to faculty
I am completing an EdD.
I am enrolling in a doctoral program in Higher Education Leadership and looking for professional development conferences where I can learn new developments in other fields.
I am going back to school to obtain a doctorate degree.
I am hoping to engage in my professional associations to a greater degree and seek publication of professional contribution.
I am involved in professional organizations, I have participated and will continue to participate in professional development (completed a leadership training course provided by IU), I read industry periodicals to stay up to date on emerging trends (especially technology), I attend national conferences on enrollment management and network with colleagues.
I am looking at what positions I can transition to that aren't necessarily enrollment specific. The constant turmoil within the industry and this position specifically make me question the balance of enjoyable and unenjoyable tasks and pressures.
I am ready to retire and enjoy having time to do as I please! I will maintain some participation in international admission and K-12 projects
I am saying yes to every opportunity that comes way in order to increase the breadth of work I'm involved. I feel this broad range of experiences will best prepare me for a job at the next level at my next institution.
I am within 1 year of completing my doctorate. I knew I would be making a career move in 2020/2021 due to leadership changes at my institution and pursued the doctorate to make me a more competitive candidate at other institutions or as a consultant.
I am working toward multiple Chief Enrollment Management Officer Certifications and on my MBA in Organizational Leadership.
I am working with a recruiter
I applied for HLC peer-reviewer position and seek professional development opportunities
I completed a professional certification in enrollment management in fall 2018.
I didn't have the option to prepare, the decision was made for me. Moved from one Assoc VP position to another.
I do not have any plans at the moment. Simply working hard to meet enrollment goals.
I finished my Ed.D. during this past academic year (graduated December 2018).
I have already been hired by another institution and I will transition in August of this year.
I have already been offered this promotion and I will also oversee Orientation, Testing and International.
I have already started a business
I have been consulting for years and I enjoy helping other institutions accomplish their objectives.
I have no plans at this stage of my career to make a move. I am very satisfied with my current role.
I just completed my PhD. Doing a lot of networking.
I moved from Director of Admissions to AVP of Enrollment last year. Have yet to hire a new Director so I am serving as acting in addition to AVP. I began my EdD 2 years ago to prepare me for continued advancement. I am expanding my portfolio in enrollment, beyond admissions.



I need to complete my dissertation.
I recently completed a doctorate degree in Strategic Leadership.
I will continue to find mentors. I have several friends/mentors at different universities and through various consulting companies. I glean their wisdom and advice. I don't always take it, but I like to get the thoughts of others. If a recruiting company contacts me I will take the time to speak to them even though I am not actively searching. However, if I am recommended by a colleague to the search team then I want to take the time to visit with the recruiter. I also continue to read several admissions blogs and other higher ed publishings (Tudor Collegiate, Render Experiences, and NACAC News are my favorites). I also stay connected through the Facebook group College Admission Counselors.
I'm learning as much as I can, networking, and expanding my skill set and knowledge base.
Implementing PeopleSoft successfully and maximizing use of the technology. Submitting proposals to regional and national organizations for conference sessions.
Increase enrollment and retention by 10% annually.
Involvement in NACAC, Teaching a college course, seeking experiences that stretch outside of my current role.
I've already accepted a position elsewhere starting July 1.
Keep doing the best I can in my current role to support the mission of the institution
Keeping resume current, active professional development, and continuing to give my institution 110%.
leadership development
Leadership programs on fine tuning my leadership ship, Change management, presentation, LEAN, and Project Management skills.
Leaning on professional mentors. Acquiring more skills with budgeting. Increasing my public speaking engagements.
Learn another language, attend conferences, read a lot of professional journals, and ask a lot of questions.
Learn more about financial aid and continue to learn about data analytics.
Learn Slate and do Strategic Search in-house
Learning about related departments that at my current institution do not report to me, but are regularly found within the scope of CEMO's
learning as many new skills as I can and participating in regional/national associations
Learning as much as I can about the Admission and enrollment management in higher education. I'm currently implementing a new CRM and working with consultants to increase capacity and leverage of our admission strategy.
Learning as much as possible about the Enrollment Management field and attending conferences and professional development initiatives when possible.
Learning by new challenges. Am I "A system QB? One who just plugs and plays strategies? Or, am I someone who actually has innovative strategies?" I mention this because part of my experience at my current institution is helping me determine where I am at in my career. I am at a 'demographically' challenged institution, however, I am interested in better understanding through my 'wins' and 'loses' how effective I am as a SEM manager/leader. That largely plays a role in my next career moves and what makes sense for me.
Long story short, I truly believe SEM VPs/AVPs/Directors of Enrollment/CAOs are largely insecure about their roles. We are at the whims of 17 year olds, parents, demographic shifts, and media reports about the perceived values of higher education, or the perceived shortcomings of a college degree. Why do you think we hold onto data so much? It's our only compass, albeit an imprecise one, that helps us try to make sense of what students might be thinking/behaving. It's largely guess work, and we often have to demonstrate this guess work to our faculties and administration as 'science' for projections. I just fear that the survival of institutions no longer means the best fit for students at the right institutions.
Learning more about other aspects of enrollment - financial aid for example.



Learning more every day, increasing my skillsets, improving my leadership skills, attending conferences, networking.
Learning new processes and procedures, implementing new technology, improving head count.
looking at getting a EdD
Maintaining awareness of opportunities and networking with colleagues and placement services
Maintaining my network of colleagues and connections. Gaining further experience in all areas
Making sure my finances are in order before retiring
Meeting with administrators to present a succession plan and how I could help move the institution forward upon my boss' retirement.
More experience with registration and records.
More involvement with professional organizations, being more involved in the institutional strategic planning
My current job was to prepare for the next higher level position.
Network and explore career opportunities.
Networking
Networking
Networking
networking and building knowledge
Networking and engaging as much as I can with what I know will be under my direct leadership when I make the transition. Financial aid and Retention.
Networking and getting involved in as many professional development opportunities as possible to expand my knowledge and skills in the field.
Networking and getting involved in professional orgs
Networking and SEM skill Building
Networking at conferences, presenting, working with faculty, creating a pathway for my staff
Networking with colleagues to develop a support group as I transition to retiring. Writing about professional issues. Learning about consulting.
Networking with professionals, particularly women in leadership from other professions, volunteering on Advisory Boards and Community Boards, taking advantage of all professional development opportunities available to me.
Networking with search companies and have already applied for a few positions.
Networking within my institution
Networking, additional learning and certificate training
Networking, gaining broader experience within institution
Networking, research, staying abreast of national trends/topics, working to improve current institutional processes/approach, etc.
Networking, studying higher education trends, finding relevant mentors, making connections within my institution.
Networking, volunteer
Networking; attending workshops/trainings; staying current with trends and best practices
Obtaining an advanced degree
On the job training and training seminars and workshops.
Participate in training as available.
Participating across EM divisions and projects as much as possible



Participating in advisory boards and on committees outside of admissions/enrollment to broaden my career and knowledge base.
Participating in professional associations; engaging in auto-didactic learning; networking
Participating in recruitment, retention, and student success initiatives in order to gain experience in multiple areas of expertise.
PhD
Planning for consulting role during retirement.
Planning on pursuing graduate studies in Higher Education Administration.
Possible enrollment in a doctoral program.
Praying, closer work with my VP/EM, more engagement in slate and different technology, state level professional development, more communication with my mentor
Preparing for personal financial stability
preparing myself mentally, financially and socially for retirement
Produce industry knowledge.
Professional association memberships and conferences; presentation and workshop facilitation; peer to peer mentee relationships
Professional development - leadership & student affairs
Professional development and networking
Professional development and networking
Professional development opportunities through conferences, webinars, and being a part of executive boards for various associations. Greater responsibilities given by AVP of Enrollment Services
Professional development, leadership in campus committees/projects, taking on additional functional responsibility in EM
professional development, leadership roles
Professional development, networking
Professional development. Leadership cohort program at institution. Continuing graduate school.
Publishing a book and working on two others. Networking and running for a national position.
Pursuing an advanced degree. Getting more involved with retention and student success projects
Pursue a Doctoral degree.
Pursue Doctoral Program
Pursuing a doctorate degree
Pursuing an EdD
Pursuing Doctorate in Higher Education leadership
Reading and keeping up on what types or jobs/careers are out there
Reading, being mentored, networking in the industry
Reading, webinars, networking
Reassessing my talents and how they can be used in another area.
Recently completed a higher degree.
Reflecting
Researching institutions that might be a good match.
Researching tech and customer management.
Resume writing and editing, conference scheduling



resume, LinkedIn updates, career planning, networking
Retirement
Retirement Planning
Retirement planning
Reviewing work-life balance.
Save
Save money
Saving money
Seeking expanded duties in current role, asking administration for growth opportunities, reviewing postings, taking additional training, broadening my knowledge through conference sessions, articles and colleague interaction, considering an institute experience
Seeking information on new trends and skills that are needed in the next wave of higher education innovation.
Seeking opportunities to sit on university-wide committees/task forces at my current institution, increasing involvement with regional professional organizations
Served concurrently in the military (National Guard) for 31 years.
Serving committees, campus involvement, state/national org involvement
Starting a doctoral program
State and national committee work; certification in EM; networking with other professionals in higher positions around the state and nation.
Stay plugged in to State and national higher ed associations. Volunteer for State committees and with professional associations.
Staying connected with others in Higher Ed who have held my current position.
Staying current on leadership and management issues and best practices. Maintaining strong interdepartmental connections and knowledge.
Staying current with HE trends demographic information, best practices and innovations; reading HE research and attending HE related conferences when possible.
Staying current with industry trends and new information via professional meetings, conferences and relevant reading material.
Strategic enrollment planning; acquiring deeper knowledge in matters related to financial aid; collaborating with key campus stakeholders in areas related to equity, access, and student retention.
Study a doctoral degree
Studying for my EdD.
Studying other professionals as well as professional development
Take on leadership projects
Taking classes in a doctoral program
Taking on additional responsibilities in my current role.
Taking on additional responsibilities when needed and serving within areas outside of enrollment management in order to stay abreast of current needs and trends across all areas of higher education.
Taking on more leadership roles. Gain additional education.
Taking on new responsibilities
Talking to search firms and reviewing my skills in comparison to current job postings
The CAO job is preparation enough for my next move.
Thinking about and planning for retirement
Trying to keep current with trends that will help me broaden my knowledge base



Update my resume and cover letter.
Update resume and LinkedIn profile
Vice President for Enrollment management
Went on to get my Masters but now just doing workshops etc.
Will begin a doctoral program in the next two years.
Working more intently with office involved with the life-cycle of students (post-enrollment). Subbing for EM when absent in campus collaborations.
Working on a PhD, and ensuring I am up-to-date on trends in my field.
Working on doctoral degree
Working to increase enrollment of specific populations and networking
Working with a leadership coach. Attending and presenting at professional conferences. Taking on additional tasks/projects in the office that stretch my skill set.
Working with my current Executive Dean on succession planning and reorganization ideas. Being involved in statewide legislative work, attending statewide Exec Dean meetings, professional development (attend PACRAO, AACRAO and other conferences).



## Appendix E: Further Words of Wisdom

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

A larger part of this job than most realize is the importance of educating the other institutional leaders on enrollment and recruitment best practices, along with providing them information to understand the difficulties of the higher ed recruitment market and growing enrollment.
Above all, have integrity.
Advancement has often required mobility. Mobility has provided me with a diverse portfolio of experiences that allow me to remain competitive in the job market. Also, mobility has allowed for significant shifts in salary (in reference to public institution employees who often only receive incremental annual increases between 0-2% if they stay in one institution).
Align with the philosophy of life-learning, support professional development for your team, develop your skills in emotional intelligence, lean into your strengths while allowing others on your team to do the same, seek mentorship, be transparent and stick to your values.
As a Director of Admissions, I erroneously thought I needed to work until all hours of the night to get things done and regularly respond to emails and texts after hours and on weekends. This did not help me advance and it sent a poor message to those who might have been seeking to follow in my footsteps. Now that I am in a Dean's position, I make it very clear that everyone needs to leave at 5. If I stay late, I let my staff know why (and usually because I need to do some classwork).
As a leader the hardest thing to do is to show vulnerability and humility; but your people will respect you more for being a human being. The most important lesson I learned is that there are days where you will lead, days you will follow, but mostly you'll walk side-by-side together.
Finally, you are not "too busy" for the needs of the students you serve or subordinates. Being a leader is putting "we" before "me".
Be aware that today's executive leaders may not understand the current delimitation's the campus is facing based on the changing demographics.
Be curious, try things, pivot . . . then keep pivoting -
Be flexible. Few leaders outside of EM truly understand what we do
Be intentional about learning broadly from other institutions. Ask questions that move beyond your current scope and don't apologize for asking them. Make sure you know who you are and define your own value outside of your job so that when the job is tough it is not impacting who you are as a person.
Be open and soak up all the knowledge you can. Failures and mistakes are the best way to learn so don't let them get you down - learn from them and move on!
Be open to change-that is all there is as a CAO today!
Be present in whichever current role you are in - rather than positioning current work for what "looks good" for what is next, focus on the best *results* in your current role. The results will speak for themselves.
Be sure to demonstrate to those to your staff that you value them as fellow employees and individuals. Also, take time to mentor younger staff members who possess a keen interest in making college admissions a career.



Be willing to learn from everyone you come in contact with along the way. It won't help you to be the smartest person in each meeting. Sure your experience may speak for itself but the insight of others can be invaluable when it comes to enrollment.
Be willing to leave your comfort zone and take on additional duties for which you may not be familiar with.
Being a good Admissions Director is like being a good dance partner. You can't have two people leading or you'll step on each other's toes! My advice to aspiring #2s, those Directors of Admission in waiting, is to remember that in order to be effective you have to be the Director that your Dean/VP needs you to be, not the Director you think you want to be. You must learn to compliment the work of your Dean or VP, not over take it. Work for someone you believe in because you might find that it is that person's vision you may ultimately have to execute, not your own. I've been very lucky because I have worked for amazing admissions leaders and that has made all the difference in my career. I can honestly say that in every office I've worked in I have thought, "I am so lucky to be working for this person". It's easy to work hard when the people you work for and work with inspire you to be your best--that's been the story of my career and I'm so grateful for it.
Being able to access, translate, and synthesize data is becoming increasingly critical. Spend time with your data systems experts and plan to budget to hire good people in that space.
Building relationships across campus is critical. Start early and engage frequently.
Challenging days in higher ed but a chance to make a difference!
Create good relationships with peer colleague outside of your current institution. They are invaluable for support and knowledge.
Culture and Fit are critical to long term success.
Data fluency and analysis skills are critical.
Depends on the institution as to how this role is set up; most institutions that I have worked with/at have housed this position/function into the Office of the Registrar and related functions (for admissions to the institution) have rolled up to it.
Develop mentoring relationships both with those who will mentor you and those who you will mentor
Develop thick skin as you will rarely be appreciated by all counterparts/constituencies. Gain professional development and make contacts as they will help you attain new positions in the future and grow you as a person. Always remember that data is important but students are the ultimate end of what we do so maintain focus on what is important to students, even if it defies the data.
Develop your ability to collaborate and build partnerships across campus. These strong relationships will serve you well as you strive to involve the entire campus community in the business of recruiting and enrolling students. Hone your speaking and writing skills. The ability to communicate clearly and convincingly is critically important in this profession. Use data to support your conclusions whenever possible. Demonstrating how your programs and initiatives support enrollment goals can (sometimes) help you secure additional resources. Develop a network of trusted friends and allies on campus, and seek their counsel when the going gets rough. Maintain balance and a sense of humor in your life, spending time doing things you love to do.
Develop your own personal board of advisors: five people who know you and what you aspire to (and where you still need to develop), and who work in institutions other than your own, preferably representing secondary and post-secondary perspectives.
Do everything you can to educate the campus on strategic enrollment management. Help them feel responsible - because they are responsible.
Do not let the enrollment challenges dissuade you. The work is rewarding and purposeful and there are always creative solutions to those challenges.



Don't manage, lead. And give your staff ownership of their work. We doing meaningful work, make sure every job reflects that meaning.
Don't focus on the title or perks. Focus on doing great and meaningful work. The rewards will come.
Engage in professional organizations. Find mentors.
Enjoy what you do, Enjoy who you do it with, Remember why you do this, and Bring your best self to work every day.
Enrollment Management can be summarized as – “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” - African Proverb
Every day is a fun, just some are “funner” than others.
Find mentors you trust who can help guide you along your career path.
Finding the right fit is important. If you are starting to apply to a CAO position, you often don't know if it is the right fit until you participate in the search process. That may involve talking to a consultant or asking trusted colleagues about an opportunity that is available. Additionally, being transparent about your search with your current supervisor and office leadership will make everything easier for all involved, and will likely help you in your own search process.
Focus on who you can help and spend less worrying about who can help you.
For those considering entering a CAO track, there really never is an optimal time and my advice is jump in and do not be afraid to serve as a change-maker. A very close colleague once shared with me that if we are not causing waves on our campuses within EM, we are doing something wrong. Develop a strong support network of colleagues at other schools to share and bounce ideas and remember that communication is key. The CAO is only as strong as their team. You must be prepared to lead by example, roll up your sleeves and do the same work that you are expecting of your recruitment staff. This trust goes a long way!
Have a mentor, have a plan for stress management, have friends, be truthful with your supervisor about the work load, and don't take anything personally
Have fun. The job is stressful but rewards are tremendous!
Have passion for what you do. Stay student centered and focused.
Higher Education is a very rewarding career. In particular, Admission, Recruitment, and Enrollment Management roles provide the most direct access to working with students and families and creating collaborative partnerships across all units on a college campus. I cannot imagine a more thrilling, meaningful and rewarding environment in which to work.
Higher education needs good ethical leaders to help colleges navigate into the future.
If you are looking to grow in your current responsibilities I would encourage you to find a niche area and become the master of that domain. This shows drive, determination and the ability to achieve goals.
I found that to move up levels I had to be willing to relocated. I originally served as the Director of Admissions at my alma mater, then as CAO at two other schools (7 years total) until the CAO position opened up at my alma mater. I was then prepared for the CAO role at my alma mater and they actually sought me out for the role based on the success of the past seven years. I know have the opportunity to serve in my dream job.
I recommend being eager to learn, willing to participate in organizations, be adaptable, be collaborative, and don't be afraid to take a risk- failure is a learning opportunity.



I strongly encourage professional membership with AACRAO and NACAC. Both have been immensely helpful to my professional development whether it is conference attendance, webinars, newsletters, or research. Advocate for yourself, this should be a non-negotiable.

I encourage connecting with colleagues at other institutions. You need a few people that you can reach out to when you're struggling to solve a problem. Most likely you're not the first person to encounter this obstacle, and having a group to reach out to can help you save time and your sanity. Attendance at professional conferences can help foster the opportunity to meet other CAOs. Also utilize professional membership list serves to ask questions.

Make friends with faculty. You need allies. Partners. They need you to bring them students to recruit, and you need them to help recruit those students. I show up to their presentations, their students' presentations and guest speakers and concerts and theater performances. I send my congratulations when someone has won an award or received a grant or is mentioned in the local paper for doing something awesome. I've learned that faculty are willing to extend grace when they know I am for them.

I would like to encourage women to stay in the profession as long as they can because we need more women in enrollment management, especially mothers and professionals with partners.

If you aren't able to move up in your institution within 3 years, it may be time to move out of your current institution.

In addition to admissions and recruitment experience, it's important to gain as much experience in financial aid as possible early in your career. The combination of admissions/recruitment and financial aid may assist you in securing positions that have a broader scope of responsibility and increased compensation. Pursue an advanced degree or professional certification as you're able.

It is a great profession and build a team around you that challenges you, compliments you and keeps you energized and fresh.

It is helpful to have direct experience with all aspects of the enrollment funnel and understanding what conversion into meaningful data looks like.

It is not a good career path at this time. Likelihood of being fired is high, stress is high, and chance of working for an unqualified VP for Enrollment is high.

It is occurring to me that Advancement professionals make more money for the same effort.

It is so important to be involved with our professional organizations. Present at a conference, serve on a committee or workforce. And move beyond your job description as often as possible. Get budgeting experience some way.

It might look like a pile of paper, but it's actually someone's future. Never lose sight of your responsibility to help connect applicants with a learning environment where they can succeed.

Keep focused on the needs of the students and the institution.

Keep pressing. Quick fixes are not sustainable for the long haul. Be willing to wait to see the results of changes. An Admissions Team that works cohesively is the best asset in this position.

Know Data and Analysis

Know Thyself.

Know your strengths, but don't be afraid to take on a project that is outside your normal comfort zone.

Learn all of the parts of Enrollment Management before tackling Admissions. Be prepared to solicit change from the upper management. Learn how to read data and make decisions using the data.



Learn all you can about technology, strategic planning, educational and demographic trends and change management. Be a strong but fair leader remembering your staff need appreciation, understanding and mentoring. Always remember to put the students first in all policies, processes and daily work activities. They are why we do what we do.
Learn as much as possible about every aspect of higher education. Understanding the interconnected nature of our work will benefit you greatly in navigating the difficult paths and situations you will face throughout your career. You will need to develop your "north star" and follow it regardless of how rough the seas get.
Learn from all experiences, good and bad. Do not be afraid to fail, but, learn from your failures (perceived or true). Do not be afraid of hard conversations. And, never forget, feedback is the breakfast of champions (credited to one of my mentors, A. Olsen).
Learn something new every day and be willing to adapt and change.
Learn to collaborate with all colleagues and achieve buy-in on all major initiatives from both the administrative and academic areas of your University. Leverage enrollment data in the decision-making process.
Listen to your applicants and really understand their needs.
Look beyond the trends and find out what works best for your institution. There is no "one size fits all" solution to any admissions related issue.
Lose the attitude but keep the work ethic.
Make personal and professional decisions that do not compromise your ethics and integrity.
Make sure you understand what you're getting into. Find professionals/mentors who will be candid about what this job/career entails.
Make the students the focus and the center of your work. Institutional success will follow. If you put institutional success above student success, you can be very effective and successful, but probably not joyful in your work.
My best advice is to never stop innovating. If you want to be successful in admissions and enrollment management, innovation should be part of your DNA. If you ever find yourself in a state where everything is "just the way you want it", that's the time to be worried that you're probably missing something--perhaps it's an opportunity, but more likely it's a threat. The best way to innovate is to hire smart people with an entrepreneurial spirit, dedication, and energy, empower them to make transformational changes, and guide & coach as needed. Your people are your strength, and without them you can achieve nothing.
Network and learn as much as you can from the experience of others. Support your team.
Networking has been one of the most important attributes in my professions career. Get involved, connect with others in the profession, and never stop learning.
Our work continues to change and challenge us but I do feel there is great opportunity to impact the lives of students. It's also incredibly satisfying to see the changing demographics within the profession. With increased diversity comes greater perspective and our profession needs it so it better reflects the country we live in.
People first.
People support what they help create, involve others
Practice being data-driven.
Professional development is necessary. Read all the articles you can and stay current with population trends. Care about your team. Learn everyone's job in the office - do not assign work to someone with something you just don't want to do. Be a role model.



Professionalism, INTEGRITY, leadership skills, compassion, confidence, and strong communication skills will contribute to your success as strength as a CAO.
Protect the integrity of the process.
Read as much as possible about the profession, SEM. Be creative and think strategically. No idea is a bad idea. Don't be afraid to be radical!
Relationship management is probably one of the most important skills to possess. You will move things further and make more progress by effectively managing working relationships, making connections with people and respecting others and the skills/perspectives that they bring to a project or situation.
Remember that passion is cultivated through hard work over time.
Resiliency is key. Stay focused on your end goal & continue to learn and evolve....from your peers, from data, from your team...don't become stagnant!
Say "yes"! When presented with opportunities to contribute, take on new projects, or serve the institution, say "yes" even if you feel you are not yet an expert. Be able to spot inefficiencies and challenges and work to develop creative solutions. Seek to identify and address issues not only pertinent in your current role, but those impacting the department as a whole.
Say yes often, Learn new things. Make a move, even a lateral move, to set yourself up for upward growth
Say yes to challenges and opportunities as they present themselves. Listen to ideas and share your own. Give credit where credit is due (always). Lead your team, but don't be above following. Servant leadership goes a long way. Never ask your staff to do something you would not do yourself.
Seek opportunities to engage the profession locally and nationally.
Seek out mentors in the industry. It's so important to make connections with admission professionals from other universities as well as high school counselors and even vendor/consultants. They offer advice and can help guide you on your career path, they can also offer a shoulder to cry on when the apps are down and times are tough. Also, become a mentor! You can deepen your understanding of the college admissions world and become even better at your own job.
Senior roles in admissions and enrollment require a distinct set of leadership skills and a level of accountability that earlier roles often don't provide an adequate foundation for. You should be prepared to stumble, find yourself in uncomfortable positions, and even fail in your role as a leader. How you carry yourself and lead when things are most difficult, is the best measurement of your efficacy as a leader. Be humble, have integrity, and lead with a focus on service to your team.
Spend time in every position of the admissions ladder to completely understand the complete life-cycle of the prospective student
Stay connected and always research what is happening in the industry
Stay focus and never lose sight of the goals. Your people are your most valuable asset.
Stay the course, be fair, be dedicated and accountable to yourself first
Surround yourself with a blend of good people, those who are great about the science as well as the art of the profession.
Surround yourself with a great team.
Surround yourself with strong team members, it took me awhile to understand I could not be good at every aspect of our office and had to hire better than me to get things done. Respect your employees, highlight them and their accomplishments wherever you can so that the organization understands your and the institutions enrollment success is based on their work. You will be at the table in places your team will not be at. Make sure you're aware of that and again, highlight them wherever possible.



Take advantage of networking with colleagues and professional development opportunities; webinars, reading, conferences.
Take care of the ones you supervise and they will be loyal to you. Be kind. Be thoughtful and treat folks as you would want someone to treat you.
The CAO position requires a strong work ethic, patience, political savvy, collaboration, confidence in your decision making skills and managerial courage.
The nature of the CAO role is changing rapidly. These professionals must now be astute politicians, data miners, phenomenal storytellers, HR gurus, and comfortable with legal issues. Those who aspire should try to expand their knowledge in these areas. While the challenges are never-ending, the position remains absolutely fascinating and when done well, allows for the opportunity to impact institutions, students, families, and our nation in transformative ways.
The strength that served me the best was the ability to look beyond my desk and to build relationships with other leaders/departments. Cultivating influence has led to many significant decisions being quickly approved by those outside of my department. I have built trust by displaying empathy to the goals and needs of others. This trust was then leveraged for the mutual benefit of the students we serve.
The work is hard, but the rewards of helping students is priceless.
These items seem too obvious: listen actively, develop collaborative relationships, use a data-informed approach, seek solutions, and think creatively.
As we look to the changing demographics, I encourage you to diversify your portfolio of institution types. Demonstrate your agility.
This can become a fabulous career if you have a love for data, meeting new people and making an impact on young lives. With all the new technologies, vendors, and changing landscape, don't lose sight of the impact you can have and what a transformational time this can be in the life of a young person. Stay grounded in that and you will go far! Working at multiple institutions was the best thing I ever did for my career in this field. I regularly pull from past experiences at different types and sizes of institutions. It makes me a stronger, more versatile Director.
This is the more strenuous, but rewarding work that I have done in higher education. I wouldn't change a thing.
This position requires flexibility and adaptability.
This work can be extremely fulfilling and satisfying, as education is a path for change and empowerment. Be mindful to find a work/life balance that allows you to grow professionally and personally, and learn to delegate responsibilities when you can.
<b>Those Who Bond, Win!</b>
To stay focused on what drives enrollment results, continuously engage in learning new technology, seek mentorship, keep students at the center of your decision-making.
Trust in your abilities as a leader
Try to get experience in all aspects of admissions and the college from recruitment, academic policies, program of studies, transfer evaluations, financial aid, payment of fees/tuition, screening applications for criminal probation/parole, FERPA and maintenance of the academic file. One must be well rounded person with full knowledge of the academic cycle from admission to graduation.



Two areas of advice:

1) You need to develop a skillset around systems level thinking, not just centered on the technology you manage, but in all the work that you do. Even the most siloed university is a highly interconnected place with codified and often subtle/invisible rules around how they connect and interact. Learning how to spot the systemic conjunctions and disjunctions that are below the surface will be critical to your success in solving the big problems.

2) While you are cultivating your skillsets around admissions and enrollment management, don't forget to continue to cultivate your heart for students. As you advance in this field and encounter some of the seemingly impossible tradeoffs we have to manage for our institutions year after year, it's easy for your heart to harden and your mind to become cynical to the plight of the students who need us the most. As Fr. Dean Brackley S.J. who was a professor of Theology at the University of Central America summed up my call to action perfectly:

"I invite you to discover your vocation in downward mobility. It's a scary request. . .The world is obsessed with wealth and security and upward mobility and prestige. But let us teach solidarity, walking with the victims, serving and loving. I offer this for you to consider - downward mobility. And I would say in this enterprise there is a great deal of hope."

You can do anything, but not everything. Delegate. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Just because you are the Director doesn't mean you have all the answers, but you can empower people to find the answers. Draw a line in the sand in terms of work you do outside the office and encourage your staff to do the same-- set good examples for them. Keep learning what you can about the profession. Encourage and support professional development for your staff and advocate for professional development for yourself. Use your vacation time!

You exist to serve other, not have others serve you.

You must always be consistently improving. Mistakes happen all the time and you must keep a short memory to improve upon them. Enrollment Management is more important than ever.

You must enjoy people and counseling to be successful at any role in higher education.

You need to be passionate about higher education and believe in what it offers society to succeed.

