



COLLEGE *and* UNIVERSITY

Educating the Modern Higher Education Administration Professional

Recruiting Nonresident Students and the Privatization of Public Universities

Pursuing Prestige in Higher Education: Stratification, Status, and the Influence of College Rankings

A Qualitative Exploration of Perspectives on the Management and Leadership Roles of the Registrar

forum

COMMENTARY

The Registrar: A Profession
90 Years Later: Reflections on
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College and University (USPS 121460) is published four times a year by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20036-1135. The cost of the publication is included in the AACRAO membership fee. For information on subscriptions and package rates, please visit www.aacrao.org/publications/college_and_university_journal. Back issues are \$30 each (price includes shipping). ISSN: 0010-0889.

INDEXES: *College and University* is indexed in Current Index to Journals in Education (ERIC), Education Index, Higher Education Abstracts and Contents Pages in Education.

Editor's Note

As I write this note, I am recently returned from the 102nd AACRAO Annual Meeting. As usual, it was wonderful to have an opportunity to catch up with old friends, make new acquaintances, hear about new products, and, of course, attend informative professional development sessions! After one session, I approached the presenters and asked if they had thought about writing on their topic for C&U. They hadn't, but I hope they will consider it now. Dear reader, if you presented at the AACRAO meeting or a State and Regional meeting, I hope you will consider writing for AACRAO!

I'm very excited about this edition of C&U. There are a number of interesting feature articles, commentaries, research-in-brief articles, and book reviews! I call your attention, in particular, to a reprint from a 1926 edition of the *Bulletin of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars* (the precursor to *College and University*), "The Registrar: A Profession," by Lotus Delta Coffman, then President of the University of Minnesota. Coffman laid out a view of the profession that, I would argue, is a compelling one even today, calling on registrars to become leaders on their campuses.

In feature articles, Michael S. Harris and Marybeth Smith examine changing practices of admissions recruiters to attract out-of-state students and their tuition revenue at a rapidly expanding four-year public university. Justin C. Ortagus considers how admissions outcomes driven by changes in rankings and other external forces are driving the pursuit of prestige in higher education. Marlo J. Waters and Len Hightower describe the management

and leadership role of the higher education registrar and the skills needed to fulfill that role, as perceived by registrars, senior-level administrators, and faculty leaders from private four-year institutions in California.

Commentaries include one by Jim Bouse, AACRAO's President-Elect, *New Technologies and Communication Tools*, Shelley J. Fortin's call to improve the transfer process for students in community colleges, *Get Ahead of the Transfer Curve*, and one I wrote to accompany the reprint of the Coffman article.

In two research-in-brief articles, Wendy Kilgore, AACRAO's Director of Research, reports on the results of thirteen surveys conducted by AACRAO in 2015, and Rodney Parks and Alexander Taylor report on the results of a survey of employers', educational institutions', and students' perceptions of co-curricular transcripts.

We have several book reviews this edition. Matthew Fifolt reviews *The Problem of College Readiness* edited by W.G. Tierney and J.C. Duncheon, *Remaking College: The Ecology of Higher Education* by M.W. Kirst and M.L. Stevens, and *Redesigning America's Community Colleges* by T.R. Bailey, S.S. Jaggars, and D. Jenkins. Theresa Gallo reviews Fareed Zakaria's *In Defense of a Liberal Education*.

I would be very interested in hearing the thoughts of C&U readers on the possibility of reprinting interesting articles from the past.

Jeff von Munkwitz-Smith, Ph.D.

Editor-in-Chief

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RECRU

NONRESIDENT STUDENTS AND THE PR

Public universities are increasingly dependent on non-resident tuition. This study examines the changing practices of admissions recruiters to attract out-of-state students and their tuition revenue at

AS state appropriations for higher education decrease, public universities rely increasingly on student tuition to meet their operating expenses. Between the 1970–71 and 1996–97 academic years, state funding decreased from 76.5 percent to 67.5 percent of all revenues at public universities even as the universities’ average tuition increased nearly 51 percent (College Board 2004). In an effort to compensate for this gap, many public universities depend on tuition paid by out-of-state students. These students often pay as much as twice the rate of in-state students, thus bringing in additional dollars with no substantial increase in institutional

costs. As Geiger (2004) argues, public universities “have become more like private institutions,” with the resulting tension representing “an incipient paradox” (p. 241).

Institutions maximize revenue-enhancing opportunities resulting from a supportive public policy and cultural environment. Nonresident recruitment gives public universities the chance to attract highly qualified students as well as those who represent specific socioeconomic and demographic groups. In order to do this successfully, public institutions mimic the recruiting practices of private institutions, granting admissions counselors an increasingly important role in the privatization of public uni-

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IVATIZATION OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

a rapidly expanding four-year public university. These recruiting efforts, especially the expansion of out-of-state admissions counselors, mimic the practices of private institutions.

versities. This study examined how an institution seeking to increase tuition revenue recruits out-of-state students. Given the relative paucity of research in this area, this exploratory study sought to answer the question “how do admissions recruiters for a tuition revenue-seeking institution attempt to attract nonresident students?”

RELATED RESEARCH

Traditionally, public higher education has relied heavily upon state financial support; however, state investments have declined relative to student enrollments, state budgets, and institutional budgets. This change in state funding

priorities has pushed institutions toward a market orientation and privatization. With the growing reality of competition within the higher education marketplace, public institutions now utilize a number of strategic approaches to recruit the most desirable students. Reliance on tuition as a key revenue source places enrollment management at the center of institutional efforts to secure financial stability. Specific to college admission, enrollment management divisions play a vital role in maximizing student revenue generation (Barnes and Harris 2010, DesJardins, Bell and Puyosa 2006). The dependence on revenue generated through enrollment management suggests the need to

better understand the strategies institutions use to recruit students—particularly high-paying nonresident students.

While enrollment management first served an administrative and organizing function, “it actually ceded decision making to market forces” (Geiger 2004, p. 244). The current importance of tuition and fee revenue for public institutions increases the need for successful recruitment strategies. In addition, the need to recruit nonresident students puts pressure on public institutions to seek greater prestige and to continually invest resources in enrollment management. Fundamentally, the “shift away from public funding has led to an increased emphasis on alternative revenue sources as well as an increased emphasis on using strategic enrollment management to improve tuition revenue” (Priest, St. John and Boon 2006, p. 4).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to examine how public universities emphasize the recruitment of out-of-state students and adjust their administrative processes to achieve this goal, two concepts from the organizational theory literature were used to inform the present work. Resource dependency theory and institutional theory clarify how internal and external influences drive administrative activity and organization. Resource dependency describes how organizations constantly compete for resources and focus their activity on developing revenue streams (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Institutions seek and increasingly rely upon stable, major revenue sources to maintain organizational activity. Research studies establish the usefulness of considering resource dependency when examining enrollment management (Barnes and Harris 2010, Hossler 2006).

According to resource dependency theory, colleges and universities seek stable and external sources of financial support to minimize the volatility and compensate for the decrease of state appropriations. Student enrollment represents a means for institutions to manage and control a critical revenue stream. As a result, institutional decision making and activity focus on successful competition within the student enrollment market, leading to increased financing. Institutional leaders may focus tremendous attention on improving prestige and rankings in order to increase the likelihood of recruiting high-ability and high-income students whose tuition and fees will offset decreases in state appropriations. Indeed, increased

tuition revenue represents one of the few ways in which higher education institutions can improve their financial standing. Resource dependency theory helps contextualize the external environment’s influence on institutional behavior, such as responding to decreases in state funding or emphasizing stronger rankings in various media.

Institutional theory provides a means by which to understand an organization’s environment and how expectations shape structures and activity (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Meyer and Rowan 1977). Organizations scan their environment looking for norms and expectations to legitimize their own processes. As environmental change occurs, institutions respond, and over time, these responses become part of their established activity. Thus, understanding early adopters can provide insight into longer-term trends as innovation becomes standardized within the institution. Institutional theory particularly helps explain how colleges respond to changes where the outcome appears ambiguous. In the midst of an uncertain economic climate, university leaders must confront their institutions’ financial position and the role of student and state funding. Institutional theory suggests that colleges will seek to mimic the practices of leaders within the field. Public universities increasingly engage in admissions recruitment efforts—for example, hiring regional recruiters or implementing extensive merit aid policies, traditionally considered the province of leading private higher education institutions.

As traditional sources of financial support become less robust, higher education institutions seek alternative and stable sources of revenue. The strategies used to pursue these resources expand and become part of the normal administrative activity of the campus. Resource dependency and institutional theories explain how these processes occur and spread, providing a basis for examining new student recruitment approaches. University strategies for seeking revenue exist within the larger competitive environment of higher education. Understanding the role of admissions offices and counselors in this environment helps improve enrollment management research and practice.

METHODS

This research approaches the study of nonresident admissions through an interpretive perspective and seeks to understand the recruiting activities and strategies employed by individual counselors and institutions more generally.

The data collected in this study come from interviews with admissions counselors working throughout the country for Southern University (a pseudonym). The regional recruiters act as an extension of the home admissions office and were selected to participate in this study on the basis of their ability to speak about their experiences meeting prospective out-of-state students. Furthermore, the recruiters' varied locations provided the researchers with information regarding regional and cultural differences. Southern University proved an ideal site for this study as it is in the midst of a growth strategy largely intended to provide a strong financial base. Southern University has continued to break institutional records for the size of its entering class. In 2014, for the first time in the university's history, the number of incoming nonresident students exceeded that of in-state students. Campus leaders attribute much of this success to aggressive recruiting endeavors and attracting competitive students nationwide.

A qualitative research design was utilized in order to better understand the recruiting process; semi-structured interviews were conducted via conference call with nine admissions counselors based in various geographic locations throughout the country. With participants' permission, the interviews were recorded and then were transcribed verbatim. Preliminary findings were discussed at the conclusion of each interview, and the protocol was adjusted accordingly.

Data were analyzed throughout the collection, interpretation, and writing phases of the study. Using the constant comparative method (Glaser 1992), a list of thematic similarities was compiled; the similarities were identified by comparing interview responses with the existing literature and building alternative explanations. By coding the data into categories, emerging themes were identified. The researchers considered various explanations of the data and of the ways in which the university sought to recruit nonresident students. Thematic analysis and coding into categories enhanced the researchers' ability to identify the most important aspects of the data.

FINDINGS

Role of Personal and Institutional Finances

Southern University takes an aggressive approach to attracting out-of-state students. These students pay more

than twice the tuition rate of in-state students, so counselors use financial and experiential incentives in recruiting them to the university. Admissions counselors also hope to enroll more competitive students so as to increase institutional prestige; they therefore seek academically superior candidates—those with above-average test scores and GPAs. Often, students with exceptional academic records are offered impressive institution-based scholarships. A counselor in the western United States said, “The students who are eligible for the automatic scholarships—who have higher SAT/ACT scores—I really like to impress upon them the availability of money.” For prospective students in states with competitive state funding, out-of-state institutions such as SU seem impractical: “The students who score high on the SAT also have high GPAs, so those students who receive the presidential scholarship at SU are also not going to come here because that's not enough to supplement four years of free tuition [with state grant programs for high SAT-scoring students].” Students in neighboring states often negotiate financial packages based on their state's funding. An admissions counselor in the southeast described how state funding packages can create challenges for neighboring states: “There's a rumor that if you're outside the state of Georgia, you will receive a Hope scholarship if you go to a Georgia school.” This presents a twofold dilemma to SU admissions counselors: not only are they unable to compete with a strong state funding system, but they also often lose the most academically competitive students in the process. Another counselor stated it more succinctly: “People here are very used to a solid state system. That creates competition.”

In many cases, highly competitive students consider Ivy League or medallion schools, and SU must advertise valuable scholarships to attract their interest. Still, many of these students choose to pay substantially more to enroll at a prestigious college. Parental involvement in decision making about college and parents' expectation that their children will attend a top-tier school compound the problem. “Parents are kind of in denial about return on investment here,” one northeastern recruiter noted. “Counselors are having a really tough time telling students it doesn't matter if they're going to go to the bottom of their class at an Ivy or at an honors college for research. They'll take out extra funding for the status.” When recruited by the best schools in the country, some students will turn

down offers of full funding in order to attend a higher-tier school. While this would have surprised admissions counselors in the past, regional recruiters now encounter students who value prestige above all else. One regional recruiter told of a student who was offered a full scholarship to Vanderbilt but turned it down, choosing instead to enroll as a “full-pay, no assistance whatsoever [student] to Harvard. That’s the kind of logic we’re working with up here,” she explained.

For many, the cost of attending a top private institution is significantly higher than that of attending SU. “The price of going to college is pretty unbelievable,” one counselor said. “Up here, [at] a school in the northeast, you’re spending up to \$40,000 a year, and that’s for one student. If there’s a family with multiple children in college all at one time, that’s a huge amount of money to spend.” This demonstrates a key selling point for SU and its regional admissions counselors: SU’s out-of-state tuition is competitive with that at students’ state universities. A mid-Atlantic recruiter said, “Especially in this region...it’s just so Ivy League-driven. Counselors tell students, ‘you know, maybe you don’t want to come out with \$200,000 in debt’ and really sit them down and get students and parents to realize there are other options out there.” Another recruiter emphasized SU’s comparatively lesser cost of attendance:

They’re already looking at in-state costs or Ivy League schools or [state flagship] or these other schools that cost \$40,000 or maybe \$50,000 a year. Then you say, “You know, Southern’s only \$32,000 a year for out-of-state students, and even if you’re looking at plane costs to come home for the holidays or extra travel times or whatever...even with those costs included, it’s going to be about the same or cheaper than a lot of the schools that these students are looking at.”

Costs not accounted for in the bottom line (tuition) are an important aspect of comparing institutions financially.

This is particularly relevant for students for whom additional costs play an important role in college price. A representative in California argues, “At this point, the fees are so close so that if you get any type of scholarship, you’re better off going to Southern than staying in state. Especially with the costs of UC-Santa Barbara and Berkeley, the housing costs in some of those areas, you’re better off going to Southern.” She also addresses the finan-

cial challenges facing California’s system and its students, highlighting additional costs incurred because the system is overloaded: “I also tell parents you’re going to be able to graduate in four years; you’re going to be able to take the classes you want; we don’t have any impacted programs, so if your son or daughter wants to change major at some point, they’re [sic] allowed to do that.” A counselor working with students in the upper northeast echoed these remarks, saying that “even if you’re going to [major urban university], your housing costs might just be astronomical (which tuition is not because you’re in state)... In this area, the cost is relatively cheap for an out-of-state school.” A counselor working in the mid-Atlantic suggests that students take into account “long-term finances” when considering expensive in-state schools versus SU. Some counselors describe scenarios in students’ home states to create interest in an out-of-state school: “I never get any pushback when I say it’s getting very difficult to graduate here. All I get is nodding. I hear horror stories about class sizes and housing. It’s not a tough sell to get that first premise, but then that platform is less than four years, almost less than in-state tuition, that’s kind of where the conversation goes.” Much of what regional recruiters do is try to make students and their families realize that tuition and fees aren’t always a good gauge of college costs: “If you really think about it, it’s going to cost you more in the end to stay in state rather than go out of state.” In this way, out-of-state universities capitalize on the problematic aspects of attending college in state.

Selling the Experience

The most compelling way in which admissions counselors attract out-of-state students is by selling “the SU experience.” With regard to costs, one counselor said, “That’s not really the reason they’re going to Southern. They’re going to Southern for a southern experience or sometimes scholarships, but typically it’s an X factor rather than costs.” In some cases, the X factor is regional. “The most common thing I hear is ‘I want to go south,’” a counselor in the northeast noted. “You know, somewhere that’s warm,” another said. “A lot of time, they really just want change,” one counselor remarked. “There’s nothing like Southern University out here. They think they have school spirit, you know, these big football games. Then they get here.” Collegiate experience plays an important part in a recruit-

er's pitch: "You get the big school, you get the football, you get the rah-rah," one counselor commented.

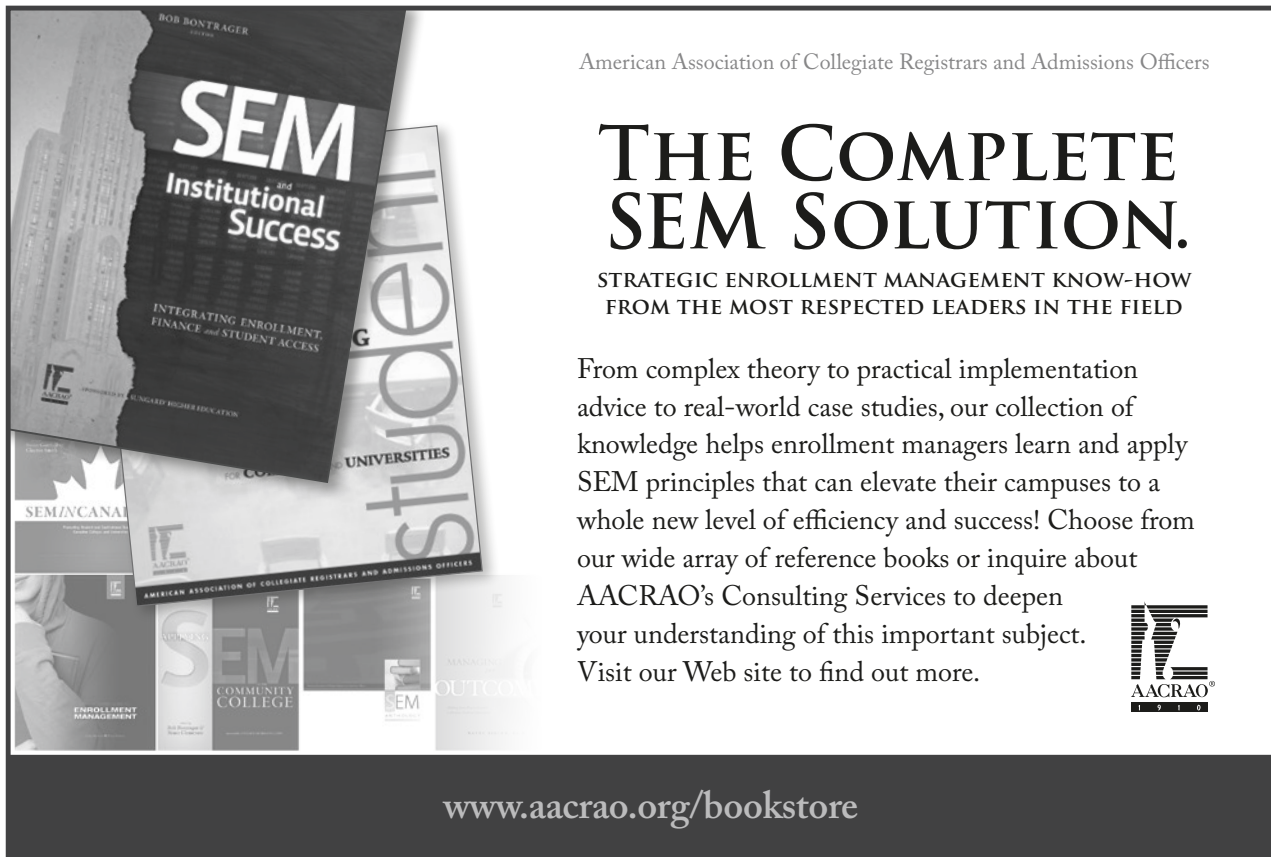
Even when SU might cost more, counselors can still sell the experience. When asked about students trying to negotiate scholarship offers, one counselor used the university experience as a defense: "We're *the* Southern University. They'll [say], [regional school] is offering me *x*, what can you offer me?" One counselor provided a comprehensive retort to students questioning an out-of-state school like SU:

My response to that is "not only are we ranked higher than [state flagship], but facilities-wise, research-wise, faculty members-wise, and also the sense of collegiate experience—you will invest in your future, and you will get more out of your experience at Southern." The fact that the price is phenomenal after the scholarships—that is a big, big thing. You have that scholarship, but do you want to [attend college] in state, in New England? Do you want to go to a warmer climate? Do you want to go to a school with great school

spirit? Because these things come into play, and these things [state flagship] can't offer.

Although funding—especially competitive merit-based scholarships—plays an important part in recruiting out-of-state students, recruiters believe that the way the school makes students feel ultimately influences their decision to enroll there.

Because experience plays such an important part in college choice, peer testimonies also impact this decision. Experience becomes the primary selling point for admissions counselors, but ultimately, other students spread the message. Several counselors commented on the importance of word-of-mouth advertising among prospective students. One recruiter emphasized the role of students' friends: "The other thing I talk about is the hospitality—I sort of have to sell it—but it's 100 percent validated when a classmate comes to campus and can go back and tell that story." From a recruitment standpoint, student experience is key to enrolling students: "The kids who are in their freshman




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year, they're going to come back for winter break and be talking about what a great time they're having at Southern, how beautiful the school is, how much fun football is. That's a really big driver, too, for admissions." This often results in admissions counselors recruiting multiple students from the same out-of-state high schools. After inviting one student for a campus visit, a west coast counselor recruited her and two of her friends. "It's an exponential type of deal," another recruiter said.

DISCUSSION

Even though SU employs admissions counselors throughout the country, many face similar advantages and obstacles in recruiting students from out of state. States with competitive merit-based funding for in-state students as well as top-tier public universities present a difficult environment in which to recruit out-of-state students. Not surprisingly, those states that offer a range of options and financing keep many of their top students, mitigating their so-called brain drain. States that fail to provide high-quality institutional or financing options for their students are at risk of losing them to schools like Southern. The recent economic recession and ongoing concerns about higher education costs and student debt seem to have resulted in students and families being somewhat more concerned about financing and being willing to consider out-of-state institutions as alternatives to in-state options. As public institutions seek and rely increasingly on tuition revenue, public universities behave as resource dependency would suggest: They pour tremendous resources and energy into tuition—what seems the safest and most stable revenue stream. In addition, private universities have long used regional recruiters, yet now it is common for public institutions to use this strategy as well. Following the lead of seemingly more successful institutions presents a logical and reliable means by which to build a strong financial foundation. Institutional theory helps explain mimicking strategies within an uncertain environment (which the loss of state funding epitomizes).

Historically, many students might not have considered out-of-state higher education options primarily because of cost differentials and geographic variables (Hossler, Schmit and Vesper 1999). However, with medallion institutions charging ever-increasing tuition and the overall hypercompetitive landscape, students and parents today

are more willing to consider out-of-state options. For schools such as SU, this is promising. As several interviewees noted, traditionally high in-state tuition states and those with struggling higher education systems represent fertile recruiting grounds. The availability of valuable merit scholarships also attracts students and improves the institution's competitive position.

To admissions officers at private institutions, these trends hardly seem newsworthy. Locating geographic areas with high concentrations of academically and financially desirable students has long been a private college recruitment strategy. These institutions also frequently tout their small campus environment, faculty interaction, and liberal arts curriculum. Similarly, Southern University focuses on its strengths—the large state school experience of big-time college athletics, a wide array of extracurricular activities, and its warm climate. Counselors described the "Southern University experience" as a key selling point for out-of-state students. For students attracted to this big school experience—particularly a *southern* big school experience—alternatives paled in comparison. Southern's recruiters are well aware of this potential advantage and leverage it against various in-state alternatives.

CONCLUSION

The current study examined how admissions recruiters seek to attract nonresident students to an increasingly tuition-dependent public university. The findings suggest that not only are admissions counselors adjusting their recruitment practices to attract nonresident students, but these students also are becoming increasingly amenable to the possibility of attending out-of-state public universities. As a result, public higher education likely will see this trend continue and expand as institutions respond to decreases in state appropriations by relying increasingly on student tuition.

The institution described in this study hired additional admissions recruitment staff throughout the country. As part of their effort to recruit out-of-state students, the counselors emphasized the cost differential between Ivy League or medallion public institutions and Southern University. They emphasized the debt associated with enrolling at a high-status school and living in an expensive area. Further, they recruited heavily in states whose public higher education systems are overloaded, informing students that additional time to degree would offset any discount in

price. For many students—particularly those in the north-eastern region of the country—the cost of attending an out-of-state public institution is substantially less than that of attending an in-state public or competitive private institution. For other students, SU provides many opportunities unavailable in their home states, such that they are willing to pay a premium for these additional benefits.

Finances play an obvious role in college choice, but a range of institutional characteristics impacts a student's decision. From our interviews with admissions counselors, a critical institutional characteristic for out-of-state students is "the SU experience." Large public universities can attract prospective out-of-state students with their social, environmental, and academic climates. Counselors learn to emphasize SU's unique qualities, such as its hospitality, warm weather, and school spirit. For many out-of-state students, these qualities trump institutional prestige; others will reject funding from small regional schools in favor of attending a state university with moderate recognition. Public universities behave similarly to their private competitors when they increase their recruitment efforts.

They pour tremendous resources and energy into tuition—what seems the safest and most stable revenue stream. Economic recession impacts public universities by stimulating the market for out-of-state students; the implications for students, states, and society are potentially profound.

Southern University's strategies for recruiting students from out of state clearly demonstrate the influence of the broader external environment and the institution's increasing privatization. Although not a direct focus of this study, public universities' use of private university admissions tactics warrants additional discussion and consideration, especially within the enrollment management community. When public universities focus on student recruitment as a means of meeting their financial bottom line, questions arise regarding the admission and recruitment of in-state residents. The field of enrollment management

would benefit from further study of nonresident recruitment by public institutions and the implications of this growing trend for in-state residents. Public higher education plays a unique role in the U.S. system. Understanding the privatization of universities generally and of enrollment management specifically merits additional study.

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Pursuing
Prestige
in Higher Education

*Stratification, Status, and the
Influence of College Rankings*

Research has suggested that changes in rankings have an impact on admissions outcomes at colleges and universities. This study incorporates organization theory to explain these mechanisms and other external forces driving the pursuit of prestige in higher education. Beyond updating and replicating previous findings related to the impact of college rankings on admissions outcomes, U.S. News & World Report and IPEDS data from 2001 through 2010 are used to describe the low variability of prestige among the top 50 institutions, show that an increase in an institution's ranking has a negative effect on the enrollment figures of first-year African-American students, and examine a possible "threshold effect" associated with greater changes in admissions outcomes for institutions joining an elite peer group, such as the top 10, top 25, or top 50.

The survival and preservation of a higher education institution has become inextricably linked with the public's perception of its quality. Despite widespread criticism of *U.S. News & World Report's* college rankings (Guinier and Strum 2001; Hunter 1995; McGuire 1995; Schmitz 1993), the annual "best colleges" guide serves as the most recognized assessment of the performance of higher education institutions. *U.S. News & World Report* has published college rankings since 1983 and averages roughly 15 million page views on its website when new rankings are released (Diamond 2012). Often, prospective students across the world rely on these rankings when deciding where to apply and enroll for their postsecondary education. For colleges and universities, a more favorable ranking represents the perception of higher quality students and greater institutional prestige. Although many higher education leaders publicly criticize rankings of academic quality, such rankings nevertheless have a strong influence on organi-

zational decision making (Espeland and Sauder 2007) as institutions frequently monitor rankings criteria in their pursuit of improved status and legitimacy (Bowman and Bastedo 2009).

This study examines ten years of *U.S. News & World Report's* college rankings in order to investigate the extent to which institutions' pursuit of prestige affects their selectivity and student quality. Changes in ranking have been found to affect higher education institutions' admissions outcomes and prospective students' enrollment decisions (Bowman and Bastedo 2009; Monks and Ehrenberg 1999). Although previous findings have indicated that colleges and universities typically change their behavior in pursuit of improved rankings, this study uses updated data to replicate and extend previous research, examine the influence of college rankings on enrollment decisions across a variety of race and gender categories, and explore the impact of joining an elite peer group—such as the top 10, top 25, or top 50—on admissions outcomes in higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

Several studies have examined the effect of college rankings on student and institutional behavior (Bowman and Bastedo 2009; Griffith and Rask 2007; Meredith 2004; Monks and Ehrenberg 1999; Volkwein and Sweitzer 2006). Although Monks and Ehrenberg (1999) found a significant relationship between college ranking and increased selectivity, all sixteen institutions included in their study were private, ranked in the top 25, and not representative of less prestigious or public institutions. Meredith (2004) investigated the influence of college rankings across a broader range of universities during the 1990s and found that improvements in ranking lowered the average admission rate and decreased the number of Asian and Hispanic students, but the number of first-year African-American students remained relatively unchanged. Bowman and Bastedo (2009) analyzed admissions data for top-tier higher education institutions from 1998 to 2005 and found that national universities were more strongly affected than were liberal arts colleges by a change in ranking. The admissions outcomes of liberal arts colleges were influenced more by institutional costs than by fluctuations in college ranking.

Additional studies have questioned the effectiveness of college rankings in assessing education quality (Hunter 1995; McGuire 1995; Pike 2004; Schmitz 1993). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported that the traditional measures of institutional quality utilized by *U.S. News & World Report* do not necessarily foster improvements in students' academic and intellectual development. During the timeframe examined in the current study, *U.S. News & World Report* rankings of colleges and universities were determined by a weighted combination of indicator variables related to undergraduate academic reputation, student selectivity, faculty resources, graduation and retention rates, financial resources, alumni giving, and graduation rate. The greatest proportion of an institution's overall ranking was based on its academic reputation and retention rate. College and university administrators determined institutional reputation scores by responding to a questionnaire and rating their peer institutions. Retention scores were based on six-year graduation and freshman retention rates (Griffith and Rask 2007).

Despite empirical evidence against the notion of indicating educational quality by the metrics used by *U.S. News & World Report* to rank colleges and universities, top-ranked higher education institutions typically are considered more

selective and thus more prestigious than their non-elite peers. The economic and academic benefits of attending a more selective institution are well documented. Students enrolled at more selective colleges and universities have higher graduation rates than similarly qualified students enrolled at less selective institutions. In addition, students at more selective institutions are accepted to graduate and professional schools at higher rates than are their peers at less selective institutions (Carnevale and Rose 2003).

Given the advantages of attending selective colleges and universities, the demographic characteristics of entering freshmen at these institutions should be considered. Although African-American and Hispanic students are enrolling at colleges and universities at increasing rates, the vast majority are not attending the most selective institutions. From 1995 to 2009, 82 percent of new white enrollments attended one of the 468 most selective four-year colleges and universities while only 9 percent of new African-American enrollments and 13 percent of new Hispanic enrollments did so (Carnevale and Strohl 2013). Beyond this brief review of relevant empirical research, other theoretical and conceptual underpinnings can be used to explain why college rankings exist.

SELECTIVITY AND STUDENT QUALITY

Due to isomorphic influences, new institutional theory suggests that organizations adapt to socially constructed values of their environment and have a tendency to behave similarly (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott and Davis 2008). For higher education, *U.S. News & World Report's* college rankings represent an external quality indicator. As a seemingly impartial evaluator, *U.S. News & World Report* appears to have high legitimacy with the public and appears to influence the admissions decisions of prospective students as well as higher education institutions (Bowman and Bastedo 2009).

Colleges and universities play the rankings game to boost perceptions of legitimacy and ensure their acquisition of critical resources. For example, students whose standardized test scores fall below the minimum threshold may be encouraged to apply to a given institution despite the likelihood of being denied admission. An increased number of denied applicants enables a college or university to decrease its acceptance rate for the academic year (a critical criterion for the publicly available quantitative for-

mula used to determine annual rankings), though doing so would not necessarily improve the quality of education at the institution (Avery, Fairbanks, and Zeckhauser 2001; Meredith 2004). As elite institutions become increasingly selective by accepting lesser proportions of applicants, other institutions follow suit by emulating those policies that enable elite institutions to achieve higher rankings and greater prestige (Greenwood *et al.* 2008).

- *Hypothesis 1:* An increase in institutional prestige during the previous year will be significantly and positively related to institutional selectivity.
- *Hypothesis 2:* An increase in institutional prestige during the previous year will be significantly and positively related to student quality.

ELITE PEER GROUPS

Organizational status typically is used to signify perceived quality despite unclear information related to the actual performance-based quality of the organization's practices (Lynn, Podolny, and Tao 2009; Podolny 1993). Because many higher education institutions espouse a "top 10" vision (Gioia and Thomas 1996), *U.S. News & World Report* rankings enable colleges and universities to provide an interpretive frame of the competition and to identify as high status or elite. Higher education institutions' ability to define their boundaries within selected peer groups provides an alternative opportunity for colleges and universities to influence perceptions of prestige.

Because non-elite institutions are not likely to become top 10 national universities (Merton 1968; Podolny 1993), the framing technique of identifying as an institution within an alternative elite peer group, such as the top 25 or top 50, increases the public's perception of their educational quality (Gioia and Thomas 1996). Strategic and interpretive framing allows many colleges and universities to define their peer groups and comparative referents in order to enhance their status. This study examines whether being ranked in the top 10, top 25, or top 50 has a greater effect on institutional selectivity and student quality than a comparable improvement in ranking that does not result in the institution identifying as a member of an elite peer group.

- *Hypothesis 3:* An increase across certain thresholds, such as the top 10, top 25, and top 50, will have a greater effect on selectivity outcomes than similarly sized increases elsewhere in the distribution.

- *Hypothesis 4:* An increase across certain thresholds, such as the top 10, top 25, and top 50, will have a greater effect on student quality than similarly sized increases elsewhere in the distribution.

DATA AND METHODS

College rankings data were drawn from annual "best colleges" issues of *U.S. News & World Report* from 2001 to 2010. *U.S. News & World Report* considered more than 1,600 higher education institutions during its annual ranking process, including the 128 "best national universities." Selectivity and pricing data were taken from the annual Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Institutional Characteristics and Enrollment surveys during the same period. Data pertaining to the race and gender of enrolled freshmen were also collected using the IPEDS Institutional Characteristics survey.

Consistent with previous work related to college rankings (Bowman and Bastedo 2009; Meredith 2004; Monks and Ehrenberg 1999), this study used various fixed effects regression models to estimate the effect of changes in college rankings on institutional behavior. Fixed effects regression requires that dummy-coded variables be included for each institution and each year to be studied. This technique controls for both observed and unobserved differences across institutions. The findings of this study should only be interpreted as the impact of changes in college rankings on identified outcomes within the same institution. The fixed effects approach has been identified as the most conservative estimate of the effect of college rankings because it only examines the impact of college rankings within each institution over time (Stock and Watson 2007).

The lagged ranking variable was reverse coded to facilitate interpretation because an increase in ranking now suggests a favorable change from the previous year. The main dependent variables for this study included admission rate, yield rate of admitted students, SAT 25th percentile score, and SAT 75th percentile score. The main independent variables included lagged rank; dummy variables indicating top 10 institutions, top 25 institutions, and top 50 institutions; and tuition and fees. The total costs of tuition and fees were divided by 1,000 in order to simplify the interpretation of regression coefficients. This study also examined the effect of changes in college ranking on the enrollment decisions of students by a variety of race

and gender combinations. Data for Asian, African-American, Hispanic, and white students (male and female) were used to investigate these relationships.

The “front page effect” was first introduced by Bowman and Bastedo (2009), but the current study broadens the concept by including additional peer groups to examine three notable thresholds: whether a jump in ranking into the top 10, top 25, or top 50 has a greater effect on admissions outcomes compared to similar improvements elsewhere in the rankings distribution. In other words, this study investigated whether a “threshold effect” suggests that jumping from a ranking of 51st to 49th had a greater impact on selected outcomes than jumping from 61st to 59th. An additional threshold of the top 100 institutions was examined, but those results were determined to be problematic because only the top 50 national universities were reported for 2001 and 2002.

Although several models include tuition and fees as a covariate, additional control variables related to institution type (public versus private) and location are time invariant and so were not included in the final models. By using fixed effects in these analyses, it was assumed that universities have an invariant unobserved effect on their admissions outcomes and that those institutional qualities—*e.g.*, location and history—influence prospective students. These invariant unobserved qualities of an institution were expected to remain constant over the ten years of this study. Formally, the model was written as follows:

$$y_{it} = \beta_1 * rank_{it-1} + \beta_2 * top10_{it-1} + \beta_3 * top25_{it-1} + \beta_4 * top50_{it-1} + \beta_5 * tuition_{it-1} + \beta_6 * year_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

$$\varepsilon_{it} = a_i + \mu_{it}$$

In the formula, ε_{it} represents the error term of the i th institution on t th year, a_i represents the institutional fixed effect that does not vary over time, and μ_{it} represents the time-variant errors. Usually, μ_{it} is assumed to be identically and independently distributed with mean 0 and variance δ_{it}^2 . The assumption is that institutions have their specific effects, which may include various unmeasurable factors, such as location, weather, and history. Under this assumption, the fixed effects regression model is the best analysis strategy for estimating institutional effect.

The main drawback of the fixed effects model is that if the data set has a large N (number of institutions), it can consume too many degrees of freedom and impair the

precision of the estimation. This problem becomes worse when k (number of years) is small. In this study ($N=128$, $k=10$), the total degrees of freedom are large enough to give a reasonable estimation. Although some observations were missing,¹ the remaining degrees of freedom are sufficient for each of the final models. For gender and race comparisons, the difference between the coefficients of different race and gender groups was examined. The lagged ranking serves as the primary independent variable in order to avoid redundant information; a dummy variable for each year of the study was also included in the model. This decision is outlined in the following formula:

$$y_{it} = \beta_1 * rank_{it-1} + \beta_2 * year_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

$$\varepsilon_{it} = a_i + \mu_{it}$$

where y_{it} represents the population of enrolled first-year students for the following race/gender combinations: Asian female, Asian male, African-American female, African-American male, Hispanic female, Hispanic male, white female, and white male. Within the same formula, the confidence interval range of each coefficient was used to compare differences. Separate analyses of several subgroups of these data were conducted to compare the influence of changes in college rankings on admissions outcomes for institutions within elite peer groups (*i.e.*, top 10, top 25, top 50) versus those institutions situated just outside of those critical thresholds (*i.e.*, rankings of 11 to 20, 26 to 50, and 51 to 100).

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations of this study should be noted. Although the fixed effects method allows one to control for unobserved omitted variables that did not change over time, these models may need to include additional covariates (beyond tuition and fees) to control for time-variant institutional variance in order to provide more precise findings. In addition, the fixed effects regression method used in this study does not examine the effect of changes in ranking among higher education institutions and can only be applied to changes within institutions over time.

¹ An observation was categorized as missing for the following reasons: the institution was not ranked among the best national universities for a given year; the institution did not provide its application number, admission number, or enrollment number in a given year, such that admission rate and yield rate were not considered valid. As a result, different dependent variables may have different degrees of freedom.

Because these data pertain only to the best national universities, analyses related to hypotheses three and four have low power. For hypotheses three and four, only the small number of institutions that crossed the identified thresholds of top 10, top 25, and top 50 within the timeframe of this study were examined. Analyses of additional peer groups within *U.S. News & World Report* (i.e., regional colleges, regional universities, best value schools, etc.) would have added an interesting layer to this study but would have been problematic given the issue of low power and the high variability of non-elite peer groups from year to year.

RESULTS

The elite peer groups (those ranked in the top 10, top 25, and top 50) varied little from year to year during the ten-year period of this study. Table 1 shows the number of institutions that remained within the top 10, top 25, and top 50 from the previous year's college rankings. Although there was very little variation among the top 50 institutions on a year-to-year basis during the timeframe examined in this study, institutions ranked toward the bottom of the top 100 were stratified to a lesser extent. Only one "top 50 institution" increased or decreased its previous year's ranking by more than six spots (in 2010, the University of Illinois's ranking fell from 39 to 47). With regard to changes from the previous year's ranking among institutions ranked outside of the top 50, the ranking of fifteen institutions fell at least ten spots; 22 institutions had their ranking improve by at least ten spots within the same timeframe.

Table 1.

Number of Institutions that Remained Within Elite Peer Groups from the Previous Year

	Top 10	Top 25	Top 50
2001	—	—	—
2002	10/11*	25/27*	51/51*
2003	9/10	25/25	49/50
2004	9/10	25/26*	50/51*
2005	10/10	26/26*	50/51*
2006	10/11*	25/25	50/51*
2007	10/10	25/26*	50/51*
2008	10/10	25/25	48/50
2009	10/10	25/25	49/51*
2010	10/11*	25/27*	49/50

* A tie caused additional institutions to be included within the threshold

Table 2.

Admission Rate and Yield Rate

	Admission Rate	Yield Rate
Constant	0.388*** (0.039)	0.320*** (0.035)
Lagged rank	-0.002** (0.001)	0.001** (0.000)
Top 10	0.032 (0.023)	0.004 (0.016)
Top 25	0.024 (0.029)	-0.014 (0.020)
Top 50	0.038 (0.023)	-0.015 (0.016)
Tuition and Fees	-0.038 (0.032)	0.019 (0.022)
N	902	725

Note: Standard errors in parentheses

* p < 0.05

** p < 0.01

*** p < 0.001

Table 3.

25th Percentile and 75th Percentile SAT Scores

	SAT 25th	SAT 75th
Constant	1104.538*** (15.561)	1330.423*** (9.176)
Lagged rank	0.901*** (0.303)	0.545*** (0.672)
Top 10	3.525 (6.196)	-1.472 (4.796)
Top 25	-6.939 (9.610)	-3.626 (7.438)
Top 50	3.422 (6.607)	0.310 (5.114)
Tuition and fees	-1.645 (0.994)	0.754 (0.770)
N	700	700

Note: Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 2 (on page 15) reports findings from a fixed effects regression model that estimates the effects of change in ranking on the admission rate of an institution. When the lagged rank of an institution increased by one (a favorable change in ranking), the institution admitted a slightly lower percentage of applicants—that is, the admission rate decreased by 0.002 or 0.2 of a percentage point ($p < 0.01$). These results suggest that *U.S. News & World Report* ranking information from the previous year had a slight but statistically significant effect on the proportion of students accepted. Table 2 also used the yield rate of admitted students as one of the outcome variables to show that favorable changes in ranking appeared to result in an increase in the yield rate. The average yield rate for each institution increased by 0.001 with each favorable unit change of the current year ranking ($p < 0.01$).

The “threshold effect”—moving from just below a top 10 ranking to within the top 10, from below a top 25 ranking to within the top 25, or from below a top 50 ranking to within the top 50—was also examined in comparison

to other movements up the rankings distribution. Findings related to the effect of moving into the top 10, top 25, or top 50 on a given institution’s admission or yield rate were not found to be statistically significant.

Table 3 shows results from the fixed effects regression models and reveals the effects of a change in ranking on the 25th percentile and 75th percentile SAT scores of entering undergraduate students. Both 25th percentile and 75th percentile scores showed positive lagged ranking coefficients, suggesting that student quality, as indicated by standardized test scores, improved after a favorable change in ranking during the previous year. Each unit of favorable change in the previous year’s ranking appeared to improve the average student’s 25th percentile SAT score by 0.871 ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, the average student’s 75th percentile SAT score appeared to increase by 0.706 ($p < 0.001$). While these estimates were

statistically significant, their effects were not sizable when ranking changes were small. These results also suggest that the 25th percentile scores were slightly more sensitive to changes in ranking from the previous year. Findings related to the effect of moving into the top 10, top 25, or top 50 on an institution’s 25th and 75th percentile SAT scores were not found to be statistically significant.

This study also examined several data subgroups as part of an effort to identify the effect of moving up one spot in the rankings on the admissions outcomes of institutions within elite subgroups (top 10, top 25, and top 50) and on institutions situated in subgroups just outside of those thresholds (rankings between 11 and 20, between 26 and 50, and between 51 and 100). Although these findings typically were not statistically significant, the effect of ranking changes on student quality measures (*i.e.*, 25th and 75th percentile SAT scores) was statistically significant for the top 25, the second 25 (rankings between 26 and 50), the top 50, and the second 50 (rankings between 51 and 100). For each favorable change in ranking for insti-

Table 4.

Cross-Tabulation of Lagged Ranking Coefficients Across Demographic Groups

	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White
Male	0.136 (0.360)	-0.426* (0.199)	-0.341 (0.264)	0.889 (0.970)
Female	-0.043 (0.428)	-1.277** (0.401)	-0.643 (0.371)	0.083 (0.966)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses

* p < 0.05
 ** p < 0.01
 *** p < 0.001

tutions in the top 25, students' 25th percentile SAT scores increased by 1.764 points ($p < 0.05$), and their 75th percentile SAT scores increased by 1.223 points ($p < 0.05$). Institutions ranked in the top 50 demonstrated stronger results as a favorable change in ranking increased 25th percentile SAT scores by 1.942 points ($p < 0.01$) and 75th percentile SAT scores by 1.589 points ($p < 0.01$). In contrast, the effect of a favorable change in ranking on the 25th percentile (1.770; $p < 0.01$) and 75th percentile SAT scores (1.270; $p < 0.01$) for the top 50 institutions was greater than on the 25th percentile (0.818; $p < 0.01$) and 75th percentile SAT scores (0.668; $p < 0.01$) for institutions ranked 51st to 100th.

Table 4 shows a cross-tabulation of the lagged ranking coefficients to signify the effect of a favorable change in ranking across multiple race and gender combinations. When a higher education institution received a favorable change in ranking during the previous year, male Asian students appeared to be slightly less likely to attend, but the likelihood of female Asian students enrolling was roughly the same. The number of new white students (male and female) enrolled at a given university appeared to increase after the institution had a favorable change in its ranking.

In contrast, the enrollment figures of incoming African-American and Hispanic freshmen appeared to decrease after an institution's ranking improved. When a university's ranking improved by one spot, the first-year, degree-seeking enrollment of African-American students

decreased by an average of 0.426 ($p < 0.05$) for male and by 1.277 ($p < 0.01$) for female students. These results suggest that a favorable change in ranking appears to attract Asian and white students and to deter African-American and Hispanic students. Although these findings reveal some interesting patterns, only the coefficients for first-year African-American students were statistically significant.

Additional analyses of each race/gender group as a percentage of total enrollment were conducted to confirm the consistency of these findings while also taking institutional enrollment size into account. The general pattern of the identified race and gender relationships mirrors the results displayed in Table 4 and support hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2: Increased prestige (*i.e.*, a favorable change in college ranking) was found to result in greater selectivity and higher student quality. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were not supported by these findings.

CONCLUSION

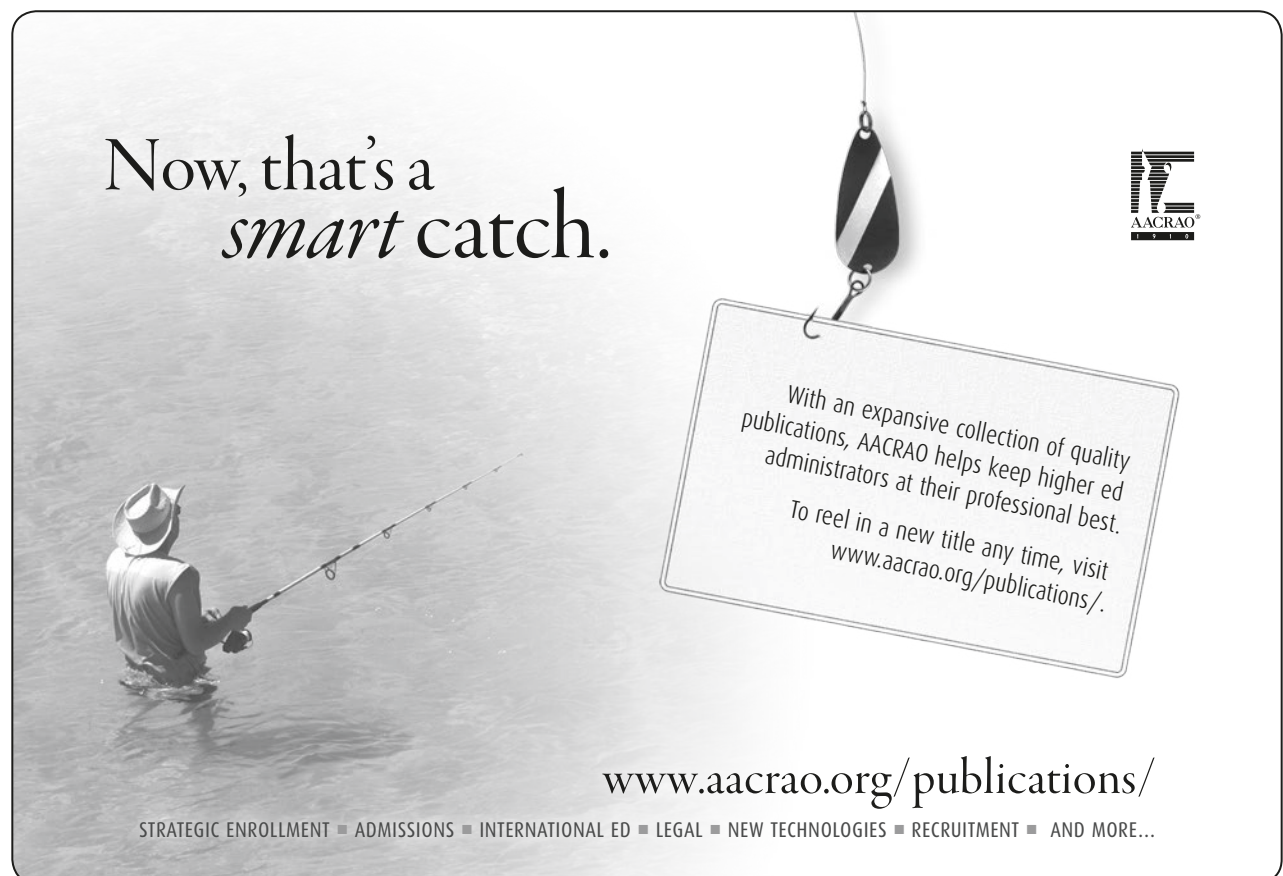
Consistent with the literature, the findings of the current study affirmed previous research related to the impact of college rankings on institutional selectivity and student quality. Although this study found that the effect of a change in ranking on admissions outcomes was statistically significant, it did not find a statistically significant "threshold effect" associated with improved admissions outcomes after moving into an elite peer group, such as the top 10, top

25, or top 50. Because there is such low variability among the top 50 national universities, only a few institutions crossed those thresholds during the ten-year period of this study (see Table 1, on page 15). In addition, the impact of a change in ranking on institutions within elite peer groups and on subgroups of institutions situated just outside of those elite peer groups was examined. Surprisingly, the effect of an increase in the previous year's ranking was greater for institutions ranked 26th to 50th than for those ranked in the top 25. This could be related to "self-screening" by potential applicants; that is, qualified students may choose not to apply to institutions ranked within the top 25 because they assume they will not be admitted. A self-screening effect on potential applicants' consideration of where to apply may also help explain increases in student quality among institutions ranked 26th through 50th as more qualified students may apply given their reluctance to apply to elite institutions. The self-screening effect was not evident in comparing the effect of a change in ranking on subgroups of the top 50 institutions and of those ranked 51st to 100th;


this could be due to applicants selecting only from the top 50 national universities (Bowman and Bastedo 2009).

With regard to race and gender groups, an increase in ranking had a negative and statistically significant effect on the enrollment figures of male and female African-American freshmen. This finding contradicts Meredith's (2004) assertion that a favorable change in ranking has little to no effect on the enrollment figures of first-year African-American students. Similarly negative patterns hold for first-year Hispanic students and for female Asian students, but these were not statistically significant. These patterns suggest potential obstacles to the pursuit by students of color of a degree from an elite national university. Administrators and policy makers at the most prestigious universities should continue to promote application and enrollment by greater numbers of students of color, particularly when their institutions experience a favorable change in their *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.

No matter how much a college or university's particular metric of quality improves, there will only ever be ten slots



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available within the top ten. The low variability in rank of the top 50 institutions suggests that non-elite institutions may not have the resources necessary to enter these elite thresholds (especially when financial resources account for a significant portion of the rankings criteria). For those institutions ranked lower than the top 50, Gordon Winston's (2000) analogy regarding those "who had to run very fast, indeed, just to stay in one place" seems apt (2). Given the stratification between elite and non-elite institutions, future research could examine college rankings in a more complex way in order to extend understanding beyond the most elite higher education institutions. Specifically, future studies could investigate the proliferation of regional peer groups in *U.S. News & World Report* as a way to examine the impact of college rankings on non-elite colleges and universities. For example, non-elite institutions may strive to identify as a top ten "regional university" or "best value school" in order to provide an interpretive frame of the competition and increase their own status. Although the college rankings literature contains too little information about non-elite institutions, the relative lack of consistency regarding which higher education institutions are ranked within those non-elite peer groups on a year-to-year basis would present its own challenges.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank Siyuan Ren, John Cheslock, and Liang Zhang for their assistance and feedback related to early versions of this manuscript.



A Qualitative Exploration of Perspectives on the

Management *and* LEADERSHIP ROLES OF THE REGISTRAR

This qualitative study used interviews to explore perceptions of the management and leadership role of the higher education registrar and the skills needed to fulfill that role. The findings reveal a variety of factors that were considered to impact the registrar's role as a campus leader. These findings can help registrars find ways to maximize their leadership potential. Recommendations are made regarding registrar professional development and succession planning.

Higher education is in a state of transition and uncertainty. Multiple drivers of change have emerged, including shifts in student demographics, advances in technology and globalization, challenges to the traditional model of higher education, and increases in public demand for accountability (Aud *et al.* 2013; Berdahl, Altbach and Gumpert 2011; Dew 2012).

News reports and opinion pieces on the value and future of higher education are common, and the federal government is devoting considerable attention to issues of higher education funding and quality (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance 2011, McKeown-Moak 2013, Rhodes 2012). Against this backdrop, individual higher education institutions are striving to meet current de-

mands even as they plan for an uncertain future. In order to do so, institutions must locate, train, and retain talented individuals in key administrative positions. These administrators need a variety of skills so they can be nimble and effective in responding to the changing context of higher education (Berdahl, Altbach and Gumpert 2011; Bryman 2007; Rosser 2004; Settoon and Wyld 2004).

Traditionally, the role of leader and change agent within higher education has been held by senior-level administrators. However, as changes redefine the higher education environment, the definitions and responsibilities of individual positions are being altered. Many mid-level administrators now are being expected to assume increasing leadership responsibilities (Boerner 2011, Clements 2013, David 2010, Filan and Seagren 2003, Fuggazzotto 2009, Rosser 2004). The registrar is a mid-level administrator whose role is being transformed. Today, the registrar is viewed as a campus leader and change agent (Lauren 2006), a key player at the hub of a complex academic system who serves an important role within the academic governance system (Braz 2012, Schipporeit 2006).

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to describe the management and leadership role of the higher education registrar and the skills needed to fulfill that role, as perceived by registrars, senior-level administrators, and faculty leaders. This qualitative study involved interviews with eighteen participants from private, four-year higher education institutions in California.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interaction between management and leadership has been the subject of extensive study and discussion (Carroll and Levy 2008, Clements 2013, Gardner 1990, Kotter 1990,

Kotterman 2006, Kumle and Kelly 2006, Northouse 2013, Toor and Ofori 2008, Yukl and Lepsinger 2005). Management and leadership have many similarities; both involve the direction of human resources to accomplish a particular goal. However, scholars have sought to define the concepts and explore the relationship between the two roles. For the purposes of this study, *management* is defined as using resources to achieve organizational goals through planning, organizing, and controlling; *leadership* is defined as influencing people to achieve organizational goals through visioning, aligning, and motivating (Daft 2012, Kotter 1990, Northouse 2013).

In his foundational work regarding this topic, Kotter (1990) states that the fundamental difference between management and leadership is the difference in focus: management focuses on order and consistency whereas leadership focuses on movement and change. Kotter (1990) also argues that one individual can function as both manager and leader. In fact, the complexity of the modern environment calls for an increasing number of manager-leaders.

Many additional researchers agree with the premise that one individual can serve as both manager and leader (Clements 2013, Gardner 1990, Toor 2011, Yukl and Lepsinger 2005); the call for leadership by managers at multiple levels within organizations continue to increase (Clements 2013, Northouse 2013). The literature points to the need to continue exploring the ways in which management and leadership intersect and integrate in administrative positions, including those that are mid-level. For the purposes of this study, the mid-level administrator is one with director-level supervisory authority who reports to a senior-level administrator (such as a vice president or president). By definition, the mid-level administrator is in the middle, navigating the space between the expectations of top management and the lived realities of front-line staff.

At the majority of U.S. higher education institutions, the registrar is a mid-level administrative position (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers 2007a). This position has developed over the past century and currently includes a variety of functions and responsibilities (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers 2007b, Lauren 2006). The registrar is the campus administrator responsible for registering students, maintaining student academic records, and ensuring the privacy of confidential student academic data (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers 2007b, Lauren 2006, Presswood 2011). This description encompasses a variety of functions, incorporating aspects of academics as well as student services.

During most of the 20th century, the higher education registrar was management and process focused. His work was to plan, organize, and monitor an array of practical functions in order to produce and maintain student records (Lanier 1995, Quann 1979, Young 2006). At most colleges and universities, the focus on management continues to the present day. The registrar needs to be able to manage a team of staff members in order to accomplish a wide assortment of critical functional tasks (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers 2007b, Bunis 2006, Presswood 2011).

The 21st-century higher education registrar is being called to lead in multiple ways. First, she is a leader within her department or unit (Bunis 2006, Epes 2013). Today's registrar leads and mentors a team of professional staff with complex responsibilities and advanced skills (Bunis 2006, Cramer 2012, Presswood 2011). She is also a leader within the campus community (Braz 2012, Fugazzotto 2009, Reinhart 2003, Schipporeit 2006). A variety of trends are having an impact on higher education (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance 2011, Dennis 2012, Lorenzetti 2013, McKeown-Moak 2013). As a crucial player within the academic governance system, the registrar is in a unique position to review these trends and facilitate the change process (Laudeman 2006, Pace 2011, Schipporeit 2006)—that is, to serve as a campus leader and change agent.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology allows for exploration of the phenomena under study as researchers seek to under-

stand the reasons behind human behavior (McMillan and Schumacher 2010, Patten 2012, Patton 2002). Qualitative methods also enable researchers to explore complex situations from multiple perspectives (McMillan and Schumacher 2010, Patten 2012). A qualitative methodology was selected for this study in order to explore perceptions regarding the current role of the registrar. This included attention to the factors that contribute to these perceptions, so as to provide a more in-depth understanding of the management and leadership roles of the higher education registrar. A limitation of qualitative research is that its findings typically cannot be generalized (McMillan and Schumacher 2010, Patton 2002). The methodological approach of the current study does not seek to provide a precise measure of difference in responses to the questions posed but rather to identify patterns of responses and their deeper meaning.

Sample

Qualitative research relies on small, strategically selected samples. For this study, the network sampling method was used. In network sampling, the researcher's professional network constitutes the initial pool of potential participants. As the study progresses, the researcher asks study participants to recommend additional candidates for participation based on the desired criteria (McMillan and Schumacher 2010). This form of sampling is also known as *snowball sampling* (Patton 2002). The researchers also used site selection by limiting the recruitment of participants to seven sites that met eligibility criteria (*i.e.*, private, not-for-profit, mid-sized four-year higher education institutions in California). Eighteen individuals from the selected sites were interviewed (*see* Table 1). The sample was intended to provide a multifaceted view of the role of the registrar, so interviews were conducted with individuals who filled the following functional roles:

- *Senior administrators*: Interviews were conducted with six senior-level administrators who work regularly with the registrar; these included three chief academic officers, two chief enrollment officers, and one senior advisor for strategy and planning.
- *Faculty leaders*: Interviews were conducted with six faculty members who have held leadership positions within the faculty governance system and worked with issues of curriculum and policy. In seeking faculty par-

ticipants, the researcher focused on individuals who served as academic program directors or as members of academic committees.

- **Registrars:** Interviews were conducted with six registrars.

DATA COLLECTION

The instrument for this study was a standardized open-ended interview, also known as a semi-structured interview (McMillan and Schumacher 2010, Patten 2012). Job descriptions for the position of registrar were collected from six institutions for purposes of document analysis (McMillan and Schumacher 2010, Patton 2002).

Interview questions were derived from the research questions and the theoretical framework provided by the literature review. In particular, Kotter’s (1990) differentiation between management and leadership was used as the conceptual groundwork for the interview questions. The questions focused on participants’ experiences and opinions regarding the role of the registrar within the administrative structure of a higher education institution. The primary researcher conducted and recorded all interviews; four were face to face, and the remaining fourteen were conducted via phone. Overall, a total of ten hours, 33 minutes, and three seconds of audio data were recorded, for an average interview length of 35 minutes and ten seconds. The primary researcher transcribed the interviews, and each participant was invited to review the transcript and provide feedback; six participants chose to do so.

Table 1.

Research Participant Demographics

	Administrators	Faculty	Registrars
Gender			
Male	2	4	1
Female	4	2	5
Ethnicity			
African American	0	0	1
Asian American	1	0	0
Caucasian	5	6	5
Highest Earned Degree			
Master’s	0	0	3
Doctorate (in process)	0	2	2
Doctorate (earned)	6	4	1
Number of Years Worked in Higher Education			
< 10	0	1	0
10–19	1	2	2
20–29	3	2	2
30+	2	1	2
Number of Years in Current Position			
< 10	4	2	2
10–19	1	3	4
20–29	1	0	0
30+	0	1	0

DATA ANALYSIS

This study used inductive analysis to examine detailed and individualized data and to identify general patterns and themes (McMillan and Schumacher 2010; Miles, Huber and Saldana 2013; Patton 2002; Schutt 2011). After collecting the data and preparing them for analysis, the primary researcher identified an initial list of 51 codes (thematic concepts) by which to sort the data, which were organized into two broad categories. After the codes were applied, the coding scheme and data were reviewed for comprehensiveness, redundancy, and accuracy. After add-

ing, removing, and combining various codes, the primary researcher refined the list to 46 codes (thematic concepts). Next, the primary researcher reviewed the categories in order to identify and authenticate the connections and themes, organize the codes into broad categories, and triangulate the data from the multiple sources (McMillan and Schumacher 2010; Miles, Huber and Saldana 2013; Patton 2002; Schutt 2011). These broad categories and specific thematic concepts represent the findings of the study, as presented in the following section.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND THEMES

These were organized into two major themes: perceptions of the registrar's role and skills considered important to the registrar's role.

Perceptions of the Registrar's Role

All participants perceived the role of the registrar as incorporating management as well as leadership functions. Registrars were seen as the managers and leaders of their departments, and this was supported by their job descriptions. However, there was disagreement regarding the registrar as an institutional leader: the majority of participants expected the registrar to be an institutional leader, but four participants did not share this expectation. The job descriptions were also divided on this issue: half described the registrar as a campus leader whereas the other half did not.

Many interview participants considered the registrar to have a comprehensive, distinctive viewpoint that made it beneficial for him to be an institutional leader. The registrar was perceived to have a unique role as the "living catalog" for the institution. As such, he was considered to have a unique, comprehensive, wide-ranging viewpoint on the institution's programs and constituents. One administrator explained the uniqueness of the registrar's role:

The registrar holds the whole curriculum in ways that most faculty don't. The provost's office, or academic affairs, does on some level. But the registrar holds it whole in a really tactical, operational way that most academic affairs people are too far removed from.

Six related characteristics were identified during the data analysis portion of the study; each was perceived by participants as being unique to the registrar as an institu-

tional-level leader. Table 2 presents an overview of these characteristics, the frequency of their occurrence within the two data sources (participant interviews and job descriptions), and major themes discussed in connection with these characteristics.

In discussing the registrar's role as a campus leader, participants often discussed factors that either enabled or hindered the registrar as leader. Based on this discussion, five factors emerged that potentially affect the registrar's ability to be an institutional leader; these factors are outlined in Table 3 along with the frequency of their mention during participant interviews and the major themes discussed.

SKILLS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT FOR THE REGISTRAR'S ROLE

Participants were asked to identify and describe skills they considered important for the registrar to serve as manager and leader. The names and definitions of the range of skills were grounded in the language used by the participants. Next, the researcher compared the skills against the definitions of management and leadership provided by Kotter (1990) and categorized the skills accordingly. Management skills were those that would be used by a logistical planner who structures and monitors staff in order to produce specified results (Kotter 1990); leadership skills were those that would be used by a strategic visionary who aligns people in such a way as to bring about change (Kotter 1990). This process resulted in the identification of twelve management and sixteen leadership skills.

Table 4 outlines the twelve identified management skills along with the number of participants that identified each of these skills. Three management skills were named by more than half of the participants. Registrars were seen as needing to communicate clearly with others in order to help them understand situations and processes (72 percent of participants said the registrar needed to be an *articulate communicator*). The same percentage said that the registrar also needs to be *organized* because she must manage many critical details. According to 61 percent of participants, the registrar should also be *knowledgeable about higher education* given her involvement with policy, curriculum, and technology systems.

Table 5 outlines the sixteen identified leadership skills along with the number of participants that identified

Table 2.

Factors Perceived as Making the Registrar Beneficial as an Institutional Leader

Characteristic	Number of Interviews	Number of Job Descriptions	Themes
<i>Access to Data</i>	10	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Manages data using technology ▶ Knows institutional data well and can review them for accuracy ▶ Sees trends in data ▶ Creates reports for the institution
<i>Committee Work</i>	11	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Serves on many committees ▶ Brings institutional knowledge and memory to committees ▶ Provides consistency and continuity as an ex officio committee member
<i>Institutional Memory</i>	7	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Archives historical academic information about the institution ▶ Informs and reminds others about the institutional history ▶ Acts as guardian of academic records and traditions
<i>Knows Academics as a Whole</i>	7	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Interacts with all academic units and programs ▶ Manages the entire curriculum ▶ Brings an objective perspective regarding academic issues
<i>Networking and Best Practices</i>	9	4	<p>Is connected to colleagues at other institutions Stays abreast of trends and best practices within higher education Makes suggestions for institutional implementation of best practices</p>
<i>Works with Many Constituents</i>	7	6	<p>Collaborates with faculty and other academic personnel Works with various offices and administrators around campus Serves needs of applicants, students, and alumni</p>

Table 3.

Factors Perceived to Affect the Registrar's Ability to Be an Institutional Leader

Factor	Number of Interviews	Themes
<i>Administrative Support</i>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A registrar can only serve as a leader with the support of senior administration. ▶ Some senior administrators do not see the registrar as having an institutional leadership role.
<i>Culture and Status</i>	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The registrar has a perceived status within the governance structure. ▶ It is critical to have the respect of the faculty in order to be an academic leader.
<i>Institutional Context</i>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The first order of business for the registrar is to maintain a sense of stability and consistency through management.
<i>Leadership Abilities of the Registrar</i>	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Registrars do not always have cultivated leadership abilities. ▶ Some hires are not prepared to step in to a leadership role.
<i>Registrar Role Perceptions</i>	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Historically, the role of the registrar has not been perceived as a leadership role. ▶ The profession has often focused on functions and regulations.

Table 4.

Management Skills Considered Important for the Role of the Registrar

Skill	Definition	Number of Participants
<i>Analytical and Critical Thinker</i>	Thinks critically about complex issues and analyzes relevant data	9
<i>Articulate Communicator</i>	Communicates clearly in small- and large-group settings	13
<i>Calm and Level Headed</i>	Demonstrates a calm demeanor in the face of stress	2
<i>Dependable and Accurate</i>	Can be relied upon to be consistent and accurate	4
<i>Detail Oriented</i>	Capable of managing details on a regular basis	8
<i>Good at Hiring and Delegating</i>	Adept at recognizing talent in employees and then delegating various important tasks	8
<i>Knowledgeable about Higher Education</i>	Knows the history, trends, culture, and climate of higher education	11
<i>Organized</i>	Keeps things organized and efficient	13
<i>Planner and Time Manager</i>	Plans in order to juggle multiple projects and priorities simultaneously	5
<i>Problem Solver</i>	Recognizes problems and develops methods for resolving them	9
<i>Technologically Savvy</i>	Is highly proficient with the use of technological record-keeping tools	7
<i>Understands Processes and Systems</i>	Comprehends systems and is able to keep them running	9

each. Two leadership skills were identified by more than half of the participants: 61 percent said that the successful registrar *demonstrates interpersonal skills* in order to maintain effective professional relationships with a variety of constituents. (Related keywords included “relationship building,” “respectfulness,” and “likability.”) Participants perceived the registrar as needing to gain trust and maintain relationships with others. Sixty-one percent of participants also said it was important for the registrar to be *visionary and able to see the big picture*. Several noted that it can be easy to get caught up in details and lose sight of the bigger picture. As participants talked about big-picture skills, they also emphasized the need for the registrar to be able to view a situation from multiple perspectives. Overall, the registrar’s ability to understand context and envision the future was deemed crucial.

The data regarding these twelve management skills and sixteen leadership skills were disaggregated by participant

category and reviewed to determine the top five skills that each participant group considered important for the registrar to possess. Table 6 provides a comparison of the top five skills overall and by participant group.

Two leadership skills that administrators discussed more frequently than the other categories of participants were *collaborative team builder* and *influences others for change*. Administrators believed that registrars need to be able to collaborate with other people and build teams. In talking about this skill, administrators referred to registrars as working within their department as well as working collaboratively with partners across campus. In addition, administrators believed that registrars need to be able to influence others for change. Participants discussed the fact that the registrar has limited direct authority and therefore needs to use methods of persuasion to bring about change. One administrator described the ideal registrar as follows:

Table 5.
Leadership Skills Considered Important for the Role of the Registrar

Skill	Definition	Number of Participants
<i>Collaborative Team Builder</i>	Builds and works with teams of professional employees	9
<i>Committed to the Institution</i>	Demonstrates a commitment to a larger institutional mission	4
<i>Compassionate and Empathetic</i>	Cares about other people and works to identify with them	7
<i>Confident</i>	Has confidence in one's own skills and abilities	1
<i>Creative and Curious</i>	Thinks creatively about nontraditional approaches to complex issues	7
<i>Demonstrates Interpersonal Skills</i>	Builds and maintains relationships with a wide variety of constituents	11
<i>Energetic and Ambitious</i>	Demonstrates professional ambition and energy to tackle big issues	4
<i>Ethical</i>	Follows a code of ethics when making decisions and interacting with others	2
<i>Flexible and Adaptable</i>	Willing to make changes and able to respond to varying circumstances	4
<i>Humble</i>	Demonstrates humility and admits to being wrong	4
<i>Influences Others for Change</i>	Able to influence and persuade others to make changes	8
<i>Learner and Educator</i>	Likes to participate in the learning process as both student and educator	8
<i>Listener</i>	Actively listens to others in order to meet the needs of constituents	5
<i>Self-Reflective and Self-Knowledgeable</i>	Knows oneself, including strengths and weaknesses	3
<i>Service Oriented</i>	Has a desire to serve others	5
<i>Visionary and Able To See the Big Picture</i>	Understands the broader context of a situation and is able to envision the future	11

I want someone who's ambitious—who sees more for the role than what is on a job description and recognizes that the hierarchy piece of it is nowhere near as

important as the impact level on the institution that the office can have.

Table 6.

Participant Categories: Top Skills Considered Important for the Role of the Registrar

Management Skills	Overall	Administrators	Faculty	Registrars
<i>Analytical and Critical Thinker</i>				X
<i>Articulate Communicator</i>	X	X	X	
<i>Knowledgeable about Higher Education</i>	X		X	X
<i>Organized</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Problem Solver</i>				X
<i>Technologically Savvy</i>				X
Leadership Skills				
<i>Collaborative Team Builder</i>		X		
<i>Demonstrates Interpersonal Skills</i>	X	X		
<i>Influences Others for Change</i>		X		
<i>Learner and Educator</i>			X	
<i>Visionary and Able to See the Big Picture</i>	X		X	

Multiple administrative participants indicated that they prized a registrar who could move beyond the traditional lines of authority to have a broad influence on the campus.

Faculty discussed one leadership skill more frequently than did the other categories of participants: *learner and educator*. In talking about the registrar, five of the six faculty participants referred to the education process. They perceived the education environment as characterized by the process of teaching and learning and believed that the registrar should participate in that process. One faculty participant saw this as important “because you’re not just keeping records. You’re keeping educational records and writing educational policies and so there’s this sense [that] the registrar needs to be an educator.” Others discussed the importance of the registrar’s willingness to learn. Overall, faculty participants wanted to interact with a registrar who demonstrated skills as an educator and as a learner.

Registrars discussed three management skills more frequently than did the other categories of participants: *analytical and critical thinker*, *problem solver*, and *technologically savvy*. Critical thinking was perceived by registrars as a necessary skill for compiling a dizzying array of information into a coherent story; the registrar was perceived as some-

one who needs to be able to recognize and solve problems. In addition, understanding technological systems was considered critical in order to function effectively as a registrar. Among the top skills identified by registrars were management skills, a focus on operational goals, and technical skills.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the literature and the research findings depict the registrar as a mid-level administrator with management and leadership responsibilities, with some variation in professional expectation, depending on the individual context.

Research participants agreed that the registrar is a manager and a leader within his department. The registrar was also perceived as having the potential to make a positive impact by serving as a manager and leader at a broader institutional level. The registrar was believed to have a valuable perspective given his access to data, possession of institutional memory, and knowledge of academics. The registrar also was perceived as being well-connected through extensive committee work, networking, and collaboration with a variety of constituents. Participants suggested that these various factors gave the registrar the ability to generate unique insights on institutional issues.

Participants also identified a variety of factors that influence the registrar's ability to serve successfully as an institutional leader. Many indicated a need for the registrar to cultivate leadership skills intentionally and noted that the registrar's day-to-day work and many institutions' limited resources can result in registrars' focusing on practical, immediate matters. Registrars also were perceived as being limited in their leadership functions if they did not have the support of senior administration or were not respected by the campus culture.

Participants identified various skills believed to be important for the role of the registrar. Those most frequently cited were *articulate communicator, organized, knowledgeable about higher education, interpersonal skills, and visionary and able to see the big picture*. Participants in the current research study believed that the successful registrar demonstrates each of these skills and suggested that professional development could be helpful if any of these skills were lacking. In considering the results of the study by group (*i.e.* senior administration, faculty, and registrars) it became clear that certain skills were discussed more frequently by group. For example, senior administrators seemed to particularly value skills more closely aligned with their own roles, and faculty seemed to particularly value those skills aligned with their role on campus. This suggests that registrars are subject to a complex array of expectations that differ by campus constituency.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

The methodology of this study limits the implications of the findings. This qualitative study was conducted with a small sample size of participants who were not randomly selected but instead were drawn from a limited number of institutions. For these reasons, the findings cannot be generalized to all higher education institutions. There are ample opportunities for additional research in this area; quantitative and/or mixed-methods studies with representative populations would provide generalizable results.

Nevertheless, this exploratory study has some implications for registrars and institutions. Because the research was conducted at moderately sized, private, four-year institutions, the results may be particularly applicable to professionals at institutions sharing those characteristics. Consider the following:

- Registrars should consider their leadership role on campus and seek to determine whether senior administration wants the registrar to serve as a campus leader. If so, the registrar should welcome this opportunity and work to develop the appropriate leadership skills. In addition, she should consider how best to balance day-to-day management functions with broader leadership responsibilities.
- If a registrar seeks to be a leader, then she should evaluate the culture of the institutional governance system. Gaining the support and respect of faculty leaders is critical. The registrar will benefit from strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build relationships. During this process, the registrar should demonstrate her commitment to being a professional colleague in the educational process.
- Senior administrators who supervise registrars should review and define the registrar's leadership role on campus. The registrar has the potential to provide unique insights and creative solutions if she is given the opportunity to participate in the leadership process.
- Professional development opportunities for the registrar should incorporate an intentional focus on building leadership capacity. This not only will benefit current registrars but also will develop potential within future registrars. Key leadership skills include visioning, interpersonal skills and relationship building, collaboration and team building, and the ability to influence others for change.

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The Registrar: A Profession

BY LOTUS DELTA COFFMAN

Editor's Note: The following is a reprint of an address given by Coffman at the 1926 annual meeting of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars, which was published in the *Bulletin of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars* (pp. 154–168) the same year. With the exception of a few minor edits, the text is in its original form.

For years the position of registrar in a college or university was merely that of a glorified clerkship. The chief duty of the registrar was that of keeping an accurate record of the grades sent in by the various officers of the staff. It was the business to accept these grades and to record them whenever they were received; he had no power over the time when they should be received and little over the form in which they should be submitted. As a matter of fact the registrar was not supposed to be a highly intelligent person; he had nothing to do with the determination of educational policies; to have assumed the initiative in the solution of some important teaching or administrative problem would have been a case of *Iese majeste*. He did what he was told to do and when he was expected to do it, and without a murmur. He was a nice, inconsequential officer, without ideas and without power. He had no standing with the faculty because he was not a scholar. He had some standing with the administration because he

furnished it with the figures showing the growth of the institution—figures which could be used in public addresses and in campaigns for additional funds.

Little or no attention was paid in those early days to the mortality of the college student. Hardly anybody failed. There was no threshold of college work. Students fresh from the graded schools were admitted to college. Others who had had training in the academy, the forerunner of the high school, were admitted. The freshman class presented a far more difficult problem so far as the previous training of its individual members were concerned than the present day freshman class presents. In those days the college was interested in numbers. All those who applied, or practically all, were admitted. Indeed, the representatives of the institution went out in the highways and by-ways and sought to lure students in. It was not considered unethical for the president, personally, to solicit students. Even the members of the faculty did not hesitate to do so. Advertisements and circulars, some of which according to present day standards, would be regarded as lurid, were published. And when the students came, they didn't fail. They weren't allowed to fail. An instructor who failed any considerable number of students, would not have been reappointed and if he had gone about boasting about the number he sent home because they couldn't do "his" work,

he wouldn't have lasted to the end of the year. Those were the days when the institution was expected to discover what the individual's capacities were, and to deal with him accordingly. The slow student wasn't sent home at the end of a quarter or semester or year. He stayed on sometimes five, six, or seven years, plugging away and playing on the football team every year.

But why enlarge upon the picture. There are those of us who know that those were happy days. There was little or no money to fight for; no one thought about reducing the size of his class, on the contrary he was always trying to hold those that he had and to get more; five hundred dollars a year for books would have been a godsend, well, what's the use to dwell on these memories? The days when college problems were simple and the registrar was a nonentity and happy that he was such, are gone and gone forever.

It is clear that we are living in a new era and that the transforming processes of civilization have wrought their work gradually but surely. Life has become increasingly more complex. Its problems have grown in number and variety. The modes of thought, which served us so well in the days when life was simple and its problems easy of solution, no longer serve. The comfortable academic atmosphere which, in early days, paid no attention to standards of admission, little to credits, none to honor points, or length of residence of the student, but made every effort to discover talent and to awaken it does not exist unmodified anywhere any more. What is it that has changed this situation or point of view? There have been several factors, in my opinion, that have helped to bring it about. Among the factors which I would elaborate in case there were time, are: (1) the growth of the schools; (2) the increase in cost. But these factors are not the fundamental factors.

They are merely the immediate and obvious evidences of the changes that have been occurring. We may quickly dispose of the second factor, cost, for no one who will carefully study the situation will maintain that we are unable to support higher education and to do it liberally.

And as far as the number of students attending college is concerned, does the campaign for limiting registration of students mean that the increase denotes the decadence of American civilization? Has something happened to these institutions of higher learning that makes them undesirable except for a few specially gifted persons? Is America in any less need today than she was fifty years

ago of democratizing and spreading learning? Does the average citizen know enough and can he acquire enough knowledge from the contacts of daily life, to qualify him for the duties of life? Or have we discovered that thousands whom we hitherto have believed to be profiting by a college education, were really not profiting by it, and that the time and energy spent on them was useless, and that they and all their kind should either be prohibited from entering college or should be sent home as soon as possible if by any chance they should get in? Shall education hereafter be a gift to the elect and government be administered by the chosen ones of a special class? Has education as traditionally conceived proved a failure and is "mass" education a menace?

Without doubt our educational institutions are feeling the impress of two conflicting movements. One is represented by the increasing thousands who are sending their children to college, with the hope and in the belief that it is a good thing. Somehow or other they realize that they don't know how to dispose of many of the questions with which they are faced and they hope the college will teach their children how to solve these problems. Furthermore they are influenced by that great American tradition that they must do better for their children than their parents did for them. They still have such an explicit and abiding faith in the virtues of education, that if the existing colleges do not provide for their children as they think they should, they propose to and will establish other colleges. In the states where the state universities flourish, it will mean that some of these new colleges will be established and maintained at state expense. So far as the great body of the people is concerned, I believe one is safe in saying that they were never more insistent upon higher education than now and that they regard the increase in registration in college circles as a favorable rather than as an unfavorable sign.

The other movement which is making its impress upon the thought and policy of our higher educational institutions is represented by those who maintain that too many are going to college, that there should be rigid selection at entrance, and relentless elimination of the unfit after entrance. They maintain that college standards are or should be beyond the ability of the masses to attain. Higher education with them is for the elect. They call attention to the fact that the standards of higher education have been

raised as public education has become more universal and life more complex. They show that many if not practically all of the subjects once taught in college have been eliminated or if not eliminated, have been so completely revised as to be unrecognizable by their progenitors. And furthermore they point to the new scientific instruments now in the hands of college authorities for the detection of ability and the classification of college students.

The impact of these two points of view centers at the university or college and multiplies as well as intensifies its problems. Whichever point of view the institution adheres to makes an enormous difference to it, for each has its influence upon the attitude of the faculty in relation to every aspect of the university's work and its activities. One emphasizes the democratization of learning, the other aristocracy of intellect. One thinks of its obligations to society in terms of the welfare of its students; the other thinks of its obligations to society in terms of its curriculum. One keeps the doors of the institution wide open; the other closes them. All questions of admission, classification, elimination, progress of students in the various fields of learning, the contacts of the institution with its constituency, and both the bearing and the presence of the extracurricular activities upon the institution's work, are colored and determined by the dominance of one point of view or the other.

This is not the time nor the occasion for me to express my personal opinion as to which, if either, of these points of view will eventually prevail. As a matter of fact I do not think either of them will. The truth, I believe, lies somewhere in between. I am primarily concerned at this time with the existence of these conflicting opinions and with the bearing they have upon the office of registrar, for the registrar has become something more than a recording officer. His position carries with it today responsibilities and opportunities which it did not formerly possess. To his office is now usually assigned the duty of rating institutions from which students are transferring. Only a few years ago this task was performed usually by a committee of the faculty, but the number of students transferring from other institutions of learning and the number of institutions from which they transferred so increased and the checking involved so much time and labor on the part of the faculty committee, that it willingly gave the work over to the registrar's office. This is no mean task and it certainly is a

great responsibility. The business of the registrar as a rating officer is not to keep a student from getting advanced standing nor to close the door, but rather to see that the student clearly gets all the standing he is entitled to. If the work is done and done well, students will not suffer because their work does not fit with nicety and exactness into some one of the required programs; on the contrary, they will be given every opportunity to fit into the new program without loss. We long ago discovered, although I fear rating officers have not yet universally accepted the fact, that the preparatory value of most subjects of study is a delusion. It is not necessary to know Caesar to study Cicero; it is not even necessary to know solid geometry to study trigonometry; it is not necessary to know ancient history to study American history. Most, but not all, of the prerequisites set up for entrance into given courses, will be found to be unnecessary if they are removed. The best and practically the only reason for having them is that the faculty accepts them as a device that insures a liberal education. Sometimes the faculty insists upon rigid adherence to its rules with reference to prerequisites. But a registrar is in a peculiarly favorable position, in view of the fact that his office passes upon the student transferring, to demonstrate in a practical way that students are entitled to standing on the basis of achievement, maturity, intellectual alertness, and application. In other words if he interprets the rules literally and then grants the students reasonable opportunity on the basis of these qualities and if the students succeed, the faculty will become more liberal about the matter.

A registrar is more than a recording and a rating officer. In a sense, he sits at the center of the university's administrative life. Students come to him to inquire about their grades. Representatives of the faculty call to check the standing of students. More comments are made in the Registrar's office about this or that instructor, this or that department, this or that policy than are made anywhere else about the university. A discreet registrar, of course, knows how to sift the truth from the various remarks that are made in his office. He is not exactly like a policeman to whom one tells his troubles and yet he hears many of the troubles of the student body and not a few of the staff. It is just here that he ceases to be a clerk and begins to be a true educational officer. He finds it possible by sympathetic consideration to help many a student over a hill of difficulty,

to point out to him the error of his assumption and to direct him to the right person so as to insure the solution of his problem. A registrar's office that feels that its business is to deal with students officially and only officially, that it is its business to see that rules are applied and imposed in a literal manner, that it is its business to regard the student purely as an impersonal rather than as a personal being, will never quite rise to the height of its possibilities.

Students must be treated like human beings if good will is to prevail. Rules are made to be broken in the interest of progress. When rules work injustice and the registrar is too timid to be just to the individual, he should protest against the injustice of the rule.

The registrar also has an opportunity of a very unusual sort as a guide and mentor to the faculty. If he fully encompasses his office and appreciates its possibilities, he will not be a mere creature subordinate to the faculty. He will, on the contrary, be a leader of the faculty. This leadership can be expressed in at least two ways, one is that of defining many of the problems which the faculty has relative to administrative matters that relate to the life and progress of students; and the other is that of anticipating many of the questions which the faculty is likely to raise later on. There is one other respect in which the registrar may serve a faculty and perhaps may exercise some leadership over it. As I have already indicated, he may point out to the faculty the injustice and unfairness of certain regulations which may have been adopted or he may call the attention of the faculty to the need of new regulations. In every case, however, he should keep in mind the needs of the students rather than the case of administration. The great danger from which all our educational institutions are suffering or are likely to suffer is a strict and mechanical adherence to rules. If the registrar will keep a human accounting of the special cases that come to his office which call for a variation of rules, he will be laying the basis for a more intelligent and discretionary administration of them.

The faculty has many questions which still exist largely as questions, in other words, questions that have not yet been raised to the level of problems. For example, the faculty may say that the students coming to our colleges and universities today are more stupid than they were a generation ago. The registrar may ask, How do we know that they are more stupid than they were a generation ago?

By what means can we determine whether this is true or not? It is possible of course that the means may not be available but the records which the registrar is keeping today will serve as a basis for such a comparison thirty years from now. Someone associated with the registrar's office or someone in the faculty who may be stimulated and assisted by the registrar's office, should attempt to find out whether it is true that we have more stupid children in college than formerly. There is a very considerable number of persons who believe that it is not true. As a matter of fact they think that the general average of the intelligence of college freshmen is higher today than it was thirty years ago. It would seem that we should find some basis for our conclusions other than mere opinion. Some of the severest critics of the present day student body were not teaching thirty years ago,—as a matter of fact some of them were not old enough to be in the primary grades of the public schools at that time. The answer to this question would make a vast difference in our administrative procedure.

There is not a registrar here, I suspect, who has not heard some representative of the faculty say, the students who come from the high schools today are more poorly trained than formerly. If this be true, certainly the high school authorities do not admit it. Now how well trained were the high school students a quarter of a century ago? It is true that there has been considerable growth in secondary education in the last thirty years? Has this spread and development of the high schools and the expansion and enrichment of their curricula really meant a lowering of the quality of instruction? There is abundant evidence to show that the quality and training of the teachers has been raised very materially in the last twenty years. If instruction has grown poorer as the scholastic and academic qualifications of teachers have been raised then we certainly are facing the horns of a difficult dilemma.

One of the commonest criticisms perhaps is that there are too many students in college. What determines whether or not there are too many? If any considerable percentage of them are too stupid to do college work, then of course there are too many. If a considerable percentage of them have been so poorly taught that they cannot recover from the bad teaching, then again there are too many. But if either of these things is true, what is the basis of determining whether there are too many? Are there too many entering medicine, too many entering dentistry,

too many entering nursing, too many going into teaching, too many going into social work, too many being trained for business, too many trained for agriculture, too many receiving a liberal education? Shouldn't there be some study and inventory of this matter made? Shouldn't the faculty be encouraged to make such studies before it commits itself to a program based upon mere opinion and prejudice? Although we say that college faculties are composed of scientific men, that we do what we can to promote scientific interests among them, it is nevertheless true that when they come to the consideration of questions like these, their attitude is frequently unscientific. It would seem to me that the registrar's office should find ways and means of keeping the faculty thinking on the scientific level with reference to such problems.

Then again we hear members of the faculty making excuses for what they call the poor work of their students; excuses in this instance that may really reflect upon the administration of the institution. They say for example, that they could do better work and get better results from their students if their classes were not so large. How large should a class be? Has anyone determined this? All of the studies that have been made thus far have shown that the size of the class is no index of the achievement of the student. Yet apparently we are not willing to accept this statement. Requests are continually being made of the administration for increases in staff, to add new members to the staff on the ground that there are too many students in the classes. In the past when we tried to determine the proper sized class, we tried to find the smallest class that would give the best results. But all of the studies show that we probably should have been trying to find the largest class that would give the best results. If the size of the class is no prophesy of the achievement of the students then knowledge to this effect would have an enormous bearing upon the construction of new buildings and upon administrative procedure. I can readily imagine that instead of large numbers of small classrooms one would have a considerable number of large classrooms.

Again we should like to know whether there are some subjects in which the classes should be smaller than in other subjects, and if some aspects of a given subject do not call for smaller classes than other aspects of the same subject. Here is a fundamental problem and a far reaching one. The registrar has in his office the grades of classes

ranging back over a number of years. It will be interesting to have these grades checked to see whether the size of the class has actually made any difference in the achievements of students. This of course would not give as satisfactory an answer to the question as a try-out of classes of different sizes under controlled conditions, but at any rate it would be a good start. Has any registrar here ever heard any member of the faculty say that students are engaged in too many extracurricular activities and that they spend too much time on them? How does he know this to be true? It may be true of certain individuals but is it true of the student body generally? What have the studies that have been made thus far shown with reference to the achievement of students who are engaged in extra-curricular activities as compared with the achievement of students who are not engaged in extra curricular activities? What do the facts show at your institution? Are there figures to be made available for this year and last year and several years back? Would it not be possible to check the achievement of the representative groups of these students—five, ten, and even twenty years after graduation? There is a movement in the public schools for the organization and recognition of the extracurricular activities as part of the educational program of the institution. The public schools are making them pay in the life and experience of the students. In most of our higher institutions of learning, however, there has been little or no conscious organization of these activities. The students have multiplied them as they saw fit, and there has been no constructive program. Nevertheless in spite of this fact it would be very interesting to determine the correctness of the statements of the faculty representatives. Perhaps some of the activities are non-educative. Perhaps the students who are engaged in them do not compare favorably scholastically with the students who are not engaged in them. The question is not who knows but how shall we find out.

And so I might go on and on pointing out questions relating to the mortality and elimination of students, to the progress of students in the various curricula, to devices which the institution has introduced for the acceleration of students, to the benefit of honor societies, of honors courses, of the honor point system, and the like. The questions which are raised in connection with such matters as these call for investigation. They call for a reserved judgment. They ask for facts. No one has

formulated these problems. The registrar, however, is in a strategic position to do this or to help to do it. His office should become a center for a continuous survey of the educational work and administrative procedure in the institution. If his office does not actually carry on the survey it could and should define many problems and it should stimulate other agencies to work upon them.

It is not enough for the registrar to attempt to define problems which grow out of questions which faculty representatives ask. It is a part of his business, in my opinion, to anticipate these questions. He must bring imagination to bear upon them. He must be an educational leader and a research officer. He must recognize that the man who anticipates the questions which the faculty are likely to ask will become the leader. By the use of abundance of information which he is in a position to acquire, the charts and elides which he may prepare in describing various situations in the institution, and the clear definition and outlining of problems which strike at the heart of the administrative organization of the institution, it will be possible for the registrar to greatly magnify his office and at the same time to serve the University in new and profitable ways.

There is one thing which I think your association might accomplish. I am of the opinion that a number of these questions and problems cannot be solved very satisfactorily by one institution working upon them alone. It seems to me that an 'association of this kind should outline some cooperative studies and should attempt to carry them out. If they require cooperation on the part of the faculty or faculty groups, every effort should be made to secure that cooperation. There is a study which the North Central Association has made this last year of failures of college freshmen. The attempt was made to relate these failures to the high schools of varying sizes from which the students had come. This study needs to be extended. We are much more interested, of course, in knowing the failures in the various subjects and why these failures occur. You will find in some institutions that there are certain subjects in which the percentage of failure is high, while in others it is low. We

should like to know the reason for this. We should like to know the relationship existing between the failures and intelligence tests of students in general and in various subjects in particular. What a fine thing it would be if there could be some objective tests prepared which might be used in a cooperative way in ten or a dozen more of your institutions.

Further elaboration of the general program for a registrar's office is, I think, unnecessary. I have tried to make it clear that, in my opinion, he must rise to a new level and must have a new type of training appropriate to that level. He must be one of the chief educational officers of the institution. He must not be a follower—he must be a leader. He must not merely do that which the faculty may wish him to do—he must point out to the faculty the way in which it should go. From the standpoint of ability, insight and leadership, he must be fully the equal of the leading members of the faculty. He must exalt and magnify his office. Although he teaches no classes he will nevertheless be a teacher. Although not employed as a director of research, he nevertheless must stimulate and direct research. Clear-minded, far-seeing statesmanship in the conduct of his office in relation to the function and purposes of the University, must characterize his administration. Helping to solve problems of paramount importance and anticipating issues and needs vital to the existence of the institution, he must be ever on the alert, ready to aid with their solution and sympathetic with their administration. It requires more than mere clerical and statistical ability. It has become a profession equal in dignity and standing and worth to the other professions of the university.

About the Author

LOTUS D. COFFMAN became the fifth president of the University of Minnesota in 1920 and served in that role until 1938. Two new colleges were established under his tenure: General College, offering two-year degrees, and University College, intended for students whose academic needs were not being met by other existing colleges. Under Coffman's leadership, one of the country's first university-based radio stations was started as well as a new art gallery and the first college-based residential conference center in the country. Prior to his presidency at the University of Minnesota, Coffman was dean of the College of Education, which he also created, at the University of Illinois.

90 Years Later: Reflections on *The Registrar: A Profession*

BY JEFFREY VON MUNKWITZ-SMITH

In 1926, the annual meeting of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars (“Admissions Officers” wasn’t added until 1949) was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Lotus Delta Coffman, then president of the University of Minnesota, addressed the attendees. His talk, “The Registrar: A Profession,” was reprinted in the *Bulletin of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars* (the precursor to *College and University*). Coffman discussed his view of the function of the registrar in a previous generation, what it had become by 1926, and what it would become in the future. Historically, he argued, the position of registrar was a “glorified clerkship,” chiefly responsible for keeping an accurate record of grades, without control over when they were received or the form in which they were submitted. The registrar was not involved in the determination of academic policies. Because he was not a scholar, the registrar had no standing with the faculty; his standing with the administration had its basis in the reporting of enrollment data.

By 1926, the higher education landscape had changed. There were more institutions and more students than before, and costs of attendance were higher. There was, Coffman reported, a conflict between those who viewed the growth as favorable—a democratizing influence

on the country—and those who viewed it as indicative of the relaxation of standards. This conflict had a direct bearing on the position of the registrar, bringing new responsibilities and opportunities, including the assumption of roles served previously by committees of the faculty, particularly with regard to the evaluation of credits from other institutions and the interpretation of academic policies. In a sense, Coffman pointed out, the registrar “sits at the center of the university’s administrative life” and interacts with students as well as faculty. The registrar, having information on the historical performance of students, is in a strategic position to provide facts. Not only providing facts but also anticipating questions that will arise make the registrar an institutional leader.

Coffman called on registrars to rise to a new level to support the needs of their institutions. The registrar

must be one of the chief educational officers of the institution. He must not be a follower—he must be a leader. He must not merely do that which the faculty may wish him to do—he must point out to the faculty the way in which it should go. From the standpoint of ability, insight, and leadership, he must be fully the equal of the leading members of the faculty. He must exalt and magnify his office (Coffman, p. 166).

Coffman closed by declaring that the registrar profession “has become a profession equal in dignity and standing and worth to the other professions of the university” (Coffman, p. 166).

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

There are those in our profession who perceive that the role of the registrar has been diminished in recent years. I’ve spoken with enough to believe that is the case at some institutions. I also know registrars who are recognized as leaders at their institutions and who are at the core of many campus initiatives. They are among the chief education officers of their institutions. In Coffman’s words, they “exalt and magnify” their offices.

“You look at where you’re going and where you are and it never makes sense, but then you look back at where you’ve been and a pattern seems to emerge” (Pirsig 1999, pp. 160–161).

I began my career in the registrar’s office in 1974 at the University of Minnesota. My responsibilities included handwriting transcripts (I still have my electric eraser) and collecting the 80-column cards used in registration. For many of my 22 years at Minnesota, I worked on the development of student information systems—not the ERPs most of us use today but the so-called “homegrown” or “legacy” systems (or, as one of my IT colleagues at Boston University, which still uses a homegrown student information system, calls them, “professionally developed local systems”). At Minnesota, I worked on one of the first systems to give students online access to their own records, allowing them to register themselves (an enormous improvement over waiting in long registration lines).

As I was leaving Minnesota in the mid-1990s, we were in the process of developing a web-based registration system. Just as the Administrative Information Services Department was created in the registrar’s office in the 1940s to support the use of the unit record equipment and 80-column cards used to register students after the influx of World War II veterans, so the web development office that is now part of the central IT department was formed initially in the registrar’s office. We also implemented vendor packages for classroom scheduling and degree audit—both wonderful innovations that I can’t imagine living without today!

When I began in the registrar’s office at Minnesota, it was the office that always had lines. The lines were longer at some times of the year and shorter at others, but they were ever present. I expect that was the case at other institutions during that era, as well. When we provided students with the online tools to access their records, view their grades, and register, lines became less common. When faculty could submit their grades online, fewer faculty visited our offices. To some, we became “invisible.” Some in our profession have advocated for that invisibility. My own opinion is that having an “invisible” registrar doesn’t work so well when something goes wrong and a student or a faculty member needs help—or when academic policy change is being contemplated. In such cases, the more “visible” the registrar, the better.

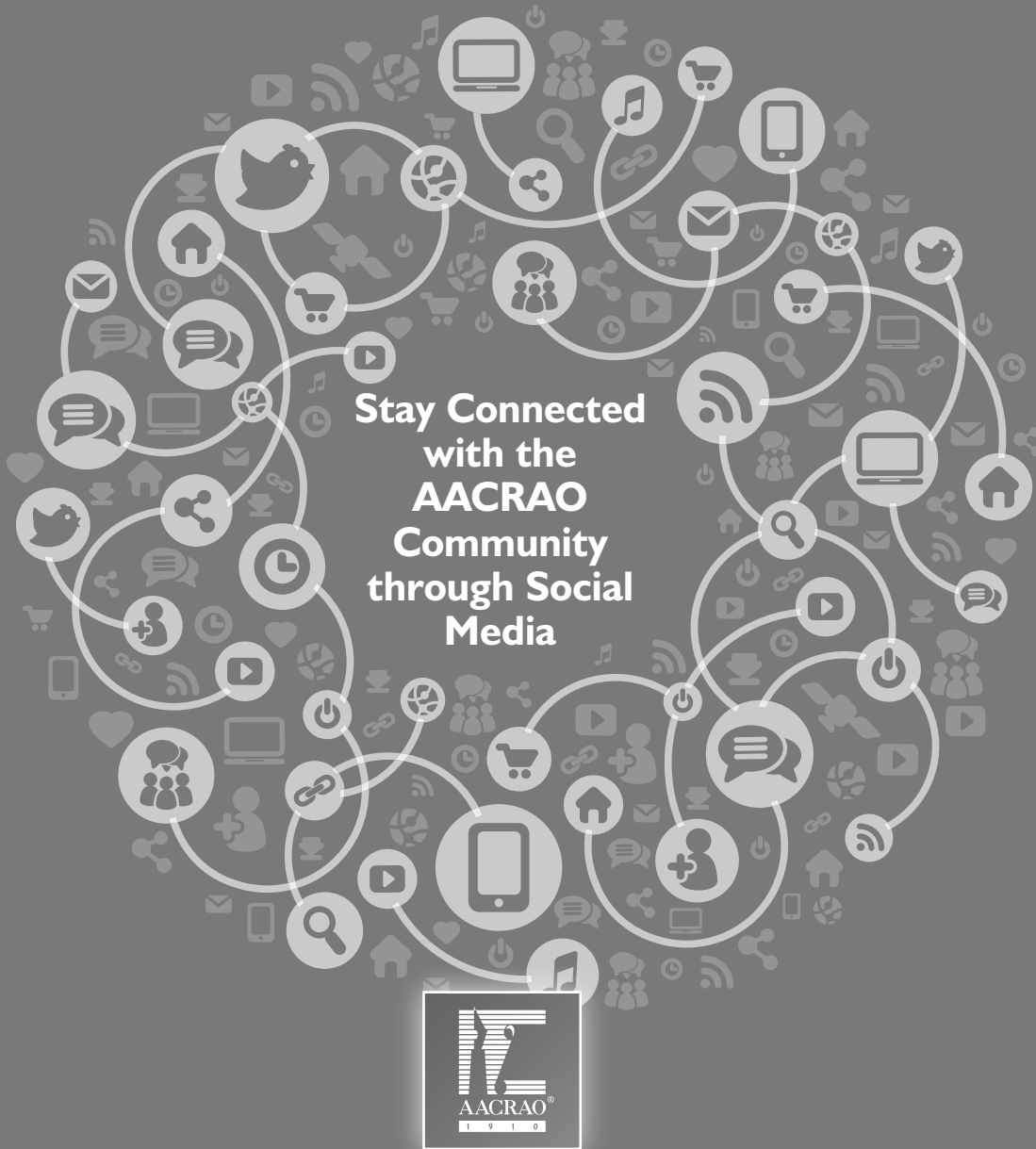
At most of our institutions, the registrar has played a lead role in the implementation of technology solutions to improve services to students and to provide needed information to the administration. During my 40-plus years in the profession, the technology we employ has changed constantly, and the changes have been enormous: online student access, email to students, data warehouse, CRM, electronic transcripts, and mobile apps, to name a few. Technology that has become obsolete includes electric erasers, 80-column cards and unit record equipment, dumb terminals, green screens (although a few of us may still have those), typewriters (some of us might still have one in the office), NCR forms, stickers on ID cards, Bitnet, Gopher, the social security number as student ID, and land lines in dorm rooms. I expect that some readers are wondering “what *are* those things?” I also expect that some of the technology we can’t live without today will be in the “what *are* those things” category before too long. As registrars, we need to be looking toward the future and helping our institutions move forward.

While he didn’t use the term “retention,” Coffman wrote that the registrar ceases to be a clerk and begins to be a true education officer when “he finds it possible by sympathetic consideration to help many a student over a hill of difficulty” (p. 160). When I was university registrar and director of summer programs at the University of Connecticut, student retention activities were part of my portfolio—one, because the registrar’s office interacts with all students, and two, because we had the data. Even if supporting retention and graduation is not formally a part



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of our portfolio, registrars ought to be actively engaged in these activities.

Coffman also wrote of the role of the registrar as “guide and mentor” to the faculty in academic policy development. The registrar should define problems for the faculty, anticipate questions, and “point out to the faculty the injustice and unfairness of certain regulations which may have been adopted, or he may call the attention of the faculty to the need for new regulations” (161). While enforcing regulations, the registrar, according to Coffman, should consider the injustice that can result from their “strict and mechanical” enforcement. The registrar should not be timid when rules work injustice.

Who knows where our profession will be in another 100 years, or even 40? Almost 20 years ago I served on a committee at the University of Minnesota that was charged with re-imagining student services. Frustrated with the pace of the discussions, I wrote a short story about an intelligent software agent providing services in the future. I think it helped people to get past thinking that the future would be just like the present. I do think we may have software agents in our future. Does that mean that “the registrar’s office will become a museum,” as Minnesota colleague Bob Kvakik, an early champion of moving student services to the web, speculated? I don’t think so. We have moved, in many ways, from processing transactions to managing processes. The processes to be managed may change, but the need to manage will not.

I’m confident that our profession will continue to adapt. We should have a sense of excitement for the future, and we should exalt and magnify our office!

I’ll conclude with one more quote from Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance that describes the work of the best motorcycle mechanics and applies equally well to registrars:

Peace of mind produces right values, right values produce right thoughts. Right thoughts produce right actions, and right actions produce work which will be a material reflection for others to see of the serenity at the center of it all (p. 289).

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NOTE: Parts of this commentary were adapted from a keynote address von Munkwitz-Smith gave at the 2012 annual meeting of the Illinois Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. The theme of that conference was “Zen and the Art of Registrars and Admissions Officers: An Inquiry into Our Profession.”

New Technologies and Communications Tools

BY JIM BOUSE

Depending on one's level of involvement with or general awareness of technology, mileage on the term "new" may vary. For that matter, the time from this article's submission to its publication may influence the "newness" of some topics discussed here. That would serve to illustrate both the rapidly evolving nature of the communication channels preferred by those higher education seeks to engage and the ever-increasing expectations thrust upon it. In an extrapolated sense, society is moving from *information technology* to *relationship technology*. In *Water the Bamboo*, author Greg Bell (2009) posits that the information age has ended and the relationship age has begun. Relationships are key to the success of everything higher education hopes to accomplish, from recruiting the next class to retaining them, guiding them to graduation, creating successful alumni, and fostering satisfied donors. This is consistent with the student life cycle that Roger Thompson, vice president for enrollment management at the University of Oregon, suggests should never be forgotten:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| ① prospect | ④ graduate |
| ② admitted | ⑤ alumni |
| ③ enrolled | ⑥ donor |

This article explores the fulfillment of some SEM goals through the application of a public relations lens in terms of marketing, communications, technology, and data. It surveys what is being utilized, how it is being utilizing, who is using it, and what is on the horizon of the possible.

STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT (SEM)

Much of SEM involves a blend of exchange and communal relationships (Grunig 2002). Higher education institutions certainly are engaged in exchange relationships in which one party is expected to provide benefits in return for something of comparable value from the other. Comparable value may include tuition, unique talents, enhancing institutional prestige, and investing in future potential. Colleges and universities also strive to enhance communal relationships in many areas in which nothing may be expected in return, at least not directly. They provide opportunities, create knowledge to share with the world, enhance the social and economic outlook for their students and, through them, for the community, state, nation, and world. Grunig (2002) and colleagues describe four principal characteristics by which to evaluate the quality of a relationship between organizations and publics:

- *Control mutuality*: the degree to which the parties in a relationship are satisfied with the amount of control they have over the relationship. The most stable, positive relationships exist when organizations and publics have some degree of control over the other. One party may be willing to cede more control to the other when it trusts the other.
- *Trust*: the level of confidence that both parties have in each other and their willingness to open themselves to the other. Trust is a complicated concept that has several underlying dimensions. Three are particularly important: *integrity*, the belief that an organization is fair and just; *dependability*, the belief that an organization will do what it says it will; and *competence*, the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will.
- *Commitment*: the extent to which both parties believe and feel that the relationship is worth spending energy on to maintain and promote.
- *Satisfaction*: the extent to which both parties feel favorably about each other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. A satisfying relationship occurs when each party believes the other is taking positive steps in order to maintain it.

Control mutuality shifts back and forth throughout the student life cycle. Trust will always be critical; without it, the road is difficult or impossible. The use of cutting-edge technology and communication tools will only take an institution so far. Its competence and all it represents are built on a solid foundation that facilitates a commitment to the forming of a relationship. Positive steps to maintain the relationship will extend from delivering a positive recruitment experience, offering educational and social opportunities, and maintaining or increasing the worth of a degree received from the institution.

In “Relationship Building as a Retention Strategy: Linking Relationship Attitudes and Satisfaction Evaluations to Behavioral Outcomes,” Bruning (2002) addresses the need to understand the variables that influence the building and managing of mutually beneficial organization-public relationships. The publics with which higher education institutions interact are seen as “active, interactive, and equal participants of an ongoing communication process” (Gronstedt 1997). This has driven the evolution toward relationship building that was characterized as “an

important change in the primary mission of public relations” (Ehling 1992).

Creation of those relationships can be engaged and facilitated by the technology, communications tools, and ideas addressed below. Although each of the following areas could be addressed in much greater depth, the current article presents an overview of some options. A few years ago, Ian Calvert (Instant Grass) said, “We only call it technology when we were born before it was invented.” Students with whom higher education is engaging now and will engage in the future will know nothing but these technologies and capabilities; for them they have always existed. Today’s technologies and capabilities will not amaze them in the same way that they do others. They will use these as accepted foundations and will expect more to be built on them as they reach higher, wanting better and faster. Initially no one needs to understand why people are using Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.; rather, what they do need to understand is that billions of other people are using these platforms, some of which are highly valued by those in target demographics.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are an engagement platform and a branding tool. One must be present, authentic, interesting, and entertaining. All of those attributes—along with relevant information—add up to a value proposition that will pull users in and, more important, encourage them to share an institution’s message and expand its reach. The first thing to understand about social media is that higher education is the product. Users exchange personal data, photos, relationships, etc. for the sake of convenience, to create relationships or connections, and to amplify their persona throughout the Internet. As Tim O’Reilly (2013), founder and CEO of O’Reilly media, says, “Your data is [sic] worth more to other people than it is to you.”

Social is an extremely dynamic space that can be daunting to approach, let alone to engage with and stay relevant for with a proper voice and understanding of the channels. The platforms are legion and ever expanding, and it is challenging to keep track of who is acquiring what. Users have shifted from broad to focused platforms, preferring to deploy an array of discrete channels based on audience and media. The social media realm is notorious for producing new platforms and putting marketers in chase mode, pursuing audiences as they shift platforms:

“Mind the gap, and watch for the gap to move.” A rather famous bridge was built in Choluteca, Honduras; its incredible engineering enabled it to survive Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and its more than 36 inches of rainfall. The bridge remained standing, but the entire river shifted so that now the bridge only spans dry ground. The bridge still exists, but it no longer serves a useful purpose. Don’t create a solid program built on a single platform that likely will shift; rather, create an adaptable, flexible process that will be responsive. Kess Knight (University of Minnesota), Katie Halberg (Wright State University), and many others have done good work in this area.

- *Twitter (Vine, Periscope)*: 140 characters of potential. This year Engagement Labs ranked the University of Wisconsin Madison as the top Twitter account (twitter.com/uwmadison) in U.S. higher education. Engagement Labs compiles 200 different metrics into three sub-scores: engagement, impact, and responsiveness. See also the university’s registrar’s office account (twitter.com/UWMad_Registrar), which provides pertinent information paired with humor, pictures, and animated .gifs.
- *Facebook (Instagram, WhatsApp, Oculus VR)*: With its 1.48 billion users, Facebook is ubiquitous. Your institution likely has several accounts. Facebook is still extremely popular, and prospects still lurk here to stay in touch with their families, but they are more passive than participants. There are also recruitment players such as “walled Facebook gardens,” like Uversity, which are designed to create admitted student communities in order to strengthen relationships and affiliations and decrease summer melt. Leesa Beck and Keri Bradford at UC Santa Barbara have done some good work assessing the impact of Uversity on transfer student populations. The WhatsApp messenger platform has crossed the one billion user threshold a mere seven months after launch and leads as the most active platform in Latin America, Europe, Brazil, Russia and India. Instagram shares social territory with Snapchat in terms of user engagement, daily users, and widespread usage. The introduction of advertising into both of these platforms has yet to negatively affect the user base; both remain popular among the traditional college recruit demographic.
- *Live video streaming*: Following the buzz created by the advent of Meerkat at the 2014 SxSW event and then the release of Periscope (owned by Twitter for iOS) in

March 2015, live video streaming is one of the newer kids on the block. Keyvon Beykpour and Aaron Wasserman were key developers of Periscope, and they had also begun the original iStanford mobile application before signing on to head up BlackBoard’s mobile division. Live video streaming has a lot of potential in enrollment management for sharing events in real time and expanding audiences. Higher education institutions can’t be physically present in every place their future students reside, but they can invite them to experience events and encourage their current students to share their school with the world. The possibilities with this technology are expansive; video streaming hasn’t yet been leveraged to its full potential. Enrollment management is apt to make much more extensive use of this tool—and in creative ways. Stay tuned.

- *Snapchat*: Editorial cartoonist Drew Sheneman has done some excellent work on the subject of technology, including one cartoon depicting Facebook advising the National Security Agency on how to gather information. The common stereotype of millennials being overly willing to share their personal information is juxtaposed against that same demographic flocking to apps such as Snapchat, with regard to which they feel a sense of trust and control over their privacy.

Venture capitalist Bill Gurley explained in a re-Tweet why Snapchat is a big deal. He linked to a Tweet from the FCC (@FCC) that said, “30 percent of college admissions officers look at applicants online... They loved your GPA, then they saw your Tweets...” This Tweet referenced research collected by Kaplan Test Prep via a telephone questionnaire. This is not to say that a review of social media activity is policy in admissions offices or that reviewers actually have time to conduct this type of research or that such research would necessarily yield accurate information. None of that matters as long as high school students think that it might be preferable to be careful now rather than to have regrets later.

Once teenagers concluded that the Internet was not a passing fad and that their online activity would last forever, they began to search for apps that would be more private. They found Snapchat and continue to flock there in droves.

In 2013 Snapchat turned down a \$3 billion buyout offer from Facebook (Yarrow 2013). (Facebook wanted to hedge

against the loss of photo sharing and user interaction data they would lose as users shifted their active and creative engagement from Facebook to Snapchat.) So far, Snapchat's refusal has proven to be a smart choice as its estimated valuation now resides in the \$10 to \$20 billion range.

Snapchat users are overwhelmingly a desirable demographic for student recruitment: 50 percent are between the ages of thirteen and seventeen years, and 81 percent are between the ages of thirteen and 24 years. More than 80 percent of all college students use Snapchat (Noel-Levitz 2014). Engagement levels are high, and users check the app often. An element of "fear of missing out" (FOMO) drives this behavior. On some figurative and literal levels, Snapchat attempts to replicate face-to-face communication. Users must be present and engaged, or they will miss a fleeting piece of communication that is shared. Content includes ephemeral photos and videos (though content resides on servers for up to 30 days), "Our Story" shared experiences, "Our Campus Story" (aggregate location-based curation), "Chat," and "Here" (real-time video chat).

Snapchat's "Our Campus Story" function was rolled out in October 2014 to Penn State, UCLA, the University of Southern California, and the University of Tennessee. (This may have been a calculated move to supplant the growing popularity of Yik Yak as a location-based institutional subconscious.) It was launched at the University of Oregon in January 2015 (prior to the college football national playoff championship game) and was quickly used to aggregate user input and curate the impending opening of a new recreation center, reflect on the New Year, and prepare for the upcoming football game—all in all great ways in which to showcase aspects of campus life in a free-form, crowd-sourced way.

Many other apps are worthy of exploration, particularly as they are segmented according to strength with specific demographics. For example, Wanelo (Want Need Love; socially curated shopping) has a younger, predominantly female membership.

MONITORING AND LISTENING

During an interview, Knowledge@Wharton asked Biz Stone, Twitter co-founder, "How do you institute change in a company?" Biz answered, "You change what you measure. You change the measurement of success" (Knowledge@Wharton 2014).

Institutions will spend the majority of their time creating their identities and brands and differentiating themselves from their competitors. But how will the effectiveness of these campaigns be measured? Monitoring and listening are the two key components. Both are data related but in powerful and subtly different ways. In the era of big data, it is easy to get lost in the "forest" created by an overwhelming amount of information. Not merely monitoring (collecting) data points but *listening* (connecting) allows institutions to see the forest. Effectively monitoring the results of social media campaigns and establishing markers by which to measure success (*e.g.*, positive mentions, views, conversions to applicants, etc.) are crucial. As per Dan Neely, CEO of Networked Insights, "Monitoring finds symptoms, listening finds causes" (Bonthous). Liz Gross (@lizgross144), a social media and market research strategist who has worked in higher education and who now works for Great Lakes Educational Loan Service, evaluated ten vendors in the social media monitoring and listening space. More than 100 companies serve this area with varying levels of cost, capabilities, depth, and expertise. Toward the free end are Hootsuite (Pro), TweetDeck (for monitoring Twitter), and Sprout Social; Google alerts and Google analytics are good for identifying mentions on the Internet but are not so effective for monitoring social media. More sophisticated tools can also cover channels such as Reddit, Facebook and blogs; among these are Radian6, Sysomos, Webtrends and Meltwater Buzz. Costs can range from \$500 to \$1,000 per month to more than \$50,000 per year. Upper-echelon tools can help define demographic data associated with social media and act as a social CRM (sCRM). Tools may help an institution ascertain who are college graduates, in what cities they reside, and other information that will help shape content and types of voice and persona to use in communications. If no budget exists to support these efforts, identify another office on campus that might use these tools, and see if an agreement can be made.

Listening can be *reactive* or *proactive*. There is no excuse for not utilizing tools that enable the gathering of social "intelligence" and that facilitate awareness of what is being said about an institution. Listening at least provides an opportunity to respond and address how one's institution is perceived in social media. People are talking whether or not institutions are listening, so at least be aware of what is

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happening in the surrounding environment. Social intelligence can help focus attention on conversations about an institution's programs or majors; those conversations can then be connected to the institution itself so that relationships can be built.

VIDEO

Use in-house talent when you can, and make people and places approachable and accessible. Feature prominent alumni or former students in videos; leverage those willing to donate their time and talent to help the institution to which they have an affinity.

The University of Nebraska Lincoln created a multi-channel social media campaign and site (perlsofknowledge.unl.edu) to promote its brand and to make its chancellor, Harvey Perlman, extremely accessible and approachable. The university engaged Evan (Ev) Williams (co-founder of Twitter) and alumnus Warren Buffet to participate in the second round of videos. (Check them out on the UNL website, or search for Chancellor Perlman on YouTube.) The Central Institute of Technology (Australia) connected with Internet comedy duo Henry and Aaron (Henry Inglis and Aaron McCann), who met while studying film and TV there. The admissions promo video they created has more than 3.4 million hits on YouTube. (It may be the most daring, envelope-pushing official admissions video you have ever seen. Trigger warning: the video contains some motion sickness, bleeped out profanity, beer spitting, and some unfortunate teleportation accidents.) Brigham Young University leveraged the popularity of Old Spice commercials to create the parody "New Spice/Study Like a Scholar" to highlight its Harold B. Lee Library (a university video library with 3.4 million YouTube hits).

Under the guidance of Jim Maraviglia, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's enrollment management team has effectively engaged students to quickly produce high-quality videos for internal and external marketing campaigns. Unlike code that is written or a website that lies fallow and unchanging when its creator departs, the story with digital assets can have a much happier ending with correctly structured licensing. Video and photographic digital assets can be used in perpetuity with little effort from current staff to maintain or deploy them.

More recently, drones equipped with video capabilities have been used to produce some stunning aerial footage

to help showcase campuses and demonstrate institutional innovations.

VIRAL VIDEO

Everyone wishes she could create viral videos. By their very nature, anything viral is almost impossible to plan. It's like scheduling spontaneity. You can increase your odds by piggybacking on other videos that have gone viral or that have high visibility in popular culture. Strike while the iron is hot.

Social media is a great way of leveraging resources in conjunction with whatever is trending. Two examples were produced at the University of Oregon: The first was conceived after the university's all-male a cappella group, "On The Rocks," created a video cover of Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance" (her video generated close to 9 million hits on YouTube). The Oregon admissions office drafted lyrics, engaged the group, and produced the original video "Call Me a Duck," which has garnered 859,000 hits.

For the institution that wants to go really big on its trending piggyback efforts, a parody of the biggest YouTube video in history was certainly the way to go. Korean pop artist Psy's "Gangnam Style" video has close to 2.4 billion hits. The "Oregon Duck Gangnam Style" parody hit the scene on the front edge of Psy's hit song. The video (filmed using an iPhone 4) received a silver medal from the National Association of Collegiate Marketing Administrators (NACMA) and has more than seven million hits. It didn't stop there though: it appeared on Psy's video review of his five favorite parodies of his own hit song. That video generated another four million hits. Again, you can't predict viral, but you can increase your chances by empowering talented in-house staff and students to go after the front edge of trending pop culture and explore the possibilities.

Note: Just because you *can* doesn't always mean you *should*. Everyone seemed to come out of the woodwork to create their own parody of "Harlem Shake." (See Harvey Perlman's video for a dry-witted take.)

PERSONALIZED VIDEO

In conjunction with Hobsons, the University of Oregon produced two personalized videos, "Migrate to UO" and "Flock to UO." Links to the videos are emailed to each prospective student; the emails also contain links to apply

to the university as well as personalized elements based on name, city, state, and zip code. For example, these elements can be used to determine which license plates are shown in the videos, to insert names in key areas, and even to indicate distances from home to the university. Many of the elements are subtle, and some occur at the same time so as to encourage multiple viewings to catch all of the references. The videos are an entertaining way for students to envision themselves becoming “ducks” at the University of Oregon. And of course they can also be shared with friends and family.

CRM (CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT)

Higher education is still on the front edge of what it hopes to accomplish with CRM. The University of Ottawa characterized their CRM implementations as being “five years into a ten-year implementation.” The student information system (SIS) at the University of Oregon has been in place for 26 years, and it is still in use. It’s an ever-growing process, and staff must always lean forward, continue to push the boundaries, and see what’s next.

Bejou (2015) has adapted Grunig’s (2002) relationship characteristics to identify the four phases of CRM: exploration, expansion, commitment, and continuation or dissolution. The “C word” in CRM—customer—is frequently met with disdain as an air of corporatization is associated with it. In higher education, “client” or “constituent” is often substituted for “customer.” The time of the “M” is over and should also be replaced. How about CRB, constituent relationship building? Perhaps creating, nurturing, facilitating, tending, or stewarding should be given priority. Administrators tend to be more energized and passionate when they are leading than when they are merely managing. Leaders want to create, build, and engage relationships, not simply manage tenuous connections based on being one of five to ten schools a prospective student identified during a stressful test-taking experience. Perhaps CEM—constituent engagement model—is the way to go. Semantics aside, at the vast majority of institutions that have deployed CRM, it has been used primarily on the recruitment side of enrollment management and has not pervaded the entire student life cycle. Implementing CRM properly takes time and resources. The goal is to maintain a life cycle, from the time a ten-year-old visits campus for a fourth-grade science fair to the time when

she is a potential alumna donor. Having a way in which to collect and maintain all of that information opens up new possibilities for an institution.

But too often, these systems are used as glorified “email blast” senders to targeted audiences and are not utilized in ways that truly expand an institution’s capabilities. John Baworowsky (2013) challenges some of higher education’s “business as usual” methods: “It is not a question of if but when there will be a major shift in the way we think about student recruitment. When will higher education move away from our old ideas of buying names, writing to students, adding respondents to our databases, and then sending paper letters, brochures, and e-mails to them?” (n.p.). Colleges and universities may not be ready to move fully in that direction, but its leaders need to be cognizant of new possibilities and shift their focus from saturation to relevancy. An email may be sent to 15,000 prospective students, but what is the point if none is engaged? So many channels now exist that call for a cohesive strategy, relevant content, monitoring, and listening. “Do Our Students Hear Us above the Noise?” (Collins 2014) addresses Monroe Community College’s approach to this issue. Attention is a finite resource of time—focused time—which must be recognized and respected. Youths have learned to tune out the noise. Before they are ten years old, children are quite aware of what an advertisement is and are adept at identifying and tuning out anyone trying to get them to buy or use a product. But if higher education can deliver the value people need, when they need it, and in the ways in which they want to receive it, then it will not be ignored. For current students this could include systems that allow opting in to receiving specific information, such as when their grades have been submitted, if a scheduled class has been cancelled or relocated for a day, or priority registration times. For recruitment, it could be identifying and anticipating the primary target audience’s needs and delivering relevant information or materials to them. Doubtless there are many others.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

Higher education cannot compete directly given the resources available to the likes of Google, Amazon, Target, Facebook, Walmart—some of the big industry players. A colleague recently purchased some charcoal composting filters on Amazon, and in checking his newsfeed on

Facebook just ten minutes later, he noticed that the sidebar advertisements were all geared toward charcoal filters and items related to composting. That's just one of many examples; the point is that higher education institutions as a rule do not have the systems, scale, or resources that big industry has. Nevertheless, some important components should be kept in mind.

Data often are described in several dimensions, each beginning with the letter “V.” Depending on one's school of thought, these may include volume, velocity, variety, veracity, visualization, and/or value. All of these present challenges, opportunities, and assignment of worth that can shift with changing priorities. Consider three that are encountered universally (some are expanding at an increasing rate):

- *Volume* (megabyte → gigabyte → terabyte → petabyte → exabyte → zettabyte → etc.)
- *Variety* (table level → databases → web, photos, audio, etc. → unstructured, video, social, mobile, etc.)
- *Velocity* (batch → periodic → near real time → real time) (Soubra 2012)

Higher education struggles with all of these—especially with leveraging data velocity in impactful ways. So many of data-dependent processes and initiatives are stuck in the batch and periodic stages. Institutions collectively have access to a lot of data, but those data are not often shared (if and when they are, they are in aggregate). The higher education spirit of cooperative competition kicks into high gear during the admissions part of the student life cycle. At that point, the data set on prospective students amounts to what any individual institution can acquire. Still, a school's student information system and other sources collect plenty of data. Large amounts may require the use of Hadoop, SAPA HANA, or some equivalent. Most institutions may be better equipped to tackle smaller data sets with a well-utilized business intelligence (BI) front end or a CRM system that enables pulling from disparate data sources and using that information for personalized, engaging interactions. Be careful to stay in the communication realm that is tactful and not creepy. Don't over-share or be overly familiar. Let people know that you care about what they are doing and about their aspirations and dreams, and show them the path to achieve those goals.

Consider this “data analyst story” involving Andrew Pole, then senior manager of guest analytics for Target (Duhigg 2012). Pole and his colleagues were able to identify approximately 25 products that could be used to generate a shopper “pregnancy prediction” score and predict a customer's due date.

About a year after Pole created his pregnancy-prediction model, a man walked into a Target outside Minneapolis and demanded to see the manager. He was clutching coupons that had been sent to his daughter, and he was angry, according to an employee who participated in the conversation.

“My daughter got this in the mail!” he said. “She's still in high school, and you're sending her coupons for baby clothes and cribs? Are you trying to encourage her to get pregnant?”

The manager didn't have any idea what the man was talking about. He looked at the mailer. Sure enough, it was addressed to the man's daughter and contained pictures of smiling infants and advertisements for maternity clothing and nursery furniture. The manager apologized. A few days later, he called again to apologize.

On the phone, though, the father was somewhat abashed. “I had a talk with my daughter,” he said. “It turns out there've been some activities in my house I haven't been completely aware of. She's due in August. I owe you an apology.”

Target responded by positioning the pregnancy-related advertisements and coupons alongside those for other household items and products, so that an ad for a lawn mower might appear alongside one for diapers. For as long as customers thought the company was not being too intrusive, the specifically designed advertisement packages worked well. Consider the speed and just-in-time printing and delivery of each advertisement/coupon packet such that each customer on a block doesn't receive the same booklet! Target's revenues increased from \$44 billion in 2002, when Pole was hired, to \$67 billion by 2010. Pole's final comment? “Just wait. We'll be sending you coupons for things you want before you even know you want them” (Duhigg 2012). The full power of these capabilities has not yet been fully brought to bear in the higher education recruitment market. Many companies are focused on solving this problem on smaller scales, but they lack the resources of

the major players in the corporate data space. This segment is ripe for change in the coming years, but it may be more evolutionary than revolutionary. Billions of dollars are spent each year in pursuit of effective recruitment; the stakes for success are high. Consequently, current models will need to be tweaked in response to proven results before widespread adoption will take place. Predictive and prescriptive analytics will also need to be aligned with institutional strategic goals. Consider the college that seeks to enroll a class of 3,000 students. If it could specifically identify, engage, and matriculate only the exact 3,000 students needed to create the class, would it? If the admissions funnel could be turned into a true pipeline, with 100 percent of applicants accepted, the institutional goal of reaching the top tier of selective schools in the next *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings would have to be reconsidered. The results would wreak havoc not only on the college's own structure but on an industry worth billions of dollars. It may seem farfetched, but this area has a lot of incentive and potential to disrupt—and the capabilities for doing so increase each year.

Many data tools are available; some may already be present at your institution. The real challenge is to find and task analysts with the curiosity, ability, and time and who truly understand your institution's information in order to find the "pearls" in its ocean of data. They can effectively translate data into knowledge that is used to make decisions, which in turn drives results producing actions. Target had all the data, but it took Andrew Pole and others to understand and focus those data toward effective business-altering results. Without the right analyst, any institution's data also may be misinterpreted. People are needed who understand the institution's data as well as the timing and cyclical nature of higher education. For example, at a school whose calendar is based on the quarter, a population of students with 200 credits may be cause for alarm that triggers an advising intervention to help the students get on the appropriate path toward graduation. Alternatively, it could simply be a matter of timing: perhaps the sample was taken between the times when grades were submitted and degrees were awarded. Many of the students may graduate in mere days whereas others may be seeking degrees in majors or programs that require greater numbers of credits to graduate than the baseline. Before rushing to provide solutions to a problem

that may not exist, be sure that the context of the data is fully understood.

Institutional administrators quickly become overwhelmed by data; often, the issue is not the need for more data but the generation of insights in response to their proper, creative analysis.

CAMPUS TOURS AND VISITS

Campus tours and visits are a strong indicator of interest and, often, commitment on the part of future students and their families. Families invest their time and treasure to visit colleges. Trust, commitment, and satisfaction are all at play during the campus visit. A college figuratively and literally needs to put its best foot forward during the campus tour. How can it use this brief time to provide prospective students and their families with the most relevant experience possible? The mashup of beacons/sensors, geofencing, GIS mapping data, CRM data, mobile app, and responsive digital signage can be utilized to deliver an augmented visit experience for those who choose to opt in. The University of South Wales (United Kingdom) has developed some of these capacities to supplement its open days (Shaw 2014). Among the possibilities are relevant information delivered to visitors as they pass academic buildings that house their majors of interest and digital signage that welcomes them or adapts to their shared interests if several visitors are within range. Imagine three visitors in proximity to a beacon-equipped digital screen backed by a system that recognizes that all of them have a common interest in track and field. Given that information, the screen could display information about upcoming track events and directions to the track and field venue. Simple yet critical questions like "Where is the nearest restroom?" could be answered based on visitors' location at any given time. The potential is vast, and the possibilities are significant. In a subway video advertisement, the model's hair "blew" in the breeze created by passing trains. Similarly, how could a college or university increase its experiential innovation and impact?

Think about adapting this to student orientation and registration events to create dynamic mobile tours. A dynamic self-guided tour could be created using registration data and the institution's mobile app. Students could be guided to visit class buildings, reducing first-day anxiety and sharing the experience with any guests who

may accompany them. All of these initiatives are geared toward increasing the relevance and the value of the campus visit experience.

What if prospects can't visit campus but want the next best thing? Virtual reality (VR) has made huge strides, and several campuses (*e.g.*, Yale, Penn State, Ohio State, Harvard, and others) are utilizing VR tours to showcase their campuses via mobile apps. Inexpensive Google Cardboard VR viewers can be sent to prospective students along with instructions on how to take the VR tour. Recruiters can also be deployed with an Oculus Rift or Samsung Gear VR headset to increase the impact of their visit and make it more memorable. The recruitment arms race continues. One campus offers a unique 3.7-mile running tour as a visit option (it is in TrackTown USA, after all). Imagine some UAV/drone video footage of a tour group in a great "video/photo op" location. Or picture a tour guide using the Lily of DJI Phantom drone, perhaps to film a portion of the tour and then to make that video available for sharing. Drones have the ability to lead, follow, or do a 360, based on distance parameters and the locations of the people controlling them. This is yet another tool that offers some interesting possibilities. Colleges and universities need to adapt to increasing external competition as well as to "internal" competition such as CampusSherpa.com (a type of Airbnb for college tours that already has more than 60 schools participating) (Moran 2015). It is increasingly critical to provide differentiating experiences and features during visits and tours.

MOBILE

Mobile applications (apps) and/or mobile web are expected capabilities. Google's recent moves to reward websites using responsive (mobile adaptable) web design (RWD) resulting in higher web page rankings on search results has made RWD a requirement and not an option. Colleges and universities that haven't moved their web properties in this direction need to do so sooner rather than later. Those that are standing still in terms of mobile responsiveness are being left behind.

Mobile is pervasive and ties in to the way constituents expect to interact with higher education and time shift to their lifestyles, not campus office hours. At this point in time, "mobile" just exists; how and what an institution produces and delivers can evolve, but there certainly is no

going back. Everything should be geared toward mobile. Only campus staff might have a full desktop computer on which to navigate content.

It is often the "mash-up" of available data with a killer concept that results in the most satisfying experiences. There is so much floating around right now that just awaits unique ideas to apply it in winning ways. Think of how the following might be used to establish location (*e.g.*, recreation center, point of sale, library, WiFi access points and events): user location via card swipes, NFC (near-field communication), RFID (radio frequency ID), Bluetooth and logins. Physical asset location stored in databased and GIS systems has allowed users to search for library books and other assets in order to produce a map to guide them to the exact shelf or location of the item they desire. Another is access to see which work stations in computer labs are free. Knowing whether free spots are available on that high-end journalism school station can be a lifesaver, keeping students from wasting their time trudging across campus unnecessarily. Recently, the University of Iowa launched a laundry app (m.uiowa.edu/home/students/laundry); being able to view which washers and dryers in every residence hall are in use and how much time remains until each one is available is valuable information to college students at residential campuses. The app is not a world changer, but it improves students' college experience and shows respect for students' time.

NEAR AND FAR HORIZON

The IoT (Internet of Things or Everything), sensors/beacons, smart devices—in short, anything that produces an active signal, can be passively accounted for by a sensor, or gleaned from a data source—can all be utilized. Google has announced a partnership with Carnegie Mellon University, Cornell, Stanford, and Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that would create a new, open platform for IoT by enabling Internet-connected sensors, buildings, and systems across campus and eventually to the surrounding city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Lumb 2015). Beyond determining whether someone opened a window (*i.e.*, pressure changes) or is making a new pot of coffee (*i.e.*, heat increase), it should be interesting to see where this takes the technology and its possible applications to higher education and enrollment management. Security and protection from hacking are difficult problems

to solve, and privacy will be key to user adoption. The “FERPA doctor” will have some interesting situations to contemplate. This is an area that has the potential to leap ahead, not just progress incrementally or iteratively.

New applications of UAVs and drones will continue to be identified. Beyond Amazon’s ambition to deliver products via drones, Facebook is striving to develop a drone that will create more Internet access in order to expand its market. Facebook’s Connectivity Lab has produced Aquila, an 880-pound solar-cell-powered drone with the wing span of a Boeing 737 that is designed to cruise between 60,000 and 90,000 feet for months at a time (Kelly 2015). Its mission is to deliver tertiary Internet access via laser at speeds of tens of gigabytes per second, providing hundreds of thousands of individuals per drone with access to broadband Internet. Google/Alphabet is also pushing forward with their own SkyBender 5G WiFi drone project. Deployment is said to be several years away but is something to watch nonetheless. How can higher education use drones in unique ways? Students at Delft University of Technology (The Netherlands) created a drone system that can rapidly deploy defibrillators on campus in case of emergency. Could a system be created that would allow preprogrammed drone routes to be guided remotely via the Internet by people who sign up for a drone-facilitated campus tour? Be sure you are following any campus drone rules and comply with any applicable FAA regulations. If you are illegally operating in the Netherlands make sure the Dutch police don’t take your drone out with an Eagle!

Higher education’s use of these technologies may depend on its ability to work with simplicity and constraint. Higher education’s lack of significant financial resources may force it to get creative, much as Twitter’s 140-character limit and Vine’s six-second looping video force users to distill value and capture attention quickly. When humans have little choice, they are notorious for innovating and identifying creative solutions.

CONCLUSION

Higher education has systems that collect a lot of data, but it’s not always clear where those data should be kept or how they should be compiled. Access to information should be quick so its relevance can be confirmed and so it can be extracted and used intelligently. It is akin to the “five Ws (and a how)”:

- Whom do you want to engage?
- What do you, or they, want or need to know?
- When is the right “just in time delivery” for information?
- Where is the information most useful or most relevant to the receiver?
- How do receivers want to interact (*e.g.*, social media, mobile, print, phone, email, SMS text, etc.)?
- Why should someone choose your institution, and does it advance your strategic goals?

Eventually, the goal is to get to the “outside edge”—*i.e.*, predictive and prescriptive analysis. The objective is a “concierge” model whereby needs can be anticipated before individuals know they have them and action can be taken to meet and exceed expectations, stated or not. Higher education isn’t really good at that yet, but it is an area with immense potential to create value.

Among colleges’ and universities’ goals are shaping incoming classes, improving their profiles, and increasing their quality. Many schools compete for the same valuable students (*i.e.*, those who are accomplished, engaged, diverse, and have high GPAs, high test scores, high ability, etc.). How does one institution gain a competitive edge? How does it create touch points so that prospective students and their families feel a level of engagement with one school that exceeds that at any other? Touch points permeate the student life cycle. Each interaction is critical and impactful; regardless of where in the life cycle it occurs, it may positively affect an individual’s life—and, by extension, the institution.

Deliver an experience that people care about. Provide staff with the data, analytics, technology, and communication tools that will improve their ability to create effective human touch points and to communicate the positive experiences and emotions that your institution creates and evokes. Give people a reason to love—not just like—your institution.

Use technology and communications to help people decide that your institution should be an integral part of their lives—a relationship they will cherish.

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Get Ahead of the Transfer Curve

BY SHELLEY J. FORTIN

Attracting capable, motivated, and diverse students is key to the success of every higher education institution. As the nation's need for more educated workers soars, a louder chorus of voices demands improved access and higher degree completion rates. It is clear that colleges need to find more innovative solutions and engage more students.

The good news is that interest in earning a college degree is growing across demographic groups. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that just over 60 percent of both black and white students enroll in postsecondary education soon after graduating from high school. College-going rates are now comparable among racial groups, but large gaps remain in the groups' graduation rates. The challenge is to facilitate the progress of students along the path between entering and completing college.

A solution is right in front of us, hidden in plain sight. There is a group of motivated, interested students who have expressed interest in earning a bachelor's degree. They have already proven themselves academically, and they represent all the glory of a diverse America. They are the 1.5 million students who enter community colleges each year. Most of these students don't identify community college as their end goal; in fact, more than 80 percent enter with the intention of eventually earning a bachelor's degree. But the reality is that only 25 percent

enroll at a four-year institution within five years of starting community college, and even fewer ever achieve their goal of earning a bachelor's degree (Shapiro *et al.* 2013).

REWARDS AND ROADBLOCKS

With more and more students making community college the starting point of their postsecondary education, there is potential in the pipeline; tapping into it promises great rewards. Transfer has long been integral to the community college mission, but navigating the path to the four-year degree continues to be a challenge.

There is no question about the potential effectiveness of the transfer process: students who transfer from a two- to a four-year institution tend to perform very well academically. According to the National Clearinghouse Student Research Center, 62 percent of transfer students go on to earn a bachelor's degree within six years (Shapiro *et al.* 2013). Transfer students have found success at all types of institutions, including the most elite universities. It is clear that good preparation can and does take place in the community college setting, but given the current structure, too many students fail to make the transition to a four-year institution.

Students fail to bridge the gap because of administrative and cultural obstacles. A common disappointment of

community college students is that many of the courses they take will not transfer to a university. A recent City University of New York study found that one in seven community college students loses 90 percent of her credits when she transfers to a four-year college; only four in seven are able to transfer 90 percent or more of the credits earned at community college to a four-year institution (Monaghan and Attewell 2014).

Many states have been proactive in developing and strengthening articulation agreements. This is an important step, but an obstacle that is often overlooked is environmental. The transition from community college to a four-year setting is more than one to higher-level course work; it is also a transition from one institutional culture to another.

Preparation for the cultural transition needs to begin early in transfer students' educational careers and should continue through their enrollment at four-year institutions. Some colleges and universities strive to ease the transition with transfer orientation courses and dedicated counselors. Such efforts are laudable, but for the majority of students, they come too late. Critical points of intervention lie much closer to the beginning of each student's higher education journey. A stronger effort to connect with aspiring transfer students before they finish community college would prove much more effective.

CHANGING TIMES

Economics, demographics, and national priorities demand a stronger connection between community college transfer programs and four-year institutions.

Minority groups continue to represent an increasing share of the U.S. population. The U.S. Census projects that this trend will continue and that white Americans will be in the minority by the year 2045. These demographic shifts could greatly affect education attainment in America. Among 25- to 29-year-olds, 41 percent of white Americans have earned bachelor's degrees, compared to 22 percent of African Americans and 15 percent of Hispanic Americans (NCES 2015).

Bachelor's degree attainment varies widely by race, but interestingly, the gap between the percentages of white and minority students who enter college soon after graduating from high school has narrowed significantly over the past two decades. The percentage of entering students is now

similar for both groups, though minority students remain much more likely to begin their postsecondary education at a community college.

According to the Georgetown Public Policy Institute (Carnevale and Strohl 2013), African American enrollment between 1995 and 2009 increased 44 percent at two-year colleges and only 7 percent at the top 468 four-year colleges and universities. Hispanic enrollment increased 48 percent at two-year colleges but only 10 percent at the top four-year institutions. White enrollment increased 72 percent at the top colleges and stayed nearly constant at two-year colleges. With the increases in minority student enrollment occurring primarily at the community college level, four-year institutions seeking to increase diversity have every reason to build stronger connections with two-year institutions.

The evidence cannot be ignored any longer: Nearly half of all students—and a disproportional percentage of minority students—are being educated at the nation's community colleges. Raising national education attainment levels will require addressing the pipeline issues that have hindered community college students from achieving their baccalaureate goals and increasing the four-year college graduation rates of minority students.

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

There will be many winners in this new framework, including universities, students, and communities.

Four-year institutions will benefit greatly from increased enrollment. Significant attrition occurs during students' first year of college: At private four-year institutions, an average of 25 percent of first-year students do not return for their second year. That percentage is even higher at public colleges (ACT 2014). Student attrition represents expensive losses. In the current era of dwindling state and local funding for higher education, even public institutions are more dependent on tuition dollars than on government aid.

Students still need to enroll in upper-level course work in their degree programs. One cost-effective solution is to enroll transfer students in junior- and senior-level courses. This would have the added benefit of diversifying academic discourse, which in turn would help prepare the nation's future leaders. And colleges themselves will become more accountable as additional students enroll and then graduate.

Students, too, will benefit from increased access to bachelor's degree programs. Paying more affordable tuition while enrolled at a community college for the first two years of postsecondary education will reduce the debt that burdens so many students today.

Counties, states, and regions will also benefit from increased access to postsecondary education and workforce development at reduced cost.

Even the United States as a whole has much to gain from improved transfer strategy. The White House and the Department of Education have set the goal that by 2020, the United States will again be the nation with the highest percentage of college-educated citizens in the world (a distinction it once held). Priorities must be realigned to reach this target; community colleges will play a pivotal role.

ALL IN CONTEXT

Four-year colleges will be more successful in enrolling transfer students as their admission counselors, faculty, and staff take more time to connect and engage with community college prospects. Specific strategies will vary by institution, but the following commitments are foundational to building stronger transfer programs.

First, community college students are more likely than four-year college students to be the first in their families to pursue higher education. First-generation college students sometimes are unaware of how college works. Too many college staff routinely use academic and regulatory language that students find confusing. First-generation college students can benefit from clear language and information. No less intelligent than their peers, they only lack the context of college-related experiences and information in their homes because their parents never enrolled. Too many of us take a "college-infused" home environment for granted.

Second, increasing tuition costs at four-year institutions have made initial enrollment at a community college a more attractive option. Over the past several decades, economic trends have resulted in universities' increasing tuition, which, in turn, has had the effect of limiting access. College tuition and fees have increased four times faster than the increase in the consumer price index over the past 30 years (Bloomberg 2012). Students and their families have not been able to meet college costs. In this

environment, in which advanced education remains a prerequisite for economic progress even as its costs skyrocket, community college is an increasingly viable route toward a bachelor's degree.

Third, the number of 18- to 19-year-olds peaked in 2010–11; the population is now moving into a period of modest decrease that is expected to continue through 2020 (WICHE 2012). Colleges already are competing for smaller numbers of students. One way to compensate for a shrinking freshman class is to focus more intentionally on familiarizing prospective transfer students with the four-year institution. More important, administrators should ensure that community college students' course work will meet university degree program requirements. Institutions that fail to build such bridges will risk falling behind other institutions.

Fourth, the Obama administration's initiative to make community college free has significant potential to affect enrollment at four-year universities. Oregon and Tennessee have already signed on to this initiative, and Congress has introduced legislation to support it. If students could complete their first two years of higher education without cost, they would limit their debt while retaining the opportunity to earn the same degree as if they had entered four-year institutions as freshmen. Four-year institutions would be well-advised to formalize their transfer agreements with community colleges and their students.

Finally, traditionally, U.S. higher education has embraced its role of preparing citizens to participate in the nation's economy and democracy. The demographics of the United States are changing rapidly, with a large increase in Latino students and a decreasing proportion of white students. Today, whites are far more likely to earn bachelor's degrees than are their counterparts from minority groups. But as the country becomes more diverse, higher education must facilitate the attainment of bachelor's degrees at comparable levels across population subgroups. In order to meet the demands for an educated citizenry and sustain national economic development, larger numbers of minorities will have to earn bachelor's degrees in the 21st century.

MOVING FORWARD

In this environment of greater diversity, increasing higher education costs, competition for new students, and a

pressing national need to educate more people, it is clear that we need to devote more attention to the critical role of two-year colleges.

With a history extending more than 100 years, community colleges experienced tremendous growth during the second half of the 20th century. Today, 7.4 million students—approximately 46 percent of all undergraduate students in the United States—are enrolled at 1,123 community colleges. These institutions have become leading providers of higher education.

It's time to improve our success in helping more students earn bachelor's degrees. As four-year institutions seek to increase their enrollment, fill classrooms, and meet the civic and social responsibilities of their missions, we need to more carefully consider community colleges—because *that's* where the students are.

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What We Learned: A Look Back at the Findings of the 2015 AACRAO Research Agenda

BY WENDY KILGORE

Thanks to the active and ongoing participation of our membership, 2015 was a productive year for AACRAO research. Among other insights, we learned about staffing for admissions and registrars, data quality practices, transcript and admissions practices, the career profile of a registrar, international student recruitment practices, and practices for tracking student identity preferences. These initiatives were designed to help meet our research goals:

- Contribute to a better understanding of the factors and conditions that impact higher education academic and enrollment services.
- Use the Research Advisor Board to engage the membership in determining the focus of the research.
- Develop new insights and information for our members to help them successfully lead their institutions in a continually evolving environment.
- Maintain current partnerships and develop new partnerships with other organizations and associations who share common interests with AACRAO.

We are fortunate to have a membership that is highly engaged in our research initiatives. Over the thirteen surveys conducted in the last year (eleven “60-Second Surveys” and two special topics surveys), an average of 818 institutions responded to the surveys. This average repre-

sents just one institutional response per survey. It excludes those surveys that were intended to collect responses from individual members. In that light, we captured the practices, policies, staffing models and opinions of 31 percent of our 2,600 member institutions. Similarly, because most of the responding institutions are U.S. institutions, we also captured a representative¹ sample of all U.S., Title IV eligible, degree granting institutions.²

Over the course of the year, a few trends in practice, policy and staffing overall became apparent. First and foremost, there is no “one size fits all” for any of the above. Variety and variance (*i.e.*, standard deviation) are the norm across and between institution, size, type, and control. Since we send the 60-Second Surveys to all active members, it is not wholly unexpected that the raw data often contain instances where more than one person per institution responds to the same survey. However, due to the topics in the 60-Second Surveys (basic practice, policy, etc.), I anticipated that I would be able to simply select one set of responses from all of an institution’s responses because I assumed that all would be the same. Unfortunately, the majority of the time the responses are not the same or even close to the same. This is often true

¹ Confidence level 95%, Margin of Error 5%.

² See <<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=84>>.

even when the respondents are from the same department. While some of the differences could be accounted for by different interpretations of the survey questions and/or separate colleges within a university functioning as separate units with similar responsibility but different practices, the occurrence rate is too pervasive across all topics to be wholly accounted for with these explanations. What this data appears to illuminate is perhaps a need for additional training, practice documentation, policy clarification or improved inter- and intra-office communication. However, this is only conjecture at this point based on anecdotal feedback from some institutions contacted for clarification. Perhaps these differences just represent what William Louis Stern found in his experiments where a chain of people told and retold a story, and by the end of the chain the story was not the same as when the first person told it. Policies and procedures are often shared in an informal way with new employees and with other departments, so perhaps the differences in understanding of the policies and procedures exist simply because of the context in which the persons responding to the survey learned about it in the first place. Further qualitative research would help us understand how and why these differences are reported and perhaps lead to ways in which AACRAO can be of assistance to its members in this regard.

There is enough data collected now to conduct some benchmarking across practices by institution size, type, control and to some degree region/location. A few institutions have asked for some of the data to be disaggregated to compare their institution to their peers. As the research continues to build a benchmarking portfolio, this function should grow.

Included here is a summary of the key findings for each 2015 survey.

60-SECOND SURVEY: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT PRACTICES—JANUARY 2015

This survey sought to gain an understanding of institutional international student recruiting practices including credential evaluation, international travel and the use of agents.

Key Findings

- Comprehensive institutions are much more likely to actively recruit international students than lower-division only institutions.
- More than half of those that actively recruit do so for both undergraduate and graduate students.
- Out-of-country travel is the norm for most international recruiters.
- One-third use agents to assist with recruiting.
- 38 percent report that international student credential evaluations are completed by internal staff.

60-SECOND SURVEY: DISTANCE EDUCATION PRACTICES—FEBRUARY 2015

For the purpose of this survey, respondents were provided with the following definitions:

- Online course—100 percent online course content with either synchronous or asynchronous learning. These courses may be self-paced or paced. They do not require any proctored course content.
- Hybrid/blended course—online courses that require a physical on-site presence for any reason, including proctored exams or other course content. These courses may be self-paced or paced.

Key Findings

- Almost nine out of ten offer distance education classes.
- In general, the larger the institution, the more likely it is to offer distance education and public institutions are slightly more likely to do so than other types.
- Most taught both hybrid courses and 100 percent online courses.
- Self-paced distance courses is the least used delivery method.
- Slightly more than half of undergraduate hybrid courses require proctored exams, and business related courses are more likely than other subject areas to require a proctored exam.
- Only 83 percent identify a course as a distance course in their schedule of classes.

60-SECOND SURVEY: TRACKING STUDENT IDENTITY PREFERENCES—MARCH 2015

This survey asked respondents to identify how, if at all, their institution enables students to indicate their identity preferences including preferred pronouns, preferred gender, and preferred name.

Key Findings

- Just 10 percent allow students to select their preferred pronoun.
- Almost half allow students to indicate their preferred gender identification, but this was most often limited to just female or male.
- About two-thirds track a student's preferred name.
- For purposes of reporting a student's preferred name, nearly three-quarters utilize the class roster (and/or LMS), while less than half use identification cards or diplomas.
- The registrar's office and application for admission are the most common mechanisms for a student to indicate his or her preferred name.

60-SECOND SURVEY: REGISTRAR'S OFFICE STAFFING—APRIL 2015

More than half of our member institutions responded to this survey. Given that there are many institutional permutations of how the registrar functions are staffed and distributed across institutions, this survey attempted to differentiate between a "traditional" registrar's office and offices that support additional functions. The following introduction was included to assist in the differentiation.

"This is a brief survey asking members to report on the number of staff associated with traditionally registrar related functions (e.g., student records, registration, class scheduling, etc.). We recognize that not all institutions have a stand-alone "Registrar's Office" so this survey attempts to capture the number of staff across the institution responsible for registrar related functions regardless of the name of the office. We are also aware that Canadian members and other member countries define the role of the Registrar's Office differently than most U.S. institutions. Where we know this difference exists, we will differentiate the responses in the report. For this survey, traditional registrar functions are defined in U.S. context, which includes student records, registration, class scheduling etc. but not typically bursar, financial aid, or admissions."

Key Findings

- The number of full-time staff varies widely across and between all institutional types, sizes and controls so it is difficult to compare "apples to apples" in this sample.

- Roughly half of all institutions reported some decentralization of registrar-related functionality.
- Included in the decentralized functions are: student schedule changes, performing graduation checks, determining course equivalencies and others.

2015 U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSCRIPT PRACTICES AND BEST PRACTICE OPTIONS—APRIL 2015

In April 2015, AACRAO released an updated version of the 2009 "Transcript Practices, Student ID Numbers, and Name Changes" survey. This was a two-part survey. In part A, respondents were queried about their institution's official transcript and related database records practices. In part B, respondents provided their personal opinions on best practice for official transcripts.

Key Findings

- With few exceptions, most practices remain virtually unchanged from the 2009 survey.
- One of the exceptions is the percentage of institutions reporting that they include the entire social security number on official transcripts. The practice declined from 26 percent to 13 percent.

60-SECOND SURVEY: PARTICIPATION, FREQUENCY AND TOPIC PREFERENCES—MAY 2015

The 60-Second Surveys were initiated in June of 2014. By May 2015, we wanted to touch base with the membership about these surveys both seeking new topics of interest and confirming that the current once a month frequency works well for most.

Key Findings

- Seven out of ten indicated they had responded to at least one other 60-Second Survey.
- More than half indicated that the current once a month frequency is appropriate and several others responded "as needed," "as often as necessary" and "weekly."
- A few of the topics of interest mined from the responses have already led to other 60-Second Surveys including "data quality practices," "course repeat practices," "AACRAO online professional development topics" and various admissions topics.

2015 U.S. REGISTRAR CAREER PROFILE—MAY 2015

Similar to the 2014 AACRAO chief enrollment management officer report,³ this report details the results of a first-of-its-kind survey conducted by AACRAO. The report attempts to build a foundation of understanding of the career profile and position responsibilities for collegiate registrars in the United States. It will serve as a benchmark for trends in this field as we complete future editions of the survey.

The survey consisted of five short sections with questions about the respondent's:

- Current position
- Career path
- Career aspirations
- Current portfolio of responsibilities and levels of involvement for each
- Basic demographic information

Key Findings

- We have concluded that a registrar in the United States likely has these characteristics:
 - ▶ female
 - ▶ identifies as white
 - ▶ is probably over 50 years old
 - ▶ spent most of her career in higher education
 - ▶ has a master's degree
 - ▶ has more than 20 years of experience in higher education
 - ▶ reports to the Vice President Academic Affairs/Provost
 - ▶ has 3.8 direct reports
 - ▶ has worked at more than one institution
 - ▶ has been in her current position less than five years
 - ▶ views communication as the most important skill for the position
 - ▶ is generally satisfied in her position
 - ▶ views a work-life balance as important factor in position retention
 - ▶ holds quite a complex job
- 38 percent indicated they intend to retire or seek another position in three years or less, and 5.9 percent are intent on making this change in one year or less.

³ See <www.aacrao.org/resources/resources-detail-view/chief-enrollment-management-officer-careerprofile-report>.

▶ Because the sample (n=703) is representative⁴ of all U.S. degree granting institutions (n=4,294),⁵ it is probable that there will be a high turnover in registrar positions in the near future.

- We can anticipate some 1,672 registrars will change their employment in three years or less and of those, 254 will do so in a year or less.

60-SECOND SURVEY: DATA QUALITY PRACTICES—JUNE 2015

The purpose of the June 2015 60-Second Survey was to gain a snapshot understanding of if and how institutions attempt to manage data quality. With the understanding that data quality practices (DQPs) may vary across departments within the same institution, this survey asked respondents to indicate their department.

Key Finding

- Three-quarters use some type of formal DQP.
- Graduate and/or professional institutions appear less likely than other institutional types to actively engage in DQP.
- Some type of internal quality/compliance audit was the most used technique, followed by exception reports while root cause analysis the least.
- Exception reports are the most effective of the techniques with 98 percent rating it either “very effective” or “somewhat effective”.
- Just about a third have at least one employee dedicated to data quality management.

60-SECOND SURVEY: ADMISSIONS PRACTICE SNAPSHOT—JULY 2015

The purpose of this was to gain a snapshot understanding of a handful of admission practices that were suggested as topics of interest by the membership. This is one of the first surveys where respondents were asked to indicate which student population they represented with the practices reported in the survey. They could take the survey twice, once to cover undergraduate practices and another for graduate practices. This differentiation was made solely by institutional type for other surveys. This approach enabled us to capture both undergraduate and graduate practices

⁴ Confidence level 95%, Margin of Error 5%.

⁵ See <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_csa.asp>.

at comprehensive institutions (*i.e.*, undergraduate and graduate/professional). This technique has been used when appropriate for all subsequent surveys.

Key Findings

- Less than half use a common admissions application (*e.g.*, the Common Application, Apply Texas, Ontario Universities' Application Centre, etc.).
- Private, proprietary institutions are less likely than other types to use a common application.
- Admission practice use varies widely both in the aggregate and when disaggregated by undergraduate and graduate/professional practices.
- Overall, the least common practice is to apply different admission criteria for wholly online programs as compared to hybrid or campus based programs.
- Most allow students to defer their enrollment period.
- Slightly more than half have a “holistic” admission process.
- Undergraduate practice is much more likely than graduate and/or professional practice to allow students to enroll in their first term with an undeclared/undecided major.
- Less than half of the participating institutions require an admission deposit.
- Private, not-for-profit institutions are more likely than any other type of institutional control to use a deposit.
- On the whole, just under half of institutions take less than a week to make an admission decision once the application is considered actionable.
- More than three quarters use enrollment projections to determine admission targets.

60-SECOND SURVEY: AACRAO MEMBER'S LEVEL OF INTEREST IN ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS—AUGUST 2015

The purpose of the August 2015 60-Second Survey was to survey our members on their level of interest in several proposed and under-development online professional development topics.

Key Findings

- Our members are most interested in:
 - ▶ staff development and performance improvement;
 - ▶ legal issues in the profession; and

- ▶ what technology can and cannot do for you.

60-SECOND SURVEY: COURSE REPEAT PRACTICES SEPTEMBER 2015

The survey was a snapshot of if and how institutions apply course repeat practices at the undergraduate and graduate level. The introduction acknowledged that institutions often grant exceptions to course repeat policies and practices and that this survey was not meant to capture all of the nuances to policy and practice; rather it was intended to “...capture the intent of an institution's policy and how that policy is applied in practice to most students.” As such, most of the questions only allowed yes/no answers. However, respondents were given the opportunity to provide further policy and practice details in an open-ended text answer.

Key Findings

- Undergraduate practices (UG)
 - ▶ Course repeat policies and practices vary widely and some are quite complex.
 - ▶ More than three-quarters of UG respondents indicated that their institutions do not limit the total number of credits that can be repeated.
 - ▶ The same percentage of institutions report that they do not limit the number of courses that can be repeated either.
 - ▶ It is more common for the “most recent grade earned” to apply to the student's record than for “highest grade earned.”
 - ▶ Less than half allow students to transfer a course from another institution for a course repeat.
 - ▶ Sixty-seven percent set a maximum grade earned on the original course as a threshold for whether a student is eligible to repeat a course for better grade.
- Graduate practices (GR)
 - ▶ Similar to UG practices, nearly three-quarters do not limit the number of credits a graduate student can repeat.
 - ▶ Graduate students are more likely than undergraduates to require permission in advance to repeat a course.
 - ▶ The most common grade earned threshold for repeating GR students is a B- or better as compared to a C or above for UG.

60-SECOND SURVEY: GED® HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY CREDENTIAL, POLICY, PRACTICE AND PERCEPTION OCTOBER 2015

This survey focused on the GED® High School Equivalency Credential (GED®) (Appendix A). AACRAO and the American Council on Education (ACE) partnered on this survey to better understand institutional policies, practices and perceptions of students who enter postsecondary education after having successfully completed the GED® test, thereby earning their states' high school diploma or equivalency credential. For more than 70 years, the GED® program has provided a second chance for adults who lack a high school diploma to pursue their educational and career goals. The GED® test is primarily an English-language U.S.-based exam, although Spanish-language and Canadian (available in English and French) versions are also offered. Within and outside the United States, the test is viewed as a value-added credential for individuals pursuing both postsecondary and career goals.

Key Findings

- GED High School Equivalency credentials are accepted by nearly all of the U.S. institutions responding to the survey.
 - For 2015, most institutions reported that GED credential holders made up less than five percent of their applicants, admits or enrollees, consistent with the often-cited⁶ reports that one in 20 students entering postsecondary schools holds a high school credential earned by passing the GED test.
 - Almost two-thirds reported being aware that the GED test changed in 2014, although most were not familiar with the specific changes. Respondents were most aware that the test is now “more rigorous and was normed on the performance of graduating high school seniors in 2013.”
 - Nearly all stated that the enrollment processes are the same for traditional high school graduates and GED® graduates.
- The majority indicated that their institution's general perception of and experience with GED graduates is that these students have demonstrated that they are equivalent to an applicant who earned a traditional high school diploma.

60-SECOND SURVEY: ADMISSIONS STAFFING AND RESPONSIBILITY NOVEMBER 2015

This survey focused on the size of admissions staff and their collective responsibilities.

- The number of reported full-time employees varies widely among institutions of similar size and type (*i.e.*, standard deviations are large relative to the averages).
- Admissions offices are more likely to have student employees than part-time staff.
- “Director of Admissions” is the most prevalent position title responsible for the daily operations of both undergraduate and graduate admissions staff.
- “Office of Admissions,” or a permutation thereof, is the most common office name for admissions services at both the undergraduate and graduate level.
- Over three-quarters of respondents indicated that manual document management is still a part of their admissions staff's responsibilities.
- As expected, more undergraduate staff make admissions decisions for domestic students than graduate staff.
- More than half of the responding undergraduate institutions process international student admissions in a different office from domestic students.
- There is no “one size fits most” staffing model for either undergraduate or graduate admissions.

About the Author

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AUTHORS NOTE: I'd like to thank all of the AACRAO members who make this research possible. If you have any research ideas or any questions about the reports highlighted here and on the AACRAO research website, please contact me at wendyk@aacrao.org.

⁶ National Center for Education Statistics report in 2002, *Condition of Education*, Indicator 35, Table 35-1, cites 5.2% of undergraduates having a “GED or other equivalency.”

Innovative Credentialing: Employers Weigh in on Co-Curricular Transcripts

BY RODNEY PARKS AND ALEXANDER TAYLOR

The higher education landscape has changed significantly over the past decade as advances in technology and the proliferation of data have rapidly reshaped the work of the registrar. Despite these innovations, many registrars steadfastly resist changing the academic transcript, arguing that it must reflect the highly structured curriculum that characterizes contemporary higher education. Many registrars struggle to maintain consistency in the face of faculty and student demands for a comprehensive credential that documents more accurately the full breadth and depth of a student's academic experience (Parks 2015).

Questions about the value and use of the academic transcript can help guide the inquiry into whether and how it should evolve. A key purpose of the information provided by the academic transcript is to assist employers in determining whether an applicant has the skills required to succeed in a specific position and contribute to the organization. Yet many employers would argue that the academic transcript is of little or no use in predicting whether a candidate has the knowledge and skills to succeed.

In reality, the academic transcript was created not as a document for employers but rather to evaluate candidates for admission to academia. A transcript created for the purpose of communicating skills to a potential employer doubtless would have provided more helpful information

than a list of often incomprehensible course prefixes, abbreviated course titles, indecipherable codes indicating course attributes, and grades by term (sometimes but not always incorporating a plus/minus system)—all recorded in ways that are specific to an individual institution rather than standardized across colleges and universities. As Pittinsky (2014) notes, “We take for granted the fact that transcripts make sense; we all expect to see a course title and number, a letter or number grade, in a sequence that is chronologically based. But transcripts are not actually standardized in any formal sense.”

Moreover, the academic transcript has never captured the broad scope of student learning that occurs in the course of completing a college degree. This deficiency has become a more significant concern as institutions confront increasing skepticism about the value of higher education. The media, the public, and some politicians have asked pointed questions about whether students are getting what they pay for; whether they're acquiring the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to be successful in their chosen careers; and how employers can be sure that recent graduates are prepared to enter a complex, multifaceted, increasingly ambiguous workplace—and world. The traditional academic transcript, however, is incapable of documenting these skills or of providing evidence of such

preparation. Given the capabilities in an era in which a vast amount of information is available, the time has come to utilize technological innovation to advance the academic transcript to the next level. In achieving its full potential, this document will communicate to employers the unique characteristics of individual students, including the depth and breadth of the skills and competencies they possess.

The evolution of academic credentials is already underway, with transcript innovations appearing at institutions across the country. Developments in co-curricular transcripts (CCTs), competency transcripts, experiential transcripts, and data-enabled electronic transcripts have laid a foundation for a new generation of electronic credentials that represent learning in a manner very different from that of conventional transcripts. For example, Northern Arizona University has begun to document student competencies linked to coursework; Furman University has created a CCT for non-student professionals working with students in the medical field; and the State University of New York at Geneseo has sought to document high-impact practices (*e.g.*, research, service learning, internships, etc.) on its transcripts. San Diego State University and Loma Linda University have created new CCTs, and Elon University has developed an experiential learning transcript that it pairs with the student's academic transcript to create a comprehensive, certified record in a single PDF document. As Tom Black, associate vice provost for student affairs and university registrar at Stanford University observes, "We've finally reached the tipping point whereby we can leverage technology to accomplish what the student needs not only while they are in the classroom learning, but beyond as well" (Black 2015).

In the context of this growing interest in extending the transcript, many institutions have begun turning to employers to better understand their needs, with the goal of developing an electronic academic credential that effectively communicates graduates' competencies. Employers, in response, have identified evidence of experiential learning as a key qualification in college graduates. In 2010, a survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) found a strong positive relationship between a student having a paid internship and an increased probability of being offered a full-time job prior to graduation (NACE 2011).

Internships represent just one means by which college students may acquire experience-based learning; others include global education, student employment, service learning, leadership roles, and many more. In recent years, many institutions have begun to view this type of learning as critical to the college experience and to recognize its positive impact on student retention; consequently, they have sought to expand the number of experiential learning opportunities available to students as well as to increase participation in these options (Moore 2013). "Ultimately, an employer needs to see the 'experiences' gained by a potential candidate and not just a random list of courses taken," said Oregon State University Chief Human Resources Officer David Blake (Kline 2014).

Despite this growing interest, research into what employers need from a college transcript remains in its infancy, with few empirical studies available. Nevertheless, college graduates seem well aware that the traditional academic transcript is insufficient. In 2015, Parchment surveyed 550 recent college graduates in an effort to understand their plans to use their credentials. Forty percent of respondents reported sharing information about academic and CCT accomplishments on LinkedIn, with 35 percent posting the same information on Facebook. Sixty percent reported that they were "excited" by the idea of displaying official or verified credentials on a digital or social media site, and 71 percent identified marketability to potential employers as the primary reason they wanted digital credentials.

There is an identified need for an improved credential that communicates effectively to prospective employers. While little empirical research has sought to identify what employers' needs are or how the academic transcript can be expanded/extended to effectively meet those needs, the current study seeks to better understand how certified experiences may influence the perceptions of potential employers. This study contributes to an area of research that has significant potential to benefit college graduates as well as employers.

METHODOLOGY

Elon University has been a leader in experiential learning for more than 20 years. Its well-developed, deep structural support systems document high-impact practices (*e.g.*, internships, service, research, global education, and

leadership) that include reflection and creation of an academic credential (Kuh 2008). These practices, embedded in the university's culture and curriculum, are the foundation of the four-year Elon experience. The Elon experiences transcript (CCT) was created and launched in 1994 and, until 2013, was only available in paper format from the Office of Student Life. As institutions moved into the age of electronic records, fewer students requested the paper credential. Thus, a partnership was born between student affairs and the university registrar, the goal having been to combine the electronic academic transcript and the hard copy CCT into a single, digital document so as to present a more comprehensive record of every Elon graduate's qualifications.

In summer 2013, Elon began offering students the choice to opt in to receive the CCT when ordering a regular transcript. In doing so, it became the first school in the nation to release both transcripts together. In fall 2013, Parchment modified Elon's transcript ordering system to allow students and alumni to opt in to order an electronic transcript file that combined the academic transcript and CCT in a single PDF. The merging of these documents was an overwhelming success. In the first year alone (the 2013–14 academic year), Elon released 727 CCTs—a 1,000 percent increase over the number ordered the previous year. Initial feedback from students was positive; only one employer called to request that information presented on the CCT be clarified.

To better understand what employers seek in a comprehensive academic credential and to gauge the impact of releasing the CCT with the academic transcript, Elon began sending a follow-up survey to every recipient of the combined transcripts in fall 2014. The survey contained qualitative and quantitative measures by which to gauge recipients' evaluation of the new document's usefulness. It asked recipients to respond to general questions about their perception of the CCT and how effectively its contents represented students.

More than 285 survey responses were received over an eight-month period (September 2014–April 2015). Of these, 146 were submitted by transcript recipients (*i.e.*, employers or higher education institutions), and 142 were submitted by Elon students or alumni who ordered them. Of the 146 employers and institutions, 95 identified themselves as employers, 29 as colleges and universities, 20

as primary schools, and two did not indicate a classification. The remaining respondents were a mix of current students and alumni from varying majors and disciplines. Employers who responded to the survey were also invited to participate in a qualitative interview about the combined transcripts. Seven interview respondents were chosen randomly from the 26 employers who indicated a willingness to be interviewed. In each fifteen to 30-minute phone interview, respondents were asked to describe their thoughts about receiving the CCT and to offer suggestions for improving the credential.

RESULTS

Open-ended survey responses were categorized into themes for quantitative analysis. For Likert-scaled survey items, frequencies were conducted to categorize responses into themes. The frequencies provided a general perception of the CCT among students and employers and higher education institutions. The data then were split into two groups—students and organizations—to examine similarities and differences between their respective perceptions. Cross-tabulations were used to indicate whether and where these groups' responses differed. The organizational data were divided further into two subgroups—employers and postsecondary institutions—and were cross-tabulated to determine whether employers and higher education institutions held differing views of the hiring and admissions processes. Finally, the sizes and the responses of all organizations were correlated to determine whether an institution's size influenced its response.

For the qualitative component, researchers used a grounded theory approach during the interview process: They interpreted the interviews to identify common themes and refine the questions for each so as to build upon and clarify emergent themes. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed to identify themes in participants' thoughts about the CCT.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Table 1 (on page 66) presents the ordinal questions asked in the survey and corresponding frequencies from all 288 respondents. Results indicate that 86 percent of employers and students reported that experiential transcripts paint a more favorable picture of a job applicant than do traditional academic transcripts. Respondents further indi-

Table 1.
Likert-Scaled Survey Items and Responses (n = 288)

	Unfavorably	Somewhat Unfavorably	Indifferent	Somewhat Favorably	Favorably
Experiential transcripts paint a different picture of applicants than an academic transcript.	2	4	36	124	122
Experiential transcripts cause me to view applicants more favorably than those who submit academic transcripts alone.	3	5	67	110	103
Including an experiential transcript with an academic transcript improves an applicant's chances of acceptance.	2	11	74	112	89
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
We require/request portfolios from applicants.	61	64	78	51	34
Experiential transcripts allow for an applicant's experiences to be more easily verified.	1	12	61	114	100
Information contained within the experiential transcript is used in making hiring/admissions decisions.	22	31	98	96	41
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Receiving more experiential transcripts from applicants would be more helpful for our hiring/admissions process.	5	20	73	118	72

cated that the enhanced transcript caused them to view the applicant/candidate more favorably (74 percent) and that sending the transcripts together improved the candidate's/applicant's chances of acceptance to or employment by the organization (70 percent). Additionally, 67 percent of respondents believed the information on a CCT might be used in hiring/admissions decisions. Some critics argue that the information on the CCT can also be found on a resumé, but the majority of respondents reported that the new credential added value.

Findings also indicate that a majority of respondents (74 percent) believed that the information provided by the CCT could often or always be verified. Unlike information reported on an individual's resumé, the institution

has already verified the information on the CCT. In contrast, employers must verify the information on a resumé by researching its accuracy and contacting references, both of which require a considerable investment of time and effort. Moreover, while an applicant may embellish information on his resumé, CCTs ensure a level of security that prevents them from being altered, thereby guaranteeing accuracy. The issuing institution certifies that CCTs are valid representations of students' experiences. This enables employers and higher education institutions to more accurately evaluate applicants' qualifications than by assessing academic transcripts alone. The more institutions that adopt CCTs, the more beneficial the credential will become as employers and institutions will be able to ac-

Table 2.
Cross-Tabulation Between Organizations and Students¹

	Unfavorably	Somewhat Unfavorably	Indifferent	Somewhat Favorably	Favorably
Experiential transcripts paint a different picture of applicants than do academic transcripts. ²					
<i>Organizations</i>	1	0	21	55	69
<i>Students</i>	1	4	15	69	53
Experiential transcripts cause me to view applicants more favorably than those who submit academic transcripts alone. ³					
<i>Organizations</i>	3	4	44	47	48
<i>Students</i>	0	1	23	63	55
Including an experiential transcript with an academic transcript improves an applicant's chances of acceptance. ³					
<i>Organizations</i>	2	8	49	48	39
<i>Students</i>	0	3	25	64	50
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Experiential transcripts allow for an applicant's experiences to be more easily verified.					
<i>Organizations</i>	1	7	26	61	51
<i>Students</i>	0	5	35	53	49
Information contained within the experiential transcript is used in the hiring/admissions process. ³					
<i>Organizations</i>	22	17	49	44	14
<i>Students</i>	0	14	49	52	27
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Receiving more experiential transcripts from applicants would be more helpful for our hiring/admissions process.					
<i>Organizations</i>	2	12	40	60	32
<i>Students</i>	3	8	33	58	40

¹ Organizations: n=146; Students: n=142

² Statistically significant at 90% confidence

³ Statistically significant at 99% confidence

curately compare applicants to one another on a broader variety of measures. Among all survey respondents, 66 percent reported that receiving more CCTs would facilitate hiring and admissions decisions.

Employer-Student Differences

Table 2 presents cross-tabulations between students and organizations. Data are compiled into two categories: responses from the employer-directed survey (n=146) and responses from the student-/alumni-directed survey (n=142). Students and organizations are distinguishable

on some issues, but both groups favor the benefits provided by the CCT. The perception of the CCT was statistically higher for students/alumni than for employers/institutions. Students responded more positively to questions about the CCT's appeal and the applicant's increased likelihood of employment or acceptance. These findings make sense intuitively, as students tend to believe that their out-of-class experiences (*e.g.*, study abroad, research, internships, service, and leadership) will help them get a job and succeed in the workforce. Similarly, colleges and universities often promote these opportunities as ways for

students to enhance their resumé and develop the skills employers seek. Thus, students/alumni believe the CCT represents them favorably in their quests for admissions/employment opportunities.

While students/alumni were most optimistic about the CCT, employers were also generally positive in their reported perceptions of the CCT. When asked whether the CCT describes an applicant differently from an academic transcript, organizations responded more positively than students. Although employers and organizations were more skeptical than students/alumni about whether this information could be used in hiring/admissions decisions, there is still strong evidence to show that employers favor use of the CCT. There is strong evidence as well to show that the CCT, provided as a supplement to the academic transcript, helps employers and students alike in the hiring/admissions process.

Employers and Institutions

Each employer or institution has specific motives and practices for selecting successful applicants, and these may vary widely. An applicant's assessed potential within a given selection process is based on myriad variables, which may include work experience, communication skills, education, and work ethic. Because so many variables may contribute to admissions or hiring decisions, Elon investigated whether employers and higher education institutions differed in their general perceptions of the CCT. Results indicated no distinction between higher education institutions' and businesses' perceptions of the CCT.

Also examined was whether a correlation existed between an organization's size and its perception of the CCT. One hypothesis was that larger institutions and employers that receive greater numbers of applications would be less impacted by the CCT because their process of filtering applicants would prevent the CCT from being reviewed until late in the admissions or hiring process. Institutions with more applicants would have less time to review each individual's credentials and evaluate their experiences in depth. Conversely, smaller institutions/employers would receive fewer applications and thus would have more time to review the details of each applicant's credentials.

To measure institutional response, the sum of the questions was calculated. This sum created an additive index

about the institution's overall perception of the CCT. The index was then correlated with the size of the institution (an institution could indicate how many CCTs it had received in the past twelve months) and used as an indirect measure of size. Larger organizations tended to receive more applications and, thus, increased chances of receiving CCTs. Findings for this correlation are presented below (Table 3, on page 69).

Results indicate a negative correlation between an institution's size and its overall perception of the CCT. Thus, it is statistically significant that the larger the institution/employer, the less impact the CCT has.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Qualitative interviews were conducted following the collection of quantitative surveys. Respondents were asked to participate in one phone interview in order to provide additional feedback on the CCT, including ways in which it could be improved. Twenty-six respondents provided their contact information; seven were randomly selected to participate in the interview. Participants were assigned pseudonyms during the transcription process to ensure confidentiality. Interviews took place at times convenient to the participants and ranged from fifteen to 30 minutes in duration. Interview questions addressed perceptions of the CCT, opinions about adding competencies to the transcript, and recommendations for improving the credential. Transcriptions were evaluated by the research team for common themes. Researchers used a grounded theory approach to categorize the themes. Three themes best represented the discussions: verification of experiences, diversity of responses to what companies seek in applicants, and the ability to communicate competencies to employers.

Verification of Experiences

The majority of respondents discussed the benefit of verifying an applicant's experiences via the CCT. All participants expressed their satisfaction with the CCT as an authentic record of students' school experiences. Employers often are burdened by having to verify experiences on an applicant's resumé and thus are inclined to be satisfied by a credential that certifies each experience in the same way in which academic coursework is certified. Employers often seek candidates who possess skills learned in co-curricular

Table 3.

Correlation Between Institution's Size and Overall Perception of CCT

		Additive Index	Co-Curricular Transcripts Received
Additive Index	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.185
	Sig (2-Tailed)		0.026
	N	145	145
Co-Curricular Transcripts Received	Pearson Correlation	-0.185	1
	Sig (2-Tailed)	0.026*	
	N	145	145

* Statistically significant at 95 percent confidence

experiences such as service, internships, and research, but some may be reluctant to believe all of the information on an applicant's resumé. Todd (a pseudonym), representing an employer, noted, "If I see something on a resumé that said I did volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity, what I can't really tell is if somebody just showed up and they are putting that on their resumé or whether they were actually committed and did a significant amount of work as a volunteer." While the CCT doesn't demonstrate depth in the experiences certified, the value of having the data certified by the institution as an academic experience improves its reliability.

John (a pseudonym), an Elon University alumnus who leveraged his CCT during the job application process, recounted his experience:

I had two internships on my resumé that I did while at Elon. The employer took them as legitimate internships where I did get experience, and they did call both of those places to verify that I was an intern there. I believe the transcript would [have been] beneficial to verify that I did that kind of thing.

Like John, respondents were supportive of the CCT because it lent credibility to the applicant and relieved the employer of having to verify experiences listed on the

resumé. Mary (a pseudonym), a nonaffiliated employer, noted, "I think there should be a way to verify that they did do it. If I actually put in the time in my service hours, I want to stand out compared to somebody who may have fudged it. I think it's good to have someone verify it."

Diverse Responses to What Companies Seek in Applicants

Each employer has varied needs and verifies student experiences in a number of ways. Whether their staff openings are entry level or executive level, employers seek applicants with knowledge and experience that will help the organization succeed. All respondents expressed interest in co-curricular experiences, but none favored any particular experience disproportionately more than any other. Respondents explained that in order to diversify their team, they had hired employees from different backgrounds, with different qualifications, and for varying levels of leadership. As Todd noted, "Hiring is not always about evaluating the experiences, but their ability to take the transcript and their life experiences and make an association between that and the job that they are intending to fill is critically important." Respondents spoke at length about employers' favoring experiences that perfectly "fit" specific skills they sought to fill. And even though key co-

curricular experiences are desired, John contended that “different types of experiences would be emphasized more by different employers; it’s not one size fits all.”

When asked to suggest ways in which the CCT could be improved, respondents agreed that the transcript should be concise—that brevity is key. Jack, also representing the employer group, said, “Keep it simple and easy to understand. We don’t have time to read through and interpret what each institution is trying to accomplish pedagogically. It’s just easier [if] we can skim it quickly.” Often, employers must read dozens of resumés in searching for one qualified candidate. Jack said, “Keep it accurate and brief when communicating your experiences.” Employers’ philosophy about credentials was the same as for resumés: entry-level candidates should limit each to one page. The transcript should provide enough detail to explain experience and connect to the competencies the employer seeks. In addition, it should strive to transcend the needs of multiple employers in multiple industries. To best represent student experiences, registrars must seek a balance between providing details about various experiences and being concise.

Communicating Competencies to Employers

During the interviews, employers referenced efforts to match the competencies they seek to higher education. Competencies—the mastery of valuable, substantive skills—have become a more common focus in postsecondary education classrooms. These competencies can be stated on resumés and transcripts to demonstrate an applicant’s qualifications. Emily (a pseudonym), an employer, said, “I think [competencies] would be quite beneficial for students coming out of college. Sometimes for these types of positions we are looking for people with specific skill sets...and if they have that skill set and they have gained it through a course that would be great to know about.” Thus, employers seek to connect the competencies students acquire during their course work to their own needs so those they hire can “hit the ground running” rather than having to wait to be trained.

Registrars have always been in the business of producing the credentials graduates need to transition to the workforce. Adding competencies may add value to graduates’ credentials and help them better communicate their qualifications to prospective employers. If an

applicant can document certain competencies, then employers can conserve valuable resources by not having to train the new hire. John, who represented a public accounting firm, believed that applicants who have taken a CPA prep course and demonstrated competencies in accounting have a smooth transition to employment. He said, “If the transcript listed the competencies needed to pass the CPA exam, it would be helpful.” For employers like John, communicating specific skills and competencies is crucial to gaining a holistic view of an applicant’s knowledge and experiences.

Finally, employers seek candidates who will be able to apply in their new positions what they have learned in the classroom and from co-curricular experiences such as internships, volunteer service, research and leadership. Todd said, “I’m looking for somebody who has the ability to communicate in their resumé what someone’s interested in and how their experiences are relevant to the job they’re applying for. Applicants must be able to demonstrate specific skills for specific industries to meet our expectations.”

CONCLUSION

Given increasing recognition of the importance of higher education ensuring that its graduates have the skills necessary to meet the changing dynamics of today’s workforce, it is more important than ever before for colleges to offer an academic credential that reflects the full range of a student’s four-year experience. Consider the growing impatience of today’s college graduate in finding and staying in a job. A recent Georgetown University study found that on average, millennials change jobs 6.3 times between the ages of eighteen and 25; only 10 percent of those surveyed considered their current job to be part of their career (Johnsey 2013). At the same time, almost all chief academic officers believe that their institutions are very or somewhat effective at providing a good undergraduate education, and more than half believe they are very effective at preparing students for the workplace (Jaschik 2015). Yet only 13 percent of employers agree that college graduates are well prepared for success in the workforce (Sidhu and Calderon 2014). While most people believe that college is important and valuable to the workforce, the only way Elon communicates that its students have acquired skills that will support their success in the workplace is to provide lists of courses they completed—lists that mean very

little to anyone outside of academe. In contrast to the transcript, the CCT appears to be a useful tool for employers in that it certifies experiences that complement classroom learning, comprehensively portraying applicants' qualifications and skills.

The current research indicates that CCTs provide valuable information for employers and admissions offices, helping organizations identify and verify students' co-curricular experiences. Research has shown that information on resumés often is exaggerated or embellished. Competition for jobs has become much more aggressive since the recession of 2008; one in six hiring managers spends 30 seconds or less reviewing any given resumé (Grasz 2008). The CCT benefits students and employers by presenting content that is verified by the university, ensuring that the student's reported experiences are accurate and valid. Overall, perceptions of the Elon CCT have been overwhelmingly positive. As more institutions build such credentials, more employers and graduate institutions will have access to a greater breadth and depth of information,

which in turn will aid their efforts to admit and employ qualified applicants.

Registrars confront a number of challenges as they work to extend and complement the traditional academic transcript. Research evinces no clear solution as to what employers are seeking. Some seek concise, verified information; others seek greater detail about students' various experiences. Variation exists even in the types of experiences employers seek. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents believed that the CCT alone or in combination with the academic transcript is a step in the right direction and that the new credential adds value.

Registrars confront numerous challenges as they navigate institutional culture, employer needs, and the lack of a standard process for creating a CCT. While professional organizations such as the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA), the Postsecondary Electronic Standards Council (PESC), and many others consider standards, research

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into creating a standard for employers has yet to be conducted. Higher education institutions and employers are not communicating or collaborating effectively with one another; they don't even agree on simple definitions, as for critical thinking (Busteed 2015). Perhaps it is time for registrars to partner with organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CupaHR) to leverage their expertise in building the next-generation academic credential. Leveraging national organizations to identify standards may be key to meeting the credential requirements of most employers.

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RODNEY PARKS, PH.D., is Registrar and Assistant Professor of Human Services for Elon University, where he has served for the past three years. He is a prolific author, appearing in multiple higher education publications annually, but is perhaps best known for his work in innovative credentialing. His work has gained national attention, and Elon University was recently selected as one of eight recipients of a \$1.3 million Lumina grant funding work to extend the transcript. Dr. Parks is also an active mentor for undergraduate student researchers, appearing in nineteen publications with his students over the past five years.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Parchment for providing a small grant to conduct this important research as AACRAO begins to make recommendations for expanding the academic record.

THE PROBLEM OF COLLEGE READINESS

TIERNEY, W. G., AND J. C. DUNCHEON, EDS. 2015.
ALBANY, NY: STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS. 222 PP.
Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt, Ph.D.

As the title suggests, *The Problem of College Readiness* is a collection of studies focused on issues related to college readiness. While the concept of college readiness may seem relatively straightforward, there is general disagreement among policy makers, law makers, researchers, and education reformers regarding what college readiness is and how to effectively measure it. For the sake of this volume, Duncheon defines college readiness as “the preparation required to enroll in college and persist to graduation without need for remediation” (p. 25). The author notes that student matriculation in higher education continues to remain stagnant in the United States due, in large part, to remediation; this is of particular concern for students who are first generation or low income as well as for students of color who are also disproportionally enrolled in remedial course work and who frequently have fewer financial resources than their college-ready peers.

Duncheon draws an important distinction between two key constructs: *postsecondary eligibility* and *college readiness*. The former describes a student’s ability to meet admission criteria for postsecondary education while

the latter describes a student’s ability to avoid remedial education and succeed in credit-bearing college courses. The author encourages readers to consider carefully how reform efforts can vary significantly based on these fundamentally different frames of reference.

In summarizing the literature on college readiness skills, Duncheon divides research studies into three broad categories: those focused on (1) cognitive academic factors (*i.e.*, content knowledge, cognitive skills); (2) non-cognitive academic factors (*i.e.*, mindsets, behaviors); and (3) college knowledge (*i.e.*, cultural and behavioral norms of higher education; relationship to self and others) (p. 8). The author states that one of the primary challenges in improving college readiness is the lack of consensus about these three categories, particularly among individuals responsible for helping students become college ready.

For example, an instructor may prioritize cognitive academic factors to the exclusion of non-cognitive and college factors. Alternatively, an instructor may provide varying levels of preparation in all three domains based on his or her personal understanding of college readiness. According to Duncheon, “College readiness is typically measured based on indicators of academic achievement at both the secondary and postsecondary levels” (p. 13); the author suggests that preparing students to be college ready

requires that they have a clear understanding of “both the academic and nonacademic [non-cognitive academic] facets of college” (p. 25).

HISTORY OF COLLEGE READINESS

Chapter author Almeida notes that the term “college readiness” did not enter the higher education lexicon until the mid-20th century, however, “the issue of how to prepare students for postsecondary studies has existed since the earliest colleges in the United States” (p. 46). That is to say, underprepared students have always enrolled in higher education.

While the concept of college readiness is not new, Almeida demonstrates how the definition and components of college readiness have changed over time in response to shifting societal needs and expectations. For example, access to postsecondary education has expanded in response to historical and legislative actions such as the Industrial Revolution, the Morrill Land Grant Act (1862), the GI Bill of Rights (1944), and the National Defense Education Act (1958), itself a response to the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957 (Best and Best 2014). Almeida notes that predictably, greater access to postsecondary education has expanded the challenges related to preparing students traditionally excluded from higher education (p. 49).

Similarly, legislative actions regarding segregation, residential patterns, and school choice as well as more recent race-neutral policies enacted by the Supreme Court have contributed to education inequality and, consequently, to unequal college preparation among students historically underrepresented in higher education. Almeida observes that African American and Latina/o students continue to be disproportionately represented in vocational tracks as compared to their white peers. In fact, the author reports that “Latina/o students are now the most segregated group by race, income, and language” (p. 56). This statement is consistent with the findings of Mettler (2014), who suggests that inequitable practices and policies have created a system of education in the United States that “has gone from facilitating upward mobility to exacerbating social inequality” (p. 5).

THE LEAST READY

Chapter author Rodriguez states that despite efforts to provide students from all backgrounds with greater

access to academic institutions, “Significant educational hurdles remain for many students—particularly those who are the least ready for postsecondary education” (p. 65). The author defines the “least ready” students as those who attend two-year institutions and are at risk of not transferring or graduating due to placement into the lowest remedial levels. Rodriguez asserts that the category *least ready* does not reflect student deficits but rather “inadequate or inequitable access to opportunities that develop college-ready competencies” (p. 66).

Consistent with findings reported by Duncheon, Rodriguez notes that the greatest obstacle that the least ready students face is not gaining admission to postsecondary education but rather becoming academically ready for it (p. 73). Further, the aspirations-attainment gap continues to widen as increasingly greater proportions of students aspire to attend college but fail to graduate once enrolled.

Rodriguez reports that the least ready students are twice as likely as the general student population to come from low-income backgrounds. Placement in remedial course work is especially problematic for these students as they must pay for remedial courses that are not credit bearing and thus do not count toward a degree. And because the majority of the least ready students attend college part time, many are ineligible for state or federal financial aid, resulting in an even greater financial burden on individuals already at risk of dropping out.

THE VALUE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Almeida contends that first-generation, low-income students lack not only the economic resources to succeed at the postsecondary level but also the social capital and/or the knowledge to understand higher education (*i.e.*, college knowledge). Because these students frequently do not have a strong college-going culture, they may not know what education options are available to them. They also may not be able to differentiate among college choices or fully understand either the availability of financial aid or the true costs of college attendance. Almeida states, “While low-income communities possess social capital in the form of information potential, the information is unlikely to pertain to college going” (p. 97). Therefore, it is imperative for students to build social capital among a network of individuals who can provide information that otherwise might not be readily available to them.

Among the individuals who might comprise an informed network of support for first-generation, low-income students are out-of-class support agents, including counselors, mentors, and older peers. College readiness skills involve more than just cognitive academic factors, so Almeida advocates for intentionally connecting first-generation, low-income students with individuals who have more familiarity with the college-going culture. This is one strategy schools can utilize to maximize student knowledge.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Because there are no national models of college readiness, the authors provide examples of cognitive and non-cognitive career readiness interventions that have been implemented in the three-tiered postsecondary education system in California. Institutions in this system include the University of California (research intensive), California State University (baccalaureate), and California Community College (two-year). The authors note that this system is neither the leader nor is California the only state to address the challenges associated with college readiness. Nevertheless, the California system provides a context for examining specific academic initiatives.

Early Assessment Program. Chapter author Garcia describes the Early Assessment Program (EAP) as an optional component of the California Standards Tests, which high school students complete during their junior year. The presumptive goal of the EAP is to provide an early indicator of underpreparedness. Garcia argues that “early information by itself...is insufficient to significantly reduce institutional remediation rates” (p. 116). Further, she notes that nearly half of students enrolled in remedial courses at public two-year institutions never complete the courses, let alone credit-bearing courses toward an associate degree or certificate or transfer to a four-year institution. Garcia concludes that “strengthening the potential impact [of an early assessment program] requires delivering meaningful academic interventions that address students’ academic shortcomings long before their last year in high school” (p. 132).

Early Start Program. The Early Start Program (ESP) requires admitted students who have not demonstrated college-ready proficiency in English and/or math to begin remediation during the summer prior to their first semester of college (p. 145). However, Duncheon suggests that remediation, especially in writing and literacy, frequently

frames the preparedness conversation from a deficit perspective and thereby stigmatizes underprepared students, who are mostly low income and students of color. From a pedagogical stance, the ESP discounts the fact that literacy is a process: it takes time for students to develop the requisite skills for proficiency. Opponents of the ESP describe it as “an attempted ‘quick fix’ or ‘inoculation approach’ that was misaligned with the needs of underrepresented writers” (p. 159).

Despite initial criticism of the ESP, Duncheon notes that designers of developmental education (*i.e.*, remedial education) and faculty members in California implemented this state mandate through either “reluctant compliance” in which they minimally met the requirements of the law or “local adaptations” in which they viewed the legislation as an opportunity to improve upon existing programs. Ultimately, Duncheon acknowledges that the ways in which faculty members and policy makers understand developmental education often differ; however, “the nuances and challenges of remediation cannot be fully understood without examining both points of view” (p. 167).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Scanning current reform efforts in higher education, Rodriguez suggests that policies designed to target low college completion rates may, in fact, have a detrimental effect on students who are the least prepared for college. For example, student eligibility for Pell Grant funding has been reduced from nine years (18 semesters) to six years (12 semesters) in an effort to accelerate college completion rates. But as Rodriguez notes, students in remedial education require a longer—not a shorter—period of time to complete courses that do not count toward a degree.

The author reports, “An estimated 80 percent of Pell Grant recipients are first-generation college students” (p. 183). Nearly half of African American undergraduates and approximately 40 percent of Latina/o undergraduates depend on Pell Grants to attend college. Reducing Pell Grant funding significantly reduces the likelihood that underrepresented students enrolled in remedial coursework will transfer or graduate before their financial assistance runs out.

Similarly, policies that prioritize degree completion over access may give postsecondary schools an incentive to become more selective in their admission process.

Citing Kantrowitz (2012), the author notes, “One of the easiest ways to increase graduation rates is to exclude high-risk students” (p. 1). To best serve the needs of the least ready students, Rodriguez advocates for institutions to strike a careful balance between access and completion; otherwise, the “college completion agenda” sacrifices access by vulnerable populations “without necessarily improving students’ postsecondary outcomes” (p. 182).

LOOKING AHEAD

Tierney contends that issues related to college readiness cannot be resolved by any single initiative or intervention: “No one is going to invent a tool that will enable everyone to be college ready” (p. 206). There is no “magic bullet” for college readiness. Rather, a number of conditions must be addressed:

- Better academic alignment between secondary and postsecondary institutions;
- More rigorous high school curricula;
- Transparency regarding the skills and knowledge needed for postsecondary success;
- More college preparation efforts across schools and classrooms; and
- Increased concern for education equity among students traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

Tierney also recommends that we pay greater attention to the career readiness needs of the 40 percent of high school students who do not plan to pursue postsecondary education. Tierney writes, “We need to take into account what is meant by career readiness and clarify who is responsible for making various decisions and carrying them out” (p. 209).

SUMMARY

The Problem of College Readiness is a well-written and extremely thought-provoking text regarding the challenges associated with preparing first-generation and low-income students as well as those historically underrepresented in higher education to be college ready. The authors provide extensive reviews of the literature in each chapter, and several chapters feature rigorous and original research conducted specifically to support the work as a whole. Despite the volume’s multiple authors, its voice is cohesive and unified.

Tierney and Duncheon acknowledge that policies that benefit some may hurt others. They conclude with a persuasive call for social justice in a system that historically has favored the college elite; their call is bolstered by the authors’ own commitment to reform, as evidenced by their written declaration that all royalties from *The Problem with College Readiness* will be donated for financial aid for low-income youths to attend a postsecondary institution (ix). Despite the challenges of college readiness, Tierney concludes that equipping the least prepared students with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve success in college is the only way to ensure that *all* students can reach their full potential “in a way that speaks to the essential ideas of what the country has aspired to become since its founding” (p. 210).

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REMAKING COLLEGE: THE ECOLOGY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

KIRST, M. W., AND M. L. STEVENS. 2015. STANFORD, CA: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. 323 PP.
Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt, Ph.D.

In *Remaking College*, editors Kirst and Stevens and contributing authors discuss the under-researched and often maligned category of “broad-access schools,” which they define as community colleges, comprehensive public universities, and for-profit institutions. Given that the majority of college students no longer reflect the “traditional” college student demographic, Stevens contends that we as a society need to rethink and redefine the concepts that characterized higher education in the 20th century—for example, full-time enrollment,

residential campuses, pre-marriage/families, and more. Stevens states, “There is a profound disconnect between what continues to be called an ideal college experience and the more complicated ways in which most people experience college and early adulthood” (p. 11). Kirst, Stevens, and contributing authors’ use of an ecological model to frame *Remaking College* enables them to challenge outdated assumptions of higher education; to identify aspects of “the higher education ecosystem” that they believe are worth preserving as well as those that should be abandoned; and to explore new components that should be seeded and encouraged (p. 15).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Contributing author Scott notes that from a historical perspective, higher education in the United States has evolved to meet the changing circumstances and societal expectations of an educated citizenry. Scott briefly describes the types of institutions that currently exist—*e.g.*, baccalaureate, research, community colleges—and suggests that the longer institutions persist, the more similar they become to their “competitors.”

These similarities are due, in large part, to three types of influences: regulatory pressure from oversight agencies, normative pressures from professional and administrative associations, and memetic pressures that encourage and promote comparisons and benchmarking. Scott contends that the stability and resilience of higher education structures reside in widely shared societal beliefs regarding what “real colleges are, do, and look like” (p. 26).

Yet even in “mature industries” such as higher education, disruptive forces constantly challenge the status quo. For example, the emergence of powerful technologies has made the physical and symbolic structures of higher education less critical. More than ever before, students can customize their own programs of study outside of the existing education system through online modules, massive open online courses (MOOCs), certifications, and other learning opportunities.

Nevertheless, questions about how to evaluate student performance and the quality of course offerings within these new platforms remain. In addition, education entrepreneurs have yet to identify a consistent mechanism in lieu of traditional “credit hours” by which to “credential” learning. Because innovation is occurring in

the midst of an existing and mature environment, Scott predicts a synthesis of old and new educational structures: “New practices are shaped and constrained by existing frameworks that, rather than being displaced by them, are combined or coexist alongside them” (p. 38).

IMPLICATIONS OF TECHNOLOGY

Building upon this notion of disruptive forces, contributing author Kamenetz identifies ways in which “digital technology, carefully designed, can address the prime needs of the nontraditional student and thus redress the significant social and economic problem of equitable access to higher education in the United States” (p. 60). Specifically, Kamenetz depicts five broad areas of concern that can be positively affected by technology in order to benefit students: convenience, cost, customization, completion, and connection.

Innovations like MOOCs, for example, can provide an infinite number of asynchronous courses, thereby increasing convenience and decreasing costs. With assistance from advisors and mentors, students can customize their own curricula, complete coursework through self-paced modules, and connect with other students in small work groups beyond the classroom. In contrast to Losh’s (2014) critique of MOOCs as “command-and-control” course management systems that promote efficiency over learning, Kamenetz and others suggest that MOOCs and other adaptive learning platforms will have the single greatest positive impact on higher education in the 21st century (Levine and Dean 2012).

FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS

One of the most contentious issues in U.S. higher education is the role of for-profit institutions. Despite outspoken criticisms of for-profit institutions as businesses solely interested in profits (AAUP 2011, Mettler 2014), contributing authors Fain and Lederman suggest that online providers are likely to expand their share of the higher education enterprise. According to the authors, the growth of proprietary schools (for-profit institutions) has ebbed and flowed over the past 40 years in response to market conditions and federal regulations. They observe that as federal oversight intensifies, the market will continue to cull the weakest players. Consequently, online offerings will improve and increasingly resemble the rest of higher education in form and quality.

In fact, Fain and Lederman contend that many nonprofit online programs have benefited from the technologies and support strategies originally developed by for-profit institutions. The authors state that “competency-based education owes much of its creation to ground broken by for profits, which pioneered a focus on students covering standardized learning objectives” (p.69). Finally, for-profit institutions have gained newfound acceptance through the public-private MOOC partnerships that elite institutions and for-profit companies have forged.

Fain and Lederman conclude that even critics of for-profit education have come to recognize that the industry is not monolithic; there are “bad actors” as well as better performing for-profit entities (p.73). Fain and Lederman predict that the next phase in the evolution of for-profit institutions will involve four actions: (a) cutting/maintaining costs, (b) improving selectivity, (c) developing stronger ties to employers, and (d) shaping curricula around workplace-determined competencies (p.79). Researchers caution, however, that increasing selectivity limits the opportunities of the very students broad-access institutions are intended to serve (Deil-Amen 2015, Kantrowitz 2012).

REDEFINING ADULTHOOD

Traditionally, going to college represented an important transition from adolescence to adulthood. Yet contributing author Settersten states that this cultural assumption must be reconsidered. Rather than moving students toward “independence,” the author suggests that it is more important to move them toward “interdependence.” That is, to ensure success, “young people need to build wide and strong webs of relationships with other adults, supportive ties that can be activated as needed to access opportunities and resources” (p.123). This may be an especially challenging proposition for individuals of lower economic status, many of whom attend broad-access institutions.

According to Settersten, the first step in creating institutions and structures that are responsive to contemporary social and economic realities is to recognize that the vast majority of college-bound students do not conform to the stereotype of their 1950s counterparts. Social, economic, and demographic forces have significantly influenced the ways in which individuals make decisions about college, marriage, and family, as well as about other significant life events that differ from those of previous genera-

tions. Therefore, “Attempts to remake higher education must both respond to the kinds of people who are moving through there and somehow capitalize on (and not penalize people for) the constraints they face” (p.132).

HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY AND ASSESSMENT

Doyle and Kirst note that policy changes in higher education have focused largely on issues related to access and increases in the size of postsecondary systems, whereas K–12 education policies focus on the ways in which systems operate. Consistent with the findings of Dougherty and Natow (2015), the authors suggest that increasingly, assessment in higher education will be driven by outcome measures rather than by the input measures that currently guide accreditation standards.

Further, Doyle and Kirst predict that broad-access institutions will progressively become a more integral part of state networks of higher education, with campuses “sharing responsibility for the creation of coursework and each campus providing learning supports, peer groups, and other interventions designed to improve student success” (p.209). They note, however, that this level of change would require higher education and its support systems (*e.g.*, financial aid) to fundamentally change the ways in which they view themselves.

Regardless of the type of reform that occurs in higher education, contributing authors Arum and Roska affirm that educators at broad-access and elite institutions alike would do better to work proactively to support the internal use of assessments than to wait passively for external measures to be imposed (Gaston 2014). Further, the authors describe how broad-access institutions can be disadvantaged disproportionately by standardized systems of evaluation that fail to account for the specific characteristics of the students they serve. The authors therefore call for more equitable ways by which to measure college quality—for example, by assessing student skills and competencies. This approach has multiple advantages: more timely feedback, outcomes that colleges can control, and a format that can self-adjust (in part) for individual differences.

SUMMARY

Remaking College is a frank and honest discussion about the challenges many students face in pursuing a degree and simultaneously attending to other life commitments.

The missions of broad-access institutions speak directly to the reality that “postsecondary institutions must serve the students they have, not those they wish they had” (Boylan 2009, p. 20).

Remaking College is a compelling and thought-provoking collection of essays. The panel of contributing authors is commendable; however, the editors fall short in their attempt to supply a cohesive narrative. Each chapter reads like a stand-alone piece that, for the most part, has little to do with preceding or subsequent chapters. Further, while some of the authors connect the content of their chapter directly to the topic of broad-access institutions, others consider overall trends in higher education and extrapolate meaning to broad-access education.

One chapter that seemed especially out of place pertained to classifying organizational forms. Contributing authors Ruef and Nag provide a persuasive argument that the Carnegie classification system is limited in its ability to differentiate among an increasingly diverse set of institutions. The authors introduce a new, empirically based approach to classifying institutions—a strategy that categorizes structures and pedagogies and allows institutions to have partial memberships in a number of different categories. Despite its relevance to the typology of broad-access institutions, this chapter is sandwiched between discussions of institutional structures and the changing nature of college students; better placement might have increased attention to this important yet challenging topic.

Similarly, Deil-Amen presents a captivating discussion regarding the distribution of college students across institutional types and highlights the marginalization of student experiences for individuals who do not attend four-year, residential higher education institutions. According to Deil-Amen, studies that present only one sector of U.S. higher education significantly diminish the experiences and circumstances of the collective majority.

This critical observation is presented at the book’s midpoint. A strong argument could be made for moving it to the book’s beginning, since students who attend broad-access institutions often are those most affected by the changing nature of higher education in the United States. Deil-Amen concludes, “Discussion of diversity and equity needs to be broadened to address who has access to what institutions and resources, and how elite institutions and

their students benefit from this structured inequality” (p. 139).

Remaking College seems less about “remaking” higher education than about developing a more comprehensive understanding of what constitutes higher education in the modern era. Contributing authors Klasik, Proctor, and Baker suggest that the view of broad-access institutions in the United States would be enhanced by more rigorous evaluation and scholarship. The authors conclude, “Ours is perhaps the most varied and flexible academic ecology the world has ever known. Understanding its dynamics is essential to preserve its vitality” (p. 271).

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REDESIGNING AMERICA’S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

BAILEY, T. R., S. S. JAGGARS, AND D. JENKINS. 2015. CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS. 286 PP.

Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt, Ph.D.

Community colleges account for a significant proportion of higher education institutions in the United States. They serve more than 10 million students per year, many

of them first-generation college students or from minority or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. According to Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins, community colleges have played an integral role in improving education equity, developing students' skills and talents, and helping students achieve their academic and career aspirations.

Even though community colleges have helped increase access to higher education, the authors contend that there is a disconnect between “maximizing access and realizing course success” (p. 2): there has been little improvement in community college students' graduation and transfer rates over the past half century. Currently, fewer than four in ten community college students complete any type of degree or certificate program within six years of first enrolling (p. 1).

The authors suggest that previous reform efforts met with limited success because they were based on the design framework of community colleges from the 1960s and 1970s. Previous reform efforts sought to strengthen rather than challenge the prevailing model. Real change, they argue, requires fundamental redesign. Bailey *et al.*, propose a shift away from the “cafeteria” model, in which students choose from an expansive menu of program and course offerings, to a “guided pathways approach,” in which community colleges offer a clear and coherent pathway that leads either to the successful transfer of credits to a four-year college or university or to career advancement (p. 15, 22).

Bailey and colleagues state, “Confusing pathways can make it difficult for students to make good decisions” (p. 26). They contend that in the cafeteria model, community colleges offer too many options with little or no guidance—with the result that many students make poor decisions. Consistent with the findings of Cox (2009), Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins note that students frequently make decisions based on short-term outcomes rather than long-term goals. In addition, many students may not be fully aware of their own needs or preferences or may delay making decisions until no good alternatives are available.

Bailey and colleagues recommend that community colleges begin offering a narrower set of program options with prescribed courses and course sequences, coherent learning outcomes, and clearly articulated transfer agreements with four-year institutions. Recognizing that the

guided pathways plan may seem overly authoritarian or limiting from the viewpoint of student choice, the authors call for an “active choice” approach in which students choose a pathway from a limited number of clearly defined curricular options and have the ability to opt out or change pathways later as they wish.

SUPPORT SERVICES

In addition to aligning curricular goals with learning outcomes, the authors suggest that the guided pathways approach can provide “a framework for redesigning other key college functions to support student learning and success” (p. 51). For example, academic advising services can build upon and reinforce the guided pathways students choose. Through a combination of in-person advising and e-advising resources, community colleges should be able to accomplish the following three tasks: (a) track student progress through program milestones, (b) provide frequent feedback to students, and (c) intervene with individual students when they get off track (p. 53). The authors suggest that this grouping of high-tech (*e.g.*, e-advising) and high-touch (in-person advising) tools as well as streamlined program offerings could empower students to navigate their chosen academic pathways successfully.

Similarly, Bailey and colleagues note that student success courses, such as UNIV101 or First-Year Experience, often are used to help students transition successfully to the college environment. These programs often fail, however, because they exist in isolation, are disconnected from students' academic programs of study, and/or cover too many topics at a superficial level without teaching students how to apply knowledge in the classroom. The authors contend that student success courses would be more effective if course content were narrowed and success courses were more closely integrated with academic programs. The authors suggest involving faculty in the development of student success courses; housing success courses in academic departments; and providing faculty members with more specific information about the goals, content, and intended outcomes of these skills-based courses.

INSTRUCTION

The authors contend that the structural changes of the guided pathways model must be accompanied by instructional changes. In the cafeteria model, courses

are disconnected from one another, and the processes of faculty hiring, professional development, and curriculum design are haphazard and insular. Conversely, the guided pathways approach promotes coordinated, collaborative, and strategic approaches to instruction.

Similar to observations by Cox (2009), Bailey and colleagues observe that cafeteria-style colleges rely heavily on *knowledge transmission* through lectures rather than on *learning facilitation* in which faculty members engage students in discussions, writing assignments, and projects that emphasize critical thinking. Further, students often lack the metacognitive skills required to recognize their need for additional assistance because they were only expected to use procedural learning and rote memorization in high school.

According to the authors, this apparent separation of academic content from skills-based learning results in students' failure to develop the capacities needed to work harder and persist longer at academic tasks (p. 97). Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins state:

Although research suggests that high-quality and well-implemented academic support services can help promote student success, many students in a cafeteria college remain unaware that these services exist, most do not use them, and those most in need tend to be the least likely to take advantage of them (p. 93).

To move toward the guided pathways approach, Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins encourage college personnel to convene faculty and student service professionals to redesign curricula based on learning outcomes and expectations of course sequences. As collaborators, student services professionals may provide a nuanced perspective of students' challenges and experiences that complements faculty members' content expertise. Finally, the authors advocate for peer-based faculty development structures that promote collaborative inquiry as well as the appropriate use of instructional technology tools to enhance rather than replace classroom instruction (Losh 2014).

SUPPORTING UNPREPARED STUDENTS

Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins criticize the use of standardized testing as a means of assessing the college readiness of entering community college students. Often, even students who do *not* place into developmental courses

struggle in introductory courses. As an alternative, the authors describe reform efforts that engage *all* students in challenging college-level material that counts toward their academic disciplines and that may serve to enhance their skills, knowledge, and habits of mind so they can be successful in college.

Unlike the current developmental education system that tends to “screen students out” of mainstream courses, Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins describe a system that helps college personnel integrate into the student experience the curricular coursework and extracurricular supports that are necessary to advance students along their academic pathways more effectively. The authors identify a number of approaches that college personnel have used to accomplish this goal, including customized placement testing aligned with program goals; tailored developmental courses that address specific program expectations; and accelerated models of developmental education that either combine courses or supplement introductory courses with skills-based requirements.

With regard to developmental education, Bailey and colleagues promote a “high expectations–high supports” methodology that is consistent with learning facilitation as opposed to the “skill and drill” approach used in knowledge transmission. They also introduce the concept of “productive persistence,” which emphasizes the values and rewards to students of persisting through difficult problems. This framework of learning communicates to students that academic abilities are not preset (fixed mindset) but instead are malleable (growth mindset) (p. 138). These observations are consistent with those of Samuels (2013), who states, “The best way to improve educational quality is not to make students take standardized tests; rather, we should be making sure that the teachers are teaching in an effective manner” (p. 124).

DEVELOPING BUY-IN

The authors readily acknowledge that developing and sustaining a guided pathways approach requires buy-in from faculty and staff and a willingness to engage in inquiry, reflection, and ongoing improvement efforts—traits typically lacking in the cafeteria model. They identify two conditions that must exist if faculty and staff are to endorse a guided pathways model: relational trust and commitment to student success. According to Bailey,

Jaggars, and Jenkins, “Successful collaborative efforts do not occur because leaders change hearts and minds, but rather because they clarify and emphasize how these efforts will promote individuals’ preexisting values” (p. 153)—values such as learning-centered teaching, innovation, and student success.

Some leaders have initiated a shift toward the guided pathways approach by creating cross-functional teams that bring together individuals from academic and non-academic units to work on specific projects for limited periods of time. In addition to addressing specific issues, these teams build relational trust across departments and divisions and empower them to engage in and lead organizational change initiatives. To increase success among cross-functional teams, the authors recommend providing faculty and staff with professional development that focuses on collaborative inquiry and builds competencies in areas such as team facilitation, assessment of learning outcomes, and framing difficult discussions.

The authors acknowledge that initiating reform has short-term costs. However, rather than expending new resources, Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins encourage college administrators to “reexamine existing time and resources to determine whether they can be usefully repurposed to better support guided pathways activities” (p. 163).

ADJUNCT FACULTY

Adjunct faculty members account for a large percentage of community college faculty and thus should be given incentive to participate in the collaborative inquiry process. Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins state, “If the larger institution wants to improve teaching and learning, they [sic] cannot afford to exclude adjuncts from the process” (p. 169).

This is particularly true as community colleges have become over-reliant on adjunct instructors (Belkin and Korn 2015). Bailey and colleagues note that adjunct instructors are not inferior teachers, but they do not receive remuneration for their involvement in activities outside the classroom, such as student advising or curriculum development. Frequently, student evaluations are the only metric of part-time instructors’ performance (Lewontin 2014).

The authors suggest that hiring more part-time faculty has had a negative effect on student completion rates and propose a new model for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the guided pathways approach. Bailey and

colleagues infer that this new calculation and the implementation of the guided pathways approach will decrease rather than increase the number of part-time faculty over time. Given the number of adjunct instructors employed by community colleges and the complexity of the hiring trend and its effects, it appears that Bailey and colleagues have underestimated the challenges inherent in transitioning from one system to another; ultimately, this may undermine the credibility of their otherwise outstanding recommendations.

SUMMARY

Redesigning America’s Community Colleges is a well-written and critical examination of the 21st century community college system. Despite successful but small reforms over the past 20 years, Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins suggest that what the system needs is not more reforms but rather a framework around which to structure and focus reforms—especially those intended to improve the education outcomes of traditionally underserved populations (p. 211). The authors provide compelling evidence that the guided pathways approach would help *all* students successfully transition either to four-year institutions or the workforce. *Redesigning America’s Community Colleges* should be of interest to faculty, administrators, and staff at two- and four-year institutions as well as to policy makers and employers.

One of the biggest challenges to reading *Redesigning America’s Community Colleges* is the authors’ extensive use of lengthy endnotes; this was especially apparent in their explanations of data sources and their calculation of cost-per-credential-completed as well as in their description of performance funding in higher education. While these notes demonstrate the authors’ commitment to transparency, their overuse frequently disrupts and distracts from the flow of the chapters’ content. The reader would have been helped had the authors further integrated the notes into the chapters, thereby reducing lengthy passages at the end of book.

Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins provide examples in each chapter of how institutions have implemented various program improvements. They acknowledge that the guided pathways approach is just beginning to emerge; therefore, their recommendations are based on evidence-based hypotheses rather than proven results.



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They encourage readers to approach their “promising practices” critically and thoughtfully and acknowledge that institutions may implement the guided pathways approach in different ways.

The guided pathways approach is innovative insofar as it lays a foundation for systemic change. The authors concede that there are not yet sufficient data to determine the full impact of a complete transformation. Further, they recognize that this type of change requires economic and political capital as well as a willingness on the part of stakeholders to undertake a certain level of risk. Nevertheless, Bailey, Jaggers, and Jenkins argue persuasively that the guided pathways model will “enable community colleges to better serve their vital role in educating the millions of Americans who attend them each year” (p. 219).

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IN DEFENSE OF A LIBERAL EDUCATION

ZAKARIA, F. 2015. NEW YORK: W.W. NORTON & COMPANY. 208 PP.

Reviewed By Theresa Gallo

When I think about the courses I took in college, I think about Greek and Roman mythology. Far from regurgitating who Hera and Neptune were, we read Camille Paglia, learned about the Venus of Willendorf statuette, and analyzed Bergman’s *Fanny and Alexander*. “This may not help make a living,” Zakaria writes, “but it will help make a life.”

I am able to write this review because of learning experiences like that one that taught me to seek out different perspectives and different meanings, dissect them, and ultimately distill them into my own view of the world. Having not only the ability but also the willingness to take in information and use it to solve a problem is also why I excel at my job. *In Defense of a Liberal Education* is a response to those politicians and parents who would deny future students these foundational and truly applicable skills in favor of turning institutions of higher learning into little more than job placement agencies.

The book opens with a quotation from E. O. Wilson (1998) (a name I know because I also took such “useless” courses as sociobiology):

We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom. The world henceforth will be run by synthesizers, people able to put together the right information at the right time, think critically about it, and make important choices wisely. (p. 294)

This strikes an especially relevant chord in an era when many people are getting their information from inaccurate memes on social media and fast-tracked sensationalist journalism. At a time such as this, liberal education—particularly its goal of creating skeptical and motivated thinkers—should be of paramount concern.

As a foreign policy commentator and writer, Zakaria is in a unique position to comment on what skills are needed to have an informed, holistic view of the world today and to succeed in it. Born in India, Zakaria was part of the very education systems some would have us emulate: test obsessed, numbers focused, and vocationally deterministic. In the first chapter of the book, Zakaria describes the means by which he came to choose a liberal education in the United States over the “limited and limiting” education institutions in India. It was not for lack of aptitude that he left India—he received his bachelor’s degree from Yale—but rather because he wanted broader opportunity for himself. By exploring beyond his comfort zone, outside the bounds of practicality, he came to appreciate the study of international affairs that led to his now-renowned career as, essentially, a thinker.

The book is reader friendly and conversational, a manifesto peppered with selected education history and trends. The chapter devoted to tracing the trajectory of liberal

education points out that divisiveness in the valuation of “theoretical” and “practical” education is nothing new. Zakaria highlights a few points in time when calls for practical education became especially loud, including ancient Greece, the 1828 Yale Report, and Charles Eliot’s overhaul of the Harvard elective system. Interestingly, ancient Greeks believed the sciences were of little use relative to the oratory skills needed for civilization. This underscores the fact that liberal arts and liberal education are not precisely defined. Neither does Zakaria try to define the kind of education he entreats the reader to support. Even as he uses the phrase “liberal education” rather than “liberal arts” throughout, he often speaks about the humanities.

The conclusion Zakaria appears to come to in his early chapters is that, for a true liberal education, there ought to be a strong and complementary balance between a core curriculum and free electives (though one does get the sense that he would not advocate for the common large menus of courses to fulfill “breadth” requirements). He discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the “great books” approach at length. Ultimately, it has the same fundamental problem as “liberal education”: everyone wants to define it differently. Zakaria’s allusion to the ancient Greeks could make a cynic wonder whether “liberal education” is simply the opposite of whatever the job market finds practical at any given time.

While the desire for a variety of disciplines in higher learning stemmed in part from theology (all knowledge was considered unified in its origin from the Creator), the rift between science and religion around Charles Darwin’s time caused the study of the sciences and the humanities to become more discrete, to our current detriment. It is a false dichotomy, as Zakaria points out, because there are many instances (for example, the user experience of Facebook) in which technology and psychology serve each other. As the Yale Report stated in 1828, and as the Yale–National University of Singapore (NUS) College admonishes now, we all are better off when we delve into multiple disciplines in order to gain a fresh and broad perspective on our work.

(I reference Yale because Zakaria repeatedly upholds the Yale–NUS partnership as a model for liberal education. The partnership is an attempt to bring two distinct cultural schemas together to serve in one interdisciplinary approach to higher education and the free exchange of

ideas. Yale–NUS does indeed have an incredible and admirable mission, but Zakaria references it too often.)

Zakaria concedes that skills-based training is important but acknowledges that its utility is limited. When one’s training is obsolete because technology has moved faster than curricula, or one’s new company adopts a unique set of best practices, or one is no longer interested in or able to continue in one’s chosen career, what then?

Many defenders of liberal education say that its use is to “teach you to think,” but Zakaria suggests that it has three more specific objectives: to teach students how to write, how to speak, and how to learn. Writing forces clarity of thought, he says; rhetoric similarly helps to “filter out underdeveloped thoughts” (a skill sorely needed in the age of Twitter). Learning how to learn is preparation for self-sufficiency—teaching a person to fish, as it were. In this way, Zakaria contends, a liberal education prepares students to learn any job, not just a specific trade.

Chapter 4 revisits history to explain another practical reason for America having adopted the liberal education model: Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson both believed that having a worldly intellectual populace was crucial to the continuation of democracy and civil service. Both believed in mass education (at least for land-owning white men with a right to vote at the time) and public funding for that education; of course, both Franklin and Jefferson founded highly regarded universities. Zakaria looks closer to the present to explore some failings of the U.S. education system, including seats being filled by recruited athletes and those in the “party pathway” (wealthy students whose ability to pay full tuition sometimes means the lowering of institutions’ admission standards).

Of course, one of the issues most often cited by liberal education dissenters is the increasing cost of college and a decreasing “return on investment.” This point is not without merit, as the cost of college has increased much faster than inflation. Those of us who work inside the system understand that some of the increase in tuition is the result of drastic reductions in state appropriations; that sticker price is not often the real price; and that higher education is doing everything possible to control costs. But, as Zakaria points out, it is difficult to explain this to someone who thinks that seminars like “Metaphysical Analyses of 19th Century Unicycles” are par for the liberal education course. One flaw in the cost argument to which Zakaria

himself falls victim is equating higher education with the dominant framework of a major research university. Those who argue that the cost of education is out of control like to quote the sticker price of the country's top schools, and Zakaria does little to challenge this when he continuously equates liberal education with elite universities. Community colleges, many of which have some form of liberal education core, are never mentioned. Zakaria defends MOOCs as a starting point for mass access and a market force that will incite brick-and-mortar colleges to improve, but he focuses only on top-tier universities' MOOCs.

I question why Zakaria chose to write this book, given that education is not his field. One meta-answer, of course, is that because he received a good liberal education, he can speak with intelligence on a variety of topics. The other is that it is simply a timely response to the political voices of opposition—on both sides of the aisle—with which Zakaria frequently is surrounded. But his defense is not new. Higher education stakeholders have argued these points early and often. Will they matter more when they are made by someone outside the ivory tower?

Zakaria argues emotionally in support of liberal education, invoking biblical allegory and religious extremists to make his point about the power of diverse knowledge. The creativity that is becoming more prevalent in higher education is exciting, and it is inspiring to hear Zakaria champion it. At times, his assertions seem so incontrovertible that I wondered if all the opposition was imagined. Unfortunately, however, the data on which he relies are not strong. When he lauds Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and Mark Zuckerberg as leaders who believe in the value of the humanities for their employees and who are using their voices for global good, it is difficult not to see another commonality: all of them made their fortunes in technology and business. Similarly, when Zakaria discusses the consistent upward trend of the entertainment industry, he fails to acknowledge that the people earning most of the money are the financiers, not the creative talent. Other research findings that would have bolstered Zakaria's claims—for example, that students who appreciate education as an end in itself perform better and are more well-adjusted than their peers—go unmentioned.

In Defense of a Liberal Education also has a few internal inconsistencies: Zakaria argues that today's young people

participate in certain activities in order to build their resumes, and they engage in little self-reflection; soon thereafter, he cites millennials' high rates of volunteerism in response to accusations of the generation's narcissism. He believes that the reason millennials are narcissistic, if they are, is the brutal competition that defines the college admission process combined with institutional disenchantment that has made them believe they must look out only for themselves (a prisoner's dilemma of sorts).

Zakaria details how miserably U.S. students perform on tests of scientific and mathematical skills, but the tests discussed are administered to school-age children, and Zakaria fails to make a convincing connection to the topic of liberal higher education and its merits. Instead, he mentions *Academically Adrift*, a recent book that demonstrated that students showed remarkably little improvement in their writing and reading skills in the first two years of college. Zakaria argues—and I agree—that this is a consequence of poor structure and ineffective delivery of the academic experience and not a failure of liberal education itself. Because Zakaria seems so enchanted with and invested in the system, it is disappointing that he did not expound more on his own thoughts for improved implementation, especially beyond the ambitious Yale-NUS model.

Perhaps this problem of theoretical versus practical education is indeed a “first-world problem” given that so many in the world have so little access to any education at all. Zakaria contends, though, that Americans find ourselves at such a fortunate point precisely because our history of embracing discussions about philosophy and social justice has created that fortune. The book concludes on a hopeful note and with the culmination of an overall persuasive defense: reinforcing the power of a liberal education to provide both meaningful introspection and external exploration.

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About the Author

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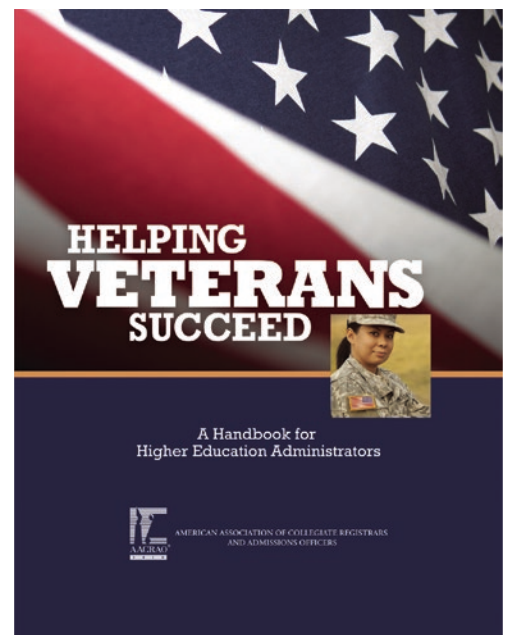


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