VIEW FROM THE TOP

SEM at 50: People, Practice, and Progress of Strategic Enrollment Management

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Strategic Enrollment Management's first 50 years, from Jack Maguire's 1976 "Grand Design" at Boston College to today, trace a path from early structural debates about organizational design, through academic context and faculty engagement, to strategic planning as SEM's operational backbone. The field developed planning frameworks, adaptations such as graduate enrollment management (GEM), and an evolving relationship with data now extending to artificial intelligence. A parallel thread has been the movement toward learner-centered, culturally responsive practice—from the "community" face (Henderson 2010) of SEM and Harper's (2010) anti-deficit research, through early institutional models like UNCF's initiative at HBCUs, to Henderson and Pollock's (2021) portable "principles of practice"—all pushing back against one-size-fits-all templates in favor of approaches tailored to an institution's own learners. The field has been animated by recurring tensions: between the tactical and the strategic, between administrative structure and academic mission, and between recruiting and graduating learners. This account draws on the practitioners and institutions most visible in SEM's published literature and national associations—a record shaped by the influence of U.S. public flagships and elite privates, many of which are predominantly white institutions. The future narrative of SEM must in commemorative work include the voices of the institutions that account for 80 percent of learners today—regional publics, small private colleges, minority-serving institutions, and community colleges. As higher education confronts declining demographics, affordability crises, eroding public confidence, and shrinking international enrollment, SEM's legitimacy rests not on any single model but on its capacity to generate, test, and apply frameworks responsive to changing conditions—and on preparing its next generation of practitioners—all in service of its enduring question: how does an institution attract, enroll, support, and graduate the learners it is best positioned to serve?

What began with a single memo at Boston College in 1974 has grown, over the past half century, into one of higher education's most influential professional disciplines—and this commemorative work attempts to tell the comprehensive story of this remarkable evolution. "Part One—The Tapestry of SEM Practice," traces the intellectual history of the field through its evolving themes, models, and frameworks—from early structural debates and the embrace of strategic planning to the transformative potential of artificial intelligence. "Part Two—Pioneers and Pacesetters" (on page 32), introduces the architects, scholars, association leaders, and campus executives whose collective vision and labor turned enrollment from a set of disconnected administrative functions into an evidence-informed, enterprise-wide profession. "Part Three—The Enrollment Management Historical Timeline" (on page 46), documents more than 100 milestones across 50-plus years, capturing the first books, conferences, academic programs, professional credentials, and landmark publications that gave SEM its institutional memory and its durable professional identity. Together, these three sections offer what no single account has yet assembled: a comprehensive record of the people who built SEM, the ideas that shaped it, and the progress that has carried it—still unfinished, still essential—into its second half-century.

Part One—The Tapestry of SEM Practice: Themes, Models, and Frameworks across Five Decades

Models, frameworks, lenses, conceptual tools, themes—there are many names for the theoretical and practical underpinnings behind SEM's development. At heart, they are what puts muscle and tissue onto the skeleton of an idea. Over the 50 years of SEM, they have guided organization design and made complexity more manageable. They have shifted thinking and practice from reactive to strategic. They have connected practice to research and given the field intellectual legitimacy. In short, these models, frameworks, lenses, tools, and themes are the difference between a collection of administrative tasks and a genuine professional discipline that has expanded the scope, reach, and impact of SEM.

As might be expected, these themes and threads did not develop in any particularly linear way. They came in response to issues, questions, or brainstorming that arose among various practitioners on various campuses. Other campuses borrowed best practices, found they often did not work on another campus, adapted them to local circumstances, and generalized them in presentations and publications. National scholars generated research that SEM practitioners could use on their campuses for SEM program development; many of those same scholars started to study SEM practice and assess its impact. In this way, the threads of SEM were woven into what might be called the tapestry of SEM.

Here then is a thematic look at SEM through the 50 years from 1976 "Grand Design's" antecedents as a response to crisis, to SEM on the "brink of a profession" responding to new challenges with new approaches, to today's discipline informed by both practice and research.

In the Beginning

The Grand Design

Maguire's 1976 "Grand Design" at Boston College (BC) is the first enrollment management model. Maguire, supported by his boss, BC executive vice president Frank Campanella, designed the classic enrollment management structure: admissions, financial aid, and registrar/enrollment services, all supported by a dedicated data function. Its moving parts were "the right people, with the right information, in the right organization," and the synergy of that combination remains in SEM's DNA today (Gordon and Henderson 2024; Epstein 2008).

It also explicitly foreshadowed continuing themes of future models: one focused on data and analysis (the information part) and one on structure (the people and organization parts). Yet there are also threads that will

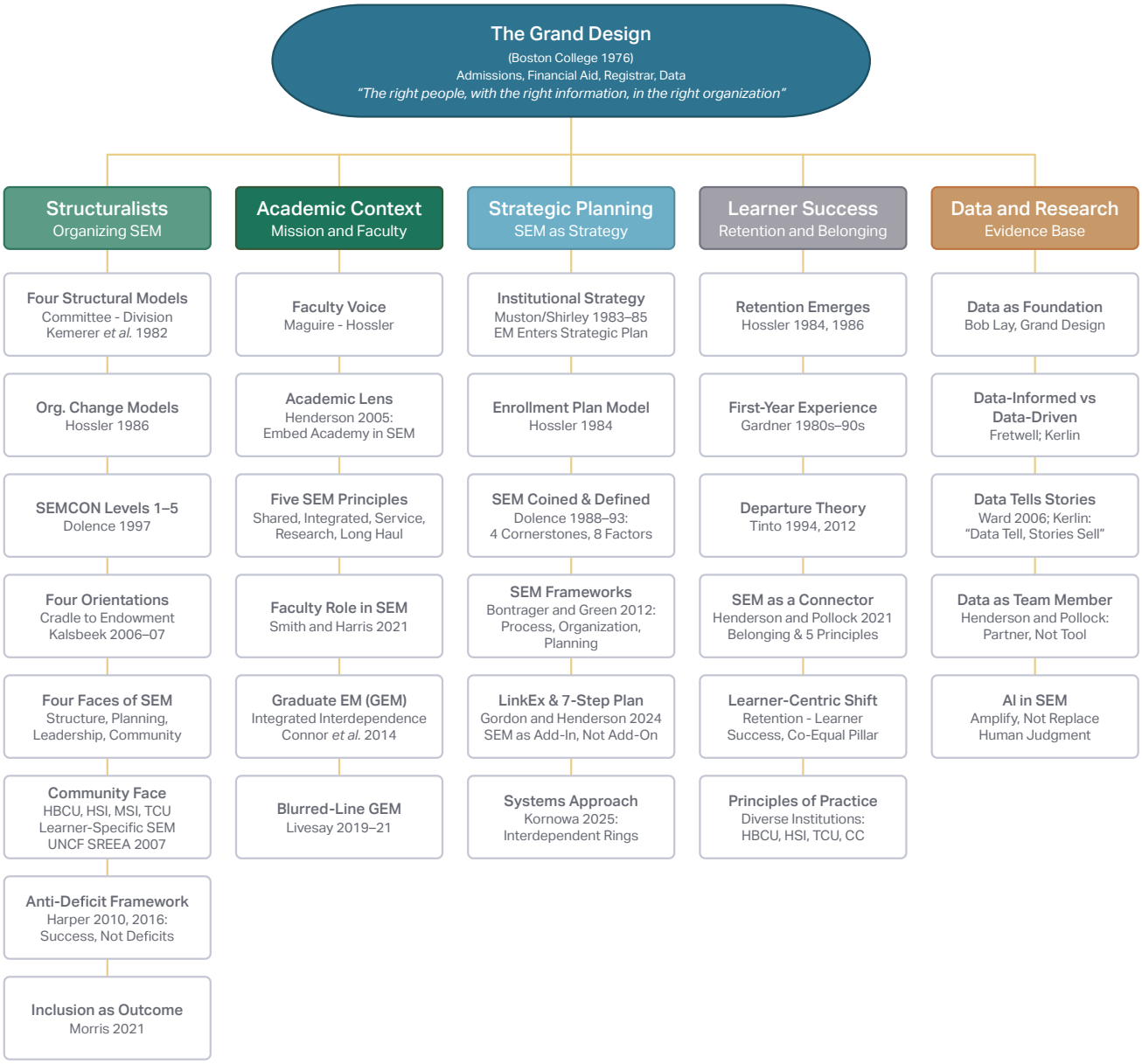


FIGURE 1 ➤ The Tapestry of SEM: 50 Years of Major Themes

lead to further development over the decades: SEM as an enterprise-wide concept ("coordinated and integrated effort of the highest order" at BC), SEM in the academic context (Maguire had been a physics professor at BC and had significant credibility with the faculty), strategic planning ("to the prepared go the students"), learner success (references to services and retention for the BC registrar position), and assessment and practice informed by research (the presence of the data function in the person of Bob Lay) (Maguire 1976).

The Structuralists

The Structural Model

Structure was a major focus for SEM development in the early days. Henderson (2001) described those contributing to the literature in the 80s and 90s as "the

structural strategists." Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green (1982, 28–40) delineated four structural models: a campus-wide *committee* for marketing; a *coordinator* of enrollment and marketing functions; a *matrix* of linked enrollment offices overseen by a senior administrator while also keeping their original reporting lines; and a *division of enrollment management* with its own senior officer. Each had advantages and disadvantages. The committee was easy to set up but had difficulty effecting any significant change. Its best attribute might be that it started a conversation. The coordinator model allowed for some new initiatives among operational offices through cooperation, but that cooperation was not always forthcoming or consistent. The matrix approach avoided the necessity of any significant reorganization but could set up a power struggle between competing senior officers. The division, judged by far the most likely to effect meaningful change, would require major reorganization both at the senior officer level and, most likely, also at staff levels in the affected offices, possibly inciting staff turnover and potentially lowered morale.

Organizational Change

Hossler (1986) cited Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green's four structural models and enhanced them with his organizational change models: an *accrual change* model most likely to occur in a stable environment where change happens only slowly, a *planned or rational change* model where a perceived threat down the road brings people together to consider new directions to meet the future potential enrollment challenge, and a *transformational change* model where an imminent threat precipitates a crisis. Hossler overlayed these change models with Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green's four structural models, creating a continuum of response to a corresponding degree of perceived threat: stability, problems, or visible crisis.

SEMCON

Hossler's continuum of structure and change was further refined by Dolence's 1997 SEMCON continuum (a riff on the Cold War DEFCON continuum of defense readiness levels, a glimpse of the humor he displayed in his presentations and workshops) of five campus SEM levels with varying enrollment trends, campus response, actions taken, and structure used: In *Level 1 Denial*, where enrollment is in decline, the campus blames outside influences ("It's because of the economy") and discusses various options. In *Level 2 Nominal*, enrollment is still in decline, the campus realizes, "We have to do something," and forms a marching millions committee of stakeholders that designs an ad hoc set of tactics. In *Level 3 Structural*, enrollment is variable. The response, "This is harder than we thought," brings some cross-functional collaboration with short-term strategies but little SEM expertise. In *Level 4 Tactical*, enrollment is growing but not yet optimal. The campus embraces reorganization: "We need fundamental change and campus participation." Cross-functional work groups coalesce and identify areas for impact under a strategic planning framework based on data. In *Level 5 Strategic*, optimal enrollment is achieved. The campus can show, "We control our enrollment outcomes." There is a stable organizational structure with senior SEM leadership, engaged in consistent planning and assessment cycles.

Four Orientations of SEM

A further enhancement of the structural strategists comes from a series of articles in *College and University* over three issues in 2006–2007 by one of SEM's preeminent thought leaders, David Kalsbeek. He expanded Hossler's view that SEM exists both in the "more hierarchical and relatively tightly coupled administrative structures and the flat, more autonomous and loosely coupled faculty structure" (1986, 37) to include four orientations of SEM: student-focused, administrative-focused, academic-focused, and market-focused. The student-focused orientation is one concentrated on the learner experience, the "Cradle to Endowment SEM" (Gordon and Henderson 2024) version of SEM, meeting learners before they even apply, following them through admission and orientation and engaging with them on the learner life cycle to see them graduate as happy alums ready to give back. The administrative-focused orientation looks for enrollment-related

efficiencies that will remove barriers and add to return on investment (ROI). It is also, significantly, the locus of institutional resource support. Gordon and Henderson (2024) call this "Corporate SEM." The academic-focused SEM represents the interests of those who spend more time with learners than anyone else on campus: the faculty. Learning, curriculum, academic policies—the entire academic experience—are the emphasis in "Academic SEM." The faculty are essential stakeholders in SEM; without their engagement, SEM cannot succeed. The market-focused SEM is the most externally oriented, concentrated on how the institution is perceived outside the campus in the market and the larger community. This "External SEM" creates the messages and communication streams that are used with prospective learners, families, secondary school counselors, legislators, the media, and business leaders.

Kalsbeek demonstrated the complexity of this cultural structure by noting the fluidity of who subscribes to which focus. Student affairs staff and individual faculty most concerned with learner success would likely gravitate to the "Cradle to Endowment SEM," while academic leadership and faculty in general would find agreement with "Academic SEM." The "Corporate SEM" would be home to the business and finance leadership, as well as executive officers, deans, and others with institution-wide focus. The "External SEM" would welcome the marketing and communications folks as well as some from business operations and faculty with marketing/communications research interests. Kalsbeek's orientations have been used extensively as a template for SEM professionals to explain the shifting sands of campus culture related to SEM (Gordon and Henderson 2024).

Four Faces of SEM

One structural construct of SEM seeks to anthropomorphize the concept by combining component parts into a robust "body" that explains the necessary interplay of functions in successful SEM. Originally (Smith and Kilgore 2006, Henderson and Yale 2008), this was presented as the Three Faces of SEM. The first face is *structural management* that focuses on campus structure that has the right offices and appropriate staffing to operationalize day-to-day functions of SEM as well as a management function that ensures optimal resources to meet SEM plan goals. The second face is *planning*. This emphasis is on the campus planning process that creates the goals, strategies, and tactics of a SEM plan to meet desired campus futures, including enrollment, curricula, pricing, etc. This face of the SEM persona ensures the campus has the tools to work successfully, supporting both learner success and institutional enrollment health. The third face of SEM is *leadership*. Top-down leadership is essential for successful SEM, but it is not sufficient. Leadership at multiple levels, like arteries moving nutrients through the body SEM, provides the lifeblood for getting SEM done (Gordon and Henderson 2024). Senior leaders, academic department leaders, and SEM staff leaders must collaboratively develop the levels of trust and collaboration to accomplish the planning and ensure the sustainability of SEM goals and plans.

In 2012, Henderson added a fourth face—community—designed to integrate and humanize the earlier three faces into a network of services focused on learners and their success. This learner-facing concept would make structure "less about organizational charts and more about creating an environment that allows people to…work for [learner] academic success" (105). Planning would view data as "critical only insofar as they improve service and contribute to the 'cradle to endowment' concept of [learner] success" (105). And leadership in the community cum service environment would become "servant leadership" in a culture of engagement and commitment rather than merely passive "buy-in."

This community perspective also addressed the template problem of SEM: "Find what works someplace else and lay it over my campus." By focusing on individual learners and their success, SEM could emphasize goals, strategies, and tactics that address barriers and opportunities unique to a campus rather than attempting to shoehorn best practices from other campuses with different missions and different learners. This gave voice to institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Tribal

Colleges, whose learners' challenges needed different solutions than what predominantly white institutions (PWIs) might put forward as universal "best practices." In this way, SEM could be an effective approach for the unique aspects of different institutions and learners rather than one-size-fits-all.

The community-face emphasis on individual learners is supported by Harper's (2010) Anti-deficit Achievement Framework that turns the tables on Black learners' deficits (why do so few go into STEM fields? Why do so many fail?) and focuses on their successes (what influenced those who *did* go into STEM fields? What supported those who succeeded?). The emphasis on factors supporting success instead of the deficits allows campuses to develop support networks and services that broaden the reach of those influencers for success. Harper's research on the learners themselves indicated different factors for success in different types of institutional communities—PWIs and minoritized ones as well—suggesting different campus practices that worked in different higher educational environments. Harper's later research (2016) expanded the STEM perspective on anti-deficit achievement to broader groups with similar results and influenced SEM planning in other sectors (LeGrande and Henderson 2021).

This community-oriented, institution-specific thinking was not confined to theory. In 2007, the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Institute for Capacity Building (ICB)'s Enrollment Management Practices (EMP) initiative gave it concrete, funded expression by partnering with four private HBCUs—Clark Atlanta University, Oakwood University, Texas College, and Voorhees College—on a pilot program that translated campus assessments and a presidential survey into strategic action (UNCF 2022). The result was SREEA: Strategic Recruitment, Enrollment, Engagement and Assessment, an enrollment-management roadmap explicitly built to take racial-identity development into account within recruitment and retention practice. As one participating student put it, arriving at a campus where being surrounded by African American peers meant feeling truly supported, valued, and expected to succeed proved directly connected to persisting to a degree—the kind of culturally specific, sense-of-belonging effect Harper's research on differential success factors would predict, and no generic, PWI-derived "best practice" template could reliably produce.

SREEA's four pillars mapped structure directly onto culturally responsive practice. Strategic recruitment sharpened institutional messaging, used demographic and labor-market data to target the right prospective students, and engaged faculty, alumni, and current students in the recruitment process itself. Enrollment strategies focused on yield—alumni and peer outreach to admitted students, synchronized financial aid and admission notifications, and customer-service-minded registration and orientation processes designed to keep newly admitted students from drifting to a competitor. Engagement, the pillar closest to Henderson's later "community" face, called for comprehensive multi-year retention plans, mentoring and early-warning systems, discipline-specific honor societies alongside support for at-risk students, and—notably—leadership programs that explicitly built racial-identity development into the self-efficacy HBCUs were already known for cultivating. Assessment closed the loop by insisting that student-satisfaction instruments be developed with cultural relevance in mind rather than borrowed wholesale from national surveys that, EMP found, routinely failed to capture the particular experience of belonging that African American students report at HBCUs but not always elsewhere. Like the community face itself, SREEA offered no single template that would work for every HBCU, let alone every institution. But it demonstrated, years before Morris (2021) made the case explicitly, that enrollment models tailored to an institution's own students—rather than imported from institutions serving very different populations—could yield measurable gains in both recruitment and retention. It stands as an early, operational answer to the "template problem" that the community face of SEM would go on to name.

Morris (2021) gave full-throated support to a community perspective for marginalized and underrepresented learners when she asserted that SEM leaders "are tasked with finding solutions that ensure that one's diversity is acknowledged without consequences, college

admission processes are unbiased, students of color have equitable access to resources to succeed academically and socially, and the faculty and staff at their institutions are representative of the people in the nation" (76). At a time when diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) were coming under attack at both the state and federal levels of government, she advocated for "creating an inclusive environment of belonging that would convert implicit social constructivist thoughts about race to explicit equitable actions that changed the deficit mindset associated with diversity" (78). "Race and ethnicity are only two shades of the DEI thread. There are various identities working together towards an overarching goal of increased representation using equitable actions as the process vehicle, and inclusion as the outcome to offer solutions for enrollment managers to effectively support all students as they advance their academic careers" (84).

The community face had the added impact of reinforcing the SEM movement away from the more clinical-sounding retention and persistence terms to a more learner-centric focus on individual learner engagement and success, increasingly becoming a pillar of SEM in the 1990s and early 2000s. It reoriented faculty and staff to the learners at the core of the academic enterprise throughout their campus journey and emphasized SEM as an embedded component of a campus's inherent academic context. A successful SEM program integrates these "Four Faces of SEM" into something greater than the sum of its parts for a more holistic approach to the learner life cycle in the academic enterprise (Gordon and Henderson 2024).

Stuck on Structure

The apogee of the structural strategists may have come in 2002, when the University of Cincinnati opened its signature architect-designed University Pavilion (Zimar 2002). It was a structure designed for a structure. The building structure itself brought ten different offices from five other campus buildings to a space designed to foster collaboration and partnership and integrate services and staff into a SEM structure of service. Included were the offices of admissions, financial aid, registrar, orientation, student support, career services, student accounts, bursar, cashiers, and a leading-edge one-stop facility staffed with cross-trained staff to handle student-facing enrollment, financial aid, registrar functions, bursar, and student accounts in person or online. All of this was monitored by an elaborate administrative structure of steering committee, planning committee, and working groups. While faculty were well-represented on the committees and working groups, the structure failed to fully engage the faculty in SEM initiatives and programs. The university's well-known silo culture of academic units remained stubbornly absent from SEM implementation. SEM at UC had become stuck on structure, perhaps signaling something had gotten lost in SEM generally.

An emphasis on structure—how to organize the pieces of functional SEM—was both expected and necessary in the early years: this was a new approach to enrollment and needed new organizational models to carry it out. However, structural debates about whether SEM should be in academic affairs or student affairs, or what functions should be included in SEM obscured the fact that SEM exists in an academic environment. To have agency and impact, SEM would have to embed itself in that academic context.

The Academic Context

Keeping the Faculty Voice in the "Grand Design"

The academy, the nominal home of all higher education, has always had a role in SEM. At the very beginning, Jack Maguire's former faculty rank at BC, aided by the inclusion of Bob Lay, a data and analysis master who could also speak faculty-ese, ensured he had the voice of faculty in his ear as he rolled out his "Grand Design." As SEM inched along in development, the academic voice continued to be heard. In *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* first article on enrollment management (May 13, 1987), John Hintz suggested that colleges should look at assessing their own academic quality before they tried enrollment management techniques. He allowed that higher education's embrace of enrollment management was "quite remarkable" but also cautioned colleges not to rush into SEM because it might be a fad.

Early discussions of SEM structure never failed to refer to the quintessentially academic environment where SEM would have to function. Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green (1982) devoted space to Alfred University's decision to build quality with intense faculty participation in decision-making even though resulting policy led to some faculty retrenchment. Hossler (1986) advised that "A comprehensive enrollment management plan should address the administrative structure of the institution as well as the role of the faculty", noting that "faculty have a direct impact on student enrollments in a variety of ways" (37). He continued for emphasis, "Effective enrollment management efforts require faculty support and involvement" (132).

The Assumed Role of Academics

However, reading definitions—even more recent ones—of SEM often do not specifically mention the academic milieu in which it functions. For example, Kerlin (2008) says "[SEM is] a comprehensive and coordinated process that enables a college to identify enrollment goals that allied with its mission, its strategic plan, its environment, and its resources, and to reach those goals through the effective integration of administrative processes, student services, curriculum planning, and market analysis" (11). And Bontrager (2004) says, "[SEM is] a concept and process that enables the fulfillment of institutional mission and students' educational goals" (12). One might argue that the academic context is there in "mission", or "curriculum planning", or even "educational goals". However, those who have worked in academia would quickly agree that the academic context is not something to be assumed. Colleges and universities expect explicit acknowledgment of the academic nature of culture, mission, structure, and outcomes.

An Explicit Emphasis on the Academic Context

Dolence is arguably the major driver of the *explicit* role for higher education's academic context in SEM. He referenced it in his 1989 *Planning for Higher Education* article, where he offered an early version of his classic definition of SEM as the process aimed at achieving optimal enrollments, where "optimal" is defined by the academic context. He expanded on that meaning in *Strategic Enrollment Management: A Primer for Campus Administrators* (1993) with a polished definition and an expanded presentation of the concept in a section entitled "Linking the Academic Program and SEM—Underlying Factors." Even as SEM became the language for strategic enrollment work, Dolence's definition made clear that its legitimacy would depend on more than planning, structure, and technique: "optimum" enrollment had to be understood within the academic context of the institution. He had put a marker down for the academic culture of colleges and universities.

An Academic Lens on SEM

Henderson picked up that marker in 2005 in his *College and University* article, "Refocusing Enrollment Management: Losing Structure and Finding the Academic Context." He found that SEM professionals could easily get "stuck" on structure: what offices should be in the SEM organization and where should the SEM division be situated organizationally were a distraction from more robust development of enrollment health. Dolence warned that too much structural emphasis "holds academics at arms length" (personal communication 2005). Henderson came to believe that what SEM needed was an academic lens for development, not a structural one. Rather than wanting to see SEM embedded in the institution, campuses should seek to ensure their quintessentially academic institutions are embedded in SEM (Gordon and Henderson 2024). Structure should be the servant of SEM, not the master. The academic lens would shape what might be called SEM's first guiding principles:

- SEM is shared responsibility. If it reflects the academic nature of the institution, it is no longer just the enrollment management division's responsibility but becomes enterprise-wide.
- SEM is integrated institutional planning. In the academic context, SEM fits more naturally into strategic planning, which connects it more explicitly to academics.
- SEM is focused on service. The academic lens puts emphasis on services that enhance learners' academic success. The academic context would

want learners to be tested in the classroom, not in the bureaucracy of policies.

- SEM is research and evaluation. Expanding the use of data and research to evaluate SEM and its programs reflects academic expectations and enhances engagement by faculty.
- SEM is for the long haul. No academic program can change on a dime; it must be guided by research and data. To be successful, SEM must follow the deliberative, data-informed, strategic path of the academic, not the quick fix of the repairman. (Henderson 2005, reframed in Gordon and Henderson 2024).
- Focusing SEM through the academic lens answers the plea of every novice enrollment manager: "Give me a template for how to do this." There may not be a one-size-fits-all approach to SEM, but the academic lens does suggest a template, one based on vertical communication that articulates a strategic vision, horizontal communication that opens dialogue and feedback, engagement that allows all to contribute on enrollment issues, and structure consistent with that academic context.

Ensuring the Faculty Voice

Smith, in a 2007 white paper for AACRAO Consulting titled, "Finding the Academic Context: The SEM Role for Faculty," echoed and expanded Henderson's academic lens. Smith moved from the general emphasis on ensuring that SEM reflects the academic culture to a specific emphasis on the faculty role in SEM. He made explicit the point that faculty are "important to all aspects of SEM, essential at key points" (1).

Later, Smith and Harris (2021) would undertake a qualitative study of faculty and chief enrollment officers across North America to examine faculty involvement in SEM further. Findings suggested a "stay-in-your-own-lane" approach with respondents identifying faculty's primary role as teaching, although they saw faculty service in a consultative way with SEM as appropriate. The faculty role in SEM implementation was judged most appropriate in areas more generally seen as faculty adjacent: academic strategies in advising, individual student interventions, faculty development, student engagement, even recruitment/retention areas related to their disciplinary specializations. The path to ensuring faculty engagement with those SEM areas judged of most interest lies through building relationships generally. As would most people, faculty are more inclined to engage with someone with whom they have an existing relationship than with someone who knocks on their office door for the first time, requesting the expenditure of time and energy. Relationships are nurtured, respondents suggested, with sharing of data, a focus on learner success, and an openness to faculty ideas and initiatives. They noted: "SEM success requires strong collaboration....The key is to find balance between operating in different areas of specialization while collaborating between academic and non-academic spheres" (8). The study offers recommendations for practice in eight areas: organizational structure that brings faculty into contact with SEM; areas related to a SEM Ethos; agreement that SEM is enterprise-wide and everyone has a role to play; collaboration and relationship building; curriculum and instructional support; learner recruitment specifically for academic programs; learner retention, where faculty have input to the creation and implementation of strategies and tactics for learner success; data availability, analysis, and finance-related decision making (Smith and Harris 2021).

The quintessentially academic nature of colleges and universities requires that SEM leaders should work to embed the academy in SEM rather than shoehorn SEM into the academy. However, those same leaders would find that living in the academic context is necessary but not sufficient to ensure SEM success and impact in solving enrollment challenges. There would also need to be a model grounded in strategic planning that could connect structure, data, academic purpose, leadership, and learner success into coordinated institutional action.

Strategic Enrollment Management

Strategic Planning for Institutions

Muston (1984, 1985) provided a full-throated endorsement of strategic planning in higher education. He drew

heavily on Shirley's 1983 representation of a strategic planning system that combined both process and structure. In addition to the classic components of strategic planning—mission, values, environmental scan, among others—there were also linkages of multiple sub-plans under the overall institutional strategic plan. Specifically, there is an enrollment plan (to include target program mix and target mix of demographic characteristics) and an admissions and recruitment plan (to include university and program level admissions and recruitment strategies). The separation of enrollment planning from admissions and recruitment speaks to the as yet rudimentary nature of SEM's development and its relationship to strategic planning. It is not the comprehensive approach of the future, but it *is* for the first time in the strategic planning neighborhood. The individual sub-plans feed development of the overall institutional strategic plan in separate tracks by academic departments and by administrative units. Each track includes a separate budgeting process and separate implementation. While this reflects Muston's concentration on public flagships and their academic unit autonomy, embedding the nascent enrollment management idea in a strategic planning framework elevates SEM from just another administrative approach to something closer to the strategic core of the institution in reach and impact.

Strategic Planning Model for Enrollment

In 1984, Hossler put strategic planning at the center of developing an enrollment plan. In his model, institutional research provided institutional data and research to the strategic planning core. Specific research pertaining to recruitment included market research, choice studies, and pricing research. On the retention side of the planning model, retention studies along with impact and outcomes research fed the strategic planning core. Using these data and research inputs, strategic planning then could produce pricing policies, marketing and recruitment activities for entry to the campus, along with a host of programs and activities targeted to moving learners through their student journey to graduation. The latter included academic programs, orientation, counseling and career advising, campus activities, early warning systems, and exit interviews. A program evaluation function applied assessment to the programs on both the recruitment and retention sides of the planning model, as well as for the strategic planning core. Feedback loops would be maintained between strategic planning and institutional research as well as specific recruitment data/research and retention data/research. His model was designed to plan for demand, influence college choice, find the right pricing niche, determine student-institution fit, attend to retention research to develop an effective retention system, and ensure evaluation to drive more research (144–148).

Strategic Enrollment Management

Michael Dolence, in his role as an institutional planner at California State University-Los Angeles (CSU-LA), was conversant in all aspects of strategic planning. In two articles (1988, 1989) in *Planning for Higher Education*, he and his colleagues discussed their adaptation and application of strategic planning for enrollment management and reported on CSU-LA's planning process led by a task force Dolence chaired. In the 1988 article, he and his colleagues describe enrollment management as necessitating strategic planning and specifically label their visual representation as "Strategic Enrollment Management Model." The model's starting point begins with the establishment of an enrollment management program, including CSU-LA's enrollment task force, a coordinator, and a review process. The program conducts an organizational assessment looking at mission, key performance indicators, strengths, weaknesses and values—all informed by program data and systems assessments. These data and assessments help to create alternative institutional scenarios, which in turn, are informed by trends and events along with environmental scan analysis. This leads to the creation of strategic options and, ultimately, implementation and evaluation. In this article, Dolence and his colleagues also introduced the Four Cornerstones of a strategic enrollment management program: institutional commitment, integration of strategies, strategic planning, and evaluation. And, focusing on the cornerstone of evaluation, they name eight Critical Success Factors for a strategic enrollment management program:

- Top Management Support
- Project Leadership
- Participative Planning
- Significant academic and administrative user involvement
- Enrollment management coordinator
- Process, policy, procedure
- Timely
- Funding

In the 1989 *Planning for Higher Education* article, "Evaluation Criteria for an Enrollment Management Program," Dolence, writing on his own, reported on the outcomes from the CSU-LA task force and its strategic enrollment management planning. He included an analysis of how strategic enrollment management modified the institutional decision-making process and emphasized the academic context of enrollment management. Looking at the critical success factors from the earlier article, he added twelve criteria for evaluating strategic enrollment management programs.

The Jump to SEM

Starting in 1991, Dolence began what would be a seven-year relationship with AACRAO, providing keynotes, plenaries, workshops, and sessions at SEM conferences and Annual Meetings, writing publications, and advising the Board on programming and direction. He saw AACRAO as the logical professional home for the burgeoning new field, and he was single-minded in forging the path. His first contribution was as a member of the founding committee of the AACRAO SEM conference. He joined the chair, Stan Henderson, AACRAO's new vice president for enrollment management intent on building the association's enrollment management portfolio; Ernie Beals, who had been instrumental in the College Board's enrollment management conferences in the previous decade; Tom Colaner of ACT, who had created ACT's Enrollment Planners' Conference six years before; and Doris Johnson, AACRAO assistant executive director for staff support—each enthusiastic and creative in their approach to the conference idea. Dolence had a vision of a different type of conference, one that was not just admissions folks and registrars, but also presidents, senior officers, deans, and faculty as well as staff from financial aid, academic advising, career services, and other support areas. It would be an enterprise-wide gathering to show how strategic enrollment management could make them participants in changing their institutions' enrollment health. He said he wanted the conference to maximize interaction time outside of sessions so that attendees could process what they heard from presenters. His ideas inspired spirited discussion, and the committee's conference recommendations won the support of the AACRAO Board.

At the 1991 Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Dolence was scheduled for a pre-conference workshop on SEM planning that was to be the kick-off to AACRAO University, an innovative conference-within-the-conference with a series of enrollment management-related sessions. Participants taking a prescribed combination of "courses" could earn an "AACRAO degree" (something one accrediting agency actually tried but failed to shut down as "fraudulent"). Dolence's workshop enrollment was capped at more than 100, but so many were turned away that he held a second one that also reached capacity. Any presentation he made—each was really more performance than presentation—was uniformly standing room only. The content was rich yet accessible, deadly serious backed with mountains of data yet laced with humor and enthusiasm—all feeding his passion for SEM.

Dolence was a prime driver of the use of the acronym SEM, meant as an AACRAO brand designed to be broadly publicized. In his 1993 *Strategic Enrollment Management: A Primer for Campus Administrators*, he quickly moved to just SEM in the text. It is likely that many in the association were using the SEM abbreviation in conversation earlier, but the primer is considered to be the first use of the term in print. The purpose of the short monograph was to reach busy presidents and provosts to give them a sketch of the SEM concept. In the abbreviated primer style, Dolence reprised and revised his 1989 *Planning for Higher Education* article. He began with a reworked definition that would become a signature description of SEM:

> *Strategic Enrollment Management is a comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain the optimum recruitment, retention, and graduation rates, where "optimum" is defined within the academic context of the institution. As such, SEM is an institution-wide process that embraces virtually every aspect of an institution's function and culture* (8).

He listed primary goals, focused a section on "linking the academic program and SEM" to give sharper meaning to the idea of academic context, and shared simple formulas to explain optimum enrollment (Optimum enrollment - Current Enrollment = SEM Enrollment Goal) (9–11). He presented SEM organizational models and institutional SEM strategies that covered recruitment, marketing, and retention strategies. He talked common sense information/technology strategies, and he made a pitch for reengineering systems and technology to drive productivity and efficiency, crucial for SEM success. The critical success factors were still eight in number from his 1989 journal article, but now they were more succinct, focused, and geared to the senior administrative audience: Leadership, Strategic Planning, Comprehensiveness, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Research, Academic Foundation, Information Technology, and Evaluation. The primer was wildly successful and was reprinted in 1997.

His second AACRAO SEM book was *Strategic Enrollment Management: Cases from the Field* (1996), based on conference sessions from the first two AACRAO SEM conferences. He introduced the book with a restatement of the material from the primer with more detail and nuance, and introduced a set of SEM pacesetters (several of whom are featured in the "Pioneers and Pacesetters" section of this article), the rising stars of SEM, to show what this rebranded enrollment management could do. The spotlight here is on the work these practitioners are doing on their campuses with SEM, which, by this point, has become shorthand for how to do enrollment management.

Graduate Enrollment Management

When Western Michigan University began a massive expansion of doctoral programs in the 1990s, the president asked the enrollment management director to consult with doctoral program directors and chairs on doctoral student recruitment. The faculty espoused the prevailing view that graduate recruitment was totally different from undergraduate and adamantly maintained that program quality and faculty reputation were the only factors graduate students would be interested in. The enrollment management director was equally adamant that graduate students would have many of the same interests as undergraduates and that recruitment materials should reflect those interests. The faculty and enrollment manager agreed to a series of focus groups with current graduate students to hear what their interests had been as they made their grad school decisions. Interest in academic quality and faculty reputation were clearly important, but so was interest in campus life, the surrounding community, a spouse's needs, jobs after graduation, and questions of "Will I fit in?" The interests were far more eclectic than the faculty had expected, and recruitment materials were adjusted accordingly (Henderson n.d.).

At about the same time, Kallio's (1995) research found that prospective graduate students would be interested in a wider range of conditions and opportunities beyond program and faculty reputation. Residency status, spousal considerations, financial aid, and the campus social environment all made the list.

Lei and Chuang (2010) found in their research that prospective graduate students would want to experience a campus as a human place where they would live and work. They would be concerned with building relationships with other students, colleagues, those in the profession, with community elements, and positive interactions with faculty they felt they could relate to, not just big names in the academic world. And they might have different academic and personal needs: some might want the convenience of flexible scheduling, support for part-time progress, or help finding an academic program or employment for a spouse. Graduate students might be locked into an academic discipline, but they have life interests outside the discipline.

In 2014, Connor, LaFave, and Balayan, introduced a graduate enrollment management (GEM) Integrated

Interdependence Model, based on an extensive research project involving NAGAP members, just as NAGAP was moving from an admissions and recruitment oriented organization to a more inclusive GEM one. The model identifies six GEM functional areas—recruitment and marketing, admissions operations, financial aid/grants/scholarships, student support and services, advising and retention, and graduation and alumni relations—to be integrated in sync with the learner life cycle. Further, these multiple areas need to be interdependent, relying on each other in following the graduate learner through the various stages of their learner journey. The integrated and interdependent concepts lead to a one-stop shop focused on learners. GEM staff members are cross-trained on the interdependent learner functions, thereby amplifying the efficiency and quality of service. The model also accommodates senior administrator and faculty stakeholders, a GEM council, staff partners, student and alumni ambassadors. Enrollment planning is also integrated into the model.

Based on the research project results, NAGAP (2014) developed an official definition of GEM:

> *Graduate enrollment management (GEM) is a comprehensive approach to the methods by which an institution recruits, admits, supports, retains, and graduates post-baccalaureate students in their respective degree programs. This dynamic paradigm includes codependent functions working congruently to strategically manage overall enrollment levels and the student experience. Elements of the student experience include enrollment planning, marketing, recruitment and admissions, academic advising, financial aid, student services, retention, and alumni relations.*

Livesay, as dean of the graduate school at Wichita State University, developed a different GEM framework that blurred the lines between the academic and traditional SEM (2019, 2021). He saw GEM as "an iterative process that encourages innovation and provides a means to evaluate impact. A key element of successful GEM frameworks is to blur the lines between academic and traditional enrollment management considerations. As a consequence, GEM is recast as a framework to catalyze program updates and encourages everyone to embrace continuous improvement" (2021 69). The potential impact of this blurred GEM model was evident with the remake with stakeholder, faculty, and student input of a small Educational Specialist post-Master's program in Counseling and Educational Psychology into a revamped straight-from-undergrad education specialist that quadrupled enrollment within a year. And an M.A. program in English Literature used the model to develop innovative and interdisciplinary courses to meet the changing career needs of its students, thereby avoiding the popular narrative that graduate literature programs were out of touch.

Livesay and Cantrell (2021) spoke to the value of using GEM to make connections for graduate students. They agree that graduate students' connection to their major advisor is most closely correlated with retention, degree completion, sense of belonging, and overall assessment of their graduate experience. However, they also agree that "GEM plans should include ample opportunities for students to interact with others across the university and within their discipline, both in physical activities and more cerebral settings, and in professional development and frivolities that are strictly for fun" (67).

In a 2022 *SEM Quarterly* article, Balayan, Connor, and Lafave note the limited academic research on GEM compared with that on SEM and argue for a research lens on the graduate student lifecycle. The article reviews existing literature, including SEM literature that relates to GEM. They recognize that some undergraduate SEM literature is instructive for GEM but argue that there are differences that need to be studied. The Integrated Interdependence model is held up as fertile ground for future research. Most significantly, the authors advocate for a scholar-practitioner approach for GEM.

GEM's emergence as a standalone version of enrollment management recognizes the needs of the graduate sector but also acknowledges SEM roots and ongoing contributions. GEM's emerging syncing of services with the learner lifecycle in an integrated and interdependent way both reflects and reinforces keeping learners at the core, whether undergraduate or graduate. Both

GEM and SEM can benefit from further research and the continued emphasis on the scholar practitioner.

The emergence of strategic enrollment management and the move to the SEM moniker did not happen overnight, but it was a seminal transition that changed how enrollment management would be presented and deployed. Muston's embrace of strategic planning paved the way to connect enrollment management to an increasingly essential aspect of higher education administration. Hossler's introduction of research informing strategic practice gave it legitimacy in the academic context and more impact in outcomes. Dolence's introduction of the concept's strategic components and their intersections brought it to a wider audience through AACRAO. However, the next major development area would be the creation of SEM Planning as a major feature and benefit of SEM. It would establish SEM as an enterprise-wide driver of change that could truly touch every aspect of "an institution's function and culture."

SEM Planning

Shiny Objects

"Attempting to manage enrollments strategically without a plan is like driving down a country road at midnight without headlights: it is possible, perhaps, but dangerous" (Massa 2001, 149). Planning for enrollments was part of enrollment management almost from the beginning. Muston's (1985) citation of Shirley's 1983 strategic planning flowchart was the first known mention of an "enrollment plan." Yet planning has often been a barrier for enrollment managers. It is always easier to do the daily work of managing than the heavy lifting of developing a strategic enrollment plan. However, human nature also gets in the way. Anytime an enrollment manager starts to talk about planning and its strategic steps from general to specific, anyone in the vicinity will begin offering what might be called "shiny objects": "You know, we should do X," or "Wouldn't it be great for us to do Y?", or "Have you ever thought about visiting high schools?" This search for shiny objects is part of the "Squirrel! Syndrome," modeled by the dog in the Pixar movie "Up" who is always being distracted by an imaginary squirrel. Shiny objects have kept many enrollment managers focused on daily tasks, the near-term, the intriguing, tactical efforts unmoored from strategic objectives and direction without ever getting around to building that elusive SEM plan.

Planning Categories

Massa (2001) gathered the broad elements for planning into one place: Institutional mission/vision as the starting point, environmental scan, planning assumptions, formulating objectives and identifying strategic issues, operational planning, evaluation, and assessment. But, for the uninitiated, a set of planning categories does not provide a road map for how to accomplish the relevant parts. There are language issues: what one faculty member calls an objective, an administrator might call a goal. How does one do an environmental scan? Who is going to collect all this data? More importantly, who is going to analyze what it means? Where do we go from here?

One of the driving factors in the growth of strategic enrollment management consulting has been this deer-in-the-headlights response to planning. Having a consultant make regular visits to campus can be a nudge for planning committee members to complete assignments. A consultant will bring their group's planning approach to guide the process instead of the enrollment manager having to devise one. And, a not inconsequential consideration: no matter the enrollment manager's national reputation or record for success, they will have no honor in their own country. The consultant becomes the resident expert.

SEM Frameworks Process

In 2012, Bontrager and Green introduced a set of SEM Frameworks, a roadmap-style approach to SEM planning that divided planning into three more manageable components. The process framework functions as a feedback loop model with gathering of data, inclusion and shared governance, monitoring of results, and adjusting course. Significantly, the framework calls for aligning broad enrollment goals and student mix with the institutional strategic plan, assigning that task to both executive leadership and a steering committee for SEM planning. Data and research are required to inform

the process and lead to focused, specific goals prepared by broadly representative stakeholder groups concentrating on recruitment and retention. To support the goals, action steps are created; accountability is assigned; and metrics are established. The resulting plan is then implemented and monitored/assessed (274–276). This is the first introduction of SEM as an iterative process.

SEM Frameworks Organization

The process framework's steps depend on the organizational framework. Here, Bontrager and Green create an interlocking set of levels, committees, and teams for the organizational framework. A SEM steering committee sets broad goals, gains approval of strategies to achieve the goals, communicates with the executive team and the broader campus community, and keeps the planning process on track. Under the steering committee are two planning committees, or councils, one focused on recruitment, one on retention. These councils devise strategic goals in their respective subject areas and use sub-groups to build action plans for implementation for each strategic goal. The separation of recruitment and retention is deliberate to allow for concentration on each area without distraction. Supporting the entire structure is a data team, charged with environmental scanning, data collection, and analysis, serving the entire planning organization throughout the process with foundational data and responses to questions for additional reports or information (277–278).

SEM Frameworks Planning

Finally, the SEM planning framework lays out the planning roadmap with the "primary topical areas to be addressed in SEM planning" (279). Bontrager and Green used a pyramid structure layered with the steps, starting at the bottom with linkage to the institutional strategic plan. Next is the identification of Key Enrollment Indicators (KEIs), those data elements that will serve as metrics for monitoring the SEM plan. The KEIs could include number of applications, admits, and enrolled; first-year retention and graduation rates; demographics; etc. The KEIs are followed on the pyramid by a Data Collection and Analysis layer, the responsibility of the data team to provide information to the committees and councils for devising strategic enrollment goals, the next step on the pyramid. The next layer is consideration of campus infrastructure. What changes in staffing, organization, facilities, or technologies would be necessary to support the enrollment goals? Is the necessary infrastructure present? If not, what can be done to ensure necessary support? Armed with data and analysis, the councils work to identify strategies in the next layer, with more specific tactics to follow in the next layer. The final layer of the pyramid is the achievement of sustainable enrollment outcomes (279–283). In the *Strategic Enrollment Management Handbook* (2015), Bontrager and Green refined and expanded the SEM Frameworks while maintaining the same general approach.

SEM Frameworks Evolve

Gordon and Henderson (2024) reworked the SEM Organizational Framework to address concerns of smaller four-year and two-year colleges about having the human resources necessary to staff the SEM planning committees and councils of Bontrager and Green. While maintaining the original structure as an ideal approach to ensuring focus on both recruitment and retention (represented by separate councils) and expanding the stakeholders included in the planning process, they added two additional options: first, what they call a "mid-size sedan" version that collapses the separate recruitment and retention councils to a Recruitment/Persistence Committee, and second, a "compact" version that features one overall committee that subsumes oversight responsibilities of a steering committee with the work of recruitment and retention committees. In each case, there is an expanded charge to consult with operational staff and faculty for input to the development of tactics and action plans. This is partly to ensure trust in the process that new programs coming out of the SEM plan will be informed by advance feedback from the very people charged with implementation. And the consultation also achieves the planning goal of ensuring the campus is aware of what is happening in the SEM planning meetings, to avoid a wariness about "the room[s] where it happens" (28–29). Gordon

and Henderson also introduce a specific level on all the SEM Organizational Framework options for the campus executive team. Those who might expect that the SEM planning group will decide on goals, strategies, and tactics independently need to understand that SEM is an enterprise-wide venture that will need the imprimatur of executive leadership to move forward.

Gordon and Henderson also adjusted the SEM Planning Framework to represent seven steps to building a SEM plan (2024, 53–54):

- **Setting the Course:** This is a reframing of the vision, mission, strategic plan linkage to one of grounding the planning in the institutional "Why," a way of looking at the campus's *raison d'etre*.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Metrics that might be called indices of institutional health and will track progress toward desired outcomes of SEM goals.
- **Making the Case:** This a different twist on the data layer of planning. Internal and external environmental scans with analysis of institutional strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results (SOAR) can be used to tell stories that identify issues that demand action ("Data tell, but stories sell").
- **Strategic Enrollment and Learner Success Goals:** Broad, measurable statements of data-informed issues to drive change in enrollment/learner success. "Enrollment" is the former recruitment function; "learner success" is the former retention function.
- **Strategies:** More focused, but still broad statements that give direction to the general kinds of activities that will help reach the plan's goals without details.
- **Tactics:** Specific steps to realize strategies and achieve goals; the how-to roadmap for executing the SEM plan that includes action plans with prioritized action steps, assignment of accountability, projected budgets, timelines, etc.
- **Assessment:** Metrics and timelines for measuring progress, feedback, and improvement of the SEM plan to ensure its impact and sustainability.

LinkEx: SEM as an Add-in, not an Add-on

Gordon and Henderson also introduced to the planning framework a reliance on an entirely new configuration of SEM as an add-in rather than merely an add-on. The approaches that have shaped SEM over 50 years tend to have evolved gradually, most often from seeds that had always been present but not developed. Rarely has a new approach burst on the scene with great impact. One exception would be the concept of LinkEx, an approach born out of resistance (Gordon and Wankel 2023).

In 2015, in a SEM planning project for a statewide community college system, three AACRAO senior consultants found the planning process stalled because campus faculty and staff were overwhelmed with initiatives. The state system had enthusiastically embraced Achieving the Dream (ATD) for all colleges; many campuses were involved in Guided Pathways; some were working on Quality Initiatives for accreditation; and some were engaged in campus strategic planning. SEM planning was late to the party, and the colleges were saying, "We can't take on another new project." This "initiative fatigue" was stymying any progress on the SEM project. The consultants brainstormed a solution that has become a major addition to SEM. Many of the initiatives already underway were dealing with learner success and removing barriers to enrollment through better services—all typically on the table for potential SEM strategies and tactics. The consultants suggested that the colleges look at their existing initiatives and see which ones could double as SEM goals. The approach was that SEM is not something added *on*, but something that is added *in*. For example, colleges could link goals already developed for ATD to SEM goals, integrate what was already happening with ATD as SEM strategies and/or tactics, and extend the reach of both the existing initiatives and SEM. One campus found that the goals they had already created for ATD could be slotted in their entirety into their SEM plan. The process of linking, integrating, and extending became the concept's name: LinkEx. It is now a part of standard SEM planning prac-

tice in hundreds of colleges and universities: scan what is already happening on the campus to see how it could be used (linked and integrated) in SEM. The process elevates the campus visibility of multiple projects and builds commitment to embracing change because goals and strategies are doing double duty rather than having to be reinvented with each new initiative. It is a mark of SEM resilience and adaptability that benefits multiple programs to serve learners.

A Systems Approach to SEM

Kornowa's 2025 *Systems Approach to Strategic Enrollment Management* provided a recent synthesis of planning and organizational developments. Using a systems theory lens, the model places enrollment management practices at the center, shared by both the enrollment management division and the broader campus community, with their intersection identified as "synergy." Surrounding those practices are rings of investment, culture, and environment, while data flows through the entire model and bidirectionality shows that influence can move from external pressures inward or from campus practices outward. The framework echoes many of SEM's enduring themes—enterprise-wide responsibility, the need for resources, the role of culture and leadership, environmental scanning, and data-informed action—while making explicit that SEM is not a linear process or a single administrative structure, but an interdependent institutional system. In this respect, it echoes the GEM integrated interdependent model, reinforcing a need for services and influences across sectors that mirror the learner lifecycle.

The role of planning in SEM has seen enormous change in 50 years. The introduction of strategic planning to higher education—and its acceptance—was the major factor in enrollment management becoming strategic enrollment management. However, one might observe that another change has been the mindset of enrollment leaders and staff, for years focused on getting the job done, rather than planning how to do it effectively. Evolving attitudes about the enterprise-wide nature of SEM, the inclusion of more campus stakeholders in planning, and the greater acceptance that SEM requires campus-specific enrollment plans, not templates, have made planning more desirable. The development of detailed, prescriptive frameworks for planning has also made it more accessible.

The evolution of SEM planning has also had an impact on the scope of enrollment management. As Stan Henderson prepared to assume the AACRAO vice presidency for enrollment management in 1990, a grande dame of the admissions community told him her view of enrollment management: "No matter what fancy name you give it, it will always be 'admissions.'" However, SEM has always included both recruitment and retention. It is true that for many years retention existed in the shadow of the flashier recruitment component. The most frequent question on every campus each fall would be, "How many new freshmen do we have?", never "How many students came back?" Henderson once lamented that retention was the "Grey Lady" of SEM. Yet as planning grew more sophisticated, data and research showed the essential contribution of learners' experiences in the classroom and on campus to overall institutional enrollment health. There were really two pillars to SEM: one was recruitment, one was retention. Recruiting students was never the whole story; keeping them always was.

Learner Success

What Is Retention?

Retention has been a thread in the SEM tapestry from the beginning. Maguire's "Grand Design" included enrollment services attached to the registrar. If the "services" were not what might be learner success best practices building community and belonging today, they at least provided a mindset of service owed to enrolled students, an interest in their success.

Individual faculty in the classroom were responsible for which learners stayed or left. Learner persistence was not necessarily a desired outcome. The oft-repeated story of freshman convocation spoke volumes to the responsibility of winnowing in the classroom: "Look to the left of you," the dean would say to the assembled freshmen, "look to the right of you. One of you will not be here next year." A Duke University dean's research confirmed learners had been hearing this at many institutions going

back at least a hundred years (Nowicki 2011). Because everyone and no one owned retention, comprehensive, campus-wide programs struggled to find footing. All campuses had a director of admissions (or similar title) to provide consistency and effectiveness measures for recruitment. Who was the director of retention? Tom Huddleston (1999) was one of the first in the 1970s to assign retention responsibility to a dedicated staff unit at Bradley University, but most other colleges and universities left it to the individuals in the classroom.

SEM's Scholar

Hossler, from the beginning focused on SEM as a conduit for helping learners with college choice *and* their subsequent success, has always seen retention as a major piece of enrollment management. In both of his books for The College Board (1984, 1986), he emphasized a wide range of retention practices worthy of consideration as SEM goals. His 1990 book with John Bean features major chapters on college choice and retention research, as well as featuring successful retention programs already in place. In his early work, he lamented that early, increasingly prevalent retention programming lacked the research to back up its efficacy. For example, his research on college choice and others on student fit landed on a promising recruitment activity: recruiting *graduates* instead of just students. The mindset that recruitment looks for fit, and that fit influences the learner's satisfaction with the college experience and therefore persistence, makes intuitive sense. However, like many other early efforts, there was no evidence of efficacy (1984, 98). Hossler posited that the attention to pre-matriculation traits, as well as the characteristics of individual campuses, led many colleges to have a fatalistic view of what can be done to stanch the loss of students in course. "Given the kinds of students we attract and the type of institution we are, our attrition rate may well be a fact of life we must learn to accept" (109).

Expanding Research

This began to change in the 1980s and 1990s, when programs such as the First-year Experience at the University of South Carolina under John Gardner gained prominence as a game changer for learner success. Gardner's career-long commitment to improving learners' experiences continued to expand, addressing the second year and then the senior year, and students in transition for transfers. The research on the first-year experience was a boost to campuses interested in doing programming to scale rather than just in individual classrooms.

Perhaps the most significant contribution to the area of student success has been Vincent Tinto. His classic 1994 *Leaving College* focused on student attrition and actions colleges should take to reduce it. His Departure Theory could also be applied to underrepresented learners, as well as to those in commuter schools and traditional learners. His primary emphasis was on the importance of the classroom experience aided by the role of multiple college communities. In 2012, his book *Completing College* provided a framework to build and deploy programs to promote completion. His work maintained the emphasis on the classroom with individual faculty as the prime target for effective institutional action.

While both Gardner and Tinto have presented at the AACRAO SEM Conference, and have consulted with many AACRAO SEM practitioners, they also write for a more general audience that encompasses many different professionals in the learner success space—academic advisors, academic coaches, student engagement professionals, retention specialists, counselors, vice provosts for undergraduate education, associate deans for undergraduate programs, and faculty development staff. They have given a common language around learner persistence, departure theory, and first-year experience programming to all of those other professionals as well as SEM practitioners. As a result, more collaborators share a common understanding of the foundational underpinnings of learner success. That increases opportunities to involve a wider range of the higher education community in SEM planning, working together on SEM goals, strategies, and tactics to meet learner success challenges. This has assuredly helped to make SEM even more intentional about the holistic learner life cycle and solidify the retention pillar of SEM.

The common vocabulary for understanding learner success from the research of Hossler, Gardner, Tinto, and others became the seedbed for an even broader ambition: could SEM identify shared principles, not just shared terms, that would work across broadly different campuses with divergent missions, learners, issues, and needs? Henderson and Pollock (2021) picked up that thread directly, arguing that the fragmented, individual faculty-owned nature of retention work described earlier could be unified not by copying "best practices" wholesale, but by identifying common principles beneath them with portability across higher education's multiple, variable sectors. In this way, the Learner Success discussion above documents the maturing of retention as a field with real scholarly grounding, while "SEM as a Connector" asks what SEM does with that maturity—turning hard-won research into a connective framework of principles capable of serving every type of learner and institution.

SEM as a Connector: Developing Common Principles for Unique Best Practices

In 2020, Vivek Murthy—twice Surgeon General of the United States—wrote a well-received book about human connection. Among other data, Murthy reported on surveys and interviews showing that learners were abandoning collegiate studies because they felt unknown and disconnected on their campuses. It was a call to develop a sense of belonging at colleges and universities and inspired Henderson and Pollock to explore the role of SEM as a connector in their 2021 book, *SEM as a Connector: Principles of Practice*.

However, Henderson and Pollock also wanted to tackle an issue that bedeviled the start of most SEM planning efforts, what they called "the search for what works" (119). Campus leaders, ever alert to fiscally sound shortcuts, advocated for the use of best practices: find a place where enrollment is working and "we'll just copy what they're doing" (119) without having to go through the SEM planning process. However, experience has multiple examples of copied "best" practices that failed to show results or were counterproductive on other campuses. This is not to suggest that best practices are not something to be aware of, or even to use; but Henderson and Pollock wondered if SEM, as it had earlier focused too much on structure, was now too focused on "...the *mechanics* of the practice and not enough on the *principles* behind them (120, emphasis in original).

> *The mechanics, those moving parts of a program, the people, units, action steps, etc., are idiosyncratic to the institution where [that program] resides. However, if we look at the principles behind the program, its foundations, if you will, those are portable. A set of principles of practice that everyone recognized and used, would be a powerful tool to ensure that our campuses were practice ready. Programs and services that followed the principles would have a better chance of becoming any institution's* own *best practices* (120, emphasis in original).

The book featured seven case studies of SEM's ability to connect learners to their campuses and build relationships that would engender a sense of belonging. The cases ranged from dealing with barriers to connections at a large flagship institution (Hutton), to connecting faculty at a private liberal arts university with the learners in front of them through data (Taylor, Hayes, and Parks), to finding institutional voice at a community college (Moore and Hayes), to building community for graduate students (Livesay and Cantrell), to using inclusion to build relationships at a HBCU (Morris), to developing partnerships between faculty and learners in Canada (Smith and Gottheil), to rethinking high impact practices (HIPs) to meet learners where they want to be (Thurmer).

Each case represented a different sector of higher education, but there were common threads of SEM that guided building connections regardless of size, level, or demographics of the various institutions. Henderson and Pollock used these threads to develop a set of principles of practice to guide colleges and universities in the mechanics of building goals, strategies, and tactics for SEM plans:

- Learners at the core:
  - → Shift emphasis from just recruitment to the holistic learner experience, with

all aspects connected: recruitment is the first step in retention.
  - → Learners increasingly articulate their needs; they are partners in their education, not just recipients of it.
- Faculty as the focus:
  - → As those who most often interact with learners, faculty should be more central to SEM planning.
  - → Faculty culture is identified as helping improve learner success.
  - → SEM and faculty are partners and collaborators in an institution-wide enterprise.
- Data as Partner in Service:
  - → Data are too often seen as a challenge: where is it, how to get it, how to analyze it, how to allocate needed staff.
  - → Data, as a key resource in SEM, should be seen as a team member, not just a tool, in identifying issues and pointing the way to solutions.
- Community as the Organizing Structure:
  - → Building connections will build community and a sense of belonging.
  - → Community can set expectations: members are called on to make a difference through their participation and contributions.
- Inclusion as the Outcome:
  - → Diversity is necessary but not sufficient for inclusion.
  - → Predisposition to inclusion will increase learner awareness of equity issues.
  - → Learners need to see themselves in faculty and staff to build a sense of belonging in the community.

Applying the principles to the SEM planning process gives a template to measure potential goals, strategies, and tactics for maximum impact on learner success and campus enrollment health. SEM planners are repeatedly urged to choose what will be *essential* plan elements, not just the very important ones. Measuring a potential goal, strategy, or tactic against all five principles of practice is a way to identify more strategically what is essential, as well as avoid the potential trap of focusing too much on the mechanics of copying or adapting another campus's best practices.

Gordon and Henderson (2024) note that the principles can also function as a tool for blending competing SEM campus cultures (Kalsbeek 2006, 2007) for SEM planning collaboration and commitment. Putting learners at the core will bring student affairs and faculty committed to learner success onto the same page. Focus on faculty will make faculty more present and willing to contribute to SEM planning and its implementation. Working to create academic programs learners want will include faculty and emphasize the academic context as well as the learners' needs. Using community as an organizing structure can help bring faculty and administrators together to set expectations for learners to connect and engage on the campus, modeling what learners see in their home communities, places of worship, or workplaces. And positioning inclusion as an outcome expressed as belonging can help external-facing communications and marketing staff better present a positive value currently under political attack. Data as an anthropomorphized team member works to provide the service of disaggregation of data on diverse students identifying areas of strength and needed support, tying all aspects of campus culture together for informed decision-making around learner success.

The use of principles can have significant impact on all higher education segments, perhaps especially those that serve underrepresented or marginalized populations such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities. Likewise, the principles of practice benefit community colleges and four-year commuter campuses that attract "the new normal" learners, adults with some college but no degree or those returning or starting to retool their skillsets. The culture and learner needs differ at such institutions, and best practices at elite flagships or other Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) may not meet those needs. However, the principles of practice may smooth the path for diverse institutions with diverse learners to find the unique

goals, strategies, and tactics that speak to and for the learners on those campuses.

Sanchez (2018), speaking for HBCUs, argues that succeeding as an enrollment manager on one of these campuses requires effective communication, intentional collaboration, and strategic coordination to build institutional trust and align faculty, staff, and board around a shared enrollment vision. He framed this as increasingly urgent because looming demographic shifts and a shrinking pool of college-going students will force HBCUs to sharpen their institutional distinctiveness and treat enrollment as a mission-wide, life-cycle-spanning responsibility rather than an admissions-only function. This supports the assertion that there are common principles that apply to all types of colleges and universities and even suggests additional examples of Henderson and Pollock's portable foundations of principles dealing with leadership. Indeed, Susan Gottheil has also argued (personal communication to S. Henderson, September 3, 2021) that there may be additional principles that should be identified. And, as noted in the "Academic Lens on SEM" discussion above, the academic context gave rise to a first set of principles that could be added to what Henderson and Pollock created. The concept of an expanded set of principles of practice offers multiple possibilities for future SEM development to ensure the voices of diverse learners are heard and that the needs and interests of their diverse types of institutions are met.

SEM as a Connector with its Principles of Practice is now the second book of AACRAO's SEM Trilogy, positioned to play a major role in determining what goals, strategies, and tactics will populate the SEM planning frameworks laid out in *SEM Core Concepts* (book one) and smoothing the way to implementing and sustaining the SEM Plan as presented in *SEM in Action* (book three).

Henderson and Pollock's third principle—positioning "Data as Partner in Service" rather than a mere tool—signals a shift already underway in how SEM practitioners understood their most essential resource, one that had been fraught since the field's earliest days. That principle, born from the *SEM as a Connector* case studies' emphasis on disaggregating data to identify strengths and needs among diverse learners, anticipates the deeper argument that data's role in SEM must evolve beyond static reporting toward active partnership in decision-informing and making. This idea carries forward into a closer look at how data grew from simply being SEM's *lingua franca* into a true partner—one that turns raw numbers into the knowledge and action needed to build real connections with learners.

Data: Accessible and Effective

Data as a SEM Foundation

"If there is consensus about anything, it is that Data and Research are critical components of the SEM process. Not only is data analysis integral to the formulation of SEM plans, but it is an important tool in implementation and assessment of strategies and tactics" (Kerlin, "Essentials of SEM" Module 1, Part B, Spring 2026 class).

"In fact, the *lingua franca* of SEM is data. One AACRAO wag even suggested that SEM *lusts* after data. No presentation or publication on SEM would fail to mention the essential nature of data. No SEM planning project that did not start with an environmental scan could expect to be successful. Data are the major tools of SEM" (Henderson and Pollock 2021, 129).

This has been true since the beginning: Jack Maguire's "Grand Design" included "the right information" (read data and research) along with the "right people" in the person of Bob Lay's expertise in data and analysis. Data are also an integral part of the academic context in which colleges and universities live. Faculty engage with data in their research. When SEM leaders use data to inform about issues relating to enrollment and learner success, faculty will prick up their ears. Issues take on more meaning with data, and funding can follow more readily than it would with even the most sophisticated intuitive thinking unsubstantiated by data.

Data and SEM: A Fraught Relationship

Although data have been at the heart of enrollment management from the beginning, and faculty have an affinity for all things data and research, SEM's relationship with data can be fraught. A significant challenge has been the traditional aversion of many SEM foot soldiers—the admissions counselors, financial aid officers,

advisors, student services professionals—to research. "I'm a people person; if I had wanted to do research, I would be in the faculty." These are the people who prefer "feel-good" evaluations of recruitment programs: "Everyone was so positive about the open house." But did it drive enrollment in the fall? is the pertinent question that requires data and research to answer.

But it also goes deeper than the people who staff SEM offices. When consultants begin working with a campus on SEM planning, the main roadblocks often revolve around issues of data: availability of data, ability to collect what is available, inability to analyze it, lack of campus awareness of what data can tell. Some institutions must start at square one to build a campus culture of data to educate and engage faculty and staff in finding, retrieving, analyzing, and using data. Unfortunately, the campuses most likely to have these problems are regional publics, minority-serving institutions, small private liberal arts colleges, and community colleges. Required state and federal reporting saps the limited time of small staffs in institutional research, leaving little or no time for research on enrollment and learner success issues, barriers, and/or opportunities. (Henderson and Pollock).

Further, users of data in SEM must realize that it is never static. As Kerlin (2026) wrote, "the world of data and research is ever-expanding and continually challenging. We are moving from analyzing trends (... data seen in the rear view mirror...) to strategies in predictive analytics (looking ahead). We are improving our internal information systems, and needing to do a better job in assessing constantly moving external factors. We are exploring the uses and tools of Big Data.... We are even struggling to enable our colleagues to understand and use the data and information we manage to produce!" (Kerlin 2026).

There are also issues of language in defining what data actually do. Consider the terms "data-driven" and "data-informed" decision-making. The use of both terms in the literature suggests they are interchangeable in meaning. Fretwell (Hundrieser 2012), however, made a significant distinction between the two. He suggested that many colleges and universities have ample data but fail to use it appropriately to meet their enrollment challenges: "They are data-driven rather than data-informed. There is a critical difference between the two, as the latter approach means data informs the development of strategies with related tactics or action items to accomplish the strategies" (62). He goes on to explain that data-driven means data are seen as single elements outside the full scope of integrated data necessary for making truly informed decisions. Kerlin (2026) explained the difference as a matter of how one identifies issues. The data-driven issue might be, "Our retention from Fall to Fall of new students is 50 percent." The data-informed issue would be, "Our retention from Fall to Fall of new students is 50 percent, and we have not moved the needle in the last six years. Sixty percent of the leavers are those who did not return for the Winter/Spring semester and who had at least two grades of D or below in their Fall classes." She continues, "This exposes a more nuanced understanding of where the retention challenges might lie. It also exposes the need for some more clarification of exactly where attrition is occurring so that interventions and supports are more targeted" (Kerlin 2026).

Meeting Data Challenges

Despite these challenges, there has been no lack of solutions to meet them in enrollment management's 50 years of evolution. As rising enrollment leaders in the 1990s began to see the connection between strategic planning and strategic enrollment management, they became more aware of the essential need for data and more creative in finding the resources to provide and use data to inform enrollment policy and practice. The chief enrollment manager at one public flagship used vacant admissions counselor positions to create an enrollment research unit for his division. The output of the new unit of ten research staff proved it could achieve the university's goals to increase quality and quantity more effectively than the admissions counselors could (personal communication to author 1995). Even those without the luxury of cannibalizing vacant staff positions for enrollment data support found admittedly less spectacular but still meaningful ways to

infuse data and research into the increasingly strategic work of enrollment management. One urban institution created a director of enrollment data position in its SEM division to collaborate with institutional research and college data specialists. A public liberal arts college added two positions to its institutional research staff to provide needed SEM-specific data and analysis. And, as technology enhanced both data availability and utilization, more campuses began to apply customer relationship management (CRM), data analytics, prediction models, and data tracking. Whether with an enterprise student information system or a stand-alone divisional product, colleges and universities found that technology could help produce the data to fuel SEM.

There are many brilliant—and complex—approaches to data in SEM. Wohlgemuth (2015) laid out a scholarly call for institutional collaboration with multiple sources of data and an analytical toolkit. Goff, Williams, and Kilgore (2016) make a cogent argument for and give an example of building a SEM analytics reporting portfolio to create a data-rich environment for SEM decisions. Hutton (2021) detailed the use of predictive modeling for building learner connections. However, given the challenges mentioned above, what may be the most valuable development in the SEM data sphere is a straightforward understanding of the process of using data for enrollment and learner success.

Data in Everyday Language

For years, Ward (2006) filled conference ballrooms with fireside chat-like presentations that broke down the process of using data in SEM decision-making into accessible and manageable pieces. In a *College and University* article, she reprised her presentations by discussing the progression from providing just *data* (More men are enrolling) to providing *information* from multiple data sets (There are more men, but they are moving from business to pre-med) to providing *meaning* (If the trend continues, more science courses and lab resources will be needed). To support this progression, the institution needs commitment to a strategic plan, a strategic enrollment plan, and an assessment plan to track outcomes. Ward's approach called for a common set of strategic business questions, asked in hierarchical order. While the questions may be the same across the higher education sector, the answers will be unique to individual colleges and universities and will create enrollment plans that fit the specific institution.

- What kinds of decisions are made related to enrollment?
- What kind of information is needed to make good decisions?
- What data are needed to create good information?
- What is the best way to obtain the data?
- Who should receive the data and in what format?

While different units bring different perspectives to the planning table, planning success requires mutual understanding of unique contributions from various stakeholder groups and recognition of where collaboration will be necessary to achieve enrollment goals. As units work through the strategic business questions, the chief enrollment officer keeps executive leadership apprised of the work and solicits feedback. Ward described what has become a foundational feature of SEM: the iterative nature of the process that makes data both available and usable.

Ward's matter-of-fact approach to data is a companion to Kerlin's down-to-earth conversational treatment of all matters data. Kerlin (2021) made data much more relatable to more SEM practitioners when she describes it as telling stories: "Data tell, but stories sell." Stories capture people's attention by framing issues that demand attention and response: "What are you going to do about this issue?" The point is that more staff and administrators can more easily grasp meaning by turning data into stories and then addressing the issues those stories frame. Henderson and Pollock's advocacy for seeing data as a team member providing service rather than a tool on the shelf extends the effort to make data more accessible, understandable, relatable, and more successfully embedded in SEM. All SEM professionals should take to heart Richard Riccardi's (2018) admonition, "Data analysis is a process. Data will not give us

an answer. In its raw form, data are just signals. With context, they become information. With meaning, they become knowledge."

Data in the Age of AI: Achieving Data Equity, Accelerating Human Judgment

The progression that Ward, Kerlin, Henderson and Pollock, and others describe—from raw data to information to knowledge to actionable strategy—has always demanded significant human effort, institutional capacity, and time. The arrival of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education introduces a force that could compress and amplify that entire progression in ways SEM pioneers could scarcely have imagined. AI-powered tools can ingest enrollment data at a scale and speed no institutional research office could match, moving from Riccardi's "raw signals" to contextualized information almost instantaneously. Predictive analytics that once required dedicated staff and costly vendor contracts are becoming embedded in platforms accessible even to the colleges that Henderson and Pollock identify as chronically under-resourced in their data capacity. Most consequentially for SEM, AI holds the promise of finally bridging the gap between the data-driven and the data-informed—not by replacing human judgment, but by surfacing the nuanced, multi-variable patterns that Kerlin described as exposing where retention challenges truly lie. In doing so, it may transform data from a team member, as Henderson and Pollock envision it, into something closer to a strategic partner.

There is no question that artificial intelligence (AI) will revolutionize the work of strategic enrollment management in a way never seen before. Any honest accounting of AI's potential impact on SEM data and research must hold two realities in tension simultaneously: the genuine promise of tools that could democratize analytical capacity across institutional types, and the very real risks that accompany any powerful technology introduced into complex human systems. AI will amplify SEM's analytical capacity, but human expertise will remain essential for interpreting its findings, understanding institutional context, and turning insight into action.

Riccardi's formulation—data as signals, information with context, knowledge with meaning—remains the right framework, but AI has the power to dramatically shorten the distance between the first and the last. The institutions that will benefit most are those that approach AI not as a replacement for human judgment and institutional wisdom, but as an accelerant for both. Ward's strategic business questions do not become obsolete in an AI-assisted environment; they become more answerable. Kerlin's stories still need to be told—but AI may help enrollment professionals find them faster, and tell them better, and with unparalleled precision.

Concluding Thoughts

In 2001, Henderson suggested that SEM was "on the brink of a profession." Twenty-five years later, in 2026, SEM can arguably claim a full-fledged professional designation. It has

- A history;
- A literature;
- Not just scholars and practitioners, but also scholar-practitioners;
- Conferences and professional communities;
- Conceptual frameworks;
- Planning methods;
- Assessment practices;
- Academic degree programs and credentials;
- Specialized adaptations such as GEM;
- And an expanding future shaped by technology and AI.

Few would now see SEM as just a collection of administrative offices tucked under possibly multiple senior officers on a campus. Chief enrollment officers increasingly sit at the cabinet table with chief academic officers, chief student affairs officers, chief financial officers, etc. (Kilgore 2023). Their portfolios more often track the learner life cycle rather than just handing learners off to another siloed office. The SEM profession ensures that services flow seamlessly as learners move from the recruitment stage into matriculation, to connections and engagement that will ensure their success and graduation as happy alumni ready to give back.

With this happy achievement for what Hossler called the most significant development in higher education administration since the rise of the development office in the 1950s (2015, 11), where does SEM go from here?

"At its core, SEM lives in the present to plan for the future" (Gordon and Henderson 2024, 89). However, few would argue that American higher education is in turmoil, and much of that revolves around enrollment:

- 36 percent of Americans had confidence in higher education in 2023, sharply lower than in 2015 (57 percent) and 2018 (48 percent) (Blake 2023a; Brenan 2023).
- Only 33 percent of Americans aged eighteen to 29 think college is worth it if they need loans to go (NORC 2022).
- New college enrollments are expected to drop by 13 percent from 2023 to 2041. Thirty-eight states will see a decline, seven will see 20 percent or more, and four (California, Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania) will account for 75 percent of the total drop (Lane 2024).
- Fall 2025 international enrollment in the United States fell by 17 percent (Blinder Nov. 17, 2025).
- Four hundred forty-two of 1,700 private non-profit colleges are at risk of closing or merging in ten years. One hundred twenty are in the highest risk category. (Marcus 2026.)
- Nearly 20 percent of presidents say it is somewhat or very likely their institutions will merge or close in ten years. (Custer and Flaherty 2025).

These data points may test SEM's hard-won professional stature in the years ahead. Consider the depth of these challenges:

The increasing cost of college may become SEM's Achilles' heel. SEM can sharpen recruitment, improve communications, optimize financial aid, build predictive models, and strengthen learner success strategies, but those tools operate within a larger affordability equation that SEM alone cannot solve. If students and families no longer believe college is affordable or worth the cost, enrollment strategy is weakened at its foundation. For the next era of SEM, affordability must be understood as a central dimension of enrollment health, not merely a pricing or financial aid issue. Cost shapes whether learners enroll, whether they persist, whether they feel they belong, whether they complete, and whether they believe the institution has delivered on its promise. The challenge for SEM will be to connect affordability, value, learner success, and institutional sustainability without allowing short-term revenue pressure to overwhelm mission.

High costs, combined with a lack of confidence in higher education, faced with declining demographics and shrinking demand, create a perfect storm for colleges and universities—and SEM. Safety valves for enrollment loss in the past—graduate enrollments, international enrollments—seem to be shut down with changes to loan caps and loan limits for graduate students and visa limits and diminished interest for international students. The challenge for SEM will be to convince faculty and administration that they must not only embrace the fact that nearly 60 percent of learners are focused on college as a way to get a better job, but also the expectation that learners increasingly want a say in their education. As Laura Wankel (2020) said in a keynote speech at the 2020 AACRAO SEM Conference, "We do traditional learners well, but what about the non-traditional learners, the new normal in higher education?" A "sages on the stages" mentality is not the kind of partnership learners today are looking for. Wankel's suggestion that their position is "Just in time, just enough, just for me," is a wake-up call to rethink what is on offer in our colleges and universities. Different scheduling, more options for alternative credentials, recognition that the new normal learners are dealing with life as well as college are the new expectations. SEM will need to navigate the changes in policy as well as attitude on many campuses. Community colleges, always more amenable to learners with jobs, families, life might be in a position to tutor four-year schools on how to partner with learners. The 40.4 million learners with some college but no degree, the two-thirds of learners who start community college intending to transfer but

never do are prime targets for removing barriers and building pathways to the four-year degree. Likewise, SEM will be called on to serve the 50 percent of learners who never transfer when their college closes.

SEM in the future will embrace systems thinking, artificial intelligence, strategy, academic partnership, and the same enduring commitment to helping institutions and learners find the right fit with one another. Future SEM will bring to colleges and universities strategic discipline with adaptive intelligence, technological power with human judgment, and enrollment ambition with an unwavering commitment to learner success.

A History Still Being Written: A Call to Welcome Those Who Will Write It

But "learner success" and "the new normal learner" cannot remain abstractions—they raise a harder question about whose experience has actually shaped SEM's story so far.

This profile of enrollment management's first 50 years draws primarily on the practitioners, scholars, and institutions most visible in the published literature, national conferences, and association leadership. It is a record that, by its nature, reflects the outsized influence, if not historical dominance, of public flagships and private elites, so many of which are predominantly white institutions, in shaping SEM's early documentation and discourse. Those institutions enroll 20 percent of today's college learners. The other 80 percent are enrolled at regional publics, small private colleges, minority-serving institutions, and community colleges. These are what Laura Wankel (2020) called "the new normal students." These learners are the ones with their textbooks on the kitchen table, a crying baby in the background, a demanding boss with an urgent work project, expenses and bills to juggle, and life to navigate. Their reality begs the question: Does Enrollment Management at 50 reflect a response to their lived educational experiences? Have the pioneers and pacesetters in this article, if not themselves from elite institutions, at least influenced by them, been able to tell the full story of what SEM is or should be?

We see this question as an opening rather than a conclusion. Every research effort should suggest additional areas of investigation. This one sends a clarion call to researchers and practitioners at the colleges and universities of the 80 percent to add their voices and their own lived experiences to the SEM narrative of the next 50 years. In the spirit of Braxton and Hossler's (2019) view of the marriage of research and practice, chronicling the challenges and solutions on the campuses of the 80 percent can shape and sharpen new threads in the ever-expanding tapestry of SEM.

The responsibility of identifying, recruiting, and supporting these practitioner-researchers does not rest solely with them. Working at the institutions of the 80 percent, these professionals themselves will juggle their own challenges—inadequate staff and budgets, position descriptions that layer on responsibility, lack of mentorship, family responsibilities, and work-life balance. The current stewards of SEM have a professional responsibility to recognize and mentor those who show curiosity about new ways of doing old jobs, or even contrariness about how SEM has always been. From curiosity and contrariness will come breakthroughs and benefits for learners and institutions both. And associations, such as AACRAO, also have a role in giving voice to new SEM innovators serving the 80 percent. Associations' professional development programs need to augment their more passive opportunities of conferences, webinars, and newsletters. What is needed in addition is dynamic, experiential opportunities targeted to the practitioners serving the 80 percent for association grant-sponsored research culminating in publication sponsored through programs such as SEM-EP and ASCEND.

In a time of great upheaval in higher education, we need not just the great ideas of our great institutions but the equally great ideas coming from institutions that have daily contact with those 80 percent of learners; we need to maintain faith in the ability of higher education to make their lives better, that college is worth it, that we are partners with them. SEM has a major role to play in this endeavor. It should be the commitment of our profession for the next 50 years.

Looking Ahead: Empowering the Next Generation of Modern Sem Professionals

Meeting that commitment starts with a question of succession: who will carry SEM's next 50 years forward, and how are we preparing them?

If SEM's legitimacy rests on its capacity to generate, test, revise, and apply new models rather than defend one fixed orthodoxy, then the field's future depends less on any single framework and more on the people who will carry that capacity forward. The pioneers profiled in this article built SEM's foundation by borrowing from marketing, economics, sociology, and organizational theory, then testing what worked against the lived realities of their own campuses. The next generation inherits a more codified profession, but also a far more volatile environment in which to practice it. Empowering that generation is not simply a matter of succession planning. It is a matter of professional survival.

Three shifts seem likely to define how new enrollment professionals are prepared, credentialed, and supported.

- **Expertise:** The first is a widening of the profession's entry points and its definition of expertise. SEM has historically drawn heavily from admissions and financial aid. The field's future will need to draw more deliberately from community colleges, marginalized institutions, academic affairs, student affairs, and institutional research, reflecting the enterprise-wide nature of SEM today. Likewise, it will need to seek professionals who themselves embody the non-traditional, some-college-no-degree, and transfer populations SEM is now being asked to serve. A profession built primarily by and for traditional-age, first-time-in-college recruitment will struggle to serve the "just in time, just enough, just for me" learner Wankel (Gordon and Wankel 2023) described. Mentorship structures, professional associations, and hiring practices will need to actively cultivate that broader range of experience rather than defaulting to familiar pipelines.
- **Technological and Analytic Fluency in a Human Setting:** The second is technological and analytical fluency, paired deliberately with human judgment. Artificial intelligence and predictive modeling will increasingly shape recruitment, yield, and retention decisions. New professionals will need enough technical literacy to question a model's assumptions, not just accept its outputs. However, data science does not replace the relational skillsets that have always been SEM's core competency: understanding a prospective learner's circumstances, building trust with faculty who are wary of enrollment metrics and tactics, negotiating with a CFO who wants revenue certainty and a president who wants acclaim associated with enrollment success. The professionals who thrive will be those who can move fluidly between the language of learners and missions, the language of dashboards.
- **Systems Fluency:** The third is a move from tactical training to systems fluency. Early SEM practitioners often entered the field through admissions or financial aid offices and learned strategy on the job, one enrollment cycle at a time. Tomorrow's professionals will need to arrive already fluent in systems thinking, able to see how a shift in financial aid packaging ripples into retention, how a curricular change alters recruitment messaging, how a state's demographic trajectory reshapes a five-year enrollment plan. Programs like AACRAO's SEM-EP, along with the growing number of graduate certificates and courses in enrollment management, are early attempts to formalize this kind of preparation. That work will need to expand and mature, not as a credential for its own sake, but because the complexity Wankel (2020), Hossler (Hossler and Bontrager 2015), and others describe cannot be managed by instinct alone.

None of this guarantees SEM will meet the challenges outlined above. Affordability, demographic decline, and eroding public confidence are forces larger than any professional development strategy. But a field this young, only 50 years into its own self-recognition, has one advantage its size does not yet reflect: the ability to decide, deliberately, who it trains next and how. That decision, more than any single model or framework,

may determine whether SEM's next 50 years look like a mature profession meeting its moment, or a field that mistook its early success for permanence.

SEM's professional legitimacy rests not on having one definitive approach, but rather on having a durable capacity to generate, test, revise, and apply models, frameworks, lenses, concepts, themes, tools that can change institutional offerings, policies, learner diversity, learner supports, campus environment to meet the times and the challenges they present. Above all, SEM's central question will endure: How does this particular institution attract, enroll, engage, support, graduate, and remain connected to the learners it is best positioned to serve?

The tapestry of SEM is therefore unfinished. Its threads—structure, strategy, academic context, planning, learner success, principles of practice, data, research, community, and now artificial intelligence—continue to be rewoven as colleges and universities confront new pressures and possibilities. That adaptability may be SEM's most important legacy. The field has endured because it has never been only a model, an office, a plan, or a set of tactics. At its best, SEM is a disciplined way of helping institutions understand themselves, serve learners more effectively, and align enrollment health with academic mission. That was the promise embedded in the Grand Design, and it remains the work ahead.

Part Two—Pioneers and Pacesetters: The Faces of SEM

The Pioneers and Pacesetters introduced here represent the architects, scholars, association leaders, consultants, and campus executives who collectively turned enrollment from a set of disconnected, often intuition-driven, functions into enterprise-wide, evidence-informed strategy linking recruitment, pricing and aid, student services, retention, and learner success. Across five decades, these individuals coined the language, wrote the foundational texts and theories, created the first SEM organizations and conferences, undertook the research, professionalized the field, advanced data analytics and planning frameworks, and translated SEM into practice and scholarship across sectors—from community colleges, regional campuses, minority-serving institutions, flagship publics to private universities and colleges, graduate and professional programs, as well as system-level organizations.

Documenting them matters because SEM's history is also higher education's recent history: how colleges responded to demographic shifts, competition, affordability pressures, equity imperatives, access, and accountability for outcomes. Capturing who shaped the ideas, the infrastructure, and the norms preserves institutional memory, credits often-invisible leadership, and gives today's practitioners a clearer lineage of concepts and choices that still govern how campuses pursue access, sustainability, and student success.

Together, these 87 profiles reveal SEM not as a single lineage, but as a tapestry of interconnected threads and contributions. Some threads capture the earliest scaffolding of the field—the theorists, teams, and conference founders whose books, partnerships, and gatherings gave enrollment management its name and its first institutional home. Others follow the associations and offices that sustained and professionalized the work over decades, building the policy infrastructure and credentialing pathways that turned a set of ideas into a recognized profession. Another reflects SEM's growing technical sophistication, as data, consulting frameworks, and financial strategy became central to how institutions understood and managed enrollment. Still others show how SEM's boundaries expanded outward—into community colleges, graduate education, and international contexts—while a parallel thread pushed the field to center learners themselves, elevating access, equity, and retention as core concerns rather than afterthoughts to admissions numbers. Rounding out the picture is the thread of practitioners whose on-the-ground results made the case for SEM in the most concrete terms: the marketers and recruiters who reshaped institutional

image, the leaders who carried SEM principles into executive and presidential roles, and the campuses whose documented turnarounds became case studies in their own right. No single thread tells the whole story, but together they stitch the collaborative, multi-generational effort behind 50 years of enrollment management.

Their biographies focus on their contributions to SEM, not their degrees, not always their institutions or titles, not all their publications, or offices held in associations or on boards. These are thumbnail sketches designed to communicate how what they did made a difference in what SEM is today: what they pioneered or what pace they set. They are treated as equals—each gets the same amount of copy, each is a thread in the SEM tapestry. SEM wouldn't be the same without each of them.

Looking ahead to the next 50 years of SEM, today's rising generation of SEM leaders, researchers, and practitioners—who are already leading and shaping the field—will create and advance the future practices and scholarship of this still-nascent profession. This next generation will bring fresh perspectives, bold ideas, and an enthusiasm that will carry SEM into territories still not imagined—and it is their hands that will ultimately write the next chapter of this field's history. The pioneers and pacesetters are bound to those who rise today by a shared commitment to excellence and discovery in celebration of not only where SEM has been, but the extraordinary places it will reach, the learners it will touch, and the lives it will change.

The task of identifying such a list of pioneers and pacesetters is fraught with the anxiety of leaving somebody out. The authors have sought input from multiple colleagues to check the list for missing or forgotten individuals. Those colleagues' good counsel has helped immeasurably in the effort to ensure the list is as comprehensive and inclusive as possible. Apologies are due in advance for any remaining omissions.

Read on to meet some of the most interesting individuals in the last 50 years of enrollment management.

Note: Teal-colored bookmarks (🔖) demark those who were featured in an interview published in AACRAO's *College and University* journal.

- **Thomas Abrahamson** served in senior admissions and enrollment management positions at DePaul University in Chicago from 1985 to 1994. During his time there, he developed and implemented one of the nation's first sophisticated enrollment management and marketing divisions. For 22 years, he worked at Lipman Hearne, serving as president of its enrollment management division. He co-authored a chapter, "Applying Marketing Strategies in Student Recruitment" in *The Strategic Management of College Enrollments* and co-authored the book, *Net Proceeds: Increased Revenues from Enrollment and Advancement. Guaranteed!*
- **J. Victor Baldridge** was a prominent higher education researcher and professor at UCLA and Stanford University in the 1970–1980s, with expertise in campus governance and conflict. He was an enrollment management pioneer, co-authoring a seminal book, *Strategies for Effective Enrollment Management* (1982), which created a platform to manage the era's enrollment crisis. The authors called for a comprehensive strategic planning approach, identified a range of organizational options, gave a voice to retention, and advocated for institutional quality. Their work laid a foundation for the SEM scholars and practitioners who followed them.
- **Janie Barnett** served AACRAO for nearly 21 years, retiring in 2019 as associate executive director. With a style described as "passionate, energetic, quick-thinking whirling dervish meets pragmatism, leadership, organization, and aplomb," she played a major role in taking AACRAO from struggling to thriving during her tenure, touching on the areas of meetings, professional development, membership, corporate partners, international relations, and more. That included support for growing the annual SEM conference to record attendance and nurturing the SEM Endorsement Program, always ensuring that SEM would be a pillar of AACRAO.
- **Ernest Beals** was a regional director of the College Board who had a major role in bringing SEM to a national audience. He organized two College Board sponsored conferences which created a pragmatic

model of best practice sessions to appeal to more institutions. After moving to Georgia State University as dean of admissions, he served as the first chair of AACRAO's enrollment management committee where he implemented AACRAO University as a conference within a conference. Most significantly, he was then named a member of the founding committee that created the AACRAO SEM conference.

- **John P. Bean** was a prominent higher education researcher and scholar at Indiana University. His research focus was on student retention and outcomes, and he frequently published in major research journals, for which he also served as a consulting editor. He co-authored and edited *The Strategic Management of College Enrollments* (1990), which was the first enrollment management book to be published by a major publishing house (Jossey-Bass). It immediately sparked increased interest in SEM and spurred adoption by more institutions. Bean was an invited presenter at the first AACRAO SEM conference.
- **Jim Black** began his work in SEM at small colleges and is the founder of the National Conference on Retention in Small Colleges. At the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, he developed a comprehensive SEM structure and plan with full engagement by the academic colleges of the university. His experiences and his presentation skills were a perfect combination for plenaries, keynotes, workshops, and presentations, as well as multiple publications, including *Strategic Enrollment Management Revolution* (2001) for AACRAO. He served as director of the SEM conference from 1998–2003. He left AACRAO for private consulting.
- **Jon Boeckenstedt** is widely regarded as one of the most influential data analysts and thought leaders in enrollment management. He is perhaps best known for his blog, *Manage by the Numbers*, where he demystified complex enrollment data and made it accessible to practitioners across the field, challenging conventional wisdom on topics like standardized testing, college rankings, and tuition discounting. Boeckenstedt also contributed to a SEM culture of transparency and evidence-based thinking, pushing enrollment managers to question assumptions and rely on honest interpretation of data rather than trends or anecdotes.
- **Bob Bontrager** was a successful SEM practitioner at Oregon State University, but his most significant impact on SEM was as an influential national thought leader with AACRAO. Eventually serving as senior director of AACRAO consulting and SEM initiatives, he chaired the AACRAO SEM conference, launched AACRAO consulting as a major association service, and extended AACRAO SEM's reach internationally. He co-developed the SEM Frameworks concept for process, structure, and planning and co-edited the seminal *Handbook of SEM*. He was a mentor to many on this list and to many who will contribute in the future.
- **John M. Braxton** has built his career as a professor at Vanderbilt's Peabody College advancing the scholarly and practical foundations of SEM. His research on college persistence has addressed and advanced SEM's core retention pillar. With Don Hossler, he established a framework for connecting the needs of enrollment professionals with the work of higher education researchers. His research on the institutionalization of SEM demonstrated the wide adoption of SEM structures across higher education sectors. Through his body of work, he stands as one of the most influential voices bridging SEM research and institutional practice.
- **Guilbert Brown** is the rare budget officer who understands SEM, and he could translate "budget-ese" to "SEM-ese." He served as chief budget officer at multiple institutions through a 30-year career in which he became increasingly proficient in, and supportive of, SEM. He was the co-author of a major AACRAO SEM book, *SEM and Institutional Success: Integrating Enrollment, Finance, and Student Access*. He presented his blended approach to finance and SEM at AACRAO, as well as national business (NACUBO), research (AIR), and planning (SCUP) organizations.
- **Kimberley Buster-Williams** has a 30-year track record of SEM success at multiple institutions, making her a nationally recognized practitioner. She is currently

an integral leader in innovative SEM work at George Washington University, focused on retention and learner success. Since 2016, she has also served as Assistant Director of the SEM Endorsement Program and is an AACRAO senior consultant, as well as a frequent SEM presenter and author. Reflecting her passion for both SEM and higher education history, she is the author of a valuable reference work: *History of American Higher Education: A Primer for Enrollment Managers*.

- **Marc M. Camille** became president of Albertus Magnus college after serving as a nationally recognized senior SEM officer at multiple Catholic and private colleges. He has achieved spectacular SEM success as president at Albertus with a 54 percent enrollment increase and designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution. His mission-driven approach to enrollment prioritizes serving underrepresented students and reframes institutional success around student outcomes. He is the author of "Ethics and Strategic Enrollment Management" in the *Handbook of Strategic Enrollment Management*. Camille epitomizes the moniker of "SEM president."
- **Frank Campanella** was the first to use the phrase "enrollment management" in a 1974 memo at Boston College. He was a new executive vice president, charged with addressing the college's dire enrollment and financial crisis. In the memo, he outlined a new approach that would put admissions, financial aid, and registrar into a combined operation. Of the fifteen people receiving the memo, fourteen were opposed; only one liked it: the newly minted admissions dean and former physics professor, Jack Maguire. Campanella got approval from his president and moved forward with the plan, centralizing the three operations under Maguire to implement.
- **Douglas L. Christiansen** is Vanderbilt University's chief enrollment strategist and a nationally recognized SEM leader in enrollment strategy, access, equity, and revenue modeling. Under his leadership, Vanderbilt has grown significantly in both selectivity and diversity. In 2009, he spearheaded "Opportunity Vanderbilt"—a groundbreaking no-loan financial aid program that has raised over $183 million and reduced student borrowing by 73 percent, becoming a model for universities across the country. He has served as chair of the Board of Trustees for the College Board and sat on the National Task Force on Admissions in the 21st Century.
- **Tom Colaner** was the regional director of ACT in Ohio for 35 years. He was instrumental in designing ACT's Enrollment Information Service (EIS) that provided institutions with marketing and yield data by population segments. Ohio's ACT council also sponsored an annual conference, which Colaner used as a model for the first national ACT Enrollment Planners conference in 1986. Its success was an impetus to AACRAO's SEM programming, and Colaner was a member of the committee that created AACRAO's first SEM conference, intended to be in partnership with ACT. The AACRAO Board presciently decided on sole sponsorship.
- **Paul Combe** was the financial aid officer in Maguire's "Grand Design" team at Boston College (BC). He redirected aid to new students instead of reserving it for continuing students. He co-authored "An Econometric Model for Packaging Financial Aid" (1983), which explained and embraced a new financial aid philosophy for BC. He later became president and CEO of American Student Assistance and held leadership roles with NASFAA centered on need analysis standards and delivery. He has dedicated his career to making student debt more manageable by advocating for nonprofit education debt management and advocacy services.
- **Michael Dolence** was one of SEM's most innovative thinkers; and as he began working with AACRAO, his influence was in many ways transformational. His strategic planning background put the "strategic" in enrollment management. His early legendary workshops and plenary sessions helped make AACRAO the professional association for SEM. He was a founder of the AACRAO SEM conference and wrote the first AACRAO SEM publication, the 1993 *SEM Primer*, introducing the foundational concept of "SEM in the academic context." His second AACRAO

book, *Cases from the Field* (1996), showcased rising SEM stars and programs.

- **William (Bill) F. Elliott** served Carnegie-Mellon University for 38 years as one of the first vice presidents for enrollment in the United States. He played a pivotal role in CMU's transformation from a regional technical school into a globally recognized institution. His emphasis was on both financial aid and recruitment of underrepresented students. Elliott is widely credited with laying the conceptual groundwork for what is now known as financial aid leveraging and founding CMU's Summer Academy for Math and Science (SAMS) for underrepresented minority students. Many SEM practitioners visited Carnegie-Mellon for tutorials from Elliott.
- **Brent Gage** is the associate vice president for enrollment management at the University of Iowa. Throughout his career at multiple four-year institutions, he has transformed recruitment and processes to grow enrollment and created significant operational efficiencies. Gage is nationally recognized for developing and implementing predictive analytics to shape enrollment while minimizing institutional costs. He is a highly popular and effective presenter and contributor to the SEM literature. His SEM consulting with AACRAO has provided exceptionally insightful and useful guidance at both undergraduate and graduate levels.
- **John Gardner** has been called "a household name" in student success. As the founder of the "First-Year Experience" movement, he has put students and their support at the core of American higher education. His work in building support and success for first-year, second-year, transfer, and senior-year students was foundational to making retention coherent, strategic, and essential in colleges and universities. In turn, his passion for students was a major impetus for student success as a pillar of SEM. He holds twelve honorary doctorates, and, in 1998, he was named by *Change* magazine as one of eleven national "agenda-setters" in higher education.
- **Eric S. Godfrey** co-authored the landmark 1980 "Enrollment Management: A New Vehicle for Institutional Renewal" (*College Board Review*), a case study of the enrollment management program introduced at California State University at Long Beach. The work developed a systematic approach from concept to process to outcome, identifying major functions and activities associated with enrollment management and positioning them within four functional groupings. This was one of the early frameworks that helped define enrollment management as a formal discipline in higher education, significantly influencing future work.
- **Jay Goff** earned his SEM credentials with his extraordinary contributions to the successful rebranding of the University of Missouri-Rolla as the Missouri University of Science and Technology. He took that expertise to a successful run at St. Louis University and then to George Washington University, where he is pioneering the incorporation of career services into SEM to strengthen learner success. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated an uncanny ability to hire excellent staff and make them even better. He is a prolific presenter at national conferences with a reputation for packed content and packed ballrooms.
- **Jody Gordon** is the rare SEM professional who has an equally deep understanding of both Canadian and U.S. enrollment management, allowing her to apply elements of each to her SEM planning work. Her background in student affairs also informs her commitment to learner success. As AACRAO's senior managing consultant, she has worked with institutions in both Canada and the United States, as well as internationally, with particular success in community college systems. She is co-author of two books in the AACRAO SEM Trilogy and is a prolific SEM conference presenter. She was the first recipient of the SEM Award of Excellence in 2009.
- **Susan Gottheil** was a SEM leader in Canada where she contributed significantly to the literature, emphasizing the comparative differences between SEM in Canada and in the United States. She was a co-founder of the Canadian SEM Summit to promote SEM in the Canadian context. However, she

was also instrumental in introducing her American colleagues to Canadian SEM approaches such as the emphasis on partnership between faculty and learners in student success. Her insights and intellect contributed in major ways to the SEM literature generally, as did her leadership as co-coordinator of the AACRAO SEM conference.

- **Melanie Gottlieb** is the executive director of AACRAO, and the first woman to hold the position in its 126-year history. In service to SEM, her leadership focuses on policies and technologies for solutions that support and improve the success of "new normal" learners, those with increasingly diverse life experiences, who take nonlinear pathways to learning. She is a passionate advocate for equitable transfer learner and credit mobility, the practices that achieve it, and the tools and policies to sustain it. In her role at AACRAO, she also brings a national voice to support assessment and recognition of prior learning credentials.
- **A. Steven Graff** was a College Board regional director who was instrumental in introducing enrollment management to a broader national audience in the 1980s. The College Board had published Don Hossler's first enrollment management book in 1984, and Graff partnered with Hossler that same year to organize the first conference to have "enrollment management" in its title. The conference brought together researchers and practitioners to discuss this new topic in a systematic way. The 1986 conference coincided with the College Board publication of Hossler's second book. The conferences were discontinued after 1987.
- **Kenneth C. Green** began his career as a higher education researcher at UCLA/HERI where he co-authored the 1982 book *Strategies for Effective Enrollment Management*, a major early part of the SEM literature. It was instrumental in introducing enrollment management to a broader audience. Among other areas, it advocated for a student affairs role in retention, stating presciently, "Once students are enrolled, student life is a key element keeping them enrolled." In the 1990s Green became one of the leading national authorities on technology and computing in higher education.
- **Tom Green** is a successful SEM practitioner who became a major SEM thought leader on SEM planning, learner success, and financial aid analysis. He co-created the SEM Frameworks concept to guide SEM process, structure, and planning. He was part of the original AACRAO consulting team and led AACRAO's multiple SEM programs, including consulting and the SEM conference, from 2015–2022. His expertise extended SEM's reach through partnerships with major national foundations for community college SEM planning for adult learners and equity, as well as computerized learning records (CLR) to assist learner engagement and success.
- **Fred Hargadon** was that individual who is sometimes so far ahead of their time that their work anticipates concepts and structures not yet imagined. "Dean Fred" should be recognized as that precursor for SEM. Given his years as dean of admissions at Swarthmore College, Stanford University, and Princeton University, *The New York Times* called him "the dean of deans" in 1964. He recruited Black students in the 1960s, pioneered holistic review at Stanford, and he created no-loan financial aid programs at Princeton. His admit letters began with a breezy "Yes!" When his classes arrived on campus, he made sure they *knew* that *he* knew them.
- **Luisa M. Havens Gerardo** serves as the Vice President for Enrollment Management at the University of Texas at Arlington. She has held executive leadership roles at Virginia Tech, Florida International University, and the University of Texas at El Paso. She has worked tirelessly to expand pathways for diverse and underrepresented populations, including transfer students, veterans, low-income, and first-generation students. She is a sought-after national voice on topics ranging from data-informed enrollment strategies to institutional transformation initiatives, process reengineering, and leadership development.
- **Joe Head** was director of admissions at Kennesaw State University and chaired an AACRAO task force on credentialing in 1995–96 that recommended the

association provide certification for professional development. When the national association declined the recommendation, Head developed the certification program through Georgia ACRAO. He continued to advocate for the concept at the national level, and in 2012, AACRAO created an endorsement program for AACRAO members working in SEM. He then served as the first director of the SEM Endorsement Program (SEM-EP) from 2012 through 2016.

- **Stanley E. Henderson** was AACRAO's first vice president for enrollment management, where he chaired the founding committee of the AACRAO SEM conference. His contributions to the SEM literature include one of the first histories of SEM, a *C&U* article on SEM in the academic context, and co-authoring two books in the AACRAO SEM Trilogy. His SEM practice includes innovative one-stop service and integration of SEM and student affairs units to build community and a sense of belonging. He was an original AACRAO senior consultant and received an AACRAO Lifetime Achievement Award for "Outstanding Leadership in the SEM Profession."
- **Don Hossler**, a professor, researcher, and administrator at Indiana University, is the academic voice of SEM. His 1984, 1986, and 1990 books gave SEM its academic grounding with definitions, concepts, and models growing out of his research. He was the co-originator of the first enrollment management conferences sponsored by the College Board and became a mainstay in the AACRAO SEM conferences as plenary speaker and presenter. He is the founding director of the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and initiated its first reports. He is known as the "SEM Guru." Rising SEM professionals regularly greet him at conferences with "I quoted you in my dissertation."
- **Cedric Howard,** currently vice chancellor at Seattle Colleges, came to SEM through student affairs and exhibits the ties to both fields through prioritization of learner achievement with measurable results. In his vice-presidential role at SUNY-Fredonia, he implemented and sustained its SEM plan to achieve a 30 percent enrollment increase, garnering national media attention. His commitment to building partnerships, is deep and the results are extraordinary. This comes as the result of an inherent ability to inspire trust in his interactions, whether as a day-to-day colleague or as a consultant.
- **Thomas Huddleston** has been called the "Godfather" of SEM because of his focus on marketing and communications as the organizing medium of enrollment efforts. He has never used the term "enrollment management," but throughout his career, he has developed organizational structures that incorporate what might be called "classical enrollment management" with emphasis on the holistic learner experience. This emphasis made him one of the first to assign accountability for retention to specific staff. At the University of Central Florida, he was instrumental in designing transfer partnerships to facilitate learner success.
- **Betty Huff** has rich experience with building SEM organizations. She was a founding leader at Cal State-San Marcos where she created an enrollment services framework and developed the campus's SEM plan. She also implemented enterprise-wide SEM organizations at the University of Memphis and UC-Santa Barbara. Internationally she brought her organizational development and evaluation expertise to reviews of CSU partners in Japan and China. As editor-in-chief of *College and University*, she worked to foster more faculty research and broaden understanding of how AACRAO members could strategically contribute to the academic context.
- **William Ihlanfeldt** served as director of undergraduate admissions and financial aid and then as dean of admissions and financial aid at Northwestern University, where he radically changed the approach to student recruitment and admissions. He introduced the concept of blind admissions, considering a student without regard to family financial need. He was also a pioneer in the recruitment of marginalized and underrepresented groups. In 1980, he authored a book entitled, *Achieving Optimal Enrollments and Tuition Revenues: A Guide to Modern Methods of Market Research, Student Recruitment, and Institutional Pricing.*

- **Doris Ingersoll** was a co-founder of The Enrollment Management Center, Inc., a private consulting firm that worked with many of the earliest institutions implementing enrollment management. The firm has worked with more than 500 colleges and universities to create and develop their enrollment management programs to more effectively meet the goals of the institution. She was co-editor and contributing author for the 2012 AACRAO SEM book, *Strategic Enrollment Management: Transforming Higher Education*, where she focused on change management and constructive conflict cultures in SEM.
- **Scott Ingold** served as associate vice president of enrollment management and registrar at the University of Miami and an adjunct in Education. He attended the first AACRAO SEM conference in 1991 and became interested in a SEM graduate program after talking with the conference's co-founder, Ernie Beals. He subsequently collaborated with Paul Orehovec in enrollment management to create the first SEM graduate credentials in the United States in 1999, informed by SEM principles of strategic vision, learner success, and data-informed decision-making. The SEM-infused program expanded to an executive Ed.D. in 2011.
- **Ronald Ingersoll** is a pioneer in enrollment management and served as president of the Enrollment Management Center, where he worked with many early schools launching enrollment management efforts. He was among the first practitioners to take a systematic, data-oriented approach to enrollment management. His 1988 book, *The Enrollment Problem: Proven Management Techniques*, was one of the first publications to address enrollment management as an enterprise-wide effort. He was co-editor and contributing author of AACRAO's 2012 SEM book, *Strategic Enrollment Management: Transforming Higher Education.*
- **Jan Jantzen** was the long-time director of admissions at Emporia State University in Kansas in the 1970s who moved to Xavier University in Cincinnati in the late 1980s to remake Xavier's enrollment program. To capitalize on the university's Jesuit ideals, he recommended a service fellowship to foster community engagement, having a major impact on Xavier's identity and viability. In SEM-world, Xavier became part of a new emphasis on learner success. Jantzen introduced Xavier's approach on the new AACRAO enrollment management committee and gave valuable input to the first AACRAO University and the first SEM conference.
- **Doris Johnson** was the assistant executive director of AACRAO in 1991 and staffed the founding committee that created AACRAO's national SEM conference. She was an active member of the committee, contributing significantly to the final program structure and content. Her notes of the founding meeting are the definitive record of the seminal interactions in the "room where it happened." She was the point person for the conference moving forward regarding arrangements, budgets, and conference registrations. Her final data and budget report were instrumental in the AACRAO board of directors' decision to continue the conference.
- **David Kalsbeek** developed leading edge SEM organizations at St. Louis University and Xavier University, culminating at DePaul University where he created a "cradle to endowment" model of SEM mirroring the learner journey from recruitment to happy alum ready for annual giving. He was a bulwark of the annual AACRAO SEM conferences, delivering plenaries and presentations at nine of the first ten of these events. His ability to pack data and analysis into his presentations sparked discussion in conference hallways and back home. Today his SEM orientation models (2006–2007) remain the basis for understanding SEM culture.
- **Stanley J. Kania III** is a national presenter on scholarship and practice in graduate enrollment management and a co-editor of the first book published on graduate enrollment management (GEM): *A Comprehensive Guide to Graduate Enrollment Management: Advancing Research and Practice*, which encompasses original research and case studies that focus on the complexities within the field of graduate enrollment management. He is assistant dean of admissions at Drexel University's College of Medicine and pre-

viously served as a board member of NAGAP The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management.

- **Frank R. Kemerer** was a prominent scholar in education law and policy who co-authored *Strategies for Effective Enrollment Management*, published by AASCU in 1982. This book was a first introduction to SEM for much of higher education and became a foundational text for many of the first practitioners, who attended author workshops. The book discussed organizing for enrollment management, linking recruitment and marketing, and staked out a role for retention in SEM. In 1986 he would co-author *Enrollment Management and Its Context* with Don Hossler, offering early definitions of SEM as a process influencing student body make-up.
- **Christine Kerlin** was one of the first SEM practitioners in community colleges (Central Oregon Community College and Everett Community College) and became the first community college contributor to SEM conference sessions and publications. Today, she is a nationally recognized leader and expert in community college SEM. She was co-creator of AACRAO's Essentials of SEM online course and of the LinkEx concept, which positions SEM as an add-in, not an add-on to combat "initiative fatigue." Her publications and presentations are especially invaluable in guiding SEM environmental scanning and data-informed decision-making.
- **Wendy Kilgore** is the Senior Director of Research for AACRAO. She has enrollment services experience at both the state community college system and individual institution level, as well as extensive consulting experience across multiple higher education sectors. Her broad-based research expertise and familiarity with emerging trends make her a respected voice in shaping higher education practices and policies. Her series of periodic surveys of chief enrollment management officers, as well as her broader *Eye on Research blog*, provide invaluable insights and benchmarks for the changing responsibilities and challenges of SEM leaders.
- **Leonard Kreutner** co-authored the landmark 1980 "Enrollment Management: A New Vehicle for Institutional Renewal" (*College Board Review*), a case study of enrollment management introduced at California State University at Long Beach. The work developed a systematic approach from concept to process to outcome, identifying major functions and activities that became known as the matrix model of SEM. This early structural model became one used by Kemerer, Baldridge, and Green (1982) to illustrate possible approaches to SEM structure and function, significantly influencing future work and helping to define SEM as a formal discipline.
- **Marsha V. Krotseng** was director of planning and institutional research at the University of Hartford (RI) and the co-author of a case study (presented at the first AACRAO SEM conference) in an AACRAO book, *Strategic Enrollment Management: Cases from the Field* (1993). Hartford undertook an early SEM initiative to return to enrollment health. A collaborative university-wide effort created a data-driven system to monitor and analyze all aspects of the enrollment cycle, including, significantly, retention rates. This information flow made the campus SEM proactive, giving meaning to a campus sign quoted in the case: "It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark."
- **Robert Lay** was director of enrollment management research at Boston College under the newly established enrollment management division implemented by Jack Maguire. He is a pioneering figure in the application of market research and data analytics to higher education enrollment management. His work transformed admissions from an intuition-driven process into a data-informed discipline during a critical period of demographic and institutional change. One of Lay's most significant contributions was bringing competitive market analysis to college admissions.
- **Tomikia LeGrande**, before becoming president of Prairie View A&M University, was vice president for strategy, enrollment management, and student success at Virginia Commonwealth University where she demonstrated extraordinary leadership in strategic positioning of the university and its emphasis on learner success. At PVAMU she has continued her

SEM emphasis on the learner experience by launching PV Cares, a first-in-the-nation commitment to providing a CARE team to each undergraduate consisting of an academic advisor, a financial aid counselor, and a career coach. She exemplifies the title "SEM President."

- **Scot Lingrell** was the first vice chancellor of enrollment management and student affairs for the University System of Georgia where he pioneered one of the first system-level SEM plans in the nation. As a SEM thought leader, he champions data-informed decision-making, cross-agency collaboration, and operating what he describes as "on the bleeding edge"—encouraging enrollment professionals to move beyond best practices and embrace entrepreneurial, forward-thinking strategies to meet the challenges ahead. He was the first recipient of the AACRAO SEM Award of Excellence at four-year institutions in 2009.
- **Louise Lonabocker** was a member of Jack Maguire's "Grand Design" enrollment management team at Boston College, initially as university registrar. In 1998, she was appointed executive director of student services and university registrar leading Boston College's one-stop organization, which included financial aid, student accounts, and related divisions such as student loans and student employment. Lonabocker supported SEM's emphasis on research and data as the editor-in-chief of AACRAO's *College and University* journal from 2003 to 2013. She also co-edited AACRAO's *Leadership Lessons: Vision and Values for a New Generation*.
- **Jerome "Jerry" A. Lucido**, after a career as a successful SEM practitioner, became the founder and executive director of the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice (CERPP) at the University of Southern California. CERRP is an independent research center serving admissions and enrollment specialists and is committed to fostering equity and expertise in educational access, admissions, and outcomes. The center launched a Leadership in Enrollment Management certificate program for professional development and organized an annual conference for SEM scholars and professionals.
- **Jack Maguire** is the father of enrollment management. With the support of his vice president, Frank Campanella, this former physics professor created a Boston College team of admissions, financial aid, registrar, and research professionals that came together to jointly address marketing, strategic financial aid, and—significantly—retention, all jointly informed by data and research for market prediction and institutional response. This "Grand Design" had outstanding people using the right information in the right organizational structure. As Maguire wrote, "to the organized go the students." It would transform higher education.
- **Philomena Mantella** was an early practitioner of SEM at several private and public universities before joining Northeastern University to oversee enrollment management and student affairs in support of a student-centered mission. She later became senior vice president and CEO of Northeastern's Lifelong Learning Network before being named president of Grand Valley State University (MI). She was always committed to the strategic nature of SEM, writing of the "inextricable bond between the strategic direction of the university and its SEM plan." She was mentored by many of SEM's "founders" and presented at the first SEM conference.
- **James Maraviglia** was a national pioneer in digitizing SEM. At Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, he built the technology that implemented the university's belief in building relationships and making connections throughout the student life cycle. His CRM development with a national venture capitalist would eventually include not just e-mail, but video messaging, text messaging, broadcast messaging, instant messaging, VIP microsites, web casting, virtual viewbooks, GPS guided tours, 4G phone apps, and more. Cal Poly became one of the most sought-after CSU campuses, and Maraviglia's innovation remade the voice of SEM.
- **Robert Massa** has practiced and shaped enrollment management in multiple private colleges over his

50-year career. At The Johns Hopkins University, he was one of the first in enrollment management to bring data and research into the enrollment process. His work at Dickinson College changed the face and image of the college. His take on developing SEM plans was a major chapter in AACRAO's 2001 *Strategic Enrollment Management Revolution*. His expertise has made him a spokesperson for SEM in the national media, repeatedly featured in *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and on *CNN* and legacy television networks.

- **Alicia Moore** is vice president for student affairs at Central Oregon Community College and a recognized national SEM contributor of practice and publication. At COCC, she has been a champion for learner success around SEM planning, one-stop services, mandatory pre-advising programs, re-energized orientation, and new facilities, resulting in an 84 percent enrollment increase. She is an expert and author on communications as a SEM tool for making student connections. She practices what she preaches: her engaging personal communication style connects her to audiences across the country as an acclaimed presenter, mentor, and consultant.
- **Chris Munoz** was deeply involved in the development of SEM through his work at Cal Lutheran University and the University of Dayton and as a presenter and author nationally and a mainstay of AACRAO's early SEM conferences. His cutting-edge approach to recruitment, focused both on targeted marketing and technology, realized remarkable enrollment gains. When he retired from Rice University, his last stop, as vice president, the campus spoke of the "Munoz Effect," which had "literally revolutionized our operation," noting a 107 percent increase in applications with nearly a third more freshmen of higher quality and greater diversity.
- **Ray Muston** was a University of Iowa researcher and the first to use the phrase "strategic enrollment management" in print in the third book on enrollment management, published by the ACT National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices and focused on enrollment management practices at state universities. The book is based on a survey of academic and student affairs officers at the largest state university users of ACT data. The study revealed a high degree of role ambiguity and organizational resistance to enrollment management strategies, demonstrating a need for clarity and coordination in organization.
- **Barmak Nassirian** has more than 30 years of experience as a nationally known expert on multiple facets of the higher education sector. His expertise includes finance, academic policy, accreditation, and federal student aid. He served as associate executive director of AACRAO from 1998–2013. He played an instrumental role in raising AACRAO's visibility and influence on Capitol Hill, particularly in relation to federal student aid policy. He was an early supporter of AACRAO Consulting as a service to the membership. He was the visionary behind AACRAO's first SEM publication, *SEM Monthly* (2002), which eventually became *SEM Quarterly*.
- **Mariea Noblitt** was an early SEM practitioner best known for her work at Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management where she reorganized the school's structure, reengineered its customer service, and reenergized its staff. Most significantly, she tackled the acquisition of new technology that could streamline processes and track progress. She lowered the acceptance rate from 48 percent to 14 percent, saw yield grow from 32 percent to 52 percent, and the school's national ranking went from 15th to 5th. Her work at Cornell, featured in the first AACRAO SEM conference, was also one of the first examples of graduate SEM.
- **Paul M. Orehovec** was an early SEM innovator and national leader with NASFAA and the College Board. As executive vice president for enrollment management at the University of Miami in the 1980s, he was establishing new positions and directions for enrollment using intense data analysis and mathematical techniques for policy development as he worked to engage the entire campus with EM. In 1999, he collaborated with Miami's School of Education to create the first graduate credentials in enrollment

management. Eventually, the holistic institutional approach of EM would become the basis for the entire Miami MSED program.

Joseph H. Paris is a scholar-practitioner focused on the intersection of institutional effectiveness and college access and informed by his professional experience in enrollment management and higher education marketing. He is co-editor of the first book published on graduate enrollment management (GEM): *A Comprehensive Guide to Graduate Enrollment Management: Advancing Research and Practice*. He serves as Dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies at Delaware Valley University. Paris is a board member of NAGAP The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management and AACRAO's Research Advisory Board.

Angel B. Pérez is a nationally recognized leader in higher education access. As CEO of NACAC since 2020, he founded the Center for Reimagining College Access and advanced the principle that enrollment/student success work must prioritize building pipelines, pathways, and partnerships that connect talent to opportunity and success—regardless of a learner's background or zip code. His advocacy for the SEM principles of learner access and success extends to policy advice to governmental leaders, and his book *The Hottest Seat on Campus* has become an essential resource for navigating increasingly demanding roles in this profession.

Ange Peterson began her SEM journey as director of admissions/enrollment services at Pittsburg State University (KS). Her partnership building with feeder community colleges there led to the University of Central Florida where she was instrumental in creating DirectConnect to UCF, the largest transfer partnership in higher education with SEM-influenced tools such as auto-admission, joint advising, and curriculum alignment. Her mantra, "It's always about the people," focused on learners and her staff. Interpersonally, she was a natural with senior officers, giving her the nickname of "President Whisperer."

Kevin Pollock retired as president of Central Carolina Technical College, the third community college presidency he held. His presidential work was informed by his time as a student affairs vice president and his early work in SEM. He led student success initiatives, creation of early and middle college programs, development of pathways for all college programs, curriculum reform, and record enrollments and state funding. He is a national expert on student success models, has presented at more than 130 conferences, and authored more than two dozen publications, including one of AACRAO's SEM Trilogy volumes. He is the quintessential "SEM President."

Michael V. Reilly served as executive director of AACRAO from 2012 to 2021. During that time, he championed the development of SEM competencies/proficiencies. He argued that "no SEM framework will succeed without...all AACRAO professionals." He was instrumental in creating AACRAO's online journal *SEM Quarterly*. In the first issue, he asserted it was a milestone similar to the creation of the SEM conference, writing in "SEM and the Future of AACRAO," "Not unlike the decision more than 20 years ago to launch the SEM conference and take the field to new levels, the AACRAO Board agreed to embark on this new initiative, *SEM Quarterly (SEMQ)*."

Michele Sandlin served five institutions with distinction, including Oregon State University, where she was the driving force behind the creation and implementation of a research-based holistic admissions program that grew enrollment and met access and preparedness goals. She would become an industry-leading expert on holistic admissions as a part of SEM, authoring a definitive book on the subject. As an AACRAO managing consultant, she also became an expert in SEM planning for community college systems, culminating in a Lumina-funded project for four state systems. A hallmark of her work was her mentorship of other SEM professionals.

James Scannell was an original member (director of admissions) of Maguire's "Grand Design" team at Boston College. His 25-year career continued at Cornell and the University of Rochester, as he built his expertise and his contributions to the SEM literature on increasing demand through data analysis and de-

velopment of strategic communications, as well as innovative financial aid. At Rochester, he was one of the first SEM leaders to include career placement in his SEM portfolio, co-authoring a book, *Shaping the College Experience Outside the Classroom*. In 1996, he co-founded a consulting firm (later acquired by Ruffalo Noel Levitz).

- **William Serrata** became president of El Paso Community College in 2012 after serving seven years as vice president for student affairs and enrollment management at South Texas College. He was deeply involved in AACRAO SEM as a contributor to the SEM literature and as coordinator of the SEM conference from 2011–2015. He is nationally recognized for leadership in enrollment management, particularly in community colleges, with respect to enrollment growth and learner success with an emphasis on first-generation and Hispanic populations and establishing a college-going culture. He is another model of the quintessential SEM president.
- **Doug Shapiro,** co-founder of the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center in 2010, established more than a dozen national reports and benchmarks that have fundamentally reshaped how institutions, policymakers, and researchers understand student pathways through higher education. He pioneered a shift in the field from completion metrics toward a more comprehensive view of student success—one that accounts for non-linear routes to a degree. A frequent voice in national media and policy conversations, Shapiro's work has made large-scale, longitudinal enrollment data a cornerstone of SEM practice nationwide.
- **Wayne Sigler** spent 20 years as director of admissions at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, where he built one of the elite admissions programs in the United States, realizing a 63 percent increase in freshmen while meeting diversity and quality goals. His influence in SEM began as chair of the AACRAO enrollment management committee. He created the nationally recognized Tri-O leadership/management system and authored AACRAO's first *SEM Core Concepts* book. His presentations at national conferences were routinely standing room only. In 2008, he received AACRAO's APEX award for excellence and achievement in administration and the profession.
- **Clayton Smith** is a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor after serving twelve years as vice provost and dean of students there. His research examines comparative enrollment management in Canada and the United States, allowing SEM professionals to compare and share best practices. He also looks at the faculty role in SEM and the impact of change management on successful SEM implementation. He was co-founder of the Canadian SEM Summit, was one of the first AACRAO senior consultants, served for six years as director of the national SEM conference, and is currently editor-in-chief of *SEM Quarterly.*
- **Robert M. Smith** was provost and president of Slippery Rock University (PA) facing a ten-year enrollment decline. He embraced SEM, educated himself on its moving parts, and enticed a faculty member to implement a SEM program with results that brought national attention. He led SRU teams to AACRAO's SEM conferences for years and was the facilitator of the AACRAO Senior Officers Symposium for ten years. AACRAO awarded him its inaugural Award for Excellence in SEM Leadership. He was also recognized as a "First-Year Student Advocate" by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.
- **Monique Snowden** began her professional career as a software developer and business analyst/consultant for a global technology firm. This background gave her a strong foundation for her expertise in the strategic assessment, implementation, and utilization of technology and analytics to improve and sustain institutional enrollment and student success. This expertise, fueled by her commitment to access and attainment, makes her a valued contributor to the SEM literature and the institutions she has served. She was an inaugural member of the editorial board of *SEM Quarterly* and was on the editorial board for *College and University.*

- **Jerry Sullivan** was executive director of AACRAO from 1998–2012. He brought a national reputation in financial aid, including a one-year stint at the Department of Education leading the reengineering of the financial aid delivery system in 1995 and directing one of the first university implementations of the Direct Lending program. His background in financial aid, an essential part of SEM, made him a SEM-friendly ED and led to his support for the establishment of AACRAO Consulting and growth of the SEM conference. His outstanding leadership resulted in a reinvigorated national association, including its leadership in SEM.
- **Roger Swanson** was the personification of SEM in the academic context: an English professor who migrated into administration at Arizona State University to become dean of admissions and financial aid and associate vice president for student affairs. He was nationally recognized for expertise in SEM, organizational structure, professional development, and leadership. He authored more than 200 publications, including the 1997 AACRAO book, *Becoming a Leader in Enrollment Services*. In 1993, he became associate executive director of AACRAO and directed the SEM conference from 1993–97. He later served as a consultant for Noel-Levitz.
- **Roger J. Thompson** has a proven record of enrollment growth and strategic planning across multiple major institutions. At Indiana University, he pioneered a merit-based scholarship approach that became the institution's signature aid program. At the University of Oregon, he spearheaded a ten-year strategic enrollment plan that consistently outpaced its targets in thirteen of fourteen years. His work expanded traditional SEM boundaries to encompass financial literacy, student wellness, and first-generation student support—rooting sustainable success in the full student experience. He is now president of St. Mary's of California.
- **Vincent Tinto** is an internationally acclaimed scholar whose research on higher education focuses on student success and the impact of learning communities on learner development and achievement. His seminal work, *Leaving College*, is the standard text for theoretical and policy perspectives on student success and has influenced every aspect of higher education touching this area. His work has been increasingly cited in SEM as retention/learner success has become a SEM pillar along with recruitment. He was an invited presenter at the first AACRAO SEM conference in 1991 and advised many early SEM practitioners.
- **Christopher W. Tremblay** is equally organized and creative—not a typical combination—but it has made him a deeply effective SEM practitioner and contributor. He was a major SEM player in the development of SEM at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and has taken SEM to a UM-Ann Arbor college. He has led SEM-EP, AACRAO's professional endorsement program, to record enrollment, enhanced by his networking abilities, and is editor-in-chief of *College and University* where he is a frequent contributor. He is a consummate researcher, accessing and retrieving material, as one colleague commented, "like an academic vacuum cleaner."
- **Melvin "Mel" Tyler** was a consummate practitioner of the SEM structural model that combines student affairs and enrollment management. As vice president of student affairs and enrollment management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, he modeled how to use SEM principles to enhance enrollment and success of underrepresented populations and was repeatedly recognized by learners for his support. He was also a model of mentorship for his staff, choosing, shaping, and supporting his direct reports. He was generous in sharing his work nationally as an author, presenter, and consultant.
- **Janet Ward** had the rare ability to be both a strategic visionary and a highly effective problem solver. As such, she articulated a new level of understanding about data management, database development, and analysis to SEM and its practitioners: what data could do (the vision) and how to use it (the problem solving). Her work at Seattle University (WA) established her expertise in data management and use, but her communication skills were what allowed

her to repeatedly fill conference meeting rooms to standing room only and made her articles and chapters must-read. She flawlessly translated "data-ese" into how-to implementations.

- **Richard "Dick" Whiteside** was a preeminent practitioner of SEM at the University of Hartford and Tulane University. He was instrumental in raising Tulane's national profile and in its recovery from Hurricane Katrina, which made him an expert in crisis management. He later transitioned to consulting work with Royall & Company and EAB. He was one of the first, and among the most valued, presenters at the SEM conference, as well as a frequent contributor to the SEM literature. His SEM insights were illustrated with his legendary storytelling and humor, which both educated and entertained his many standing-room only audiences.
- **Robert "Bob" Wilkinson** is an expert in strategic planning, institutional research, and assessment within the broader context of institutional effectiveness. His impact on the development of SEM came from his work at Pittsburg State University in Kansas where he helped to create its SEM operation. He had an acclaimed ability to put data and assessment into everyday language in service of learners through institutional effectiveness. He was a frequent presenter and contributor to the literature for AACRAO, other national organizations, and state entities such as the Texas Higher Education Commission.
- **Amanda Yale**, a faculty member at Slippery Rock University, engaged with SEM to help reverse a ten-year enrollment slide, eventually becoming SRU's chief enrollment management officer. Slippery Rock became a national poster campus for successful SEM implementation, and she was its principal spokesperson. She and her colleagues earned national recognition for exemplary programs in marketing, recruitment, retention, and first-year initiatives, always data-informed. "If it moves, measure it," was her mantra. She was an originator of AACRAO's Essentials of SEM course, which she taught for a decade.

Part Three—Enrollment Management Historical Timeline

What began as a single administrative memo at Boston College in 1974 has evolved over the past half-century into one of higher education's most influential and far-reaching disciplines of both practice and research. This comprehensive timeline traces the arc of enrollment management and strategic enrollment management (SEM)—from the coining of the term by Frank Campanella and its implementation as Jack Maguire's "Grand Design" to the sophisticated, data-informed field it is today. It documents the pioneering scholars, practitioners, and organizations whose ideas, publications, conferences, and programs transformed how colleges and universities think about recruiting, enrolling, retaining, and graduating successful learners.

Spanning just over 50 years, this timeline captures not just the milestones of a profession, but the intellectual and institutional history behind them—the first books, the first conferences, the first academic courses, the first certifications, and the first degree programs dedicated to the field. It reflects the contributions of AACRAO and its members, The College Board, ACT, individual colleges and universities, and countless dedicated professionals who built enrollment management into the strategic, learner-centered enterprise it is today.

Whether new to the field or a seasoned practitioner, this timeline of 101 entries offers an essential record of enrollment management's people, practice, and progress—and a foundation for understanding where it is headed.

1974

- "Enrollment management" is first mentioned as an administrative concept in a November 1974 memo from Boston College Executive Vice President Frank Campanella to Jack Maguire, who had just been appointed as dean of admissions.

1976

- The first published mention of "enrollment management" appears in Jack Maguire's Fall 1976 article "To the Organized Go the Students" in Boston College's alumni *Bridge Magazine*. This first *public* mention is used to mark the official birth of enrollment management.

1980

- William Ihlanfeldt's *Achieving Optional Enrollments and Tuition Revenues: A Guide to Modern Methods of Market Research, Student Recruitment and Institutional Pricing* revolutionizes how colleges and universities approach the enrollment process through college choice, market planning, data/research, admissions, pricing strategy, among other topics.

1981

- The *College Board's Review* publishes the first enrollment management case study. Leonard Kreutner and Eric Godfrey review the enrollment management program at California State University at Long Beach.

1982

- Frank R. Kemerer, J. Victor Baldridge, and Kenneth C. Green author the first book on enrollment management, *Strategies for Effective Enrollment Management* (American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU).

1983

- (April) The AACRAO Annual Meeting offers members a session that moves beyond marketing with a more strategic title, "Assessing the Potential of Enrollment." It promises discussion on "a comprehensive institutional enrollment plan", and "proven techniques... and for improving the retention of students."

1984

- Ray Muston presents a paper entitled, "Enrollment strategies among selected state universities" at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Chicago.
- Don Hossler authors *Enrollment Management: An Integrated Approach* (The College Board). He defines enrollment management as a comprehensive institutional strategy. It is the College Board's most popular publication to date.
- The College Board and Loyola University of Chicago sponsor the first national conference on enrollment, "Leadership for Enrollment Management: An Integrated Strategy for Institutional Vitality." Held in Chicago, it was organized by A. Steven Graff of the College Board and Don Hossler. Their partnership was the direct result of the College Board's sponsorship of Hossler's 1984 book.
- The College Board sponsors a newsletter, "The Enrollment Management Review," edited by Don Hossler with help from a graduate student. It ran until 2006.

1985

- The College Board and Loyola University host the second enrollment management conference in Chicago.
- Ray Muston authors a monograph through ACT titled "Marketing and Enrollment Management in State Universities." While his survey data show considerable skepticism among flagship publics towards SEM, he embraces strategic planning and its inclusion of "enrollment management planning," and "strategic planning for enrollment management." His reference to "strategic enrollment management programs" is the very first coupling of "strategic" with "enrollment management" in print.
- (Mid 1980s, exact launch date unknown) Enrollment Management Action System (EMAS), the first software to effectively manage the process for students from inquiry to enrollment, is launched by the Ingersoll Group and Tom Williams.

1986

- California State University-Los Angeles forms an Enrollment Management Task Force, led by Michael Dolence, a strategic planner at the university.
- The first AACRAO Annual Meeting conference session with enrollment management in its title,

"Enrollment Management Prior to Admissions," is presented in Baltimore, Maryland.

- Don Hossler publishes his second enrollment management book, *Creating Effective Enrollment Management Systems* (The College Board). It is a guide for college administrators for developing and operating enrollment management systems, through management science and organizational theory.
- Robert H. Glover publishes an article, "Designing a decision-support system for enrollment management" in *Research in Higher Education*. The article presents a case study of enrollment work at the University of Hartford, expanding on a paper presented at the Twenty-Fifth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research, in Portland, April 28-May 1, 1985.
- ACT launches its first Enrollment Planners Conference in Chicago, organized by Tom Colaner, ACT's Ohio regional office director.
- Indiana University's department of higher education and division of student affairs assume sponsorship of the third enrollment management conference, previously sponsored by the College Board, held in Chicago.

1987

- Indiana University Higher Education and Student Affairs host the fourth enrollment management conference in New Orleans.
- Charles Pollock authors the earliest known documented doctoral dissertation featuring "enrollment management" in its title. Pollock completed his doctoral degree at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and his dissertation was entitled, "Enrollment Management Structures and Activities at Four Year Institutions of Higher Education."
- (May 13) John Hintz authors "Before Trying Enrollment-Management Techniques, Colleges Should Assess Their Own Academic Quality," *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* first piece on enrollment management. The article discusses how higher education has embraced enrollment management, calling that embrace "quite remarkable" but also cautions readers to not rush into it as it could just be a fad.

1988

- Michael Dolence presents on "strategic enrollment management" at the Society for College and University Planning's 22nd annual international conference in Washington D.C.
- Dolence, Miyahuara, Grajeda, and Rapp author "Strategic Enrollment Management and Planning", the first journal article on SEM in *Planning for Higher Education*. The authors describe EM as being strategic and then introduce the Four Cornerstones of an enrollment management program.
- Ronald Ingersoll authors *The Enrollment Problem: Proven Management Techniques.*

1989

- Michael Dolence authors "Evaluation Criteria for an Enrollment Management Program," his second journal article in *Planning for Higher Education* journal. He discusses how enrollment management modifies the institutional decision making process, the academic context of enrollment management, and outlines twelve criteria for evaluating enrollment management programs.
- AACRAO establishes a Vice President for Enrollment Management, Admissions, and Financial Aid and creates its first Enrollment Management professional activities committee.

1990

- Don Hossler and John Bean, *et al*., author *The Strategic Management of College Enrollments.* It provides an examination of research and practice related to enrollment management at institutions of higher education.
- Stanley E. Henderson is elected AACRAO's inaugural Vice President for Enrollment Management, Admissions and Financial Aid at the Association's Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

1991

- AACRAO's Annual Meeting in Honolulu includes the first iteration of AACRAO University, a conference-within-the-conference focused on SEM and created by the first Enrollment Management professional activities committee, chaired by Ernest Beals of Georgia Tech.
  - → Attendees taking select SEM-specific workshops or sessions in combination receive a completion certificate, styled as a "degree" for marketing purposes.
  - → An accrediting agency in Washington, DC threatens legal action for "fraudulent credentials" but Hawaii law did not cover the claim.
  - → AACRAO University became a mainstay of AACRAO Annual Meetings into the 2000s with increasingly linked and integrated sessions explicitly focused on the core concepts of SEM.
  - → This was the first documented use of strategic enrollment management by AACRAO.
- (January) AACRAO Vice President Stanley Henderson chairs a committee in Chicago to explore an AACRAO national enrollment management conference. Members in addition to Henderson include Michael Dolence, Ernest Beals (chair of Enrollment Management Committee), Tom Colaner (Director of ACT's Enrollment Planners Conference) and Doris Johnson (AACRAO staff). The committee proposes a conference to be co-sponsored by AACRAO and ACT.
- (February) The AACRAO Board endorses the national strategic enrollment management conference proposal but stipulates that AACRAO will be the sole sponsor.
- (November) AACRAO hosts its first national Strategic Enrollment Management Conference in Atlanta with Stanley Henderson (Western Michigan University) as the director.

1992

- The term and category, "Minority-Serving Institution" formally enters federal statute as an umbrella designation for institutions. Historically, MSIs enrolled at least 25 percent of a specific minority group. MSI designations pushed enrollment managers to build deeper cultural understanding of their students and more precise, data-driven ways of serving them.

1993

- The first documented use of "SEM" as an acronym by AACRAO appears in an advertisement for the 1993 SEM Conference in *College and University* journal.
- Michael Dolence authors AACRAO's first book on enrollment management, *Strategic Enrollment Management: A Primer for Campus Administrators.*
- The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) is founded by the higher education community, initially as a verification service for student loans. Subsequently, it has provided institutions with real-time, comprehensive student enrollment, persistence, and degree completion data across thousands of Colleges and universities nationwide, enabling data-informed decisions about recruitment, retention, and learner success initiatives.

1996

- Michael Dolence edits *SEM Cases from the Field* (AACRAO). These chapters showcase successful SEM practices presented at the first two AACRAO SEM conferences and feature rising SEM stars.
- AACRAO president Stanley Henderson charges a Credentialing Task Force chaired by Joe Head (Kennesaw State University) to consider professional certifications for AACRAO members. The task force recommendations are not accepted, but Head will use them to develop certification at the regional level and later win approval for the AACRAO SEM Endorsement Program (SEM-EP).

1997

- Roger M. Swanson and Faith A. Weese co-edit *Becoming a Leader in Enrollment Services* (AACRAO with Magna Publications, Inc.). The contributing authors include multiple past and current AACRAO officers,

national office leadership, as well as SEM practitioners and thought leaders, including Michael Dolence and David Kalsbeek.
- Michael Dolence serves as the keynote speaker at the AACRAO Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City.
- (April) Wiley publishes its first edition of the *Enrollment Management Report*.

1998

- The University of Miami offers the first academic course on enrollment management.

1999

- The University of Miami launches the first master's degree in enrollment Management.

2001

- AACRAO informally begins consulting activity with grants and referrals with associate executive director Barmak Nassirian providing guidance and Lisa Rosenberg as staff.

2002

- AACRAO publishes the first issue of *SEM Monthly* newsletter; it runs until 2004. Barmak Nassirian served as the editor-in-chief. This publication recognized the emergence and importance of strategic enrollment management practices on campuses nationwide.

2004

- Achieving the Dream (ATD) launches as a Lumina Foundation initiative with 26 community colleges, which shifted national attention toward the use of data, institutional reform, and evidence-based practices to improve learner success, persistence, and completion.

2005

- AACRAO Consulting formally launches with Bob Bontrager (Assistant Provost for Enrollment Management at Oregon State University) as the director with Lisa Rosenberg supporting from the national office.
- AACRAO's *SEM Monthly* becomes *SEM Source*, published only electronically. It runs until 2012.
- Georgia Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (GACRAO). launches the Georgia Institute for Strategic Enrollment Management (GISEM), created and led by Joe Head of Kennesaw State University. GISEM is the precursor to AACRAO's SEM Endorsement Program.
- Capella University launches a Post Master's Certificate in Enrollment Management, in partnership with Noel Levitz (In 2012, it will move to Bay Path University.)

2007

- Bob Bontrager and Tom Dibble serve as co-directors of AACRAO Consulting Services.
- AACRAO Consulting Services publishes the first SEM white papers, formalizing the use of occasional white papers at previous SEM conferences.
- The first Executive SEM Workshop is offered at the SEM Conference, targeting college presidents and vice presidents but also including other campus executives as well. Robert M. Smith, president of Slippery Rock University, chairs the workshop.
- The Center for Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice (CERPP) is established at the University of Southern California (USC) under the leadership of Jerry Lucido.

2008

- The first Canadian SEM Summit is convened by Clayton Smith and Susan Gottheil, bringing together more than 40 senior enrollment management leaders from across Canadian colleges and universities.
- USC/CERPP hosts its first annual conference on Enrollment Research, Policy and Practice.

2009

- AACRAO establishes the SEM Award of Excellence with the first recipients being Jody Gordon (University of the Fraser Valley) and Scot Lingrell (Western

Georgia University). The SEM Award of Excellence (SAE) was a peer-review awards program that provided formal recognition to exemplary SEM professionals who had contributed to institutional SEM planning and achievement of SEM goals. The award was given from 2009 to 2012 and was sponsored by Education Services, Inc.

2010

- (and 2011)Vanderbilt and AACRAO host an Institute for Senior Academic and Enrollment Services Professionals.
- (September) AACRAO launches first Essentials of SEM online course, taught by Christine Kerlin, Reid Kisling, and Amanda Yale.
- CERPP becomes part of the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education.
- The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center is founded with Doug Shapiro as the inaugural director. The center's work becomes a major addition and support for both SEM practitioners and scholars.
- Jim Black serves as editor of *Strategic Enrolment Intelligence: Canada's First Book on Strategic Enrolment Management* (Academica Group and SEMWorks).

2011

- Susan Gottheil and Clayton Smith co-edit the first Canadian SEM book by practitioners: *SEM in Canada: Promoting Student and Institutional Success in Canadian Colleges and Universities.*
- The United Negro College Fund (UNCF)'s Institute for Capacity Building (ICB) releases *Enrollment Management Best Practices Guide: A Model for Success.* It presents the SREEA (Strategic Recruitment, Enrollment, Engagement, and Assessment) model as a framework for improving student recruitment and retention at these institutions.

2012

- Bob Bontrager, Doris Ingersoll, and Ronald Ingersoll co-edit *Strategic Enrollment Management: Transforming Higher Education* (AACRAO and EMAS® Pro). Bontrager and Tom Green write a chapter introducing the SEM Frameworks for planning, organization, and process.
- Jim Hundrieser edits *Strategic Enrollment Planning: A Dynamic Collaboration*, Noel-Levitz's first enrollment management book.
- USC/CERPP launches its Leadership in Enrollment Management certificate Program for professional development.

2013

- AACRAO launches its SEM Endorsement Program (SEM-EP) with Joe Head of Kennesaw State University as the inaugural director.
- AACRAO launches the first academic SEM journal, *SEM Quarterly*, peer-reviewed and online with Bob Bontrager as its founding editor in chief.
- "Graduate Enrollment Management" (GEM) enters the lexicon, originating from NAGAP (originally known as the National Association for Graduate Admissions Professionals, now referred to as "NAGAP: The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management").

2014

- Don Hossler and Bob Bontrager co-edit the first *Handbook of Strategic Enrollment Management* (Jossey-Bass and AACRAO). At 624 pages, it represents the largest compilation of enrollment management literature to date and features 40 authors contributing 30 chapters.
- (June) AACRAO publishes the first Chief Enrollment Management Officer Career Profile Report.
- Abilene Christian University launches an enrollment management graduate certificate.
- NAGAP defines GEM for the first time: "Graduate enrollment management (GEM) is a comprehensive approach to the methods by which an institution recruits, admits, supports, retains, and graduates post-baccalaureate students in their respective degree programs."
- Rob Garrett from Brigham Young University-Idaho becomes the first graduate of AACRAO's SEM Endorsement Program.

2015

- AACRAO Consulting team of Jody Gordon, Stanley Henderson, and Christine Kerlin, working with a state-wide community college system, encounter "initiative fatigue" as a major impediment to SEM planning. To respond, they create the concept that SEM is an add-in, not an add-on and can use existing campus initiatives without reinventing the wheel. Kerlin creates the language of linking, integrating, and extending initiatives with the name LinkEx.

2016

- Ruffalo Noel-Levitz publishes a second edition of "Strategic Enrollment Planning."
- Linda Conrad edits *Pathways to Enrollment Management: A Financial Aid Perspective* (The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA), the first standalone book on the intersection of financial aid and enrollment management.

2017

- (January 1) Christopher Tremblay becomes Director of the AACRAO SEM Endorsement Program and Kimberley Buster-Williams becomes the program's first Assistant Director.
- (April) SEM *Quarterly* publishes an article by Gabriel R. Serna about undocumented students and enrollment management. It aims to help SEM professionals, including those with limited experience serving this population, advance equity, access, and diversity for undocumented students.
- Wayne Sigler authors *SEM Core Concepts: Building Blocks for Institutional and Student Success* (AACRAO).
- AACRAO launches a digital badge through Credly for the SEM Endorsement Program.

2018

- AACRAO launches the LEAD Initiative (Leaders in Enrollment Advancing Diversity) at the 2018 SEM Conference. The Leaders in Enrollment Advancing Diversity (LEAD) Initiative will take a multi-pronged approach to identifying and preparing a diverse group of enrollment leaders for leadership roles in Enrollment Management in North America and across the globe.

2019

- AACRAO launches ASCEND, a dynamic, strengths-based, nine-month hybrid, cohort-based professional development program designed for mid-career leaders across all spectrums of higher education who want to enhance their leadership capacity. ASCEND is uniquely guided by AACRAO's Core Competencies and the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) framework, with CliftonStrengths serving as a key tool for personal and professional growth.
- John M. Braxton and Don Hossler author an article entitled, "Developing the Two-Way Practitioner-Researcher Loop for Enrollment Management" in *SEM Quarterly.*
- Excelencia in Education introduces the Seal of Excelencia, a rigorous certification framework recognizing institutions that intentionally align leadership, data, and evidence-based practices to improve Latino student success.

2020

- The American Indian College Fund's Cultivating Native Student Success initiative kicks off to enhance tribal colleges and universities' enrollment practices and strategies to increase Native student enrollment, retention, persistence, and completion rates.

2021

- Stanley E. Henderson and Kevin Pollock co-author and edit *SEM as a Connector: Principles of Practice* (AACRAO), part of AACRAO's SEM Trilogy book set along with *SEM Core Concepts* (Gordon and Henderson) and *SEM in Action* (Gordon and Wankel).
- Royal Roads University launches the first enrolment management graduate certificate in Canada.
- Kimberley Buster-Williams authors *History of American Higher Education A to Z: Primer for Enrollment Managers.* This concise A-to-Z primer provides enrollment management professionals with 180 essential historical facts and milestones.

- AACRAO launches two EM online mini courses with a microcredential of a digital badge: "Core Concepts of Strategic Enrollment Management" and "Enrollment Managers' Role in Retention and Student Success."

2022

- AACRAO launches a third EM online mini course with a digital badge microcredential: "Enrollment Management: Environmental Scanning."
- Brainstorm Consulting launches their microcredential, Fundamentals of Strategic Enrolment Management under the brand of SEMM Academy. (Enrolment with one 'l' is the Canadian spelling).

2023

- Jody Gordon and Laura A. Wankel co-author and edit *SEM in Action: Implementing and Sustaining Your Plan*, part of AACRAO's SEM Trilogy Book Set along with *SEM Core Concepts* (Gordon and Henderson) and *SEM as a Connector* (Henderson and Pollock).
- Lew Sanborne edits a third edition of *Strategic Enrollment Planning* (Ruffalo Noel-Levitz).

2024

- Jody Gordon and Stanley E. Henderson co-author *Core Concepts of SEM: Leading Toward Learner Success and Campus Enrollment Health* (AACRAO), part of AACRAO's SEM Trilogy Book Set along with *SEM as a Connector* (Henderson and Pollock) and *SEM in Action* (Gordon and Wankel).
- Harvard University's Graduate School of Education launches its Leadership in Strategic Enrollment Management in-person institute.
- Stephen McKellips of the University of Akron introduces Forensic Enrollment Management (FEM) to the lexicon as a pre-conference workshop presenter at the AACRAO SEM Conference.
- Stephen Burd publishes *Lifting the Veil on Enrollment Management: How a Powerful Industry is Limited Social Mobility in American Higher Education*, a critique of the enrollment management consulting industry with emphasis on admissions and financial aid practices.
- Joseph H. Paris and Stanley J. Kania, III publish the first GEM book: *A Comprehensive Guide to Graduate Enrollment Management: Advancing Research and Practice*. Routledge and NAGAP.
- Canadian SEM Summit becomes a part of the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC).

2025

- USC's CERPP becomes a part of the Earl and Pauline Pullias Center for Higher Education.
- (September) Geoff Baird and Teague Mettille publish *The Signal Solution*, which introduces the role that artificial intelligence will play in enrollment management.
- (December) AACRAO graduates 100th individual with SEM Endorsement, Necia Martins of Wilfrid Laurier University.

2026

- Academy of Emerging Enrollment Leaders (AEEL) launches at the University of Miami.
- Strada Education Foundation published "Student-Centered Enrollment Management Principles," a sector-led framework for rebuilding student and family trust through clearer pricing, affordability, sustainable aid practices, stronger value communication, and more transparent use of personal information in enrollment management.
- (October) *SEM Quarterly* publishes a special anniversary issue for the 50th Anniversary of Enrollment Management.

2027

- (Summer) Forthcoming: *Handbook of Strategic Enrollment Management: 2nd Edition*, edited by Luke Schulteis and Alex Fronduto.

Appendix

Table 1 (on page 55) documents key AACRAO/SEM leadership roles and recognitions over time—who served, and when—showing how the field's infrastructure (conference leadership, SEMQ governance, board representation) and professional honors evolved across the timeline.

Postlude

Connected Since 1989 by an Admission Letter

Stan Henderson and Christopher Tremblay first became connected when Tremblay received his letter of admission offer from Western Michigan University on October 17, 1989, signed by Stan (at that time, he personally signed every admit letter in ink that could be "smudged" to prove it was real). In 1991, Tremblay served as an Orientation Student Leader and received his first professional development experience on "professionalism" by Henderson. In August 1994, Henderson offered Tremblay his first admissions counselor role, thus beginning Tremblay's lifelong career in higher education. Henderson became a mentor to Tremblay. Then in 2005, Henderson hired Tremblay to become his Director of Admissions and Orientation at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, where Henderson served as Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Student Life. The two worked together until mid 2013. This article represents their first written collaboration and was an incredible experience to share in a mutual love of history. They shared hours and hours of historical reflection and conversation. From that letter of admission signed in 1989 to a shared written work celebrating 50 years of a field they both love, the arc of Stan Henderson and Christopher Tremblay's 37-year connection is itself a small but meaningful piece of enrollment management history—a story of mentorship, collaboration, and an enduring devotion to the profession that shaped them both. Today, they live five minutes from each other in Canton, Michigan, and do dinner together as part of their friendship.

Tremblay interviewed Henderson for *C&U* in 2012 (**Volume 87, Issue 4**).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND NOTES

*Special recognition goes to our hero-editor Heather Zimar, who has professionally overseen the publication of a dozen books on **SEM** and nearly 300 articles on **SEM** during her tenure thus far at **AACRAO**. We are grateful for Heather's contributions in facilitating the sharing of this knowledge so future generations can learn from these first 50 years of enrolllment management.*

Thank you to the various colleagues who offered recommendations for the Pioneers and Pacesetters section of this article. Your suggestions were valued and have made the list more comprehensive.

We have made every effort to recognize the major contributors to the first 50 years of enrollment management through our research and input from colleagues who also "were in the room(s) where it happened." We apologize for any omissions.

Special Thanks

*To Lisa King and Eric Dickerson at **ACT** for helping to locate one of our resources.*

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TABLE 1 ➤ AACRAO's Strategic Enrollment Management Leaders

SEMQ (Strategic Enrollment Manageent Quarterly)

Editors-in-Chief

- Bob Bontrager (Founding Editor)
- Tom Green
- Clayton Smith

Editorial Board Members 2013–2026

- Jody Gordon (2013–2018)
- Don Hossler (2013–2019)
- Luke Schultheis (2013–2018)
- William Serrata (2013–2018)
- Monique Snowden (2013–2018)
- Mel Tyler (2013–2018)
- Janet Ward (2013–2018)
- Darin Wolgemuth (2013–2016)
- Matthew Andrews (2016–2022)
- Morgan Blair (2018–2021)
- Tara Winters (2018–2024)
- Monique Perry (2019–2021)
- Alison Buckley (2019–2022)
- Robert Hensley (2018–2022)
- Diane Treis (2019–2025)
- Kimberly Taylor–Benns (2019–2025)
- Chuck Knepfle (2019–2025)
- Jairo McMican (2021–)
- Irlanda Gonzalez–Price (2021–)
- Alicia Moore (2022–)
- Rebecca Hapes (2022–)
- Stephanie Krusemark (2022–2025)
- Marcella Elliott–Ferguson (2022–)
- Joseph Mews (2022–)
- Ariana Balayan (2022–)
- Tammy Johnson (2023–)
- Shaimaa Hassanein (2025–)
- Brett Bruner (2025–)
- Kelly Lips (2025–)
- Amanda Ostreko (2025–)
- Jennifer Passenti (2025–)
- Jena Lenhardt (2025–)
- Derek Kindle (2025–)

SEM Conference Directors

- Stanley Henderson (1991–1992)
- Roger Swanson (1993–1997)
- Jim Black (1998–2003)
- Bob Bontrager (2004–2007)
- Jay Goff (2008–2015) (Co-Coordinator of Four-Year Institutions)
- William Serrata (2008–2015) (Co-Coordinator of Two-Year Institutions)
- Susan Gottheil (2010) (Co-Coordinator for Canadian Colleges)
- William Serrata (2011–2015) (Coordinator of Two-Year Institutions)
- Clayton Smith (2016–2022)
- Jack Miner (2023–2026)
- Brian Gann (2027-)

SEM Award of Excellence Honorees

- Jody Gordon (2009)
- Scot Lingrell (2009)
- Brian Dalton (2010)
- Deborah Robinson (2010)
- Jane Dane (2011)
- 2011 Andrew Kim (2011)
- Kenneth Ender (2012)
- Maria Moten (2012)
- Scott Verzyl (2012)

AACRAO Board Members Representing Enrollment Management

VP for Admissions and Enrollment Management (new title adopted in 1999)

- Lenell Hahn (2026–2029)
  Southeast Missouri State University
- Brenda Selman (2023–2026)
  University of Missouri-Columbia
- Sherry Waldon-Wells (2020–2023)
  Lamar University
- Tammy Aagard (2017–2020)
  University of Florida
- Luke Schultheis (2014–2017)
  Virginia Commonwealth University
- Tracey Jamison (2011–2014)
  The University System of Maryland
- Michele Sandlin (2008–2011)
  Oregon State University
- Wanda Simpson (2005–2008)
  San Jacinto College
- Ange Peterson (2002–2005)
  Pittsburg State University
- Paul Taylor (1999–2002)
  Bluegrass Community College

VP for Enrollment Management, Admissions and Financial Aid

- Diana Guerrero (1995–1999)
  University of Texas-El Paso
- Walter Washington (1993–1995)
  University of Illinois at Chicago
- Stanley Henderson (1990–1993)
  Western Michigan University

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About the Authors



Stanley E. Henderson

Stanley E. Henderson retired from the University of Michigan-Dearborn where he served as Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Life from 2005–2015. In that role, he provided leadership to campus enrollment efforts that resulted in nearly a 30 percent increase in freshman enrollment as well as record growth of students of color and international students while increasing quality indices. He was also instrumental in developing a public-private partnership for student housing. He previously served in senior enrollment management positions at the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, the University of Cincinnati, Western Michigan University, and Wichita State University. His roots in enrollment began as an admissions counselor at Michigan State University in 1970.

Henderson has a 50-year record as a national leader in developing new models for universities to better recruit and retain students. At the University of Michigan-Dearborn, his work resulted in the integration of ten student service offices around common student success goals and championed a spirit of community to grow student engagement to new levels. His leadership in designing an enrollment facility at the University of Cincinnati helped to create a widely studied model of One-Stop service and integrated recruitment and retention delivery. He was known on his campuses as a collaborator with faculty and Honors Programs for the recruitment of scholarship level students.

He also has been deeply involved at the national level of AACRAO, where he served as the association's first vice president for enrollment management in 1991–93 and as president in 1995–96. He was a founder of the Association's national SEM Conference, now in its 36th year. He is a frequent contributor to AACRAO publications, including the first history of enrollment management, as well as a frequent presenter at state, regional, and national levels. He is also a recipient of the Distinguished Service Award and the Founders Award for Leadership. AACRAO has presented Henderson a Lifetime Achievement Award for "Outstanding Leadership in the SEM Profession" and awarded him Honorary Membership in 2015. He continues to serve the Association as a Senior Consultant with AACRAO Consulting.

Henderson holds a B.A. with High Honor in Political Science from Michigan State University as a member of Phi Beta Kappa, an M.A. in Government from Cornell University, and completed doctoral course work (ABD) in Higher Education Administration from the University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign.

He is the co-author of *SEM Core Concepts: Leading Toward Learner Success and Campus Enrollment Health* (2024), and *SEM as a Connector: Principles of Practice* (2021), part of AACRAO's SEM Trilogy series.



Christopher W. Tremblay

Christopher W. Tremblay, Ed.D., is a nationally recognized leader in enrollment management with more than three decades of experience shaping enrollment strategy, student access, and institutional vitality across a range of higher education settings. He currently serves as Executive Director of Enrollment Management at the University of Michigan's Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning and as Director of AACRAO's Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Endorsement Program—a role in which he has helped shape the professional development and credentialing of enrollment leaders around the world. Tremblay originated the concept of the "Pioneers and Pacesetters" list in November 2023. Over his 33-year career, Tremblay has held senior enrollment leadership roles at multiple institutions, including vice chancellor for enrollment management at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, associate provost for erollment management at Western Michigan University, and assistant vice chancellor for enrollment management at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. His work spans admissions, new student orientation, financial aid and scholarships, college access and enrollment management. A committed scholar-practitioner, Tremblay earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees from Western Michigan University, a post-master's certificate in enrollment management from Capella University, and a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Michigan-Dearborn. He has served as Editor-in-Chief of *College and University* journal since 2020 and is the co-founder and co-editor of the *Journal of College Access* (launched in 2015)—reflecting a deep and sustained commitment to advancing knowledge and equity in higher education.