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Preface

Once thought of merely as gatekeepers, admissions officers now need to master a wide variety of knowledge and techniques in order to help form the entering classes at colleges and universities. As a professional association, AACRAO is committed to providing exceptional publications addressing multiple areas of this complex and evolving field. *The College Admissions Officer's Guide* is the next volume in a series dedicated to the AACRAO professions.

As vice president for Admission and Enrollment Management of AACRAO (2003–06) and then as AACRAO's president (2006–07), it became my mission to develop a guide for admissions officers to supplement the limited amount of literature available to many important segments of our AACRAO membership.

There were some articles in *College and University*, and there was Swann and Henderson's *Handbook for the College Admissions Profession* from 1998. But there was a lack of more recent, wide-ranging guidance for admissions officers, due in part to the fact that admissions is a relatively "newer" profession within AACRAO, merging with the registrars only in 1947.

Recognizing the need for ongoing professional guidance for AACRAO's admissions officers led to our commitment to publish this *Guide*—to complement and support the professionals in the field, and to serve as the most current comprehensive guide specifically for admissions officers, as distinct from enrollment managers.

When Heather Smith and I requested a call for authors for what was originally intended to be a comprehensive guide for both registrars and admissions officers, the membership response was so overwhelming that AACRAO decided to begin with the registrars' publication and follow with the *College Admissions Officer's Guide*. These two significant books provide current guidance to the two major segments of AACRAO's membership, and allow for additional development of the series or sequence.

AACRAO appreciates the significant contributions of fifty-six authors contributing to the forty-four chapters of expertise. Under the tutelage of Dr. Barbara Lauren, this publication will continue the AACRAO tradition of exceptional professional literature, and will establish a foundation for the admissions profession in the twenty-first century. The AACRAO Board of Directors would like to thank each of you for making this mission a reality.

Angé Peterson
Assistant Vice President—Regional Campuses
University of Central Florida

Introduction and Overview

Newspapers advertise for perfection in our field every day. Here is a composite sample advertisement for a director of admissions.

The director is responsible for providing leadership to the institution's recruitment, admission, and retention of undergraduate and transfer students. He or she must have a thorough understanding of enrollment management, data-driven recruitment strategies, promotion and public relations techniques, and assessment/planning skills. Such a person will supervise professional and support staff, and will work closely with the all of the following: directors of the enrollment management division, student affairs, and treasurer's office, and also department heads and key faculty members.

Other requirements: Public speaking ability, enthusiasm, knowledge of current and evolving technologies for reaching students, and a commitment to a collaborative approach.

The position requires weekend and extended hours.

The subject of college admissions is a complex one. As the above fictional but realistic advertisement indicates, today's admissions officers must build on their traditional arsenal of knowledge and enthusiasm. They must acquire a comfort with data-driven analysis of targeted student populations combined with the technological savvy to reach them, and they must engage—in many productive ways—with the greater college community.

This book, *The College Admissions Officer's Guide*, follows on the excellent *Handbook for the College Admissions Profession* (1998), by Claire C. Swann and Stanley E. Henderson. So many additional developments have occurred within the past ten years, however, that AACRAO thought it appropriate to create an entirely new work, which would address both new subjects (such as holistic admissions) and new factors affecting traditional topics.

This book is aimed firmly at the admissions officer. Yet we begin with a chapter on admissions in the context of enrollment management, because of the growing interrelationship between the two. As summarized by Stanley Henderson in the opening chapter of this work, the tools of enrollment management can help colleges reach out not only to students of color, but also to what have been called “the New Students”—low-income, first-generation college students. This first chapter discusses statewide partnerships with K–12 education, especially The College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC), a suite of services for students (beginning in middle school) and parents. The CFNC is designed to be one place, easily accessible

on the Internet, where students can plan, apply, and pay for college. Henderson also discusses campus-based partnerships and early outreach, both of which have been productive examples of admissions conducted strategically.

Chapters 2 and 4 present two issues which affect all institutions: financial aid and affirmative action.

In Chapter 3 Professor Michael A. Olivas, of the University of Houston Law Center, discusses the availability of “529” plans for funding college study—both state College Savings Plans (CSPs) and Prepaid Tuition Plans. He also includes a list of programs available, state by state, with Web sites.

We next address what has become a critical concept in recruiting, favorably mentioned by the Supreme Court: holistic assessment. This concept involves taking into account non-cognitive variables as well as more conventional factors such as grades and test scores. In Chapter 5 Michele Sandlin presents “The ‘Insight Resumé’: Oregon State University’s Approach to Holistic Assessment.” OSU developed an “Insight Resume,” a series of six questions to which every applicant must respond in one hundred words or less (per question). “We emphasized—to faculty and anyone else—that by allowing us to assess how students had set goals for themselves and what steps they were taking to reach them, we were able to consider students based on demonstrated achievements beyond traditional testable scores.” In Chapter 6 Ted Spencer of the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor describes how the University of Michigan revamped its admissions procedures after the Supreme Court decisions in 2003, which had involved admissions at the University of Michigan’s undergraduate (and law) schools.

After these two chapters which focus on admissions in the state university setting, we include two chapters that discuss “Small Private Liberal Arts Colleges: Recruiting Challenges and Opportunities,” and recruiting in the community college context.

The next series of chapters focuses on marketing and outreach. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 address, respectively, “Technology-Enhanced Recruitment Communications” (a challenging tour of everything from instant messaging and chat rooms to “tour blogs” and Podcasts); use of interactive Web-based services for prospects; and making use of faculty in recruiting students.

We then present a coordinated series of chapters on recruiting various categories of students. Deliberately we have started this sequence by addressing the topic of “Low-Income Students: Outreach and Retention” (Chapter 12). These are the low-income and/or first-generation college students whom we first referred to in the opening chapter. Then, in separate chapters, we cover recruiting black, Hispanic, Asian Pacific American students, and Native American students (Chapters 13–16, respectively). Each of these chapters has been written by two authors, representing the blending of two sets of professional experience (one chapter includes perspectives from those who work in student services and retention as well as admissions).

We continue by discussing the recruitment of other distinctive student cohorts: women in Engineering (and by implication, the sciences generally); transfer students; homeschooled students; military students; the adult market; LGBT students; and International students.

Following up on the chapter concerning international students, we present a chapter called “The New TOEFL” (Chapter 24), and a chapter by Professor Olivas on “The DREAM Act and In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students” (Chapter 25).

We next address ourselves to admissions processing, with three chapters: Chapter 26 discusses continuous process improvement and use of technology in admissions processing; Chapter 27 explains the new XML standard for the electronic exchange of admissions applications; and Chapter 28 presents a discussion of yield along various stages of the enrollment funnel, and various techniques for predicting it.

The next five chapters return to the issue of testing. Chapter 29 addresses the topic, “Enhancing Academic Excellence and Diversity.” Chapter 30 describes a “Freshman Index” devised by Georgia State University, a combination of SAT score and high school grade point average, and its use in predicting the graduating GPA of white, Asian, and black graduates.

Chapter 31 presents a thoughtful overview of the Advanced Placement exams, including a frank discussion of both the advantages and the challenges involved in using them.

Chapters 32 and 33 present the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The first of these two chapters provides an overview of the program, its components, and its transcripts by a member of the organization. The second chapter, by an admissions officer at a “receiving” school, discusses (among other topics) how universities can market their schools to take advantage of the strengths of students in the IB program—global perspective, civic/community involvement, extended essays, and capstone projects.

Chapters 34 through 37 will be useful for admissions officers in schools of law, medicine, graduate health studies programs (health care administration, nursing, nutrition, and physical therapy), and graduate work, respectively. But these chapters are, indeed, intended primarily for the undergraduate admissions officer, and may better equip such admissions officers to answer the question: “What are law schools (etc.) looking for in an applicant?” Many of the answers will not be surprising, but they come with particular authority from chapter authors who work in those settings.

Chapter 38 presents a helpful elucidation of the Bologna Process and U.S. Graduate Admissions Practices.

We are proud to present three chapters which focus on the use of data in this field. The study of data is helpful not just for the registrar or the institutional research office! Chapter 39, on “Student Data: The Relationship between the Admissions and Registrar’s Offices,” covers the following places where a good data relationship is critical: the transition from applicant status to student status; loading data from an online application; two common schedules for “rolling the data,” thus creating the student record; and managing data in the “gray period” before the semester begins.

“Ultimately it is all about data,” says chapter author Reta Pikowsky. “Data, efficiently gathered and effectively used, can help you significantly increase the quality of your service and interaction with students—the students whom you have worked so hard to recruit and retain.”

Chapter 40 offers a unique insight into the use of IPEDS data by admissions officers. It was written by Ira Tyszler, who as dean of Enrollment Management and also as director of Institutional Research has a rare dual perspective. This chapter offers you step-by-step tips on how to use College Navigator, the IPEDS interface which is open to the public. Easy to use, it is full of information about your own school and also about your peer schools (or any other institutions you choose to access).

Chapter 41 discusses how to calculate the freshman tuition discount rate, and how to use the IPEDS Peer Analysis System to compare tuition discount rates.

“So You Want to Be a Director of Admissions?” In this level-headed and practical chapter two current directors and one assistant dean of admission offer you guidelines, which can be modified to fit your unique situation. “The simple (and crucial) truth is simply that the perfect job opportunity comes to those who are prepared,” they say. The authors discuss elements to consider in assessing an open position. They then break down your first year and a half in the new position into three semesters, mirroring a typical semester system. They suggest items which you should be observing, researching, and acting on. Their summarizing conclusion is sensible and to the point: “Your goal is to align as many resources across campus as you need to implement the changes you need to make.... All of these efforts should create an environment in which success is the norm, and your value to the institution is without question.”

Chapter 43 attends to an issue which every admissions office must face: “Creating a Career Ladder: Motivating and Developing Staff.” The two co-authors set forth a three-step interviewing process; discuss the training, mentoring, and assessment of staff; and above all, emphasize that “the most successful admissions offices create [a] sense of achievement—of professional growth—by developing a ladder of success where one is not otherwise apparent.”

The concluding chapter ties everything together. Titled “Engaging the Greater College Community,” it starts with the premise that “It is all too easy to become disconnected from the campus community. Yet being connected and engaged with the campus community is so critical to doing the job well.” Brian Williams, the author, goes on to describe the increasing stages of engagement of an admissions officer, from listener and supporter to influencer and champion, in relation to nine facets of campus life: financial aid; student accounts/bursar; orientation; residence life; student affairs; academic advising; the faculty; business and financial matters; and advancement/alumni.

Brian Williams concludes: “By embracing a spirit of engagement, you will not only find the best way to navigate your current campus, but will also understand the full interaction of different approaches, as staff changes or professional development brings you to new responsibilities. By considering the role admissions plays in the larger academic community, you will begin to intuitively function as an enrollment professional and not just as a recruiter. You will grow. And your office, your campus, and the profession will benefit from your engagement.”

We include, as an appendix, three checklists which we reprint from AACRAO's own *College Recruiters' Quick Guide*: "Student and Parent FAQs"; "College Fair Do's and Don'ts"; and "Working with High School Counselors."

I would like to express warm and special thanks to Martha Henebry, AACRAO's Director of Membership and Publications, an invaluable colleague for anyone who creates books at AACRAO. I would also like to thank Jim Graham, our graphic designer, a wizard at making content visually attractive and accessible. All three of us worked together on the companion volume which appeared in 2006, *The Registrar's Guide: Evolving Best Practices in Records and Registration*.

I would also like to express my cordial appreciation to Jill Bogard, director of the Library and Information Service, a library maintained by the American Council on Education, in the National Center for Higher Education at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC, for associations headquartered there, including AACRAO. Jill has graciously and unfailingly helped us to obtain many obscure print publications, which have illuminated several topics.

Most of all, I would like to pay tribute to the fifty-six authors, all of whom were fully committed to their institutional work, and yet who chose to distill their experience for their colleagues. Our goal has always been two-fold: to add value to the experienced practitioner who specializes in any of these topics, but to do so with such clarity that newcomers, either to the field or to any specific part of the field, can follow the discussion with ease.

During the year and a half in which we all worked with such concentration on this book, I felt that it "belonged to us." Now that it is published, I am glad that it belongs to everyone—to AACRAO members in particular, and to the higher education community, generally.

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