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Enrollment management has become an important leadership function on many college and university campuses. It is also attracting critical attention here and abroad among observers of our system of postsecondary education. With this essay, we begin a series that will examine policies and practices that are central to campus-based efforts to manage enrollments and achieve enrollment goals, thereby clarifying an “enrollment management perspective” on issues ranging from admissions marketing, to rankings, financial aid, and student success. The goal of these essays, which will be a regular feature of future issues of College and University, is to extend our understanding of enrollment management, examine the underpinnings of this emerging profession, and promote professional dialogue.
functions or units should be organized together as part of an enrollment management effort, and (2) how should the enrollment management effort itself be structured within the broader college or university organizational context? The first question asks if offices such as registration and records, orientation, career planning, academic advising, and marketing should be included with admissions and financial aid as part of the enrollment management effort. The second asks whether these enrollment management units should be aligned with traditional structures such as student or academic affairs or whether they should constitute an entirely separate structure with its own senior campus leader (such as a vice president or associate provost for enrollment management).

Since those early beginnings of enrollment management, much has happened to shape the administrative practices of our field, to refine its core principles, and to explore structural alternatives. The AACRAO-sponsored Annual Meeting for Strategic Enrollment Management—which will mark its 18th year in 2008—has become a major annual conference attracting more than 1,000 professionals from the United States, Canada, and several other countries. References to enrollment management now are common throughout both scholarly and professional publications in the field of higher education. Graduate courses and degrees in enrollment management are found in higher education curricula. College and university officers with enrollment management in their title and responsibilities are commonplace, as are enrollment management consultants. Even if its core principles and optimal structures have evolved over the past 30 years and its scope and purposes still evade simple definition, there is no question that enrollment management is now and will continue to be a fixture in higher education administration.
There also is no question that the practice of enrollment management increasingly has been criticized, often sharply, by thoughtful observers of higher education. In the last five years, numerous magazine articles and editorials have critiqued enrollment management as an example of what’s wrong with American higher education. Critics have described enrollment management as part of the “winner-takes-all” orientation that has a negative influence on access and equity and that thereby diminishes the underlying values of a postsecondary education. Critics have equated enrollment management with a range of specific strategies designed to deliberately shape enrollment outcomes such as increasing selectivity, optimizing net revenue, and improving student academic profile—all in ways that work against broad educational values and the social good. Critics have identified enrollment management strategies as causal factors in the pervasive pursuit of prestige—‘the arms race’—in American higher education.

It is indeed true that enrollment management tools, techniques, and tactics can be used in ways that constrain certain outcomes even as they pursue other outcomes. Enrollment management strategies can and do constrain some equity outcomes for students from low-income and first-generation backgrounds as the strategies simultaneously strive to enhance net revenue outcomes and prestige; in short, enrollment management does attempt to balance and manage tradeoffs between access and other institutional goals. Enrollment management strategies can and do bring a calculated, empirical perspective on and market orientation toward the real costs and the consequences of espoused values such as increasing diversity and access. It is that perspective that attracts so much of the criticism.

But in the spirit of playfulness, we would ask this: If enrollment management has such a negative impact on students and institutions and the social good, what is the alternative? Should institutions not attempt to plan for and manage their enrollments? Should colleges and universities just let their enrollments happen? Many critics hint at bygone days when institutional enrollment practices exhibited greater integrity and reflected some “higher order values” than they do today. Scholars who have examined the history of American higher education have found scant evidence to suggest that there was ever a time in the history of American colleges and universities when institutions’ leaders were not attempting to exert influence, directly or indirectly, on the numbers and types and mix of students enrolled in order to achieve the institution’s mission and goals.

We suggest that few presidents or boards of trustees or faculty would be willing to take a laisse-faire attitude with student enrollment, to be nonchalant about the dominant source of institutional revenue, to be undisciplined and unintentional and uninformed in the functions and processes that have such a powerful impact on the mission, health, and vitality of an institution. The stakes are too high, the consequences too great to not be as deliberate, as knowledgeable, as intentional, and as effective as possible in the pursuit of an institution’s desired strategic enrollment goals. But if managing enrollments is a natural and necessary process with no viable or sustainable alternatives, then why is the practice of enrollment management perceived as so problematic?

Considering that question prompts us to reflect on how to locate the concepts and practices of enrollment management in the institutional context. In this essay, we attempt to situate both the practice of enrollment management and the tensions associated with managing enrollments as campuses strive to achieve important societal and institutional goals.

**ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT REVISITED**

Enrollment management strategies enable institutions to pursue their strategic goals in more informed, intentional, and integrated ways. At its core, enrollment management uses a wide range of applied social science research methods and models of strategic planning and analysis to achieve enrollment goals. This includes research that measures an institution’s competitive market position relative to other institutions; that assesses how a campus is perceived by prospective students; that explores why students do or do not matriculate; and that seeks to understand why and how students progress to graduation, drop out, or transfer. Enrollment management strategies employ financial and econometric modeling to understand the influence of price and financial aid on students’ decisions to enroll and to persist and to explore how changes in price and aid can shape a wide range of enrollment outcomes, including increasing net tuition revenue, enhancing the academic profile, and achieving diversity and access. Enrollment management uses marketing research methods to identify opportunities for expanded outreach and market position as well as for assessing an institution’s brand image. It uses business modeling to understand enrollment capacities or the costs and benefits of enrollment growth in specific programs. Findings from these kinds of applied studies are then used to enable colleges and universities to deliberately segment student markets and to execute ap-
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appropriate marketing, recruitment, and retention activities in order to enroll and graduate the desired number, profile, and mix of students.

There is nothing inherently pernicious or even inappropriate in these activities. The key question for institutions of higher education is not whether to apply enrollment management strategies and techniques but to what end? The key questions include: What are the institution’s goals and aspirations that guide the enrollment management practice? How are these goals established and evaluated and prioritized? How adequately do relevant research, analysis, and modeling guide the planning process? How are institutional goals and aspirations translated into enrollment management programs, and how does enrollment management, in turn, inform institutional goal setting? And what is the institution willing and able to invest and to do to achieve those goals and aspirations?

In addition, we submit that senior campus policy makers at least in the nonprofit sector (which receives direct subsidies if they are public institutions or indirect subsidies because they are tax exempt) also should examine how their decisions about student enrollments help to achieve broader societal goals. Answering these questions constitutes one important step in locating enrollment management in the institutional context.

The enrollment goals of senior campus administrators are almost always multifaceted and complex; they also are almost always in conflict with one another. Likewise, the relative priority given to multiple enrollment goals tends to vary between campus constituencies in predictable ways: the goals of faculty often vary from those of financial officers, for example. These multiple goals can range from attracting more students to under-enrolled majors to increasing the numbers of national merit scholars; they can include increasing six-year graduation rates and increasing enrollment of students from out of state. In this (and succeeding) essays, however, we focus on six primary and overarching goals found at most campuses: improving market position and market demand; enhancing the academic profile of the student body; ensuring the economic diversity of the student body; ensuring racial/ethnic diversity; improving persistence and graduation rates; and increasing net tuition revenue.

The pursuit of each of these goals requires different patterns of marketing investments and expenditures, alternative staffing patterns, varied approaches to admissions and recruitment, different pricing and financial aid strategies, and a range of programmatic initiatives. Each goal thus is in competition with the others for money, staff time, and institutional attention. Of course, that’s always the case in institutions of higher education: Multiple and varied goals vie for position and priority in the allocation of scarce resources. But at the crux of the strategic nature of enrollment management goals is the fact that the simultaneous pursuit of all of these goals requires a difficult balancing act not only of resources but also of competing outcomes; it requires the management of multiple tradeoffs since in many ways these enrollment goals are in conflict and often are mutually incompatible. We suggest that it is in the process of helping senior campus administrators and boards of trustees to understand, define, prioritize, and balance these institutional goals that we locate the heart and soul of any enrollment management strategy.

Several examples are illustrative. Increasingly, institutions seek to increase the enrollment of low-income and/or first-generation students in order to fulfill missions of access and educational opportunity. This typically requires special recruitment and student support programs along with new staff and services; it also likely requires more campus-funded need-based aid. Simultaneously, improving the academic profile of the student body—a persistent goal and aspiration at most institutions—may require new targeted marketing efforts, perhaps new academic programs such as Honors Colleges, and, at many campuses, increases in campus-funded merit-based aid. Finally, budgetary requirements to increase net tuition revenue not only drive annual tuition pricing increments but also often require campuses to provide scholarships to students not otherwise eligible for either need-based or merit-based aid; these students can afford to pay most or all of the costs of attendance but may be unwilling to do so without some grant or scholarship (an outcome of the analytic process referred to as financial aid leveraging). Most institutions seek to improve their performance in all three of these areas; in short, they want it all. Ultimately, however, these goals compete both in the allocation and reallocation of required budgeted resources as well as in the balancing of the conflicting outcomes (e.g., more merit scholarships to improve the academic profile reduces net tuition revenue; increasing access of low-income students often adversely affects some traditional measures of the class academic profile). The responsibility for setting these priorities does not rest solely with the enrollment management leadership but rather with the entirety of an institution’s executive leadership, with the board of trustees, and with the prevailing governance and strategic planning processes, as well.

As another example, except for a small number of very wealthy colleges and universities with large endowments,
annual net tuition revenues (NTR) determine the health and quality of the educational experience that a college or university can offer its students and faculty. Deliberately pursuing increased NTR is not necessarily a reflection of institutional greed or some perverse inversion of institutional values and priorities. Rather, it is an essential element of educational improvement, especially at the vast majority of American colleges and universities that rely upon student tuition for a substantial share of institutional revenue. One of the notable successes of the evolution of enrollment management practices and principles is an improved understanding of the complex interplay of any given institution’s market position, student profile, tuition price, and financial aid strategy in producing, sustaining, and increasing its NTR. Perhaps as a result of the increasing prevalence, precision, and effectiveness of the analytic tools and financial models now used to achieve NTR goals and balance those goals with competing values of access, diversity, and academic profile, it is one of the practices in the crosshairs of the critics of enrollment management. Indeed, practices associated with the use of merit aid are at the center of much of the current criticism of enrollment management. (We address this important topic in a subsequent essay.) As we seek to locate enrollment management, it’s essential not to confuse means with ends, not to equate tools and techniques with goals and priorities. Annually budgeted goals for net tuition revenue are established in institutional budget processes that typically involve senior administrative and academic leadership, faculty governance, and board approval.

As a third example, many campus policy makers find themselves in complex trade-offs when they attempt simultaneously to improve graduation rates and to pursue goals of socioeconomic and ethnic diversity. Research clearly demonstrates that for many reasons, low-income, first-generation, African-American, and/or Latino students are at greater risk of dropping out. Comparative data are almost painfully compelling in demonstrating the correlations between institutions’ diversity and graduation rates. A public policy environment where graduation rates are used increasingly (and too simplistically) as an institutional accountability measure creates powerful disincentives to enroll larger numbers of students who in all likelihood will depress overall graduation rates. This is not to suggest that campuses can do nothing to improve these students’ success; in fact, the range of retention programs and strategies on most campuses continues to expand. These strategies require substantial investments in student support programs because disproportionately more of these students lack adequate academic preparation, previous positive experiences in educational environments, and financial resources to sustain academic progress toward degree completion. While colleges and universities can help students overcome their disadvantages, experience and evidence suggest that they cannot be completely overcome—thus creating yet another difficult trade-off in institutional priorities and goals.

These simple examples illustrate the scope and complexity of the enrollment management agenda at many institutions. More important, these dynamic complexities and realities demonstrate the difficult institutional decisions the leadership of most colleges and universities confronts. While these choices constitute the foundation of any enrollment management strategy, they are not solely enrollment management issues; ultimately, they are issues of institutional mission, campus aspirations, and the extent to which policy makers choose to emphasize their public service roles.

**HOW THEN SHOULD ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS BE STRUCTURED?**

Regardless of the challenge we have in describing the purposes and responding to critics of enrollment management, there continues to be a great deal of interest in how to structure enrollment management organizations and in what functions should be part of these units. These interesting and important questions are difficult to answer for several reasons. First, the structural question presupposes that we can answer the more basic question, *What works best?* To date, there is no singular, definitive answer. No empirical evidence exists to attest whether the structure and composition of enrollment units influences their effectiveness. Ample examples of successful enrollment management efforts achieved with radically different organizational models and structures can be found. We believe that if enrollment management is to fully reflect the way by which an institution realizes its mission and its academic and business goals, then structure should follow strategy and so should reflect the particular, idiosyncratic institutional culture, climate, and character.

In lieu of evidence that leads to a prescriptive overview of organizational structure, we offer the following thoughts on the structure and composition of enrollment management organizations:

- Campuses benefit from having a senior administrator who, as a knowledgeable enrollment officer, can sit at the table with other senior policy makers and bring an enrollment management perspective to policy decisions.
related to student enrollment and to academic and financial planning.

The enrollment management organization needs to have in order to guide institutional and enrollment planning and to execute enrollment strategies. We offer several examples:

- Enrollment management is fueled by a comprehensive research agenda and a need for on-going action research that often is not adequately met by traditional institutional research units; an effective enrollment management organization needs the capacity to conduct ongoing studies and analysis of the admissions process, of the effects of financial aid on matriculation, of student retention, etc. One of the defining characteristics of enrollment management is that it is a data-driven, research-dependent process.

- The enrollment management organization needs the capacity both to drive and to support institutional marketing strategy and tactics. As marketing evolves to include brand marketing, one-to-one relationship marketing, or word-of-mouth marketing, and as institutional visibility, recognition, brand identity, and competitive market position play an increasingly prevalent role in realizing enrollment goals, the institutional marketing strategy needs to be fully integrated with its core enrollment strategy, and vice versa.

- Enrollment management is increasingly dependent on information systems and technologies; it is very much a technology-intensive process and enterprise. The enrollment management organization therefore must have the capacity to partner with campus IT divisions in developing, implementing, and managing integrated data systems and web-based strategies and services—and in prioritizing the many competing demands for systems development.

- Perhaps even more than organizational structures and capacities, effective enrollment management requires an institutional culture and climate characterized as an open systems environment. The factors that influence student enrollment outcomes are too complex for one administrative unit to control and manage, regardless of its scope and composition; it is a truism that all offices and individuals can and do influence student enrollments, from the activities of campus marketing and branding efforts, to the range of academic offerings, to the quality of student life. Open systems environments encourage the broad sharing of information and decision making and discourage the creation of organizational silos that operate independently of one another. Enrollment management organizations require the capacity to build and to manage processes by which academic and student service
CONCLUSION

Enrollment management is a set of strategies, practices, and perspectives that can help an institution more effectively achieve its mission and goals. These strategies, practices, and perspectives can be used to increase socioeconomic diversity or to enhance institutional prestige, to optimize enrollment capacity or to elevate academic profile. Enrollment management is about managing the pursuit of the institution’s enrollment goals and outcomes. Ultimately, it falls to the board of trustees, executive administrators, and governance structures to set appropriate priorities to ensure that both short- and long-term institutional and societal goals are kept in balance. However, senior enrollment management leaders can and must play an important role in helping senior policy makers understand the tensions and trade-offs embedded in many of the decisions they make. Having a disciplined and intentional process and an organizational structure for managing the pursuit of possibly competing enrollment goals is something in which no one would find fault. It is in that institutional process of framing an informed view of enrollment challenges and opportunities that we believe we locate the core of enrollment management.

In this first essay we have attempted to provide some prefatory context for how we can define and locate the strategies and practices of enrollment management within the administrative and planning structures of colleges and universities. We have attempted to set this context for an ongoing discussion of the rapidly evolving policies and practices and perspectives associated with enrollment management. In future issues of College and University, we will reflect upon what insights an enrollment management perspective brings to such topics as the concept of market position, the role of technology, student retention, the effects of public policy on enrollment practices, the potential impact of demographic trends, the impact of college rankings and accountability movements, and the use of financial aid in enrollment management.

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Within our diverse higher education landscape, no single formula exists for pursuing strategies that support stable or growing enrollments. College leaders can, however, utilize some common elements of enrollment management planning, adapt those elements to their institutional culture, and get on the road to enrollment success.
What is “enrollment management?” The concept first made its way to higher education in the 1970s, when Jack Maguire described enrollment management as an approach and structure that organizes a variety of institutional processes relevant to student enrollment (Maguire 1976 as cited in Kalsbeek 2000). Hossler (1986) described it as a process through which the size of the student body is influenced by the deliberate organization and efforts of admissions, advising, financial aid, pricing, orientation, advising, retention and other services. Dolence (1993) offered a seminal definition: “Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) is a comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain optimum enrollment, where optimum is defined within the academic context of the institution.” Bontrager (2004) stated that enrollment management “enables fulfillment of institutional mission and students’ educational goals.”

A review of the literature and attendance at any enrollment management conference will demonstrate that these multiple perspectives on enrollment management are highly related to successful practice in both the CTC and the baccalaureate sectors. Institutions across the nation have strengthened their enrollments through such strategies and tactics as coordination of recruitment activities, enhancement of financial aid processing, implementation of effective retention strategies, development of new instructional programs, a focus on intensive marketing activities, creation of one-stop service centers, and numerous other efforts. There is no shortage of best practices and good ideas in enrollment management techniques. Nevertheless, experienced enrollment professionals agree that each institution should develop its own approach, strategies, and tactics, reflecting its own institutional culture and challenges.

This is particularly true for community colleges, where certain strategies utilized in the baccalaureate sector may not be applicable given the unique characteristics of the CTC—e.g., open door, non-residential, less well-funded, and largely focused on the local or regional community.

Lest the concept of enrollment management seems too nebulous and the journey to enrollment success appears to have few universal road signs, the following definition is offered as relevant to community and technical colleges:

**Enrollment management (EM) is a comprehensive and coordinated process that enables a college to identify enrollment goals that are allied with its multiple missions, 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.**

**GETTING STARTED**

...EM is a comprehensive and coordinated process...

The key word is “comprehensive.” As much as possible, the process of EM should be inclusive of all sectors of the college, from Adult Basic Education to ESL, from university transfer to career and technical training. However, there is no single preferred EM organizational structure. Kemerer, Baldridge and Green (1982) suggest that there are four approaches: Committee, Coordinator, Matrix, and Division. Penn (1998), Jonas and Popovics (2000), and others have offered commentary on the viability of those models, noting that advantages and disadvantages are associated with each model. Henderson (2005) argues for an enrollment management ethos rooted in the...
academic context rather than over-emphasis on a formal structure. Institutional culture and the realities of an institution’s structure should be the drivers of an institution’s process of EM. At this juncture in our history, many CTCs are finding the “committee” to be the best vehicle given its fit with the schools’ typically egalitarian climate. Some community and technical colleges are elevating the role of a current student services or academic administrator to include oversight and accountability for the progress of an EM effort.

...that enables a college to focus on identifying enrollment goals that are allied with its mission, its strategic plan, its environment, and its resources...

Enrollment goals should be developed in accordance with the institution’s vision of its future, its strategic plan to achieve that vision, and its practical assessment of its resources. Harmony between a vibrant institutional strategic plan and an EM plan ensures a sharper focus on goals and a better utilization of human and financial resources. In identifying enrollment goals, attention must be paid to the implications of targets set by any state oversight board, of funding allocations tied to enrollment, of alternative entrepreneurial endeavors, of enrollment profiles and trends, of program mix and delivery modes, and of other environmental data that describe the reality of a college’s situation.

The following suggestions may be helpful in getting started:

1. Review the college’s strategic plan: Is it current, vibrant, focused? Does it include a direction for enrollment?
2. Assess the college’s internal and external data collection and analysis capabilities. Are data clean, reliable and informative?
3. Executive leadership must make a cogent case for an EM focus, utilizing data that describe enrollment goals, the internal and external challenges related to those goals, and why it matters to everyone. EM requires visible executive buy-in and leadership.
4. In those situations where an institution-wide effort with strong executive leadership may be absent, develop an incremental approach to EM (Kerlin 2000). Putting some components of EM in motion is preferable to no action and could set the stage for an eventual comprehensive approach.

A few caveats are in order: First, EM does not happen overnight; there are few silver bullets. Second, and related to the first, developing an EM ethos across an institution takes time; asking the question “how does this affect student enrollment?” at each decision-making moment must become a habit. Third, knowledge of EM must be honed; attend conferences and other professional development opportunities.

MAKING A PLAN

...reach those goals through the integration of administrative processes, student services, curriculum planning, and market analysis.

Notwithstanding the goal of imbuing every member of the college with a sense of responsibility for enrollment management and success, an EM plan, usually developed within some sort of collaborative group, helps the college focus on key initiatives that intentionally move the college toward its goals. While there is no single recipe for an EM plan, the following steps are offered as a suggestion for both method and format.

1. Establish relevance. Identify those portions of the college’s strategic plan that are relevant to the enrollment position of the college. The EM plan should support the strategic plan.
2. Conduct an environmental scan. Analyze internal and external enrollment-related data that expand understanding of issues raised by the strategic plan, as well as related enrollment issues. EM findings also can be used in a feedback loop to overall strategic planning.
3. Identify and explain the issues.
4. Select the most critical issues and identify key strategies that address those issues. Focusing on a limited number will enable the college to concentrate its attention and resources on achieving the biggest impacts.
5. Set goals, using measurable elements wherever possible.
6. Identify tactics. Brainstorm, use data, assess resources, and be selective about the tactics that will respond best to the issues. Identify the commitments and the accountabilities for those tactics.
7. Create an assessment, feedback and revision schedule.
8. Communicate. Periodic meetings, a campus feedback mechanism, and sharing of the plan will help ensure collaboration and follow-up.

EM should not be seen only through the lens of student services. In fact, it is critical that EM be seen as more than simply beefing up recruitment, creating a one-stop service center, or counseling at-risk students. These types of tactics may be low-hanging fruit and initially may prove helpful when a college is seeking to strengthen enrollment, but
they are not long-run contributors to a healthy and enduring enrollment pattern because they do not affect the core of the institution: instructional programs and academic planning practices.

Dolence (1993), Henderson (2005), and Kalsbeek (2006) emphasize the necessary comprehensiveness of EM—particularly the relationship of the instructional program to EM. Kalsbeek (2006) clarifies it further, identifying four “orientations” that can be utilized when approaching and implementing EM:

- **Administrative**—Coordinating college processes, practices, and policies related to enrollment.
- **Student-focused**—Caring for the individual person (student) who interacts with college processes and services.
- **Academic**—Focusing on the development of a current, compelling, relevant, and competitive curriculum, with optimal enrollment size, mix, quality, and revenue.
- **Market-centered**—Assessing the realities of the marketplace by attending to the college’s position and competitiveness in that marketplace.

A college that integrates these four orientations will ensure that steps 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 (above) engage the participation of representatives of many parts of the college, perhaps even including students and external stakeholders.

**SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES**

The foregoing narrative offers a broad view of enrollment management and factors that may be considered in developing an enrollment management focus at an institution. It is worthwhile to also discuss some perspectives that may be most pertinent to the community and technical college sector.

First, as open-door institutions, community and technical colleges “control” their enrollments quite differently than baccalaureate institutions, which may utilize various selectivity tactics to increase or decrease their enrollments and to match those they admit to their offerings. In contrast, CTCs enroll most of the students who walk through the door and meet widely varying levels of needs, interests, and preparedness for college work. To manage enrollment either up or down and/or to focus on different populations...
that are matched with special programs, CTCs may find it helpful to develop segmented marketing and recruitment plans, and they may rely on faculty and staff from different segments to utilize their community connections to ensure healthy programs and enrollments.

Second, though CTCs are open door, many of them provide programs that have restricted entry—as, for example, health science programs. In such cases, it can be very helpful to observe the practices of baccalaureate institutions in an effort to identify successful EM models. Practices such as focused marketing, application processes, analysis of access to prerequisites, and waiting list management should be examined.

Third, CTCs increasingly are finding their niche being nibbled away by other institutions and learning organizations. This calls for serious review of the institution’s market position, review of the viability of current programs, and an entrepreneurial approach to new program development. The challenge is not only in the area of certificate and degree programs. Rather, the ability of some competitors to offer 24x7 service, non-traditional delivery modes, and other benefits may exceed the resources of a typical CTC. Nevertheless, a number of CTCs are developing model programs of reorganized student services as well as aggressive partnerships with business and industry to expand their program relevance.

Fourth, community and technical colleges, which historically have flourished because of their focus on the local community, are challenged to expand their vision to encompass global concerns: the ability of graduates to function in international work environments, the ability of their faculty to infuse global issues into their materials, and the ability of their faculty to occupy a positive position worldwide as an effective education provider. This goes beyond the notion of managing (growing) enrollments by attracting more international students. Opportunity beckons CTCs to assure local residents that they can “think globally and serve locally.”

Though the list of challenges could become quite long, this article will identify only one more: inadequate funding. Typically funded at a lesser rate than their sister public four-year institutions, many CTCs are trapped in an environment of needing to enroll more students in order to gain more tuition income and/or state and local funding, yet never having enough income to meet the expenses of that enrollment. This challenge goes to the heart of enrollment management, which is the ability to identify strategies and practices that match resources with wants and needs. In other words, CTCs should carefully identify their different funding streams and expenses and should match emergent needs with prioritized missions. Analyses of program mix, of class scheduling routines, and of budgeting methodologies, for example, are central to optimizing and growing resources.

**SUMMARY**

As the twenty-first century continues to unveil new challenges for higher education, enrollment planning and management strategies offer a pathway for community and technical colleges to sharpen their focus, optimize their resources, and achieve enrollment goals that support the health and viability of their enterprise. While there is no strict formula for enrollment management, several of the steps suggested in this article may help college leadership get started on their own unique journey.

**REFERENCES**


**About the Author**

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Group presentations are an easy way to reach large groups of students and parents at one time (Kennedy, Oliverez and Tierney 2007). When group presentations are well done, they increase students’ and families’ knowledge of the financial aid process. In their finest forms, group presentations provide information and build students’ and their families’ confidence as they navigate the financial aid process. At the same time, group presentations are not enough to meet the needs of students with the most complicated financial aid situations. Unfortunately, students and families in difficult circumstances may continue to be the least appropriately served. In this article, we share findings related to group
FINANCIAL AID ADVISING
FOR LOW-INCOME URBAN COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS

Group presentations are the common ways to communicate information about financial aid to high school students. This article discusses the value of group presentation and suggests that additional techniques should supplement this approach, especially in the case of low-income urban college-bound students.

Presentations on financial aid—related topics, focusing specifically on the questions that students and their parents asked at these meetings, when they asked them, and how presenters responded to the queries. An amalgamated version of observation notes might look like this:

November 2003, 2004, 2005, or 2006: The researcher attends a group presentation at school X, Y, and/or Z. An informed financial aid practitioner attempts to explain the entire financial aid application and decision-making process in about an hour. A few handouts summarize either a PowerPoint presentation or notes written on a chalkboard. A Web site visit or short testimonial video may be used as part of the demonstration. At the end of the session, the presenter invites questions.

The question-and-answer period frequently begins with a few moments of silence. The college counselor may help get things started by posing a question of her own. Only rarely does the audience ask more than 4 or 5 questions. In response to a very specific question, for example, “What happens if my uncle has savings that he wants to give me? Do I have to put that on the FAFSA?” the presenter typically asks the student to see
her after the session because she needs more information. The answer to the question is not heard by the entire group.

When the session is over, the rush begins: Students, parents, and sometimes the college counselor create a line to the presenter, waiting to talk about their personal situations. Presenters know to expect the onslaught of individual questions and often plan ‘about another half an hour’ after the meeting to make sure these questions are answered. Students may plan to follow up after the session, but few actually do. The presenter is unlikely to return to the school until the following year.

The scenario described above is fairly typical of most financial aid group presentations: There is always a presenter, and there are usually handouts. (In most cases, the information provided is accurate and intended to be useful.) The presentations are an extension of the current focus on using mass communication techniques, including social marketing (Mundel and Coles 2004) and large-scale informational events (Davis and Erisman 2006). Although these approaches are valuable, we suggest that while the process is crucial to informing outcomes (informational “blitzes” are helpful), it is not sufficient for low-income students as they navigate the financial aid process for the first time.

FINANCIAL AID APPLICATIONS WERE OUTCOME ORIENTED AND PROCESS DRIVEN

Past research on financial aid has been more outcome oriented than process driven (Tierney and Venegas in press). Researchers have continued to focus on the challenges that low-income student populations face in gaining access to college and financial aid. Low-income students face a number of potential barriers, including lack of adequate academic preparation (Perna 2007; Perna and Swail 2001), debt aversion (Burdman 2005; ECMC 2003), and lack of counselor support (McDonough and Calderone 2006). There is a clear relationship between financial aid knowledge and decision making about college choice (Perna 2007; St. John 1990, 2003, 2006; Wooden in press). The type of information a student has about financial aid has the power to positively or negatively impact his or her access to postsecondary education. Low-income, minority students frequently lack access to institutional and social resources that influence the type and amount of financial information they receive. Wooden (in press) suggests that high school counselors do not have enough information about specific financial aid requirements and processes to give students individualized support. In particular, Latino students frequently have limited knowledge of financial aid opportunities (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute 2004) and processes (Venegas 2006). The Education Research Institute commissioned a set of papers that considered the ways in which financial aid information was communicated through a variety of settings, including college counselors (McDonough 2004) and college preparation programs (Tierney and Venegas 2004); the papers also examined student perceptions of financial aid (Long 2004; St. John 2004) as well as financial aid policy (Langancker and Blanco 2004). An overarching theme is that many low-income, first-generation students and families struggle to understand and utilize financial aid information. Critiques of current delivery systems included a lack of attention to the particular issues confronted by low-income students and their families.

The financial aid application process is both outcome oriented and process driven. Our research design therefore utilized a cultural ecological lens to analyze financial aid research. This approach suggests there is “a set of cultural influences, resources, and expectations that affect students’ ability and drive to acquire financial aid” (Venegas 2006, page 1654). The model privileges the role of the home environment, the peer environment, the school environment, and the broader community environment (Tierney and Venegas 2005; Tierney and Venegas in press). Each of these spheres influences the way in which students access financial aid information as well as how they ultimately engage in the pursuit and securing of financial aid. In the case of group presentations and financial aid, it is possible to see how these multiple environs affect the resources and information that can be shared when presenters are informed. Not only do students and parents need to understand the financial aid process, but they also need to be able to put what they know into practice. The financial aid information they receive is not—certainly, it should not be—passive.

Data for this paper derive from two sources: First, data were gathered from participant observations and case studies during a three-year study of financial aid and access for low-income college students. Students attended large- and small-group financial aid sessions. Second, students and financial aid sessions were observed during a summer bridge program for high-achieving, low-income students. The same cohort of students was observed in both group and one-on-one financial aid meetings that were held during the summer program. These students were in the process of finalizing their financial aid packets. In each context, the content of the presentation was recorded. Of
equal importance was documenting how the session was structured as well as the response of attendees. Careful notes were taken of the questions that were asked and of the quality of the responses that were given.

**DISCONNECTED QUESTIONS:**
**“I HAVE A FRIEND WHO…”**

The financial aid process requires specific information about family background, socioeconomic status, and multiple other individualized issues. Students in large-group sessions were found to be less likely to ask specific questions. Questions were more likely to be asked in an impersonal manner, or without a “process orientation.”

Some attendees asked questions in an impersonal manner because they either were trying to get information for a family member or were trying to conceal personal issues. For example, the question was asked, “I have a friend who has a parent who works on a cash-only basis. Can my friend still fill out the FAFSA?” Of course, there was a general answer to that question: yes. However, layers to this question could not be easily addressed in a large-group session. It might be possible for the presenter to obtain more detailed information about the situation if a parent was in the room and if he or she was willing to share. Yet the nature of the large-group session precluded parents and students from feeling comfortable asking more detailed questions.

Students who may have had specific questions about their situation were likely to pose more general questions posed in a group setting. A student who had a question about not turning in the financial aid form because his parents had not filed taxes the previous year asked instead, “Is the financial aid deadline a ‘real’ deadline?” The general answer to this question was both yes and no. All students should complete their financial aid forms so that they meet the set deadlines for state, federal, and institutional agency. Some presenters recommended that students submit the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) on January 1—the first day the system was available. Other presenters focused more specifically on March 2 as the deadline. Students who attended community colleges were given yet another set of due dates and forms. Variations in the application process made it difficult to communicate consistent messages about specific deadlines, particularly given that students’ postsecondary plans varied greatly. Any of several answers to the question were correct given the differing status of students attending the session. Yet neither the student nor attendees in general received an answer appropriate to their individual situations. Thus, the general question followed by a general response proved insufficient.

Questions asked by students typically were closed ended—that is, the questions could be answered either yes or no. “Should I apply for scholarships?” The basic answer was yes: applying for scholarships will increase the breadth of opportunities to locate additional streams of financial aid. However, not every student was eligible for all kinds of scholarships. While presenters typically shared long lists of scholarships at large-group meetings, it would not be reasonable to expect them to identify a specific scholarship for which each student in the room might be eligible. Scholarships typically are awarded on the basis of a student’s grades, community service, and special talents. Although the question the student asked was answered in a general way, the underlying question may have been process oriented: “How or where do I apply for scholarship?” Basic information could have been shared, but there was no opportunity to share information about scholarships particular to each student in attendance.

The limitations of group presentations were real. It was not always possible to answer either the most detailed or more overarching financial aid questions. The numerous large-group sessions we observed concluded with long lines of students and parents waiting to ask specific questions. Large numbers of students left without asking any questions at all. Even though time was set aside for answering questions, the setting was not conducive to in-depth conversation. Even when families did get to ask a question, they were well aware of other families waiting in line behind them. And because the session was officially over, many people may have thought it would be impolite to ask questions for an extended period.

**CONNECTED QUESTIONS:**
**“I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT MY FINANCIAL AID.”**

When we observed students in smaller group presentations—usually attended by fewer than 20 people—we found that students and their families were more willing to ask detailed questions. Attendees asked specific questions that were connected to their individual situation—for example, “What is the difference between a loan and a grant, again?” or “What if (my son) needs to work while he goes to school? Will they take away his financial aid?” The questions represented a deeper level of understanding about the financial aid process, as well as a willingness to share more detailed, personal information. When the student asked for clarification of a loan versus a grant “again,” he implicitly admitted that he did not fully understand the differences. In
response, the presenter was able to query the group: “Who remembers the difference?” Given the meager show of hands, the presenter realized she needed to restate her description of a loan and a grant. Because the group was quite small, she also was able to ask which particular schools students were interested in attending and to focus her comments accordingly. In a larger group setting, there is not enough time to query each person in the group. Youths attending small-group sessions tended to have more homogeneous goals and financial situations than those attending larger group sessions. The more homogeneous the group, the better able the presenter is to target her comments.

Compared to the large group, the atmosphere of the small group was more comfortable and open. In another small-group presentation, a parent asked about her son needing to work for school. The mother shared information about her family’s expectations and values. She was comfortable discussing options about when and where her son might choose to work and the relationship of such choice to his financial aid eligibility. Other parents were visibly interested in the presenter’s response. The question was important to parents and usually was asked by one who “stayed after” the large-group sessions. The presenter returned to a discussion of the federal and other work-study programs as part of his response to the question. He shared research demonstrating the positive impact of working on campus (as compared to off campus) on staying connected to and persisting through college. He affirmed the parent’s concern about her child’s work, not just as a source of income for her son as an individual, but also in meeting the needs of his family. The detailed information shared during the session allowed the presenter to give a specific response. Of equal importance, the family felt affirmed, and their particular circumstance was incorporated into the solution.

**PRECISE QUESTIONS: “BASED ON MY FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE, DO YOU THINK I NEED TO WORK?”**

Observing one-on-one financial aid discussions was the impetus for writing this article: Whereas the small-group session increased participants’ comfort level, one-on-one sessions allowed them to be vulnerable. In the large- and small-group sessions, some questions were never asked because they were perceived as “high risk.” Nevertheless, it was not uncommon for students from low-income backgrounds to share their tenuous living situations after the session was over in a one-on-one conversation with the presenter, if the practitioner was available to stay and discuss these concerns. Students discussed personal issues relating to being undocumented; to being a dependent of the foster care system; to having a parent incarcerated. A few students lived independently while their parents worked in another state or in another country. These students all had financial aid options, but the specifics of their situations were too sensitive to be shared in a group setting. The pathways to financial aid for these student populations required a safe setting and careful planning.

Typically, special financial aid situations required individual attention over a longer period of time than the “typical” student seeking financial aid. One student and her counselor struggled with financial aid applications well past the deadline because they were unable to locate a parent (who struggled with a drug addiction) during the three-month FAFSA filing period. The counselor offered ongoing support and served as a liaison with the student’s intended postsecondary institution. This particular interaction went well beyond the scope of a group presentation, but the student likely would not have received the support she needed had group presentations been the only available option.

Students who were making final decisions about their financial aid packages also warranted individual attention. Such students typically had specific questions about their financial aid options; some were weighing two or more offers. Students who were the recipients of multiple scholarships commonly had questions about informing their intended postsecondary institution of the awards and determining how they might affect their financial aid. During individual interactions, we observed counselors coaching students on how to negotiate their financial aid offers.

Another frequently asked question related to moving financial aid from one institution to another. This was of particular importance to students who were planning to transfer from a community college or who had received a late offer of admission to a school that was their top choice. Again, advice was based on individual students’ unique financial aid situations and personal academic goals. In fact, individual meetings provided more than specific financial aid information: they amounted to informal training sessions in which students could begin to see themselves as advocates and owners of their own financial aid process. No longer were the students passive recipients of information.

**CONCLUSION: MORE THAN A GROUP PRESENTATION**

Group financial aid sessions help students learn basic facts about financial aid. However, students’ individual situations often are too complicated to be discussed and resolved either in or after a group session. Even students with more “typical” financial situations may have numer-
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ous follow-up questions. There are several implications for financial aid practitioners:

- **Link group presentations to one another.** Financial aid presentations should not be isolated events. For example, a school counselor-based presentation should link to local college and university presentations, which in turn should link to larger state and national financial efforts, such as Cash for College and College Goal Sunday. Each session should include interactions that go beyond the larger group presentations. The large group session is an effective first step in disseminating general information. Intermediate, smaller-group sessions are useful for similar groups as a transition from the larger group to the one-on-one sessions. For more delicate situations and as final decisions are made, students and their families will need opportunities to participate in one-on-one sessions with trained financial aid practitioners. Think about the timing of these sessions: 9th and 10th grade students benefit from larger “basic definition”-oriented financial aid sessions while 11th grade and first-semester 12th grade students could participate in smaller-group sessions according to the type of institution they plan to attend. Extending this model further, students graduating from high school would participate in individual counseling sessions during the FAFSA and state aid application periods, with the possibility of attending a follow-up meeting during the financial aid offer decision-making process.

- **Create group presentations that include an action-based outcome in addition to learning outcomes.** A number of important and short time-framed tasks could be completed within the context of a group presentation. For example, a presentation on the FAFSA for 11th and 12th grade students and their families could incorporate a Personal Identification Number or “PIN” set-up booth. A presentation on state-based financial aid could include verification of aid eligibility. (In California, this meant completing a form that required the applicant’s name, address, and grade point average so that at the end of the session, the information could be passed on to the school counselor for verification and electronic submission.) Providing structured opportunities for low-income students and their families to engage in these activities helped this population increase their useful knowledge of the financial aid process. Participating in action-oriented experiences was particularly beneficial for the many low-income students and families who were attempting the financial aid process for the first time.

- **Develop large-, small-, and individual interactions that promote agency in the financial aid process.** Presentations and meetings must provide accurate information in a culturally relevant way. But the most effective sessions also will include tips on how students and their families can become their own advocates in the financial aid process. For example, one presenter informed a medium-sized group of students that they could contact the financial aid office at their intended institution to ask specific questions. “It is okay to call to ask the financial aid office questions,” she said. The shift in interest in the room was audible. The response was similar when a presenter shared the toll-free hotline for FAFSA support and noted that “anyone can call with questions about the FAFSA. There is assistance in Spanish, and you can contact the office for an application without sharing your name or social security number.” These were important new messages for individuals without prior experience of the financial aid process.

Group presentations are valuable sources of information for all students, including low-income students. However, our findings suggest that large-group presentations should not be the only source of information—or even the primary source of information—for this student population. Environmental influences significantly affect the ability of low-income youths to advocate for themselves and to obtain vital information. The barriers they face require more than a single blitz of general information. If financial aid is a determining factor in whether low-income students enroll in college, then increased, specific attention to individual financial aid issues can serve to increase students’ understanding of the financial aid process and, by extension, their enrollment in college.

Group information sessions, well presented and incorporating useful take-home information, can increase students’ understanding of the financial aid process. Yet such large-scale efforts should not take the place of the one-on-one attention that many low-income, first-generation students need to carefully plan for their college education.

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The Efficacy of Using Rankings to Improve the Perception of a Non-OECD\(^1\) Country’s Educational System

Rankings have an increasing impact on higher education. Regardless of their true ability to judge a university’s success or failure, rankings are used by students, their families, and, increasingly, policy makers to define the quality of institutions. Rankings have gone beyond comparisons among universities within individual countries: Today, they compare universities across geographic regions, and a few rank universities in a global context.

This paper reviews the impact of rankings on universities and explores the methodology behind some of the more popular global ranking systems. It then discusses the impact these rankings could have on perceptions of the education systems of countries not included in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (the assumption being that OECD countries tend to have the longest history of utilizing rankings and of marketing their education systems internally and externally) and explores whether these rankings equally influence the perceptions of OECD and non-OECD educational systems as well as the feasibility of improving the rankings of institutions from non-OECD countries. As a case study, this paper focuses on Chile and discusses the relative value and influence of global rankings in regard to the country’s higher education system.

\(^1\) The author chose to use OECD vs. non-OECD countries for the following reasons: (1) It is an easily identified and publicized set of countries, (2) membership in the OECD requires a certain level of availability of a country’s data regarding education, and (3) referencing membership in the OECD is less pejorative than referring to countries as developed/developing or first/third world.
THE IMPORTANCE OF RANKINGS TO INSTITUTIONAL IMAGE

To the general public and to many policy makers, rankings (or “league tables,” as they are referred to in the United Kingdom) are synonymous with quality. They are a short-hand method used to assess whether one university is better than another (Sarraf et al. 2005). However, what rankings actually measure is often of a secondary nature to information consumers.

Although some semblance of rankings existed in the United States prior to the 20th century, university rankings in a mass fashion began in 1983 with the publication of rankings of U.S. universities in U.S. News & World Report. Since that time, country- or region-specific rankings have been developed in the United Kingdom (The Times, The Guardian), Canada (Maclean’s), Asia ( Asiaweek), Europe (The Times), China (NETBIG, Guangdong Institute of Management Science, Research Centre for China Science Evaluation of Wuhan University, The Chinese Universities Alumni Association, the Shanghai Institute of Educational Science), Japan (Asahi Shimbun, Diamond, Kawai-juku, Recruit Ltd.), Germany (CHE/Stern), Poland (Perspektywy), and Australia (Melbourne Institute, Good Guides) (Liu and Liu 2005; Van Dyke 2005; Yonezawa, Nakatsui and Kobayashi 2002). In addition to rankings developed by magazine publishers, some governments have developed methodologies by which to compare institutions (e.g., Russia, China, and Kazakhstan).

The value and impact of rankings vary by constituency and country. Despite dispute over the validity of their methodology (Bowden 2000; Eccles 2002; Sarraf et al. 2005; Turner 2005; Van Dyke 2005), rankings remain popular, and the number of rankings available to the public grows. Though many rankings are constructed with the intention of influencing student choice, their actual influence on students is unclear at best. Their impact on student choice in the United States appears to be minimal (Kinzie et al. 2004), and in the United Kingdom (Eccles 2002) and in Canada, their impact is either “puzzling” (in the case of larger institutions) or localized to smaller, primarily undergraduate universities (Drewes and Michael 2006). Though it would be inappropriate to extrapolate these findings to all rankings in all contexts, a developing body of evidence indicates that rankings do not have a significant influence on college choice.

Nevertheless, rankings in the United States do have an impact on university administrators (Hossler 2001a, 2001b; Kinzie et al. 2004). In the quest to improve the reputations of their institutions, administrators pursue policies intended to improve their institutions’ ranking. This typically includes the allocation of resources, and though the exact amount of impact has not been determined, it seems clear that rankings do influence institutional policy in the United States. Added to this is their impact on alumni, who can be very influential.

Little research has been devoted to the impact of rankings on public policy making; nevertheless, it is not far-fetched to think that rankings are of concern to governmental policy makers. At the very least, rankings provide policy makers with an idea of what variables should be considered in policy decisions. For example, the recent debate about degree completion rates in the United States may be at least a partial result of U.S. News & World Report’s inclusion of this statistic in its rankings. The impact
of rankings on government policy appears even more direct in those countries whose governments sponsor a ranking system (for example, Russia, Kazakhstan, and China). Top-ranked universities often are given more resources or other preferential treatment in public policy decisions (e.g., exemption from state entrance examination policies or admissions procedures). In fact, rankings have been developed specifically for this purpose.

Global ranking systems are too new to have been studied adequately, but it seems reasonable to assume that their general impact would be similar to that of country- or region-specific ranking systems. Yet as rankings embrace larger geographic scopes, the likelihood that they speak to the true strengths of an education institution must diminish. The cultural contexts of university are extremely important to the validity of a ranking system (Yonezawa et al. 2002). But as universities from all countries are compared along a handful of variables, it seems unlikely that individual context can be taken into account. Other methods have been proposed—for example, search engines that allow student selection of variables (Van Dyke 2005), benchmarking via Data Envelope Analysis (Turner 2005), and a unifying set of best practices for rankings (International Ranking Expert Group 2006), but it is likely that newer rankings will be geared more toward “infotainment” (as Bowden [2000] suggests) than they will be grounded in standard research methodology.

GLOBAL RANKING SYSTEMS

Even though the ranking of universities is not new, rankings that attempt to compare universities around the globe are relatively new. Of the three most commonly used, the annual Academic Rankings of World Universities (ARWU), produced by Shanghai Jiao Tong University’s Institute of Higher Education, first released its rankings in 2003 (Institute of Higher Education 2007). In 2004, The Times Higher of the U.K. partnered with the educational services firm of QS Quacquarelli Symonds to produce World University Rankings (WUR) in The Times Higher Education Supplement, released annually (The Times Higher QS 9 November 2007). QS provides an expanded set of rankings on its Web site (QS Quacquarelli Symonds 2007). In 2004, the Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), a sub-unit of Spain’s Ministry of Education, developed and released the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities (WRWU) (Cybermetrics Lab 2007). The WRWU is published semi-annually (in January and July).

Table 1.
Comparison of the Primary World Rankings of Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Webometrics</th>
<th>ARWU (Shanghai)</th>
<th>THES (Times/QS)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities Analyzed</td>
<td>13000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>520+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities Ranked</td>
<td>4000+</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>200 (520)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alumni Nobel &amp; Field</td>
<td>Students/Staff Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationalization</td>
<td></td>
<td>International Students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>International Staff</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Web Size (2x)</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>Size of Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Output</td>
<td>Rich Files (1x)</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>Nature &amp; Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td>Google Scholar (1x)</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>SCI &amp; SSCI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Link) Visibility (4x)</td>
<td>(Link) Visibility (4x)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>Highly Cited Researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff Nobel &amp; Field</td>
<td>Academic Reputation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Highly Cited Researchers</td>
<td>Reputation Employers</td>
</tr>
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* Source: Cybermetrics Lab 2007
Each of these ranking systems includes institutions from around the globe, but each differs significantly in terms of methodology, number of institutions included, and mission (see Table 1, on page 26). As a result, an individual university’s ranking can vary widely from one system to another. However, all three are published on the Web and are open for public use. Thus, utilization of the ranking system may no longer be in accordance with the publishers’ original intent; in the case of at least one (WRWU), original intent has been expanded from mere web presence to enabling students to differentiate among graduate schools (Cybermetrics Lab 2007). For the purpose of this research, it is important to note that the top 200 institutions of each of the ranking systems are dominated by North American, European, and East Asian institutions; Latin and South America generally account for three or fewer of the institutions of the top 200.

To date, the rankings’ newness has precluded study of their impact, but indications are that they are being used. As the editors of the WUR state:

*We know these tables are used in many ways by a variety of audiences—from internationally mobile staff and students to university managers wanting a look at the international esteem in which their own and other universities are held, especially in Asia where interest in the rankings is at its highest* (The Times Higher QS, November 9, 2007, p. 2).

**Webometrics Ranking of World Universities**

The WRWU was begun in 2004 by the Cybermetrics Lab of the Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) in Spain. A subdivision of the Ministry of Education of Spain, the CSIC is charged with managing the oversight of research in the country. As a result, the WRWU was developed to assess the research productivity of world universities. The WRWU includes some 4,000 universities in its rankings.

The general methodology of the WRWU is a review of an institution’s web presence. Web content is not a factor rather, the assumption is that the larger a university’s web presence, the more research it would produce. As a result, bias is given to those institutions with longer and more developed web presences. Four variables are used to calculate each institution’s rank: Web size, as measured by page results on Google, Yahoo, Live Search, and Exalead (25%); the number of rich files (Adobe Acrobat [,pdf), Adobe PostScript [,ps], Microsoft Word [,doc], and Microsoft Powerpoint [,ppt]) returned by Google (12.5%); and the number of external links to the university’s site as obtained via Yahoo Search, Live Search, and Exalead (50%).

One can readily see the problems with this methodology, beginning with its reliance on data from the Web. As a result, the proportion of a developed country’s higher education population may be more likely to be more accurately represented than the population of a country with less Internet access or experience. Prevalence of use of the Internet as a medium for documenting research is an additional issue. In countries where the Internet is relatively new or where Web sites are censored, university rankings may be negatively affected even while those from countries with less censorship, more Internet experience, and lesser restrictions on publishing standards for Web sites may be disproportionately rewarded.

Finally, there is concern about equating a university’s quality with its research alone (and certainly it is disputable as to whether the WRWU actually measures research). A university has many roles, and research is only one. To fail to acknowledge other roles (for example, education or civic engagement) renders a judgment of a university’s contribution that is based on only a partial picture.

**Academic Ranking of World Universities**

The oldest of the three ranking systems, the ARWU has been published since 2003. Like the WRWU, the ARWU depends upon data that are readily accessible via the Internet. A publication of the Institute of Higher Education based at China’s Shanghai Jiao Tong University, the ARWU focuses on the research productivity and size of a university’s staff. The only variable not directly linked to a university’s staff is the number of Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals earned by its alumni.

The ARWU was developed for the purpose of determining the position of Chinese universities in relation to those from other countries. Though independent of national funding, the ARWU is meant to support the government’s quest to create a “world-class university.” In this context, research—as measured by the number of prestigious awards (Nobel and Fields Medals), publications, citations, and the size of a university’s staff (Liu 2007)—is considered the primary indicator of whether a university is “world class.”

**World University Rankings**

Published since 2004, the WUR is the result of a partnership between the London-based The Times Higher Education Supplement and QS Quacquarelli Symonds, a British
education services firm that specializes in university search publications, recruitment tours, and education consulting. Of the three systems reviewed, it is the most similar to those published in the United States (U.S. News & World Report) and Canada (Maclean’s) in that it is independent of a research entity focusing on higher education. Moreover, its purpose, though not stated overtly, seems to be to provide a “general” ranking of universities.

Of the three systems reviewed, the WUR is the only one to depend upon its own data. This data collection enables the WUR to incorporate peer assessments (40%) and employer opinions (10%) in its rankings. However, the magnitude of this task limits the number of institutions included to approximately 520 and requires the use of multiple years of survey data (for example, three years of survey data were used for the 2007 survey) (Ince 2007). The remaining variables included in the WUR were the measures of scholarship output by measuring citations (20%), student/staff ratio (20%), and the numbers of international staff (5%) and international students (5%). Data are reported to QS Quacquarelli Symonds via its Web site, www.topuniversities.com (Ince 2007).

WEAKNESSES OF RANKING SYSTEMS WHEN APPLIED TO NON-OECD COUNTRIES

One need not look far to understand the inherent weaknesses of rankings in general or of these three systems of rankings in particular. Liu (2007) openly discusses the limitations of the ARWU. Rankings have been criticized for their arbitrary choice and weighting of criteria. In response, publishers have developed advisory boards and have published their criteria. Nevertheless, there are five major weaknesses of global rankings systems, particularly as they relate to countries not in the OECD.

Data Collection

Collecting data on more than 10,000 institutions worldwide presents a complex logistical issue. Of the three global rankings reviewed, only one, the WUR, collects its own data. Yet it must use multiple years of data to have enough to include in its methodology. The other two rely on data that are readily available. The ARWU relies on relatively few variables from few Web sites. By limiting the data collected, the ARWU reduces related logistical challenges. However, it does not allow for rich data. In contrast, the WRSU surveys the entire Web to determine a university’s presence but uses number of Web links, types of files, and numbers of pages as a proxy for institutional popularity and strength of research.

Balancing the collection of meaningful data with the provision of timely rankings is a significant issue. Using third-party reports has similar implications for data collection (for example, timeliness, validity). Evaluating web presence, as the WRSU does, may more accurately reflect institutional funding or dedication to funding technology. It also may not acknowledge contributions to those fields (e.g., the humanities) that do not produce large numbers of web files.

Misapplication

Both the ARWU and the WRSU were created for the purpose of assessing universities’ research capability. The WRSU has the additional stated goal of serving as an impetus for institutions to publish more of their research on the Web, but it also recommends that graduate students use it—the WRSU—as a means of selecting institutions. Thus, even though at least two global rankings systems are narrowly focused, they can be easily co-opted for the purpose of judging the “total” value of an institution. Given that none of the rankings includes data concerning learning outcomes, their value to prospective students seems dubious. Nevertheless, as with country- or region-specific rankings, they likely will be used by institutional administrators and policy makers to guide the allocation of resources and to define missions.

The Resource Gap

Perhaps most problematic for non-OECD countries is the link between resources and high rankings. In each ranking, institutions in the top tier are not widely distributed geographically. The introduction to the 2007 edition of the WUR clearly states:

The top universities, on a number of measures, are in the English-speaking world. Although heavily dependent on state funding, they are independent of governments, and, in many cases, they are far from being ivory towers . . . The top 200 universities are in 28 countries. Four are in the developing world: in Brazil (with two entrants), Mexico, and South Africa, where the University of Cape Town finally enters the top 200 after three years of near misses (The Times Higher QS 2007, p. 2).

Table 2 (on page 29) displays the distribution of ranked universities on the ARWU along with countries’ contributions to the global population and GDP. These data suggest that those countries with more resources and lower populations fare better on the ARWU than those whose
percent of the global population exceeds their share of the global GDP. This is not surprising, but it does present a possible barrier to those countries with few or no “top” universities gaining them unless they have an economic boom and their populations remain the same or smaller.

Outcomes Measured
Review of these rankings calls into question the relationship of the outcomes measured to whether a university is of quality. Certainly, amount and quality of research are important to many policy makers, but do the number of articles and the number of highly selective awards indicate the true quality of the research performed at an institution? In the case of the WRWU, the basic premise seems dubious: Does the web presence of an institution really reflect the quality of its research? Peer opinions can reflect things other than reputation—including strong marketing and branding, institutional size (and, by extension, the numbers of faculty, staff, and students who represent it around the world), and many other factors.

Value to the Context
In reviewing rankings of Japanese universities, Yonezawa (2002) asserts that the value of rankings depends upon the cultural context: Rankings that are useful to Japanese stakeholders may be of no use to individuals outside of the country. Rankings that encompass the globe thus are vulnerable to losing their value to the individual contexts of the universities. In essence, they become so expansive that they become meaningless. The impact on countries with few institutions represented could be overly negative. With the growing alignment of European education with that of the United States and Canada through the Bologna Process, rankings based upon OECD-biased measures of quality will continue to place institutions from non-OECD contexts at a disadvantage. Moreover, by expanding the number of institutions included, the image of institutions not in the top 100 or 500 is diminished either because they are not listed at all or because their ranking is so low as to be meaningless or, worse, derogatory. As Hossler (2001a, 2001b) notes, “Everybody wants to be number one.” But no one wants to be number 2,562, even if the total sample is 10,000. In the three ranking systems reviewed, institutions from non-OECD countries consistently fall below the top 500.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of…</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top 100</td>
<td>Top 500</td>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>32.5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>10.9</td>
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<td>4.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
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<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Argentina</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
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</table>

A CASE STUDY: CHILE

Chile is well-known for its privatization of higher education. In many ways, it resembles U.S. higher education given its emphasis on student fees and the funneling of government aid through students rather than directly to institutions. The country has aspirations of turning the University of Chile into a “world-class university” by 2038—its 150th anniversary (Rice, November 7, 2006). One possible definition of “world-class university” might be increasing the institution’s ranking into the top 200 or even 100 of one or more of the rankings.

In reviewing the WRWU, the ARWU, and the WUR, Chilean universities rank in the top 200 in only one of these rankings (see Table 3). Chile has one university in the top 400 in the WRWU and two in the WUR. In the only system that ranks more than 500 institutions (the WRWU), Chile has three universities in the top 1000. It may be possible to move one institution up in the rankings, but it is unlikely that the other institutions’ rankings will remain static; thus, this goal may prove more difficult to attain as other countries (e.g., China) strive to increase their institutions’ rankings.

Prospects for improving Chilean institutions’ rankings are bleak. Table 2 shows that as a country, Chile’s GDP represents 3 percent of global GDP, and its population comprises 3 percent of the global population. In comparison, the United States is responsible for 27.4 percent of global GDP and 4.6 percent of the global population. Compared to Chile, the U.S. thus has a larger percentage of GDP to expend on each of its citizens. Except for Russia, all countries with a university in the top 100 on the ARWU contribute a much larger percentage to the global GDP than they do to the global population. This may reflect the amount of resources required to develop a system that would have a university in the top 100 according to the ARWU criteria. Given that Chile has a 1:1 correspondence between these two factors, it simply may not have the resources necessary to improve its education system such that its institutions rank high on the ARWU.

What is the value of any of these rankings to Chile? Other than prestige in the global context, the primary issues facing Chilean universities may simply be local or regional. Historically, the value of research (the primary measure on the ARWU and the WRWU) in the Chilean university system may not have been as highly regarded as teaching. Moreover, the high start-up costs of research (particularly research in the sciences) may further inhibit Chile’s ability to reach the level of research output seen at U.S. or U.K. universities. In addition, given that Chile’s national language is Spanish, it also is possible that the country’s researchers are at a disadvantage when competing in an increasingly English-speaking global academia. Viewed through the lenses of the ARWU and the WRWU, Chile is at a significant disadvantage.

In regard to the WUR, the significant weighting of peer and employer opinion counts against them. The size of the university system and the number of graduates and faculty are far smaller than for institutions in some OECD countries. Moreover, the historic primacy of U.S. and European institutions as the “best in the world” may give those countries’ universities an advantage. Finally, who is surveyed can affect which institutions are given high marks for reputation.

The universities of Chile face significant hurdles to being highly ranked by any global ranking systems. Existing systems do not value the heritage of the Chilean education system (producing graduates rather than research); as a result, in comparison to other countries’ higher education systems, the Chilean university system stands at a significant disadvantage in developing a strong reputation. Finally, there is the simple issue of not being familiar with rankings: Whereas Chilean universities have little to no experience with ranking systems, the opposite is true of institutions in other countries—particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan, which collectively make up the vast majority of the top 100 ranked universities. It may all boil down to this: Knowing how to play a game is essential to winning the game. Those countries experienced with playing the “rankings game” may have a significant advantage over those just entering the arena.

Table 3.
Distribution of Chilean Universities across Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Rankings</th>
<th>Number of Universities in...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRWU</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARWU</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUR</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SOURCE: Cybermetrics Lab 2007*
Expanding demands on campus information systems have led to the development of automated approaches to enable the right access for the right people to the right resources. Increasingly, automation alone is not enough to provide consistent privacy, data use, and security policy across all our services. Campus information systems must integrate information about individuals from multiple sources and manage that information to facilitate people's access to broad campus services.

Because of the interdependence of the technology and policy infrastructure inherent in identity services, AACRAO is collaborating with EDUCAUSE and Internet2 to present a workshop on this topic titled: Developing Effective Identity Management Strategies for Your Institution. The workshop will take place July 9–10, 2008 in conjunction with AACRAO’s Technology Conference at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront.

For more information visit our website at www.aacrao.org
Additional Questions: Call 202-293-9161 or e-mail meetings@aacrao.org
CONCLUSIONS

Rankings are a popular method of judging the quality of an institution. Though previously limited to assessing institutions within a single country or region, rankings now assess universities from around the world. As with other rankings, it is reasonable to expect that global rankings will have an impact on stakeholders (students, university administrators, alumni, and government policymakers) throughout our increasingly globalized culture.

This paper has described five weaknesses of global ranking systems. These weaknesses either begin to exist or are amplified when rankings expand to include institutions across the globe. Which data to include and how to collect them are significant hurdles given the number of institutions worldwide. Moreover, the gap in resources between very wealthy nations and those that are resource poor may have a negative impact on the rankings of universities from poor nations. The very outcomes measured clearly favor those countries whose universities value research and already enjoy global reputations. Finally, the meaningfulness of these rankings to the individual contexts of countries may be questionable.

Much work remains to be done in creating a meaningful global ranking system for universities. The three reviewed have significant limitations. None of them takes into account student outcomes or a measure of research that does not favor the hard sciences. The risks involved with the use of such rankings are highest for non-OECD countries that are not wealthy and whose educational systems are neither well-known nor research-oriented. Measures should be taken to develop a ranking system that would be more comprehensive in its review of universities. If such a system is not developed, then decisions about educational institutions will continue to be made on the basis of inaccurate information.

REFERENCES


About the Author

CHRIS J. FOLEY is the Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Prior to this Foley was Chief of Operations and Director of International Admissions in Indiana University Bloomington’s Office of Undergraduate Admissions. While at Bloomington, Foley implemented an aggressive international recruitment plan that resulted in a 64 percent increase in international freshman applications in two years and a 40 percent increase in the total number of international students on campus over five years. In addition to international admissions and recruitment, his areas of professional expertise include enrollment management, credit transfer and articulation, information technology, management, and marketing. He was a Sturgis Fellow at the University of Arkansas where he completed his undergraduate studies, and he holds master’s degrees from Indiana University.

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Incorporating Ever-changing Technology into a Communication Strategy

By Mary Chase

Does it seem each day when you read a newspaper or log in to your favorite news feed that you learn of another emerging technology? Do you remember the good old days when there were three primary ways—direct mail, telephone, and e-mail—to communicate with prospective students? I suspect that most of us do; after all, it was only a couple of years ago!

There has been a significant shift in the way colleges and universities communicate with students. As the array of communication options grows, the preferences of our student population change. For most of us, old habits die hard: We are convinced we must be all things to all students, and this belief pulls us in numerous directions. Colleges and universities have expanded their communications to include blogs, instant messaging, text messaging, social networking, podcasts, photo galleries, video, social bookmarking, and virtual reality sites. And by no means is this list comprehensive. As institutions across the country determine how to capitalize on these opportunities, they must consider not only what modes of communication they will utilize, but also how to deliver them. After deciding what will be delivered and how it will be delivered, institutions also must determine the timing of communication—when it will be delivered. What works for one student may not work for another.

We live in a now world. We live in a world about me. Reality is what makes the world go around for our audience. Web 2.0 has revolutionized the way we communicate. What may prove most challenging is determining whether our audience wants us in their world—and, if they do, when and how they want us to appear.

Today’s traditional-age college students were born in 1990. Do you realize that the personal computer was already fifteen years old (IBM’s 5100 was introduced in 1975)? The Palm Pilot went on the market in 1996—when these students were in first grade. Napster was created when they were in fourth grade. Wikipedia and iPod hit the scene just as these students entered middle school. As they walked the halls of high school, podcasts, YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook all became popular. Today’s college students grew up with access to technology unlike that of any other generation.

Some people wonder if embracing Web 2.0 technology is worth the time and effort given that it is changing so fast. But consider the following: According to Pew Internet & American Life Project research released in December 2007, 93 percent of today’s teens use the Internet. Of online teens between the ages of twelve and seventeen, 64 percent have engaged in web content-creating activities. They aren’t just reading or viewing information on the Web; they are producing content for others. As many as 55 percent of online teens have created a profile on social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook. They are writing blogs, sharing photos, and telling their stories.
A sign of the changing times is that only 14 percent of all teens report sending e-mails to their friends every day, making e-mail the least frequently used form of daily social communication. Texting, instant messaging, and social networking have more appeal to the teen cohort. Interestingly, 84 percent of those who social network post messages on a friend’s page or wall, and 82 percent send a message within the social networking system. In addition, 59 percent of teens who go online daily are reading online journals or blogs. If you think that a strong electronic communications flow includes only or even primarily e-mail, you are mistaken.

The good news is that 55 percent of teens who go online use the Internet to get information about colleges and universities they are considering attending. But we must be mindful of what our audience enjoys. For example, real stories are important. Families still appreciate seeing statistics about an institution, but people—not marketers—are who they want to hear from.

WHAT STUDENTS WANT
According to E-Expectations, a series of surveys that tracks student behavior and the expectations of college-bound students, students know what they want. Students do not regularly look to Facebook or MySpace for information about schools they are considering attending. In fact, only 20 percent of students surveyed report having looked on a social networking site for information about a school. Nevertheless, students do want self-service access on college and university Web sites: fully 97 percent of students reported wanting access to a campus portal to see information about class registration, billing, and financial aid while 94 percent want to process housing contracts and meal plan options online. Students also want to use technology to get to know other students who attend the schools they choose: More than 75 percent of students want to read profiles of other admitted students, and 78 percent want to create a personal profile to share with other admitted students. Clearly, students want to be able to complete tasks online, on their time. In addition, they want to connect with other students long before they move into their residence halls.

Despite technological advances, print has not disappeared. E-Expectations indicates that 57 percent of students would rather look at a Web site than read brochures, but that leaves 43 percent who presumably still want to have some information in hand.

CONSIDER THIS
College and university administrators have to make some difficult decisions regarding how to maximize the potential of available technologies. They must evaluate a number of elements.

Web 2.0 technologies are flashy, and it is easy to get caught up in trying to be the first to do something. Yet I caution everyone on this point. Before launching into a Web 2.0 communication strategy, define the goal. Who are you attempting to reach? What will be communicated? Once this is determined, measurements must be put in place to evaluate the return on investment. Too often, strategies are not integrated into the larger communications flow, and the result is a complete disconnect from existing initiatives. Considering the bigger picture and evaluating how each strategy fits will better serve everyone in the end.

One of the most obvious items to be evaluated is fiscal resources. Consider start-up expenses as well as recurring investments. Do not forget (as many do) that the launch of an initiative is only the beginning. While one of the advantages of Web 2.0 is that it is easy to update, one of its disadvantages is the upkeep it requires. Visitors expect fresh content, and that isn’t always cheap.

Beyond fiscal resources, human resources need to be considered. Institutions must determine how they will manage the content and what type of technology will power the tools. Will initiatives be managed internally, or will they be outsourced? It is no small feat to keep content fresh while maintaining the ability to interact.

Another item to consider is how to position your institution. Depending on how available technologies are implemented, your school may be perceived in any number of ways. It is impossible to be everywhere and to do it all well. Thus, it is crucial to determine where, when, and how your institution can communicate most effectively. You may wish to start small with your own site and then branch out to more public venues. (Starting with our own site and repurposing content has proven very effective.)

CAPITALIZE ON OPPORTUNITY
With the integration of Web 2.0 technologies, colleges and universities have the opportunity to:
- reach new audiences;
- keep existing audiences engaged;
- provide authentic voices;
- offer self-service opportunities;
- engage students with the campus community; and
- build relationships.
in PRINT

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The College
Admissions Officer’s Guide

Our first comprehensive guide to the profession in a decade boasts 44 chapters covering the full range of admissions officers’ responsibilities—from recruitment and holistic admissions to admissions processing and predicting yield...from using technology in recruitment communications to making use of faculty in recruitment...from creating a career ladder and motivating staff to engaging the greater college community.

Service within specific settings, working in the context of enrollment management, financial aid, affirmative action, and the use of IPEDS data are among other important topics addressed.

Edited by Barbara Lauren, Ph.D., J.D., this 638-page book is an indispensable collection of knowledge—contributed by more than 50 authors from across the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.

ITEM #0120 | $95 MEMBERS | $130 NONMEMBERS

The Registrar’s Guide: Evolving Best Practices in Records and Registration

The profession’s first comprehensive guide to be published in 27 years, this 35-chapter book surveys the various responsibilities of the registrar’s office today. Editor Barbara Lauren, Ph.D., J.D. (AACRAO) brings the knowledge and insight of over 36 talented registrar-authors to light, and crafts a reference tool that you’ll want to keep close-at-hand.

Topics covered include: registration and academic scheduling, detecting credentials fraud, implementing student information systems, preparing for commencement, accreditation requirements, project management, and budgeting...among others. Additionally, the guide highlights how your approach may differ in small colleges, community colleges, graduate schools, and law, medical and theology schools. Overviews of FERPA and the Solomon Amendment are also included.

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www.aacrao.org/publications/
Many college Web sites are synonymous with Web 1.0. Communication is one-way. Sites push information to visitors and hope their audience continues to be interested. But this is not going to work over the long term. When launching or updating your institution’s Web 2.0 strategies, consider the following:

- Generate ideas for your strategy by paying attention to the competition and to schools that are maximizing their use of Web 2.0 technology.
- Think about how to repurpose material on your own site and place it on public sites. If you develop a video or a photo gallery for your own site, place the same or similar content on public sites.
- Ask currently enrolled students to tell you their favorite Web 2.0 sites. Having a better understanding of what appeals to students will help you develop your internal strategy. It also will help you better understand good placements on public sites.
- Visit and participate in Web 2.0 sites that teens are using. Start to read blogs, listen to podcasts, watch video blogs, and if you haven’t already, create your own Facebook and MySpace accounts.
- Use an RSS reader to stay on top of emerging technologies. You may wish to subscribe (free of charge) to any number of newsletters, but consider having information delivered to one place (not your e-mail inbox) where you can check for all the latest information from a variety of sources.
- Set up Technorati watches and Google news alerts so you know when information about your institution is being posted on other sites. This is a must in today’s public relations field!
- Check Wikipedia regularly so you know what is being said about topics relating to your campus. If you haven’t already, take control of how your institution is being defined online.
- Create MySpace and YouTube accounts for your institution regardless of whether you use them; doing so will reserve—and thus preserve the integrity of—the account name.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

Because of audience demographics alone, colleges and universities that recruit traditional-aged college students likely will feel the impact of Web 2.0 more than other institutions of higher education. Millennials or Net Generators expect and demand advances in technology. They have grown up with the ability to click on a piece of media and view it on their terms. Our market demands choice—lots of choice—and we need at the very least to create the illusion of choice. Because this generation is the most marketed-to group in history, it craves real and authentic content. Even as more “fake authenticity” is created, it sees right through it. Web 2.0 has brought many changes, but the greatest and most difficult to accept is the end of the controlled message.

Nevertheless, you should make every effort to control your message where you can. Fewer than 10 percent of high school students utilize social networking sites to gather information about colleges. According to “College Search and the Millennial Generation” (produced by Eduventures Inc.), 84 percent of students use colleges’ own Web sites to research schools. Be sure to develop and incorporate Web 2.0 strategies into your institution’s site as they will keep your audience engaged and coming back.

If you thought Web 2.0 technologies were a fad, you were wrong. Keep incorporating new communications technologies into your plan. Communications plans are always a work in progress. So belly up to your keyboard, put in your earbuds, and get ready for a fun ride!

**About the Author**

**MARY CHASE** is Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management at Creighton University. She has nearly fifteen years of experience in admissions and enrollment management. During her time at Creighton, the university has enrolled three of the four largest classes in school history, culminating in record overall enrollment. Academic profile and diversity also have increased under Chase’s leadership. She continuously seeks new and innovative ways to integrate technology into the recruitment process, and she played a significant role in Creighton’s initiative to be one of the first institutions to notify students of their admission status by text message.

Previously, Chase consulted for Noel-Levitz and worked at Buena Vista University. She graduated with a B.A. from Briar Cliff College and earned her M.A. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Iowa.
The concepts of service and leadership formally merged with Robert Greenleaf’s 1970 essay entitled “The Servant as Leader.” Applying these concepts to the institution and to the board of trustees, the servant leadership movement has been fostered by associations and a plethora of authors, to include Stephen Covey, Peter Block, Peter Senge, Margaret Wheatly, John Maxwell, Trevor Hall, James Autry, Larry Spears, and Ken Blanchard, to name just a few. The foundational postulate dictates that leaders steward the organization’s resources and serve all stakeholders in their effort to move the organization toward the shared vision.

Servant leadership in the community college setting is unique. It pulses from the heart of those who lead. From the heart of leadership flows the lifeblood of the community college: Service.

The heart of leadership attempts to answer fundamental organizational questions. For example:

- What is the purpose of the community college?
- What is the difference between faculty and professional staff?
- What are the responsibilities of these two groups?
- Do programs serve people, or do people serve people?
- Ultimately, what are the institution’s goals?

These and other questions are consistently on the minds of good leaders. The “Heart Chart” attempts not only to answer these questions but also to be the catalyst for creating a vision, establishing programs, and meeting the needs of the community.

Designed to be read from bottom to top, the Heart Chart starts at the outside of the heart and moves inward. The uppercase lettering identifies the overall flow while the bold lettering indicates the organizational positions; note that this does not necessarily indicate a hierarchy of authority. The italicized titles suggest an attitude of service, reinforcing the challenge of balancing authority and service. The Heart Chart communicates the following:

- Serving people’s career needs is primary.
- Leaders and managers’ function is to create an environment where faculty and staff can serve peoples’ needs.
- Service is the driving force.

**PURPOSE OF SERVICE**

The “Purpose of Service” must be the driving force behind the community college’s vision and mission. Equity, access, and workforce development are just a few of the values and community needs that inspired the creation of community colleges. If the community college is to be successful, all stakeholders must share this vision of service. In truth, thousands share the vision of the community college, and millions are served. The foundational apex is the Purpose of Service.
EXECUTIVES (SERVANT LEADERS)
As a group, Executives and Trustees are responsible for four areas: First, they motivate management, faculty, and staff to adhere to the Purpose of Service. Typically, people do not think of themselves as servants; as a result, a vision of service may not be perceived as worthy of being followed. Second, Executives and Trustees make policies, plans, and procedures that are driven by the purpose of serving the community. Third, they make budgets that provide resources for programs and services focused on serving the community. Fourth, they mentor others in an effort to cultivate “approachability” with the community, management, faculty, and staff.

MANAGEMENT (SERVANT MANAGERS)
As a group, deans, chairs, and directors are responsible for administering the Purpose of Service and providing feedback to Servant Leaders. Honest and open communication between Servant Leaders and Servant Managers is essential for success. Servant Leaders may be involved, to some extent, in implementation of the Purpose, but it is the Servant Managers who are “in the trenches.” Servant Managers need permission to question the purpose—as well as policies, plans, procedures, and budget allocations—as they strive to create an environment where faculty, staff, and students are successful.

Servant Managers seem to align in two separate directions: Whereas student services directors are responsible for serving people through student development programs, academic administrators are responsible to serve by managing academic programs. Both groups have the common goal of meeting peoples’ needs. For example, to increase student retention, student services directors may implement a series of workshops on study skills while academic administrators may implement in-service training on teaching techniques. Even though the paths of academic and student services diverge, successful Servant Managers maintain lateral communication and share the goal of serving students. The path divides because of the mode of implementation, not because of a divided purpose.

FACULTY AND STAFF (SERVANTS)
Faculty and staff execute the plan and the vision. The community college’s purpose is realized through faculty and staff, for they serve peoples’ needs. Whereas student services’ counselors may implement a series of workshops on listening skills and note-taking tips, faculty adapt their teaching techniques in response to students’ learn-
ing styles. Communication between Servants and Servant Managers must be open. Contact with students and with the community creates a unique relationship of direct observation and conversation about the success of the community college.

**STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY**
The efforts of Servant Leaders, delegated to Servant Managers and implemented by Faculty and Staff, directly affect the students and the community. Feedback is essential if academic programs and student services are to be successful (see the interior arrow on the Heart Chart).

**DEPARTMENT CASE STUDY**
One key to excellent service is to listen intentionally to those whom you serve. During an appointment to appeal his residency classification, a student painted this word-picture: “While at a clothing store I chose a shirt and noted the price on the rack. After waiting to purchase the shirt, the cashier informed me that it was three times as much as I expected. I expressed my surprise and disappointment; I did not purchase the shirt. That’s the way I feel now.”

The appeal was denied, and the student remained classified as out of state. Nevertheless, the word picture inspired a change in the priority and in the process of notifying students of their residency classification. A servant listens intentionally, because a need or desire may be expressed at any time. As the Heart Chart illustrates, it is the intentionality of listening that creates the flow of the heart. Formal or informal, the communication flow moves from listening to action. Without intentionality, the model simply lists a few positional titles.

**CROSS-DIVISIONAL CASE STUDY**
Another key to excellent service is to be open-minded during training and to be non-territorial in management. A Servant attended a workshop on the retention of developmental students. Developmental students’ need for assistance and guidance in regard to their organizational skills sparked the idea of a notebook for developmental math students. The idea grew as the Servant partnered with a student services colleague to identify the population to be served. The concept expanded into a collaboration with the math department that resulted in turn in the MaP (Math Portfolio project).

One idea for better serving developmental students by improving their organizational skills crossed three divisions. The idea eventually matured into a project that meets the needs of students and improves communication among the three divisions. How did this come to be? Because a Servant striving for excellence understood that meeting student needs was more important than retaining control over administrative “territory.”

**INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDY**
Finally, a key to excellent service is to make the best decision, not the more easily implemented second-best decision. For example, as part of the college assembly committee structure, the Faculty and Staff Council proposed a designated smoking area policy. The steering committee received and considered the proposal. The focal point of the ensuing debate was not the benefits to students or employees but pertained instead to implementation and accountability—legitimate concerns. After three months of research and debate, the steering committee, the executive administrators, and the board of trustees agreed to make the best decision: Serving the population was deemed more important than ease of implementation or accountability.

**CONCLUSION**
The purpose of the community college servant leader is to hear the community’s needs and to serve students in such a way as to meet those needs. Student success is a result of the dual efforts of student services directors who serve through student development programs and academic administrators who serve through academic programs. Student development and academic programs together are charged with the responsibility of adapting to the ever-changing needs of the local community. Ultimately, the goal of the community college is to serve students and their needs.

Though most of these principles are common knowledge in leadership and management circles, the challenge is to remember that the heart of community college leadership is service. Apart from its mission to serve, the community college is just another education institution. Committed to the Heart of Leadership and driven by the Purpose of Service, leaders open a door of hope.

**About the Author**

**DR. JAMES W. KELLEY, E.D.D.,** serves as the Director of Admissions at Fayetteville Technical Community College, in North Carolina. He holds a Doctorate of Education from Nova Southeastern University and a Master of Arts in Counseling from Cincinnati Christian University. He teaches a leadership development course and has facilitated leadership development workshops at several conferences.
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For Those Without Billions: Navigating the Wave of Dramatic Aid Awarding Changes

By Jonathan P. Epstein and Sarah Parrott

So, you’re not Harvard or Yale. Most colleges and universities are unable to infuse an additional $15 million to $20 million per class year into financial aid to reduce costs for families earning upwards of $150,000 per year, as Harvard and Yale plan to do. Most are unable to devote an additional $2.5 million per class to eliminate tuition entirely for families earning up to $75,000, as Dartmouth plans to do. Since the reality is that nearly all institutions operate on considerably leaner budgets, it’s a jaw-dropping combined endowment total that most inequitably separates the three venerable universities mentioned above from the vast majority of institutions within the nation’s higher education community: $60 billion. For the other 97 percent of colleges and universities in this country that don’t have billions from which to draw (just 76 institutions of the 2,582 four-year colleges and universities have endowments of $1 billion or more, according to NACUBO), comparisons with these elite institutions are utterly unrealistic, and competition with them is inherently unfair.

Unfair or not, the dramatic shifts in financial aid awarding policies at many elite institutions are rippling through the entire higher education landscape. Whether by altering public perception and expectations of costs (“Do you offer the ‘Harvard Plan’?”), or by influencing financial aid packaging at competing institutions, make no mistake, while only the elite and wealthy institutions can afford to enact such wholesale policies, the impact is not limited to institutions that breathe the rarefied air.

After the dramatic December 10th announcement by Harvard University, the dominos started to fall. They continue to fall. There’s a good chance that the trend won’t end anytime soon. Here, we offer an analysis of the current state of affairs:

- What is happening in need-based financial aid awarding and why?
- What do the financial aid policy changes really mean and where are they headed?
- If your institution doesn’t have millions of non-restricted endowment dollars at your disposal, what can you do?

It is possible to successfully navigate the rising wave of competition set into motion when more than two dozen of the nation’s wealthiest colleges and universities elected to offer greater financial incentives for talented students to enroll at their institutions. As the wave gathers speed and power, fueled and supported by an endless stream of media attention and billions of dollars, it becomes increasingly important for all of us as higher education pro-
fessionals to more deeply understand these critical changes in the undergraduate enrollment climate and how the new realities may eventually affect our institutions.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED
Throughout the 1990s, college tuitions skyrocketed well ahead of the rate of inflation. Aid officers struggled mightily to find ways to help families finance an education that, on average for a four-year private school degree, soared past $100,000 in total costs. Educational loans became an ever larger part of the packages being offered to families with demonstrated financial need.

In early 1998, Princeton University became the first college in the nation to buck that trend. The university eliminated loans from financial aid packages for low-income families earning up to $40,000 annually, and at the same time, reduced the loan burden for families earning between $40,000 and $75,000. Scarcely a year later, Amherst College followed suit. Not to be outdone, in January 2001, Princeton expanded their program and eliminated loans entirely, replacing them in financial aid packages with grants and scholarships. According to their press release, “No undergraduate student will be required by the University to take out a loan to finance his or her education.”

In the wake of the moves by Princeton and Amherst, other higher education institutions did not immediately react. It was three years before Harvard University, in 2004, announced their plan to eliminate contributions required from those earning $40,000 or less per year. Over the next two years, a few scattered institutions introduced similar plans, including the University of Virginia, Rice University, and the University of Pennsylvania. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill created the “Carolina Covenant” to allow low-income students to graduate debt-free. All in all, however, these aggressive financial aid changes were few and far between.

In March 2006, Stanford University eliminated parent contributions for families earning up to $45,000 per year. Not to be outdone, Harvard responded just one week later by raising their program’s income limit from $40,000 to $60,000, also reducing contributions for families earning up to $80,000 per year. Then, in late September 2006, the Spellings Commission report on U.S. Higher Education was released. It was met with forceful rebukes by several prominent higher education officials and professionals. In addition to other critiques (regarding student learning outcomes), the report was scathing in its criticism of rising educational costs and insufficient access for the less privileged. The report opened a floodgate of media attention and lawmaker interest. In 2007, Congress began to take a keen interest in the national higher education accountability and affordability discussion, including endowment totals, gains, and spending levels. The wealthiest colleges and universities heard the threat of legislative action loud and clear.

As 2007 progressed, Davidson College eliminated loans in March, Amherst College expanded their program to eliminate all loans in July, and Williams College followed suit in early November. However, it was Harvard that broke the dam with its December 10th announcement that the university would dramatically reduce contributions required of families earning up to $180,000 per year.

The Harvard announcement produced immediate reactions and overwhelming industry and media attention. A few praised the bold move, but many in the higher education community had mixed reactions. Articles in The Boston Globe, The Washington Post, The Chronicle of Higher Education, and Inside Higher Ed made it clear that many were frustrated by the attention that Harvard’s announcement received, since less-wealthy colleges and universities couldn’t possibly enact similar policies. Some went so far as to say it creates a distorted view for future students.

But, it’s the actions taken by competing well-endowed institutions that are most telling. Threats, both congressional and competitive, resulted in a stunning sequence of aid change announcements. Duke University jumped just in front of Harvard’s announcement, but in the months to follow, The California Institute of Technology, Pomona College, Swarthmore College, Haverford College, Tufts University, Bowdoin College, Colby College, Cornell University, Northwestern University, Wellesley College, Washington University, Vassar College, Lehigh University, Claremont McKenna College, and Lafayette College all announced that they’d eliminate loans from their financial aid packages for some or all students. Dartmouth College, M.I.T., and Stanford University went a step further and eliminated tuition for families earning $75,000 and $100,000 or less, respectively. Not to be outdone, on January 15th, Yale University matched Harvard by dramatically cutting costs for families earning up to $200,000 per year.

In all, more than two dozen colleges and universities have dramatically reshaped their financial aid packaging in the past year. Soon, there are likely to be more.

But, how much does all this really matter? What does it have to do with the less wealthy colleges and universities

The wealthiest colleges and universities heard the threat of legislative action loud and clear.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Income Cap</th>
<th>Current Endowment ($1)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/25/1998</td>
<td>Princeton University</td>
<td>Eliminates loans (and reduces loans)</td>
<td>$40,000 (up to $75,000)</td>
<td>15.8</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td>$40,000</td>
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<td>15.8</td>
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<td>University of North Carolina</td>
<td>Established “Carolina Covenant”</td>
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<td>Harvard University</td>
<td>Eliminates family contributions</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>34.6</td>
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<td>Rice University</td>
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<td>$45,000</td>
<td>17.2</td>
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<td>$50,000</td>
<td>6.6</td>
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<td>3/19/2007</td>
<td>Davidson Colleges</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td></td>
<td>490 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/19/2007</td>
<td>Amherst College</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/2/2007</td>
<td>Williams College</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/8/2007</td>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10/2007</td>
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<td>Cal Inst of Tech</td>
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<td>$60,000</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<td>Pomona College</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Haverford College</td>
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<td>12/19/2007</td>
<td>Tufts University</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/15/2008</td>
<td>Yale University</td>
<td>Reduces Contributions</td>
<td>Up to $200,000</td>
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<td>$75,000</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td></td>
<td>599 M</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/31/2008</td>
<td>Cornell University</td>
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<td>$75,000</td>
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<td>Northwestern University</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td>High Need</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>2/7/2008</td>
<td>Wellesley College</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19/2008</td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
<td>Eliminates tuition</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
<td>17.2</td>
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<td>2/19/2008</td>
<td>Washington University</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/23/2008</td>
<td>Brown University</td>
<td>Eliminates loans (and reduces contributions)</td>
<td>$100,000 ($60,000)</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/7/2008</td>
<td>M.I.T.</td>
<td>Eliminates tuition</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<td>3/11/2008</td>
<td>Vassar College</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>870 M</td>
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<td>Columbia University</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
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<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
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<td>3/17/2008</td>
<td>Claremont McKenna College</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td></td>
<td>474 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/17/2008</td>
<td>Lafayette College</td>
<td>Eliminates loans</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>734 M</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1 NACUBO 2007; in billions, except where indicated as “M” (millions).
that educate the vast majority of students in the United States? What should those without billions do in this increasingly competitive climate?

**WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?**

Some are quick to minimize the impact of the recent changes. A number of industry professionals have offered quotations to the media, effectively saying, “We can’t all respond to every move a few colleges make.” Inequities aside, however, this is not a tempest in a teapot. Neither is it the end of higher education as we know it. While the truth lies in between, these are seismic shifts in the financial aid awarding environment.

So, the rest of us are left to make sense of the recent changes and figure out where higher education is heading. In doing so, there are several points to consider as we analyze this trend in student aid awarding:

- **Institutions that have made changes so far can afford it.** None of the recently participating institutions are genuinely tuition-dependent institutions. The lowest endowment is Claremont McKenna College’s $474 million. Bowdoin College, in their January 24th press release, proudly claimed at the time to be “one of only two colleges with endowments of less than $1 billion to eliminate loans for both new first-year and current students,” along with Davidson College. Bowdoin’s endowment is approximately $850 million, one good year from the magical $1 billion mark. None can claim poverty. As for the top four (Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Princeton), their combined endowments top $90 billion.

- **The number of students who will immediately benefit is minimal.** The NCES projects approximately three million high school graduates this year. Of these students, only a tiny fraction of carefully-chosen, top-notch students will be offered admission to the elite institutions that have recently changed their financial aid policies, and fewer still will enroll. Among those, only a fraction will fall below the income caps and benefit from the changes. In a nutshell, the policies themselves will benefit just a few elite students at the most selective schools—less than 1 percent of students entering college this fall.
It’s a presidential election year. This is no coincidence. The Spellings Report focused both media and public attention on education costs and accountability. Lately, governmental concerns have shifted to the gigantic untaxed values and gains of some college and university endowments. Many in Washington are asking why tuitions keep rising when colleges appear flush and are exempt from taxation. Many aid policy changes in late 2007 and early 2008 are preemptive strikes against government-mandated spending requirements. Although history suggests that political attention spans are notoriously short, the billions at stake are incentive for legislators to keep the issue in the forefront of public debate.

Money matters. Even without a single additional formal awarding change, the competitive ripple is in motion. This spring, for example, some families will be required to finance $3,500 or more in loans each year at one college and not at another. For them, the difference will be glaring. Research has shown that non-repayable money is an extremely influential factor in college choice for those with demonstrated financial need. The very families that are most sensitive to net cost also tend to be the most debt-adverse. The cost to fill the loan gap with institutional funds is far more difficult at institutions with fewer resources at their disposal. These institutions now face a greater challenge to enroll qualified, desirable students without placing themselves in financial peril.

Perception matters. Even though only a small fraction of college-going students will be immediately impacted by the changes to financial aid policies, the marketplace has started to internalize the messages: loans are bad, colleges are rich, they should make it less expensive, and families shouldn’t have to sacrifice for a college education. If perception is reality, it may not matter that only two dozen of the nation’s wealthiest and most exclusive institutions actually have official policies; families across the country are developing new expectations for all institutions. Recent research and polls of public perception suggest that families are already less willing to make sacrifices (i.e., loans and out-of-pocket payments) to finance higher education, and are not fully convinced that colleges give them their money’s worth.

Students matter. Over a dozen colleges and universities, from all areas of the country, have jumped on board with more generous financial aid policies in 2008. This means there’s geographical competition for students with their less-selective neighbors. They are engaged in battle on the grounds of net cost and perceived value. Whether or not they can afford to, nearby colleges are pressured to respond, either by adjusting their own financial aid awards or by restraining tuition increases. When either occurs, their competitors may be forced to respond, and so on. Competition breeds competition.

To assume that competitors aren’t making moves will be dangerous, both to your enrollment and your bottom line.

The unfortunate reality is that the competitors in this high-stakes playing field are not at all equal. Just because your institution is not in the billion-dollar club (or perhaps not even the hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars club) doesn’t mean that you have no competitive options. Less-wealthy colleges and universities can indeed compete for students in this new paradigm; it’s just that they’ll have to play their hands more strategically than ever before.

WHAT CAN EVERYONE ELSE DO

Even though your endowment may be short a zero or two, there are still many moves you can make to remain strong and viable in this time of change and competitive uncertainty. Adopting a more strategic approach requires that you stay focused and keep your eyes on the chess board at all times. To assume that competitors aren’t making moves just because they don’t announce a formal awarding policy change will be naïve and dangerous, both to your enrollment and your bottom line.

Much of the impact will be out of sight of the public, but it will happen just the same. Heaven help the institution that is caught completely unprepared this year, next year, or the year after when a surprisingly small percentage of their admitted students enroll and their traditional financial aid packaging strategy is suddenly rendered an ineffective relic.

Below we offer suggestions for navigating the waters in this uncertain time:

Don’t overspend just to keep up. Before you jump into the fray- step back, look a little deeper, and consider all your options. Research your market (prospective stu-
Market shifts your own dynamic of student recruitment. The most effective over time. The bottom line is that your competitors are becoming increasingly strategic with their admissions decisions, and will directly impact your institution. Continually reaching out for information is essential to quickly respond to changes that may impact your yield and enrollment.

Be smart about what your direct competitors are planning and doing. Information matters now more than ever. Get to know your head-to-head competitors beyond anecdotes, student self-reports, or your institutional aspirations. Pay close attention to what is happening at competitor colleges, because what happens there will directly impact your institution. Continually reaching out for information is essential to quickly respond to changes that may impact your yield and enrollment.

Be smart about what your own admitted students are doing. In an uncertain time, it is critical to understand and evaluate your student responses, yield, and price-sensitivity tendencies. Using targeted market research and predictive modeling tools it’s possible to learn about admitted students that are of particular interest to your institution. Do you want to know if your aid package is competitive? Do you want to know which other institutions they’re considering? You'll never know if you don’t ask. When you combine rigorous evaluation with timely student input, you put your institution in the best position to effectively solidify an institutional aid awarding strategy, taking new price dynamics and financial incentives in the marketplace into account.

Be smart about using institutional aid dollars strategically. It’s best to think of institutional aid not as a budget expense but as a tool. Scholarship and grant aid can function as incentives to enroll rather than just as rewards for good academic behavior. If you routinely use the same institutional aid allocation approach you’ve used for years, you may see it become less and less effective over time. The bottom line is that your competitors are becoming increasingly strategic with their institutional aid dollars to craft their incoming classes and maximize their net revenue. So, if your institution is not using aid both to manage yield and optimize resources, your competitors will thank you for it.

Build your classes from the ground up. Market shifts alter the dynamics of student recruitment. The most effective recruitment operations constantly assess, experiment, evaluate, and adjust. Recruiting students to your institution is an expensive and time-consuming process that requires broad strategic management skills. What tactics work best will be unique to your institution, but there are best practices for how to think about the process. To be most effective, you need to capture every piece of data you can, then make it a priority to identify the actions and activities that yield applicants and enrolling students (and which do not). Don’t settle for believing that certain marketing efforts work or you may well be sacrificing opportunities and wasting a lot of money. Merely reacting to either developing or well-established market trends leave you perpetually one step behind. Analysis allows you to work smart and truly build an incoming class.

During the next several years, as political forces and economic market changes ripple throughout higher education, a willingness to make regular adjustments will be an evermore valuable component of success. Targeted analysis, thoughtful planning, and frequent market research are the best tools to support continued progress without breaking the bank. Such a measured and proactive approach will allow many institutions to ride the wave and flourish, and avoid being caught by surprise or washed up on the beach.

About the Authors

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Bellah (1999) wrote that many students view colleges and universities as consumer marketplaces. While Bellah referred to student consumerism within the context of the classroom, students have similar expectations of the programs and services offered by colleges and universities (Low 2000). Regardless of whether one agrees with the student-as-consumer metaphor, higher education administrators and faculty often report that students and their parents expect and demand expedient, error-free services from higher education institutions. This is becoming more and more obvious as our millennial generation of students approaches graduation from a U.S. college or university. Whereas accountability for teaching and learning gained momentum in the early 1980s, the need for accountability no longer is confined to the classroom setting: Accountability now is afforded careful scrutiny outside of the classroom and extends to the student services arena—from admissions and registration to eventual degree review and certification.

Even before accountability became a focus of intense discussion and debate, student development was a chief aim of higher education institutions. Astin (1993) suggested that the mission of higher education is to enhance a student’s total development. Various authors have suggested that one means of enhancing student development is to ensure student satisfaction (Sanders and Chan 1996; Upcraft and Schuh 1996). Student services personnel historically have utilized anecdotal reports and feedback from colleagues and students as measures of student satisfaction. Yet informal measures may no longer be appropriate given the increased need for data-driven decision making (Lesick 2007; Locke and Guglielmino 2006). Further, they may not provide an accurate picture of student satisfaction. And they most certainly are not a credible source in the minds of upper-level administrators charged with making staffing and financial decisions.

Careful review of the literature did not result in the identification of any studies that have examined student satisfaction as it relates to the graduation certification process. Yet the graduation certification process often leaves a final and lasting impression on students. Indeed, student services personnel suggest that the graduation certification process is often arduous and sometimes unrewarding. Satisfied students often graduate without fully understanding or appreciating the work that is involved; as a result, they generally do not share their impressions of the experience with college personnel or the community in general. In contrast, students dissatisfied with the process certainly do spread the word to students and the community. Voiced satisfaction—or rather, dissatisfaction—often informs upper-level administrators’ budgetary and staffing decisions. A formal assessment of the graduation certification process that clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses should guide such decision making—not anecdotal reports received informally through various channels. What
follows is one college's experience of its first formal assessment of the graduation certification process.

**BACKGROUND**

Tidewater Community College (TCC), a large, ethnically diverse, multi-campus public community college located in the Southeast, served 37,761 credit students in 2006–07 (TCC 2007a). The College graduated 2,141 students during the 2006–07 academic year (TCC 2007b). Prior to the development of a centralized records office in 1995, TCC’s four campuses were individually responsible for accepting and reviewing student applications for graduation and for the degree certification of students. After an internal review and subsequent organizational restructuring, a centralized office was given responsibility for several major campus-wide functions, including the review and certification of all graduation applicants.

Unfortunately, the centralization of graduation certification did not go as smoothly as had been anticipated. Students, faculty, administrators, and community members were critical of the new process. Anecdotal reports averred that the status of applicants was not accurately and efficiently conveyed, awards were not recorded to the academic records within an acceptable time frame, and students were not receiving their diplomas in a timely manner. In response, a thorough internal review of the graduation certification process was begun in December 2005. As a result of this review, many modifications reliant on technology were implemented. Significant changes to date include:

- The replacement of postal-delivered status letters with electronically sent status letters delivered to student e-mail accounts approximately two to three months prior to a fall or spring semester’s ending date but promised no later than 30 days prior to the close of a semester/term.
- The development of a graduation e-mail account to which students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to direct questions and comments regarding a candidate’s status; a response is promised within 24 hours (although during the regular work week a response typically is provided within one hour).
- The creation and implementation of an online graduation application that allows students to apply at their convenience and that automatically creates a database for the collection and reporting of information not collected through the college’s student information system.

Acknowledgment of the application along with the student’s graduation status in the college’s SIS to assist faculty and staff in their work with graduation candidates.

- The design and development of a graduation Web site that communicates graduation requirements and commencement information and that also outlines the graduation certification process.

- The placement of automated calls to students with 45 or more credit hours, reminding them two to four weeks in advance of an approaching graduation application deadline.

- The creation of posters for distribution at the college’s four main campuses as well as nearby military bases.

Greater reliance on technology and the implementation of creative and streamlined processes have resulted in marked improvements to the graduation certification processes. Not only do students receive communication regarding their status in a timely manner, but they also can expect a more efficient response to their questions and concerns. The posting of awards to student academic records begins on the semester’s official ending date, with awards usually posted within three to five business days. In addition, students are promised receipt of their diplomas within four to six weeks of the official degree conferral date. (Students granted awards during the past two semesters (i.e., spring 2007 and summer 2007) received their diplomas within two to three weeks of the degree conferral date.)

Although anecdotal reports about these new processes have been positive and complaints have diminished significantly, a more formal evaluation was needed to document successes and to more carefully evaluate areas of deficiency. The following questions guided the present exploratory study:

- Are the graduation application deadlines reasonable, and are these deadlines adequately publicized?
- To what extent do students meet with college counselors to review degree progress, and do students perceive these meetings as helpful?
- Do students perceive the completion of the graduation application as a simple process?
- Do students receive timely notification regarding their status, and do they perceive this notification as accurate?
- Are student questions and concerns answered in a timely manner, and are the responses courteous and accurate?
Do students receive their diplomas within an acceptable timeframe, and are their diplomas accurate? To what extent are students satisfied with the overall graduation certification process?

METHODS AND INSTRUMENTATION

Students included in the study were summer 2007 graduates of Tidewater Community College. Of the 717 awards applied for, 595 awards were conferred. Because some students received multiple awards, a total of 577 students received one or more awards. A survey questionnaire was mailed along with the diplomas to the 577 unduplicated students within two weeks following the July 31, 2007 degree conferral date.

The survey instrument was developed by the registrar, and feedback was solicited and provided by the college’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Students were asked to complete the questionnaire and to return it in an enclosed postage-paid envelope by October 1, 2007. An overall response rate of approximately 21 percent percent was achieved (N = 119).

FINDINGS

Completion of the Application

Students typically can apply for graduation as early as one year prior to a graduation application deadline. Because some students applied well before the online graduation application was developed and implemented, students in this cohort of applicants used various methods for submitting an application. Of the 113 students who reported their method of submission, the majority (approximately 70%) submitted their application online; approximately 20 percent reported that they submitted a paper application at one of the campuses; the remainder reported that they either faxed or mailed an application directly to the centralized records office.

Graduates were asked to assess whether completion of the graduation application was a simple process. A majority (70%) strongly agreed or agreed that completion of the graduation application was a simple process, and slightly fewer than 13 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Using data from only those students who responded to both items on the questionnaire, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between ease of application completion and the method of completion (i.e., paper version/mailed, paper version/faxed, paper version/ submitted at a campus, and on-line). The ANOVA was not significant (F[3, 109] = 1.31, p = 0.27), indicating that a student’s selected method of completion did not significantly affect the extent to which the student viewed the application process as simple.

Graduation Application Deadlines

Graduates were asked to indicate their extent of agreement with the statement that “application deadlines are well-publicized by faculty and staff.” A five-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) was used as a measure for this item. Almost 36 percent of the 118 respondents strongly agreed with the statement, and 28 percent agreed; about 15 percent were neutral and approximately 21 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents also were asked to rate their degree of agreement with the statement, “The graduation application deadlines are well-publicized in college publications and/or the college Web site.” More than 81 percent of the 118 graduates who responded to this item strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, with the majority of the respondents indicating strong agreement; roughly 9 percent were neutral and 10 percent indicated disagreement or strong disagreement. Finally, recent graduates were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that the application deadlines were reasonable. Of the 118 who responded, 47 percent strongly agreed and 16 percent agreed that the deadlines were reasonable; approximately 7 percent were neutral and fewer than 10 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Assistance from Counselor/Advisor

Again using a five-point Likert scale, students were prompted to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that they had met regularly with a counselor or advisor to discuss their degree progress. Of the 116 graduates who responded, approximately 55 percent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, and roughly 28 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed (see Figure 1, on page 50). Students then were asked to rate their extent of agreement with the statement, “My curriculum requirements for graduation were accurately conveyed to me by my counselor/advisor.” The majority (70%) of the 118 who responded to this statement agreed or strongly agreed; fewer than 13 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Degree Audit

Graduates were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed that a status letter regarding their application was sent to them by the deadline advertised by the college. Approximately 64 percent strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, and approximately 18 percent disagreed.
Almost 80 percent of the 117 respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the status letter received was accurate; fewer than 8 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed on this same item.

Response to Applicant Questions and Concerns via E-mail

Students who had directed concerns and questions to the graduation e-mail account were asked to respond to three items regarding this experience. First, graduates were asked if a response to their question or concern was received within 24 hours, as advertised. Further, they were asked if the response received was courteous and accurate. Seventy-three (N = 73) students responded to this series of questions. Almost 77 percent strongly agreed or agreed that a response to their question or concern was provided within 24 hours; roughly 16 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this item. With regard to whether graduates perceived the response as courteous, 85 percent strongly agreed or agreed that the response was courteous, and fewer than 3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. More than 82 percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the response received was accurate, approximately 12 percent were neutral or unsure, and almost 6 percent disagreed.

Response to Applicant Questions and Concerns via Telephone

The same series of items pertaining to e-mailed questions and concerns was included on the questionnaire regarding student calls and the office’s response to those calls. Graduates first were asked to rate their degree of agreement with the statement, “My phone call was responded to or returned within two business hours.” Of the 31 students who responded, slightly more than 74 percent strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, and slightly fewer than 13 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The majority (roughly 58%) strongly agreed that the response received was courteous, followed by about 32 percent who agreed. None disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item. When asked to rate the accuracy of response received via telephone, almost 84 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the response was accurate, and fewer than 7 percent disagreed. (None strongly disagreed.)

Receipt of Diploma

Graduates were prompted to indicate their extent of agreement with the statement, “I received my diploma within a reasonable timeframe.” Of the 106 respondents,
almost 56 percent strongly agreed with the statement, approximately 38 percent agreed, fewer than 4 percent were unsure or neutral, and fewer than 3 percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents next were asked how long it took them to receive their diplomas: 1–3 weeks, 4–6 weeks, 7–10 weeks, and 11 weeks or longer. The most frequent response was one to three weeks (42.2%) followed by 31 percent who indicated that they received their diploma within four to six weeks. (See Figure 2, on page 50.)

Respondents were asked if the degree information on their diplomas was accurate. Of the 105 students who responded to this item, more than 94 percent strongly agreed or agreed that it was accurate; the majority were in strong agreement. Fewer than 3 percent were neutral or unsure, and fewer than 3 percent disagreed. None strongly disagreed.

**Overall Satisfaction with Graduation Certification Process**

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their overall satisfaction with the graduation certification process using a five-point Likert scale. Of the 118 students who responded, most (43.2%) strongly agreed with the statement, followed by 42.4 percent who agreed; fewer than 6 percent expressed disagreement or strong disagreement. (See Figure 3, on page 50.)

**DISCUSSION**

The study’s findings indicate that students expressed overall satisfaction with the graduation certification process. More than 85 percent of the students expressed satisfaction with the overall process, with very few indicating dissatisfaction. Because this was a benchmark study the goal of which was to formally document strengths and weaknesses of the graduation certification process, all areas—from advisement to degree receipt—were analyzed carefully.

The online graduation application was implemented in March 2007. Because many of the graduates had applied for graduation according to traditional means (i.e., paper application faxed, mailed, or submitted to a campus) prior to implementation of the online application, it seemed necessary to compare the mode of submission with students’ perception of the ease of application. Statistical analysis indicated that student perceptions of the simplicity of submitting an application were not affected by the means of application. Creating an application that is easier for students to complete will be a focus of discussion for the centralized records office, although resolve may soon be met through the design of a universal Virginia Community College System (VCCS) graduation application. The proposed system-wide application, which is scheduled for implementation in fall 2008, will require students to enter less data as it will extract much of each student’s information directly from SIS.

The college’s graduation application deadlines are January 15 for spring (May) graduation, June 1 for summer (August) graduation, and September 1 for fall (December) graduation. Given that 83 percent of the graduates surveyed indicated that the application deadlines are reasonable and fewer than 10 percent perceived them as unreasonable, the current deadlines are likely to remain unchanged. Further, with two staff members responsible for degree certification and diploma delivery (in addition to other assigned office duties), the deadlines are needed to ensure ample time for the evaluation and certification processes.

While a strong majority (81%) of the graduates perceived that the application deadlines are well-publicized in college publications and on the college’s Web site, they were not as satisfied with the publicity of these deadlines by faculty and staff. Announcing these deadlines in every orientation class—a required class for all degree-seeking students—may serve as an excellent means of notifying students of the deadlines. While many orientation instructors already are publicizing the deadlines, it may prove necessary to require that they be made a topic of discussion in the course. Faculty teaching 200-level courses also may be able to include the deadlines in their course syllabi. Currently, TCC is creating a video that will remind students of the need to apply for graduation. Utilizing TCC students as actors, the video will be linked from the college’s Web site and also will be aired periodically on the college’s closed-circuit television network (viewable from many locations at each campus).

Findings from the study suggest that student advising is another area that needs attention. While 70 percent of respondents indicated that curriculum requirements for graduation were accurately communicated to them by a counselor or advisor, 28 percent indicated that they had not met regularly with a counselor or advisor to discuss degree progress. TCC will need to devise strategies for ensuring that more students seek and/or receive assistance in this area. Some of the college’s campuses have been conducting group advising sessions. It may be helpful to conduct group advising sessions that target certain majors so that specific degree requirements can be examined and discussed. A student may be more likely to attend a session if she understands that even within a group session, the information will pertain to her as an individual. Con-
conducted brief advising sessions in upper-level courses for specific majors also may prove beneficial. This is an area worthy of further discussion by faculty, counselors, and administrators.

Study findings suggest that receipt of a status letter by the advertised deadline is an additional area requiring attention. Currently, students are promised receipt of a status letter at least 30 days prior to the semester’s end. Because the application deadlines are far in advance of the conferral dates for fall and spring graduation, students applying for fall or spring graduation typically receive a status letter two to three months prior to the semester’s closure. In contrast, the summer graduation application deadline of June 1 for late July/early August degree conferral renders it nearly impossible to produce status letters any sooner than 30 to 45 days prior to the session’s end date (status letters are not sent until students have registered for summer classes; summer session begins in mid-May). Rather than move the application deadline for summer graduation to an earlier date, it might be possible to send status letters stating what coursework remains before students have enrolled in summer classes. Such a solution might make the eventual certification process more difficult for college personnel, but it is an area worthy of further inquiry.

An internal review of status letter notification found that all applicants who applied by the June 1 deadline received a status letter by June 28—more than 30 days prior to the term’s ending date. However, some students were approved for submission of a late application—as late as July 28. Consequently, it was not possible to send late applicants a status letter 30 or more days prior to the summer term’s end date. It may be beneficial to prepare a letter that informs late applicants that the status letter was not provided by the college’s promised date because the late application rendered such action impossible.

Approximately 80 percent of respondents indicated that the status letter received was accurate; fewer than 8 percent perceived the status letter received as inaccurate. Inaccuracies never should be overlooked, but it is important to note that the office sends revised letters to students when transcripts from other colleges or universities are received and when petitions for course substitutions, waivers, and the like are received—regardless of how late such information is provided. Students may not have realized that their initial status letter was inaccurate because of incomplete student information (i.e., updated information not received and/or processed). Regardless, this issue should be more carefully scrutinized and analyzed.

Students with questions regarding their status letter are encouraged to contact the office via e-mail or telephone. Students preferred e-mail contact over telephone contact. Students who contacted the office via e-mail, with a promised response within 24 hours, agreed overwhelmingly that the response was received in a timely manner and that it was both accurate and courteous. Students who called the office, with a promised return call within two business hours, also seemed satisfied. While fewer than 7 percent perceived that the information received was inaccurate, all agreed that the response was courteous. In sum, data reveal that contact with the office—whether by e-mail or telephone—is positive, with students preferring electronic over personal contact.

Students can expect to receive their diplomas within four to six weeks of the degree conferral date (graduates of the past two semesters have received their diplomas within three weeks of this date). Given that fewer than 3 percent of graduates indicated dissatisfaction with the time it took to receive their diploma and 94 percent expressed satisfaction, this is an area that does not call for any immediate changes. It is important to note, nevertheless, that the college recently purchased software and paper that will allow for the in-house production of diplomas. The centralized records office is considering distributing diplomas at each of the campuses within one week following the degree conferral date; diplomas would be mailed to those graduates who did not pick them up on campus. Distributing diplomas on campus has the potential to save TCC mailing costs and human resources (in mailing preparation) and, most importantly, would allow for more expedient diploma delivery.

Although the majority of graduates expressed satisfaction with the length of time it took to receive their diplomas, some respondents that it took longer than three weeks. In fact, almost 11 percent responded that it took 11 weeks or longer. Given that the survey questionnaire was mailed to students along with their diplomas and that the survey had to be returned by October 1 for consideration in this study, it is impossible for any graduate to have received a diploma so far after the July 31 degree conferral date. Students who met their degree requirements prior to the term’s ending date may have included this time in calculating the amount of time it took for them to receive their diploma; perhaps they did not understand that a degree could not be received any earlier than the term’s actual conferral date. This question may need to be modified for future studies.

Almost 86 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied overall with the degree certification process, and fewer than 6 percent expressed dis-
satisfaction. While it is seemingly impossible to ever satisfy all students, further inquiry and changes are needed to reduce the numbers of those who are dissatisfied. This study enabled us to identify specific areas in need of change. It is hoped that, as a result of this study, recommended modifications will be carefully considered for their ability to reduce student dissatisfaction with the process in whole or in part. This study should serve as a benchmark for measuring progress in the future. Administering this survey questionnaire in other semesters—for example, at the end of a December or May graduation—should help the college better identify shortcomings of the graduation certification process by semester/term.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The recommendations that follow are offered in response to the present study’s findings.

- TCC’s college registrar should continue to work with VCCS to ensure that a system-wide, online graduation application is implemented in fall 2008, thereby simplifying completion of the graduation application.
- Students in all orientation classes should be notified of the requirement for applying for graduation and of the related application deadlines.
- Graduation application deadlines should be printed on all 200-level course syllabuses.
- A video should be produced that will remind students of the need to apply for graduation. The video should be posted to the college’s Web site and also should be broadcast at all campuses via the college’s closed-circuit television network.
- TCC should require that all students applying for graduation first seek advisement from a counselor/faculty advisor. Conducting group advisement sessions specific to certain majors should be given strong consideration as such sessions would aid students in meeting the proposed advisement requirement and also would increase staff efficiency.
- The centralized records office should begin sending status letters to summer graduates before summer class registration begins to ensure that status letters are received within the advertised deadline.

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The centralized records office should compose modified letters to late applicants that remind the applicants that status letters are not forthcoming within the promised deadline because of the late application.

The registrar should replicate this study in future semesters—particularly during a fall or spring graduation—to see if differences exist by graduation term/semester and to formally record progress in the graduation certification process.

**IMPLICATIONS**

This paper details a college’s first formal assessment of the graduation certification process. As discussed above, it is not wise to base decisions on anecdotal reports. Meaningful decision making must rely on thorough and objective analyses. While significant improvements have been made to the certification process at TCC, this study highlighted areas of deficiency that call for additional modifications.

Colleges and universities seeking to assess their strengths and weaknesses in this area are encouraged to do so through a formal assessment such as the one described herein. Carefully guided by a more objective form of analysis, higher education institutions can have an impact on how graduates perceive their institutions at the point of departure. Students’ final impression is often lasting; and too often, the stories of dissatisfied students are recounted to prospective students and community members. The development and satisfaction of all students requires careful and deliberate evaluation and the willingness to make data-driven decisions.

**REFERENCES**


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Graduate Enrollment Management: Leading the Way to EM’s Future

By Kristin S. Williams

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Enrollment management (EM) has evolved significantly over the past few decades. Responding to all of higher education’s challenges and opportunities—changing student populations, technological advances, fiscal constraints, increased competition—professional practices have become more sophisticated and complex. Nevertheless, the three basic concepts of enrollment management have remained constant:

- The primary function of enrollment management is to recruit and retain an optimal student population that meets an institution’s interests and needs. The goal is not simply increased numbers of applicants, admits, students, and/or graduates. Rather, EM helps identify desired student attributes (academic quality, work experience, specialized skills, professional goals, research interests, socioeconomic/demographic background) as defined by the institution’s priorities, resource limitations, and fiscal demands.

- Enrollment management encompasses far more than student recruitment and admissions. Anything and everything that affects a student’s experience and perception of the institution can have an impact on EM: financial assistance, orientation, registration processes, academic advising, curriculum development and assessment, career services, student support, retention services, and the university’s relationship with its alumni and other external communities.

- Successful enrollment management requires thoughtful, data-driven planning and evaluation. Quantitative analyses of enrollment trends, including prospect and applicant conversion rates, socio- and geo-demographic patterns, attrition rates, and years-to-degree, traditionally have played a major role in developing short- and long-term EM strategies. Surveys, focus groups, and interviews of key constituencies are equally important. Feedback from admitted students who do not enroll also can provide useful insights into recruitment strategies and admission processes. Exit, graduation, and alumni surveys reveal useful information about student experiences and satisfaction and can help strengthen curriculum, academic policies, student services, and administrative procedures.

The early years of EM were dominated by discussion of organizational structure and leadership and by the assumption that there is a single, perfect model toward which universities should aspire. As the field matured, it moved on to discussions of customer service delivery, creative reengineering of processes, and the development of one-stop service centers. Concepts originating in the for-profit world—customer relationship management,
brand identity and positioning, pricing theory, market segmentation, environmental scanning, geo-demographic research, predictive modeling—were incorporated into the EM vocabulary and toolkit.

It has become apparent that EM is not simply structure and process but rather an institutional point-of-view. In a recent series of articles in *College and University*, David Kalsbeek clearly describes four ways in which enrollment management has been viewed and implemented, pointing out the strengths and limitations of each of these different “orientations:”

- **An administrative orientation** integrates enrollment-related processes for optimal efficiency and effectiveness (e.g., university-wide enrollment management units, one-stop student service centers, financial aid leveraging).

- **A student-focused orientation** is driven by individual student needs, experiences, satisfaction, and engagement in the learning process, with separate services designed for segmented student populations, such as freshmen, underrepresented minorities, and international students.

- **A market-centered orientation** is focused on the institution’s competitive position in the marketplace and seeks to manage enrollments through a differentiated brand identity and promise, pricing strategies, and the institution’s perceived quality and value.

- **An academic orientation** fuses enrollment management functions with the academic priorities and strengths of the institution, incorporating faculty participation and emphasizing cocurricular activities.

Kalsbeek suggests that a university’s philosophical orientation often drives both the institution’s organizational structure and its approach to EM. It has become apparent that there is no ideal, one-size-fits-all model for enrollment management. To be successful, EM must be tailored to the institution’s mission and long-term priorities, with structures and processes appropriate to institutional size, complexity, and resources. Efficient use of resources, student satisfaction and success, a solid position in the marketplace, and strong links to the academic core of the institution are—or should be—EM goals for all univer-

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sities. But successful organizational models, techniques, and methodologies must grow from a realistic assessment of each institution’s goals and needs.

**GRADUATE ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT**

Graduate enrollment management (GEM) has long suffered from the perception that it is trailing behind mainstream (undergraduate) enrollment management. GEM varies significantly across—and within— institutions, largely due to differences in the culture of the academic discipline, the size of the graduate student population, and the overall role graduate programs play in the university’s mission and reputation. EM’s early ideal of a single, cohesive unit managing all aspects of enrollment across multiple disciplines and schools has seldom been realistic at the graduate level. GEM has remained a shared responsibility, stretching across units, levels, and roles, dependent upon committees and informal relationships for effective implementation. It is seldom static. In many ways, it is more true to the basic collaborative and creative nature of academic institutions than are university-wide enrollment management systems.

Rather than falling behind the profession, graduate enrollment management appears, in fact, to have been foreshadowing the future of EM, offering a model that incorporates all four EM orientations. GEM’s decentralized and collaborative nature—often viewed as an organizational weakness by senior administrators more comfortable with the traditional centralized and hierarchical undergraduate model—has become a key factor in the merging of these multiple perspectives.

- As graduate enrollment traditionally has fewer resources than undergraduate enrollment management (even at institutions at which graduate students are the majority), GEM offices have had to be cost-effective, continually searching for creative ways to do more with less, seeking out new technologies and strategies to better use available resources. Graduate assistantship funding, for example, is used to accomplish multiple goals: to attract and support top graduate students; to provide the university with a cost-effective teaching resource; and to further faculty and institutional research efforts.

- Because interaction with prospective and current students at the graduate level is primarily discipline-specific, GEM always has been student-centered and focused on distinct groups of students. Graduate admission is based on a holistic appraisal of the individual and of the student/institution fit rather than on goals for an “entering class.” A common definition of the difference between undergraduate and graduate enrollment management states this perfectly: Recruiting and retaining undergraduates is like herding sheep; recruiting and retaining graduate students is like herding cats.

- Faculty have always been integrally involved in most graduate admissions and financial aid decisions, as well as in other key enrollment management functions, such as orientation, academic advising, and career counseling. In even the most centralized, university-wide GEM models, academic departments play key roles. Faculty and staff within the department often provide that all-important “first impression” for prospective students, as well as serving as the first point-of-contact for enrolled students with questions or problems.

- The one area in which GEM has lagged behind has been in incorporating a market orientation. Demographic changes that motivated undergraduate admissions to adopt more aggressive and professional marketing efforts affected the graduate level later, allowing traditional graduate programs to retain a “build it and they’ll come” mentality. Over the past decade, however, graduate education has become more market-responsive, with schools developing and reconfiguring curricula and credentials to meet the needs of new prospective student populations and working to articulate programs’ differentiating characteristics and brand promise.

Being at the forefront of the future of enrollment management is not easy, and the challenges of the program-based GEM model are considerable. To be successful, GEM participants must work proactively to build and maintain relationships across administrative silos, connecting admissions, student services, deans’ offices, academic departments, international services, and institutional research, and assigning responsibilities based on cost efficiencies, customer service, and expertise.

As Kurz and Scannell (2005) state, “Under the enrollment management umbrella, data is the glue that holds the process together” (p. 65). For undergraduate programs, slicing and dicing data to evaluate marketing and recruitment efforts, to analyze enrollment trends, and to understand factors related to student success and retention is not an easy task, but it can be accomplished on a university-wide level. At the graduate level, there are more variables, and analyses are more complicated. University-wide analyses across multiple graduate disciplines can be misleading, depending on the relative size of schools and academic programs. Analyzing the interaction between student characteristics and financial support, academic program content, and external variables (competition, the
Economy, the job market) becomes more art than science. Admission requirements, student selectivity, and long-term enrollment goals vary significantly by academic discipline, as do successful marketing messages, recruitment techniques, and market position.

At the same time, the increasing complexities of EM — technological advances, legal issues, growing competition domestically and abroad, resource constraints — have created a demand for centralization of some graduate enrollment management functions. Without centralized coordination, it simply is not possible to accomplish all of EM’s ambitious goals of optimal cost-effectiveness, quality assurance, customer service, and integration with the long-term strategic goals of the institution. Institutions must find and maintain a balance between decentralized and centralized EM: strengthening the traditional student- and academic-centered focus of program-based enrollment management while reinforcing centralized efforts to achieve economies of scale, to support cross-unit collaboration, and to provide effective leadership for institution-wide strategic enrollment management.

Following the GEM model will not make enrollment management easier or less complicated; it will make EM more organic. Structure and process would evolve from the unique culture of the university and its constituencies and would be defined by the academic core, fed by students and alumni, and carefully nurtured by good leadership and strategic planning. While GEM can’t provide all the answers for successful enrollment management, it does point the way to more dynamic and adaptable universities.

REFERENCES

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Strategic Leadership of Change in Higher Education

By Stephanie Marshall (Ed.)
Reviewed by Sam J. Fugazzotto

Marshall’s book, a compilation of thirteen studies on change projects at colleges and universities in the United Kingdom, positions itself against the macho rhetoric associated with change management. Overall, it succeeds. The contributors, most of whom led the change projects themselves, adopt a practical, story-based style, making the lessons learned seem applicable in other contexts and making the book a welcome addition to literature on change management in higher education.

Chapter 1 (by Marshall) explains that institutions must manage change effectively to survive a competitive marketplace. Two theoretical strands sum up the approaches to change described in the projects: (1) structured change, as set forth in the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter, and (2) a people-oriented approach, as adopted by John Kotter. Marshall also draws out three tactics for change: (1) a structured approach; (2) using incentives to motivate change; and (3) capacity-building, or using motivated change agents to recruit others. Examining project results, Marshall formulates three lessons: First, project planning ought to separate strategic thinking from the mechanics of carrying out the change. A people orientation underlies the second lesson: Good leadership, personal relations, and effective communication make successful change more likely. Finally, an organization must have a clear evaluation plan to take the pulse of the change effort continually.

The three change management approaches outlined by Marshall provide the structure of the book. Part 1, which begins with Chapter 2 (by Paul Evans), focuses on structured approaches. Evans describes the application of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model at Liverpool John Moores University. The University used this model to align key business processes with its strategic plan. Despite an overall top-down structure, the review teams that recommended process change included staff members from all levels. Process review occurred in three stages: initial review, process implementation (when actual changes were made), and implementation review (when review teams evaluated the success of changes). The EFQM model worked well—team members showed little protectionism of outmoded processes—but participants were not always trained adequately for their roles.

Bob Munn’s project, summarized in Chapter 3, involved the implementation of a “right-touch” quality framework at the University of Manchester. Munn defines right-touch as “fit for purpose, being restricted to what is necessary and appropriate to the circumstances” (p. 31). Reducing inefficiencies strongly informed this approach. However, the
University used conversation to add a human dimension, thereby ensuring that faculty and staff could express their hopes and anxieties about changes. In fact, the desire for less bureaucracy and greater efficiency emerged from these conversations. Conversation made the right-touch approach more flexible and capable of meeting university needs.

Chapter 4 (Simon Donoghue) deals with strategy making at the University of Leeds, which sought to refashion itself as a leading research institution in the United Kingdom and worldwide. The project highlights the importance of executive leadership sponsorship of change initiatives but without making the effort too “top-down.” In addition, good communication emerged as a key driver of successful change efforts, helping to make strategy part of everyone’s job and not a mandate from management. Finally, the Leeds project shows how strategy making must become a process that continually gauges performance against strategic goals.

In Chapter 5, Helen Valentine and Julian Constable write of Anglia Ruskin University’s effort “to simplify structures and processes and clarify accountabilities” (p. 55). The project brings together insights from Chapters 3 and 4. Besides rethinking operations, process improvement must maintain awareness of institutional strategy. Anglia Ruskin pursued greater operational efficiency in order to devote more energy to the academic work underlying its reputation. Valentine and Constable also mention the necessity of addressing cultural and emotional issues that accompany change, especially when staff are “displaced.” Finally, the Anglia Ruskin project shows the value of external facilitators, who can remain more objective than institutional staff. Despite taking place in only six months and displacing several staff members, Anglia Ruskin’s restructuring resulted in better organizational performance in the form of improved student recruitment and university reputation, for example.

Institutional change from a teacher training college to a comprehensive university necessitated effective leadership development at the University of Chester. In Chapter 6, Malcolm Rhodes describes the multi-dimensional, multi-phased, and “multi-method” program that emerged from this necessity. The program included such features as coaching from senior leaders and courses and seminars. Coaching emerged as a problematic feature because mentors were not always available to meet with participants. Also, program administration proved a burden. Nevertheless, Rhodes notes the program’s overall success.

Yahya Al-Nakeeb, in Chapter 7, marks a transition to “incentivized” change. Al-Nakeeb’s project sought to increase the research orientation of the traditionally teaching-centered Newman College. The main incentive behind this effort centered on using research to further the institution’s teaching mission: Newman realized the benefits that accrue to students who are taught by research faculty. The teaching load of faculty forms the primary barrier to fostering a research culture at institutions like Newman. Nevertheless, Al-Nakeeb concludes that teaching institutions can create a research culture by fostering collaboration among faculty to overcome time and resource limitations. The opportunity to collaborate energized Newman faculty (though collaboration hinges on an institution having enough researchers with common interests).

At many institutions, minority staff members with leadership potential hit a glass ceiling. In Chapter 8, Udua Archibong and Barbara Burford describe how the University of Bradford provided minority staff with incentives to pursue higher-level opportunities. Archibong and Burford’s project focused on mentoring partnerships between current senior managers and minority staff with management potential. The mentoring program sought to provide career development for high-potential minority staff and to increase the “transcultural competence” of current managers to make the senior ranks more welcoming. The authors describe the project as successful, but they mention that the duration was too short and that coordinating the schedules of mentors and participants proved difficult.

Relationships move to the institutional level in Chapter 9 (Kevin Edge and Patricia Gayá Wicks), which discusses a research collaborative, the Great Western Research Initiative. Participating institutions and researchers had obvious incentives—including the avoidance of research duplication and sharing of talent—for forming the collaborative. Operationalizing the initiative underscored several challenges, such as building the institutional and individual relations that make partnerships effective. Successful leadership of a collaborative must manage the inherent tensions in those relationships as collaborators are also competitors. Further, leaders must involve key stakeholders in the planning process so that they can create a supportive infrastructure that remains responsive to constituent needs.

Tony Stevenson and Lynne Howlett, in Chapter 10, echo Archibong and Burford in their focus on leadership succession. Stevenson and Howlett write of the use of leadership development centers at Newcastle University. Current managers provided input for the centers by defining
important qualities for head-of-school candidates. Taking this input into account, the development centers sought to pinpoint participants’ greatest development needs. The leadership development program also included post-center activities, such as 360-degree feedback and workshops. While noting the pilot’s success, the authors conclude with three primary lessons: (1) senior management must support the program; (2) institutions must not assume that development centers do not work in academe; and (3) to have meaning, a leadership development framework must be linked to human resource processes like recruitment and performance evaluation.

Chapter 11, by Paul Gentle, shifts the focus of the book toward capacity building. Focusing on the College of St. Mark and St. John, he writes of applying learning organization principles at higher education institutions. A Change Academy formed the centerpiece of the project. A four-day event, the Academy trained participants from different institutions to achieve complex organizational change. At the College of St. Mark and St. John, change efforts led by Academy participants lay at the periphery of management concerns. The Academy itself may have presented learners with good strategies to effect change; indeed, participants from the college successfully built momentum for change among their peers. Nevertheless, such change efforts cannot be mere exercises in applying Academy principles. Recalling structured approaches to change, senior managers often must champion change to make an initiative effective: Building capacity through lower-level change agents might not carry sufficient momentum.

Embedding values of equality and diversity in Cardiff University’s culture forms the basis for Teresa Rees and Hannah Young’s study, in Chapter 12, which sought to implement university-wide policies and procedures to foster a more inclusive culture. While many schools at Cardiff had good diversity practices, nothing linked those practices together at the university level. The project succeeded in raising diversity awareness among staff, thereby increasing capacity for continued change. However, a significant challenge arose from awareness: Staff needed support, and developing the structure to meet this need proved time consuming. But operationalizing diversity practices in the short term only goes so far: Diversity issues often involve constant challenges to individuals’ perspectives. To address
the constancy of change, Rees and Young seek to continue their work by making diversity and equality issues part of strategic planning.

Chris Shiel’s project, in Chapter 13, on embedding global perspectives in Bournemouth University’s culture, follows Chapter 12 nicely. Factors that moved the project forward included planning that obtained constituent buy-in, hiring two project assistants, establishing incremental wins, and fleshing out concepts like sustainable development. The project’s outcome was the creation of a strategic report that discussed specific ways to make global perspectives part of the university’s business practices and curriculum. Shiel also describes the project’s long-term reach through students: “To become world-class, a university with a global perspective would produce ‘graduates who are empowered to contribute to a better world’” (p. 172).

Gwen Wileman concludes the book with Chapter 14, about a human resources transformation project at De Montfort University. University leadership recognized the key roles that people play in achieving strategic objectives and therefore began to look more closely at the HR function. Examining best practices and involving HR staff to build capacity, the project sought to clarify HR’s role as a business partner at all levels and to use personnel-related information to support strategy. Wileman notes that the partnership model for HR worked well but that “people metrics” must improve through more effective performance evaluation and staff surveys. Better collection tools would help gather HR data with more use for strategic objectives.

As a whole, the book’s practical basis should interest any leader responsible for change efforts in higher education. However, given the institution-wide impact of most of the projects, the book probably has greatest use for senior-level administrators. While the projects’ practicality speaks for itself, my primary critique stems from Marshall’s theoretical framework in Chapter 1. Links between projects and theory were not always clear. Kanter and Kotter’s works might effectively describe the projects, but because Marshall reduces these works to bulleted lists, it is more difficult to make the connections to the chapters. While the approaches to change (structured, incentivizing, and capacity-building) organize the book well, readers do not always have a clear sense of which approach predominates in a given project. This occasional lack of clarity can make the book’s divisions according to approach seem forced.

Apart from the book’s pragmatism, readers would benefit from some theoretical grounding (this reviewer would recommend slight modifications to Marshall’s presentation). Several change projects included elements from more than one of the three approaches. For example, Munn’s project had a well-defined structure, but its conversational approach has incentivizing and capacity-building elements. Rather than organizing the book along the three perspectives on change, Marshall instead might focus on the overall lesson that seems to emerge from the projects: the importance of a balanced, hybrid approach to change.

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THE BLACK SWAN

BY NASSIM NICHOLAS TALEB
RANDOM HOUSE, 2007. 400 PP.
Reviewed by Margaret B. Bacheler

Have you ever had an unexpected, unexplained event occur that happened without warning yet ultimately altered the course of your life? Such experiences are the subject of a fascinating new book that attempts to explain unpredictable world events. Author Nassim Nicholas Taleb, defines a “black swan” as a rare, wild, unexpected event that lies outside our imaginings. Black swans include events like Hurricane Katrina and 9/11, after which people admit, “I never saw it coming.”

In an engaging, lighthearted style that blends stock market speculation, Western philosophy, and modern economic thought, Taleb debunks the theory that catastrophic events are unpredictable. In fact, he blames our own linear thinking for boxing our thought processes into a paradigm of predictability.

While the most important black swan events of the recent past include Hurricane Katrina and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Taleb argues that what we believe to be unpredictable really is not. He believes that the problem lies in our way of thinking about the world and in our beliefs about what is supposed to happen. Taleb applies the principle of cause and effect to explain a black swan event: Whereas most people would be surprised to see snowfall in May, Taleb argues that precisely because our framework of thought assumes warm weather in May, we ignore meteorological evidence that suggests any other possibility. To borrow from Shakespeare, “Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so.”

Taleb believes that prediction is also limited by narrative theory and the way in which our thought structures
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define what is normal or abnormal. He doesn’t believe that we live in a linear world and cites many historical examples that prove nonlinearity in the progress of humankind. For example, Black swans include the many important inventions that were “accidents.” In Taleb’s analysis, history jumps rather than crawls. He chastises our 24-hour news cycle and cable television news pundits, decrying their generalized analyses which attempt to explain each day’s events apart from any historical perspective. Political and economic analysts’ generalizations only reinforce the very linear framework that causes unpredictable events to be labeled black swans.

My favorite part of the book is the chapter that describes mediocristan and extremistan, Taleb’s two main theories of modern culture. Extremistan is a place where only a few people are successful and wealthy; in mediocristan, citizens on the whole are less wealthy, but wealth is more evenly distributed. Taleb believes that the United States falls into extremistan because the income gap is growing. Specific examples of extremistan include professional athletics and reality television, areas in which only a select few attain wealth and celebrity. Extremistan is a roll-the-dice powerball lottery version of success—one that many college-aged students buy into. Mass media such as YouTube and MySpace reinforce the “anyone can become a rich and famous celebrity” myth. This information has proven useful when dealing with students who have embraced extremistan values that hinder their academic progress.

In the end, Taleb describes a positive outcome: Although individuals will always experience unpredictable and random life events, those who learn to accept randomness will remove the wasted emotional energy tied up with predictable thought processes. Instead of thinking, “That wasn’t supposed to happen today,” a person can accept the unpredictability of a particular life event and gain the ability to move forward. Therefore, if we perceive a black swan event as a necessary if unexpected life transition, we retain some control over the randomness of the situation.

Taleb also describes “white swans”—positive life-changing experiences. While it is easy to view all change as negative in so far as it disrupts the status quo, white swan events include many of our most cherished moments.

The Black Swan is particularly relevant to a career in higher education. Even as it will help you make sense of your own personal and professional black swan events, the book provides a framework for supporting students and their black swan crises. University life is a time of remarkable transition in the lives of students, and helping them respond to black swan events is critical for their personal and professional development. We can help our students deal more effectively with their personal problems and simultaneously assist our institutions with retention efforts by utilizing the black swan philosophy.

Dealing with uncertainty is an important aspect of enrollment management. As best as we can plan enrollment goals for next year, black swan events may cause our projections to become irrelevant. Statistical junkies (of whom there are many in enrollment management) will enjoy Taleb’s deconstruction of the bell curve and current economic analysis.

As complex as these subjects are, the author’s writing style is humorous and conversational. Taleb has a clear passion for interdisciplinary thought; his connecting of such diverse theories is remarkable. My only criticism of the book has to do with Taleb’s academia-bashing. He attacks academic silos and what he terms rigid adherence to outdated knowledge. Taleb’s numerous potshots at tenured faculty appear petty and unnecessarily divert attention from his remarkable ideas.

While it is sometimes difficult to follow the author’s endless topic jumping and constantly vibrant thought pattern, The Black Swan is well worth the journey. Lovers of philosophy and stock trading will equally enjoy reading this book—its own black swan event!

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