



# COLLEGE *and* UNIVERSITY

*Educating the Modern Higher Education Administration Professional*

## **Crossing the GEM Frontier:**

Graduate Admissions Professionals' Participation in Enrollment Management

## **Dietary Identities in Higher Education:**

Attracting and Accommodating Vegetarian and Vegan Students

## **Bridging STEM Professions for McNair Scholars through Faculty Mentoring and Academic Preparation**

## **The Changing Nature of Division III Athletics**

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# CROSSING THE **GEM** FRONTIER

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## **Graduate Admissions Professionals' Participation in Enrollment Management**

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Using qualitative inquiry and professional socialization as a framework to draw meaning from the work experiences of graduate admissions professionals, this project examines individual beliefs and organizational behaviors as they relate to enrollment management.



## **BACKGROUND & RATIONALE: GRADUATE ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT (GEM)**

For some time, admissions professionals have played a key role in advancing enrollment management as a concept and field of practice in postsecondary education. Henderson (2008) traces the history of the admissions profession and the evolution of the undergraduate admissions officer from “gatekeeper” to “recruiter” and then to strategic enrollment manager. Hossler (2004) proposes that the scope of the professional field transitioned from admissions to enrollment management, defined as a “set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments and total net tuition revenue” (p. 65). As an emerging concept, enrollment management garners attention as a process as well as an organizational philosophy. Black (2004) describes enrollment management as “an institutional commitment to reorganization” (p. 37) and a conceptual framework for the “cradle to endowment” relationship between student and institution that outlines the comprehensive, developmental nature of a mature enrollment management organization.

Affinity groups and professional societies (*e.g.*, AACRAO, NAFSA) contribute to ongoing discourse about the intersection between enrollment management and graduate admissions. Recently, the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) added “enrollment management” to its name, signifying the importance of such activities to graduate admissions work.

These developments point to the transition from intake (*i.e.*, admissions and recruitment) as independent activities to enrollment, which functions as part of a larger matrix of activities gaining popularity among graduate and undergraduate admissions professionals.

In analyzing enrollment management at graduate institutions, Schulz (2008) identifies the pursuit of institutional quality, access, and financial stability as “pillars” or guiding priorities of many admissions professionals over the past 30 years. Williams (2008) characterizes graduate enrollment management (GEM) as being led by professionals who “work proactively to build and maintain relationships across administrative silos...assigning responsibilities based on cost efficiencies, customer service, and expertise” (p. 57). Graduate admissions professionals now spend almost 60 percent of their time on retention, leading researchers to conclude that “institutions are shifting their primary focus on retaining current students, rather than recruiting new students” (NAGAP 2011, p. 16).

In their effort to understand enrollment management, scholars apply multiple conceptual perspectives, to include resource dependency, systems, revenue, as well as cultural theories pertaining to institutional image (Barnes and Harris 2010, Hossler 2004). There is increasing interest in the study of graduate admissions professionals and how they view their work in enrollment management.

Moreover, graduate admissions is an increasingly professionalized field. Nevertheless, few empirical studies look specifically at professional administrators' day-to-day participation in graduate enrollment management. As GEM becomes increasingly significant, so will researchers' examination of the experiences of graduate admissions professionals in their quest for insight into the future of GEM.

The guiding research construct for this project is professional role development in graduate admissions professionals who describe enrollment management as part of their work. The central research question is "How do select graduate admissions professionals identify with enrollment management in their work?" The purpose of the project is to examine the work experiences of graduate admissions professionals (from their perspective) as they relate to enrollment management. Ultimately, this research makes more explicit the process of how one identifies with and promulgates graduate enrollment management.

In this project, we explore professional socialization both as a managerial strategy and as a practice as it relates to enrollment management. We explain socialization from an interactive perspective, the aim of which is to bring focus to the individual and organizational processes that contribute to role commitment as an enrollment manager. Following a review of the research methods, we present the data and emergent findings. Finally, we discuss those findings.

## PROFESSIONAL SOCIALIZATION WITHIN ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Professional socialization is the conceptual framework that analyzes acquiring and internalizing the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and norms of a profession. Rusaw (1995) defines a professional as one who "by education, training, and experience performs work, analyzes and solves problems, makes decisions, and promotes ethics associated with a particular field of study." (p. 216). The professional characteristics researchers have used in many social and behavioral studies include:

- Full-time occupation
- Calling to a lifetime's work
- Specialized body of knowledge and skills acquired over a prolonged period of education and training
- Decisions made on behalf of the client from universal principles or standards
- Service orientation on behalf of clients

- Professional service based on objective needs of the client and independent of particular sentiments
- Professional assumed to know better than the client what is good for the client
- Professionals forming organizations that define criteria for admission, educational standards, licensing, or other formal entry mechanisms
- Professionals having great power and status in their areas of expertise
- Professionals not allowed to advertise their services (Schein 1972 in Rusaw, p. 217).

Broadly defined, socialization is "the processes by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them more or less effective members of their society" (Weidman, Twale and Leahy Stein 2001). Professional socialization, then, is grounded in symbolic interactionism in which one actively and continuously interacts with others and the environment while transitioning into professional life. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes human interaction that informs human conduct (Attinasi 1989). Similarly, postmodern perspectives of organizational socialization emphasize an individual's interpretation of the structure, including its "contradictions, ambiguities, and oppositions" (Tierney 1997) to determine organizational effectiveness. Collectively, these definitions converge on the idea that a socialization process prepares an aspiring professional to assume a new role within a professional community.

Interactive frameworks of socialization emphasize normative and individually defined personal commitment to a professional role. The sociology of everyday life considers the individual's background as active in shaping present and future behavior (Douglas 1980). Socialization in graduate enrollment management entails dynamic, personal interaction with the institution and its professional communities as well as extramural professional associations and the graduate department. The symbolic interactionism perspective provides a framework for understanding inter-office collaboration through which socialization occurs in the everyday work experiences of graduate admissions professionals, particularly through the thoughts, beliefs, and emotions of those individuals involved in the social construction of meaning for enrollment management. Because this perspective incorporates



both professional identity and organizational role development through reciprocal social interaction, symbolic interactionism is relevant to socialization research. We describe two components of the socialization process that are central to explaining admissions professionals' participation in enrollment management.

### **Professional Identity as Enrollment Manager**

Role development in professional socialization includes three dimensions: anticipatory, informal, and personal (Thornton and Nardi 1975). The anticipatory dimension comprises the "preparatory and recruitment" phases as the admissions professional begins a career working with traditionally defined job responsibilities, including recruitment, admissions counseling, telephone prospecting, etc. The professional role a GEM professional assumes within the anticipatory dimension includes an idealized professional identity to which a novice enrollment manager aspires. Conversely, anticipatory role development may view the professional role as incongruent with the novice's aspirations. During role acquisition, the novice learns about informal expectations which "tend to be implicit and refer to the attitudinal and cognitive feature of role performance" (Weidman, Twale, and Leahy Stein 2001). Individuals have the freedom to base their own meanings for a role and its performance on social interactions rather than having to internalize formal, prescribed expectations. Professional peers at regional association meetings, extramural committees of colleagues from peer universities, and graduate faculty and students encountered in daily activities are primary sources of informal expectations. The third dimension—personal—entails the confluence of personality, past experiences, unique abilities and skills, and culturally defined values and beliefs in affecting how an individual enacts the target role in his life (Thornton and Nardi 1975). Graduate admissions professionals who think and act like enrollment management professionals—regardless of position hierarchy or office locale (*e.g.*, academic or student affairs)—have personalized enrollment management into their professional identities.

### **Organizational Participation in Enrollment Management**

Structural approaches to professional socialization emphasize individual interaction with the social setting as opposed

to individual psychologically constructed processes dealing with socializing influences. Organizational researchers Van Maanen and Schein (1979) define organizational socialization as "the experiences of individuals in transition from one role to another structured for them by others in the organization." (p. 232). Williams (2008) maintains that GEM professionals "build and maintain relationships across administrative silos, connecting admissions, student services, dean's offices, academic departments, international services, and institutional research, and assigning responsibilities based on cost efficiencies, customer service, and expertise." Structural characteristics of organizations that relate to GEM include organizational levels (faculty vs. staff), span of control (office, department, and division), sub-unit size, institutional size, and centralized or decentralized graduate operation (Berger and Cummings 1979).

Although GEM has emerged as a potential explanatory concept for organizational effectiveness, additional research is needed to explore its relationship to socialization processes. This study aims to describe the process of professional role development within enrollment management from the viewpoint of those who construct GEM. We determine on the basis of this perspective how administrators are socialized to a professional role.

### **METHODS**

Data were collected between November 2011 and March 2012 through semi-structured telephone interviews of 23 graduate admissions professionals. We prepared a set of interview questions based on enrollment management and socialization literature and piloted the protocol with non-participants to better gauge how understandable the questions would be for participants (Glogowska, Young, and Lockyer 2010).

We obtained permission from a leading professional association for graduate admissions professionals to e-mail its members an invitation to participate in the study. We followed institutional IRB protocol to obtain participants' informed consent to use interview data. We used maximum variation sampling and randomly selected participants to attain balanced study participation by gender, geography, institutional size, and years of experience in the profession (Patton 1987).

Data for this article largely derive from participants' responses to open-ended analytical questions about en-

rollment practices and professional preparation. We used typological analysis to search systematically for meaning in the data, particularly for information related to categories based on the literature (Hatch 2002). We reviewed interview transcripts, looking especially for comments relevant to enrollment management, and identified emergent categories. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest that all interviews be examined word by word and that any idea or concept that is mentioned should be coded. We recorded interviewees' exact quotes to facilitate grouping by theme or concept (Rubin and Rubin 1995). We then sorted the data into three main themes: gatekeeping, handing off, and promise keeping.

One limitation of our analytical approach is that we center on figures or quotes about the relationship between recruitment and retention in selected professionals' work. That is, we focus on a speaker's perception of enrollment management rather than on direct observation of enrollment management. Again, our goal is to discover how individuals develop an individual and organizational role within GEM as an emerging strategy.

## FINDINGS

Participants talked about professional responsibilities in ways that often appeared consistent, even across institutions that varied in size, geography, and mission. Three emergent themes speak to the way in which graduate admissions professionals identify with enrollment management at the individual and organizational level: priming, gatekeeping, and promise keeping.

### Priming through Prior Admissions Experiences

Graduate admissions professionals described two kinds of pre-socialization experiences: college admissions work and graduate student experience. This section reports on themes in participants' responses to the question "How did you first become interested in graduate admissions professionally?"

When discussing their start in GEM, graduate admissions professionals identified previous experience in undergraduate admissions. One director of graduate admissions at a professional school in the humanities recounted:

*Going way back in my history, I went to an arts high school and worked in its admissions office. Then I was a student worker in the admissions office as an undergrad and grad student, and that seemed*

*to naturally progress into positions into entry-level counselor positions at colleges... [My first interest] was the "road warrior" school visits—that sort thing, the constant contact [with prospective students]...*

Another graduate professional explained that an internship in the undergraduate admissions office first exposed her to "admissions in general" but that she did not consider work in graduate admissions until she "cast a wide net in admissions." She now works with a "wider variety of folks, workforce returners, working professionals." An associate dean recalled that he began working in undergraduate admissions early in his career, prior to returning to a position in graduate admissions that required certain technical expertise that he acquired subsequently.

First-hand experience as a graduate student was another significant factor that led participants to pursue work in graduate admissions. Such experience indicates informal and formal pre-socialization to admissions. One participant at a public midwestern institution said that her graduate degree in marketing and public relations inspired her to pursue her interests in education—particularly when she saw the job description for her current position. Another mid-level professional described graduate school as facilitating her career shift:

*I had been working with undergraduate students at that time so I was purposeful within my master's program to seek a graduate assistantship within the graduate school... I had been working with freshmen getting into college...and didn't enjoy working with parents who were pushing students one way or another.... I wanted to work with students who had already made decisions academically about directions they were going to pursue.*

An assistant dean in graduate studies clarified, "I didn't go into [admissions] because it was a part of graduate enrollment; I went into it because this part of the job is what I enjoy doing." Previously, this professional had completed her graduate degree at the same institution where she had served as a teaching assistant before taking a full-time position (subordinate to the present one) that also was closely related to her field of graduate study.

Participants spoke positively about their work as graduate enrollment professionals. It is arguable whether all

participants were committed to a career in GEM; one indicated an interest in attending graduate school after only a year's work in the field. No two participants in this study had identical pre-socialization pathways to their work in GEM, but overall, the data suggest that pre-socialization experiences were favorable to productive careers in the field.

### Gatekeeping is Managing Applicants

Admissions professionals in the study articulated rationales that further explained the balance between gatekeeping and recruiting. A popular image of gatekeeping depicts one person as deciding who is accepted and who is rejected for admission. In fact, the admissions professional does little to cultivate the pool of prospective applicants to graduate programs. This may be due to the popularity of particular graduate programs and/or the institution, limited competition, or other factors that pertain to the comparative effort exerted by the admissions professional on gatekeeping as compared to recruiting and/or marketing. One director who worked with professional master's programs at a large research university indicated that the proven track record of graduates' job placement had a profound influence on gatekeeping:

*[T]hey come in and they have great job opportunities.... [In] about 18 months, they leave with about \$75K in pay. Very rarely do we have anybody leave the program. So recruitment—it's not really that much of an issue. It's more once they get here—what do they need to make them successful?*

One professional described his role as connecting gatekeeping to recruitment. The criteria upon which he determines applicants' admissibility was evident:

*What we look at is the quality of their preparedness. If the students don't have a strong enough background, they're just not going to have the capacity to take on the challenges that graduate school encompasses. We definitely are looking for students who have research experiences and who have done these types of activities so they are coming in prepared...so we look at that piece from the recruitment side.*

These clearly defined characteristics (*i.e.*, research experience, independence, fortitude, etc.) also help those in the gatekeeping role determine whom they should recruit

(though it is not clear from this particular response how a gatekeeper might identify prospects having these qualities).

Another dimension of gatekeeping that was evident in participants' responses was its relationship to personal networks. The admissions professional's role as gatekeeper is reinforced according to the strength of personal networks that attract strong applicants to the programs he oversees. As one professional from a large, public research university explained:

*We have a very high percentage of international graduate students on our campus, and we can tie that directly to word of mouth. A lot of our students will go back and tell their friends, so nearly every day I get a phone call or e-mail that says "my uncle went to your school" or "my cousin went to your school" or "I'm interested in this program because my brother did it." So we know that works.*

This response also suggests that in some cases, there is little distinction between gatekeeping for international and for domestic admissions. At least according to this professional, the pathway that highly qualified graduate admissions candidates take to a particular institution is shaped more by what others (including alumni and current students) have experienced than by an independent search. "We know that works" suggests that the value of word-of-mouth and referral activities, though informal, nevertheless have a significant impact on graduate admissions.

Participants' responses depicted the relationship between recruitment and retention as sequential, beginning with active recruitment that results in admitting students who are the best fit for the program. One professional said, "We take pre-admission advisement very seriously so students have a strong understanding...whether or not the program is a good fit for them." He went on to say that the "recruiting process is really trying to get the students as best prepared as possible" such that their admission will lead ultimately to graduation.

### Promise-Keeping is an Aspirational Ideal

Some graduate admissions professionals used language emblematic of promise-keeping. One described the ways in which her work as a diversity officer involved coordinating various offices' efforts to better ensure retention of students of color. She said, "They are not only seeing me

but a number of faculty and staff of color to be someone they know for support across the university.” Building institutional capacity to achieve the organizational goal of enhancing diversity was critical in “building community” for underrepresented students and proving the graduate program’s commitment to that group.

A second admissions professional talked about the timing of retention activities as having a direct impact on graduate recruitment. In describing the importance of connecting current students with prospects at planned events during the recruitment process, he said,

*I’ve always operated under the contention that retention starts with recruitment.... We focus a lot on things like social events, professional development events, access to networking opportunities. [We are] trying to maintain basically everything and execute everything that was promised [during] the recruitment process.*

Current students not only demonstrate the promise of networking and professional development to prospective students, but they also experience each of these activities by being active participants themselves. This view of promise-keeping reflects multiple retention activities concentrated at one point in the recruitment process rather than multiple activities throughout the student life cycle.

Another graduate administrator spoke from a normative standpoint, articulating what promise-keeping should be. Still other professionals described day-to-day activities

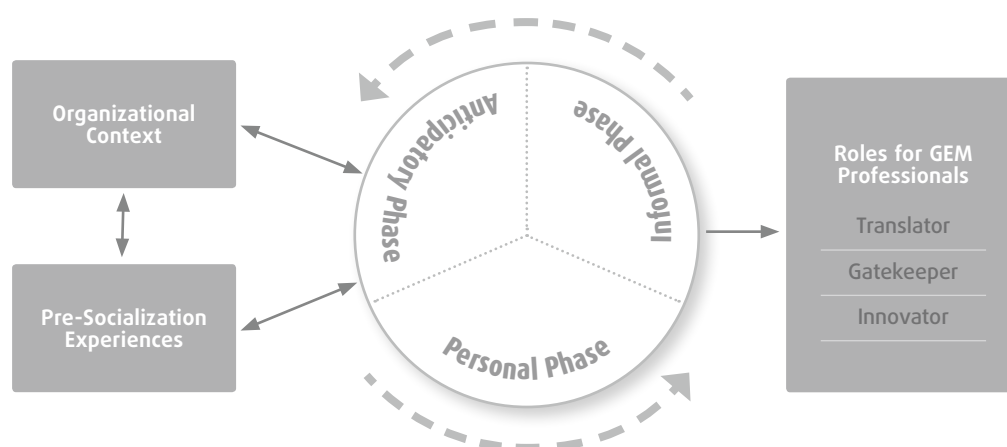
and/or experiences that served as examples of promise-keeping. A senior-level administrator explained:

*In recruitment we tell a story, and we basically promote a product.... But alumni who leave the institution and then don’t feed back into the institution—or they find that the promise is not there, and they don’t stay—they go elsewhere.*

This view of retention and recruitment drew on the perspective of the alumni community and included an evaluation of the institutional promise through their eyes. Alumni who deemed the promise as poorly kept eventually spoke with their feet and either withdrew or simply failed to return to the institution for future study. Even though no organizational structure or strategy was described, the response reflected graduate admissions professionals’ tying together of recruitment and retention.

Having set out to determine how professional identity and enrollment management develop, we now examine participants’ responses through a lens that reveals their personal identification and structural interaction with enrollment management. That is, we examine how graduate admissions professionals think and act like enrollment managers and in what ways the social context contributes to the making of a GEM professional.

In what follows, we outline a model (see Figure 1) of the graduate admissions professional socialized into enrollment management. Next, we offer a typology of three roles that admissions professionals assume within enrollment



**FIGURE 1.** Professional Identity Development for Graduate Enrollment Management

management. While other admissions professionals have suggested similar role changes (*see* Henderson 2008), these roles have not been examined empirically at the graduate level. We then offer some preliminary conclusions.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine how graduate admissions professionals are socialized into enrollment management. We highlighted the day-to-day work experiences of a select group of individuals, all of whom self-identified with the graduate admissions profession through their membership in a major professional society. Collectively, the professionals in this study exhibited different phases of professional identification within enrollment management. Collectively, these phases suggest that professional experiences contribute to a larger socialization process. While the findings for such distinct phases (anticipatory, informal, personal) do not point to socialization as a linear or chronological process (Weidman, Twale, and Leahy Stein 2001), the data within each category suggest that the phases differ from one another.

Professionals in this study described an array of personal experiences which they defined collectively as a starting point in graduate admissions. Many began their careers before the concept of graduate enrollment management even existed. In fact, one participant remarked, “No one ever grows up thinking ‘I want to be a graduate admissions professional!’” Another could not recall having heard the term “GEM” in the 1980s or 1990s. Indeed, the predominant themes were that undergraduate admission and experience as a graduate student provided the most direct pre-socialization for work in graduate admissions. This relates to professionals’ informal role identification (as opposed to their assumption of predefined roles) through interactions with colleagues who enriched their professional lives. Related identification with the graduate admissions profession was equally salient for senior-level administrators (*e.g.*, deans, associate deans, vice presidents) who valued participation in graduate admissions work by those in their charge, either by participation in professional association meetings or networking with other colleagues in the field. The gatekeeping admissions professional views enrollment management through the lens of matriculation. In the words of a graduate admissions peer, “It is easy to take a passive role in the admissions arena and allow the compo-

sition of the admitted student cohort to be determined by accident or chance rather than design” (Dimminie 2012).

Participants in this study talked about gatekeeping resulting from active and passive involvement. Active involvement included narrowly defining and selecting the admissions criteria used to filter prospective students (in this case, considering only those suited for the institutional research culture characteristic of the graduate program’s university setting) as well as intentional pre-advisement during the admissions process. Passive involvement included matriculation factors beyond the control of the admissions professional—for example, the promise of employment and of key referrals provided by former and current students. Collectively, these facets of gatekeeping suggest how graduate admissions professionals describe their work in an area traditionally considered a core facet of enrollment management.

Gatekeeping among study participants was largely a function of the position in so far as it did not require the individual to engage actively in cross- or inter-office collaboration in order to recruit students to the institution. We maintain that the anticipatory phase of role development is salient within gatekeeping: Many professionals in this phase have few or no formal responsibilities or professional identity related to enrollment management beyond what is traditionally considered admissions and recruitment or intake. In some cases, this anticipatory phase helps clarify for the newcomer what is expected in terms of the division of labor. Graduate programs that are highly tuition and revenue dependent emphasize “placing warm bodies in classroom seats” or designating a professional to serve as the “face” of graduate programs and travel the graduate fair recruitment circuit. Such experiences have served to prepare many admissions professionals for future enrollment management positions.

Within the promise-keeping theme, we found evidence of the personal phase or personalization of enrollment management. Graduate admissions professionals engaged in efforts to advance diversity spoke of the importance of having face to face contact with students at every phase of enrollment in order to build trust and communicate a welcoming environment. Maintaining this kind of personal contact required personal commitment beyond the formal responsibilities assigned to the admissions professional to ensuring student success. Admissions professionals who

viewed their work through the eyes of alumni spoke as well of the need to adjust to the extraordinary expectations of individuals focused on enrollment management.

### **A TYPOLOGY: GRADUATE ENROLLMENT MANAGER PROFESSIONAL ROLES**

A key implication for GEM is that this study contributes the insider perspective—that is, the thoughts, opinions, and professional experiences of those engaged in the social construction of GEM. We described ideal types (see figure, above). Although an individual may identify with a combination of phases, it is instructive to consider how socialization takes place. Future research on professional identity development into enrollment management might examine the interplay among the anticipatory, informal, and personal phases.

Graduate admissions professionals identify with enrollment management in at least three ways that are consistent with their roles as members of their institution and of their professional society of peers. Behaviors and attitudes related to gatekeeping, handing off, and promise-keeping are socially constructed and lend insight into how admissions professionals identify with enrollment management. An important assumption is that norms and behaviors within a professional community are socially constructed and may change as individuals and the organizations in which they work evolve.

Institutional setting and individual experiences contribute to the social construction of the following professional roles. Like the phases of professional identity development described above, the roles are ideal types; one individual may assume combinations of roles given the context.

*Gatekeeper.* Admitting students remains a significant barometer of the health of admissions professionals' identification with enrollment management. Many graduate institutions, for example, include use of standardized admissions exams such as the GRE or GMAT to screen for high-potential applicants. Graduate admissions professionals share best practices based on their experiences with a handful of electronic application management system vendors as they process large volumes of graduate applications.

*Translator.* Graduate admissions professionals translate relevant skills, aptitudes, and knowledge from related areas to GEM. Graduate admissions professionals and their

institutions constitute the objects of this work. Many institutions have created graduate admissions positions staffed by personnel from enrollment management offices on campus. New and early career graduate enrollment managers invest significant resources translating the enrollment management philosophy for campus stakeholders and others unfamiliar with the GEM paradigm.

*Innovator.* The third role in which graduate admissions professionals serve as enrollment managers is through personal identification with the priorities espoused by GEM as a management philosophy. Admissions professionals understand GEM as the primary lens of their work, whether or not the institution has reorganized itself formally for graduate enrollment management. Such professionals “think like” GEM professionals: They look beyond formal admissions responsibilities and value cross-departmental outcomes, including retention and graduation and high levels of academic achievement and student satisfaction.

### **CONCLUSION**

Our research supports the use of professional socialization as a framework for examining graduate admissions professionals' identification with enrollment management. Interviews are flexible research designs that better enable GEM practitioners and policy makers to examine the process of individual and organizational role development in the objectives of graduate enrollment management. Collectively, GEM professionals vary in their individual commitment to enrollment management. Some are committed individually to the objectives espoused by enrollment management but work at institutions that are not organized to pursue enrollment management formally. Researchers may build upon the professional experiences examined in the present study as they further investigate professional role development in graduate enrollment management.

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# DIETARY IDENTITIES

## IN HIGHER EDUCATION

AS ADHERENTS OF VEGETARIANISM AND VEGANISM FORM A DEDICATED MINORITY WITHIN THE UNITED STATES AND CONSTITUTE COMPARATIVELY GREATER PROPORTIONS OF THE POPULATIONS AT U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, THIS QUALITATIVE STUDY INVESTIGATES THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES THESE COMMUNITIES FACE IN HIGHER EDUCATION. THE EXPLORATORY STUDY DRAWS UPON TWO SETS OF INTERVIEWS OF SIX VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN STUDENTS WHO ATTEND A SOUTHERN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY. PARTICIPANTS PERCEIVED SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS AS A RESULT OF DINING AND HOUSING POLICIES AND BELIEVED UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION SHOULD OFFER PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCES TO BETTER SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH PLANT-BASED DIETS. THESE RESULTS IMPLY THAT ADMINISTRATORS WHO WISH TO BETTER ATTRACT AND RETAIN VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN STUDENTS MAY NEED TO REEVALUATE INFLEXIBLE AND UNACCOMMODATING POLICIES INVOLVING MANY ASPECTS OF CAMPUS, NOT SIMPLY THOSE RELATED TO DINING.



*Attracting  
and  
Accommodating  
Vegetarian  
and Vegan  
Students*

The results of a national study conducted in 2008 and corroborated by other recent studies (Humane Research Council 2005) suggest that 3.2 percent of American adults self-identify as vegetarian, with one-sixth of this number further distinguishing themselves as vegans or individuals who consume no animal products (Vegetarian Times 2008). An additional 10 percent of American adults in the study reported following a “vegetarian-inclined diet,” and half of these individuals were “definitely interested in following a vegetarian-based diet in the future.” Individuals who are members of these vegetarian and vegetarian-leaning communities are disproportionately young, with the highest rates found among teenagers (Vegetarian Resource Group 2005). This trend is apparent in a 2005 survey of 100,000 college students by Aramark, a food services provider to many U.S. higher education institutions, where nearly a quarter stated that “finding vegan meals on campus...was important to them.”

Many vegetarians and the scholars who study them present two categories of motivation for the lifestyle—ethical and health reasons—which frequently overlap in the practitioner’s decision-making process (Fox and Ward 2008; Jabs, Devine and Sobal 1998a). Ethical reasons derive from both religious and secular convictions. Commonly stemming from a sense of moral obligation as well as from dietary codes related to purity and health, strong traditions of vegetarianism exist in nearly all major world religions, with associated beliefs and practices central to these adherents’ faith (Kemmerer 2011). In addition to or instead of faith-based rationales, many who maintain plant-based diets are motivated by beliefs about the ethics of animal use and suffering, the environmental impact of animal agriculture, the health effects of animal product consumption, and aesthetic aversion to animal products (Fox and Ward 2008; Maurer 2002; Rozin, Markwith and Stoess 1997). The implications of vegetarianism frequently extend beyond dietary preferences and nutritional goals, even to an adherent’s sense of identity and morality (Jabs, Sobal and Devine 2000; Lindeman and Sirelius 2001;

Willetts 1997). Indeed, Jabs, Sobal, and Devine (2000) note in their oft-cited study of vegetarian identity that “the majority of [their] vegetarian respondents reported that they ‘were’ vegetarian... [and] adopting a vegetarian diet led participants to develop a different view of themselves and a new relationship with the community in general and other vegetarians in particular.”

Adherents of plant-based diets form a dedicated subset of the U.S. population, and as higher education continues to encourage diversity and to strive to meet the needs of minority populations, increased attention will need to be paid to students who identify with these communities. In many cases, such students must overcome systemic barriers in order to maintain lifestyles that are central to their identities. However, despite previous studies that focused on barriers to maintaining vegetarianism among general adult populations, little research has examined the specific barriers that confront vegetarian college students (Beardsworth and Keil 1992; Jabs, Devine and Sobal 1998b; Lea, Crawford and Worsley 2006). Drawing upon two sets of semi-structured interviews, this exploratory study investigates the unique challenges encountered by six vegetarian and vegan undergraduate students enrolled at a private southern university. This paper argues that higher education administrators must craft targeted policies—particularly pertaining to campus dining, housing, programming, and resources—to better accommodate vegetarian and vegan students.

## **CHALLENGES TO MAINTAINING VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN IDENTITIES**

Because of their minority status in the United States, vegetarians and vegans must overcome systemic barriers to their lifestyle given a dominant culture ambivalent and often uneducated about adherents of plant-based diets. The literature has focused on the role of community interactions and environmental resources in challenging and supporting vegetarianism.

## **COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS**

Community interactions have a significant impact on vegetarians’ ability to successfully maintain their lifestyle. As a result of their deviance from cultural norms, vegetarians’ choices are scrutinized by others, to the extent that some non-vegetarians exhibit negative attitudes and behavior toward vegetarians (Worsley and Skrzypiec 1998). Unwel-

come attention often takes the form of incessant questioning and teasing about vegetarianism or goading to ingest an animal product (Chin, Fisak and Sims 2002). This unwelcome attention sometimes results in argument or hurt feelings, contributing to the vegetarian’s perceived isolation (McDonald 2000); some vegetarians may feel forced to “pass” or hide their lifestyle from others (Boyle 2011). In more intimate circumstances—as those of a vegan college student who participated in Beardsworth and Keil’s (1992) landmark study—passing may not be an option: after nearly a year of harassment by her roommates, the student felt it necessary to move out of a shared residence.

Many of the most negative reactions are by members of vegetarians’ nuclear families—particularly non-vegetarian parents (Jabs, Devine and Sobal 1998b). Beardsworth and Keil (1992) note that “nowhere was the contrast between acceptance and hostility [toward vegetarians] more marked than in the evidence which emerged concerning parents’ reactions to an individual’s adoption of vegetarian beliefs and practices.” Unsupportive parents may engage in a “battle of wills” and attempt to marginalize their vegetarian child’s choice by insisting it is a phase (Willetts 1997). Often, the opposition seems to arise from a parent’s feeling of rejection. Flare-ups typically occur in the context of holiday meals, when family tradition and identity are linked most closely to food (Beardsworth and Keil 1992); Jabs, Devine and Sobal 1998). Other scholarship indicates that gender affects how parents and others interact with vegetarians. One study identified a potential association between paternalism and increased hostility by fathers toward their daughters’ vegetarian practices (Merriman 2010). Adams’ (2010) seminal text, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, reveals the intense cultural pressure for males to consume animal products. Supportive or not, parents of vegetarians may also have concerns about their children’s nutritional well-being—particularly when their diet is radically different from their own (Beardsworth and Keil 1991).

Maurer (2002) claims that vegetarian organizations provide vital support for many who otherwise would feel isolated and overwhelmed by dominant non-vegetarian cultures. These organizations, examples of which range from vegetarian societies to PETA, provide opportunities to socialize with like-minded individuals, learn best practices, and become educated about related issues. In her relational study, Cherry (2006) argues that identifying with

veganism and its associated cultural movements alone does not often provide adequate support to the aspiring vegan. She contends that “maintaining a vegan lifestyle is not dependent on individual strength, subcultural norms, or collective identity. Instead, maintaining a vegan lifestyle depends upon having strong social networks that are supportive of veganism.” For many of her participants, this involved vegan friendships and events found not through mainstream vegetarian organizations but rather through punk subcultural activities. Other scholars have shown an association between not joining vegetarian groups such as “potluck get-togethers [and] online message boards” and an increased likelihood of returning to an omnivorous diet (Haverstock and Forgays 2012).

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The existence or absence of programming and resources designed to support an individual’s transition to vegetarianism affects whether the individual will be able to maintain the lifestyle. In a review of studies that have investigated the health implications of a vegetarian diet, the authors state that “well-planned vegetarian diets are not only nutritionally adequate but also provide many health benefits, particularly in the prevention and treatment of many chronic diseases” (Marsh, Zeuschner and Saunders 2012, 14). Despite this finding, a leading reason that vegetarians give for returning to an omnivorous lifestyle is self-perceived health concerns (Barr and Chapman 2002). Similarly, Kenneth Menzies and Judy Sheeshka’s (2012) study on exiting vegetarianism indicates that leaving the lifestyle “is a serious possibility when vegetarians lack the skills to produce quickly tasty vegetarian food in their price range, experience ill health, or find their vegetarian food choice generates major hassles with their table companions” (p. 167).

Many vegetarians in the United States have been raised with knowledge only about omnivorous, not plant-based, foodways. Therefore, to ensure a healthful and sustainable transition, new and would-be vegetarians benefit greatly from educational opportunities focused on the preparation of plant-based diets that satisfy nutritional, taste, cultural, cost, and time needs (Lea, Crawford and Worsley 2006). The availability of meat and dairy analogs that enable vegetarians to replicate culturally important meals and satisfy non-vegetarian cravings is also beneficial (Jabs, Devine and Sobal 1998b). The American Dietetic Associa-

tion (2009) contends that nutritionists have an important role in helping vegetarians avoid nutrient-deficient diets that may result from poor research and planning. Further, it asserts that nutritionists can help new vegetarians by providing information about appropriate sources from which to purchase vegetarian foods and guidance about local restaurants’ offerings for individuals who adhere to plant-based diets.

## RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study sought to understand and interpret the experiences of six undergraduate students enrolled at a small southeastern private university. Phenomenological methodologies attempt to “see reality through another person’s eyes” and thus provide the researcher with different perspectives through which to identify problems and solutions (Bernard 2000, 20). Qualitative studies that follow this tradition are of particular utility as initial investigations that can be developed and explored in later quantitative research (Stake 2000).

## SAMPLE

Because vegetarian and vegan students at the university were a limited population neither identified nor tracked by administration, study participants were recruited through “snowball sampling” wherein initial contacts known to the researcher suggested additional participants (Bernard 2000). The disproportionate number of females within the targeted communities would have made it challenging to build a sample evenly split by gender (Maurer 2002). Of the four female and two male participants, all were of white European descent and were between the ages of nineteen and 22 years. (See Table 1, on page 16.)

## DATA COLLECTION

Participants were asked via email to complete two in-person interviews over the course of the spring 2013 academic term. Each participant read and signed a consent form and was paid \$10 per interview for her time. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The interviews took place in mutually agreed-upon settings and ranged from 40 to 60 minutes in length. Both interviews were semi-structured and were designed to solicit data that captured the essence of participants’ shared experiences. Questions derived from a social constructivist

approach based on the assumption that participants make meaning of the events they describe from a subjectivist perspective (Creswell 2009).

The first round of interviews featured broad, open-ended questions such as “Has your vegetarianism af-

in order to reconcile main themes in the data. Once these were identified, a grounded theory approach was used to refine the questions from the first set of interviews for use in the second. The primary objective was to elicit fuller accounts of the ways in which participants organize their reality (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Researchers analyzed the second interviews and coded the additional material into named categories.

Table 1.

*Demographics of Research Participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Class	Lifestyle
Amy	Female	19	Sophomore	Vegetarian
Caroline	Female	20	Junior	Vegetarian
Ellie	Female	22	Senior	Vegan
Meredith	Female	22	Senior	Vegan
Rob	Male	19	Sophomore	Vegetarian
James	Male	21	Senior	Vegetarian

ected where you have chosen to live while attending the university?” Transcriptions of the interviews were coded (as described below), and the emergent themes provided the focus for the second round of interviews, which took place approximately six weeks after the first. The follow-up interview provided the opportunity for participants to supply the necessary depth for this study. Because of the possibility that participants might cease to be enrolled beyond the semester during which they were interviewed, all fieldwork needed to be completed within one semester, making two interviews the maximum feasible.

## DATA ANALYSIS

After the interviews were transcribed, the researchers conducted member checks by asking participants to review copies of their audio files and transcribed interviews and to comment on their perceptions of their accuracy (Merriam 2009). As noted above, the initial set of interviews was analyzed using open coding to identify primary themes among participants’ experiences (Strauss and Corbin 1998). This process was undertaken independently by two researchers who constructed and named categories and sorted data accordingly. The researchers met subsequently

that dining policy was too inflexible. Ellie’s view that “one size fits all is a pretty good way to describe the way they run things, and if you try to go against that, you’re just not taken seriously” was representative of those in the study. This inflexibility was noted particularly in the meal plan.

At the time of writing, the university offered two versions of its meal plan: One provided unlimited access to traditional dining halls, with the option to purchase a limited number of additional swipes for use at on-campus retail locations; the other supplied only universal swipes that could be used interchangeably at traditional dining halls and on-campus retail locations. A student’s ability to choose between these two plans was limited by seniority and housing status. Upper class students who had kitchens in their residences were allowed to opt for the universal plan while under class students in hall-style dorms were required to purchase the traditional plan. Participants objected to these restrictions because they believed that some on-campus retail locations had more accessible offerings than did the traditional dining halls. Participants felt that by not allowing all vegetarians and vegans to choose a suitable plan, the meal plan policy exacerbated the challenges attendant to restricted diets.

## DESCRIPTION OF THEMES

The researchers categorized into three themes the challenges that the vegetarian and vegan participants discussed: dining, housing, and programming and resources.

### Dining

Issues related to dining on campus were the topic discussed most in interviews. All participants expressed significant dissatisfaction with the current dining experience at the university, and each in turn indicated



Much of the perceived need for access to retail locations seemed to stem from participants' overwhelmingly negative reviews of traditional dining halls. Vegetarian options in the dining halls were reported to be sparse, and what options did exist were often considered to lack variety and nutritional quality. James said that "there is always pizza, which is great, but sometimes I would be on a run of like four or five days in a row, and you just find yourself eating pizza with every meal, because there weren't enough options." Similarly, Meredith commented that "there weren't good vegetarian options. I ate a lot of carbs. Tofu was rarely available. I ate a lot of French fries." Moreover, one newly vegetarian participant believed the plant-based options in the dining hall to be so nutritionally inadequate that he continued to occasionally consume fish in order to meet his perceived protein needs. Food preparation procedures also were seen as problematic. Students were concerned about the cross-contamination of their food with products they sought to avoid, as many dining hall facilities utilized the same gloves, knives, and cookware for vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals.

Participants found that identifying available options was a constant challenge. In fact, the study's cohort consistently noted labeling as the most pressing dining hall issue. Participants stated that labels often were not present, and many noted a time when labeling was incorrect. Staff were described as uneducated about alternative diets, with several participants commenting that staff frequently would confuse the meanings of vegetarian, vegan, and gluten free. As a result, many students felt unable to trust signage and staff, which added further stress to eating at the dining hall. Ellie reflected on her daily routine of asking dining hall staff about ingredients:

*[Staff would respond], "Oh, let me talk to this person who can go find you the packaging with the ingredients," and it is just such a hassle. So, a lot of the time, I would say, "Can I just read it myself?" But a lot of times, they would say, "Well, we don't have the packaging for this," or they would find the packaging, and it doesn't [sic] list the ingredients. It is frustrating, because it is just an additional hassle, and you have everybody just kind of looking at you, and you are asking people questions, and they think it is really weird that you are asking them. You know, they are not sure why you would want to know if there is egg in the salad dressing or something. If you are with people who aren't*

*supportive, you can feel...I don't know, kind of silly or excluded or isolated.*

Other participants described similar incidents, but some said they were too embarrassed to ask the sorts of questions Ellie did. Meredith, for example, said she would rather guess about ingredients than go through the ordeal Ellie described. She said, "When I go in dining halls, I don't even bother asking, because I feel like if I were to say, 'Does this have butter or milk in it?' the staff would probably just be annoyed at me or simply not know." She acknowledged that this guesswork surely involved many mistakes that made her feel uncomfortable, and she complained that labels with accurate ingredient lists were not standard in all dining halls. All participants shared the desire for consistent and reliable ingredient lists.

Participants also were consistent in their belief that maintaining a vegan diet while relying upon dining halls was a near impossibility. Both vegans in the study felt forced to continue eating eggs and dairy during their first year because of the dining hall meal plan requirement, and they remembered having a strong wish to drop the meal plan as soon as possible. Ellie stated clearly that "the challenge of eating in the dining halls was the reason I decided to postpone being vegan until my first year was over." While each of the non-vegan participants in the study indicated interest in eating a mostly or entirely vegan diet, the perceived institutional challenges to veganism were noted by each as an important factor in her ongoing decision not to further pursue this interest. Caroline, a vegetarian, explained that "the reason I wouldn't even consider it is because it seems too hard to do in a dining hall; it's never clear if anything is vegan in the dining hall."

However, one vegetarian participant did attempt to follow veganism for Lent, only to return to vegetarianism after the observance ended. During Lent, she chose to eat solely at one newly opened retail location that had designed its menu so that many items could be ordered with or without animal products. She explained that "it was the easiest [option], and I knew it was vegan, and I ate the same thing [there] twice a day for six weeks....It would have been completely impossible to be vegan at a regular dining hall." This retail location was lauded by all participants as a step in the right direction. James praised the location's concept: "I think meat being optional is like

the best idea ever, because that doesn't hurt anyone and it helps people. And, honestly, when meat is optional, that helps people who aren't vegetarian, too, because some people are trying to eat less meat for health reasons."

Despite participants' positive reactions to this model, many described the difficulties associated with only some campus dining locations having vegetarian and vegan options. Having to patronize certain dining facilities was inconvenient, and more important, participants felt ostracized by being prevented from eating with friends and classmates. James said, "You don't want to be that guy who is putting himself out there and saying, 'Hey, can we do something different, because I have this need that is different from yours?'" Similarly, Amy described feeling "like the jerk who always had to figure out where we were going to eat because it was my dietary restriction that was dictating what everyone else could eat." Each participant argued that every dining location should have at least one option suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

Campus events involving food also left participants feeling excluded. The most prominent example was an important weekly university event featuring free coffee and baked goods that was designed to bring the campus community together by offering a break from classes. All participants who avoided dairy voiced frustration that non-dairy milk alternatives were unavailable, and they expressed similar frustrations regarding the baked goods. A second common example was a university-hosted food event that took place each Thursday at midnight and where no vegetarian—let alone vegan—option was offered. Caroline's reaction was representative: "[The inaccessibility] becomes the baseline, and you get used to it, and then you move on, because it won't help if every time you go you feel frustrated. That's not a good way to live your life." Still, many decided not to continue attending these food-oriented campus events because they felt unwelcome or that they were there for no reason.

Private university events such as awards ceremonies and departmental picnics that include a meal were also problematic. Many students were unaware that vegetarian and vegan meals could be ordered from the university's food service provider or felt uncomfortable making such a request if the event coordinator did not invite them to. Ellie, like several other participants, said that she had attended many events of this nature, but that it was often unclear

what food options would be available and whether she could request a special meal. She explained that occasionally she would be "invited to something, and there would be nowhere on the invitation...that says 'if you have an alternative diet, please contact this person.'" In situations like this, students who were more shy or who simply did not want to stand out said they would not ask the event coordinator if accommodations could be made. Meredith noted that she did not ask such questions: "It occurred to me [to ask for accommodations], but I didn't want to be a pain." Many participants who did request special meals were disappointed in their quality. Often, the meals included only a small main course with no side dishes or dessert—which non-vegetarians and non-vegans would receive.

## HOUSING

Participants believed that housing policies also had a negative effect on vegetarian and vegan students. In fact, the deficiencies in the dining policy seem closely connected to those participants identified regarding housing policy. Participants believed that a spectrum of options should exist, from complete dependence on the dining halls to self-sufficiency, and they believed that housing policy should play an important role in supporting students who want to be less dependent. However, housing policy was perceived as not accommodating the needs of vegetarian and vegan students. Like the meal plan policy, the campus's housing policy presented different residence options and restrictions according to students' seniority and class rank. Although the university strongly encouraged all students to live on campus, first- and second-year students ostensibly were required to do so. In fact, first-year students were required to reside in hall- or suite-style dormitories, a majority of which did not provide access to either communal or personal kitchens. For their second year, students could apply to live either in dormitories or in on-campus apartments with personal kitchens, but at the time of writing, placements in the apartments were highly competitive.

Because on-campus apartments were not guaranteed for second-year students, participants who believed a kitchen was necessary to maintain a healthful diet felt anxious throughout the housing process. One participant asked housing staff for assistance. Ellie recalled, "I made it clear to them that this was a very serious need of mine, and I approached them as early in the process as I could, and

I was really disappointed when they came back and said they couldn't really do anything for me." The staff person said that if diet could influence the housing process, the system could be abused by students who would lie in order to receive a choice placement.

Meredith concluded that she should attempt to get permission to live off campus, where apartments were plentiful. Participants stated that some second-year students were permitted to live off campus, but none clearly understood who was allowed to do so or for which reasons. While most participants were uncertain whether a student would be allowed to live off campus for dietary reasons, Meredith confirmed that at least in her case it was possible. She had heard rumors throughout her first year that other vegetarian students had been permitted to live off campus during their second year. Knowing this and that the university was unwilling to ensure that she would receive an on-campus placement with a kitchen, she wrote a letter to housing staff explaining her situation and requesting permission to live off campus. Ultimately, her request was approved, and she lived off campus as a second-year student.

However, not all participants wished to live in apartments with kitchens or to prepare many of their own meals. Indeed, despite Meredith's decision to seek a residence with a kitchen for her second year, she lamented that she felt it necessary to do so. Her position was that "housing could be made better by simply having more 'veg' options in the dining halls because, realistically, freshmen and sophomores don't need to spend a lot of time preparing their own foods. They need to be socializing and studying and figuring out how to transition to college and enjoy the dining hall." She wished that she could have remained in the dormitories for her second year, but she felt forced to select a housing option that would compensate for the lack of vegetarian options at the dining halls. Several other participants chose dormitory life over the benefits of their own kitchen. Amy said, "I liked the atmosphere that the dorms provided, and I was willing to sacrifice having a kitchen for the disgusting hall-style dorms in which you make all of your friends and everyone knows everyone's business. That is just worth it."

Others advocated for a middle ground between traditional dormitories with a full meal plan and apartments with no meal plan: dormitories with community kitchens

and a pared-down meal plan. They believed that such an option would allow vegetarian and vegan students both to supplement their diet on a more regular basis and to retain the benefits of the dorm community and the convenience of a meal plan. Dormitories such as this did exist on some parts of campus, but residents were still required to subscribe to full meal plans. James noted in frustration that he and his neighbors rarely made use of the kitchen because they had already paid for meals in the dining halls. Thus, any meal prepared in the kitchen would cost extra—in time and money—compared to simply eating at the dining hall. He contended that "if we had had the option to not be on as strong of a meal plan, and if we had had the kitchen available, and we were in this community setting, then I think it's more likely that we would have spent more meals cooking."

Most participants expressed interest in vegetarian affinity housing, a residential strategy adopted by the university prior to the enrollment of the participants in this study. Housing communities could be affiliated with an extracurricular or academic initiative, such as community service or a foreign language; interested students shared the residence hall, and the university provided funding for programming related to the community's affinity. Participants frequently commented on the benefits of living with others with similar lifestyles. Several students described living with other vegetarians as especially valuable because of the opportunities it allowed for teaching and learning recipes and cooking techniques. Affinity housing also offered general social support. Ellie said that "if you feel kind of isolated or lonely, you might start to doubt [your lifestyle] if it seems like it is preventing you from feeling part of a community or other people are making a big deal out of it." Several other participants expressed similar sentiments, noting that they believed that affinity housing could provide refuge from critics. Rob said, "I'm just going to have to deal with [the teasing], because basically everyone makes jokes every now and then, but it would be nice to have a group that I can rely on and get away from other people when they are being jerks about [my vegetarianism]."

Many participants believed that vegetarian affinity housing would be worthwhile because some individuals never find like-minded people and groups. Indeed, several remembered not being aware during their first year of

other vegetarians or vegans who attended the university and feeling lonely as a result. Amy recalled, “My first semester, I was like...there is no one like that here, but there actually are a lot, and I feel like they are kind of hidden.” For this reason, many students believed that having an affinity housing community with the capacity to plan and provide programming for vegetarians throughout campus would help those who felt unsupported. Caroline, who lived in academically based affinity housing with a high proportion of vegetarians, described how this affected her own vegetarianism: “Once you reach critical mass, you don’t feel like you and your lifestyle choices are in isolation. So there were enough people who were vegetarians in [my affinity housing] that it felt like a mini-community, like you weren’t the only one.”

## PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCES

In addition to improving dining and housing policies, participants felt that the university should also offer programming and resources to assist those who were already vegetarian or vegan as well as those who were interested in adopting the lifestyle. At the time of this writing, no student organization was officially dedicated to supporting and promoting vegetarianism and veganism on campus. However, several participants noted that the university’s student-run environmental club provided unofficial education and support to vegetarian and vegan members and hosted vegan Thanksgivings and similar events. Rob commented that this club helped during his transition to vegetarianism: “Most of [those in the club] have been vegetarian longer than I have, and they have more knowledge about this stuff. So I know I can go to any of them to talk about anything—like if I am having issues or I need to find a good dish to try.” While this club appeared to serve some of its vegetarian and vegan members’ needs, such assistance was not part of the organization’s official mission. Moreover, participants were concerned that this feature could fade with new leadership, particularly as its present support of plant-based diets would not have been outwardly apparent to non-members.

All participants in the current study believed that a dedicated vegetarian organization would be beneficial, but they agreed that to most effectively serve their communities, trained staff should provide programming and resources. Ellie thought staff were unable to respond

knowledgeably to her questions and concerns and described “reaching out to [staff] who don’t have this information, so you have to explain it to them, and then they have to try to figure it out and give you answers.” Other participants agreed that staff rarely were aware of the unique challenges vegetarians and vegans faced and had no established resources or protocols to offer. Several students expressed frustration that there was not a staff member to advocate for vegetarians and vegans—someone capable of articulating their needs to administration and of providing objective advice on how best to navigate aspects of campus such as dining halls and housing. They also hoped for accessible cooking lessons and qualified nutritional guidance. The students believed that such an advocate should be unbiased by either the administration or the food service provider. Rob said, “If Elon actually would give advice like that, it would definitely help. But, at the same time I would also be worried [that] they will base [the advice] off [our food service provider].”

Study abroad, too, was universally identified as being in need of improvement. All participants had studied abroad or had immediate plans to do so. Yet no participant was aware of resources pertaining to diet that were available from the study abroad office and so could help her make informed decisions about where to study. Many students were anxious about how effectively they could maintain their diet abroad and would have been grateful for realistic and supportive guidance. Caroline, like the other participants, wished that information about best practices for vegetarians abroad were available—even simple advice such as “bring your own emergency food.” While Rob believed that he would “definitely pick a trip over another if there were guaranteed vegetarian and vegan options,” the other participants thought guidance from staff would influence but not make their decision for them. Several participants stated that other factors, including geographic location, language spoken, and program design, were more important to them but that accommodation of diet could help them choose between similar programs. Meredith’s top priority was that the program be located in a Spanish-speaking country in South America. Absent guidance from the study abroad office, she chose a program in Ecuador that she did not consider vegetarian friendly; only later did she learn from a friend that a similar program in Chile was much more accommodating of

plant-based diets. She claimed that this knowledge would have influenced her choice of program; several other students expressed similar beliefs.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this exploratory study indicate that despite increased awareness of the trend among students toward plant-based diets, administrators and the food service provider at a private southern campus have inadequately accommodated vegetarians and vegans. Participants believed that it was not possible to maintain a vegan diet while being required to rely on traditional dining halls; some said they had to forgo their ethical concerns in order to remain healthy. The vegetarian options that were available were perceived as lacking nutritional content and as being insufficient in terms of both quantity and variety. Participants said that vegetarian options in the dining hall were not labeled; that staff were neither trained in nor aware of vegetarians' and vegans' needs; that the inflexibility of the meal plan left students with no suitable option; and that events involving meals did not consistently offer vegetarian or vegan options.

Housing policies, as well, were considered restrictive and unable to meet the needs of participants, some of whom sought kitchen access to supplement or replace dining halls. While lamenting that dining hall deficiencies prevented them from flourishing in dormitories without kitchens, several of those who preferred to live in such housing felt forced to seek apartment-style options instead. Further complicating matters, students perceived housing staff as unwilling to assist vegetarians in locating suitable residences, and most participants were unaware of policy permitting them to live off campus because of dietary concerns. Participants were in favor of the creation of vegetarian affinity housing, where they hoped to find support for their lifestyles.

Just as participants were in favor of affinity housing, so, too, were they in favor of additional peer-to-peer support systems such as a student vegetarian organization. At the same time, participants were convinced of the need for administration-led programming and resources for vegetarians and vegans. The students in this study believed that an unbiased staff member could advocate on their behalf to administration and dining services and could offer nutritional and culinary programming to students commit-

ted to plant-based diets. Students also requested resources to help them navigate other aspects of academic and campus life. In particular, they sought resources to help them identify study abroad programs more and less accommodating of plant-based diets as well as advice and strategies for maintaining their lifestyles while out of the country.

## IMPLICATIONS

The results described above must be considered in light of the study's limitations. This exploratory study involved only a small sample of students enrolled at a particular private university in the southern United States. Students were invited to participate in the study on the basis of previous participants' recommendations rather than through randomized sampling. Therefore, this study's population cannot be understood as representative of vegetarian and vegan students in general. It is hoped that additional mixed-methods studies with larger sample sizes will explore similar lines of inquiry at a range of higher education settings in order to further understanding of this important topic.

Despite its limitations, this study suggests that universities may benefit from close examination of policies that may affect vegetarian and vegan students. Anecdotal evidence suggests that several universities have scheduled formal discussions involving administrators, food service providers, and students with plant-based diets. The University of Maryland, College Park has created a Vegetarian Advisory Board (VAB) that includes vegetarian students, student nutritionists, a staff dietitian, the director of dining services, and other dining services staff. The board meets monthly to discuss the state of vegetarian dining on campus (UMD, CP 2013). Dartmouth and UCLA also reportedly held productive "conversation dinners" at which students were invited to communicate their concerns to senior staff from university dining services (Jackson 2012; Wright 2012). It seems likely that similar discussions are occurring on many more campuses, but data on the subject are sparse.

Discussions involving students and staff have been fruitful but could be of even greater utility if they were not limited to dining services. Indeed, many of the issues presented by participants intersect with other aspects of student life. For example, although participants were primarily concerned about challenges related to dining

halls and meal plans, they made it clear that many additional challenges to vegetarianism and veganism relate to housing, programming, and resource policies. In a spirit of accommodation and inclusion, university administrators should engage their vegetarian and vegan students in wide-ranging discussions, and staff should not assume they know such students' unique needs. Participants identified many starting points for such discussions, and the authors strongly encourage consideration of the following initiatives in order to create a campus more welcoming of vegetarians and vegans:

- formally review dining options and labeling;
- ensure that events and programming involving food include options for students who are vegetarian and vegan;
- dedicate a staff member to serve as an unbiased advocate for vegetarians and vegans;
- hire a staff nutritionist to consult with concerned students;
- create vegetarian affinity housing; and
- provide planning and logistical support for students with alternative diets who wish to study abroad.

### CAMPUS TRENDS IN THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF VEGETARIAN/VEGAN STUDENTS

Although there is not an abundance of knowledge about vegetarian/vegan students pursuing higher education, this has not prevented some forward-thinking institutions from initiating some outreach. One way in which institutions have passively attempted to recruit such students is by advertising vegetarian-friendly policies and student groups on admission websites. Other institutions have identified themselves as vegetarian/vegan friendly by asking students to self-identify on supplemental datasheets following their formal admission. It is also critically important to discuss special dietary needs during campus visits and to train recruiters and tour guides about these populations' unique needs.

All participants discussed affinity housing and felt strongly that it should be an option marketed to future students. Students believed that the creation of a living community around their particular needs and interests would help educate the group as well as protect them from campus discrimination. Students' ability to reserve a centralized kitchen area was also a popular approach to

meeting this population's needs. Some institutions have created kitchens within their student centers. Often glass enclosures, these kitchens showcase students' cooking and learning together and allow their peers and prospective students to witness activities that support their lifestyle. Such spaces send a clear message about the campus's support for dietary diversity.

As more students identify as vegetarian or vegan before matriculating in higher education, it is time that institutions plan to accommodate their needs. Even small changes—creating a vegetarian/vegan advisory board comprising campus dining personnel, administrators, students, and a nutritionist to address current concerns or having a “conversation dinner” for discussion of any concerns—affirm current students' dietary identities.

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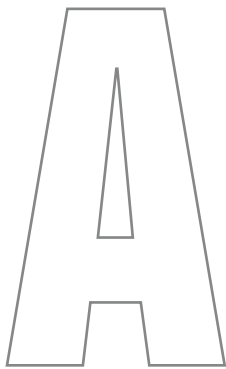
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# BRIDGING STEM PROFESSIONS *for* MCNAIR SCHOLARS THROUGH FACULTY MENTORING AND ACADEMIC PREPARATION

IN 2007 AND 2010, THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL REPORTED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS NOT PRODUCING ENOUGH GRADUATES IN THE STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS) FIELDS TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE GLOBAL ECONOMY. DESPITE RECENT CHALLENGES TO THESE FINDINGS, ONE THING REMAINS CLEAR: UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITIES (URMS) CONTINUE TO BE THE MOST UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS IN THE STEM DISCIPLINES. (THE TERM “UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITIES,” OR URMS, IS USED TO DESCRIBE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS THAT ARE NOT REPRESENTED IN THE POOL OF STEM PROFESSIONALS COMMENSURATE WITH THEIR REPRESENTATION IN THE GENERAL U.S. POPULATION—NAMESLY, AFRICAN AMERICANS, HISPANIC AMERICANS, AND AMERICAN INDIANS [CLEWELL ET AL. 2006]). FURTHER, THE LACK OF APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS MAY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR STEM DISCIPLINES TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN A DIVERSE POOL OF STUDENTS. ONE PROGRAM THAT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE RESEARCH LITERATURE AS EFFECTIVELY PREPARING URMS FOR DOCTORAL STUDIES IS THE RONALD E. MCNAIR POST BACCALAUREATE ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM. PROGRAMMATIC FEATURES, INCLUDING FACULTY MENTORING AND ACADEMIC PREPARATION, HAVE BEEN SHOWN TO MITIGATE MANY OF THE OBSTACLES THAT URMS TYPICALLY ENCOUNTER. IN THIS PAPER, WE DEMONSTRATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FACULTY MENTORING AND ACADEMIC PREPARATION IN HELPING STUDENTS TRANSITION FROM BACCALAUREATE TO GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN THE STEM DISCIPLINES AT ONE RESEARCH I UNIVERSITY IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES.



According to recent reports, underrepresented minorities (URMs) continue to be the most underrepresented populations in the STEM workforce (Bell 2009; George *et al.* 2001; National Science Foundation 2006). The number of U.S. citizens from minority groups who have earned doctorates in science and engineering has increased over the past decade; however, URMs continue to represent a small proportion of the scientists and engineers in the United States (NSF 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013).

In the fields of science and engineering, African Americans accounted for 4.5 percent, Hispanics for 5.5 percent, and American Indians for 0.3 percent of the doctoral degrees awarded by U.S. institutions in 2011 (NSF 2012) whereas these groups accounted for 13.1 percent, 16.9 percent, and 1.2 percent, respectively—and combined, approximately 31 percent—of all U.S. residents in the comparable age bracket (U.S. Census 2012). Researchers also have noted that women are less likely than men to major

and earn degrees in the fields traditionally defined as “hard” sciences and engineering (Nixon, Meikle and Borman 2013), though this is beyond the scope of this investigation.

In 2007 and 2010, the National Research Council reported that the United States was not producing enough graduates in the STEM fields to meet the growing demands of an increasingly competitive global economy. Despite equivocal data in the research literature regarding the existence of a STEM shortage in the United States (Anft 2013, Mangan 2013), failure to develop the talents of all members of the nation’s diverse citizenry will compromise its ability to meet future demands for a highly skilled and technically proficient workforce at a time when the opportunity for great advances is accelerating (Bell 2009; Lavrakas 2012; National Research Council 2007; Nixon, Meikle and Borman 2013).

Friedman and Kay (1990) note that while enrollments of women and URMs in STEM curricula may increase as a result of strong recruitment programs, issues related to retention and completion rates have yet to be adequately addressed at the institutional level. Indeed, attrition appears to be one of the greatest threats to the STEM pipeline (DeSantis 2013). Finally, researchers have indicated that in the absence of culturally competent role models (Flores 2009, Kwan and Taub 2003), URMs will continue to exist on the margins of the STEM professions (Aguirre 2009, Bordes and Arredondo 2005, Laden 2000).

One program that has been identified as effectively preparing URMs for doctoral studies is the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program (Girves, Zepeda and Gwathmey 2005). Programmatic features, including faculty mentoring and academic preparation, have been shown to mitigate many of the obstacles that URMs encounter (Hirsch *et al.* 2012). In this paper, we demonstrate the contributions of faculty mentoring and academic preparation in helping URM students transition from baccalaureate to STEM graduate programs at one Research I university in the southeastern United States.

## BACKGROUND

The Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair Scholars Program) is a highly competitive U.S. Department of Education–funded program designed to prepare university juniors and seniors who are low income, first generation, and underrepresented in graduate education for successful completion of doctoral degrees in STEM disciplines. Through a selective grant competition, funds are awarded to higher education institutions for the purpose of engaging students in research and scholarly activities. In 2010, McNair Scholars Programs were funded on approximately 200 U.S. college and university campuses at a total cost of \$4.3 million (Ishiyama and Hopkins 2003, U.S. Department of Education 2013).

The McNair Scholars Program was established by Congress in 1986 to honor the memory of Dr. Ronald McNair, a nationally renowned scientist and researcher in the field of laser physics. One of America's first African American astronauts, McNair died when the space shuttle Challenger exploded on January 28, 1986 (U.S. Department of Education 2013).

The McNair Scholars Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) was established in 1999 and was supported by three funded renewal applications (UAB Graduate School n.d.). In its most recent renewal (beginning in 2007), the McNair Scholars Program at UAB was funded for five years at an annual investment of \$225,000 per year through federal TRIO programs (U.S. Department of Education 2013); additional program costs were met by state resources. In the most recent cycle, the U.S. Department of Education awarded UAB an additional (*i.e.*, fifth) year of funding (typically, it is a four-year award). Scholars at UAB have benefited not only from a strong, committed faculty who are experienced in mentoring undergraduates but also from outstanding research programs and facilities, a full range of support programs and educational enhancement opportunities, a population of graduate students who serve as role models and mentors, and administrative commitment at all levels (UAB Graduate School 2013).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

As noted in the literature, obstacles that often prevent URM students from completing baccalaureate programs and continuing to graduate education include the lack of

personal support, mentoring, guidance, and encouragement (King 2003); research experience (Babco 2004); and skills and knowledge to better integrate into the university community (George *et al.* 2001).

### Personal Support, Mentoring, Guidance, and Encouragement

URMs confronting the broad choices available in college may be unprepared for the fast pace of courses, unfamiliar with the amount of self-reliance expected of them, and uncertain of their abilities. They may be unaware of the academic and social support systems available to them or may fail to take advantage of services designed to support their academic success (Burger *et al.* 2007). URM students also may be recruited into a demanding STEM curriculum yet be offered insufficient guidance and support (Taningco, Mathew and Pachon 2008; Tornatzky *et al.* 2006).

A report from the National Research Council (2007) identifies faculty mentors as a key link between undergraduate students and potential careers in science and technology; however, the relatively small number of visible and diverse faculty role models for women and URM students has been shown to increase these students' sense of isolation (Johnson 2007; Taningco, Mathew and Pachon 2008; Tornatzky *et al.* 2006).

URMs' need for mentoring is strongly related to issues of self-efficacy and professional role confidence when students are involved in courses and experiences that have been dominated historically by the white male majority (Borg *et al.* 2005, Burger *et al.* 2007, Cech *et al.* 2011, Margolis and Fisher 2002). Role models are cited in the literature as a critical source through which behaviors are learned and efficacy beliefs are formed (Bandura 1986). Mentors may also influence protégés by verbally encouraging them to engage in positive and productive behaviors (Johnson and Ridley 2004, Laden 2000).

### Research Experience

Admissions committees for doctoral programs in the STEM disciplines look for evidence that students have had an undergraduate research experience. Previous studies have shown that effective laboratory experiences can help students identify the right major, envision future goals, and add value to their educational experience (Hofstein and Lunetta 2004, NAS 1997). According to Hundt and

Kurzweil (2007), hands-on research experiences provide URMs with the skills necessary to develop a research agenda, which can significantly increase their chances of being accepted by competitive graduate programs.

Russell, Hancock and McCullough (2007) surveyed students regarding their participation in undergraduate research experiences and concluded that the overall duration of such experiences and the variety of research activities contributed to positive outcomes in terms of student commitment to obtaining a Ph.D. in a STEM career. Respondents' comments suggested that "(faculty) mentors who are able to combine enthusiasm with interpersonal, organizational, and research skills play a large role in facilitating positive outcomes" (Russell, Hancock and McCullough 2007, p. 549).

### Skills and Knowledge

For URM students, access to and retention in STEM fields may be compromised by inadequate preparation in math and science courses; poor study skills; and issues of efficacy based on self-confidence, ethnicity-based stereotypes, and stereotype threat (Steele 2010; Taningco, Mathew and Pachon 2008). Additionally, students may not be aware of the wide variety of options available to them at the graduate level or of the ways in which graduate education can prepare them for careers in science and engineering.

One strategy for addressing current deficits in the STEM fields is for colleges and universities to provide positive experiences designed specifically to meet URMs' needs. Jackson (2007) advocates for early access, opportunity, and mentoring to encourage interest and to foster talent among URMs. STEM preparation programs such as the McNair Scholars Program have been cited in the research literature as sources of support for students to identify with individuals who have shared similar experiences and succeeded at the highest levels of their professions (Burger *et al.* 2007; Frehill, Ketcham and Jeser-Cannavale 2005; Handelsman *et al.* 2005; Jackson 2007; Packard 2004–2005; Suarez 2003).

### MCNAIR SCHOLARS

During the most recent funding cycle (2007–12), 92 juniors and seniors participated in the McNair Scholars Program at UAB. Female candidates outnumbered male candidates at a ratio of 2:1, and approximately two-thirds

of scholars were among the first generation of their families to attend college. The remaining third of scholars were chosen from low-income and/or underrepresented groups. Since 2007, approximately two-thirds of scholars have self-identified as either black or African American, with the remaining third comprising white, Asian, and Hispanic students (bi-racial and multi-racial demographic data were not reported).

### METHODOLOGY

Two primary methods were used to evaluate the McNair Scholars Program at UAB: a pre-post evaluation design with composite Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores as the dependent variable and a longitudinal design in which students were tracked to determine their academic accomplishments. During each year of the program, students were required to take the GRE prior to program participation. During the ten-week program, graduate school staff provided instruction as students prepared for both the GRE and for completing their research projects. During the course of grant implementation, the Educational Testing Service changed the GRE's content and structure so as to include a section on academic writing; as a result, this section was added to the McNair curriculum.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to assess program objectives. Formative data were obtained primarily from focus groups held to review scholars' accomplishments at the beginning and end of each program. These data guided the process of continuous program improvement. For example, McNair Scholars initially completed all practice GRE exams in a paper-and-pencil format. However, the actual GRE exam was administered as a computer-based assessment. During focus group discussions, McNair Scholars identified the apparent disconnect between testing modalities and thus informed an immediate change in test preparation methods.

Analyses of quantitative data included both descriptive and parametric statistics (SPSS, ver. 11.0). Paired t-test differences were considered significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ . We analyzed qualitative data using content analysis procedures as described by Patton (1980) and coded data through an iterative process. Emergent themes were managed through a text-to-table application. Evaluation of the McNair Scholars Program at UAB was conducted with the approval of the Institutional Review Board.



## RESEARCH SETTING

The University of Alabama at Birmingham is a comprehensive research university and medical complex that enrolls more than 17,000 students in schools of liberal arts and science, professional schools, and the university-wide Graduate School (UAB Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis 2012). Graduate training programs encompass all major research areas, including biomedical sciences, natural sciences, and engineering. As a Research I university in an urban setting in the southeastern United States, UAB is committed to increasing participation in K–12 through postdoctoral education by addressing access by minorities and by students from families with low incomes. With more than \$400 million in active grants and contracts, UAB is an ideal site for a program to prepare students for careers in science and technology research (UAB Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis 2012).

## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the McNair Scholars Program is to increase college graduation rates and success in graduate education. This goal was addressed at UAB through specific program offerings. All components of the McNair Scholars Program at UAB were based on a review of research regarding effective strategies for providing assistance to the priority population of URM students. Program objectives guided program improvement efforts for the McNair Scholars Program at UAB, and results of the overall programmatic evaluation informed the present investigation. Specific areas of interest included: (1) research experience, (2) academic preparation, (3) baccalaureate degree attainment and readiness for doctoral education, and (4) application and entry into graduate school.

## FINDINGS

### Research Experience

To support the goal of successfully developing and executing a laboratory research experience, each of the McNair Scholars was paired with a faculty mentor. This mentoring relationship was designed to encourage, motivate, and prepare McNair Scholars for doctoral studies. Faculty mentors served three vital functions: (1) prepare undergraduate students for graduate education, (2) direct the

summer research experience, and (3) report the results of faculty/scholar research.

Through focus group feedback, scholars overwhelmingly expressed positive comments about their interactions with faculty mentors, crediting them with providing career and scholarship advice; guidance regarding graduate school options; training in research skills; and opportunities to network with other professionals. One scholar said, “My mentor allowed me to pursue a research subject of my interest and was immeasurably helpful in guiding my readings.” Another identified specific types of assistance her faculty mentor provided: “She helped me improve my resume and gave me useful resources for scholarships and great advice on graduate school.”

Faculty mentors also spoke highly of scholars’ achievements in gaining hands-on experience, developing research skills, and contributing toward the overall success of the research. One mentor commented, “This scholar made significant progress in understanding complex clinical data sets and extracting meaningful information by proposing empirical questions, doing analysis, and interpreting findings under the guidance of myself and my Ph.D. candidate who helped mentor her.”

### Academic Preparation

The skills necessary to succeed in a baccalaureate program are quite varied and depend to some extent on the academic preparation of each student accepted into the McNair Scholars Program. While scholars undoubtedly benefited from seminars designed to teach academic skills, it was clear from their accomplishments in high school that they had come to college having already embarked on a trajectory toward success.

Indicators of requisite academic skills for the McNair Scholars Program at UAB have included applicants’ standardized test scores and high school GPA. Although the same skills required at the baccalaureate level are also required for success at the graduate level, doctoral-level study requires additional proficiencies related to reading and conducting research, writing technical papers, and presenting research findings. The McNair Scholars Program at UAB provides opportunities for students to engage in all of the activities considered essential for success in a doctoral program.

The ability to communicate research findings is essential for excelling in the STEM fields and achieving success in a doctoral program. Scholars who attended the GRE preparatory classes typically improved their GRE scores—particularly in the academic writing section. Instruction in academic writing was structured and clearly helped students develop effective written communication skills (Crocker 2005). (See Table 1.)

### Baccalaureate Degree Attainment and Readiness for Doctoral Education

One index of scholars' readiness for graduate school is their baccalaureate GPA. As noted in Table 2, in all McNair Scholars cohorts, more than 90 percent of scholars who completed their degree had a GPA of 3.0 or better, with the exception of Cohort 4, in which 89 percent of students attained a GPA of 3.0 or better. It is noteworthy that approximately 75 percent of McNair Scholars graduated with a baccalaureate degree within three years of participating in the McNair Scholars Program at UAB.

### Application and Entry into Graduate School

A requisite for being admitted to graduate school is a competitive GRE score. Prior to 2011, the maximum score on the GRE was 1600 (800 for verbal reasoning plus 800 for quantitative reasoning). In compiling a data-based report on research-doctorate programs in the United States, the National Research Council (2011) asked doctoral programs to supply their students' average GRE scores. Researchers then calculated the averages of these average

GRE scores. Given a maximum score of 800 on the quantitative section of the GRE, programs reported average scores in the following disciplines: biological and health sciences (686), physical and mathematical sciences (745), and engineering (760) (National Research Council 2011). Even though McNair Scholars at UAB were admitted to college with high ACT scores and maintained high university GPAs, students' initial GRE scores were not competitive for graduate school admission.

**Table 1.**  
*Combined GRE Scores on Pre- and Post-Practice Tests (Verbal + Quantitative)*

	Pre-McNair GRE Practice Scores ≥ 1000	Pre-McNair GRE Practice Scores ≥ 900-999	Post-GRE Practice Scores ≥ 1000	Post-GRE Practice Scores ≥ 900-999
2006-07 Baseline	1	3	8	3
2007-08 Cohort 1	10	5	14	4
2008-09 Cohort 2	6	6	11	8
2009-10 Cohort 3	3	3	7	6
2010-11 Cohort 4	13	2	14	3
2011-12 Cohort 5	12	7	20	3

■ Based on UAB student practice test scores  
■ In 2007-08 and 2010-11, there are no end-of-program practice test scores; calculations are based on the 2nd or mid-program practice tests.

**Table 2.**  
*Readiness for Doctoral Education*

Cohort Year	Readiness for Doctoral Education*
2007-08 Cohort 1	16 of 17 Scholars (94.1%) with GPA of B or better
2008-09 Cohort 2	18 of 20 Scholars (90.0%) with GPA of B or better
2009-11 Cohort 3	15 of 16 Scholars (93.7%) with GPA of B or better
2010-11 Cohort 4	16 of 18 Scholars (88.8%) with GPA of B or better
2011-12 Cohort 5	21 of 21 Scholars (100%) with GPA of B or better

\* Numbers based on incoming members of the cohort (does not include scholars who participated in multiple years)



# Table 3.

Average Gains on Combined GRE Practice Test Scores  
(Verbal + Quantitative)

Cohort	Average Pre-Score	Average Post-Score	Average Gain
2007-08 Cohort 1	912.90	1012.90	100.0 <sup>a</sup>
2008-09 Cohort 2	872.50	1008.50	136.0 <sup>a</sup>
2009-10 Cohort 3	852.10	1009.30	157.1 <sup>a</sup>
2010-11 Cohort 4	1000.00	1089.40	89.1 <sup>b</sup>
2011-12 Cohort 5	961.10	1020.50	59.5 <sup>c</sup>
Overall UAB Cohorts 1-5	943.02	1019.55	106.7 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>  $p < 0.0001$

<sup>b</sup>  $p < 0.0050$

<sup>c</sup>  $p > 0.0500$

■ Individual cohort averages based on UAB student practice test scores

■ A cohort was based on students who began that year; second-year students' scores were included in the previous years' average. This was the reason the Cohort 5 gains were considerably lower: they did not include any second-year students.

■ Based on individuals' earliest and latest practice test scores, even if across two or three years

■ In 2007-08 and 2010-11, there were no third practice test scores;

calculations were based on the second practice test.

Students benefited greatly from GRE preparation classes, as evidenced by increases in their GRE scores. (See Table 3.) Scholars' GRE score increases were statistically significant in every year except year five. Pre-GRE scores for years four and five were extremely high before attending GRE preparation classes, which could account for the smaller differences in pre- and post-GRE scores. Another plausible explanation for lower gains by cohort five as compared to previous cohorts is that it included only students who began the program in 2012, and the average did not include students who had participated for two years previously. Students who participated in the program for two (or three) years showed significantly greater gains on practice test scores than single-year student participants. Scholars who participated for one year averaged a gain of only 93.0 points whereas those who participated longer averaged a 132.3-point gain ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

## Post-Baccalaureate Training Experiences

Evaluation data indicated that of the first four cohorts of scholars, 47 (66%) were accepted for graduate study.

Students who participated in the McNair Scholars Program at UAB have pursued opportunities in the following STEM/research areas:

- 9 matriculated into M.S. programs in STEM disciplines,
- 19 matriculated into Ph.D. programs in STEM disciplines,
- 15 matriculated into medical school, and
- 17 completed programs in M.D., D.D.S., D.P.T., O.D., and Pharm.D.

## DISCUSSION

Students who participated in the McNair Scholars program between 2007 and 2012 have achieved significant success in fulfilling the program's mission. These findings are particularly significant given the challenges faced by URMs in the STEM disciplines. As noted previously, STEM disciplines may have difficulty attracting and retaining a diverse pool of students given such students' lack of an appropriate support system (*e.g.*, mentoring, research experience, access); consequently, efforts by the United States to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive global economy may prove insufficient.

## VALUE OF MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS

Faculty and peer support were hallmarks of the McNair Scholars Program at UAB. Scholars often commented that meeting with the principal investigator, program coordinator, peer mentors, and faculty mentors was helpful as they completed their research projects. Moreover, having positive role models enabled them to envision similar careers for themselves. This sentiment reflects the research findings of multiple studies in which role modeling/mentoring was identified as a key element in portraying the STEM fields as not merely acceptable but as normative for URMs (Burger *et al.* 2007; Fifolt and Abbott 2008; Frehill, Ketcham and Jeser-Cannavale 2005; Handelsman *et al.* 2005; Packard 2004-2005).

Scholars and program administrators also described the value of faculty mentorships and positive interac-

tions with others as key to the success of the program at UAB. In addition to providing hands-on learning experiences and opportunities for scholars to develop their technical skills, faculty mentors provided encouragement, guidance, access to resources, role modeling, advocacy, and friendship—all key elements of psychosocial support (Jacobi 1991; Kram 1983; Russell and Adams 1997). As Paglis, Green and Bauer (2006) note, “Psychosocial mentoring contributes to the protégé’s (student’s) sense of competence, confidence, and effectiveness in his or her role” (p. 457). The findings from the present study suggest that scholars perceived faculty mentoring as a value-added contribution in the critical areas of personal support, research experience, and skills and knowledge.

### FACULTY MENTOR PREPARATION

Considering the potential influence of mentoring relationships as well as feedback from faculty mentors who participated in the McNair Scholars Program, additional training and support for future mentors may be critical.

Zachary (2012) asserts that mentor preparation is about increasing an individual’s level of readiness to assume the responsibilities of a mentor. Given the unique needs of URM students in the sciences as well as the “disproportionately small number of African American, Hispanic American, and Asian American faculty in most settings—particularly in the upper tenured ranks” (Johnson 2007, p. 166), engaging in cross-cultural competence and communication and establishing trust may be important topics for further research (Fifolt and Searby 2011).

### SUMMARY

The McNair Scholars Program at UAB served as a catalyst for engaging URM students in research and scholarly activities. Further, program activities helped scholars transition from baccalaureate to graduate programs in the STEM disciplines. Key components of the McNair Scholars Program addressed students’ specific needs in the areas of personal support, guidance, and encouragement; research experience; and skills and knowledge. Scholars

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benefited from their interactions with faculty mentors and enhanced their prospects for acceptance into graduate school through rigorous academic preparation. Given the important role faculty mentors play in supporting URMs, we recommend that additional consideration be given to preparing faculty mentors in the areas of cross-cultural competence, communication, and trust.

## POSTSCRIPT

Between FY 2011 and FY 2012, the U.S. Congress reduced funding for the McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program by approximately 20 percent. This cut resulted in nearly one-fifth of all McNair Scholars Programs being defunded in fall 2012 (U.S. Department of Education 2013). The projected budget for FY 2013 included another 5 percent cut, indicating a continuing trend toward decreasing funding for the program. Despite the gains achieved nationally by the McNair Scholars Program over the past 27 years, recent cutbacks may have a powerful and negative impact on URMs' attraction to and retention in the STEM professions. In fact, the impact of these decisions may not be fully appreciated until organizations realize that the pool of diverse individuals who might serve as mentors and role models for a new generation of STEM students has all but disappeared (Collier 2007, Fields 2005, Higgins and Koucky 2000, McSherry 2005).

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# The Changing Nature of DIVISION ATHLETICS

That athletics play a role in college admissions is well known. The common perception is that athletic scholarships are awarded to high school students on the basis of their perceived ability and the sport they play. This has been the norm at most major universities in the United States for some time. The number of athletes on campus typically is small, and athletes often are viewed as specialists who perform a service for the university. The situa-

tion is somewhat different at Ivy League and other highly selective institutions, which typically receive thousands of applications for a limited number of positions in the freshman class but field large numbers of athletic teams. Although the majority of these prestigious institutions do not offer athletic scholarships, being an athlete can provide a significant advantage in gaining admission given that the institutions still must fill their teams' rosters.

*Non-selective Division III institutions often face challenges in meeting their enrollment goals. To ensure their continued viability, these schools recruit large numbers of student athletes. As a result, when compared to FBS (Football Bowl Division) institutions these schools have a much higher percentage of student athletes on campus and a slightly higher number of varsity teams despite having much smaller enrollments.*

These two approaches have been in place for years. However, over the past two or three decades, a third model has emerged: Schools recruit athletes to increase or to stabilize enrollments. In recent years, a number of news accounts have highlighted this strategy (Cohen 2012; Lammer 2010; Raby 2009; Sander 2008), but few studies have examined the phenomenon in a more comprehensive manner. Although schools in other divisions use sports to increase enrollments, this article focuses on non-selective NCAA Division III institutions. These schools typically are small private colleges that accept the majority of students who apply. Nevertheless, higher tuitions make the recruitment of sufficient numbers of students for each class challenging, and athletics represents a potential solution. After providing a brief historical background of the role of athletics in college admissions, this article more closely examines the role of athletics at Division III institutions by comparing it to that at Division I FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) schools.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

There is no definitive history of financial aid and the recruitment of college athletes. Often, the endeavor has been murky and subterranean, marked by informal agreements and a lack of official records (those that were kept were often difficult to decipher). As early as the 1880s, certain colleges offered athletes inducements such as employment, free lodging, and meals. At a minimum, financial assistance was intended to offset any additional costs an athlete might incur as a result of participating in a sport. However, financial aid was not provided by the schools themselves but rather through alumni and fraternities along with student athletic associations that collected dues and held various fundraisers. The lack of more formal institutional support was a consequence of the fact that in the early days of college sports, student groups (with some faculty oversight) organized and controlled athletic events (Smith 1988). The offering of financial incentives to student athletes was a response to the development by



the 1880s of fierce rivalries and the desire to defeat other schools' teams.

Although college officials seemed to have little interest in sports in the early years, that began to change by the turn of the century. Eligibility and professionalism in college sports became major concerns, while college administrators also realized the potential of athletics to generate publicity and revenue. Increasingly, full-time coaches were hired and paid to produce winning teams; recruiting talented athletes became an important part of the job, and those coaches who could offer financial inducements to athletes had a better chance of success. In 1900, Penn State became the first school to openly award athletic scholarships, and in 1906 the legendary coach Amos Alonzo Stagg was permitted to use a trust fund provided by John D. Rockefeller to secure and assist needy athletes at the University of Chicago (Smith 1988). In the same year, the newly formed NCAA issued recommendations regarding financial aid: Any inducements to lure an athlete to a campus, along with direct or indirect financial aid for athletic purposes, were to be avoided. The NCAA hoped that colleges would voluntarily comply with the recommendation because no means were in place to enforce it (Fleisher *et al.* 1992). In the years that followed, the lack of any enforcement mechanism produced what one researcher has called "unregulated chaos" (Estler 2010). Athletic scholarships continued to be awarded by some schools while others based financial aid on need or academic criteria. Need-based financial aid to athletes has always been problematic and remains so to this day. Is the aid provided on the basis of financial need or athletic ability? As former Michigan State football coach Duffy Dougherty said in reference to need-based scholarships, "We don't take a boy unless we need him" (Thelin 1994).

Although various athletic conferences attempted to regulate financial aid awarded to athletes, it was not until 1948 that the NCAA, in conjunction with various college officials, attempted to impose some level of control and uniformity when it introduced what became known as the "Sanity Code." Among other things, the code called for restrictions on financial aid. Student athletes were to be eligible for financial aid, but the aid could not be based on any athletic criteria (this was similar to what had been recommended in 1906). A number of institutions, particularly southern colleges, felt they were at a disadvantage

compared to wealthier schools in the Northeast balked at the Sanity Code. Subsequent investigation by the NCAA found that a number of colleges continued to award athletic scholarships. Yet the only penalty was expulsion from the NCAA—a rarity given that two-thirds of the member institutions had to approve. The Sanity Code thus was largely impotent (Fleischer *et al.* 1992). Schools continued to award athletic scholarships given the remote likelihood of being sanctioned. With so many schools doing so, the NCAA eventually acquiesced and permitted athletic scholarships (Shulman and Bowen 2001).

The first official four-year athletic scholarships were awarded in 1956 with few, if any, limitations on the number of scholarships that could be given. An exception was the Ivy League and some other prestigious institutions, whose presidents decided to preserve the concept of need-based aid in conjunction with a student's academic record. Even so, once the NCAA gave its formal approval, the number of athletic scholarships increased rapidly, not only in sports such as football and basketball but also in so-called low-revenue sports like wrestling, track and field, and swimming. In 1972, with the passage of Title IX, institutions fielded more women's teams, greatly increasing the number of students receiving full or partial athletic scholarships. Through the years, the idea of the athlete as a specialist performing a service for the institution appeared to be the dominant model at most colleges. If athletics were used to increase enrollments, it was typically through the publicity generated for the school. Attracting prospective students in this way became an important enrollment strategy in the early part of the 20th century, and it continues to the present (Chu 1982, Perez 2012).

In 1973, the NCAA implemented a new classification of colleges (Divisions I, II, and III) based largely on institutional mission and size; this had a significant impact on athletic financial aid. Divisions I and II would continue to award athletic scholarships, but Division III would mimic the Ivy League and base all financial aid on need and academics rather than athletics. The prohibition of athletic scholarships at Division III schools suggested a de-emphasis on sports, particularly given that the rules governing the recruitment of athletes were far less stringent. For example, Division III coaches could communicate with potential recruits with few restrictions, which was not allowed in Divisions I and II, where recruiting battles for



top-notch high school athletes could be intense. In addition, because no athletic scholarships were awarded at Division III institutions, the number of players on any given team was not limited (Bowen and Levin 2003; D-III Recruiting Quick Reference Guide).

The absence of athletic scholarships in the Ivy League and at other prestigious institutions had important ramifications: Such institutions traditionally had large numbers of athletic teams—often between 25 and 30—seemingly stemming from the philosophy of “sound mind, sound body.” Because all of these teams had to have sufficient numbers of players to compete, prospective students who could help fill rosters had a greater chance of being accepted. Bowen and Levin (2003) calculate that an athlete had a 50–percentage point admission advantage over other applicants to Ivy League schools and a 33.5–percentage point advantage over other applicants to New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) institutions. These advantages were reflected in the makeup of the student body: In the Ivy League, approximately 20 percent of all undergraduate students were athletes, and in the NESCAC, as many as 40 percent were (Bowen and Levin 2003). Though relatively few in number, many of these schools compete in Division III. Consider that only 12 percent of Division III schools accept fewer than one-half of students who apply (Rasmussen and Rasmussen 2003). Thus, the vast majority do not have the luxury of selecting students from a large applicant pool.

## A NEW MODEL

According to the NCAA website, 80 percent of the 448 Division III schools are private, and most are not highly selective (54 percent admit 70 percent of applicants [Rasmussen and Rasmussen 2003]). Tuition at these schools can be two or three times greater than at state-supported institutions, which can make the meeting of enrollment goals an ongoing challenge. That most of these schools are tuition driven, with modest endowments, only exacerbates the problem. Enrollment challenges became more acute during the mid 1980s, by which time the baby boom generation had largely completed its college career, as the number of traditional-aged college students that most Division III schools relied upon decreased. Between 1960 and 1990, 167 private colleges closed their doors (Ferrall 2011).

To maintain enrollments, institutions intensified their recruiting efforts and discounted their tuition, while increasing the number of athletes on campus provided another option. Of the millions of high school athletes nationwide, only 1 or 2 percent received athletic scholarships at Division I or II institutions (Westfall 2011). Given the opportunity, a large number of high school athletes might continue their athletic careers at the college level. Moreover, by offering the opportunity to play at the next level, a college might enroll any number of students who otherwise would not have considered it. Even if a student did not perform well athletically, they might continue to attend, not wanting to transfer to another school. In addition, because any financial aid would be awarded not on the basis of athletic performance, it could continue regardless of whether the student played on a varsity team; the only requirement would be to remain in good academic standing. Hence, athletics clearly had the potential to bolster enrollments.

## METHODOLOGY

A number of secondary sources were utilized to ascertain the degree to which athletics has affected enrollments at non-selective Division III schools. The most important is the U.S. Department of Education’s Equity in Higher Education Data Analysis Cutting Tool (2012–13), which provides data from institutions that compete in intercollegiate sports. Another valuable source is the NCAA Division III Profile of Institutions and Conferences (Rasmussen and Rasmussen 2003). Both websites provide institutional enrollments, the number of athletes, and the number of intercollegiate teams. This study compares Division III and Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions in terms of the number of full-time undergraduates, the number of student athletes, the percentage of full-time students who are athletes, and the number of intercollegiate sports a school sponsors. Eighty Division III schools representing different regions of the country were selected for analysis. The schools are fairly typical of Division III in that they are private, coeducational, and field football teams. In addition, all have acceptance rates greater than 50 percent (*U.S. News* 2013). (The 50 percent figure is somewhat arbitrary but suggests that the institutions are largely non-selective in that they accept a majority of students who apply.) Forty Division I-A FBS schools were selected for

comparison. FBS schools have come to epitomize college sports in America: Not only do they field highly competitive football teams, but excel at other sports as well. The selected FBS schools are coeducational institutions and represent different regions of the country; approximately one-third of all FBS institutions were included.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are revealing (*see* Table 1). Division I FBS schools enroll more athletes than do Division III schools. On average, FBS schools enroll 83 more varsity athletes (510 compared to 427). However, the average full-time undergraduate enrollment at FBS schools is nearly 11 times greater than at Division III schools (19,010 compared to 1,781). This disparity is reflected in the percentage of full-time students who are athletes: At the Division III schools included in the sample, athletes account for an average of 25.2 percent of full-time students compared to only 2.5 percent at FBS institutions. Finally, the Division III schools sponsor slightly more intercollegiate sports on average than do their FBS counterparts (17.3 compared to 16.5).

Typically, these schools have between 80 and 100 students on their football team rosters; this alone can increase enrollments by 5 percent or more. And there appears to be a steady supply of recruits. Consider that there are approximately 1.1 million high school football players (nearly double the number of high school athletes in any other sport) and many expect to receive a football scholarship. However, only 6 percent will play college football and only 2 percent will receive a football scholarship at a Division I or II school. The rest (4 percent) will enroll at a Division III institution. Hence if a high school student plays football, the majority will play in Division III. (O'Shaughnessy 2011).

Obviously football represents an important revenue stream. Players may receive grants and non-athletic scholarships, but almost all will finance their education at least in part through loans and parental support. A danger is that schools will spend too much on athletic facilities, staffing, and other costs, negating any financial benefit to the institution and diverting funds from academic needs (Malekoff 2010). Moreover, fielding a football team can re-

sult in a gender imbalance in the student body. In the current sample of 80 schools, there were on average 104 more male athletes than female athletes on campus, and no school had more female athletes than male athletes. This is somewhat surprising in an era when colleges are concerned about gender equity—for legal and ethical reasons. It seems clear that these institutions are willing to accept the imbalance, since there is nothing equivalent to football to boost enrollments.

Gender issues aside, the strategy of using athletics to bolster enrollments was driven by financial exigencies but was made possible and reinforced by social trends in the United States. Sociologist

Emile Durkheim first stated that a society's education system reflects its culture, and American society clearly values athletic participation by its young people. Beginning in the 1950s, increasing numbers of young children began to play organized sports in youth leagues. This trend can be traced to changes in family structure as the number of working parents began to increase. Organized sports, un-

Table 1.

*Comparison of Division I FBS Institutions and Non-Selective Division III Institutions*

	FBS (N=40)	DIVISION III (N=80)
Number of varsity athletes (non-duplicate)	510	427
Average number of full-time undergraduates	19,010	1,781
Percentage of full-time undergraduates who are athletes	2.5	25.2
Average number of intercollegiate sports	16.5	17.3

The data quite clearly indicate the extent to which non-selective Division III schools have come to rely on athletics as a component of their enrollment strategy. Indeed, with athletes accounting for an average of 25 percent of the student body, some (if not many) of these institutions might not have survived without intercollegiate sports. Football has the most dramatic impact on enroll-

der adult supervision, seemed to provide a safer environment than so-called pick-up games. Over the years, good parents came to be seen as those who provided opportunities for their children to participate in various activities—sports foremost among them (Coakley 2006). Eventually, it became common for children as young as four years of age to play on adult-supervised teams. Although many children eventually cease to participate in sports, millions more continue to participate: 55 percent of high school students play at least one varsity sport (Koebler 2011). These figures only increased with the passage of Title IX. In addition, children have been encouraged increasingly to specialize in one sport in the hope of eventually earning an athletic scholarship or even making it to the pros. Thus, increasing athletic participation in higher education could be perceived as a logical extension of what occurred in primary and secondary education and made the idea of enrolling such large numbers of athletes at Division III schools more acceptable.

On the other hand, the enrollment reality that has emerged at these institutions does not appear to have been intended by the NCAA. If anything, with the inception of Division III, the idea of the student athlete being essentially the same as any other student on campus (an ideal that the NCAA has promoted since its beginnings) appeared to be becoming a reality, with financial aid based on non-athletic criteria. Just as important, because athletes were viewed as students rather than specialists, no limits were placed on either the number of athletes on campus or the number of spots on a team's roster. As a result, at many institutions, athletes have become the largest subgroup of students on campus, and distinctive athletic subcultures have emerged—something many educators believe is counterproductive to the academic environment (Bowen and Levine 2003). Students who focus on athletics tend to be less involved in other campus activities, and their grades may also suffer. The College Sports Project (Emerson *et al.* 2009), a comprehensive study of athletics at Division III institutions, found that recruited male athletes at less selective colleges have lower GPAs on average than do male non-athletes (2.65 compared to 2.74). (The differences between the GPAs of recruited female athletes and of female non-athletes was negligible—3.03 compared to 3.02.) The authors speculate that the reasons for male student athletes' comparative under-performance are

a consequence both of male athletes' making sports a priority over academics and of "stereotypic threat," whereby athletes perceive themselves as less able in the classroom (Emerson *et al.* 2009)

The NCAA could take action to counter the impact of athletics on enrollment and academic performance. For example, it could limit the number of players permitted on any given team. Of course, to do so could place many of Division III schools in financial jeopardy. The current model seems likely to continue, particularly because the annual supply of high school athletes continues to increase. That said, the number of boys participating in Pop Warner Football has decreased recently because of fear of head injury (Doyel 2013), which could eventually affect Division III recruitment of student athletes. For example, there could be a shift away from football and increased recruitment in less contact-oriented sports.

To this point, Division III schools do not appear to be awarding more financial aid to athletes. Rather, data provided to the NCAA indicate that athletes and non-athletes receive approximately equal amounts of financial aid, and as long as the difference is within 8 percent, the NCAA typically does not investigate (Clark 2009). This suggests that sufficient numbers of high school athletes are willing to devote time and energy to play on a college team without significant financial incentives.

Nevertheless, there have been violations. Between 2004 and 2011, 13 percent of Division III colleges violated financial aid regulations. The most common violation occur when schools intentionally or unintentionally award athletes certain types of grants that the NCAA prohibits (Sander 2011). For example, some colleges award "leadership grants" to incoming freshmen. According to NCAA rules, the captain of an athletic team would be ineligible for such a grant because his leadership involves sports, whereas the captain of the debate team would be eligible to receive such a grant because the leadership is "non-athletic." But what if the team and the debate captain are the same person? According to the NCAA, such a student would be ineligible to receive the scholarship because of his athletic involvement. This regulation apparently causes financial aid officers some confusion.

Finally, some claim that too many marginal high school athletes are being recruited to Division III. These athletes are flattered that a college would show interest in them.

However, once on campus they become frustrated when they realize they have little chance of ever playing (Anonymous 2008). Part of the problem is that coaches must “over-recruit” because there is no “letter of intent day” in Division III, meaning that coaches cannot be certain who will actually enroll. Nonetheless, recruiting marginal athletes is part of an enrollment strategy designed to lure them to campus in the hope that they will decide to stay.

## CONCLUSION

Non-selective Division III institutions’ use of athletics to increase enrollment is a response to the challenge they face in recruiting sufficient numbers of students for each freshman class. The strategy has meshed well with a society obsessed with youth sports that provide a steady stream of high school student athletes who want to compete at the collegiate level, which they otherwise could not due to the paucity of Division I and II athletic scholarships. The irony is that rather than deemphasize athletics in Division III, as the NCAA seems to have intended, quite the opposite has occurred. And while many Division III administrators bemoan the results, which they fear have undermined the academic environment, many institutions’ financial stability is reliant on athletics. Given the numbers of Division III colleges and student athletes, perhaps it is these schools even more than FBS institutions that epitomize intercollegiate sports in American society.

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## Motivation—On the Ground

BY KARL E. BURGHER AND MICHAEL SNYDER

“Motivation—On the Ground” is more practical, applied and “how to” than theoretical discussion. In this article, we consider actions you can take right now to help get your people fired up and moving along a successful project completion trajectory. Recall that we are primarily about work, not thinking about and planning work. We need to motivate our people to accomplish objectives and complete projects using the tools we have described in our previous articles. Motivation requires spirit and fire and a love of people. When done properly, it is a gateway to good work.

Motivation can be a difficult and finicky practice; it is often talked about at seminars, but rarely is it executed well. As with management and leadership, there is no shortage of literature, discussion, or opinion about motivation. It is everywhere: Google “motivational quotes” and you will have a quote to read every day for the next decade. Zig Ziglar said that motivation, like bathing, should be done regularly. We suggest that it should be a daily point of focus as it tends to be a highly temporal asset. Employees need to know that they are appreciated every day (or so) of the week. It is also worth noting that motivation can be even more fleeting unless some permanent changes results. As humans, we find it quite difficult to change permanently; very few managers know how to

effect permanent change via motivation; and we all find it difficult to self-motivate day in and day out, year in and year out.

That said, motivation can open people’s minds and hearts to permanent change and spur them to action. Keep this in mind as you manage by walking around: Not only should you encourage and cajole, but you also should use these interactions to teach, to imprint a positive attitude in your people, and to instill in them a desire to deliver and accomplish great things. Remove their limits. You should almost always be the one to go and visit your people; always making them come to you stifles their self-worth. You need to see where they work and what their working conditions are like in order to be able to better motivate them. Napoleon and Mother Teresa always worked and ate alongside their people.

A note of caution: Be careful not to pile on the work and expect to accomplish it purely through motivation. You must clear a place for the new in order to affect sustainability. Effective motivation requires prioritization of work. So dig a bit, get organized, get prioritized, and then help motivate your staff to do the important work every day. We all need to be motivated at some time or another. And as managers, we need to make clear that a good attitude is simply the beginning of greatness, not greatness itself.

What follow are our “first ten” motivational practices. Why not our top ten? Because we do not pretend to know the thousands of things that might motivate your staff. Human beings are complex, and there is no one size fits all. Nevertheless, our “first ten” list is a good place to start. Do these, and attitudes will improve, the machine will hum, and you increase your chances for promotion. This is hard to undertake every day, thus takes considerable practice and energy.

The “first ten”:

■ **Sit with people. Do not look at your watch. Turn off your phone!** Time is of the essence. “In Time” is a Sci Fi movie about time as currency (very well done actually in our opinions.) The film provides a nice example about just how precious our time is, particularly as we get in situations in which there is less of it. You should give it a look... Time also has been likened to a roll of toilet paper: The closer you get to the finish, the faster it swings around. Spend quality time with your people. Remove distractions and do not look at your watch. During our work days, the only time we ever schedule back-to-back meetings is when we need an excuse to get out the door because we think something is unproductive. Instead, we budget time for a meeting and then add a little time—an extra half hour or so—to review the one and to prepare for the next. We never want folks to feel they are being rushed, and we always want them to know that we care about them and have prepared as such.

When an employee’s boss gives her undivided attention, it is a natural motivator. Motivation results when staff members know their boss is interested, not in a rush, and will let them say their piece. And once they understand that the boss will give them time, they know she cares. This leads to feelings of security. As they become more secure, they will not need to come back as often. Ultimately, this will mean fewer meetings overall and more time available for work. So think of time as currency, as the sci-fi movie “In Time” does. Business is about time and money, and money equals time, so it is all about “time squared.” Give time to your people, and they will require less of it.

“

*Of course motivation is not permanent. But then, neither is bathing; but it is something you should do on a regular basis.*

— ZIG ZIGLAR

■ **Practice empathy.** Great managers care about their people. Active listening has historically been all the buzz, but in our opinion, it is often much buzz about false appreciation. Do you really think people cannot tell when someone cares so little about what they have to say and has to work to stay engaged in a conversation? When you really care and are genuinely interested in a person’s thoughts and feelings, you do not have to practice active listening. Everyone has something to contribute, some-

thing to teach, or something of interest they are (and should be) truly proud of. Look for it. Find it. And then cultivate it. You may have to manage if conversations veer too far off topic too often, but it should not be work to show care and compassion. And compassion is empathy in practice. When your employees know that you legitimately care about them, their lives, and their work, they will be motivated to deliver for you. They will want to make you proud, and they will take pride in themselves and their work.

Some will struggle with this. Some people just don’t like people enough to practice empathy. If you are a manager who truly does not like people, with all their blessings, issues, and faults, then you likely are in the wrong line of work. But if you are a great manager, then you do care, and you demonstrate it. You know your people. You invest your time in their lives. You may need to spend time talking with them, or perhaps you sometimes write a quick note to let them know you are paying attention. Recently, we sent notes to ten of our project managers to thank them for their work and to wish them an enjoyable break. We do not need them to respond, nor do we need to consider whether they would do the same for us. We simply took time to maintain the relationship and to practice empathy—and, imagine this, to get a little work done. Do not expect your employees to reciprocate or to be as good at this as you should be. It is not up to them; it is up to you. It is what you are paid to do: manage. Someone has to “go first,” so let it be you. Develop relationships in part by learning empathy and compassion; it helps get the work done.



- **Praise in meetings, praise in public.** Praise is another concept that is often preached but rarely practiced well. Learn how to respectfully praise your people. Learn how to look them in the eye and say, “Great work,” “Nicely done,” or “I am proud of you/this.” Do this publicly, and do it in truth. Do not praise falsely or insincerely. Insincere praise does not motivate; in fact, it makes everyone else on the team or in the room angry. Unjustifiable praise will do more to wreck a team than just about anything else. It is extremely unproductive.

That said, find reasons to praise, and praise often. Praise out loud, and as it is deserved. Practice this, as it can be difficult. Giving praise is emotional. It shows vulnerability, and some will view it as weakness. But human beings are not machines. Practice being vulnerable, be confident in it, and give your praise and power away. It just may motivate as well as anything else you could do. If you are uncomfortable with this, do it anyway. Do it often enough that it becomes more comfortable. You are the manager. Be the bigger person, and get it done. Praise.

- **Insist on quality.** How does insisting on quality help to motivate? Once your people know that they can perform at a level they previously thought impossible, there will be no going back. They will be proud, they will feel good about their work, and they will do more of it so long as you recognize as appropriate and continue to insist on a high level of delivery. Quality begets more quality, and employees will come to better understand what is meant by quality. Teach your folks how to accomplish a particular task in a high-quality way; teach them how to error check, both systematically and randomly. Point out to them that doing work in a high quality way actually reduces rather than increases their workload.

As employees come to understand that when they deliver to a high degree of quality the first time they will not get pushed back at, they will be motivated to deliver consistently at a level commensurate with your expectations. A job well done will lead to another job well done as folks’ motivation to perform increases as each high-quality product is delivered. When was the last time you told someone that her last effort at work was “beautiful?” It seems a little weird, eh? Sel-

dom does anyone label something “beautiful” in the workplace. But we do say it often in other settings: “What a beautiful move to the basket”; “what a beautiful catch at third”; “landing that fish was beautiful”; “what a beautiful dinner.” If we can compliment professional athletes, fishermen, and restaurateurs, then we ought to be able to compliment our peers, bosses, and subordinates. Insist on quality; insist on beautiful work. Motivation will follow.

- **Never blame. Find solutions. Never gossip.** There is no shortage of finger pointing in the workplace when things go wrong. Instead of immediately working to find a solution when things go south, too many employees often rush to make sure everyone knows it was someone else at fault. Imagine what your subordinates feel when you as the leader are always blaming others for your own weakness or inability to deliver. It seems in today’s self-esteem environment that we are never to blame for anything; instead, it is always some external factor, situation, or person that is causing the problem. Blame is destructive. It shows a lack of responsibility. It shows weakness. Sure, there may be some short-term benefit to pointing fingers, but in the long run, it is entirely destructive. It shows that you as a manager are not doing your job, that you are not in control, and that you are certainly not a leader.

Leaders do not blame—they fix the problem. They take ownership of the task at hand and work toward a positive outcome to all issues. Constantly bellowing “not my fault” or “not my job”—that is, constantly articulating blame—does no one any good—not you, not your people, and certainly not the customer you seek to serve. If your people do not believe that you have the power to control outcomes or deliveries, then you have lost. If you have lost control, you cannot motivate and you cannot lead. Certainly there is nothing wrong with speaking to the ‘enemy’—that is, the problem—and then attacking that problem. But do not blame. And do not make excuses in front of your staff, your peers, and most certainly your boss for why you cannot do what you are paid to do.

Like blame and perhaps a bit more personal is gossip. It should go without saying that gossip should be avoided at all costs. Gossip is a clear sign of weakness, a sign that you need to exalt yourself by speaking ill



of others. Instead, be positive all the time. At a minimum, never miss an opportunity to remain silent.

Encourage, motivate, and act and speak purposefully in order to be productive. Never take the opportunity to take a swipe at someone else in front of your team. Negativity is highly contagious and will catch like wildfire, particularly when a manager engages in it. No one is perfect, but practice this at all times: Do not gossip, and do not blame; doing so destroys motivation.

- **Explain why.** Be sure that your staff knows why they do what they do. Employees do not respond well when they do not understand the *why* of their work. If they begin to feel that there is no rhyme or reason to their effort, their motivation suffers. Recall that as knowledge workers, we need understanding and purpose in order to thrive. And yes, explanation takes time. But as we explained in number 1, above, time spent with employees up front reduces time spent on the back end. There will be less confusion about what is to be delivered, and motivation and product quality will be higher from the outset.

Sometimes there is no good reason why, and care must be taken in providing the explanation. Politics, another's finicky behavior, or an executive's iron-fist directive may be at issue. But there is still a "why," and your team needs to understand it (just be sure to avoid blame or gossip).

"Because" is just not sufficient reason anymore. We are engaging a new generation of young people, a new generation of knowledge workers. If they do not know or understand why they do what they do, you will lose them. They may not have the option of walking off the job site, but they surely will do so from a mental standpoint. So tell your people why they do what they do or at least why they are being asked to do what you want them to do. Motivation will follow.

- **Be a coach. Practice coaching.** Good coaches motivate full time—on the practice field, during the game, and after the game. To lead and motivate their teams effectively, today's managers need to think of themselves as coaches. Be aware that what you say and do and how you teach and explain is as critical as anything a coach might say during the World Series. Your words and actions have an impact on people's

lives. Be cognizant of what you say and do *at all times*. *Coach* at all times.

Because there is no shortage of good and bad opinions on coaching, we direct you to Wikipedia:

*[W]hen referring to getting coached by a professional coach, [coaching] is a teaching, training, or development process in which an individual gets support while learning to achieve a specific personal or professional result or goal. The individual receiving coaching may be referred to as the client or coachee, or they may be in an intern or apprenticeship relationship with the person coaching them. Occasionally the term coaching may be applied to an informal relationship between one individual who has greater experience and expertise than another and offers advice and guidance as the other goes through a learning process. This form of coaching is similar to mentoring. The structures, models, and methodologies of coaching are numerous and may be designed to facilitate thinking or learning new behavior for personal growth or professional advancement. There are also forms of coaching that help the coachee improve a physical skill, like in a sport or performing art form. Some coaches use a style in which they ask questions and offer opportunities that will challenge the coachee to find answers from within him/herself. This facilitates the learner to discover answers and new ways of being based on their values, preferences, and unique perspective.*

This needs to be you all of the time. Good coaching boosts motivation; bad coaching de-motivates people. Practice coaching. Motivate your people by being a good coach, a positive leader, and a fine example for all to follow.

- **Eat—yes, eat—with your people often.** This is a motivational tip for all to love! Eating is perhaps the longest of intimate traditions in all cultures. In our hurry-up Western society (particularly our U.S. fast food society, which translates to fast food relationships), we have forgotten the value of taking time to eat with one another. In many other cultures, no work is done prior to eating. Eating demonstrates that you can be polite, that you enjoy others' company, that you are interested in their well-being, and that you

respect them and their time. Feeding ourselves requires etiquette and manners, and when we act mannerly in front of our people, we engender respect and foster motivation; as a result, our employees will seek to improve their work effort and to be better people.

Now take eating with your staff to the next level: try for at least 30 minutes to not talk about work. You will need to practice this. Because we always talk about work, it will be difficult not to. While you certainly cannot keep others from doing so, you can steer the conversation toward something else. It will show your people that you are interested in them, not just in their work. When they know that you care about their lives, they will feel that they are valued members of your team and thus will feel motivated to do more good work. Continue to show that you appreciate their efforts.

For example, the authors are closet geographers, so we like to talk about where folks grew up and have lived—it is an easy ice breaker. Chat about your favorite non-work-related thing so you can speak with sincerity.

Recently we took a team to a local coffee shop for coffee and scones; you would have thought we had bought them a steak dinner and a round of golf! In 20-plus years of buying a whole lot of food, we have never seen people more grateful. The results were amazing: an offsite meeting that cost a whopping \$28 produced a sense of camaraderie that was invaluable. Just the idea that a manager cared enough to get a team out of its offices and to pay for a cup of coffee did more to increase motivation than a \$300, one-hour Carnegie webinar ever could have. (Please note: If you do not have an expense account, spend your own money; it will come back to you tenfold.) Eating with people shows that you enjoy their company, that you are willing to share your personal time, and that you value not only their contribution at work but them as people. Eating with others fuels motivation, as it has for eons. Eat with your people as Napoleon and Sister Teresa ate with theirs.

- **“Just say no” to negativity and despair; be positive at all (or almost all) times.** Negativity is an obvious motivation killer. There is hardly a worse behavior than being Eeyore in front of your team every day.

If you continually despair, why should anyone feel motivated to do work for you? People don’t want to spend time with—let alone work for—someone who is constantly complaining about how bad his life is and how nothing is ever going to get better. If life is that bad, please talk to a professional outside of work; if you do not, you inevitably will drag your employees down with you.

Be positive—not a Pollyanna, but positive. Your people need to know that today is a good day that is worth being grateful for. They should know and feel from you that it is purposeful to have hope and faith that tomorrow can be an even better day. Despair is despairing—and absolutely no fun to be around. No matter how good a person’s attitude, it will suffer once Dr. Negativity walks in the door. Worse, it will take time to restore people’s attitudes, and productivity will be lost forever.

Today’s economy is too competitive for us to sacrifice time by being negative. You are paid to manage your people efficiently and productively so they accomplish work that keeps your organization moving forward, competitive, and profitable. Lose the negativity.

- **Practice motivational words for the meta-(wo)men: finding humanity.** How seldom do we hear such phrases as “way to go,” “nice,” and “perfect?” All humans should be required to be kind to all other humans (wouldn’t such a rule be great?). Learn to use words wisely and often. Do not patronize your staff; rather, speak the words they have earned. Not everyone needs to practice this skill, but those who do (and you know who you are) should begin doing so immediately.

What is the best way in which to proceed? Make a list of the kinds of things you should say according to this tenth of our first ten items. Stick the list on your bathroom mirror if you must. The point is to practice affirming your staff out loud so you can hear what it sounds like. If you find it difficult to tell folks that they have done well, then you probably ought to consider your own ego and make some adjustments. Speak to the mirror, talk to your cat, shout at the dog:

“Way to go!” “Nice!” “Proud of you!” “Perfect!” “I am grateful for what you do.” “Keep it up!” “Please,

you are really helping the team with this.” “Way to go (oh, said that!)” “Great work; nice!” “Thank you.” “Thanks, I do not know what I would have done this week without you.” “I need you on this one.” “Help me get this done.” “We need to do just a bit better.” “Thanks a lot—now go get ‘em.”

Ask questions as you motivate and manage: “Can I have that by [fill in the date]?” “Can you help me today?” “Let’s eat!” “Let’s go get coffee.” “What are your kids’ names?” “Do you have a dog?”

Practice saying these things, please! Too many managers do not know how to compliment their people. For that matter, many do not know how to accept a compliment, either. What a shame! If you are going to be a motivator, then you had better speak the language; most important, you must mean it. If you are just mouthing the words, people will figure you out quick.

On the other hand, we knew a man who complimented everyone all day every day. His compliments were meaningless because no one took him seriously. He did good work, but folks knew what was coming as soon as he approached.

Be proud to be a good manager. Take pride in what you do, and motivate out of kindness and sincerity.

In closing, celebrate!

Why do we close with a celebration? Because it is done too seldom, despite its necessity in keeping our teams interested in their work life. We must show our employees that doing great work is a great thing. Reaching a goal is no small accomplishment, and it should not be belittled by simply moving on to the next project or maintenance item. We must stop to celebrate with our faculty and staff both the micro-deliverables and the huge successes. Higher education is too often a world of rejection. When we win, we need to feel as though we have won, not as

though we are treading water. When we win, we must stop, take notice, and then celebrate. Do not let moments of accomplishment pass without recognition and celebration. Use celebrations to motivate and encourage. Think of them as the gasoline that fuels the car, the food that fuels their motivation. It is essential. And it, too, requires practice and repetition.

People need motivation. They are not machines. They need to feel good about their work, that it has a purpose, and that they are expected to do good work. Motivation must be practiced: Just as one gets good at hitting a baseball by practicing hitting, so management and motivation need to be practiced. Knowledge workers do not last long in any position if it is really just all about the money. Today’s workers are not mercenaries but must be motivated back into humanity and into excellence in the workplace. Look for greatness. Expect greatness. Motivate it. Recognize it. Celebrate it. Then sit back and enjoy it.

Until next time,  
Karl and Mike

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## About the Authors

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## Tomorrow's Academic Profession and the Board's Responsibility

BY KEVIN W. SAYERS

Once again the academic profession is in the midst of crisis. Although the professoriate remains at the core of any higher education institution within a broader American system that continues to flourish, changes in funding structures; new competitors; income/salary differentials; job scarcity; increased public accountability; stronger, more centralized management paradigms; and heated attacks on tenure and academic freedom cause many to question the future of the profession. And rightfully so.

This essay considers three emergent challenges facing faculty:

- academic disconnectedness from community needs and acknowledgement of new market competition;
- current debates on alternatives to tenure; and
- emergent technology.

What follows are analyses and reflections on each of these three daunting challenges, along with a recommendation for proactive board roles in support of tomorrow's academic profession.

### COMMUNITY NEEDS AND NEW MARKET COMPETITION

Perhaps more than any other important issue facing the professoriate, the true problems lie within the profession itself. American higher education has consistently stymied indus-

try experts. In the United States, more than half of Americans have a college degree or at least postsecondary learning experience, yet the American model maintains arcane vestiges of prestige and privilege in its faculty ranks. Continued disconnectedness from community and workforce development needs further threatens the continued longevity of the nearly one-third of U.S. colleges that are already at risk due to insufficient financial resources, inconsistencies in intellectual capital, and the non-existence of creative leadership.

Tenured faculty at major colleges and universities need to think more about action-oriented research and entrepreneurial-minded teaching that can solve problems in the community and increase their students' marketability and useful skills. Most traditional faculty, when asked about the career relevance of their curricular offerings and the career preparedness of their students, are unaware of any external connection or applicability. Steven Cahn, author of *Saints and Scamps: Ethics in Academia* (1994), examines this issue in depth and points out that many faculty are incapable of academic self-examination, meaning that some faculty fail to identify their responsibility to community and public good. As a result, those outside academe feel that American faculty are preoccupied with their own job security and research rather than with providing tangible benefits to society.

Similarly, the academic profession's failure to acknowledge new competitive markets may contribute to heightened public dissatisfaction. During the past 40 years, the fastest-growing sector of U.S. higher education has been the community college. During the past ten years, the fastest-growing sector has been for-profit, proprietary institutions. As in previous decades when the middle class migrated to large, public universities for reasons of affordability and access, faculty no longer have a captive audience. Market competition has created new arenas of postsecondary education of which too many faculty are either unaware or unwilling to acknowledge.

The capacity of U.S. higher education to reinvent itself; to do more with less; and to regenerate its academic program offerings in response to rapid shifts in the economy and workforce development likely will determine its success in the future. American faculty need to learn how to “turn on a dime,” deliver programs and services efficiently, and become leaders in delivering higher education and training to students and the community.

## **CURRENT DEBATES ON ALTERNATIVES TO TENURE**

Even faculty within U.S. higher education describe the current tenure system as being rigid, stressful, based on ambiguous and unclear criteria, time consuming, and devaluing of pedagogy. Some administrative and board leaders argue that the concept of permanent lifetime appointment is incongruent with societal norms and economic performance indicators. It is from these points of view that new demands for post-tenure review and even the abolishment of tenure have arisen.

Proponents of the current tenure model note its strength and value in protecting the academic freedom of the professoriate. Alternative perspectives propose a decoupling of academic freedom and tenure, replacing them with new contractual agreements and stronger, more robust relationships between employee and employer. This separation of academic freedom and tenure would “make explicit within an institution, and perhaps more generally within academia, the content of and the values behind academic freedom” (Byrne 1997, p. 13). This is not to suggest the abolishment of tenure (quite the contrary) but rather a reinvention of current practice. Changes in the legal definition of faculty employment and academic freedom would actually broaden their scope and strength. Another

argument is to celebrate the authenticity and value of the current tenure system by limiting the total number of tenured positions. For an institution to have 90 percent of its faculty tenured distinguishes neither its academic excellence nor its academic reputation.

Closely related to the first challenge outlined in this essay is the belief by some that the “new” education market focusing on the development of sustainable economic communities, linking workforce needs to students’ learning potential, and employing industry experts or “professionals who teach” rather than “professional teachers” is not conducive to traditional ideas of tenure. Richard Chait’s work (2002) provides several valuable perspectives on tenure’s contemporary purpose, its desirability among a shifting faculty workforce, and implications on governance. Chait (2002) is explicit in saying that any policy manifestation surrounding tenure is best grounded on faculty choice, not administrative authoritative bureaucracy. Professional faculty should be given the option to select from a diverse range of incentives in place of tenure appointments. Tenure would not disappear, but replacements and substitutions would be created and considered. Options could include more frequent sabbaticals and creative pay scheduling in place of tenure. Other universities have offered significant salary increases—sometimes as much as 25 percent. More creative incentives that have been proposed are exchanges in tenure appointment for “ownership” or personal “equity” in an institution—possibly resulting in trustee seat appointments or, at proprietary institutions, in an obvious advantage in the offering of company equity in the form of stock options.

Some contend that diversions from the traditional tenure model threaten the academic freedom of the profession and cause the balkanization of faculty into differing class systems. Others argue that the current system neglects young academics and refuses to recognize market demands. The adoption of alternative tenure models should be approached carefully. Institutions wishing to develop alternative tenure systems should tailor policies to their missions and the distinct characteristics of their faculty.

## **APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY**

Contemporary trends and developments in technology undoubtedly are changing the role(s) of faculty members as researchers and pedagogues in the traditional college or

university. It would not be difficult to support an argument that technology has either enhanced or worsened research, teaching, and learning inside or outside of the college gates. Obvious, practical advantages of technology include:

- balancing economies of scale: providing equal access to large amounts of information at relatively low maintenance costs; and
- broad customization with specialization: providing global, asynchronous access combined with the ability to recognize differences in student goals, learning styles, and cognitive abilities.

Administrative leaders have invested heavily in information technology infrastructure with the understanding and justification that it is “linking” faculty to students and “facilitating” the overall teaching, research, and learning processes incumbent in higher education.

While much of today’s technology conversation centers on new and innovative instructional tools, technology has especially transformed the research component of the academic profession by facilitating collegial communication, collaboration and engagement. Even so, those involved in the profession have struggled to agree on how technology is best used; the lack of consensus may stem from traditional faculty norms of academic autonomy and freedom; a primary focus on academic productivity, research, and publishing; and overall resistance to change. After all, college and university faculty tend not to think collaboratively when it comes teaching. Financial constraints and heavy teaching loads politicize faculty relationships, and traditional reward structures (*i.e.*, tenure) are not conducive to faculty implementing new technology techniques or tools (*e.g.*, MOOCs, Blended Adaptive learning).

A 2010 study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (Hurtado 2012) of the University of California at Los Angeles reports that faculty continue to be stressed when it comes to technology. Approximately three-quarters of faculty believe that they do not receive “incentives to integrate new technology into the classroom.” On the whole, “keeping up with information technology” was a source of stress for 52 percent of academics. Even among those faculty most engaged in integrating technology into their work, only 15 percent “feel rewarded for their efforts to use instructional technology.”

Again, most colleges and universities have spent the past ten to fifteen years investing enormous amounts of financial capital in developing extensive and expensive technology infrastructures. The new challenge that directly involves the academic profession is to develop mechanisms that motivate and inspire faculty to spend time visualizing their courses online, teaching through interactive pedagogical methods, and experiencing the benefits and efficiencies of technology-based research.

Anecdotally, it is likely that first-year students are more fully acquainted and comfortable with the application of technology in and out of the classroom than are the professors who teach them. Institutions should proactively engage faculty in discussion about actualizing technology in classroom teaching and research. Their focus should be on establishing intellectual property policies (with incentives) that encourage faculty to create, share, and export new courseware. This is critical to the expansion and application of technology across the curriculum. Other programs should be tailored to address faculty fear of technology. Lack of computer training has been a major issue for faculty. Skills development programs should be developed with the input and support of faculty members, perhaps on a peer-based support model.

## BOARD AND PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In 2009, the Association of Governing Boards’ “Faculty, Governing Boards, and Institutional Governance” report presented three recommendations for successfully partnering boards and faculty in their professional and institutional development. These centered on mutual respect, clarification of governance policy and procedure, and presidential leadership in the collaboration process (Schwartz 2009).

Yet given the three pressing challenges described above (community needs, tenure, and technology), boards would be best served by designing collaborative roles that are more proactive, practical, and pragmatic in nature—roles that are highly visible (externally), accommodating (internally), collaborative, filled with rewards, and newsworthy.

Thought leadership campaigns by presidents are increasingly common. AGB’s 2009 report makes it clear that presidents make the difference. Indeed, presidents could



design thought leadership campaigns in such a manner as to yield the types of collaboration and incentives necessary to spur faculty development. Such a forum could serve as an incubator for new board/faculty interactions, eliciting active collaboration on externally facing thought leadership projects that would teach all involved new ways of shared communication and messaging. Of course, this would place much responsibility on the president to facilitate such collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

It is imperative to acknowledge that the issues confronting the academic profession are highly interdependent. The entire campus will benefit from shared participation in the solution to this daunting challenge: *How can faculty in the midst of tenure debates with heightened pressure for the integration and application of technology address increasing community expectations and threatening market competition?* This essay asserts that faculty play integral leadership

roles in identifying the answer to this question and that it is a fundamental board and presidential responsibility to create forums in support of the academic community in order to meet this challenge.

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## About the Author

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## Using Big Data to Yield Big Results: How a Homegrown Social Network Enhanced Enrollment at Ithaca College

BY ERIC MAGUIRE

It was 2007, the year in which Barry Bonds hit his 756th home run\*, Apple introduced the iPhone, and you were secretly rooting for Sanjaya on American Idol. Facebook was still a private company with only 50 million profiles (compared to 1.1 billion today), placing it second behind rival mySpace. It was the year in which my predecessor, Larry Metzger, recognized that social networks were not just the latest technology fad (I am looking at you, Second Life, QR codes, and Bluetooth headsets) but rather an emerging technology that would become largely integrated into mainstream America and particularly into the lives of prospective college students.

In and of itself, that recognition was not unique. But Larry's response was exceptional. In partnership with a third-party company, Ithaca College (IC) built its own social network for prospective students. To this day, IC Peers remains one of just a handful of networks built and independently maintained by a college or university.

IC Peers is a virtual gathering place for students who were admitted to Ithaca College. Facebook-like features kept the learning curve manageable for new users. For example, students could create a personal profile with related photo galleries, "friend" others in the system, demonstrate an affinity by joining related groups, and search for others who shared common academic and other interests. Ac-

cepted students also could interact openly with current IC faculty, staff, and students via wall or forum posts or privately through a closed messaging system.

I was introduced to IC Peers in 2009 when I interviewed for my current position. I understood the potential impact of social media on student recruitment, but I did not understand why a college would invest the time and effort to build and maintain its own network. I asked the director of admission, "Why reinvent the wheel with our own system? Why not just communicate with students where they already are—namely, Facebook?" His answer was singular and profound: data.

Communicating with students via Facebook is a way to initiate conversation and engage students in the recruitment process, but that is largely the extent of the tool's usefulness. By building and maintaining our own social network, we could access a world of data—so-called big data—that wasn't available to us through Facebook. By building tracking tools and software connections, we could understand who liked what, who posted where, who friended whom, and how those activities correlated with enrollment decisions.

Over the past six years, our experimentation with and exploration and analysis of IC Peers data have enabled us to evolve not only our prospective students' social net-

work experience but also—even more important—our enrollment management practice.

### **IC PEERS 1.0 (2007–10)**

The introduction and early years of IC Peers were focused on answering two important questions: Would students embrace this new technology? And if so, how would that engagement impact enrollment?

The first question was answered fairly quickly and definitively: In IC Peers' inaugural year, 2,223 admitted students (27 percent of all admits) created an IC Peers profile. By 2010, 4,270 admitted students (45 percent of all admits) created an IC Peers profile. The rate of adoption was crucial because the value of a social network increases with each user, and a critical mass is necessary for a worthwhile experience.

Clearly, students were embracing the technology and engaging with the community, but our second question remained unanswered: Would students' engagement with IC Peers have an impact on enrollment? Would the increase in student engagement build a familiarity with and affinity for the College that would increase our recruitment yield? In a word, no. While students appreciated the opportunity to connect with peers and interact with the campus community in this forum, those interactions were not sufficient to sway decisions. Ithaca College's yield rate did not increase appreciably following the introduction of IC Peers.

Some on campus who were involved with IC Peers were disappointed by its seeming inability to influence student choice. However, what IC Peers seemed to lack in terms of power of persuasion it more than made up for in another important area: IC Peers proved an excellent barometer of student interest and predictor of enrollment. The data showed that students who were most engaged in IC Peers were also most likely to enroll. For example, in 2010, students who were inactive in IC Peers yielded at a paltry 3.3 percent whereas those who were minimally active in IC Peers yielded at 22.3 percent; students who were most active in IC Peers yielded at an astounding 58.7 percent.

### **IC PEERS 2.0 (2010–PRESENT)**

Armed with a better understanding of the bellwether qualities of our social network, we considered how to use this information in our enrollment process. Ultimately, we

decided that it could best be used to improve retention and graduation rates.

Research at the College had shown that students who were more engaged in the recruitment process were more likely to be retained once they were enrolled. By using IC Peers information in combination with other measures of student interest (such as campus visits), we could identify the students who statistically were most likely to persist and complete their degree. Accordingly, we evolved our recruitment process to better select the “right” students for the College.

Rather than continue to invite only admitted students to join IC Peers, we expanded the timeline in order to invite all applicants to join IC Peers. During the crucial admissions decision months of December, January, and February, we could observe which students engaged in IC Peers and at what levels. Combining this information with other metrics enabled us to understand levels of student interest and engagement prior to making admissions decisions. And when faced with the hypothetical decision between two comparably qualified students, we would select the one who had demonstrated greater interest in and engagement with the institution.

It is worth noting that institutions have long used ‘interest qualification’ as a means to inform admissions decisions and improve enrollment metrics. In that regard, this initiative was nothing new. However, our application of sophisticated social networking ‘big data’ to assess student interest was new.

Because it takes years to realize the successes and failures of retention initiatives, we are still working to understand the long-term results of IC Peers. That said, in IC Peers' first year, summer melt (the number of students who submitted a deposit in May but did not matriculate in the fall) decreased to 6.7 percent from 8.0 percent the previous year. First-to-second semester retention increased from a historically consistent 95.5 percent to 97.5 percent, and our first-year retention rate increased from 84.2 percent to more than 87.5 percent. With additional experimentation, we believe we can increase our first-year retention rate to more than 90 percent and grow our already favorable four- and six-year graduation rates. As a result of this initiative, the College will realize important retention gains. It will also enable the College to better serve its students

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### IC PEERS 3.0 (2014 AND BEYOND)

Taking our social networking experiment to the next level requires that we answer two important questions. The first pertains to relevance. Some technology prognosticators and crystal ball gazers suggest that social networks have reached a point of stagnation or saturation. They point to the fact that Facebook's growth has slowed considerably over the last couple of years. The numbers may indicate frustrations specific to Facebook, the emergence of new alternatives, or a commentary on the limits of social media. But as admissions professionals, we must continually ask what we need to provide or facilitate in order to make our social network experience relevant to our applicants. Only then will students find value in the service and engage in necessary numbers and at sufficient levels. And only then will we have the ability to better inform our enrollment process.

The second important question we must answer pertains to ethics. IC Peers is a proprietary and voluntary social networking site with clearly stated conditions and qualifications. To date, our mining of data from IC Peers has involved quantifying levels of student engagement. Yet the technology exists to perform text analyses that would inform a systematic understanding of student comments and questions, thereby deepening our exploration into behaviors and individual actions. We then could correlate "sentiment analysis" with enrollment decisions to determine whether it yields additional understanding.

We remain vigilant about staying on the "right side" of the dangerous line that separates the logical evolution of data analysis from violations of prospective students' privacy and trust. We continuously consider the relevance of and research opportunities associated with IC Peers and explore new ways in which this information may be used to improve our enrollment outcomes.

### APPLICATION FOR OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Institutions considering investing time and money in the building of their own social networks should consider a number of factors. First, institutional size, mission, and circumstance will influence the extent to which the creation of a social network will yield a worthwhile return on your investment. For example, a small liberal arts college with relatively high first-year retention and four-year graduation rates may struggle to realize the benefits of such an effort. Its small enrollment will make it more difficult to establish a critical mass of users, and its relatively high retention rate will leave little room for improvement. However, a larger research university with more moderate retention statistics could realize significant increases in student persistence. The start-up and maintenance costs of an independent social network could be quickly offset by retention-related increases in tuition revenue, and the network could foster a greater sense of campus community.

Should your institution choose to develop its own social network, I encourage you to think of the network as a new tool in your enrollment management toolbox. Although it is unlikely to revolutionize your enrollment process, it may serve to magnify impact and facilitate improved results. Keep an open mind. Our experience with IC Peers has taught us to look beyond our initial aspirations of improved yield to increased retention. I have little doubt that further exploration will reveal new ways in which these data can be used to help colleges and universities better serve prospective and enrolled students.

### About the Author

**ERIC MAGUIRE** serves Ithaca College as Vice President for Enrollment and Communication, a position he has held since 2009. During his tenure, the College has enjoyed notable application increases, improvement to selectivity and retention, and new benchmarks for incoming student diversity. Prior to joining Ithaca College, Maguire served as associate vice president for enrollment management at Franklin & Marshall College. He received his master's in higher education administration from Indiana University and earned his bachelor's from Muhlenberg College.

## Unfunded Tuition Discount Rate and Net Operating Revenue: A Balancing Act

BY MATTHEW B. DEEGAN AND JOHN DEEGAN, JR.

Higher education in the United States is a large and highly competitive industry. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there were 4,706 degree-granting institutions of higher learning in the United States in 2011–12. Of these, 1,649 were public, 1,653 were private not-for-profit, and 1,404 were private for-profit institutions (Snyder and Dillow 2013).

This paper focuses on four-year baccalaureate colleges because it is this segment of the higher education market that is perhaps the most competitive for students and tuition dollars and the most vulnerable financially. The U.S. Department of Education, reports that in academic year 2011–12, there were 2,968 bachelor's degree-granting institutions in the United States. Of these, 682 were public, 1,553 were private not-for profit, and 733 were private for-profit institutions (Snyder and Dillow 2013).

Five primary factors serve as the focal points of competition for students and tuition revenue: (1) reputation, (2) resources, (3) price of attendance, (4) breadth of course offerings, and (5) geographic proximity.

■ *Reputation* is a multidimensional phenomenon: it is hard to earn, easy to lose, and even more difficult to regain. For many aspiring students (and perhaps even more so for their parents), an institution's reputation is a “feel good” matter of sometimes great importance. It

is prestige. It is perceived value. It is bragging rights. It is status. It is the beauty and grandeur of the institution's facilities and grounds. It is winning athletic teams. It is an affirmation of one's own quality as a person.

■ *Resources* are also multidimensional and include, among other things, financial strength (including endowment), human capital strength, quality and quantity of facilities, and geographic location.

■ *Price of attendance* at a baccalaureate institution serves as both a barrier to attendance, because the price may appear too great for family circumstances, and an impediment to retention. Sometimes, within certain segments of the marketplace, price may be considered a surrogate for reputation and perceived value—that is, the more expensive the institution, the better its quality is believed to be.

■ *Breadth of course offerings* is akin to a fishing net: For some baccalaureate institutions, the larger the “net” that can be cast, the greater the likelihood of high enrollment. In other words, if an institution fails to offer “it” (whatever “it” might be), some prospective students will not even consider applying.

■ *Geographic proximity* has to do with ease of access: the vast majority of students in the United States enroll at an institution within 250 to 300 miles of home (*i.e.*, a

driving distance of approximately four hours). Unless some other factor trumps proximity, travel distances greater than 250 to 300 miles tend to be inversely related to student retention.

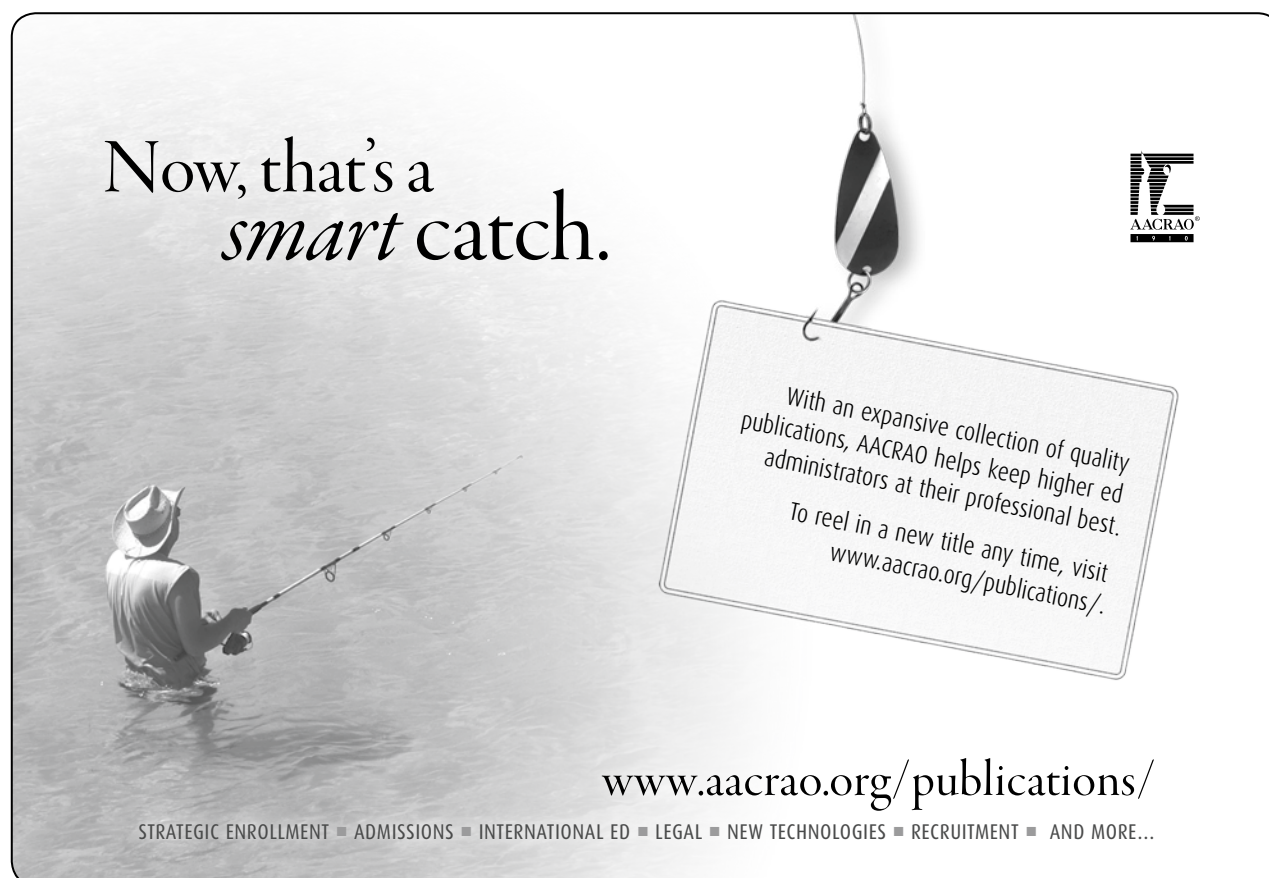
Private, not-for-profit baccalaureate institutions (many of which were under-capitalized at their inception) have been subject to enormous financial strains resulting from the competitive forces of the marketplace. As more and more public institutions and private for-profit institutions have entered the marketplace during the past 50 years, many private, not-for-profit baccalaureate colleges have experienced stagnant or decreasing enrollments. The challenge to remain fiscally viable has been tremendous; some pundits have viewed it as nearly insurmountable.

In response to this challenge, many private, not-for-profit baccalaureate institutions have sought to re-position themselves in the marketplace. One popular strategy has been to embark on an aggressive campaign of striving


to “grow” (through increased enrollments) their way to financial health. Another common strategy has been tuition discounting, which involves the awarding of institutionally funded as well as non-funded financial aid in order to increase enrollment and revenue. Any number of other tactics have also been employed, but it is not our intention to enumerate them. Rather, our interest is in clarifying those forces that affect a college’s financial health and future economic vitality.

Often, one of the first questions asked by people who are interested in the well-being of a private, baccalaureate, not-for-profit college is something like the following: How does the admissions picture at the college look for the fall semester? While this is an important question to ask, it is more important to understand that it addresses only in part the issues that determine an institution’s financial vitality.

As its financial picture weakens, a private, baccalaureate, not-for-profit college may respond in any of a number of ways. These may include:



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- a reduction in programmatic offerings, which in turn may reduce the size of the inquiry pool (“net”) from which the institution can recruit students;
- a reduction in expenditures to maintain the facilities and grounds, which may adversely impact the attractiveness of the institution;
- a reduction in expenditures for faculty and staff, which may adversely affect the institution’s ability to provide adequate services to its students;
- a reduction in admissions standards which may encourage more students to enroll but which, in turn, may reduce the institution’s retention rate and adversely affect its reputation and prestige;
- an increase in awarded scholarship or grant aid for which no financial backing exists (unfunded tuition discount) in an effort to compete for students on a cost-to-attend basis; this may adversely affect the potential revenue derived from those students.

The combination of these actions may have yet another unanticipated consequence: a decrease in the institution’s ability to retain the students it recruits. Clearly, retention of revenue-generating students is critical to an institution’s financial vitality.

Typically, a college’s retention rate is measured in several ways. Two of the most common are the rate at which students remain enrolled at the institution from their freshman to their sophomore year and the four-year (or five- or six-year) graduation rate for each freshman cohort (*i.e.*, the number of first-time, full-time freshmen who enter in a given year). By way of illustration, at highly selective “prestigious” private, not-for-profit, baccalaureate institutions, the freshman to sophomore retention rate is often greater than 95 percent and the four-year graduation rate may be greater than 90 percent. At less selective institutions, the freshman to sophomore retention rate sometimes falls below 50 percent and the graduation rate may be well below that. In such instances, admitted students who soon become dropouts transform the recruitment-admissions-enrollment process into a revolving door. An institution’s inability to retain its students is indicative of an institution in financial freefall.

The implications are clear: The more difficult it is for an institution to recruit and retain its students, the more likely it is that the institution will have to discount its tu-

ition. Further, the less well endowed or the less able an institution is to raise scholarship or grant funds, the more likely it is that the institution will have to discount its tuition through unfunded incentives. All of this takes place against a backdrop in which the competitiveness of the marketplace—crowded as it is with public and private institutions—exerts forces on all institutions, even the most prestigious, to rely on funded and unfunded financial aid for purposes of enrollment management (*e.g.*, to recruit athletes, musicians, national merit scholars, or other students of particular interest to the institution).

According to the annual survey of members of the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) (2012), the average tuition discount—the percentage of income from tuition and fees that colleges award to their students in grants and aid—was 45 percent for incoming freshmen in 2012. NACUBO (2012) also reports that the average tuition discount rate (both funded and unfunded) for freshmen for all institutions in 2011 was 44.3 percent.

Unless the institution can maintain or improve its perceived competitiveness in the marketplace, it might easily spiral into a financial decline from which it might not recover. In response to this clear threat, many institutions have sought to improve their competitive position by engaging in a facilities “arms race” in which newer, bigger, and better facilities (*e.g.*, student centers, housing, recreation centers, science buildings, libraries, etc.) are built for bragging purposes and amenities become selling points used to recruit and (institutional administrators hope) retain students.

While the size of an entering class is of some interest, of primary financial importance to an institution is the combination of overall student enrollment (a function of new students plus retention) and the net operating revenue generated by that enrollment (a function of price and unfunded tuition discount).

Net operating revenue (Net Rev) is defined as the product of two quantities: the number of enrolled paying students (*N*) and the price-adjusted unfunded tuition discount (*UD*) cost of attendance, which is dependent on the published rates for tuition (*T*), room (*R*), board (*B*), and mandatory fees (*F*). This relationship is represented by the following equation:

$$\text{Net Rev} = N * [(T * (1 - UD)) + R + B + F]$$

Consider a hypothetical institution whose published prices for a given academic year are as follows: tuition is \$25,000, room is \$3,000, board is \$4,000, and mandatory fees are \$1,000. Thus, the “sticker” price of attendance is \$33,000 per year. Using these values, net revenue is expressed as:

$$\text{Net Rev} = N * [(\$25,000 * (1 - UD)) + \$3,000 + \$4,000 + \$1,000]$$

Now consider the financial effects of various levels of unfunded tuition discount (UD), which is an average value across all enrolled paying students. Consider unfunded discount rates of 50 percent, 45 percent, 40 percent, and 35 percent.

*If UD = 50%, then Net Rev = N \* \$20,500*

*If UD = 45%, then Net Rev = N \* \$21,750*

*If UD = 40%, then Net Rev = N \* \$23,000*

*If UD = 35%, then Net Rev = N \* \$24,250*

So how much net revenue will the institution derive given each of these discount rates? The answer depends on overall enrollment (*i.e.*, enrollment of new students plus retention of previously admitted students). Assume that the total number of paying students at this institution is 2,000 (the approximate size of a typical baccalaureate institution). Given the formulae above, net revenue would be as follows:

*If UD = 50% and N = 2,000, then Net Rev = \$41,000,000*

*If UD = 45% and N = 2,000, then Net Rev = \$43,500,000*

*If UD = 40% and N = 2,000, then Net Rev = \$46,000,000*

*If UD = 35% and N = 2,000, then Net Rev = \$48,500,000*

As the unfunded discount rate decreases, the per student net revenue increases. Thus, enrollment (N) can have a considerable effect on the financial consequences for an institution. For our hypothetical institution, the difference in net revenue between unfunded tuition discount (UD) rates of 40 percent and 50 percent amounts to \$5 million. Many private, not-for-profit baccalaureate institutions would find such a financial shortfall critical if not catastrophic.

These results demonstrate that for a given overall enrollment level, net revenue will be \$5 million greater if the unfunded tuition discount rate can be managed at 40 percent rather than 50 percent. The enrollment management challenge, of course, is to keep the unfunded tuition dis-

count rate at a desired lower level even in the face of competitive market pressures that conspire to drive it higher. For an institution already in financial decline, this can be very difficult.

Next, consider the net revenue relationship from another perspective: Assume that the unfunded tuition discount equals 45 percent (approximately the national average), and consider the impact that even modest changes in overall enrollment can have on net revenue. Assume that N equals 1,900 or 2,000 or 2,100—a modest range of 200 students.

*If UD = 45% and N = 1,900, then Net Rev = \$41,325,000*

*If UD = 45% and N = 2,000, then Net Rev = \$43,500,000*

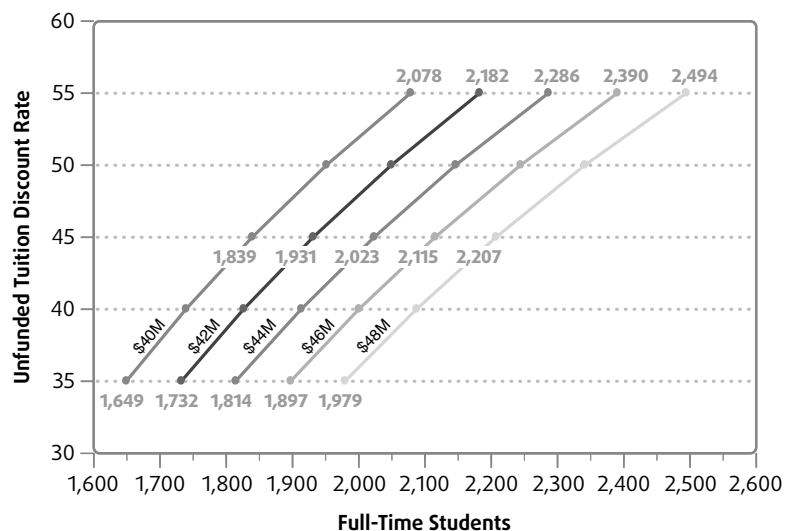
*If UD = 45% and N = 2,100, then Net Rev = \$45,675,000*

Thus, for a given unfunded tuition discount rate at the hypothetical pricing scheme, net revenue will vary by approximately \$4,350,000 over a range of only 200 students (1,900 versus 2,100 students). Clearly, more students are better than fewer students for an institution’s financial status *if and only if* the unfunded tuition discount rate can be held constant. The most challenging enrollment management task for an institution in financial decline is to recruit and retain increasing numbers of students while holding the unfunded tuition discount rate constant.

It is clear that for a given set of prices (*i.e.*, tuition, room, board, and mandatory fees), only two elements need to be identified in order to predict net revenue: overall enrollment (N) and the unfunded tuition discount rate (UD). See Figure 1 for a depiction of the relationship described by the amounts stipulated above for tuition, room, board, and mandatory fees.

Figure 1, on page 59, depicts the net revenue relationship across a variety of UD rates and varying overall enrollment levels. The lines may be interpreted as “iso-net revenue” curves—that is, they represent a constant level of net revenue across multiple combinations of unfunded tuition discount rates and enrollments. Although iso-net revenue curves are drawn for only five specific net revenue amounts (ranging from \$40 million to \$48 million), one can interpolate between and outside the curves to obtain other net revenue amounts for specific enrollments and tuition discount rates.

To further illustrate the relationship between enrollment and the unfunded tuition discount rate, consider



**FIGURE 1. Net Revenue Goal**

the iso-net revenue curve at \$44 million. This curve represents the fact that the very same net revenue goal of \$44 million can be obtained by enrolling 1,814 students with a UD rate of 35 percent; 1,913 students with a UD rate of 40 percent; 2,023 students with a discount rate of 45 percent; 2,146 students with a UD rate of 50 percent; or 2,286 students with a discount rate of 55 percent—as well as all other combinations of enrollments and discount rates along that same line.

The implications of these results for enrollment management are considerable and illumine the challenging art of maintaining the financial viability of private, baccalaureate, not-for-profit higher education institutions. First, more students (*i.e.*, higher enrollments) doesn't necessarily mean better financial results (*i.e.*, greater net revenue). Second, the same desired financial outcome (*i.e.*, sought-for net revenue) can be achieved across a variety of tuition discount rates and enrollments. The challenge for every institution is

to simultaneously control both the unfunded tuition discount rate and the desired enrollment level at values that are optimal, attainable, and sustainable.

Finally, as unfunded tuition discount rates increase secularly (*e.g.*, due to enrollment management objectives or increasing competition for students) and as more public, not-for profit private and for-profit private institutions compete for the same students, the financial viability of historically undercapitalized private baccalaureate not-for-profit institutions will become increasingly tenuous.

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## Student Voting: A Catalyst for Civic Engagement

BY ROBERT M. BRANDON

One of the most fundamental rights American citizens have is the right to vote. Voting is how most Americans participate in our democracy. It's how we choose our representatives and voice our opinions on important local issues. And it's how we select our country's leader.

Colleges and universities have a particular responsibility to promote and protect the right to vote because many young Americans are there when they first have the chance to exercise their right to vote. Study after study has shown that voting is a strong indicator of broader civic engagement and that students who are involved in our nation's democracy are more likely to be active members in their communities once they graduate.

Many higher education institutions acknowledge that voter registration, civic learning, and democratic engagement are aspects of a well-rounded college education. However, they do not always provide students with the information and resources they need to participate in the electoral process.

Recent barriers to student voting make the need for this type of information increasingly important. Many have moved to their college communities only recently—sometimes from another state—and thus are more likely than other voters to lack basic information about the voting process. New voters (and even those already registered)

may lack information about ID requirements or deadlines and may even encounter hostility when they seek either to register or to vote. Misinformation can be another significant barrier. Changes to election laws, restrictive voter ID rules, and a string of recent legislative attacks aimed at student voters are creating even more obstacles to student involvement in the democratic process. These conditions can make voting challenging and often discourage or prevent students from voting.

### **BENEFITS OF CIVIC EDUCATION**

Voter registration is a strong indicator of overall civic engagement. A 2010 survey administered by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) showed that registered voters were more likely to engage in other civic and political activities than those who were not registered voters. These activities include being involved in a group, participating in a religious institution, and being more strongly connected with neighbors and family members.

Last year, CIRCLE (2013) released “All Together Now: Collaboration and Innovation for Youth Engagement,” which outlines findings on the “current state of civic education, informed voting, and political engagement of the nation's youth.” The report states, “When young people

experience high-quality civic education, they can gain skills, networks, confidence, and interests that are also useful in college and the workforce” (CIRCLE 2013). Continuing civic education into college, including providing information about the election process and voting, will only enhance those benefits.

## **BARRIERS TO STUDENT VOTING**

Students often don’t understand that they have the option to vote using either their home or their college address. Students’ involvement in their college communities makes voting using their campus addresses a logical choice. For many students, “home” soon comes to mean where they attend college. Typically, college is the first experience students have of living independently. Students also spend years living in their college towns, working, volunteering, shopping at local businesses (and consequently paying sales taxes), and paying tuition to important local institutions. All of these things make students an integral part of their college communities; consequently, they have not only the right but also the responsibility to vote on who will represent them as well as on the issues that affect them.

Unpredictable changes in voting regulations and state legislatures’ antagonism toward student voters threaten to keep student voter participation rates at a minimum. Strict voter ID laws that deem student IDs unacceptable and redefinitions of residency requirements can discourage students from registering to vote in their college communities. Some election officials have distributed misinformation that confuses students about their eligibility, curbs their participation in elections, and even threatens legal action or reductions in financial aid should they register to vote in their campus communities.

The U.S. Supreme Court held in 1979 that additional barriers directed at students seeking to vote in their college communities violate the 26th Amendment, which guarantees the right of eighteen-year-olds to vote. Nevertheless, examples of constitutionally dubious initiatives abound: A North Carolina senator proposed to eliminate the state tax deduction for dependents for North Carolina families whose children register to vote in their college communities. North Carolina also excluded student IDs from the list of identification that can be accepted at the polls. College student IDs also are not a valid form of voter identification in Tennessee, despite the fact that employee

IDs from the same institutions are acceptable. The Ohio House of Representatives snuck into a massive budget bill a provision that would require any public college or university that provided documents to a student for voter ID purposes to charge that student in-state tuition, thus risking the loss of millions of tuition dollars. (This language was later removed by the state senate.) Rather than foster an environment of increased civic participation that would create a legacy of citizens invested in democracy, these types of actions attempt to stifle students’ right to vote.

## **NATIONAL FOCUS ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN COLLEGE**

National higher education associations emphasize the importance of encouraging students’ civic involvement and have identified ways in which colleges and universities can do so. These efforts attest to diverse interest in civic engagement and student voting as well as the need for a variety of sources—to include administrators, educators, student organizations, etc.—to support it.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2011) report “A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future” calls on educators and public leaders to advance a 21st century vision—one with civic learning and democratic engagement as expected elements of every student’s college education. The report recognizes that students who are civically engaged in our democracy leave their colleges and universities better prepared to be active members of society.

The idea of incorporating civic engagement into higher education has broad support. The Campus Compact, made up of nearly 1,200 college and university presidents, pledges to integrate civic learning into its schools’ missions and to develop students’ citizenship skills. Over the years, AACRAO, too, has recognized the importance of student civic engagement and has worked to help its 2,600 member institutions comply with the Higher Education Act, which requires institutions to make a good faith effort to distribute voter registration information and forms to students. In recent years, AACRAO has sent its members state-specific registration information, voting guides, and links to registration forms and other online materials for students as part of an effort to help them fulfill this obligation.

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education published “Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action,” which



describes the department's plan to expand and transform approaches to civic learning and democratic engagement and calls on K-12 schools as well as colleges and universities to incorporate this initiative into their missions. A large part of pursuing those goals is encouraging students to exercise the fundamental act of citizenship: voting.

This year the Department of Education met with AACRAO, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), Fair Elections Legal Network, and several other organizations to develop strategies for administrators to encourage students to vote. One outcome was that the Department of Education sent a "Dear Colleague" letter reminding college and university presidents of their institutions' obligation under the Higher Education Act to provide voter registration forms to students. This letter was followed up by a conference call to inform college administrators, faculty, staff, and students around the country about the importance of institutionalizing efforts to get more students to register and to vote. During the call, Under Secretary of Education Martha

Kanter described specific strategies for getting more students to participate in our democracy and thereby helping to ensure that graduates are active and engaged citizens.

### **PRACTICAL WAYS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO VOTE**

Practices that encourage students to vote range from reminding them of voter registration deadlines, early voting periods, and even the date of Election Day to providing links to voter registration forms as part of the course registration process. Providing voter registration forms at freshman orientation enables students to complete the form along with other standard paperwork related to course enrollment, among other things. Establishing a Web page on the college website that includes information about voting as well as links to voter registration and absentee ballots provides students with easy access to this information via a website they already access regularly. Social media outlets and listservs can also be used to send reminders about voter registration and early voting deadlines as well as polling locations and hours.

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Schools in the University of Wisconsin system as well as private universities in the state took measures to distribute newly required ID documents before the law was ultimately blocked in state court. Other administrators worked with election officials to establish polling locations on campuses. The University of Colorado Boulder's registrar's office Web page includes information about what students need to do in order to vote and also lists ten reasons that students' votes matter.

In Ohio, letters from government entities are acceptable forms of voter ID, so Ohio State University and other state schools e-mailed students a letter that included their local address so they could use it as identification at the polls. Many institutions in North Carolina provided county election officials with rosters of students living on campus in order to verify the students' residency during the state's early voting period. Doing so enabled students who lived on campus to use their student IDs to register and vote at an early voting location.

In Colorado, one of fourteen states that has implemented online voter registration, the legislature adopted as part of comprehensive election reform legislation last year a requirement that state colleges with online class registration offer students the opportunity to register to vote at the same time. In Illinois, a recent election bill that includes online voter registration will require that in-person early voting locations be available in high-traffic areas at public universities.

College and university administrators have an important role to play in educating students about the how and why of voting, and they are in a unique position to help students overcome barriers resulting from new laws and restrictions. Routinizing the dissemination of basic voter information and enlisting the aid of students, campus

organizations, and elections officials in encouraging voting—regardless of the legislative climate—will help colleges cultivate civic-minded students. Whether reminding students of Election Day via social media or staging a major campus-wide effort, no endeavor is too small.

The turnout of student voters has increased, but students still vote at a lower rate than older adults. Barriers continue to hinder student voting. More must be done to engage young people in our democracy; that effort should start at college, where many students have their first opportunity to exercise their most fundamental democratic right: the right to vote.

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## HIGHER EDUCATION IN AMERICA

BOK, D. 2013. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS. 479 PP.

Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt

*Higher Education in America* is a compelling and comprehensive overview of the systems, structures, and relevant issues in higher education in the United States. Written in a straightforward and authoritative style, Bok discusses the nature and scope of U.S. higher education and describes the strengths and potential vulnerabilities of a system that encompasses such differing institutions as community colleges, research universities, and for-profit institutions.

Modeling the principles of scientific inquiry, the author frames the text with the following key questions:

- How vigorously are U.S. universities responding to their emerging problems and opportunities?
- Which of the many criticisms of U.S. higher education institutions' activities are truly valid, and which are unfounded or highly exaggerated?
- What can U.S. colleges do to improve their performance, and how can such reforms best be brought about? (Bok 2013, p. 4)

In each section of the book, Bok provides evidence to support or refute claims relevant to these primary ques-

tions. The sections are broad in scope and cover the context of higher education (*e.g.*, its history, purposes, and governance) as well as the concepts of undergraduate and graduate education; professional education; research; and conclusions.

Bok notes that as the education system in the United States has evolved, colleges and universities have codified the tripartite mission of higher education to include teaching, research, and service. More recently, a number of schools have added economic development as an accompanying institutional aim. The author acknowledges that colleges and universities can have multiple and complementary goals and that it is, indeed, inevitable that they do given the complex nature of the modern multiversity (Kerr 1963).

Yet Bok cautions higher education leaders against taking on initiatives that divert their efforts from achieving their institutions' established mission and goals. Specifically, he regards the variety of institutions that comprise the U.S. education system as one of its greatest strengths and therefore recommends that institutions strive to do what they do well rather than succumb to the pressure to become something they are not (*e.g.*, community colleges aspiring to become four-year institutions, four-year institutions aspiring to become comprehensive institutions, etc.).

Despite the challenges associated with maintaining a disparate and distributed system, Bok suggests that the values and norms that define the academic community are core strengths of the education enterprise in the United States. Across institutional type, these values and norms provide a framework for defining responsibilities, establishing principles that guide behavior, delimiting individual actions, setting mutual expectations, and resolving differences of opinion.

In persuasive and potentially controversial statements, the author encourages college and university leaders to divest themselves of all activities that others could do as well or better, including ownership of teaching hospitals and activation of programs designed for the sole purpose of generating revenue. Bok notes that these endeavors are often costly and complicated and can lead to unforeseen consequences that ultimately discredit the institution. Further, non-essential activities frequently consume the time and energy of education leaders yet do little to strengthen the core mission of the institution.

Bok is especially critical of intercollegiate athletics programs, which he calls “a flagrant example of universities sacrificing academic standards in the pursuit of profit” (p. 351). In fact, given the current state of competition, intercollegiate athletics could easily be considered antithetical to higher education. Yet the author reluctantly admits that “the cost of abandoning a high profile sport—in both practical and political terms—is now too great for the colleges involved to contemplate” (p. 129).

Bok readily acknowledges that American education still holds prominence on the world stage but admonishes that “it is likely that our impressive standing in the world owes less to the success of our own system than it does to the weakness of foreign universities, which were long overregulated, underfunded, and neglected by their own governments” (p. 3). To remain competitive, U.S. college and university leaders will have to address significant and complicated issues such as reconciling frequently intangible academic goals with calls for public accountability and emphasizing high-quality academic programs in an era of consumer-driven decisions.

Bok notes that the decentralization of education in the United States, long recognized as a universal strength, may also be a point of weakness. For example, one of the goals of the Obama administration is to grow college and uni-

versity enrollments through increased Pell grant awards. However, rather than expanding educational opportunities for low- and moderate-income students, many state legislators instead have decreased subsidies to colleges and universities in order to pay for other priorities. These actions have compelled institutions to increase their tuition, which, in turn, has resulted increasingly in students choosing to attend more affordable institutions—namely, comprehensive and community colleges.

According to the author, dropout rates at community colleges—and, to a lesser extent, at comprehensive colleges—tend to be higher. As such, “a significant fraction of the students who drop out prior to completion eventually default on repaying the federally guaranteed loans they have accumulated in the course of their unsuccessful effort to earn a degree” (p. 102). Bok suggests that this lack of systems thinking has created an environment in which there is little coordination of effort and significant inefficiency among the various types of institutions that comprise the education system. In the absence of a national plan—or, at the very least, a more streamlined process among institutions—the author maintains that it is unlikely that colleges and universities will realize their goals of increased enrollment and improved retention and graduation rates.

One of the prevailing themes in *Higher Education in America* is Bok’s perceived need for faculty and administrators to provide empirical evidence in support of the decisions they make. Bok includes numerous examples of assumptions that should be challenged, from the distribution of courses that encompass a liberal arts education to the ability of online education to achieve its stated goals while maintaining the highest levels of academic rigor.

Bok makes an especially compelling argument for assessments of undergraduate curriculum and instruction, which have remained largely unchanged for the past 50 years. He acknowledges that modest reform efforts are currently under way, to include the use of blended courses and other active learning techniques, but observes that many faculty members remain wholly unaware of or disinterested in what the literature says about best practices in pedagogy and student learning. Therefore, it is the responsibility of academic leaders to engage faculty members in meaningful dialogue about improvement initiatives. Indeed, Bok challenges faculty and academic administra-

tors to consider these reform efforts in the same way they would research—that is, in which revisions are frequently made in light of new evidence. According to Bok, reform from within is the only way for authentic change to occur.

Bok also provides critical reflections on graduate education in the United States, noting the apparent disconnect between the number of students who enter a program and those who actually graduate. With regard to doctoral programs, the author cites Golde and Dore (2001) in recommending that university personnel be very clear with students about the “time, money, clarity of purpose, and perseverance that graduate study entails” (p. 236). Bok notes that graduate programs could lower attrition by improving student advising by faculty mentors, a proposition that is consistent with the call for greater psychosocial mentoring by Paglis, Green, and Bauer (2006). Finally, Bok suggests that providing accurate and complete information from the outset of each student’s consideration of graduate school would save universities limited resources and ultimately serve the student’s best interests.

As part of his effort to provide a comprehensive overview of higher education in the United States, Bok includes a discussion of professional schools—specifically schools of medicine, law, and business. Despite such programs’ highly specialized nature, Bok contends that excluding them would paint an incomplete picture of the broader education landscape in the United States.

In contrast to graduate programs, professional schools tend to have significantly higher rates of graduation but struggle to balance theoretical content and practical application. While schools of medicine rely heavily on providing hands-on opportunities for their students to acquire practical knowledge, they are less successful in preparing students to negotiate policy issues related to the health-care system and in enabling students to develop the skills they need to be effective and responsible members of their profession. Conversely, students of law and business frequently become so mired in the theories of their respective schools that they fail to master the practical competencies needed to excel in their professions.

Bok asserts that despite these challenges, professional schools continue to be on the forefront of innovative instruction given their utilization of simulations, role playing, case studies, problem-based instruction, the Socratic method, and other active learning techniques to engage

students in a dialectic process. Further, Bok suggests that these techniques, combined with instructional feedback and opportunities for reflection, are the most adaptable formats for meeting the changing needs of their corresponding professions.

While U.S. colleges and universities historically have been preeminent in the world in their scientific research, Bok identifies “a massive shift in relative positions in science and technology from the United States and Europe toward Asia” (most notably China) (p. 324). This observation is corroborated by recent reports from the National Research Council (2010) and the National Science Foundation (2012). However, Bok points out that the quickening pace of discovery is not a zero-sum game in higher education as “progress in one country tends to benefit research in others” (p. 325).

Continuing the conversation regarding scientific inquiry, Bok examines three complex and often contentious topics of perennial interest in higher education: the “publish or perish” phenomenon, for-profit ventures, and academic freedom. Bok presents multiple well-informed arguments, many of which contradict prevailing opinions. For example, he reviews evidence-based research to demonstrate that the pressure to publish does not necessarily detract from an individual’s ability to teach effectively. However, the pressure does limit the time faculty members have to develop innovative course designs and improve their teaching methods.

*Higher Education in America* is an insightful and thought-provoking account of the various types of institutions and programs that comprise the loosely coupled system of education in the United States. The text is well-suited for individuals who are seeking a thorough overview of U.S. higher education and would serve as an excellent primer for new higher education professionals or as a reference for seasoned higher education administrators.

Each section of the book includes a brief and informative foreword that outlines key considerations for ensuing chapters as well as an afterword that summarizes key points and raises critical questions for further examination. The text could be read cover to cover, but it might prove more useful if read by section; this is especially true of the chapters regarding professional schools as the details are dense and highly specific. Readers also would be well-advised to carefully review the meticulous footnotes

that Bok provides in each chapter. In addition to extensive citations, these notes frequently include rich, substantive details that complement the chapter's content.

Given the scope of his topic, Bok does an impressive job examining the evidence related to internal and external vulnerabilities of colleges and universities in the United States. Despite the U.S. higher education system's shortcomings, Bok seems cautiously optimistic about its ability to remain both dynamic and responsive to the needs of the country over the next quarter century.

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## About the Author

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## CHEATING LESSONS: LEARNING FROM ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

LANG, J. M. 2013.  
CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS. 256 PP.

*Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt*

Building upon more than 50 years of research, Lang adds an important new perspective to the conversation about cheating and academic dishonesty by examining the phenomenon through the lens of cognitive theory. Specifically, he considers how the contextual factor of the classroom environment either induces or reduces cheating among students. The author notes that the classroom environment is one of the few areas in which an individual faculty member has the power to effect real change. According to Lang, a structured approach to designing learning environments can “promote academic integrity by increasing student motivation, student learning, and student self-understanding” (p. 4).

Lang provides academic and performance-based case studies to depict the historical and cultural influences of cheating and to illustrate four key features that may foster a learning environment in which students feel pressure to cheat. He introduces a fifth key feature in a later section of the text based on peer-related contextual factors. These features are:

- an emphasis on performance;
- high stakes riding on the outcome;
- extrinsic motivation for success;
- a low expectation of success; and
- a student's perceptions of peers' cheating behavior (pp. 35, 50).

Of these five features, Lang recommends addressing student motivation first because it has the greatest potential to affect both cheating *and* learning. In discussing methods for fostering students' intrinsic motivation, Lang draws upon resources and recommendations offered by colleagues who are widely recognized in their fields for excellence in teaching. According to Lang, these individuals have focused their efforts on creating courses that promote students' deep and substantial learning. Lang posits that effective teaching is perhaps the most effective strategy for reducing cheating and minimizing opportunities for students to cheat.

Vivid descriptions of actual course activities illustrate how faculty members have engaged students in learning by (1) connecting the questions of the course with questions that are important to students, (2) challenging students to pose their own questions and solutions, and (3) conducting authentic assessments. On this last point, Lang suggests that assessments bound by time and place or that rely on personal reflections or interdisciplinary connections not only engage learners but also are “virtually uncheatable” (p. 61). Lang recognizes that wholesale course redesign may not be feasible and describes a range of innovations that faculty members can implement either as stand-alone measures or as combined strategies to increase students' internal motivation.

To allay concerns that his approach to restructuring the classroom environment would be limited to small, senior-level seminars or other unique settings, Lang describes colleagues' implementation of these innovative techniques in large classes and across academic disciplines. The key is



that faculty members emphasize mastery learning through multiple and varying channels rather than a limited number of performance-based, high-stakes assessments. For example, Lang describes how an instructor facilitates a large class by giving students “the autonomy to create their own individualized learning experience through his multi-choice assessment system” (p. 91).

By offering opportunities throughout the semester for students to demonstrate their learning, faculty members can alleviate much of the anxiety associated with high-stakes assessments. Further, Lang observes that the goals of *producing* learning and *measuring* learning are not mutually exclusive. In other words, frequent assessments promote learning by challenging students both to recall information and to apply it to real or imagined scenarios. Finally, Lang recommends that students be given opportunities to practice their skills through low-stakes assessments and in-class activities in advance of graded assignments. The literature is clear: giving students choice and control of their learning enables them to build confidence and develop competencies, both of which reduce incentives to cheat.

To further promote student success in the classroom, Lang recommends that faculty members help students develop *metacognition* or a greater situational awareness of their own understanding. Poor metacognition can result in students overestimating their mastery of a topic and making poor study decisions, which ultimately can lead to a greater enticement to cheat. According to Lang, the best way to improve students’ metacognition is to use formative assessments prior to graded tests or major assignments. Formative assessments provide opportunity for students to test their knowledge through low-stakes activities. Further, they can provide more accurate information about students’ understanding of the course material.

Lang also identifies the benefits of the “flipped” or “inverted” classroom in which “students get the basic information they need prior to class and then spend class time working on problems or answering questions with the instructor on hand to guide and supervise” (p. 141). Pre-class preparation could be facilitated through technology, such as streaming videos and virtual learning platforms (Selingo 2013), which would free up class time for students to practice skills and receive immediate feedback. According to Lang, helping students enhance their skills

while developing their accurate self-appraisal can demystify the process of learning and remove additional reasons students might have for cheating.

Citing research by McCabe and Treviño (1993) and others, Lang notes that peer-related contextual factors are the greatest determinant of academic dishonesty and cheating. Further, there is a direct relationship between students’ perceptions and their behaviors. That is, the greater a student’s perception of peer group disapproval of cheating, the lesser the likelihood the student will cheat. Similarly, students’ perceptions of their peers’ approval of cheating as well as students’ observations of cheating within their peer group are so powerful that they can create “a kind of normative support for cheating” (p. 52).

In addition to addressing issues of cheating within the classroom, Lang recommends that stakeholders participate in broader conversations at the campus level to establish expectations and to “settle on a definition of cheating that governs the campus” (p. 163). Varying definitions and policies from multiple institutions suggest that it is no longer safe to assume that everyone in the campus community is operating according to shared standards of academic integrity.

Lang also reports findings from previous studies in which researchers examined the efficacy of honor codes in reducing the prevalence of cheating. He argues that honor codes unfairly shift the burden of reporting violations to students “whose moral and intellectual development may be in early formative stages” (p. 170). It may be unrealistic to expect students to assume this responsibility in an environment in which peer influences are sacrosanct.

Further, Lang notes that honor codes in and of themselves do not influence behavior. Rather, students’ expectations of one another and their commitment to adhere to the standards of the academic community are key elements in transforming the educational landscape. Lang advocates for open and honest dialogue among faculty, students, administrators, and other key stakeholders about the values of mutual trust and respect that are required for building and sustaining a community of scholars.

One recommendation for moving the conversation about cheating beyond the classroom is for faculty members to collaborate with student affairs and residence life staff to promote the learning that occurs in all areas of a student’s life. As Kuh *et al.* (2010) suggest, we can only begin to ad-

dress questions of accountability in higher education when student affairs and academia work together to develop and integrate processes for improving student learning.

Lang advises that partnerships of academic and student affairs be used to promote campus-wide initiatives that communicate and reinforce the message of academic integrity, especially during times when students may feel the greatest pressure to cheat. At the most basic level, Lang seems to suggest that in welcoming students into the community of scholars, we need to help them understand: (1) the expected standards for academic work, (2) how to adhere to these standards, and (3) the consequences should they fail to adhere to the standards.

A well-regarded teacher and scholar, Lang recognizes that there is no one solution to issues of cheating and academic dishonesty on college campuses. In fact, not even the most rigorous combination of interventions would wholly eliminate student cheating. Lang therefore considers the ways in which individual faculty members can minimize opportunities and even the perceived necessity for cheating. Moreover, he proposes a more nuanced approach to enforcing academic integrity policies so that first-time offenders could learn from their failure to uphold such policies while repeat offenders would be subject to the uniform and severe penalties warranted in an educational context.

*Cheating Lessons* is well-suited for its intended audience—namely, teaching faculty members and the administrators who support their work. Rooted in academic research but written in a conversational manner, the book is accessible to all potential readers, particularly given its inclusion of real-world examples and pragmatic strategies for creating assignments and assessments that shift the focus away from performance-based (extrinsic) motivations to mastery learning (intrinsic) experiences. For readers who want to learn more about related research, Lang provides an extensive list of investigators who have chronicled cheating research in higher education.

As Lang illustrates throughout the text, a fundamental shift in mindset—from individual to environment—enables faculty members and students to actively seek the best in one another; this is a tenet of appreciative education (Bloom *et al.* 2013). Further, he demonstrates through previous research that cheating is not a new phenomenon, nor has it increased markedly since the advent

of smartphones and other portable devices. While the tools for cheating may change, the underlying motivations have remained the same throughout the course of human history. Lang challenges faculty members, administrators, students, and other stakeholders to consider methods for developing a campus culture in which individuals hold themselves and others to the highest standards of academic excellence.

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## About the Author

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## SAT WARS: THE CASE FOR TEST-OPTIONAL COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

EDITED BY JOSEPH A. SOARES  
TEACHERS COLLEGE PRESS 2012; 226 PP.

*Reviewed by David S. Williams II*

Over the years there has been considerable debate about the use of SAT scores in the college admissions process (Groux 2012, Jaschik 2009, Strauss 2012). Due to the alleged biases inherent in the SAT and the test's limited ability to predict student success, many institutions are moving toward a test-optional model in which students may but are not required to submit standardized test scores with their applications (Groux 2012, Ochoa 2013). In the midst of this timely debate, the contributing authors to *SAT Wars* provide an in-depth perspective on how standardized testing has evolved, its biases, and the transition to and evaluation of test-optional admissions policies. This book review summarizes the main points of each chapter, assesses the book's major strengths and limitations, and

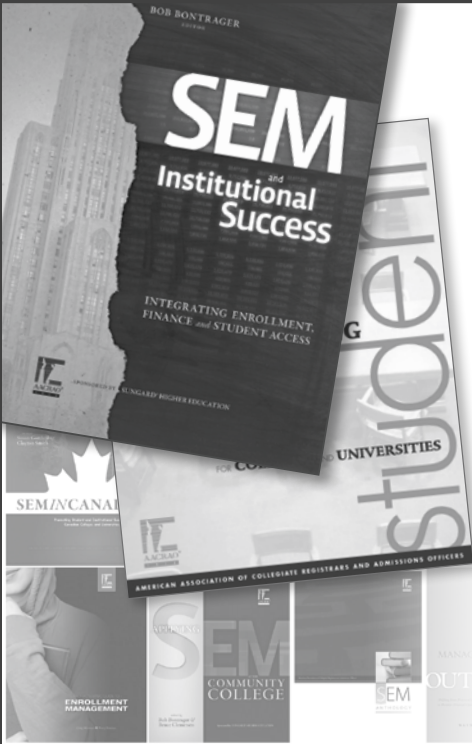
analyzes the ways in which the book contributes to the discussion about standardized testing and admissions.

The main objective of *SAT Wars* is to inspire admissions professionals to rethink how standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT are utilized in admissions and the extent to which their institutions should consider adopting test-optional policies. According to the editor, too much weight has been placed on tests that are alleged to be inherently biased against minority and low-income students. The chapters are organized so as to frame the reader's understanding of the history of standardized testing, the alleged biases of the current SAT and ACT, and the burgeoning and evaluation of test-optional admissions policies. The early chapters' broad perspectives on testing dovetail nicely into the institutional case studies on the SAT's ability to predict student success and on test-optional policies.

The four chapters that comprise the book's first section provide an overview and history of admissions and testing. The first chapter highlights the various admissions preferences that weight privilege over ability. For example,

the author highlights admissions preferences for legacy students, students connected with possible donors, athletes, children of faculty and staff, and the wealthy. The author of the first chapter contends that the SAT can be a counterweight to privilege and asserts that the good SAT score of a minority applicant from a low-performing school should elicit strong consideration of his or her academic potential whereas the poor score of a legacy or wealthy applicant might indicate the prospective student's lack of academic seriousness and/or ability. Although the author's claims are not supported empirically, they are supported by the literature.

The author of the second chapter provides a historical account of the evolution of the SAT: Since its inception, the SAT was designed to ascertain a student's aptitude or ability for learning. Despite the current rebuttal against the SAT, the author indicates that if the SAT truly helped measure prospective college students' aptitude for learning, then applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds could be identified for admission, thereby helping to in-




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crease access to and equity in higher education. However, the author reports that the SAT evolved from measuring test takers' aptitude for learning to assessing their general analytic ability. The author also indicates that toward the end of the 20th century, critics began to realize the SAT's shortcomings—particularly in regard to its biases against minority and low-income applicants. This claim is supported by the literature (Freedle 2003, Soares 2007). In addition to these shortcomings, the SAT was also found to be a relatively poor predictor of student success in college. In an effort to address these issues, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) introduced the new SAT in 2005. However, the author alleges that the test's new format did little to redress the previous shortcomings and in fact was found not to be aligned with the K–12 curriculum. The chapter concludes with the author's report of the test's shift in focus, from prediction to prior achievement, and the consequent emphasis on the SAT II subject tests and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. The author also references a significant amount of literature on the reliability of high school GPA in admissions decisions. The last two chapters in the opening section provide an overview of the University of California's inclusion and exclusion of SAT scores and a call to abolish the requirement that applicants submit their SAT scores. The author of chapter four specifically cites socioeconomic privilege as the primary reason for abolishing the SAT. However, the claims of this chapter are not supported by empirical evidence, and the supporting literature is scant.

The second section of the book, chapters five through nine, examines other means of testing as well as the limitations of the SAT. The author of chapter five presents the results of two tests designed to evaluate the range of skills assessed by the SAT. The author contends that the Rainbow and Kaleidoscope projects were designed to test not only analytic skills but also practical and creative skills and abilities. Utilizing multi-level modeling, the author found that the Rainbow project, which includes multiple choice, essays, and oratorical testing, considerably increases the ability to predict student performance over and above the SAT's ability to do so. Further, in contrast to the widening gap of SAT scores by ethnic group, the Rainbow project reduces differences of scores by ethnic group. The author describes the Kaleidoscope project as an optional short essay that accompanies the Common Application and con-

tends that differences in performance by group did not exist. Thus, the Kaleidoscope project appears to be a more equitable assessment than the SAT. Chapter five concludes with its author's identification of the study's methodological, resource, and data limitations.

The author of chapter six details the SAT's design and inherent biases. Sections of the 1998 and 2000 SAT exams are presented in order to demonstrate the tests' bias in favor of male and white students. The author's methodology includes analysis of the results attained by 100,000 test takers. The chapter would be enhanced by a descriptive analysis of the test takers' gender and race/ethnicity in order to contextualize the findings. The author also might have described specific ways in which ETS could improve the SAT's fairness.

Chapters seven, eight, and nine address the SAT's effectiveness at predicting students' success at a liberal arts college, a large public research institution, and a private research institution, respectively. Although each author used a different methodology—a seventeen-year panel data study, examination of the University of Georgia's fall 2006 cohort, and comparison of three cohorts—they arrive at the same conclusion: The SAT increases the ability to predict student success only marginally. The findings reported in chapters seven through nine are consistent in indicating that high school GPA is the best predictor of first-year college students' performance. Research on the predictive ability of the SAT subject tests and AP exams remains mixed. Although each of the studies featured in chapters seven through nine has its limitations—as, for example, focusing on one cohort or one institution—the findings, taken together, present a convincing argument in favor of test-optional policies.

After a brief chapter on the benefits to institutions of becoming test optional, the last section of *SAT Wars* is a timely evaluation of test-optional policies at Wake Forest University and other selective private institutions. The author of chapter eleven indicates that after becoming test optional, Wake Forest attracted the same caliber of students as it had previously. In fact, the institution doubled the number of international students it enrolled, and the number of first-year students who enrolled increased from 18 percent to 23 percent over the previous year. There was no difference between the first-year GPAs and attrition rates of enrolled students who had and who had not



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submitted test scores with their applications. In their examination of how test-optional policies affect the racial, socioeconomic, and academic profiles of admitted students at a few selective private institutions, the authors of chapter twelve indicate that after becoming test optional, the number of applications increased 6.6 percent. Moreover, the number of black, Hispanic, and lower socioeconomic status applicants increased by 30 percent. The authors contend that test-optional policies may help institutions increase their racial and socioeconomic diversity. The authors' analysis of data from multiple institutions enhances the validity of their study.

Overall, *SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional College Admissions* is informative, and the authors present a compelling case for institutions to become test optional. The research cited in the book should give admissions professionals cause to carefully consider the alleged biases of the SAT. While the book may help inform changes to institutions' admissions processes, several limitations are noteworthy. One is that the book does not describe the ability of the SAT to predict students' performance beyond their first-year GPA. Given national pressure to increase graduation and job placement rates, evidence of the SAT and the ACT's ability to predict college completion and/or graduates' attainment of professional competencies would be instructive. Another of the book's limitations pertains to its minimal discussion of diversity in terms of race and socioeconomic status. More focused examination of the impact of test-optional policies on such important issues as international student enrollment, major selection, and gender would enrich the discussion. There is no doubt that the book highlights several important themes, to include the bias inherent in the SAT, the test's limited ability to predict student success—particularly as compared

to high school GPA—and the burgeoning of test-optional policies. Yet the book is limited in its suggestion of alternatives. Institutions interested in moving beyond reliance on SAT scores but not wholly invested in becoming test optional are not given alternatives to consider. The literature referenced in the book is likely to tilt discussion about the use of standardized tests in what seems to be the right direction. Nevertheless, future research should expand upon the arguments presented in the book, particularly by including other ways of assessing standardized tests' utility and more alternatives for admissions professionals seeking to change their standardized test requirements.

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