An Examination of the Causes of Grade Inflation in A Teacher Education Program and Implications for Practice

Business, Political & Academic Perspectives on Higher Education Accountability Policy

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF GRADE INFLATION IN A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE
Grade inflation occurs when a student receives a grade that is not commensurate with the work she has performed (Stone 1995). Students who receive inappropriately high grades thus are provided with a false impression of their skills. As our nation strives to maintain its competitiveness and leadership in the world, this raises a number of concerns. Not only must we increase the number of qualified college graduates—especially in science, technology, and mathematics—but we also must

This study provides information on the possible existence of and reasons for grade inflation as perceived by students and faculty at a teacher education program at a liberal arts college. Results indicated grade inflation existed, which was consistent with previous research reviewed. Faculty perceived its existence, while students did not.
strengthen the skills they need to compete with others worldwide.

We examine grade inflation as it relates to teacher education by reviewing the grades of students enrolled from 2006 until 2008 in the Graduate Teaching Literacy Program at a liberal arts college in the northeast. An inflated grade distorts performance and affects who is selected to teach, especially as we seek as a nation to strengthen the teaching profession so as to improve educational outcomes. If grade inflation was identified at this college, then we may presume that the problem exists at other institutions of higher education as well. Mansfield (2001), for example, indicated that at Harvard University, he resorted to giving each student two grades: one for the student transcript and one in private which more accurately reflected the student’s true academic achievement. The transcript grade was intended to conform to what Mansfield (2001) perceived to be Harvard’s inflated grade distribution system.

Consumerism. Some researchers (Ballard 2004, Beaver 1997, Eiszler 2002, Pugh 2000) suggest that grade inflation is a result of an increase in students’ self-perception as consumers first and as students second. Ballard (2004) notes two results: (a) “teacher shopping” by students seeking to avoid “hard” graders and/or more difficult classes and (b) later withdrawals to avoid the stigma of a poor grade. If students perceive themselves as consumers, then it follows that they would want “their money’s worth” in the form of high grades—whether they deserve them or not. Faculty and administrators alike feel pressured to satisfy these self-proclaimed consumers by inflating their grades (McSpirit et al. 2000). Cushman (2003) states, “Every professor knows that he or she has to spend much more time writing comments to justify lower grades and... those encounters can be...excruciatingly painful.”

Self-Esteem. Twenge (2006) blames grade inflation on a culture that is overly concerned with making students feel special. Twenge and Campbell (2003) maintain that narcissistic students are more likely “to respond to failure feedback with anger and aggression.” Twenge et al. (2003) suggest that students today are more narcissistic than in the past. This has resulted in professors’ being cautious when assigning grades. Students dispute poor grades and retaliate by giving professors poor evaluations. Some professors make certain that assignments are not too rigorous or so challenging as to damage students’ self-esteem (Hagedorn 2000).

Lanning and Perkins (1995) explain that the majority of instructors in teacher education programs were once enrolled in these programs themselves and also worked in school systems. They note that the curriculum is heavily influenced by the philosophy that a teacher must avoid damaging a student’s self-esteem—to include by giving low grades. Landrum (1999) concludes that students believe that making an effort and coming to class regularly are sufficient to earn high grades; thus, even though students acknowledge that their work is average and that the grade for average work is a C, they expect a grade of B or even A 70 percent of the time.

Stanley and Baines (2004) note that report cards have little accurate information and instead have become “a vehicle used by the teacher to increase students’ self-esteem.” An article in The Register-Guard (2009) reinforces the belief that college students are primed in grade school and high school to expect higher grades than they deserve. Until 2009, Oregon schools were ranked by the state’s Department of Education into one of five categories ranging from “exceptional” to “unsatisfactory.” Today, there are only three categories: “outstanding,” “satisfactory,” and “in need of improvement.” The result is that a much larger number of schools are deemed “satisfactory,” with one in three considered “outstanding.” The broader categorizations facilitate grade inflation at the school and statewide levels as more schools are designated as being in the top third.

Maintaining professors’ self-esteem has also been cited as a cause of inflated grades (Cushman 2003). Insecure professors may seek students’ affirmations in an effort to raise their own self-esteem. They want to be liked, and inflating students’ grades may be one way in which to earn approval. According to Riesman, Glazer, and Denney (2001), such professors are “other directed.” Cushman (2003) says that “inner-directed” professors, who give grades based on carefully constructed standards, “are at a distinct loss in the culture of affirmation that characterizes modern higher education.” Lanning and Perkins (1995) substantiate this view, noting that faculty “want to be liked and respected as people;” giving low grades is likely to foster negative feelings toward the professor. Moreover, professors consider factors other than academic achievement when assigning grades (Lanning and Perkins 1995). Often, they believe that if a student demonstrates effort
and a positive attitude, then she deserves a good grade, regardless of her actual academic achievement.

**Fiscal Policies.** Barndt (2001) argues that many states' use of enrollment-based funding formulas is a primary contributor to grade inflation; after all, public colleges receive some funding that is linked to enrollment. According to Barndt (2001), "...it would not be good business to have students leave the college to seek friendlier grading."

Stone (1995) notes that college administrators’ success is determined in part by the highly visible factors of enrollment, organizational size, and program development—and funding streams that follow accordingly. Stone (1995) concludes that those departments with the greatest enrollments are allotted the most resources. A natural result is that faculty respond to the administrative emphasis on increasing enrollment by accommodating the demands of students who want high grades, whether they deserve them or not (Stone 1995).

**Student Evaluations.** Literature on the connection between grade inflation and student evaluations is extensive (Cushman 2003, McPherson, Jewell and Kim 2009, McSpirit, Kopacz and Chapman 2000, Simpson and Siguaw 2000). Often, student evaluations are a factor in determining raises, promotions, tenure, and other job-related decisions. Cushman (2003) and Simpson and Siguaw (2000) note that the use of student evaluations is unfair as it is at the faculty member's expense. At the least, it is evidence of the now-dominant “consumer culture” in higher education. Extensive research since the early 1970s indicates that students reward professors with good evaluations if they are given inflated grades (Greenwald 1997, Griffin 2004, McPherson, Jewell and Kim 2009, McSpirit et al. 2000, Snyder and Clair 1976); thus the implications for tenure are clear.

Yunker and Yunker (2003), as corroborated by Weinberg, Hashimoto, and Fleisher (2009), conclude that the use of student evaluations may predict grade inflation, with higher grades associated with better evaluations. Yunker and Yunker (2003) state that "student evaluations are positively related to current grades but unrelated to learning once current grades are controlled."

**Faculty Status.** Kezim, Pariseau, and Quinn (2005), Kirk and Spector (2009), and Sonner (2000) show that students taught by untenured and adjunct faculty have significantly higher mean GPAs than students taught by full-time, tenured faculty. Similarly, Kirk and Spector (2009) cite evidence that adjunct faculty assign higher grades than do full-time faculty.

DeBoer, Anderson, and Elfessi (2007) suggest that a professor may grade more rigorously in order to gain the respect of colleagues or more leniently to gain the approval of students. Scanlan and Care’s (2004) analysis of grades given at a Canadian nursing faculty shows that the relationships students develop with their professors can factor into grade inflation. “Assigning lower grades can become more difficult if teachers become emotionally connected to their students...” (Scanlan and Care 2004).

**Faculty Personality.** Cacamese et al. (2007) collected data regarding the extent and causes of grade inflation at U.S. medical schools. Results indicated that more than 80 percent of the students received excellent grades, even though their performance was average or below average. Moreover, 18 percent of the responding sub-internship directors admitted to having passed students who should have failed. The primary reason given for inflating grades was that faculty had formed close relationships with their students; such relationships skewed their grading and made it difficult for them to fail a student.

Faculty egalitarianism also has an effect on grading. According to Lawler (2001), professors during the 1960s embraced a democratic attitude that continues to define academic culture today. Lawler (2001) maintains that democratic beliefs make it difficult for professors to exercise authority: “Why should their opinions be privileged over those of students? By what right do they rule?” Lawler (2001) concludes that if student opinions have the same weight as professors’, then the professors will have to grade according to this belief, the inevitable result being grade inflation.

**Lack of Uniform Grading Practices.** Another cause of grade inflation is that grading practices are rarely uniform, leading to confusion and lack of validity. O’Connor (1995) and French (2005) conclude that if there is no consensus as to what a grade means and what criteria are used to determine that grade, then the grade does not have a universal meaning. Lowe, Borstorff, and Landry (2008) confirm a lack of uniformity in grading across twelve academic fields of study. Specifically, they provide evidence that math and science have the highest incidence of grade inflation.

Kuh and Hu (1999) suggest that although grade inflation exists, it is not the norm at all colleges, and it varies
among disciplines. They cite evidence of grade inflation at research universities and selective liberal arts colleges, in particular. Conversely, they confirm grade deflation at general liberal arts and comprehensive colleges and universities, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, thereby lending credibility to the belief that grade inflation is not prevalent in all schools and in all areas of study.

In summary, the review of literature identifies a number of causes of grade inflation and shows that grade inflation is not found consistently across all higher education institutions and disciplines. Academe would be well served by further study in this area.

**IMPLICATIONS OF GRADE INFLATION**

Grade inflation in higher education has resulted in changes in institutional practices. For example, many institutions now permit late course withdrawals; students who anticipate receiving poor grades thus can “protect” themselves (Biggs and Kamber 2007). Late withdrawal policies contribute to grade and GPA inflation (Eiszler 2002, Pugh 2000). In 2005, the Association for the Study of Higher Education (2005) warned that such policies may negatively affect both the education and future well-being of students and cautioned college and university administrators to reconsider their use.

Grade inflation also has induced changes in admissions criteria. Wongsurawat (2008) found grade inflation in applicants’ materials for ten law schools. Some law school admissions offices now weight applicants’ standardized test scores more heavily than their grades.

Cushman (2003) and Johnson (2003) also note that teachers who do not inflate grades receive poor evaluations that in turn decrease the likelihood that they will be granted promotion, tenure, and salary increases. Low enrollments often are a decisive factor in rehiring and tenure processes. Cushman (2003) candidly asks:

*Does anyone with any experience of teaching in today’s culture believe that professors who give Fs, Ds, and Cs on a regular basis are going to enjoy a high degree of popularity and get high enrollments? Students these days tend to be narcissists rather than masochists.*

Cushman (2003) also notes how grade inflation has a negative impact on the institution as a whole. For example, if a college attempts to mitigate or eliminate grade inflation, it may inadvertently create a “competitiveness problem” with students who attend colleges that have not instituted comparable reforms. In addition, applicants may choose not to enroll at a college known to have rigorous standards. In such cases, enrollment decreases are almost inevitable, threatening possible decreases in funding and, ultimately, faculty layoffs.

Dresner (2004) states that inflated grades are not true indicators of a student’s intellectual ability. Writing about the connection between cheating and grade inflation, Dowling (2005) notes that before grade inflation became so prevalent, students who received good grades because they actually had earned them viewed cheaters with contempt. Now, cheating is just another form of dishonesty that ensures that students will obtain the grades they want. Barriga et al. (2008) suggest that grade inflation is a disincentive for all students to produce their best work: Hard workers who see mediocre students also earning As may be discouraged from performing to the best of their ability.

It is no secret that both the private and public sectors have expressed increasing concern about the qualifications of college and university graduates; many discount or ignore prospective employees’ GPAs because almost everyone appears to have been an A student. Zimmerman (2002) observes that because so many students are on the dean’s list and graduate with honors, such distinctions have become meaningless; one result is that prospective employers rely less on GPA as measures of intelligence and ability.

Vanderslice (2004) states that “good grades on transcripts have very little meaning, and it is extremely difficult to determine competencies by viewing a transcript from most institutions of higher education today.” Levine and Cureton (1998) also note that students are aware that grade inflation has devalued their undergraduate degrees; consequently, many now view a postgraduate degree as a necessity for job entry.

**THE STUDY**

To examine the impact of grade inflation, the grades of 235 students enrolled in a Master in Teaching Literacy Program at a northeast liberal arts college during school years 2006–08 were analyzed. According to the grade rosters that were compiled, a majority of the students received A grades: 97 percent of the students had GPAs in the A to A- (3.34–3.67) range (Nikolakakos 2008). The faculty
included 25 professors, of whom four were full time; the remaining 21 were adjuncts. The purpose of the study was twofold: (1) to determine the extent to which faculty and students perceived grades as accurately reflecting academic achievement and (2) to determine the possible causes of any differences in faculty and students’ perceptions of their accuracy. Five research questions were asked:

- What factors are perceived to contribute to the high percentage of A grades in the Master of Teaching Literacy Program at a liberal arts college in a northeast metropolitan area?
- What are faculty perceptions regarding grade inflation in a teacher credential program at a liberal arts college in a northeast metropolitan area?
- What are student perceptions regarding grade inflation in a teacher credential program at a liberal arts college in a metropolitan area in the northeast?
- What is the relationship between faculty status and student grades at a liberal arts college in a northeast metropolitan area?
- Is there a correlation between student course evaluations and the number of A grades given by faculty?

**METHODS**

With the assistance of formative and summative committees, the researcher developed two survey instruments—one for students and one for faculty. The student survey (see Figure 1) included eleven statements that were organized into subscales pertinent to the research questions. Whereas the student version was administered as a paper-and-pencil survey, the faculty survey (see Figure 2, on page 8) was administered online. The faculty survey included fifteen statements that were organized into subscales. The final “question” in both the student and faculty surveys was an open-ended statement.

Of 255 student surveys distributed, 116 (45%) were completed and returned. Of 25 faculty surveys distributed, 21 (84%) were completed and returned. As both surveys included Likert-type scales as well as an open-ended question, the data were both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

**LIMITATIONS**

A limitation of this study is that the results were restricted to the program in which the researcher conducted the study. Whether the students and faculty in the sample differ from students and faculty at other higher education institutions is unknown. A second limitation is that the survey design precluded the researcher from identifying specific characteristics of the students and faculty that may have contributed to the findings. Finally, this study relies primarily on faculty and student perceptions of grade inflation, possibly limiting the study’s validity.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

To answer the first research question, the researcher utilized content analysis to detect emergent themes. The researcher utilized descriptive statistics in the form of...
frequency distributions to answer research questions two and three. To answer the fourth research question, the researcher conducted a Spearman Rho correlation with faculty status as the independent variable and student grades as the dependent variable. To answer the fifth research question, the researcher conducted a Spearman Rho correlation with course evaluation scores as the independent variable and student grades as the dependent variable.

RESULTS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1:
What factors are perceived to contribute to the high percentage of A grades in the Master of Teaching Literacy Program at a liberal arts college in a northeast metropolitan area?

Faculty Responses

The most pervasive theme that emerged related to job security: Professors gave students higher grades than they deserved because they feared that if they did not, students would give them poor evaluations, which could result ultimately in the loss of their jobs. In 39 percent of the courses taught by adjuncts, more than 90 percent of students received A grades; in only 17 percent of the classes taught by full-time faculty did more than 90 percent of students receive A grades during the 2006–08 period for which grades were analyzed.

Sixty percent of the 25 faculty members surveyed indicated that job security was a factor; typical comments were “I want to keep my job” and “The student will complain to the program director and my job may be jeopardized.” One adjunct instructor was unwilling to give a student a lower grade than he had received previously because “having to defend [the lower grade] could be problematic;” another was concerned he would be considered “a racist.”

Another theme related to professors’ beliefs that students feel entitled to receive A grades. A third theme that emerged was the belief that giving any grade other than A would result in student complaints—complaints with which professors were unwilling to deal. “The professor may feel that he or she will be placed on the defensive and will need to maintain extensive documentation to justify a student’s low grade.”

A final theme related to low expectations and a “watered-down” curriculum. Some faculty allege that instructors who do not possess a doctoral degree may design courses that are less rigorous than is appropriate for graduate-level students. Higher course grades thus are believed...
to correlate with the less demanding content of courses taught by less well-credentialed faculty. One faculty member’s comment is illustrative: “Faculty with master’s degrees may design courses with content that may be less rigorous than it should be for graduate-level students. Therefore, the higher grades correlate to the less demanding course work.”

**Student Responses**

Two themes emerged from the student survey. The first was that students have unrealistic expectations of getting an A grade. Approximately 80 percent of the 116 students who responded to the survey expressed the opinion that they received grades that were in accordance with their performance. Some students expressed the belief that many students do not read the assigned texts and do not participate in class discussions and yet expect to get an A grade. The second theme reflected the belief that students feel entitled to A grades simply because they are in graduate school and believe that A grades are expected, or they “put forth lots of effort and try hard and that warrants a high grade.” One student wrote, “Students complain too much about course load and grades. I definitely feel they are a generation about [sic] entitlement rather than hard workers.”

Survey responses indicated that very few students believe that grade inflation exists; a few students stated emphatically that they work very hard and deserve the grades they receive. Still others replied that they were insulted by the questionnaire. (Presumably such students recoil at the implication that their grades might be inflated.) This was in stark contrast to the faculty responses, which did not question the existence of grade inflation. At a minimum, faculty responses assumed or at least considered the possibility of grade inflation.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 2:**

*What are faculty perceptions regarding grade inflation in a teacher credential program at a liberal arts college in a northeast metropolitan area?*

To address this question, data were collected from the faculty survey. (See Table 1.)

Survey responses indicate that faculty believe that grade inflation exists. Almost all faculty (95%) believe student entitlement to be the primary cause of grade inflation. Faculty indicate that students routinely expect A grades and receive them at least in part as a result of faculty members’ fear of negative student evaluations. Survey data indicate some faculty members’ belief that grade inflation may be

---

**Table 1.**

**Faculty Survey Question #2 Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Who Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Some students feel they are entitled to receive high grades.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some faculty may give higher grades to students in order to receive favorable student evaluations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grades in the master of teaching literacy program accurately reflect student achievement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A disproportionate number of students receive grades in the A range.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some students in the master of teaching literacy program at this college receive grades that are higher than they deserve.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some students pressure professors to give them higher grades than they deserve.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I grade my students more rigorously than my colleagues.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some faculty may give higher grades to students to encourage them to enroll in future courses with them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some faculty may give high grades to students in order to maintain enrollment in the program”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some students receive high grades because some faculty dilute course content.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some faculty have low expectations for student performance.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I grade my students more leniently than my colleagues.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grade inflation occurs more often at this college compared to other comparable institutions.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
caused by lenient colleagues who either have low standards for academic performance and/or who assign high grades in the hope of receiving good student evaluations.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3:
What are student perceptions regarding grade inflation in a teaching credentialing program at a liberal arts college in a metropolitan area in the northeast?

Survey responses to questions about students’ perceptions of the existence of grade inflation at the college provide the answers to this research question. (See Table 2.)

A large majority of students (80%) disagree with the statement that students receive grades that are higher than they deserve. Specifically, student responses to Statement 1 indicate that they do not believe their grades are inflated; consequently, succeeding statements on the survey that postulated possible reasons for grade inflation garnered only minimal percentages of agreement. The results of the student survey clearly indicate that most students believe that grade inflation does not exist in the master of teaching literacy program. Students are convinced that they work hard and that they deserve the A grades they receive. Students perceive the program’s curriculum and the professors’ standards as rigorous.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4:
What is the relationship between faculty status and student grades at a liberal arts college in a northeast metropolitan area?

In 39 percent of the courses taught by adjuncts, more than 90 percent of students receive A grades; in only 17 percent of the classes taught by full-time faculty do more than 90 percent of students receive A grades. A Spearman Rho correlation indicates a strong positive correlation between faculty status and the number of A grades assigned \( (r = 0.802, p < 0.001) \). Specifically, adjunct instructors gave significantly more A grades \( (M = 14.53, SD = 6.87) \) than did full-time faculty \( (M = 11.74, SD = 6.81) \) during the 2006–08 study period.

The data indicate that job status is another factor contributing to the assignment of A grades: Adjuncts and non-tenured faculty assigned A grades at higher rates than their full-time colleagues. This makes sense when one considers that questions of job security loom each semester for adjunct and non-tenured faculty. (Note that this is not to say that adjunct and non-tenured faculty intentionally inflate their students’ grades.) At a minimum, faculty status is a contributing factor to grade inflation at this college; as such, it deserves further study.

RESEARCH QUESTION 5:
Is there a correlation between student course evaluations and the number of A grades given by faculty?

A Spearman Rho correlation indicated a moderate correlation between course evaluations and the percentage of A grades given \( (r = 0.35, p = 0.02) \). Specifically, as the percent-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage Who Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Grades in the master of teaching literacy program accurately reflect achievement.”</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some students feel they are entitled to receive high grades.”</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some students receive high grades because of diluted course content.”</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some students pressure professors to give them higher grades than they deserve.”</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Grades in the A range are given more often than they are deserved.”</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some students in the master of teaching literacy program at this college receive grades that are higher than they deserve.”</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some faculty may give high grades to students in order to maintain enrollment in the program.”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some faculty may give higher grades to students in order to receive favorable student evaluations.”</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some faculty have low expectations for student performance.”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some faculty may give higher grades to students to encourage them to enroll in future courses with them.”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
age of A grades increased, so did the average course evaluation scores. This correlation is statistically significant. Thus, at this college, grade inflation is as closely related to student evaluations as other factors—such as the employment status of faculty—were found to be.

**DISCUSSION**

The authors sought to determine whether grade inflation exists in a teacher credentialing program at the college and, if it does, what faculty and students believe to be contributing factors. Survey results indicate that faculty believe grade inflation exists. Contributing factors were found to vary according to one’s position—from student views regarding the existence and causes of grade inflation, it is important to note that while research questions one, two, and three were subjective, research questions four and five were objective. Professors and students responded according to their perceptions; this fact alone may have distinguished faculty from student views regarding the existence and causes of grade inflation. This does not invalidate the views; it suggests, however, that one’s perceptions of grade inflation vary according to one’s position—i.e., faculty or student—within the college. Regardless, the survey results for the

Although most faculty believe that students are graded appropriately, nearly two-thirds agree that a disproportionate number of students—97 percent—receive grades in the A range. This is inconsistent: Individually, faculty members believe that grade inflation is not caused by their own grading policy; thus, grade inflation must be the result of other professors’ grading practices. It would seem that faculty capitulate to student expectations, even though they believe that too many undeserved A grades are given.

The student survey yielded a vastly different view: Students do not believe that grade inflation exists; rather, they believe they earn the high grades they receive. Students perceive professors’ standards as rigorous and course content as challenging. Only a very small percentage of students agree with faculty about the existence of grade inflation. Notably, students and faculty alike sense a pervasive attitude of student entitlement. Whereas 95 percent students agree that grades accurately reflect achievement, only 80 percent of faculty think so.

The results of the present study support the findings in the literature that faculty status is an important contributor to grade inflation. The high correlation between the percentage of A grades given and adjunct, untenured, or otherwise “insecure” faculty status may be a result of such faculty members’ desire to appease students (see DeBoer, Anderson and Elfessi 2007 and Scanlan and Care 2004). Moreover, such faculty may believe that while they have the “power” to grade students, the students have the “power” to grade them. And, like students, faculty, too, want and need good “grades.” Because they work without job security or tenure, positive evaluations may be more important to adjuncts than they are to full-time faculty. This would support some faculty members’ perception that some faculty may exchange good grades for positive evaluations.

The moderate correlation between student evaluations and A grades may indicate that all professors—regardless of faculty status—want good evaluations. Good course evaluations are validating and contribute to one’s feelings of self-worth; poor evaluations can have the opposite effect, discouraging even those faculty members who do a fine job and who receive poor evaluations only because they do not give all their students A grades.

Although the survey data revealed markedly different faculty and student perspectives regarding the existence and causes of grade inflation, it is important to note that students believe they earn the high grades they receive. Students perceive professors’ standards as rigorous and course content as challenging. Only a very small percentage of students agree with faculty about the existence of grade inflation. Notably, students and faculty alike sense a pervasive attitude of student entitlement. Whereas 95 percent students agree that grades accurately reflect achievement, only 80 percent of faculty think so.

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present research indicate that grade inflation does exist in the teaching literacy program at the college.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Grade inflation is harmful to students as well as faculty. Faculty should not have to fear that honest grading may result in job loss. Students who truly deserve A grades also are negatively impacted when they receive the same grade as students who submit good but not superior work. At the very least, it is a disincentive for students to work to the best of their ability. Students who receive higher grades than they deserve may develop a false sense of their mastery of a subject and may become accustomed to getting the grade they want rather than the grade they deserve. (Imagine if generation after generation of—among them, future professors—were to believe—mistakenly—that their grades accurately reflect their knowledge and ability?)

The consequences of grade inflation are not limited to faculty and students but extend to employers. Those that evaluate prospective employees’ transcripts as a part of the screening process are apt to find their new hires less qualified than their academic records suggest.

If grades are to accurately reflect the level of knowledge and skill a student has mastered, then it is imperative that students be assigned the grades they earn rather than the grades they want. Faculty should not have to fear the repercussions of negative feedback from students. And when students agree that a professor’s grading practices are unfair—or that the instruction is poor—they need to confront their instructor; if the result is unsuccessful, they need to communicate their complaint to the chair of the department.

Higher education institutions should not promulgate a culture of easy grading. Leading students into a false sense of achievement will ultimately degrade our academic system.

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About the Authors

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NOTE: This article is based on research from an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Nikolakakos 2010).
Evidence of the emergence of accountability expectations for higher education in the United States and throughout the world is abundant; it is in national reports, conference themes, mandated assessments, accreditation guidelines, and government statues and regulations. Yet some research establishes that business, political, and academic stakeholders do not necessarily agree as to either the purpose of accountability policy or what constitutes “evidence” of accountability. This paper presents survey results from academic, business, and political officers in five states, noting significant areas of consent and dissent regarding higher education accountability policy.
EMERGENCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Among the earliest markers of the call for higher education performance accountability was regional accrediting agencies’ shift in the 1980s and 1990s from the use of process indicators to educational outcomes and institutional effectiveness indicators as the bases for assessment and program/service improvement (Bogue and Hall 2003). At the same time, state government became a more assertive player in higher education accountability policy, mandating assessment practices (Ewell, Finney and Lenth 1990) and calling for reporting on the basis of selected performance indicators (Bogue, Creech and Folger 1993, Borden and Banta 1994, Gaither, Nedweck and Neal 1994). Individual campuses, multi-campus systems, and national policy agencies added to the accountability impulse with a range of report card policies. Perhaps no accountability policy initiative has provoked as much discussion and debate as the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education’s Measuring Up 2000 (reissued in 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008).

Two reports furnish conceptual bookends to the political and professional dialogue on higher education accountability from 1972 until 2005. In Accountability in Higher Education, Kenneth Mortimer (1972) commented that “Accountability accents results—it aims squarely at what comes out of an educational system rather than what goes into it.” In 2005, the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education released Accountability for Better Results: A National Imperative for Higher Education. The Spellings Report (A Test of Leadership), released in September 2006 by the U.S. Office of Education, offered six recommendations for improvements in higher education, including a call for a shift “from a system primarily based on reputation to one based on performance... which will be more easily achieved if higher education in-
stitutions embrace and implement serious accountability measures.”

In response to the challenge posed by the Spellings Report and to other calls for higher education accountability, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (formerly the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges) entered into a policy partnership. Many of the approximately 500 colleges that are members of these two organizations are creating the Voluntary System of Accountability—College Portrait, Web sites that will provide (1) institutional information for students and families (e.g., enrollment costs, degrees offered), (2) data relating to student experience and perceptions (these will derive from one of several surveys, e.g., National Survey of Student Engagement), and (3) data pertaining to student learning outcomes (these will derive from one of several instruments, e.g., College Learning Assessment) (Voluntary System of Accountability 2007).

Similarly, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities launched the University and College Accountability Network, an online venture that provides student enrollment profiles, graduating student profiles, costs of attendance, and information about campus life.1

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Higher education accountability literature (Lingenfelter 2003, Millett 2008, Spellings Report 2006) and at least three dissertation studies suggest differences in the academic, business, and political perspectives on accountability in higher education—including its definition, accountability policy purpose, acceptable evidence, and communication of results (Roberson-Scott 2005, Tanner 2005, Tipton-Rogers 2004). Business officers are primarily interested in the readiness of college graduates for work; they rarely cite other accountability outcomes. Political officers often are unaware of the accountability reports that are furnished annually to state political leaders. Distrustful of accountability reports furnished by higher education campuses and boards, they are more likely to trust independent assessments such as those conducted by an audit process or a state comptroller’s office. Academic leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of current accountability policies and reports and anticipate that accountability will remain a prominent policy expectation.

While the call for accountability thus remains strong, it is not clear that different stakeholders agree as to the purpose of accountability policy, evidences and standards of acceptable performance, issues of credibility, and application of results.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The research reported in this article was intended (1) to discern the extent to which academic, business, and political leaders’ expectations of higher education accountability policy differ and (2) to explore means of improving the design and impact of such policy. Two research questions guided the study:

- What differences, if any, exist among academic, business, and political stakeholders with regard to issues of collegiate mission and definitions and evidence of accountability?
- What are the most important steps higher education can take to improve its performance accountability?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research builds on Bolman and Deal’s (2003) “organizational frames” model, in which the complexities of organizations and associated leadership roles may be examined through four “frames”: structural, human relations, political, and symbolic. The structural frame focuses on organizational charts, policy manuals, and position descriptions. The human relations frame focuses on relationships and interpersonal needs—the talent investments and aspirations of workers. The symbolic frame focuses on values, shared assumptions, celebrations, storytelling, and ways of doing business as means of understanding an organization. This paper focuses on the political frame, which posits that no organization exists without conflict over purpose, policy, process, resource allocation, and performance assessment.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Survey questions were framed around six themes derived from a review of accountability literature and research:

- preferred definitions of accountability;
effectiveness of existing accountability instruments/policies;
- priorities in higher education mission and purpose;
- importance of accountability stakeholders;
- expected outcomes of accountability policy; and
- importance of accountability evidence/indicators.

The survey was revised twice in response to feedback from a review panel of higher education policy experts and scholars as well as a pilot survey administered to selected legislators and business leaders.

The survey was sent to academic, business, and political leaders in five states in different geographical and institutional accreditation regions. The five states were Connecticut, Georgia, Michigan, Colorado, and Oregon.

Survey participants included the president, chief academic officer, and faculty senate president of each public institution in each state, a convenience sample of business leaders identified from selected chamber of commerce member lists in each state, and all legislators in each state.

LIMITATIONS
We make no claim that the study respondents are statistically representative of these three populations. Indeed, the modest number of political responses refutes any claim of adequate population representation. This must be counted an exploratory study only.

RESEARCH METHOD
Each participant was sent a link to an online survey that invited responses to six areas relating to policy interest and perspective; follow-up “reminder” e-mails were sent one week and two weeks after original transmission of the survey. Response rates were lowest for individuals in the business and political categories. Finally, in an effort to increase response rates, we mailed a hard copy of the survey as well as a postage-paid envelope with return to Dr. E. Grady Bogue. (See Table 1 for information regarding survey participants.)

Table 1. Participant Profile Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Academic Count</th>
<th>Business Count</th>
<th>Political Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA ANALYSIS
We limited our analysis to findings for each of the combined stakeholder groups. Future research may focus on analysis of the data by state or other classification variable (e.g., academic position, political affiliation, size of corporation).

RESULTS
The tables that follow present the mean responses of the three participant groups (academic, business, political), the F-test for the analysis of variance, and the significance level of each survey item.

Definitions of Accountability
Survey respondents were invited to use a four-point Likert scale to rate their level of agreement with each of four definitions of accountability in higher education. Responses were compiled by “frame” (academic, business and political) and are presented as the mean response by frame. (See Table 2, on page 18.)

Survey respondents showed the greatest level of statistical agreement in their definition of institutional accountability as institutional goal achievement, though that definition was not the highest ranking of any of the three groups. Each survey group gave high ratings to “fiscal and management integrity” as a definition of accountability in higher education. Significant differences were apparent in the groups’ perceptions of “achieving state goals”
and “offering public evidences on educational and fiscal performance.” More than survey respondents in either the academic or business group, those in the political group deemed institutions’ responsiveness to state goals as an important definition of accountability.

### Instruments of Accountability

Which are preferred accountability instruments? Survey respondents were invited to rate five measures using a Likert scale in which 1 represented “least effective” and 4 “most effective.” (See Table 3.)

Respondents from the academic, business, and political groups demonstrated similar rates of acceptance of institutional and major field accreditation as well as financial audit reports as instruments of accountability. Each of the groups rated major field accreditation the highest. Business and political respondents placed higher value on performance indicators and report cards—as well as *U. S. News and World Report* rankings—than did academic respondents.

### Higher Education Purpose

Given the policy emphasis on accountability in higher education, it seemed reasonable to determine the extent to which academic, business, and political respondents agree as to the mission and purpose of higher education. Survey respondents thus were invited to use a four-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement with each of six summary statements of the purpose of higher education. (See Table 4, on page 19.)

When one poses questions about the accountability of an enterprise, it seems

### Table 2.

**Definitions of Accountability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Academic*</th>
<th>Business*</th>
<th>Political*</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
<th>Scheffé</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution Achieves Established Goals</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.276</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution Demonstrates Fiscal and Management Integrity</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution is Responsive in Achieving State Goals</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>B-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution offers Public Evidence on Educational &amp; Fiscal Performance</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>A-B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Appropriateness, on a 4-point scale, of the given statement as a definition of accountability in higher education.

### Table 3.

**Instruments of Accountability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Academic*</th>
<th>Business*</th>
<th>Political*</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
<th>Scheffé</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution Accreditation</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.890</td>
<td>0.410</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Field Accreditation</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.130</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Audit Reports</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.080</td>
<td>0.340</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Indicator Reports or Report Cards</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>8.230</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rankings and Ratings such as U.S. News &amp; World Report</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>55.781</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Effectiveness, on a 4-point scale, of the given instrument in promoting accountability in higher education.
reasonable to ask whether stakeholders agree on the mission and purpose of that enterprise. (See Table 4). Beyond agreeing that higher education should contribute to economic and workforce development, the participant consensus disappears. Academic leaders place higher value on (a) student discovery of talents, interests, and values, (b) serving as depository of cultural history and heritage, (c) sustaining and strengthening democracy, and (d) serving as forum for public policy debate. Though not reaching significance at 0.05 or 0.01 levels, academic leaders place a higher value on the unimpeded search for truth than business or political leaders. Business leaders do not accord as much value to the “public policy forum” mission of higher education as do political and academic leaders. These differences in perspective on higher education mission and purpose reinforce the need for face-to-face dialogue among stakeholders on precisely what is expected of colleges and universities.

**Accountability Impact**

Survey respondents were asked to use a four-point Likert scale to indicate their extent of agreement with each of four statements regarding the impact of accountability policy. (See Table 5.)

There was general agreement on three of the four improvement impacts of accountability policy, with disagree-
ment between academic and political leaders on improving government confidence. (See Table 5). Academic and business participants place first priority on improving fiscal and educational management as an outcome of accountability policy, with political participants close to even on that purpose and improving government confidence.

**Attitudes Toward Accountability Policy**

Again, participants were asked to use a four-point Likert scale, this time to rate their agreement with each of six statements pertaining to the form and credibility of accountability efforts. (See Table 6.)

Differences are evident in the groups’ ratings of all six statements. As might be expected, academic respondents were more trusting of the credibility of institutional accountability data than were business and political respondents. This finding accords with those from previous qualitative inquiries (Roberson-Scott 2005, Tanner 2005, Tipton-Rogers 2004). Business and political respondents were most supportive—and more so than academic respondents—of independent educational and financial audits. Business and political respondents also were more inclined than academic respondents to believe that campuses will use “cosmetic and adaptive” approaches to deflect public attention away from unflattering data. Finally, business and political respondents were more supportive than academic respondents of periodic public polls to gauge support of higher education. Academic respondents agreed most strongly with the statement that “isolated instances of integrity problems in higher education can overshadow good reports of academic and fiscal stewardship.”

**Evidence of Accountability: Constituent Satisfaction**

Survey participants were asked to use a four-point Likert scale to rate the importance of the satisfaction of six separate constituency groups as an indicator of institutional accountability. (See Table 7, on page 21)

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**Table 6.**

**Attitudes on Accountability Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
<th>Scheffé</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability data submitted by higher education institutions can be trusted</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent financial and performance audits are more valuable than accreditation reports</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>20.69</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions will use cosmetic and adaptive responses to avoid disclosing unflattering information</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability information is more valuable when developed by an independent evaluator than by higher education boards/institutions</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>54.04</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A periodic public poll (similar to gallop poll) should be commissioned to gauge public confidence in higher education</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>13.24</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated instances of integrity problems in higher education can overshadow good reports on academic and fiscal stewardship</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>A-B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Level of agreement or disagreement, on a 4-point scale, with each of the given statements.
Academic, business, and political respondents agreed that the two constituencies whose satisfaction is most important as evidence of institutional accountability are employers and currently enrolled students. Whereas academic respondents placed the least value on parents’ satisfaction as a measure of institutional accountability, business and political respondents valued alumni satisfaction least. Academic respondents also valued faculty satisfaction more highly than did business and political respondents.

Evidence of Accountability: Student Learning Outcomes

Survey participants were asked to use a four-point Likert scale to rate their agreement with each of eleven statements describing student learning outcomes as evidence of higher education accountability. (See Table 8, on page 22.)

See Table 8 showing differences among 9 of 11 student learning outcomes. Academic leaders place higher value on knowledge of other cultures, democratic heritage, modes of thought and pursuit of truth, systems of ethical and religious thought, artistic/aesthetic expression and analytical/critical thinking. Business leaders tend to favor interpersonal skill/interaction.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research demonstrates that the call for accountability in higher education is not a simple policy challenge. Key stakeholders disagree as to what should be the mission priorities of higher education, the purpose of accountability policy, and the evidence of accountability.

It seems unlikely that a credible system of accountability will be developed given the lack of consensus regarding the mission and purposes of higher education. A primary emphasis on the economic development role of colleges and universities is understandable in the context of today’s global marketplace. But while economic development and workforce readiness are legitimate purposes of higher education, they are not its only purposes. Who will assert the importance of higher education as a venture of personal discovery, as a guarantor of liberty and guardian of democracy, as a depository of heritage and culture, as a forum for policy critique and debate, and as a facilitator of the search for truth? Given the complexities of the history and mission of higher education in the United States—and its existence in a climate of chronic crisis and continuing criticism—guarded attitudes about the possibility of framing a broadly accepted accountability policy seem warranted. Disagreement and debate are at the core not only of our colleges but also of our democratic society. We thus should welcome dissent and dialogue and not shrink from the hard work that will be required to develop accountability policy that is credible and useful to academic, business, and political stakeholders.

Table 7.

Evaluation of Accountability Evidence—Constituent Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Academic*</th>
<th>Business*</th>
<th>Political*</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
<th>Scheffé</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled Student Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.452</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>A-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community/Civic Satisfaction</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>0.289</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Satisfaction</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>23.15</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Desirability for each of the given evidences of accountability.
Each of the participant groups in this study believes that accountability is essential. Each group also believes that evidences and instruments to demonstrate accountability exist. Each group believes as well that higher education exists to serve multiple purposes and multiple constituents—students being foremost among them.

Despite these areas of agreement, the academic, business, and political respondent groups differed in their ratings of the purpose, evidence, instrumentation, and communication of accountability in higher education. Given these differences (and evidence of comparable differences in other research), it seems reasonable to conclude that a more useful and credible accountability system could be developed were representatives of each group to meet for this purpose: Rather than arguing for or against current accountability measures in higher education, stakeholders should initiate and persist in transparent and candid exchange until they devise an accountability policy and procedure(s) that reflect reasonable agreement as to their purpose, evidence, methods, and evaluation.

We therefore recommend that the following actions be taken:

- Each state should convene a representative group of academic, business, and political leaders to review current accountability efforts and to revise/develop accountability policy that is acceptable and meaningful to all stakeholders. (North Dakota is already working in this direction. See Dunn 2006.)
- Each of the six regional institutional accrediting agencies should consider undertaking the challenge of building consensus among academic, business, and political leaders regarding higher education accountability. Such an effort could guide campuses and states that seek to strengthen their accountability policy.

### Table 8.
**Evaluation of Accountability Evidence—Student Learning Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
<th>Scheffé</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and appreciation of other cultures</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>31.730</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge in a special or major field</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>0.465</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of democratic culture and heritage</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>11.700</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B, B-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of modes of thought associated with pursuit of truth in different fields</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>11.920</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of systems of religious and ethical thought</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>4.370</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>A-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency in artistic and aesthetic expression</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>5.960</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>A-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency in analytical and critical thinking</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>5.270</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>A-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance on exit examinations and/or professional licensure exams</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.130</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency in interpersonal skill</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>5.390</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>A-P, B-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency in oral and written communication</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>6.090</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>A-B, A-P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency in foreign language</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.230</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (Please indicate the desirability of each of the following evidences in demonstrating accountability.)
Regional policy agencies (e.g., SREB and WICHE) should consider taking responsibility for the design of accountability policy that would be deemed credible by academic, business, and political stakeholders.

REFERENCES

About the Authors

DR. E. GRADY BOGUE is Professor of Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Tennessee. He served for eleven years as Chancellor of Louisiana State University in Shreveport (1980–1991) and for one year as Interim Chancellor of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He was named Chancellor Emeritus of LSU Shreveport by the LSU Board of Trustees in 1995. Dr. Bogue was named a distinguished alumnus of the University of Memphis in 1986. He has served in a variety of other campus and state level administrative positions. He has written ten books on leadership and accountability themes and has one more in press. Presidential Derailment in Higher Education, with Stephen Rechtenberg and Gerry Kauvar (Rowman and Littlefield), will be released in spring 2012. He has published more than 60 articles in such journals as the Harvard Business Review, Leader to Leader, Journal of Higher Education, Educational Record, Phi Delta Kappan, Planning for Higher Education, College and University, and Trusteeship. Over the past two decades, seven of his public speeches have been carried in Vital Speeches of the Day.

KIMBERELY BINGHAM HALL is the Executive Vice President for South College in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she has served for sixteen years. Including her current position, she has worked in private higher education for more than 24 years. Dr. Hall earned her doctoral degree in Education Administration and Policy Studies, with a concentration in Higher Education Administration, from the University of Tennessee. In her current position, she works closely with all aspects of institutional and program accreditation, as well as planning and assessment. She is an active participant in the accreditation process in service on task forces, accreditation committees, visiting teams and special accreditation teams.
How can SEM be tied to executive leadership and take its own leadership role on a campus? This article explores this question from a campus transition to SEM, identifies the “players” along with internal and external drivers, and details the executive’s role in strategic enrollment management.
Expectations of higher education leaders are high, varied, and numerous. Leaders are expected not only to be visionary, decisive, and articulate, but also to share information, purposes, commitments, and struggles (Rouche and Rouche 2011). Effective leaders must know and understand their faculty and staff; insist on realism; set clear goals and priorities; follow through; reward doers; expand people’s capabilities; and know themselves and their limits. An institution takes on the culture of its leader (Bossidy and Charan 2002).

Strategic enrollment management (SEM) can provide leaders of education institutions with the tools to connect community, regional, and national initiatives with campus goals. It can create a data-driven culture focused on student success, and it can provide means of breaking down campus silos. Affiliated with the right leadership, it will, itself, take a leading role in campus planning, decision making, and future direction.

Strategic enrollment management can be defined as “a concept and process that enables the fulfillment of institutional mission and students’ educational goals” (Bontrager 2008, Bontrager and Pollock 2009). Why is SEM important on a campus? The answer is simple: because it increases the number of successful students. It is a hard concept to argue against, although it is not unusual to find resistance to and pushback against SEM initiatives. The pushback may come from faculty who are concerned that a focus on enrollment and a call for increasing students’ success really means lowering academic standards, grade inflation, and pressure to pass academically unprepared students for the sake of reaching specific goals. Such faculty should be shown that SEM can mesh with an academic master plan (Clemetsen 2009). Alternatively, pushback may come from enrollment services staff who are concerned that they will be held solely responsible if specific enrollment goals are not met. In fact, pushback may come from any campus constituency concerned about changing practices, job descriptions and responsibilities, and the campus culture as a whole.

For these reasons, any implementation of a SEM model must be inclusive and collegial. This will help staff and faculty understand SEM and will assist in creating a student success model that takes a leading role on campus. How SEM is organized, what “players” are involved, and to what extent the executive leadership and the faculty embrace the model will determine its success. One thing is certain:
No single model works on every campus. The question, then, is how to work with campus leadership to create and enhance a strategic enrollment management model that is the best fit.

**LEADING THE TRANSITION TO SEM**

**Why is SEM leadership important?** Strategic enrollment management is more than an attempt to manipulate enrollment. It can easily be misunderstood by upper-level administration as merely an enhanced approach to admissions, marketing, and financial aid and, thus, solely the responsibility of these few enrollment service departments. Because it is more encompassing, it is easy for campus leaders to underestimate the scope of what is required to implement SEM. Successful implementation of a SEM model can change the entire culture of a campus and can be a linchpin for addressing larger issues.

Although SEM ultimately cannot be limited to enrollment service departments, the creation of a SEM model often begins in the student services area as admissions or financial aid officers are exposed to SEM through conference and seminar participation as well as interaction with student services colleagues. A major task at the outset thus is not only providing the campus with information about how SEM works but also describing the potential benefits to students and other constituent groups. SEM can:
- be a catalyst for establishing comprehensive enrollment goals;
- promote academic success;
- promote institutional success;
- address specialized student challenges;
- help create a data-rich environment;
- strengthen internal and external communications; and
- increase campus collaboration (Bontrager 2008, Bontrager and Pollock 2009).

Perhaps most important, SEM provides the means for examining everything as through the eyes of the student: Class schedules, tutoring, testing, course placement, developmental education, advising, financial aid, and more can all be reviewed and adjusted to maximize student success. The focus of the campus becomes the student. The success of the student becomes the paramount goal, and decisions are made in light of what is best for the student. This does not mean that administrative efficiency should be sacrificed and the campus given over to catering to every student wish and demand. Rather, it means that decisions should be made in light of their impact on students and whether they aid or hinder student progress. If this is done, then the very manner in which staff and faculty interact with students can change.

Indeed, change is the foundation for implementing a new or improved SEM model. To realign an institution according to SEM principles, barriers among departments, divisions, programs, staff, and faculty must be broken down. Mature SEM models influence department structures, staffing, and the use of staff resources. Ask the question again: Why is SEM leadership important? Tied with strong campus leadership, it can become the driving force for cultural change defined by a focus on student success (Pollock 2004).

The magnitude of change associated with transitioning to a SEM model necessitates active leadership from the chief campus officer (the president or chancellor) and the executive leadership team. However, although top-level leadership ultimately is required for full, successful SEM implementation, effective SEM transitions do not always start at the executive level. In fact, it is an oft-repeated fallacy that it is impossible to adopt a SEM approach without initial support from the chief campus officer. A common corollary is the lament “I wanted to implement SEM, but I could not get buy-in from campus leadership.” Top-level support from the outset is an advantage, to be sure. But it is not always required.

Among institutions that now employ robust SEM models, many began their transitions with a grassroots approach. As noted above, directors of enrollment service departments are often the first to become aware of SEM. When institutions take their initial, fledgling steps toward adopting a SEM model, they sometimes appoint a chief enrollment management officer (often, the director of an enrollment service department). This typically occurs well in advance of a true commitment to the change of campus culture required by SEM. Mid- to upper-level managers often lead the first SEM charge: They compile data; involve a range of campus stakeholders in enrollment planning; create new, well-informed enrollment initiatives; and finally achieve stronger enrollment outcomes that garner attention and create buy-in from executive leaders. This form of
leadership—modeling the SEM process and demonstrating its effectiveness—has been the catalyst for many successful SEM transitions.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Comments about the importance of grassroots SEM leadership notwithstanding, a sustainable transition to a SEM model requires buy-in from the chief campus executive. Presidents and chancellors must have a clear vision of what their institutions can and should be and must carefully articulate that vision to inspire others on campus. One of a leader’s main roles is to create a vision and a strategic plan. A SEM model provides an opportunity to create a vision that is inclusive and student-focused.

The role of the president in the successful implementation of a SEM model hinges on his or her level of involvement, understanding, and support. His ability to deploy a SEM model will be dependent upon his gathering the diverse forces on campus into a working, coherent group dedicated to student success. The chief executive sets the scene for all that will follow: She will need to determine the roles of other campus leaders, including cabinet-level administrators and, potentially, a chief enrollment management officer.

Executives, their leadership teams, and, eventually, faculty leaders must be able to describe the reasons for implementing SEM. Leaders must be prepared to explain the issues confronting the campus as well as desirable SEM outcomes, whether increasing enrollment or student retention or diversifying the student body. Mature SEM organizations utilize more refined enrollment targets to inform other aspects of campus planning, such as forecasting staffing levels, merging departments, and projecting facility needs. The determining factors on each campus will differ, as will specific goals and sub-goals. Leadership should build SEM into the institution’s vision and strategic plan. Then SEM will have a significant impact as it will be goal oriented and data driven.

Be certain that goals are measurable and fit into the strategic plan. Present data to faculty, staff, and the public,
and facilitate discussions—not just “talk”—about how to improve programs. Some on campus may dismiss SEM as just another “flavor of the month” that should be ignored until it goes away, but this attitude can be countered by presenting data and encouraging open, honest discussion.

Throughout the planning process, executive leaders should make student success the top priority on campus. Leaders who are truly “student oriented” will create a campus culture that is defined by its continual search for solutions that promote students’ best interest. (It is one thing to state that a campus “puts students first” but quite another to put that commitment in writing, incorporate it into a vision and strategic plan, and prove it with data.) Once the pieces of a SEM model are in place, all leadership must support it, financially and in discussions with the campus community as well as the community at large. The chief executive should be students’ greatest advocate.

Understand that this will mark a departure from some traditional education models; certainly, it will change the culture on campus. Viewed through the student lens, every traditional process can be challenged: Is the student schedule created in the best interest of students or faculty? Are bills and payments scheduled around what is best for students or in accordance with “the way it’s always been done?” How are students advised? Which student support mechanisms are effective? Are the cafeteria and bookstore hours optimized for students? Campus leaders may be surprised to learn how many campus processes benefit staff and faculty yet constitute barriers for students.

The president should follow up with both the process and the results. It would be self-defeating to put the program in place and then not monitor it and continue to advocate for it. As he or she does so, the president will gain a better understanding of who is involved in—and truly committed to—the student success model.

If a president lacks a thorough understanding of enrollment management, he or she can increase his knowledge in any of a number of ways: Seminars and conferences (such as AACRAO’s annual SEM conference) provide opportunities to learn about multiple facets of enrollment management. Consultants and advisors may be brought to campus to assist in the building of an enrollment management system. Yet another resource is student services experts on campus: Many have years of experience and background in SEM and student success models. Involving these individuals in campus planning discussions (if they are not already involved) can prove an effective initial step.

**IDENTIFY DRIVERS AND “PLAYERS”**

Any successful student success model encompasses all areas of campus; for that reason, it is important to recognize the potential players in the model as well as those external entities that monitor the institution’s success. Identifying internal and external drivers and their roles will help shape a SEM model. Some drivers will benefit directly from having a SEM model; others may never have direct involvement in the system but will benefit nevertheless from a model that facilitates student enrollment and retention. Leaders should look at any model through the “lenses” of every driver.

Campus leaders will need to answer numerous questions: Who should be involved? What sort of structure will be utilized: committee, coordinator, division? How will issues regarding reporting lines, accountability, and shifts in campus culture be addressed?

The successful SEM model is incorporated into the fabric of everyday work on campus. Staff and faculty should understand its importance, what their roles might be, and how a combined effort will net the result of more successful students. Faculty and staff training will be critical to facilitate their learning about SEM and how each area affects students and can be modified to help increase student success.

**Internal Drivers**

- **Students** are the reason to create a SEM model on a campus. Each component of the model should be reviewed according to the student perspective and should be modified to maximize the support needed for students to be successful. One suggestion is to review all of the processes students must navigate—e.g., apply for admission, register, apply for financial aid, pay bills, enroll in classes, etc. Students’ expectations for their college experience will be higher; they will want streamlined courses focused on what they need—and offered at more convenient times and places. They will want proof that they are getting “their money’s worth” (Rouche 2000).
- **Faculty** have more direct contact with students than any other group on campus and therefore must be
involved from the outset in the creation of a SEM model. (This can help thwart the perception that academic rigor and standards are being sacrificed in order to support enrollment goals.) Faculty will be charged with creating and reviewing learning outcomes and developing measurable assessment components. Learning outcomes should be created that best represent what students should know when they complete one course and enroll in another—and when they leave campus to enter the workplace (Rouche, Kemper and Rouche 2006). Another area of faculty concern may be finding the balance between academic freedom and accountability. One must remember that faculty are also subject to more public scrutiny than ever before. “Public interest in faculty’s duties, responsibilities, and time on task; legislators’ questions about what students are getting for their tuition dollars; and like concerns have become serious intrusions into the business of higher education” (Rouche and Rouche 2000). Today, “more than ever, the methods and criteria by which faculty performance is evaluated will be aligned more closely with documented outcomes than with intent or effort” (Rouche and Rouche 2000). Assessment of outcomes may require overhauling the curriculum and developing measurable student outcomes. These outcomes in turn may be tied directly to SEM efforts and student success models. One benefit for faculty involved in SEM is that data from measurable goals will provide “proof” that students are learning.

The chief campus officer must buy in to the model wholeheartedly, regardless of how and where the model was initiated. No SEM model will ever live up to its potential without the president’s eventual full support and participation.

Board members should understand the importance of a student success model and related data. SEM can be one of the major guiding principles on campus. Presentations to the board about goals and data will update trustees as they help plan the college’s future.

Upper-level administrators must understand and support SEM and be able to lead change—including cultural change—on campus. This group may include executive cabinet members as well as directors and others who lead day-to-day operations that help students progress through the education system.

Enrollment services staff carry a significant portion of a SEM model and are responsible for nearly everything outside of the classroom, including such critical student support mechanisms as advising and tutoring, student recruitment, admissions, and orientation. While others on campus may point to this group and deem student success its responsibility, this group cannot be held solely responsible. Enrollment service departments often initiate SEM practices on campus and ultimately lead the charge for change and the creation of a campus-wide SEM plan.

External Drivers

Although it is easy to identify and focus on the internal drivers on campus, external drivers also must be considered when creating a SEM system.

Particularly for community colleges, the institution’s response to local needs and expectations is important: Program offerings that seek to address local needs; flexible class offerings; and the ability to show good financial stewardship of local tax money are just a few critical areas that can be related to SEM objectives.

State expectations—related to funding and education initiatives, required submission of data, and evidence of increased student success—are inevitably tied to SEM models. In recent years, state lawmakers have withdrawn billions of dollars of funding for public education (Wildavsky, Kelly and Carey 2011). Expectations for change are abundant, and requirements to provide data related to measurable goals may soon become the norm.

The federal government is involved in many initiatives that relate to SEM—for example, financial aid and grant opportunities. Each year, higher education institutions are required to submit various data-based reports to the federal government; many of them relate to student success and completion rates. Expectations are rising: Federal calls for an increase in graduation rates would have the United States boast the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. To help accomplish this goal, colleges may create SEM models that allow for closer collaboration.
with K–12 education; that increase student retention by eliminating obstacles to academic achievement; that increase enrollment; that include a shift toward more data-driven decision making; that increase financial aid; and that redesign remedial education (Cook and Hartle 2011).

Numerous national education initiatives may be tied to a SEM model. Achieving the Dream (ATD) is one example: Based on a data-driven approach that helps identify gaps where students fail, ATD provides a pathway to help increase student success. Policy makers and private foundations also have set ambitious goals for improving the rate at which Americans earn college credentials (Bailey, Jaggars and Jenkins 2011). Other initiatives include the American Graduation Initiative, the Voluntary Framework for Accountability, and the National Community College Benchmarking Project. Each of these initiatives may be related to strategic enrollment management, data collection, and increased accountability.

National accreditation initiatives are requiring more data on outcomes—for example, in such areas as student enrollment and success.

POSITIONING SEM TO TAKE A LEADING ROLE

By recognizing internal and external drivers and the ways in which SEM relates to them, it should become apparent that SEM can take a leading role on campus. It also becomes easy to see that campus leaders must play a key role if a SEM plan is to become fully operational and successful. What steps can leaders take to ensure that an institution adopts a SEM plan and to have that plan shape campus decision making?

Vision and Strategic Plan

One expectation of a president is that she will create the vision of where an institution is headed and then will create the plan that is the “roadmap” to achieving that vision (Rowley, Lujan and Dolence 1997). If the vision is not focused on student success, then it needs to be adjusted. In fact, the vision statement itself should include specific language about the focus on student success.

SEM provides the opportunity to make student success the driving force on campus. It can help spur discussions that inspire the crafting of a vision and a strategic plan focused on students. While SEM takes a leading role in planning an institution’s future, it is not the sole force driving the creation of a strategic plan. Rather, it can help focus a campus on its highest priority: student success.

Creating a strategic plan provides the opportunity for an institution to think long-term about its future. It is critical to involve all campus leaders in integrating SEM. By aligning SEM plans with the budget process, recognizing student success as a campus-wide responsibility, and creating an open communication model that keeps the entire campus informed, SEM takes a leading role in institutional planning (Sharp 2009).

Once a plan is created, goals can be set that, once achieved, will increase the campus’s ability to meet students’ needs. Enrollment goals are only a portion of an overall plan. All other area goals can flow from the primary student focus. Given this focus, areas that hinder student success can be identified and modified.

Statement of Importance

From the outset, the president and the leadership team must emphasize that student success is the paramount objective. There must be no doubt about the importance of SEM and the institution’s long-term commitment to a strong, ever-evolving student success model. A strong executive leader will make a bold statement about the direction in which the campus is heading and will emphasize that students are the institution’s focal point. If a leader states that all decisions will be made only after carefully considering what is best for students and their success, SEM will be positioned to take a leading role in campus decision making.

The president should clarify for the whole college the value and importance of a healthy enrollment. Leadership should review program and course offerings, relevant delivery modes and schedules, as well as good-quality entry and retention services (Kerlin and Serrata 2009b).

SEM can succeed without the involvement of an executive, but the model’s success increases in proportion to the executive’s commitment to SEM.

Collegiality and Inclusion

SEM encompasses the entire campus. To be effective, a student success model must include input from all involved parties. When a model is completed, specific goals and
measures of success should be in place; thus, representa-
tives from all areas of campus should be involved in build-
ing the student success model. This can be accomplished
by various means, including student focus groups, surveys,
staff meetings, all-campus meetings, blogs, and others.

While the president may set the overall direction and
tone of future SEM discussions, the bulk of the work must
be impelled by a group (or groups) creating goals, targets,
and measurements. SEM takes a leading role on campus as
departments, programs, and divisions set goals related to
student success and begin to work together to ensure that
those goals are attained.

Because each area on campus has an impact on student
success, input from all areas is critical. Faculty and aca-
demics, student services and retention, auxiliary services
and human resources have important roles to play in sup-
porting student success; each group must also see how ev-
erything is interconnected.

As a campus shifts its focus toward enhanced student
success, one inevitable outcome is increased interaction
among various campus constituencies. This can provide
opportunities for faculty and staff to learn more about
their colleagues and so to gain a broader perspective of the
campus. A better understanding and appreciation of co-
workers may be an additional valuable outcome.

Defining Student Success

If an institution does not define student success, how can
it determine whether goals, policies, programs, and initia-
tives are effective? The definition should be concise and to
the point, e.g., “students attaining their educational goals
in the most efficient manner.”

This simple definition recognizes that students may
have different or even changing goals: Many community
college students never intend to complete an associate’s
degree. This definition’s emphasis on efficiency acknowledges
the multitude of processes that can impede student
progress. Many may have been created for the benefit of
staff or faculty without consideration of their impact on
students. Is the course schedule well thought out? Does it
facilitate academic progress? Do tutors and advisors work
closely with faculty? Is orientation required?

Institutions may either create their own definition or
adopt one used by another institution. Either way, the
definition must be appropriate to the unique needs of the
institution—as well as its students—and be recognized
campus-wide as foundational to the student success model.

Defining Goals

As the campus works to create a vision and strategic plan
focused on student success, the next challenge is to iden-
tify goals. Numerous types of students attend college.
Consequently, goal setting should include more than just
enrollment objectives. Specific goals can be set for specific
segments of the student population. Whereas some goals
may be short term, others may encourage individuals to
become more forward thinking as SEM goals can have an
impact on multiple departments and programs.

Sometimes goals are at cross-purposes and offset one
another. For example, a goal of increased enrollment may
offset a goal of increasing net revenue if increased tuition
discharging is implemented. Similarly, a goal to increase
enrollment may be offset if the campus lacks the capacity
or infrastructure to support increased enrollment (Black
2004a).

Identify vital issues, and rank them in terms of impor-
tance. Carefully consider what it will take to make a dif-
fERENCE. Goals will have an impact on numerous areas:
enrollment, marketing, program mix, and policies and
procedures. Whatever the method, goals must be devel-
oped in a collegial manner so that all involved parties buy
in. Finally, goals must be measureable.

Creating a Data Agenda

Given numerous local and federal requirements for docu-
mentation of institutional performance, it is critical for
colleges to develop measureable outcomes—particularly
related to student success and data collection (McClenney
2004). Learning outcomes must be identified by course
and program. Additional measurements may include year-
to-year retention, number of admission applications and
financial aid awards, number of visits to support services,
and the percentages of students who earn a D, F, or W in
particular programs and classes. Measurements also might
include enrollment headcount, student quality, student
diversity, retention rates, graduation rates, student satis-
faction, staff satisfaction, and institutional image (Black
2004b). Once data are collected, they should be presented
to the campus so faculty and staff can monitor progress
and note areas that need improvement.
Executives also should evaluate institutional performance with regard to research. Is there a need for an institutional research department? Are staffing levels adequate? Some institutions may find they are unprepared to collect needed data.

**Accounting for State and Federal Initiatives, Grants, and National Education Initiatives**

Rouche, Kemper and Rouche (2006) write, “With numerous federal and local pressures for student performance testing and effectiveness measures documenting institutional performance, colleges have much to gain by a serious focus on meeting these growing and increasingly invasive demands.” A number of national groups and initiatives are examining student progression and completion measures. Many of these initiatives include success indicators as well as final outcome measures.

Common completion metrics include graduation rates, transfer rates, numbers and percentages of degrees and certificates awarded, time to degree, and credits to degree. Intermediate metrics include enrollment in and completion of developmental education, success in “gatekeeper” English and mathematics courses, credit accumulation in the first year, and fall-fall and fall-spring retention (MCCA 2011).

Campus leaders must take into account local, state, and national initiatives, mandates, and accountability metrics as they develop strategic plans, budgets, and staffing. Nearly everything quantified by these metrics falls into the SEM sphere and, consequently, its impact on student success. It seems natural that SEM should take a leading role in the future of many institutions and that strong leaders will utilize the initiatives and benefits of SEM to advance their campuses while addressing accountability metrics.

Tying together local, state, and federal mandates and initiatives with campus planning legitimizes the plan even as it emphasizes the lead role of SEM on campus.

**Professional Development**

While professional development initiatives may increase individual or department expertise, it is imperative to make a concerted effort to provide professional development that will expand knowledge of student success. Faculty and staff who attend professional development sessions should be asked to consider implications for student success as they view new materials and consider new ideas and concepts. SEM thereby can take a leading role in professional development.

Professional development in the context of SEM can include any focused effort to help staff and faculty better understand student needs as well as methods for better campus collaboration. For example, faculty may be charged with reviewing student outcomes, measurable goals, online offerings, class schedules, and processes for transferring course credit. All staff can be trained in customer service and in best practices in advising, counseling, financial aid, and other student services. Executive staff also may attend conferences and programs that enhance their skills as well as their knowledge of legislative issues, education law, and current higher education initiatives. It is in any institution’s best interest to “prepare all employees through a strategic staff development program for their role in creating and sustaining student pathways to completion” (O’Banion 2011).

**Accountability and Responsibility**

The call for accountability for higher education institutions is ever greater. As campus leaders compile data and use them to inform campus decision making, it would behove them to also release the data to the campus community. Open communication is key. Data should be used not as a weapon against others on campus but as a means of holding individuals, programs, and departments accountable for their actions and decisions. A change in campus culture is sure to result.

**SUMMARY**

Although strategic enrollment management models may be initiated by others on campus—including the president—the executive’s role in the creation of a SEM model is pivotal. It is imperative that the leader:

- Define the reasons, issues, and rationale for pursuing SEM. He must be prepared to articulate its importance;
- Recognize the diverse internal and external drivers and their roles;
- Determine who should be involved and in what manner;
- Connect SEM to the institution’s vision and strategic plan;
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Help determine the primary components of the SEM plan;
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Understand budget implications;
Provide related professional development; and
Communicate with all campus constituents.

If campus leadership can take these critical steps in the creation of a SEM plan, SEM itself can become a leading force, making student success a focused, campus-wide goal.

REFERENCES


About the Author

DR. KEVIN POLLOCK is President of St. Clair County Community College in Port Huron, Michigan. He received his Ph.D. in Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education from Michigan State University. He also holds a Master of Arts in Education and a Bachelor of Science in Education, both from Central Michigan University. His 30 years of educational experience began as a high school and junior high school teacher. A former admissions director at GMI Engineering & Management Institute (now Kettering University) and Lawrence Technological University, he has also served as Director of Enrollment and Recruitment and at Lake Superior State University. Prior to his presidency he was Vice President of Student Services at West Shore Community College, Scottville, Michigan, where he has also taught as an adjunct faculty member.

Nationally recognized as a public speaker and consultant, he has presented nearly 75 sessions at conferences and colleges, including the League for Innovation, the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, AACRAO SEM Conference, the Small College Enrollment Conference, the First Annual Community College Symposium, and the ACT Planners Conference about such topics as student success, at-risk students, leadership, retention, mentoring, strategic planning, and continuous quality improvement. He has written more than a dozen articles and book chapters and his writings are included in the SEM Anthology, Essentials of Enrollment Management: Cases in the Field, Applying SEM at the Community College, and The College Admissions Officer’s Guide.

EDITOR’S NOTE: An earlier version of this article was distributed to attendees of AACRAO’s 21st Annual Strategic Enrollment Management Conference.
Co-Articulating the Value of A Liberal Arts Degree with Students

By Pamela Cushing

While most scholars and higher education professionals believe in the intrinsic value of a liberal arts degree, high school students and their parents often have a different bias as they seek to determine where to invest themselves and their resources. Anyone who has taught in or recruited for the social sciences or humanities will recognize the familiar pattern of eager interest in engaging, challenging topics followed by that unsettled look as the prospective student asks, “But what could I actually do with this degree?” It is a fair question. If we believe in the value of a liberal arts degree, we ought to be able to explain why we do. This article is about how we are collaborating with faculty, the registrar, and the alumni office—as well as alumni themselves—to better answer the question.

THE SCHOOL AND THE PROGRAM

Our university has a network of “liaisons” (recent graduates) hired to tour high schools across Ontario; the job of the liaisons is to share what makes our liberal arts degree distinct. We are one of three affiliate campuses to a large research-intensive university, and our enrollment is 3,500 full-time undergraduates. The affiliates increasingly are being invited to develop complimentary (non-duplicate) offerings since students can take courses at any campus. Our interdisciplinary program has thrived by providing a distinct worldview for students interested in making a difference and understanding more about the social injustices they witness and read about. In just nine years, the program has grown: we have several full-time faculty and sessional instructors; we teach roughly 200 introductory students each year and offer many core courses, electives and a series of local and international experiential learning opportunities.

Yet we were confronted by four significant challenges:

- **Retention**: Could we raise retention in majors/honours modules above the usual 20–25 percent of the first year class?
- **Recruitment**: How might we better convert high school students’ interest and enthusiasm during informational visits into enrollments?
- **Understanding students**: How could we achieve greater clarity around the diversity of our students’ interests and futures?
- **Vocational Support**: Could we identify better ways to support current students and recent graduates who are uncertain how to translate their degrees into vocations and paid positions?
Although the current generation of college entrants tends to be characterized by educational uncertainty and prolonged adolescence, these characteristics tell us little about students’ uncertainty about our program in particular. On the other hand, students’ genuine concern about the value of the degree—particularly in relation to discerning a career—is a common barrier to choosing (or remaining in) the program. This concern pervades many of our discussions with high school students and parents during welcome days, recruiting events, and the registration period.

Our sense was that seniors in the program in fact were faring well compared to their peers in other departments. Many were being awarded internal and external scholarships and grants, and many were using their degrees in impressive ways. But our knowledge about such things was largely anecdotal and was dispersed widely among professors; “evidence” existed primarily in the form of e-mails and phone conversations. We decided that we owed students a better answer.

**PROJECT GOALS**

It was important for us to identify overall as well as division-specific project goals. (Clarity of purpose helps to ensure that a diverse working group makes progress.) We are fortunate to have an innovative registrar with a reputation for openness to student and faculty initiatives. Given the different responsibilities of professors, registrars, and alumni officers, we believed it would be beneficial to clearly state the unifying goals of our project as well as distinct, “role-specific” benefits and objectives.

**Overall Team Goals**

- To develop an empirical, satisfying answer to students’ questions about “what to do” with an interdisciplinary, liberal arts degree.
- To ensure that students choose to enroll in or remain in the program rather than not enroll or drop out due to a fear of being jobless after graduation.
- To help students discern how to use their degrees in meaningful ways.

**Local Goals**

- Project participants had additional “localized” goals that, though overlapping, were distinct in their emphases.

**Registrar**

- Develop good-quality content about the distinctiveness of programs so that more high school students will enroll—and for good reasons. Retention rates may increase if matriculated students feel more confident about the value of their program choice.

**Alumni Office**

- Compile reliable information about the experiences and successes of alumni that can be presented to prospective donors as evidence of the excellence of our school and the impact their donation could have.
- Compile graduates’ contact information for alumni events, relationship building, information sharing, and where welcomed by alums, fundraising.

**Program Professors**

- Enroll qualified, interested students in the program and ensure that most continue to graduation.
- Ensure that current students and recent graduates find meaningful employment or volunteer opportunities related to their programs of study.
- Formalize opportunities for mentoring, for the sharing of vocational and career-related experience and advice, and for publicizing inspiring stories among students and graduates. Community support is vital in this field as “burn-out” is common.
- Improve the empirical basis for attracting resources and partners to the program (e.g., funding for courses, faculty, research, and experiential/ service learning).

**Students**

- Identify an engaging program that will not result in under-employment.
- Be affirmed in their choice of program through publicity of program graduates’ successes.
- Benefit from career counseling offered by professors, program administrators, and alumni.
- Learn about achievable, interesting career paths through other graduates.
PROJECT ELEMENTS

Building Up Contacts

At the outset, we had little contact information for our alumni. We dedicated an e-mail account to this project and began to build a list of contacts. We obtained graduates’ names and graduation dates from the registrar’s office as well as from the alumni office and then cross-referenced this information with professors’ class records and past correspondence. The extensive use of the internal email function in class websites such as Blackboard meant that we often only had students’ university email address which not all students use and which expires eventually. We began with those graduates for whom we did have accurate contact information and then relied on word of mouth through them to put us in touch with other former students who were interested in participating.

We set up a Facebook account and a private “group” for our faculty and alumni. We made the group “closed” (private) because we wanted people to post what they had been doing and to reconnect with peers without having to worry about privacy. The great advantage of Facebook was its powerful social network, which continually suggests new friends who are “related” to those already in the group (that is, having mutually listed friends or associations such as a home university or degree earned). Using this tool sped up our connections as we could search many students by name whereas it can be difficult to find young graduates via regular Web searches.) That said, some graduates’ use of full or partial aliases made it difficult to find them on Facebook.

Inviting Grads to Share Their Stories

Inviting graduates to share their stories was a two-pronged effort involving a profile template and a message. The profile template outlined what information graduates could include in their profiles. The messages were sent via e-mail and Facebook and explained why we were seeking contact and profile information. Student feedback resulted in substantial changes to the profile partway through the project. For example, a few graduates indicated that they hadn’t responded to the first version of the profile because its categories seemed to favor those who had chosen academic or traditional career paths as opposed to alternative paths such as organic farming, social entrepreneurship, or even starting a family. Our revised version of the template allowed a broader range of responses (see inset). (You may wish to pilot test your profile template with a small but diverse population of students before setting up a database.)

We worked with the alumni office to adapt its database software (Raiser’s Edge) to include extra tabs for storing the additional information we sought. The original goal was to use the software to ease the data analysis and search processes. The software also provided a safe, university-approved repository for private information. Hindrances included the need to work through trained, approved users of the software; the need to input data twice (i.e., in the Word template and in the database); and other challenges relating to the strict privacy guidelines that govern databases.

Our first e-mails included a general message to graduates about the goals of the project and what information we were seeking. While the message was efficient and effective for obtaining e-contact information, it proved less effective at motivating people to complete the profile. Striking a balance among information (for clarity and trust), brevity (for ensuring readership), and the appeal (to elicit a response) proved challenging! Student responses to the way in which the project was positioned varied: Whereas some responded best to a message focused on the “fun” of reconnecting with peers, others were more
interested in gaining career insights and networking; still others were moved to respond only when we underscored how they might help younger students find their way.

In addition to general appeals, we also found that personal conversations were helpful in re-establishing connection with graduates and encouraging them to take the time to actually complete a profile. E-communication with former students was often quite illuminating as they sent along informal reflections on how particular elements of the program had been helpful for them as they moved into the world, as well as their insights on what courses or topics might have enriched their experience.

Students could post their profiles on Facebook or have us do it through its internal ‘documents’ function that permits people to create their own profiles and enables comments from any group member. The majority of students had no issue with posting to the group, but a handful indicated that they only wanted their profiles to be used internally, by the program.

Project outcomes are ongoing; we are encouraged by progress to date. Our list currently contains contact information for approximately 150 of 200 graduates; most of the information that remains missing is for students who were program minors. More than 90 full profiles have been completed, accounting for approximately 85 percent of all majors and honors graduates in six graduating classes.

Empirical data indicate that our alumni are involved in a range of vocations and further education: Many have gone on to law or graduate school (often with scholarship support), and many are in professional positions in the non-profit and government sectors that dovetail well with their experiential and service learning placements in the program. Other findings are as follows:

- Knowing that various graduate schools require economics or statistics, we could support students to complete these within their degree by alerting them to the existence of such requirements earlier;
- We should offer a core course and an elective in the summer or online to help students who only find the program after first year and want to transfer in (to avoid the need for doubling up courses in one year), and to help students graduate who are one credit short;
- Our research methods course prepares graduates well to improve information gathering processes in their non-profit places of work and graduate theses.

Planned Use of the Information and Network

Our team is revisiting the project’s original goals and methods in order to determine how best to utilize the information and the network to benefit students, the program, and the university, all within the parameters of emerging debates and understandings in Canada and globally about how Facebook and other social media tools are using or protecting the content of what is posted to them. We have now included a communications expert in our group who aims to help ensure full protection of graduates’ information. We foresee that moving forward, the project will be simpler since we can invite students to share their contact information when they graduate, and thereby preclude the labor required to find people post-facto.

Research, Reports, and Advice

Even as we continue to accept profiles on a rolling basis, we analyze those profiles created to date. The outcome will be a summary and a detailed report of the key findings and recommendations. Specifically, we seek to understand the kinds of study and work graduates are performing and how that work grows out of their time in our program. The report will be posted for interested incoming and current students to read and will answer the question, “What could I do with this interdisciplinary, liberal arts degree?” The report will support program resource requests.

We envision utilizing the electronic alumni network to solicit input from graduates regarding curriculum planning, program development, and career advice. An informal mentoring system has emerged naturally in the group and current students have indicated an interest in formalizing this effort once our analysis is complete. Following are additional examples of how we might make use of graduates’ experience-based insights:

- **All graduates:** Survey their opinions about strengths and weaknesses in the program offerings and which courses prepared them best for the next steps in related fields of study, community service or the workplace.
- **Grades with international NGO or CIDA internships:** Create a gathering where they could share their experiences and advise current students as to which courses, skills, and experiences will help them secure comparable positions;
- **Grades enrolled in or who have graduated from law school:** Facilitate interactive encounters where grads
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could answer current students’ questions and communicate experiences and insights, such as where to find courses, universities, and professors that address social justice issues.

**Communication and Promotion**

The Facebook group has proven an effective means of locating our graduates and we anticipate that Facebook will remain useful for contacting people and invitations. Still, we want to develop a separate Web site with fewer interface limitations. For example, the Facebook group user interface is barely customizable and offers no way to organize, sort, or search the profile documents—features students would find useful. Further, while setting it up as a closed or private group made sense for the initial goals of the project, we now realize that in doing so, we can not use this platform to share the exciting particulars of these graduates’ stories with other key groups such as current or interested students without compromising other members’ privacy. This led us to some re-thinking.

Our next step is to consult with graduates around ideas for how to move forward with sharing their stories with these other groups, while ensuring that the graduates remain in control of how much, if any, of their story is shared outside that initial, closed Facebook group. Our hope is to design an open-access Web page linked with the program site that shares summaries of the profiles in a succinct, searchable format usable by all stakeholders. Any graduate profiled would of course have to be consulted again for informed consent of such a page. This site will also include the report summarizing patterns in how program graduates are using their interdisciplinary, liberal arts degree. The registrar’s office and academic counselors could refer prospective students and their families to this site, or to leaflets highlighting some program graduates’ experiences. Professors can feature this information in class presentations during the program registration period in the spring.

In addition, we plan to initiate a student event that will synchronize the goals and needs of the program, of the registrar, and of alumni officers. Our idea is to invite our graduates to share their stories of work, volunteering, and activism with current students as well as interested high school students. Each year, we would invite graduates with experience in a different “theme” (e.g., conflict studies, AIDS in Africa, graduate school, NGO grant writing, disabilities, etc.) to participate in a one-day symposium with current students and faculty, perhaps during homecoming weekend. Program graduates would give talks and answer questions during workshops; these could be interspersed with opportunities for informal socializing as well as a presentation by the alumni office. Parts of the symposium could be taped and edited for later web-based sharing with interested high school and college students.

**CONCLUSION**

This project has yielded a rich portrait of the diverse undertakings of our alumni and how the program has helped or been remiss. Our task now is to determine the best ways to translate what we’ve learned into steps that enhance what the program offers to students—and to support current students and alumni in discovering all they can do with an interdisciplinary, liberal arts degree.

**About the Author**

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The New Massachusetts Miracle: How a Recent State Law Motivated One College to Improve Its FERPA Compliance

By Ari B. Kaufman

As an associate registrar at Berklee College of Music, I am responsible for ensuring the College’s compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). My sense was that we could do more to establish our compliance (e.g., develop more safeguards for student records, increase training, etc.). My challenge—and, perhaps, that of colleagues at other institutions—was how to persuade senior leadership to give priority to strengthening our FERPA efforts. Doing so required a comprehensive strategy with substantial funding for physical and technological enhancements as well as appropriate college-wide training. FERPA efforts competed against (and mostly lost to) a variety of other strategic initiatives.

In 2009 I was asked to be part of a team charged with assessing Berklee’s conformity with a soon-to-be-enacted state regulation. The Massachusetts Department of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation soon would enact 201 CMR 17.00—Standards for the Protection of Personal Information of Residents of the Commonwealth—which would set new standards for all Massachusetts business entities to protect the personal information of the state’s residents. The penalty for violating the regulation would be a maximum of $5,000 for each specific violation. (As of this writing, one restaurant chain had been assessed $110,000 for violations.) Such penalties have given the law its teeth, with the result that schools across Massachusetts have initiated comprehensive reviews of their information security practices.

In contrast, the penalty for violating FERPA is a potential loss of federal funding. If the penalty were imposed, many schools that rely on federal financial aid as a significant part of their annual operating budget would close. Perhaps as a result, since FERPA’s rollout in 1974, not a single school has lost its federal funding due to violations of the law. Unlike the enforcement office in Massachusetts, the U.S. Department of Education’s Family Compliance Policy Office (FPCO) has not rushed to assess any penalties upon receipt of complaints but instead has chosen to work with each individual school to enhance its compliance.

SCOPE OF THE MASSACHUSETTS REGULATION

While FERPA focuses broadly on safeguarding education records, the Massachusetts regulation focuses specifically on protecting a resident’s social security number (SSN), driver’s license or state-issued identification card number, and financial account number(s) or credit/debit card number(s). These are the keys to identity theft.

The Massachusetts regulation and FERPA overlap: All students who apply for federal financial aid must disclose their social security numbers to the schools to which they
apply. In turn, many colleges rely on students’ social security numbers (which appear on their transcripts) as the most efficient way to identify students receiving transcript credit. As increasing numbers of people change their names—or use hyphenated names and/or first name/last name combinations—no single data element provides such quick and certain identification of a person as a social security number. It soon became clear that to enhance our protection of SSNs to comply with the new Massachusetts law, we would simultaneously improve our FERPA compliance, including our protection of students’ grades, addresses, identification numbers, and immunization records.

STRUCTURING THE PROJECT
With the support of senior leadership, the College created a two-person Office of Information Security. The office was staffed with information security experts and was provided with a significant budget. They were charged with implementing security solutions that were developed in response to the risk assessment process. Ultimately, the department was responsible for ensuring Berklee’s compliance with the regulations.

Various departments (e.g., registrar, human resources, admissions, financial aid, bursar, etc.) were asked to provide an accounting of “information asset containers” (a methodology designed by OCTAVE Allegro). Information asset containers are of three types:

- **Technical containers** are electronic devices that either are under the direct control of the organization or are managed outside of the organization.
- **Physical containers** include offices, lobbies, shredding bins, file cabinets, and drawers that either are under the direct control of the organization or are managed outside of the organization.
- **People** either are under the direct control of the organization or are managed outside of the organization.

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The next step was to identify potential risks to the institution for each information asset category. After developing a variety of worksheets (the Office of the Registrar produced 15 in all), we prioritized the areas of greatest risk for each department. For example, the three greatest vulnerabilities in our office were a portable hard drive attached to a shared PC used to store archived student folders, several unencrypted staff laptops that were taken out of the office on a regular basis, and an open office environment that did not adequately protect against theft of student folders during or after business hours.

**TAKING ACTION**

We then identified action steps to mitigate these vulnerabilities. We decided to:

- Move all student data from the unsecure portable hard drive onto a shared server that restricts access by requiring a login and password.
- Encrypt all laptops used regularly outside of the office by staff members.
- Create redundancy in the locking systems used to secure the 5,000+ student folders we maintain in our office by adding a card-swipe access lock for the inner-office area in which the student folders are kept and a locking system for the file storage system itself, which we now close and lock at the end of each day.

These straightforward enhancements clearly increased the level of security afforded to records housed in the Office of the Registrar.

**ANALYSIS**

In retrospect, these three action items seem to be “no brainers”—that is, they were obvious improvements to the security of our student records. So why did it take a new Massachusetts state regulation to inspire these innovations? Shouldn’t FERPA compliance have provided sufficient incentive to enact these fixes?

I believe there is one key reason that the state law prompted greater compliance than the federal law: Berklee’s senior leadership placed more importance on compliance with the new state regulation than with FERPA.

**QUESTIONS AND SOLUTIONS**

So why hasn’t FERPA compliance resulted in the same degree of senior leadership support for change that was inspired by the state regulation? The answer, I believe, has to do with enforcement—the “teeth” of the state law as compared to those of FERPA. The culture surrounding FERPA enforcement has been one of courtesy: the FPCO works with schools when violations are reported. In contrast, the atmosphere surrounding the Massachusetts regulation—one fraught with the perils of identity theft and the threat of fines—urges compliance.

Nevertheless, FERPA is, in fact, vitally important. Students expect the privacy of their education records to be maintained, and schools must strive to comply with FERPA even in the midst of the increasingly sophisticated information age in which we live. Schools should be proactive in adopting policies and procedures that safeguard against FERPA violations.

Our college still has more work to do with regard to FERPA, but having a strong state law protecting citizens’ privacy has paved the way for advocacy for additional security measures to protect student information. Regardless of whether your state has in place a similar law, every school should identify a committed advocate with sufficient seniority and stature to promote FERPA compliance. Ideally, a school will create a dedicated, knowledgeable information security office that has FERPA compliance in its purview. In today’s electronic era, safeguarding sensitive student data should be everyone’s priority.

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**About the Author**

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I confess: As a boy, I never once played “Registrar.” I grew up on a farm where I neither saw nor ever heard the word. I remember seeing it for the first time above a doorway in the hall of the building that housed the administrative offices of the small, rural junior college I attended. I was sure the word had something to do with registration, but I was confident that it had been misspelled (seemed it had too many “r”s.) After graduating and transferring to a university, I came across the word again—spelled the same way—in the hallway of the administration building. Even though I still didn’t know what the word meant, I started to get the idea that perhaps I was wrong about the spelling.

Now, having spent 38 years in education, I have a much better understanding of the duties and responsibilities of a university registrar. For most of my career, I served as a registrar at Brigham Young University (and yes, I learned how to spell the word). But most important, I have come to understand something—if only the tiniest bit— about leadership and what it requires to really make a difference in the lives of students as they pursue their education and life dreams. I hope that the lessons I share will be beneficial to all my colleagues, seasoned leaders as well as those new to the profession.

ON BECOMING AN EDUCATION LEADER

It takes a conscious effort to become an education leader. Usually, it doesn’t “just happen.” Start by making sure that you know what business you are in. Regardless of your academic background or your job description in student services, you should know with certainty that you are in the business of education. Even though your job may not be in a classroom, you are an educator by virtue of the fact that you work in education. This distinction is an important part of being a leader in student services because leaders have clarity when it comes to their purpose and their mission.

If you believe that your only purpose is to admit students, schedule classes, register students, and keep records, then you may not be correct. Ted Levitt, of the Harvard Business School, told his students, “People don’t want a quarter-inch drill; they want a quarter-inch hole.” His argument was that most people will focus on their product or the process and will neglect the benefit customers truly seek.

Railroads in the 1950s and 1960s made this same mistake: Decade after decade, they built bigger and better railroads because that was the business they thought they were in. But in reality, they were in the transportation business. Having lost sight of that fact, the railroads were nearly put out of business by airplanes. When students are trying to be admitted, trying to register, or trying to get
their transcripts, remember that what they really want is not merely to be admitted, to register for courses, or to get their transcripts; the real reason they are at your institution is to further their education. Becoming an educated person is the larger benefit that students seek.

In the simplest terms, there are only two “elements” at colleges and universities: faculty and students. And these two elements exist for two purposes: teaching and learning. Everything else in higher education—including student services—is intended to support and facilitate the teaching and learning processes.

If you are clear that your true purpose is to be a part of the education process and not just to build bigger and better processes and systems, then you will be oriented in a way that will foster success in your work and in your career because you will be effective in your efforts to help students and faculty achieve the outcome of education.

**LEADERSHIP STARTS WITH SELF**

You don't need a title to be a leader. You don't need a big office, and you certainly don't need to have people report to you. **You become a leader by virtue of who you are.** That includes your core values and beliefs, how you think, how you behave and how you act, how you communicate your ideas, and, most important, how you treat people. What we need in the academy are **education leaders.** What we don't need are more education managers. The difference is substantial. One can manage time and money, but one cannot really manage people. People are creative, free-thinking individuals who want as much agency as possible to choose what they do. **Exercise your leadership by giving people choices whenever and wherever possible and by helping them make good decisions.**

Managers focus on the best way to get things done and so tend to control, dictate, and mandate procedures; leaders focus on the things they think are most important and then trust others to make good choices. Leaders stay focused on doing what they believe is right, and they teach those principles to others. **To become a leader, focus your time, your talents, and your energy on doing what you believe to be the right thing.**

Here are my ten best suggestions for becoming a leader by starting with self:

- Resist the need to always feel and be in control.
- Be a teacher of correct principles.
- Always treat others with kindness, even when you must say no and when you cannot give them what they want.
- Learn to understand that doing what is right is not always logical or objective; that is why it is often met with resistance.
- Focus on ideas rather than functions or processes.
- Be clear about your core values and what you believe. Your core values and beliefs should drive your actions. Leaders make decisions that are based on correct principles, not solely on rules, policy, or the expectations of others.
- Have a clear vision of the possibilities for your organization—possibilities that are based on its purpose.
- Empower others by showing trust when giving assignments.
- Surround yourself and build relationships with the best people you can find.
- Demonstrate confidence in the people you serve.

**BE A PROBLEM SOLVER**

Learn to be a problem solver. It is said that “necessity is the mother of invention.” Start with small problems or circumstances that constitute a “necessity” and that are well within your control or stewardship. Consider what you can do that would make things easier, faster, or better for others. A problem solver is a person who makes things happen and who gets things done.

The following ideas and principles have been particularly helpful as I have worked to solve problems:

- As you seek to resolve problems, recognize that they may have more than one solution. Don't stop looking for solutions just because you find one that seems effective. Keep looking for the second, third, or fourth right answers.
- Changing behavior is not always the best solution. Trying harder, changing attitudes, being more diligent, or redoubling effort may not yield desired results. The solution may lie in trying something different. In other words, **what** you do is more important than how “hard” you do it.
- Problems will persist if you rely ONLY on your strengths to identify solutions. Often, our strengths become weaknesses because we rely too heavily on them, habitually doing what we do best rather than seeking the best
things to do. When your only tool is a hammer, you approach every problem as if it were a nail. Collaborate with others to identify solutions to problems.

- Learn to ask questions; learn to ask the right questions. “Problems” are circumstances with questions. Answers do not exist without questions.
- Problems can be difficult to solve because they often are misidentified. Fail to diagnose a problem correctly and you may end up with a good solution...to the wrong problem.
- Problems remain when we fail to act on our decisions and choose instead to keep talking.
- Take action, even if you don’t think you are ready. Excuses and reasons for delay invariably are motivated by fear. Acknowledge fear, but take action. Fear and uneasiness are normal and possibly even healthy. Fear becomes a problem if you fail to confront it and so let it paralyze you.
- All solutions to problems require communication with feedback.

“...The problems that exist today cannot be solved with the same thinking that created them” (Albert Einstein).

BE AN ADVOCATE FOR STUDENTS

Hanging on the wall of the school where I first taught was a statement that read, “Nothing is more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals.” I remind myself often that people are not all the same. Policies and procedures usually are written to address the needs of the institution—needs centered on order and conformity. No matter how unequal everyone is, policy and procedure are intended to ensure that everyone is treated equally. Education leaders advocate for students by balancing their needs with those of the institution. When a student can justify his action, help him by making an exception without harming or eroding institutional policy. Justifiable reasons may include circumstances beyond the student’s control. Look for justifiable reasons to help students; don’t expend all your energy defending and upholding policy.
Advocate for students by giving serious consideration to their appeals. Don’t deny or approve students’ requests in isolation, but collaborate with other stakeholders to identify justifiable reasons for approving (or denying) students’ requests. Having spent years hearing student appeals, I have developed twelve questions that have guided others and myself in the decision-making process.

Would the exception harm the university if it were approved?
Would it be compassionate to approve the student’s request?
Will approving the request aid the student’s quest for knowledge and perfection?
Would it build goodwill and better friendship?
Would it be fair to all concerned?
Would approving the request be immoral or illegal?
Is the problem a pattern of behavior for the student?
How will this decision affect other stakeholders?
Does the consequence fit the crime?
What is the probability of this recurring and requiring further exceptions?
Would it be expedient to approve the request?
To what degree is the university culpable in the problem?

BE A BRIDGE BUILDER
Throughout my career, I have sought most to be considered a partner in the education process by students and faculty alike. Achieving this goal has required a proactive rather than a merely reactive approach to service. In other words, don’t just sit in the metaphorical fire station waiting for the alarm: Get out there and prevent fires. There are many ways to build bridges and to make strong connections across the campus community. Start by involving all staff in your office in considering how this could be accomplished. Work with your cohorts to identify stakeholders and to discover how you could improve the lives of others—especially students. Volunteer for committees and other assignments and so demonstrate your willingness and commitment to help in any way possible. Do your work in ways that demonstrate that you and your office are team players. Above all, be a problem solver. Experience has taught that every time you help others on campus solve a problem, the “bridge” will get stronger.

FINAL CONFESSION AND CONCLUSION
I confess that most of the lessons I have learned over the years have been the result of someone who has been willing to teach me. In return, I have tried to teach others. Leaders are teachers, and we become better leaders by teaching others what we ourselves have learned. Docendo discitur: “one learns by teaching.”

Decide to be a leader. Take time to clarify your purpose and your mission. Determine how you and those with whom you work can be more proactive and less reactive. Become a problem solver by identifying problems that can be fixed with a quick and effective solution. Advocate for students by making exceptions when they are needed and when there are justifiable reasons for so doing. And finally, strengthen relationships across campus. You will never have reason to regret it.

About the Author
M. WAYNE CHILDS has worked in academic student services at Brigham Young University (BYU) for the past 30 years. He has served as associate registrar and director of assessment and planning. He earned his master’s and education specialist degrees in education leadership and his doctorate in higher education leadership from BYU.
So, You Want To Be A Leader

By J. James Wager

Thousands—if not tens of thousands—of books, monographs, and articles have been written on the subject of leadership. A Google search of the word returns nearly a half-billion Web sites. Given this wealth of information, what is the added value of an additional commentary on the subject? I leave the answer to the reader.

As a professional who has spent nearly 40 years in the higher education sector, I have been blessed with opportunities to view and practice leadership from various perspectives: as a staffer at an academic college, as an information technology practitioner, as registrar at a large public university, as a university administrator, as a classroom instructor, and most recently as an executive of a for-profit company. While each of these assignments has had its unique roles and responsibilities, leadership has been a common thread.

Each of us has spheres of influence—opportunity to have an impact on the lives of others. Our roles as parent, spouse, and friend and as manager, co-worker, supplier, and consumer attest to our spheres of influence and our leadership opportunities.

Leadership is not management; we must be careful not to confuse the two. Good managers may be good leaders, but one can be a manager without having followers. Whereas managers have the power and authority to require desired behavior, leaders have the opportunity to make a difference in people’s lives and for the organization. The formal authority of a manager enables coercion or even discipline if instructions are not obeyed. Leaders create outcomes such that followers choose to participate in strengthening the organization. Managers are appointed; leaders are identified by their followers. The difference is significant.

We all have leaders in our lives to whom we relate and from whom we learn. I am fortunate to have followed many talented leaders; one was my grandfather. As a young teenager, I was proud of his position: a senior executive at General Electric. As he led me on a tour of the plant, employees were quick to acknowledge his authority. My read was that my grandpa was the man! I felt like a big shot because I was with a big shot. When a man who appeared to be a janitor extended his hand, my grandfather extended his hand in turn, introduced me, entered into a brief conversation, and, upon leaving, tipped his hat to the man. I asked my grandfather why he had done that. His answer surprised me, and it left a lasting impression. He said, “I refuse to let any man be more of a gentleman than I should be myself.” This was, for me, an early lesson in leadership.
As they work within their spheres of influence, leaders demonstrate five characteristics: discipline, humility, accountability, perseverance, and vision.

**DISCIPLINE**

Discipline is doing what has to be done; doing it when it has to be done; and doing it continuously. This is the no excuse zone.

Each day in the registrar’s office, we received many phone calls. Our goal was to answer each call personally and to provide an accurate and professional response. To achieve this goal, each staff member (including the registrar) had a weekly “appointment” for “phone duty.” This practice was not well received by all staff; some believed they had more important duties to perform.

Among the questions asked most often was, “How do I obtain a copy of my transcript?” The answer to this question was clearly stated on our Web site; one was tempted to wonder why the caller hadn't first checked the Web site. After responding to the same question for the umpteenth time, why not cut the caller off and refer him to the Web site? The answer was simple: Each caller was seeking information and neither knew nor cared that others had asked the same question.

Why were all staff, including the registrar, required to spend time each week answering the phone? The answer was that no task was more important than providing excellent customer service. The discipline required to maintain this perspective was critical to successful leadership. Every time a staff member—regardless of her title—answered the phone, she was “the registrar” representing the university.

Being disciplined requires having a work ethic. As a little league coach, I told my players, “You’ll play like you practice.” Some got it, and some didn’t. It was not uncommon for a boy or girl with average skills to become an outstanding player; unfortunately, it also was not uncommon for a talented youngster to never amount to much of an athlete. Leaders in the workplace must promote these same qualities and work ethic.

**HUMILITY**

My dad used to tell me that the longer I went to school, the less smart I became. He meant that I should not let my formal education—“book learning”—get in the way of common sense.

To be a leader, one must be humble. People who forsake humility often find themselves in positions of compromise. Arrogance diminishes perspective and distorts reality. Humility keeps us teachable and helps us learn.

Leaders cannot demand respect; they must earn it. Leaders need to demonstrate that the direction, goals, and actions being proposed are best for the organization and for all individuals involved. Confidence is important; arrogance crosses the line. Be humble.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

As a result of my professional position, I meet many people. Often, I meet people who want to blame someone for something. Of course, they never consider that they themselves may be part of the problem, let alone that they may be the problem. They don’t want to be held accountable for their actions, for their lack of planning, for their misjudgment, etc. Instead, they want someone else to be accountable and to rectify what they deem an unsatisfactory situation.

How often do we read about celebrities, politicians, sports figures, and businessmen who put themselves ahead of the law? Their attitude is that they are not accountable to their fans, constituents, or customers. Rather, they believe that their status affords them special privileges—as if “some are more equal than others.” Of course, this is never true.

Yet it is an easy trap for a leader to fall into. Formal authority and associated power may blur the distinction between management and leadership roles. But this is no excuse. Many leaders—myself included—have found they are not fully accountable for every decision. The acid test may be to present the following question to the person (or persons) you most respect: “Would you approve if I were to...?” If the answer is “yes,” then your accountability level likely is very high.

I believe that we reap what we sow: No one else is responsible for the leader each of us becomes.

**PERSEVERANCE**

I have come to appreciate (and have shared often with my son, a Division I-A pitcher) the saying that ”pitchers are like tea bags: You never know how strong they are until you put them in hot water.”

We are familiar with such one-liners as:

- “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”
“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”

“Marines do more before breakfast than most people do all day.”

Their common theme is work hard and persevere.

Throughout my career, I have been presented with wonderful opportunities to make a difference in people’s lives. But never were these opportunities without challenges. Making a difference typically involves change. And change almost always is met with resistance. People fear the unknown; they may believe they no longer will be needed or that they no longer will be capable of fulfilling their responsibilities; they may be convinced that change is unnecessary; and on and on. The successful leader is adept at ushering in change without being confrontational.

One memorable change occurred while I was at Penn State: The university had an established process by which students could withdraw voluntarily from degree status. The process was intended to advise the student of the consequences (academic, financial, and personal) of removing himself from degree status; the practice, unfortunately, was reduced to obtaining multiple signatures on a student action form. Using technology that interacted with the student on a personal and data-driven level, the signature-collection process was replaced with a computer-aided withdrawal process. Student retention increased nearly 10 percent. Ultimately, the new process proved a great success. But prior to and during the change, resistance was great. The nay-sayers argued that personal interaction would be sacrificed, and students would make uninformed decisions. Had the leader of this change lacked conviction, the ability to demonstrate and discuss the change, and commitment to persevere under pressure, this particular improvement would never have been realized.

Michael Jordan is considered by many to be one of the greatest basketball players ever to have worn an NBA jersey. Despite his success, he had to persevere in the face of great competitive pressure. Michael Jordan missed the basket 9,000 times; he lost almost 300 games; 26 times, he was trusted to take the game-winning shot—and missed.

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Yet he persevered and led his team (his sphere of influence) to many impressive victories.

**VISION**

“If you do what you’ve done, you’ll get what you got.” People and organizations are prone to get caught in the “lack-of-vision rut,” for which they pay a steep price. There are dozens of examples of leaders who lost their vision for their organization, with the result that the organization failed:

- Kodak lost its premier standing in the photography business because its leadership didn’t believe that digital cameras would last.
- IBM, which once controlled the computer market, missed the vision that desktop computers would play a significant role.
- The U.S. auto industry just barely re-invented itself so as to remain competitive with foreign manufacturers.
- The U.S. education sector is still trying to determine the role of for-profit education.
- Borders closed hundreds of stores in part because it failed to prepare for the e-book revolution.

Yet there are as many examples of leaders who cast a new vision such that their organizations prospered:

- The cell phone industry quickly surpassed the traditional land-line business.
- Bottled water quickly became one of the most profitable products for many beverage companies.

The list goes on.

Leaders think strategically and demonstrate entrepreneurship. In recent years, higher education administration—and the office of the registrar, in particular—has changed dramatically. The fundamental services they provide—e.g., scheduling courses and classrooms, registering students, recording grades and generating transcripts, managing graduation processes, etc.—remain the same. But vision and entrepreneurship have changed the manner in which these services are delivered. Leaders have a profound impact on their organizations as they challenge the traditional methods by which services, processes, products, and outcomes are achieved. Leaders do not accept the argument that “we have always done it that way.” Strategic visioning leads to new and different—and desirable—end points; improvements are not merely incremental but constitute new directions. Whereas managers focus on processes, leaders envision opportunities. They are action driven. As they cast the vision, their fundamental objective is to have followers embrace it. The person whose vision is shared by no one is a dreamer; the person whose vision is supported by the organization is a leader.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

My question is simple: Do you want to be a leader? Someone has invested her confidence and resources in you; that is why you are in your current professional position. Someone saw leadership qualities in you and appointed you a manager. Your challenge is to take full advantage of the opportunity you have been given and to become a distinguished leader of those within your current and future spheres of influence.

- **Practice discipline**: Do what is necessary, not what is easy.
- **Remain humble**: Remember the influence you have, and cherish it as a precious commodity.
- **Always be accountable for your actions**.
- **Persevere**: If something were easy to do, it likely would already have been done.
- **Be a person of vision**: Don’t be afraid to challenge the current system and to set higher expectations.

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**About the Author**

**J. JAMES WAGNER** is Vice-President and Chief Information Officer of SCRP-SAFE® International, Inc. Before retiring from Pennsylvania State University after more than three decades of service, Wager served as assistant vice president for enrollment management and as University Registrar.
Mentoring the Next Generation of AACRAO Leaders: Taking Advantage of Routines, Exceptions, and Challenges for Developing Leadership Skills

By Sharon F. Cramer

As members of enrollment management units look ahead to the next few years, they anticipate many institution-wide challenges: implementation of a new student information system, major upgrade of an existing system, re-configuring an existing system to reflect changes in academic policies or to accommodate new federal or state guidelines. Many of these prospective changes elicit dread—of consequent drains on basic operations, of pressures on staff, of the implications of testing new systems, and of the pressure to be “error free.” This article encourages enrollment management supervisors to view these “exceptional circumstances” in a new way: as “greenhouses” for facilitating the development of leadership perspectives and as unique opportunities for mentoring. This article also is intended to serve as a resource for enrollment management staff members who might consider taking on more responsibilities—and perhaps, eventually, leadership roles within (and beyond) their current positions/departments.

In 1999, I was asked to serve as executive director of our campus transition from a home-grown, back-office product to a commercially developed, web-based student information system. The team of enrollment management members assigned to the project worked closely with information technology staff, campus members, and administrators. The result was a cultural change on our campus that prepared all of us to better adjust not only to that initial implementation but also to many subsequent changes (e.g., implementation of another student information system, change of product for our learning management and degree audit systems). Our experiences inspired an AACRAO publication focused on system implementations (Cramer 2005) as well as a chapter on the systemic aspects of such changes (Haab and Cramer 2011).

Although my experience with a full-time team is my reference point for this article, enrollment management professionals and supervisors can use my recommendations at any point in an annual cycle. Most enrollment management departments can utilize the ideas in this article for responsibilities that have a defined start, middle, and end (e.g., semester registration, communication about a new student registration or faculty grading procedure), as well as for technology implementations such as those mentioned above.

The thesis of this article is that mentoring is one of the unique opportunities that arise in the process of working on small or large “exceptional projects.” Ideally, as Norton and Kaplan (2004) suggest, an institution’s strategic plan will connect with the performance programs of enrollment management professionals. The following questions may be asked either by the person who will serve as
a mentor or by the person who seeks to become a leader.

- **Question 1:** What can a mentor do to create a climate supportive of leadership aspirations and opportunities?
- **Question 2:** How can new challenges become self-evaluative opportunities?
- **Question 3:** How does one make the transition from learner to mentor or leader?

Consideration of each of these questions is designed to stimulate further conversation. Ideally, given the relative scarcity and high cost of formal mentoring programs—and the many opportunities for (and low cost of) informal ones—this article also may stimulate a commitment to informal mentoring relationships. Although not every supervisor can be an effective mentor (and not every supervisee can become a leader), this article may inspire you to think differently about yourself and those with whom you work.

**MENTORING PRAGMATICS: GIVING AND GETTING**

For the most part, enrollment management specialists have in-depth knowledge of and experience with specific tasks in their day-to-day work. They familiarize themselves with the responsibilities required to perform their jobs. Often, this means that their only work contacts are within their own offices. And although attendance at regional, state, or national professional conferences is a typical expectation at some campuses, many enrollment management professionals retire without ever meeting their counterparts at other institutions—or even on their own campus. Intentional planning for leadership experiences can be accomplished either within a campus or beyond it.

- **Question 1:** What can a mentor do to create a climate supportive of leadership aspirations and opportunities?

Confidence and the ability to solve problems are essential aspects of leadership. These skills are best cultivated in a climate of candor and self-reflective examination about what is working and what needs to be improved. Self-reflection is a habit that individuals can learn as they observe others who routinely strive to ensure that evolving solutions match identified problems. Members of my project team told me that as a result of their participation, they began to see themselves in new ways. Although our project had no explicit leadership development component, several team members have since been promoted to positions of leadership. Their project experiences helped them identify new aspirations and attain personal and professional transformations. As they learned more about the interconnections among different aspects of enrollment management, information technology, and other campus efforts, the silos within which they had worked began to be replaced by cross-campus awareness and relationships. As team members returned at the end of the project to their previous positions, many realized that what previously had been a comfortable employment fit no longer was.

The challenges our team sought to address proved to be the “machines” that tore down “work silos” during the project. Routines were no more. Exceptional circumstances—really, short-term leadership assignments—proved to be opportunities for enrollment management specialists to confront problems they had not previously encountered. They had to learn to adjust to ambiguity. Suddenly, strategies on which they had relied were not relevant to the problems they faced. Although not every supervisee—nor every member of a full-time team—had the potential to become a leader, all needed to be encouraged to rise to their individual levels of excellence. It fell to the supervisors to help them accomplish tasks they had thought were beyond their ability.

Helping enrollment management specialists to overcome their apprehension and become adaptive, creative problem solvers requires that supervisors/mentors:

- Believe in their supervisees: They will gain confidence because they know their mentors believe in them.
Listen to them as they verbalize their thoughts, and then provide gentle direction.

Give them access to resources on and off campus.

Create a learning organization such that all participate in shared problem-solving.

Provide honest feedback during supervisory sessions, the goal being to facilitate leadership development.

At a particularly difficult juncture in our project, I expressed my hopelessness to our executive sponsor, the vice president of finance and management. His response was to ask me if I thought the newly elected president (it was shortly after a national election) was fully informed about all aspects of running the nation. He encouraged me to do what the president likely was doing: surrounding himself with smart, thoughtful, articulate people and reflecting on the information they provided before taking action. I was reassured to know that my mentor was aware of the gaps in my knowledge. The conversation went a long way toward helping me to keep the project moving ahead—and to ensuring my own professional growth.

At crucial points, I utilized different strategies to give project team members opportunities to build their skills. When we felt perplexed by the task of communicating with campus members, we developed a communication plan. Whole-team discussions involved a variety of campus experts in its design. We have continued to use the paradigms we developed. For example, recent use of a campus researcher, information technology specialist, and representatives from campus governance and enrollment management led to recommendations for a policy regarding the use of technology rather than a narrowly defined decision-making process to address an advisement problem during registration.

Prior to their involvement in the project, many team members had viewed complex outcomes as emerging from behind closed doors. (In a similar way, people who dine at a sophisticated restaurant witness only the presentation of an elaborate entrée; the waiter’s flourish gives no hint of what was involved in creating the dish). In fact, deconstructing leadership may be likened to watching the Food Network: certain routines for problem solving become clear. Much like learning to dice an onion, previously unknown ideas and skills (e.g., cross training, learning the jargon of different campus units) can be demystified. An example of this for our team was sharing “annual reports.” Most enrollment management professionals never saw the department or unit annual reports. Sharing them with team members gave them insights into what was shared with the executive sponsor of the project and also served as a point of pride. This helped them understand aspects of the enterprise of which they previously were unaware.

Opportunities to use one’s knowledge in campus-wide contexts can facilitate increased confidence and skills. Giving individuals titles (e.g., project manager, coordinator) for specific exceptional circumstances or for short-term implementations can facilitate leadership development. Additional graduated leadership opportunities include the following:

- Participating in leadership-oriented professional development activities (online, on and/or off campus);
- Serving as “lead” on a committee (e.g., conference room pilots of new procedures, discussion of policy matters) composed of enrollment management specialists as well as other campus members; and
- Presenting periodic work-related updates by presenting at campus, state, and/or national conferences.

Ideally, these new experiences will enable enrollment management professionals to build their confidence and develop a new sense of self. Note, however, that assistance may be needed to foster some employees’ willingness to move beyond the comfort zone of familiar routines.

**Question 2: How can new challenges become self-evaluative opportunities?**

As exceptional circumstances come to be seen as incubators for learning, enrollment management specialists are likely to become increasingly self-reflective. Rather than perceiving corrections or recommendations for reconsiderations as criticism or personal attacks, enrollment management professionals may come to perceive them instead as opportunities for self-improvement. Whereas I had previously completed annual performance evaluations, I asked each team member to prepare a self-evaluation. I also asked them to give me anonymous, specific feedback on my leadership goals; they then had the opportunity to see how I responded. Many since have let me know that it was what I did rather than what I said that helped them understand professional evolution as essential. Ideally,
identifying explicit leadership opportunities for the year ahead and building them into annual reviews will help ensure that these activities take place. Linking the actions with the unit’s (or the college’s) strategic plan can facilitate increased understanding of how the work of the enrollment management unit affects the campus as a whole.

Consider these opportunities to develop leadership skills during exceptional circumstances:

- Incorporate specific skills into annual reviews that can be used during the exceptional circumstance as well as thereafter.
- Facilitate participation in broad-based training experiences.
- Take ten minutes every Thursday afternoon to ask:
  - “What did I do to help my leadership candidates stretch beyond their reach?”
  - “How did I recognize efforts as well as achievements?”
  - “What happened this week to show me that progress is being made toward leadership as well as toward the specific goals of the exceptional circumstance?”

As a project team, we participated in two retreats each year that were designed to help us think in new ways about ourselves and our work. One retreat focused on the team described by Ken Blanchard et. al (2000) in *High Five*. The book uses a parable to illustrate how teamwork requires not only one or two outstanding talents but also capacity for improvement by all members. A light-hearted starting point for discussion, the book clarified ways in which team members could support one another’s developing skills and thereby learn more about themselves. As we learned together, all team members grew in their confidence as well as in their skill set.

**Question 3: How does one make the transition from learner to mentor or leader?**

One aspect of making the transition from learner to leader involves increased awareness of and comfort level with others on campus. Intentionally incorporating campus-wide activities into performance programs can facilitate this process. Consider, for example, the following:

- Participate on campus-wide committees to consider challenges and benefits likely to be derived during/after resolution of the exceptional circumstance.
- Serve on a campus governance committee that oversees policies pertinent to the exceptional circumstance.
- Join a listserv sponsored by the vendor, a users’ group associated with the product, or a professional organization.

Just as becoming a leader is not an option for everyone, so becoming a mentor is not an option for every supervisor. Some supervisors have little or no capacity for leadership or mentoring. (This includes supervisors who have no interest in investing their time and energy in others, who are poor at self-reflection, and who are loath to leave old habits behind. If you are a potential leader and realize that your supervisor is ill-suited to mentor you, then consider others who may be resources. Similarly, if you are a supervisor and recognize that one of your direct reports has the capacity for leadership *but you are not the right mentor*, then explore other ways in which your campus might provide mentoring to this individual. Candid recognition of impediments to mentoring can minimize [if not eliminate] wasted time and effort.)

The following questions may aid potential leaders and mentors as they consider the transition from learner to leader:

- What capabilities do I already possess that could serve as the basis of mentoring or leading?
- Which aspects of my professional and educational background could provide the foundation for further learning in the area of mentoring or leadership? In what areas would I need to develop new frames of reference and greater depth of knowledge?
- Am I willing and able to participate in self-reflective inquiry, adjustment, and forward thinking to develop my mentoring or leadership skills?
- Who could serve as professional resources for me as I develop my mentoring or leadership skills? What is the best way to invite these individuals to assist me as I develop?
- How can I develop the skill set I believe to be essential to the mentor or leader I aspire to be?
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What supports are necessary for me to take reasonable risks in my professional development as a mentor or leader?

CONCLUSION

Exceptional circumstances for enrollment management staff members should be perceived as “greenhouses” for facilitating the development of leadership perspectives and as unique opportunities for mentoring. Greenhouses can be both cloying and useful; the moisture and heat can be oppressive. But if you recognize that time in the greenhouse is short and that it facilitates desirable outcomes, then the discomfort may be perceived as worthwhile.

Prospective Leaders: Leadership is not just for other people. Consider what you might contribute to your department and/or to your campus. Take advantage of opportunities to learn whether leadership could be a satisfying addition to your career.

Prospective Mentors: The tendency in exceptional circumstances is to hope they pass quickly, with as little “skin loss” as possible. Instead, seek to perceive them as opportunities for learning and growth. As future leaders begin to view their work, campus, and profession in new ways, they begin as well to consider how they might take on new roles. Supervisors can assist with this process. As one team member said, “I saw through the mirage I’d been in before: there were opportunities in front of me that I’d never previously considered.”

REFERENCES


About the Author

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Establishing Remote Student Identity: Results of an AACRAO/InCommon Federation Survey

By Mark McConahay and Ann West

Students are admitted; registered; provided with financial assistance; given examinations; assigned grades; permitted to graduate; and mailed diplomas and transcripts. At many institutions, these educational experiences and institutional services are delivered remotely: The students never set foot on a campus. Proximity to brick and mortar is neither an expectation nor a program requirement. Who are these students (and graduates), and how do we know they are who they say they are?

Successful administration of remote programs and services requires that information technology (IT) professionals and university administrators address two critical identity management factors: linking the institutional electronic record representing an individual with the “real” person and establishing a mechanism/protocol (user name and password, also known as a credential) via which the physical person can “link” to his electronic record. Institutions rely on a set of Identity Management (IdM) practices to accomplish this process (see McConahay et al. 2010).

For traditional students—i.e., those who arrive for orientation and anticipate spending their academic careers on campus—we have standard procedures for vetting identities and issuing ID cards and credentials. But for students at a distance, no analogous common methods or best practices exist—certainly none deemed acceptable by key privacy and regulatory experts.

Universities are accelerating their reliance on technology to deliver online educational services, including individual courses and entire programs. Nationally, there is increased interest in understanding these trends (e.g., the vast data available through the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics and its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) as well as increased scrutiny of program integrity (e.g., Title IV, Section 600.2). IdM thus must provide appropriate support while guaranteeing both security and privacy. What IdM practices, then, have institutions adopted and implemented?

To answer that question, AACRAO and InCommon1 conducted a “Survey on Establishing Remote Student Identity” in fall 2010. The goals of the survey were to:

- determine the state of current Remote ID practices;
- compile a set of common practice(s); and
- recommend reasonable practices.

1 See <www.incommon.org>.
The survey focused on business process and practice, not on technology, and concentrated on remote identity practices surrounding the delivery of distance and remote instruction that could result in the award of a terminal degree. The intent was to identify practices that highlight the difficulty of proving the identity of an individual and linking that person to an institutional electronic record in the absence of face-to-face contact.

WHY DO WE CARE?

As more and more business is conducted online, the implications of a security breach become ever greater. Colleges and universities are subject to increasing scrutiny and compliance requirements for protecting student information. As a result, conducting business online with students we never meet in person is particularly complex and challenging.

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)/security Compliance

Institutions offer an array of information displays and services to enable their students to conduct business from remote locations. Often, this information can be accessed only by the student to whom it pertains. Ensuring that the information is available only to intended recipients relies on sufficient assurance in the links among user, credential, and record.


Higher education institutions are required to submit, via the Annual Institutional Data Update (AIDU), their identity verification practices for online learners. The re-authorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008) requires an institution that offers distance education or correspondence education to have processes through which the institution establishes that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit.

The HEOA challenge can be restated as two simple questions for the registrar: Given a digital dossier containing a series of student life-cycle records and events filed under a single digital identity, how do you know that the same personal identity is associated with all of the entries in the dossier? And even after establishing that all the recorded events concern a single personal identity, how certain can you be when a particular physical individual says, “That digital dossier is about me”?

McCabe, et al., in their 2001 report on more than a decade of research, reflect that “cheating is prevalent and that some forms of cheating have increased dramatically in the last 30 years.” Extend the age-old practices of paying others to take exams and write papers and of purchasing lecture notes to the online environment—where the learner is never seen in person and opportunities for identity theft and impersonation abound—and such abuses may become even more prevalent. If they are not addressed, they may degrade the value not only of distance learning programs but also of higher education; at a minimum, they are sure to compromise the reputation of the institution(s) under whose auspices they occur.

Accreditation and HEOA

Since spring 2010, universities have been required to report their identity-proofing practices via the Annual Institutional Data Update (AIDU). The U.S. Department of Education requires accreditors to ensure that institu-
Admissions staffs routinely conduct vetting processes in developing applicants’ initial dossiers. Similar procedures are applied whether the student ultimately will be physically present on campus or will remain “remote” throughout her academic career. As a result, an institution can justly claim that all the items in the initial dossier refer to some single individual and that the facts they assert about that individual are true.

‘Identity proofing’ is the act of verifying the physical identity of a person—for example, by using photo identification—and ensuring that information on the ID (e.g., address) corresponds to that in the vetted identity dossier. This establishes one crucial link (“A”) between the physical person and the identity dossier (see Figure 1, on page 62).

‘Credential binding’ is the process of establishing two further crucial links: One (“B”) between a specific known physical person and a digital credential (today, most institutions rely on a single credential pair: user name and password) and the other (“C”) between the digital credential and the identity dossier. Link B enables the institution to claim that activities authenticated with a given digital credential belong to a particular physical person, and link C, between the credential and the dossier, attests that the institution knows where to file the digital record of those particular authenticated user activities. Once a student is admitted, her dossier continues to grow, reflecting class enrollments, work submitted, tests taken, course grades, declaration(s) of major, etc. The credential-dossier link (C) is the basis on which the institution avers that “yes, all material in this dossier is associated with the single associated credential bearer.”

For on-campus learners, identity proofing (link A) as well as credential binding (links B and C) often are accomplished in one transaction by having the learners appear in person at a photo ID office. Identity proofing is accomplished by comparing each learner’s physical appearance with one or more pre-existing photo IDs. Link B is established by having users authenticate with their
previously issued credentials (or by issuing new credentials on the spot) and then having them change their passwords in the presence of photo ID staff. Link C is established by recording the credential and password change in the digital dossier.

For remote learners, establishing these three links poses unique challenges because of the difficulties inherent in both remote identity proofing and remote credential binding. The results of the current AACRAO/InCommon Federation survey provide the best information to date on how current practices seek to address those challenges.

Even were a credential known to have been linked initially to a given physical person, some (including user name and password) can be passed from their authorized owners to others who then can authenticate as the original owners. While this threat exists for on-campus as well as for remote learners, it is not the focus of the present article.

SURVEY RESULTS

“Establishing Remote Student Identity” was developed by the InCommon Student Services Group, a collaboration of IT staff and registrar campus teams, AACRAO, InCommon, Internet2, and EDUCAUSE. The survey was conducted between September 15 and October 6, 2010; questions focused on the processes used by institutions offering degree programs at a distance to verify the identities of and to communicate login credentials to prospective, admitted, and registered students.

Responses

The survey was sent to 2,810 individuals representing approximately 1,100 institutions. Of the more than 100 responses that were returned, only 76 could be analyzed in a meaningful way (the others were incomplete, did not pertain to a distance education program, etc.). The 76 respondents comprise:

- 43 percent registrars;
- 26 percent distance education staff;
- 17 percent admissions staff;
- 14 percent other administrative staff.

Of the 66 respondents who provided information about the size of their distance education programs, 47 percent enrolled more than 500 students and 70 percent enrolled more than 100 students. (Note: institutions with more than 500 students are part of the percentage of institutions with over 100 students).

Survey Measures

Although a more complete analysis of the survey was performed, the metrics were simplified for the purposes of this report. The three primary measures were defined as:

- Information Services Risk (ISR), a categorical measure of information access and risk of unauthorized disclosure or breach of information services rendered by an institution. The more sensitive the information and the greater the consequence of unauthorized disclosure, the higher the ISR value. An example of a low-risk service is sending recruitment materials to a potential applicant;

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* See [https://spaces.internet2.edu/x/xQ](https://spaces.internet2.edu/x/xQ).
a high-risk service is providing access to financial information.

- Level of Assurance (LOA), an ordinal measure of confidence that identity proofing and credential binding have been achieved successfully. It is properly thought of as a measure of how well the institution has established and maintained links A, B, and C (see Figure 1, on page 62).

- Robustness of Credential Practice (RCP), which indicates the extent to which the institution has confidence that the key (credential holder) is resistant to unauthorized use. ‘Credentialing’ is the process by which the user is assigned a credential (e.g., NetID) and completes the process to establish the first factor for authentication (typically a password). ‘Authentication’ is verifying that the person seeking access to a resource is the one previously identified and approved. Proper authentication requires that the preceding processes are not compromised. An example of a robust credential practice is sending via U.S. mail a one-time link to a password selection page; a less desirable practice would be to send the credential to a user-provided e-mail address.

For purposes of analysis, all information services were categorized by ISR level (high, medium, and low). Similarly, LOA and RCP were categorized as high, medium, and low. ISR then was compared to LOA (see Table 1) and to RCP (see Table 2).

Ideally, Table 1 would show response data clustered along a diagonal from the lower left (low ISR and low LOA) to the upper right (high ISR and high LOA) (see shading in Table 1). However, survey results indicate that more than half of respondents offer high ISR information with only a low LOA.

A similar result is observed when RCP is compared to ISR (see Table 2). Ideally, information with high ISR would be associated only with robust credential practices. However, only twelve of 53 institutions could be said to offer confidential information in a secure manner; the vast majority offer high ISR services despite low RCP.

### FINDINGS

The low response rate limits the generalizability of the survey findings. Nevertheless, descriptive data provide a window into the identity-proofing practices in use in higher education today and provide a basis for future inquiry.

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**Table 1.** Information Services Risk (ISR) vs. Level of Assurance (LOA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Services Risk</th>
<th>Level of Assurance</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Three respondents did not specify any services*

**Table 2.** Information Services Risk (ISR) vs. Robustness of Credential Practice (RCP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Services Risk</th>
<th>Robustness of Credential</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Only 53 respondents provided sufficient information to accurately classify the credential practice.*
No best practice for identity proofing was revealed. Several institutions’ responses suggest that reasonable procedures are currently in use, but a clear best practice did not emerge. Some respondents provided examples of practices that are insufficient to guarantee an individual’s identity—for example, accepting as proof of identity verification from personal or professional references. References provide additional information for identity dossiers, but they do not verify identity.

Few remote identity-proofing procedures or standards were revealed. One of the goals of the survey was to compile a set of common practices. However, practices were many and varied and were difficult to classify or categorize. A common—if unwritten—standard seems not to exist. In fact, many practices seem to have evolved. Within any given institution, multiple practices may exist.

The “balance” between convenience and security is skewed toward convenience. Institutions are more likely to utilize identity-proofing practices that are cost effective and convenient for students than those that ensure information security.

Information services risk was independent of both level of assurance (LOA) and robustness of credential practice (RPC). The information services offered to constituents appear to be wholly independent of the rigor of the identity-proofing practices utilized. Services often include those required to recruit and/or to enroll students at the institution and, thus, those that are integral to the effective and efficient conduct of business. Yet services appear to be offered regardless of the strength of affiliated security practices.

At least two issues may explain the lack of a common set of practices and standards for identity proofing:

Necessity, time sensitivity, and client (student) convenience helped drive the multitude of identity-proofing practices in use at institutions today. Rather than adapt to commonly accepted standards (which do not exist), each institution considered its own needs and processes and used its own judgment to develop what it deems a “reasonable” practice.

Each institution utilizes a risk-benefit analysis—if only informally. What is identity security worth? What is the risk to the institution as a result of a disclosure or breach?

Because there has not been a major security breach and/or major security incident with profound consequences for an institution (at least not one that has been publicized), sensitivity to these issues is low. It is worth asking how long we can remain in this blissful state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Barring creation of an organization to regulate or oversee standard IdM practices, we offer the following recommendations:

Consider the sensitivity of the provided business or service. Early in the academic life cycle, when communications with students are largely recruitment and informational brochures, confidence in students’ identities is not as critical as later in the life cycle, when business being conducted between institution and students is more sensitive and individualized. IdM practice should be evaluated according to the business being conducted: Not all services require equal confidentiality.

Consider how resilient the credentials are to unintended use, i.e., how the credentials are initially established and communicated. A highly regarded practice is to provide a system-assigned user name and then communicate the password via U.S. mail by sending a one-time link to a password selection page. This provides assurance that the user name is unique and that the password is communicated to the user with protection against unauthorized use.

Consider how the physical identity of the individual is confirmed. Both the credibility of the documents required from the student to establish physical identity and the mode of transmitting these documents are important. Notarized documents sent through U.S. mail provide confidence in the documents and the communication mechanism.

CONCLUSION

Identity proofing is the means to determine “who is on the other end”—that is, the people using systems, services, and data. When traditional means of identity proofing are not adequate—as when matriculated students never set foot on campus—we are left with more questions than answers. Some promising concepts have been identified, including the potential to leverage the identity proofing already being conducted by undergraduate and graduate
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testing agencies. Another approach might be to issue a high-quality electronic credential to high school students, who then could log in to college and university systems. The technology for these scenarios exists, but discussions about its use as a solution to current IdM challenges remain in the very early stages. Other aspects of IdM—to include the development of policy—may prove the more significant challenge.

REFERENCES


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Duality and Tension for a University Registrar: A Modern-Day Lesson for Academic and Student Affairs

By Sylvia L. M. Martinez

One of the most fervent debates at the University of Kansas (KU) during the Vietnam War played out in the University Registrar’s Office. During this period, James K. Hitt held the dual role of university registrar and Selective Service Representative: he used his position as registrar to inform the military of students’ grades and class standings for draft deferment eligibility. The duality of Hitt’s role became widely unpopular and spurred debate among faculty and administration as to the appropriateness of KU’s cooperation with the Selective Service and the broader military establishment. In 1966 KU faculty petitioned Hitt to reconsider both his role as Selective Service Representative and the implications of a military draft policy dependent upon students’ academic records. The draft policy itself had the intended consequence of selecting certain college men over others on the basis of academic performance, but it also had the unintended consequences of creating a moral dilemma for faculty (specifically with regard to assigning grades) and of riddling an academic culture with tension among students, faculty, and administrators.

The premise of the American draft law in effect from 1940 until 1973 was that military service should be shared equally among all men in times of need (Flynn 1998). Yet at the start of the Vietnam War, the United States had in place a draft that offered deferments to students, fathers, and scientists. The student deferment system was not designed to protect students per se but was a response to a philosophical and theoretical need to retain educated men to fight communism (Flynn 1998). However, as the war escalated and the need for soldiers increased, President Johnson made quick decisions about where to secure additional manpower. Pressured by the American public’s belief that student deferments favored the elite, President Johnson changed the deferment eligibility for undergraduates in 1966; in 1969, President Nixon ended deferments for all graduate students except those in health care (Cooper 1978).

In 1966, local Selective Service boards gave education deferments (II-S classification) to more than 1.7 million eligible draftees on the basis of their full-time attendance at colleges and universities (Cooper 1978). As a result, the Vietnam draft was criticized for its seemingly inequitable system of selections and deferments (Cooper 1978, Flynn 1998). On June 5, 1966, The New York Times published “Complaints on Draft May Bear Fruit—in ’67,” written by Hanson W. Baldwin who described the significant inequity between who was selected for the draft and who was able to take advantage of deferments due to college attendance, occupation, and marriage status. Baldwin noted
that many Americans thought the draft “tend[ed] to favor an economic or intellectually favored group at the expense of underprivileged youngsters” and that the deferment system for college students should be eliminated so that all American youths would share the burden of military duty equally.

In April 1966, the Selective Service introduced new criteria for education deferments under the II-S classification (Cooper 1978): Universities and colleges were required to submit course load figures and information on scholastic standing for each undergraduate and graduate male. In addition, students who chose to take a college qualification test to maintain their II-S deferment (rather than have only their grades and course loads be taken into consideration) were required to obtain a minimum recognized score. The II-S classification did not guarantee that they would not be reclassified and drafted, though the Selective Service did maintain that as long as students stayed in school and continued to meet the criteria, their status would remain unchanged. The new criteria and Registrar Hitt’s compliance with military policy in providing grade information to local draft boards led to an interesting tension between academic and student affairs at KU.

**DUAL ROLE, UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

Registrar Hitt’s dual role was highlighted in the KU student newspaper, the *University Daily Kansan* (*UDK*). On January 18, 1966, the paper published “The Choice—Full Load or Full Uniform,” in which Hitt stressed the importance of studying hard and earning good grades if students expected to return to the University the following semester. Hitt’s comments were met with faculty disapproval as they questioned the appropriateness of his dual role. The tension came to a head on May 18, 1966, when several faculty members petitioned Hitt to reassess his role in providing students’ grades and class rankings to the Selective Service. In an article titled “Faculty Petition Hitt” (1966) the faculty petition contended that University policy to supply grade details “burdens the instructors to decide what grade a student should have, while knowing that a poor grade may send a student to Vietnam.” Hamilton Salsich, an assistant instructor in the English Department, was quoted in the article as saying, “A grade should only be an indication of the student’s performance in a class and should not be used to indicate the expendability of a man to society on the basis of a mark.” Furthermore, Salsich noted in the article that:

> War is a grave moral issue; as an educator, I cannot—and will not—accept the responsibility for indirectly deciding whether a student will preserve his life as a student or endanger his life as a soldier. Such a responsibility is an insult to my profession. I am an educator, not an executioner. (Faculty Petition Hitt 1966).

In fact, college and university faculty across the country were confronted with the same dilemma: students’ grades could determine their draft eligibility. As a result, many chose to assign higher grades despite low levels of achievement so that students could maintain their draft status (Birnbaum 1977, Bishop 1997, Sabot and Wäkemann-Linn 1991, Weller 1984, Zirkel 1999).

On May 25, 1966, *UDK* published an article by Herbert J. Ellison, who noted that some faculty opposed the petition. Although they acknowledged the precarious position of students with regard to the draft, they believed that as university employees, administrators and faculty members should submit to the Selective Service requirements as one of KU’s top ten stories of the year. Years later, in Kenneth Fulton’s March 4, 1975 *UDK* article titled “Professors and students suffered from honor roll boom,” KU professors contended that they did not grade more easily during the Vietnam War and the draft, though they did acknowledge increased pressure from students to assign higher grades. In Fulton’s article, Thomas Gorton, then dean of the School of Fine Arts, noted, “Male students were susceptible to the draft if their grades were low... [and] teachers were sensitive to the stu-
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Some faculty members’ willingness to assign students higher grades because of draft policies may have caused them to violate institutional ethical standards, thus jeopardizing their employment (and their reputations). In “Salsich: Fired or Not,” published on April 26, 1968, Salsich stated, “I probably would, if approached by one of my male students, give him whatever grade necessary for him to escape the draft.” He explained, “I feasibly could kill a male student by giving him a low grade that would make him draft material…. I cannot do it—it’s immoral.” Salsich did not return to KU the next academic year; many believed this was the result of his outspokenness and of his involvement in campus protests related to military policy at KU (See Gillie 1968).

TENSION BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Throughout the country, many faculty members and students opposed not only the Vietnam War and the draft but also on-campus military research, recruitment, and Reserve Officers’ Training Corps programs (Kurlanksy 2004, Thelin 2004). At KU, they also criticized the combined role of university registrar and Selective Service Representative. The duality of the role coalesced toward a unique tension between academic and student affairs as it was believed by many to be both unethical and the cause of unintended academic consequences. Of foremost concern to faculty was the denigration of the academic culture and the learning ethos as the change in deferment eligibility criteria distinguished between who would remain at the university and who could be drafted. As Birnbaum (1977) stated, “Grading was no longer a trivial or arbitrary matter, and those giving grades became aware of a new and desperate responsibility.” Not only did many faculty feel pressure to protect college men from the draft and the increasingly unpopular war, but they also felt morally obliged to do so. These were critical unintended consequences of draft deferment eligibility.

Although academic and students affairs are no longer considered separate—i.e., with academic affairs concerned primarily with student learning in the classroom and student affairs concerned with learning outside the classroom—we nevertheless must reflect on the tension between the two. The mantra of higher education today is purposeful partnerships to meet the mission of student learning, growth, and graduation. But we must question our ability to work in such partnerships when competing assumptions and structures are in place (consider, for example, the role of external, societal forces on higher education practice). Tension between some KU faculty members and the registrar arose when Selective Service deferment criteria altered the registrar’s role and clouded issues related to student learning. This instance offers us an opportunity to reflect on academic and student affairs’ shared role in advancing higher education’s mission of fostering student learning.

REFERENCES


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