



# COLLEGE *and* UNIVERSITY

Volume 92 Issue Nº 4

Educating the Modern Higher Education Administration Professional

The Influence of Electronic  
Word-of-Mouth on College  
Search and Choice

Revolutionizing  
Academic Records:  
A Student Perspective

From "AICE-ing" the Test  
to Earning the Degree:  
Enrollment and Graduation Patterns  
among Students with the Cambridge  
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It's a Big Job, but  
We Have to Do It

Seeking the Sage:  
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The Mentoring Relationship

### Research in Brief

Disney in the Academy  
(and Other Disney  
Educational Experiences  
on College Campuses)

### Commentary

Leaders Who  
Attract Followers

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### Book Reviews

Knowledge Games: How  
Playing Games Can Solve  
Problems, Create Insight,  
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Reengineering the University:  
How To Be Mission  
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SEM Core Concepts: Building  
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# COLLEGE *and* UNIVERSITY

Volume 92 Issue N° 4

## 2 The Influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on College Search and Choice

By *Whitney Lehmann*

## 12 From "AICE-ing" the Test to Earning the Degree: Enrollment and Graduation Patterns among Students with the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma

By *Carmen Vidal Rodeiro, Cara Crawford, and Stuart Shaw*

## 24 Revolutionizing Academic Records: A Student Perspective

By *Jesse Parish, Rodney Parks, and Jack Fryer*

### FORUM

#### Mentorship Series

It's a Big Job, but We Have to Do It ..... 37

By *Daniel J. Bender*

Seeking the Sage: A Personal Essay on Mentoring ..... 41

By *Mary Hodder*

The Mentoring Relationship ..... 45

By *Glenn Munson*

#### Research in Brief

Disney in the Academy (and Other Disney Educational Experiences on College Campuses) 49

By *Christopher Tremblay*

#### Commentary

Leaders Who Attract Followers ..... 61

By *Michael Hawkins*

Office of the Registrar: Mission and Vision ..... 65

By *Howard E. Shanken and David M. Sauter*

#### Book Reviews

Knowledge Games: How Playing Games Can Solve Problems, Create Insight, and Make Change ..... 69

Reengineering the University: How To Be Mission Centered,

Market Smart, and Margin Conscious.. 72

Higher Education Reconsidered: Executing Change to Drive Collective Impact ..... 75

SEM Core Concepts: Building Blocks for Institutional and Student Success.... 78

*Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt, Kimberley Buster-Williams, and Christopher Tremblay*

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# Editor's Note

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As we put the final touches on this edition of *C&U*, summer is coming to an end and the academic year is starting. The influx of new students and faculty energizes and inspires our institutions. It's often a time when new policies and processes are being rolled out, and new challenges arise. What are the issues that are energizing, inspiring, or challenging you? Perhaps you'll find some answers in these pages!

This edition includes three feature articles. In "The Influence of Electronic Word-of-mouth on College Search and Choice," Whitney Lehmann reports on a study of the perceived influence of social media on the college search and selection process, especially in comparison with more traditional inputs (word-of-mouth, college web sites, campus tours, etc.).

In "Revolutionizing Academic Records: A Student Perspective," Jesse Parish, Rodney Parks, and Jack Fryer discuss a study of student reactions to the Elon University Visual Experiential Profile, which presents information in both summary and visual forms on a student's Elon experiences in five areas: Global Education, Internships, Leadership, Research, and Service.

In "From 'AICE-ing' the Test to Earning the Degree: Enrollment and Graduation Patterns Among Students with the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma," Carmen Vidal Rodeiro, Cara Crawford, and Stuart Shaw examine college enrollment and graduation statistics for a cohort of students who earned a Cambridge AICE diploma in 2011.

The Mentorship series continues with three articles: "It's a Big Job, but We Have to Do It," by Daniel J. Bender, "Seeking the Sage: A Personal Essay on Mentoring," by Mary Hodder, and "The Mentoring Relationship," by Glenn Munson.

Also included are two commentaries: "Leaders Who Attract Followers," by Michael Hawkins, and "Office of the Registrar: Mission and Vision," by Howard Shan-ken and David M. Sauter.

We have one Research in Brief article. Christopher Tremblay presents research on "Disney in the Academy (And Other Disney Educational Experiences on College Campuses)."

The edition also contains three book reviews by Matthew Fifolt, of *Reengineering the University: How to be Mission Centered, Market Smart, and Margin Conscious*, by William F. Massey, *Higher Education Reconsidered: Executing Change to Drive Collective Impact*, edited by Jason E. Lane, and *Knowledge Games: How Playing Games Can Solve Problems, Create Insight, and Make Change*, by Karen Schrier. In addition, Kimberley Buster-Williams and Christopher Tremblay review *SEM Core Concepts: Building Blocks for Institutional and Student Success*, by Wayne Sigler.

I hope the variety of articles in this edition gives you, our readers, your own ideas for possible articles! As always, the editors of *C&U* are looking for authors!

# The Influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on College Search and Choice

This study used an online questionnaire to survey 276 first-time, non-transfer undergraduate freshmen students at the University of Miami to determine the perceived influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on their college search and choice compared to that of traditional word-of-mouth (WOM). In addition, eWOM's influence was examined during the search and choice phases of the three-phased college choice process and when consumed across various forms of social media. The results of this study suggested that traditional WOM had a greater perceived influence on students' college choice than eWOM. The results also suggested that eWOM had a greater perceived influence during the search phase than during the choice phase and a greater perceived influence when consumed on online reviews/forums than when consumed on social networking sites. A recommendation for further study follows.

For more than half a century, researchers have studied the power that word-of-mouth (WOM) conversations have in the marketplace. These informal conversations between friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors have been found to have a significant impact on consumer choice and to be more effective than traditional marketing tools as they typically are perceived as more credible and trustworthy than commercial sources (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins 2007; Arndt 1967; Engel, Blackwell and Kegerreis 1969; Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czaplewski 2006; Katz and Lazarfeld 1955; Keller 2007; Liu 2006; Whyte 1954). “The reasons for WOM’s power are evident: word-of-mouth is seen as more credible than marketer-initiated communications because it is perceived as having passed through the unbiased filter of ‘people like me’” (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins 2007, 398).

The advent of the Internet and its interactive capabilities introduced a new form of word-of-mouth called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) that exists online and allows consumers, who are typically strangers, to interact with one another and share their opinions about various goods and services through review sites, social networking sites, blogs, content-sharing sites, and other forms of social media. This consumer-to-consumer communication has become increasingly influential in consumers’ purchasing decisions and has shifted the power of influence from marketers to consumers; today’s consumers are no longer passive receivers of product-related infor-

mation but rather are active communicators who seek fellow consumers’ opinions and offer their own (Chu and Choi 2011). “So while WOM has always been important, its importance today is higher than ever. As the credibility of ‘official’ marketing messages is waning, the power of one consumer recommending a product to another—or to many—is waxing” (Keller 2007 449).

eWOM’s influence in relation to consumer decisions has been examined across numerous industries, including tech-electronics (*e.g.*, DVD players and computers), high-touch retail (*e.g.*, clothing, appliances, and furniture), no-touch services (*e.g.*, travel, vacations, and financial services), household staples (*e.g.*, beverages and pet supplies), and online entertainment (*e.g.*, movies, music, games and television content available on the Web) (Riegner 2007); eWOM is most likely to influence purchasing decisions for items that are more complex, expensive, and highly coveted (such as technology and consumer electronics) and less likely to influence low-involvement products—those purchased mainly in stores and that buyers want to see, feel, or try on, such as clothes and furniture, and products that are personal or confidential in nature, such as financial services (Riegner 2007). In addition, eWOM has been found to have a strong influence on complex and high-risk purchasing decisions, such as travel (Hernández-Méndez, Muñoz-Leiva and Sánchez-Fernández 2013).

These findings suggest that eWOM may have a similar effect on another type of complex, high-risk service purchase: college (which has yet to be examined within an eWOM context). Examining the influence of eWOM on college choice is especially relevant in light of findings that Millennials, the generation comprising the largest

cohort of college students in the United States, increasingly are basing their product evaluations on information consumed from online reviews; their generation is “a vital component in the evolution of social media becoming a source of product information” (Hartman and McCambridge 2011; Mangold and Smith 2012, 141).

The “always-connected” generation, Millennials are immersed in digital technology and social media and utilize them as sources of information (Pew Research Center 2010, 1). Millennials both read and are influenced by online reviews and are more likely than the general population to talk about products and services online (eMarketer 2011; Mangold and Smith 2012).

Although no existing studies have specifically examined eWOM’s influence on college choice, limited studies have examined the perceived influence of social media on the college choice process and have found that prospective students consider social media to be the least important, least influential, and least reliable source of information among college search and enrollment resources (Constantinides and Zinck Stagno 2011; Noel-Levitz 2014; Parrot and Tipton 2010).

Why are college-bound students placing so little importance on social media as a source of information during their college search and choice? Individual Media Dependency (IMD) theory, the micro-level view of Media System Dependency (MSD) theory that examines how individuals use media to satisfy goals, may provide some insight. If higher education social media, such as a university’s Facebook page or Twitter account, and other forms of higher education eWOM, such as college review sites like College Confidential, Cappex, and Niche (formerly College Prowler), are not helping prospective college students fulfill specific goals during the application and enrollment phases, like seeking information and engagement, then students will not depend upon these media and therefore will consider them to be less valuable or important, according to IMD.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on the college choice process and, specifically, how the perceived influence of eWOM compares to that of traditional word-of-mouth. In addition, this study examines eWOM’s perceived influence during different phases of the college choice process (*i.e.*, search versus choice) and when it is consumed across different types of social media (online review sites versus social networking sites) (Hossler and Gallagher 1987). This study uses

Individual Media Dependency (IMD) theory to explain why prospective students are placing value on eWOM as a resource during the college choice process (or why they are not), proposing that prospective students’ perceived influence of eWOM is related to the attainment of their goals during the process.

## Literature Review

Traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) dates back to the oral tradition, having existed since people began engaging in conversation (Kimmel and Kitchen 2014). Defined as “oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product, or a service offered for sale,” these informal conversations between consumers have been found to have a significant impact on consumer choice and to be more effective than traditional marketing tools (Arndt 1967, 190; Engel, Blackwell and Kegerreis 1969; Gruen, Osmonbekov and Czapslewski 2006; Katz and Lazarfeld 1955).

The advent of the Internet introduced a new form of word-of-mouth called electronic word-of-mouth, also known as eWOM, that exists online and allows consumers, who are typically strangers, to interact with one another and share their opinions about various goods and services. eWOM is defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2004, 39). Such communication has become increasingly influential in consumers’ purchasing decisions and has shifted the power of influence away from marketers. Today’s consumers are no longer passive receivers of product-related information but rather active communicators who seek fellow consumers’ opinions and offer their own (Chu and Choi 2011).

## Differentiating Between WOM and eWOM

eWOM differs from traditional WOM in several ways. Traditional word-of-mouth involves spoken, person-to-person communication whereas eWOM is not face to face but rather the passive reading of a computer screen or the active writing of a message (Andreassen and Streukens 2009; Arndt 1967; Rogers 1995). Traditional



WOM takes place privately, and conversations are perishable; eWOM takes place publicly and online, on platforms such as blogs, review sites, and social networking sites, and, because it is written, is stored for future reference (Andreassen and Streukens 2009; Chu and Choi 2011). Because eWOM is defined as taking place publicly online and being delivered to a multitude of people via the Internet, it does not include one-on-one conversations that may take place online—for example, via email, Skype, or instant message (Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2004).

Another distinction between WOM and eWOM is the reach of the communication. eWOM’s extensive reach is achieved through the Internet’s low-cost, bidirectional communication capabilities (Dellarcoas 2003). Various eWOM platforms, such as online discussion forums, blogs, review sites, and social networking sites, allow for multi-way exchanges in an asynchronous mode that result in “unprecedented scalability and speed of diffusion” (Cheung and Lee 2012, 219).

Although eWOM may create more influence than traditional WOM because of its viral nature and reach and

because its online existence allows access to information whenever the user seeks it, it also is significantly less personal than traditional WOM, which may lessen its impact (O’Reilly and Marx 2011). Unlike traditional WOM, which takes place between individuals familiar with each other, eWOM can include both identified and unidentified sources of information (Brown and Reingen 1987; Chu and Choi 2011; Flanagin and Metzger 2007). Most WOM involves individuals known and trusted by the receiver, such as family and friends, as well as perceived experts, whereas eWOM typically involves individuals who are strangers with no indication of expertise about the product category under consideration (Gupta and Harris 2010).

Despite the unprecedented volume and reach of eWOM, its effects have been found to be less influential than traditional word-of-mouth in decision making for high-risk and complex purchases, such as travel (Hernández-Méndez, Muñoz-Leiva and Sánchez-Fernández 2013). Word-of-mouth of friends, family, and acquaintances affects tourist behavior to a greater

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degree than does communication with other Internet users, whether the users are known to the tourist or not (Fotis, Buhalis and Rossides 2012; Murphy, Mascardo and Benckendorff 2007; Nielsen Company 2009; Park, Lee and Han 2007). Frambach, Roest, and Krishnan (2007) reported a similar finding regarding mortgages, a complex service purchase, stating that consumers had a strong preference for offline compared to online communication during all stages of the buying process.

## eWOM and the College Choice Process

Although no existing studies specifically examine eWOM's influence on college choice, limited studies have examined the perceived influence of social media on college choice and have found that prospective students consider social media to be the least important, least influential, and least reliable source of information among college search and enrollment resources; admission counselors, friends, relatives, and current students at the school of interest are all considered more influential than social media in terms of influencing the enrollment decision (Constantinides and Zinck Stagno 2011; Noel-Levitz 2014; Parrot and Tipton 2010).

Although traditional word-of-mouth may influence college choice more than eWOM does, eWOM still may play an important role in the process—specifically, during a particular phase of the three-phased model (Hossler and Gallagher 1987). Jang, Prasad, and Ratchford (2012) found that consumers use product reviews in the consideration stage more than in the choice stage. In defining the three phases of the college choice process (predisposition, search, and choice), Hossler and Gallagher (1987) identified the search phase as that in which higher education institutions can exert a modest influence; during the choice phase, however, most colleges and universities can have only a minor impact. In applying this knowledge about the consumer choice and the college choice processes, it would be expected that prospective students would perceive eWOM as more influential during the search phase of the college choice process—the stage during which a student gathers information and forms a “choice set” of institutions to apply to—than during the choice phase—the stage in which a student decides where to enroll (Hossler and Gallagher 1987).

## eWOM and the Millennial Generation

eWOM's influence has also been examined within the Millennial generation—that comprising college-bound students. Also referred to as Generation Y, Nexters, Echo Boomers, Generation Tech, Generation Next, Generation 2000, and Generation Dot Com (Behrens 2009; Howe and Strauss 2000), the Millennial generation consists of people born in or after 1980 (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons 2010) and follows Generation X (people born between 1965 and 1980), the Baby Boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964), and the Silent Generation (people born between 1928 and 1945) (Pew Research Center 2010). With 1.8 billion members worldwide and more than 75 million members in the United States, the Millennial generation has surpassed the Baby Boomer generation as the nation's largest living generation (Fry 2015; Petronzio 2014). Millennials also make up the largest cohort of college students in the United States (Hartman and McCambridge 2011) and are on track to become the most-educated generation in U.S. history (Pew Research Center 2010).

Increasingly, Millennials are basing their product evaluations on information they consume from online reviews and are “a vital component in the evolution of social media becoming a source of product information” (Mangold and Smith 2012, 141). Millennials both read and are influenced by online reviews and have shown a preference for consuming online reviews on social networking sites (eMarketer 2011; Mangold and Smith 2012). In addition, Millennials are more likely than the general population to talk about products and services online (eMarketer 2011). In posting online reviews, Millennials have shown a preference for voicing their opinions on Facebook and on company websites (Mangold and Smith 2012).

## Individual Media Dependency

Whereas the macro-level view of Media System Dependency (MSD) theory examines the interdependencies of the media with various societal institutions (*e.g.*, politics, economics, family, religion, education) in pursuing organizational goals, the micro-level view or microcomponent of MSD, called Individual Media Dependency (IMD), is “the perceived importance of the media by the



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individual in satisfying fundamental human goals” (Skumanich and Kintsfather 1998, 203). IMD offers a means for assessing media impact, as the intensity of a media dependency relationship can predict the likelihood that a message will have an effect (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach and Grube 1984; Grant and Ball-Rokeach 1989; Skumanich and Kintsfather 1998). IMD research has been compared to uses and gratifications (U&G) research because both focus on the question “What do people do with media?” The two are conceptually different, however, in that U&G asks “Where do I go to gratify my needs?” whereas IMD asks “Why do I go to this medium to fulfill this goal?” (Grant, Kendall Guthrie and Ball-Rokeach 1991).

An individual’s dependency on media is a direct outcome of the individual’s perception of the utility of media resources for the attainment of personal goals (Ball-Rokeach 1985); when achieving a particular goal becomes more important, an individual’s dependency on media is likely to be stronger (Jung 2012). That said, if a specific medium is not perceived as useful in helping an individual attain a goal, then that individual will depend less upon on the medium and place less value on it.

## Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following hypotheses:

- ◆ First-year undergraduate students’ perceived influence of traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) on their college choice will be significantly greater than their perceived influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on their college choice.
- ◆ First-year undergraduate students’ perceived influence of eWOM will be significantly greater during the search phase than during the choice phase of the college choice process.
- ◆ First-year undergraduate students’ perceived influence of eWOM will be significantly greater when consumed on social networking sites than when consumed on online forums/review sites.

## Method

The method was a quantitative survey via an online questionnaire developed using the Web-based program Qualtrics as the data collection tool. The questionnaire included the following types of questions: multiple response, multiple choice, and text entry. The online survey was cross-sectional, allowing each participant to

complete the survey one time during the fourteen-day period when the survey was open.

The sample included 276 first-time, non-transfer undergraduate freshmen students who were enrolled at the University of Miami and who were born between 1985 and 1996—a range inclusive of all proposed age ranges for Millennials that would also confirm that participants were adults and at least eighteen years old.

E-mail addresses of first-year, non-transfer undergraduate students (both domestic and international) were provided by the University of Miami’s Division of Enrollment Management and were input into Qualtrics. On the day of the survey launch, Qualtrics sent to each student’s e-mail address an invitation containing the informed consent and a personalized link to the online survey.

Four reminder e-mails were sent over the course of the fourteen-day period according to a schedule counting down to the close of the survey; reminders were sent at the ten-, seven-, three-, and one-day mark. Qualtrics was programmed to send reminder e-mails only to students who had not yet completed the survey, including those who had started the survey but not completed it.

The online questionnaire closed with 283 completed questionnaires; ultimately, seven were removed because the participants were younger than eighteen years old or because they entered invalid birth years.

The independent variables for this study included type of word-of-mouth (traditional word-of-mouth versus electronic word-of-mouth), phase of the college choice process (search versus choice), and type of social media (online review sites versus social networking sites). One dependent variable was used: the self-perceived influence on a student’s college search and choice, as measured by a Likert scale (*i.e.*, a 5-point scale using “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neither agree nor disagree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree”). After subjects submitted their ratings, data were collapsed into three categories: “agree,” which included “strongly agree” and “agree”; “neither agree nor disagree,” which remained the same; and “disagree,” which included “strongly disagree” and “disagree.”

To test the three hypotheses of this study, a chi-square for paired samples was used to test for any significant differences in perceived influence between items representing the independent variables (type of word-of-mouth, phase of the college choice process, and type of social media).

## Results

### First Hypothesis

The results of the chi-square demonstrated a significant difference in the predicted direction,  $\chi^2(1, N=475) = 6.49, p < 0.05$ . The data suggest that traditional word-of-mouth has a greater perceived influence than eWOM on college choice. Thus, the first hypothesis was supported.

### Second Hypothesis

The results of the chi-square demonstrated a significant difference in the predicted direction,  $\chi^2(1, N=435) = 36.07, p < 0.05$ . The data suggest that eWOM has a greater perceived influence during the search phase than during the choice phase. Thus, the second hypothesis was supported.

### Third Hypothesis

To test the third hypothesis—that the perceived influence of eWOM would be significantly greater when consumed on social networking sites than on online review/

forums—two different chi-squares were performed. The first chi-square was performed on respondents' answers to the item "Online reviews/comments posted to college-specific review/forum-type websites (*e.g.*, College Confidential, Zinch, Cappex, College Prowler)," representing eWOM consumed on online reviews/forums during the search phase, and their answers to the item "Online reviews/comments posted on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+," representing eWOM consumed on social networking sites during the search phase. A second chi-square was performed on respondents' answers to the item "Online reviews/comments posted to college-specific review/forum-type websites (*e.g.*, College Confidential, Zinch, Cappex, College Prowler)," representing eWOM consumed on online reviews/forums during the choice phase, and their answers to the item "Online reviews/comments posted on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+," representing eWOM consumed on social networking sites during the choice phase.

The results of the first comparison demonstrated that there was a significant difference,  $\chi^2(1,$

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$N=429$ ) = 108.50,  $p < 0.05$ . However, when examining the data, the difference was not in the predicted direction. The results of the second comparison also demonstrated that there was a significant difference,  $X^2(1, N=405) = 14.20, p < 0.05$ , but, again, not in the predicted direction. The data suggest that eWOM had a greater perceived influence when consumed on online reviews/forums than when consumed on social networking sites. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not supported.

## Discussion

Previous research examining social media's role in the college choice process has suggested that compared to that of parents, admission counselors, friends, relatives, high school counselors, and current students at the institution of interest, social media have little influence on a prospective student's enrollment decision (Noel-Levitz 2014). This study supports these findings, as students reported that word-of-mouth, college websites, college planning/ranking websites, online reviews/comments (eWOM), campus tours, and college e-mail were more influential sources of information than were social media when making an enrollment decision. Nevertheless, these findings should not be taken to mean that social media do not play a role in the college choice process or that marketing and recruitment officials should stop creating and maintaining official college social media.

One-third of students reported that they used eWOM when making an application decision, and one-fourth of students reported that they used eWOM when making an enrollment decision.

The major limitation of this study is external validity in regard to generalizability, as the sample consisted of students enrolled at a private, four-year university; their attitudes may not represent those of students enrolled at other types of higher education institutions, such as public universities, community colleges, and institutions offering online degrees. Because this study was conducted during the spring semester of participants' freshman year, another limitation pertains to participants' recall of influences a year after their experiences of the college search and choice phases (experiences that typically take place during the spring of students' senior year of high school).

Suggestions for future research include administering the online survey to students enrolled at other types of higher education institutions, including public universities, community colleges, and institutions offering online degree programs; repeating this study with first-time undergraduate students during their first semester of college or who have just submitted their enrollment deposit, so that recall of their college search and choice is as accurate as possible; and repeating this study with high school seniors in the midst of the college choice process.

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# From “AICE-ing” the Test to Earning the Degree: Enrollment and Graduation Patterns among Students with the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma

A key issue for admissions teams is to distinguish which students of those who apply are truly able and sufficiently committed to complete a degree. One signal of a student’s ability to achieve college-level academic requirements is participation in high school acceleration programs such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or Cambridge AICE. This research study examined college enrolment and graduation, two stakeholder concerns, for a cohort of high school students who earned a Cambridge AICE diploma in June 2011.



In recent years the U.S. Department of Education has articulated a commitment to promote college readiness for all (U.S. Department of Education 2006, 2014). Yet students remain underprepared for the demands and rigor of college-level study (ACT 2016; Barnes, Slate and Rojas-LeBouef 2010; Barnes and Slate 2010; Camara 2013; Kahlenberg 2010; National Center for Education Statistics 2015; Ravitch 2010; Rosenbaum, Stephan and Rosenbaum 2010; Symonds, Schwartz and Ferguson 2011; Zhao 2009; Zhao and Liu 2011). In 2010, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 40 percent of admitted and enrolled students took at least one remedial course; in 2014, the National Conference of State Legislatures reported that only 23 percent of students who took the ACT met the test's readiness benchmarks in all four subjects (*i.e.*, English, reading, mathematics, and science). This is a significant concern because students who start college unprepared are much less likely to graduate than their peers who are college ready (Chen 2016).

A key issue for admission teams is to distinguish which of those students who apply are sufficiently committed and able to complete an undergraduate degree. One signal of a student's ability is participation in high school acceleration courses. Acceleration programs are one of the main policy mechanisms for increasing college enrollment and graduation; they can have positive effects on cognitive strategies, content knowledge, and learning and behavioral skills and techniques (Conley 2012). Cambridge Assessment International Education

(Cambridge, hereafter), part of the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, has developed a suite of courses and complementary examinations the successful completion of which is acknowledged by award of the AICE diploma. The Cambridge program is currently helping thousands of U.S. high school students prepare for and demonstrate their abilities in college-level courses. This study adds to existing research on the relationship between AICE diploma achievement and college success by quantifying the rate at which students who have earned the AICE diploma complete undergraduate degrees.

## High School Acceleration Programs

Acceleration programs vary from individual subject courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses that can be added to a typical student's regular course schedule, to more complete programs, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) or the Cambridge AICE diploma. These programs are intended to develop students' breadth as well as depth of understanding and to provide high school learners with a robust, rigorous, and challenging program of study—one that provides the opportunity to earn high school as well as university course credit.

Traditionally, acceleration programs in the United States were available only to a small minority of students. In fact, some high schools offered these programs only to their best students. More recently, it has been argued that educational programs that prepare students better than the traditional high school curric-

ulum does for success in postsecondary education are needed (Adams 2012). As a result, participation in acceleration programs—and in the Cambridge program, in particular—has increased.

If participation in acceleration programs is increasing among all types of high school students, then participation alone may be a less reliable indicator of future academic success than it was in the past. However, performance in these programs should remain closely tied to postsecondary outcomes. For example, a student’s achievement in an acceleration program indicates strong performance in many areas and competence with different types of instruction and assessment.

## The Cambridge AICE Diploma

The AICE diploma recognizes students’ performance on several Cambridge International Advanced Subsidiary (AS)- and Advanced (A)-level examinations across a variety of subject areas. Good grades in A- and AS-level subjects can result in the award of university course credit. Credit is typically awarded based on each subject and examination grade earned, but credit award practices vary among institutions. More than 550 U.S. degree-granting institutions<sup>1</sup> formally recognize the Cambridge AICE Diploma and the A- and AS-level qualifications. Universities with formal recognition policies include all of the Ivy League institutions as well as other renowned universities across the country. Examples of credit policies can be viewed in the Cambridge recognitions database (<http://recognition.cie.org.uk>).

To receive the AICE diploma, learners must earn a total of six credits (starting in June 2017, this increased to seven credits); the credits must include at least one subject examination from each of three different subject groups at either the AS- or the A-level: mathematics and sciences (Group 1), languages (Group 2), and arts and humanities (Group 3). There is also an option to study Global Perspectives or Thinking Skills, a cross-curricular subjects (Group 4). AS-levels count as a full (single) credit, and A-levels count as a double credit.

Students receive a separate grade for each Cambridge AS- and A-level subject. Cambridge AS-levels are graded A, B, C, D, E, with grade A being the highest and E the lowest. Cambridge A-levels are graded A\*, A, B, C, D, E, with grade A\* being the highest and

E the lowest. Students who fail the examination receive a grade U. The lowest passing grade of E is equivalent to a U.S. high school grade of C and is typically the minimum grade for which college credit for a course<sup>2</sup> may be obtained.

The Cambridge AICE diploma is awarded according to a points system, so each AS- and A-level grade is converted to a predetermined number of points (*see* Table 1).

**Table 1. Cambridge AS- and A-Levels Grade and Point Equivalence**

Grade	Points	
	AS-level	A-level
A*	–	140
A	60	120
B	50	100
C	40	80
D	30	60
E	20	40
U	0	0

The Cambridge AICE diploma is awarded at distinction, merit, or pass level, depending on the grades earned in all the AS- and/or A-level qualifications attempted. The level awarded is based on the overall score, as follows: distinction = 320 points or more; merit = 220 to 319 points; and pass = 120 to 219 points.

Students who do not meet the requirements of the Cambridge AICE diploma receive a certificate that records their achievement on each Cambridge AS- and A-level subject exam.

In the past few years the Cambridge AICE diploma has become popular at many schools in the United States. In June 2011, students at 51 schools took at least one Cambridge qualification (AS-level, A-level, AICE diploma); 26 of these schools were in Florida, with others in California, Maryland, Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio, Washington, and Virginia. By June 2016, the number of participating schools had increased to 105; Florida remained the state with the most Cambridge schools

<sup>1</sup> See <<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=84>>.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see <[cie.org.uk/images/142015-florida-college-course-equivalents-for-ai-ce-exam-grades-pdf](http://cie.org.uk/images/142015-florida-college-course-equivalents-for-ai-ce-exam-grades-pdf)> for the credit equivalence for AS- and A-levels at Florida public universities.

(82), and several states (Tennessee and Arizona) newly offered the Cambridge qualifications.

## Research on the Value of the Cambridge AICE Diploma

Previous research has examined whether earning an AICE diploma is positively related to some measures of university success. The focus of much of that research has been on *competitive differentiation*, highlighting the effectiveness of Cambridge qualifications as compared to that of the AP and the IB to predict preparedness for and continued academic success in postsecondary education.

For example, Shaw and Bailey (2011) explored the link between high school quality (in terms of the educational program followed) and university academic achievement as measured by first-year grade point average (GPA). They found that students who followed an acceleration program on average earned higher first-year GPAs than did those who did not. The study also revealed that after controlling for gender, race, and SAT score, students who earned the AICE diploma achieved higher first-year GPAs than did students who earned an IB diploma. But there was no statistical difference between students who earned the AICE diploma and those who took AP courses. Shaw, Warren, and Gill (2014) attempted to address the impact of the AICE diploma on various aspects of university engagement, including university performance (first-year and cumulative GPA), participation in extra programs such as directed individual studies or study abroad, and retention rates. The findings of this research also suggested that the Cambridge acceleration program is a credible alternative to other more established acceleration programs, such as the AP or the IB. Both of these research studies took a case study approach, using data collected from students enrolled at Florida State University (FSU).

Research by Shaw (2011) showed that the Cambridge program may improve learning through its effect on teaching practice as well as on students directly. The study revealed that teachers of Cambridge AS- and A-levels emphasize argumentation skills (written and verbal) and promote academic writing, which helps learners prepare for the type of study required of them in college. More recently, Shaw and Werno (2016) investigated perceptions of the effectiveness of

the Cambridge AICE diploma in helping students transition from high school to college. This qualitative research project utilized online questionnaires to collect feedback from FSU students who had participated in Cambridge high school programs. The questionnaire solicited students' insights into the quality, effectiveness, and demands of the Cambridge AICE program. Results showed that former program participants perceived it to be challenging and academically rigorous. Further, students reported that the program allowed them to develop a wide range of skills and learning attitudes, such as time management, writing, critical thinking, the ability to work under pressure, the ability to engage in independent study, and perseverance. Participants thought that these skills helped them adjust to the demands of postsecondary education.

However, given the small numbers of students seeking to earn Cambridge qualifications, the case study nature of some of this research, and the possible presence of unknown confounding variables among groups of students in the different acceleration programs, it would be unwise to draw conclusions about the relative predictive strength of the Cambridge program based purely on the research just described. In addition, research focused on the experiences of current college students does not allow for exploration of the relationship between AICE diploma achievement and college graduation.

## Aim of the Research

Although previous studies have suggested a positive association between the AICE diploma and early college success, post-college outcomes such as future earnings are tied to college graduation rather than first-year grades (Grubb 1993). Therefore, the aim of the current study was to investigate the relationship between the Cambridge AICE diploma and students' likelihood of graduating from college. In particular, the study sought to determine whether admission officers could treat a student's achievement of or progress toward an AICE diploma as a reliable indicator that the student would successfully complete a postsecondary degree. Given the rigorous nature of the AICE curriculum and its structure as an interdisciplinary academic program, it was expected to compare favorably to "à la carte" acceleration programs such as Advanced Placement.

## Data

This research used data from two sources: the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) student tracker system<sup>3</sup> and in-house data from the Cambridge examinations system.

Data were extracted from Cambridge internal databases for all U.S. students who took at least one AS- or A-level exam in June 2011 (7,384 students) and were matched by name and date of birth to NSC college enrollment and degree completion records. The NSC tracks student enrollment and graduation from more than 3,600 U.S. colleges and universities, representing more than 98 percent of all students enrolled at public and private institutions. Its student tracker system matches students by name and date of birth. For those students who are found in the NSC database, the information returned includes dates of all postsecondary enrollment and, for each term, identifies the institution of enrollment, the student's enrollment status (*e.g.*, part time or full time), and, often, major (if declared). The data set also returns the awarding institution, degree type, and dates of all degrees earned during the requested time period.

The NSC returned records for 5,543 Cambridge students (75 percent of the students who took at least one AS- or A-level examination in June 2011). A returned record from the NSC indicates that the student has enrolled at an NSC-participating institution; a non-returned record could mean any of several things, including a student attending a postsecondary institution that does not participate in the NSC or a student not enrolling in postsecondary education. It also might be possible that there was not enough information about the student—*e.g.*, if only their name was available—to find a match. This information was combined with internal data on all examinations taken and grades earned by the Cambridge AS- and A-level students.

This particular study focused on students who earned the AICE diploma in June 2011 ( $n = 678$ ). Although information about the students who did not earn the AICE in this exam session is useful to Cambridge for curricular improvement, it was not possible to directly compare students with and without the AICE diploma from this cohort. Because high school graduation dates were not available, it could not be determined with cer-

tainty which students who did not earn the AICE in the June 2011 session did not complete the diploma in subsequent exam sessions. Because the AICE is earned at the end of a student's senior year of high school, however, it could be determined with some confidence that students who earned the diploma in June 2011 would have had sufficient time to complete a bachelor's degree within 125 percent of program time before degree information was collected in fall 2016.

## Methods

Descriptive analyses examined where, when, and at what type of institution students with the AICE diploma enrolled for their first semester and whether they graduated within five years. Specific variables used to classify students were:

- ◆ AICE diploma level: the diploma can be earned at three levels (in increasing order of difficulty): Pass, Merit, and Distinction.
- ◆ Highest undergraduate degree: associate or bachelor's.
- ◆ Year starting postsecondary education (to compare students along the same timeframe, graduation rates were calculated separately for students: starting college in 2011; starting college in 2012; and starting college in 2013 or later).

In addition, institutions were classified according to information obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research 2016). The classifications considered in this research were:

- ◆ Institution type: two year vs. four year
- ◆ Institutional control: public vs. private
- ◆ Percentage of applicants admitted: institutions were assigned to one of four groups based on acceptance rates:
  - less than 25 percent accepted,
  - 25 percent to 49.9 percent accepted,
  - 50 percent to 74.9 percent accepted, and
  - 75 percent or more accepted.
- ◆ Level of selectivity: Carnegie Classification measure of selectivity on the basis of the 25th percentile ACT or equivalent test score (the minimum score earned by 75 percent of students) for each

<sup>3</sup> See <[studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/studenttracker](http://studentclearinghouse.org/colleges/studenttracker)>.

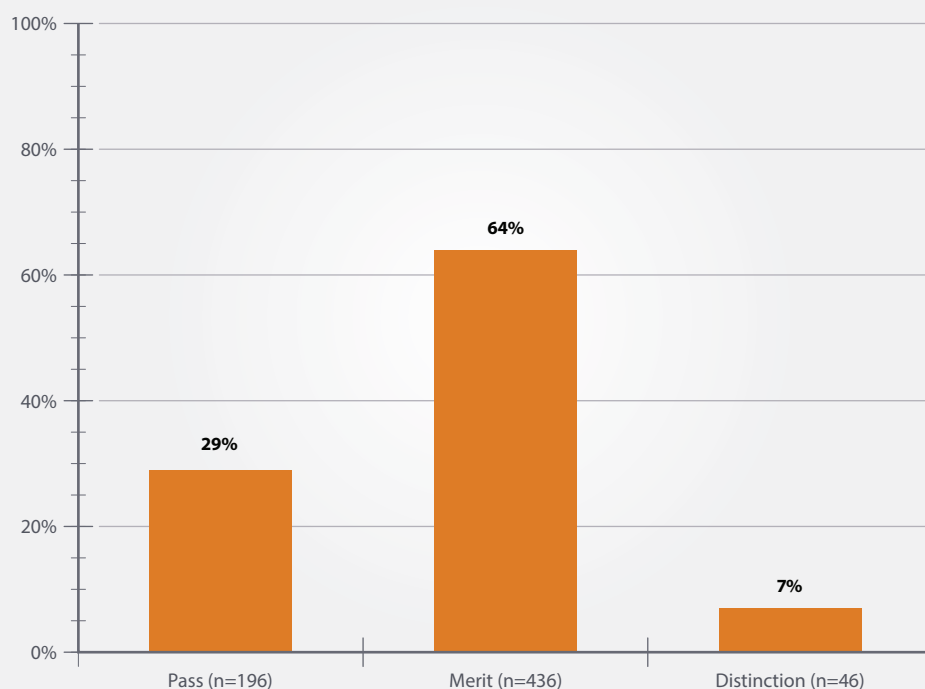


Figure 1.  
Grade  
Distribution for  
AICE Diploma  
Students

institution's first-time first-year students.<sup>4</sup> The categories were as follows:

- inclusive (25th percentile ACT score less than 18),
- selective (25th percentile ACT score of 18 to 21), and
- more selective (25th percentile ACT greater than 21).
- ◆ Level of research activity: This was defined by the 2015 Carnegie Classification and was based on the number of research/scholarship doctoral degrees awarded in a year. Four groups were used (all but the research-intensive levels were combined in a single group):
  - R1: Highest research activity,
  - R2: Higher research activity,
  - R3: Moderate research activity, and
  - Other (institutions that awarded fewer than twenty research/scholarship doctoral degrees).

Within the above groupings, enrollment patterns and graduation rates were calculated for subsets of AICE diploma holders.

## Findings

In June 2011, there were 7,384 students in the United States who took at least one Cambridge qualification (AS-level, A-level, AICE). More than one thousand (1,076) of these students (14.57%) made an entry for the AICE diploma (*i.e.*, they notified Cambridge that they intended to meet the requirements), although only 678 (9.18%) achieved the qualification. (To achieve the AICE diploma, six credits are required, and students must achieve at least one credit in each of groups one to three, as discussed above.) The grade distribution for students with the diploma is shown in Figure 1.

Table 2 (on page 18) shows some of the most popular AS- and A-level subjects taken by students who achieved the AICE diploma. At A-level, the most popular subject was Thinking Skills (taken by almost 68 percent of the students), followed by Literature in English and subjects in group 1 (Biology, Physics and Chemistry). At AS-level, English Language was the most popular subject and was taken by the majority of students who obtained the AICE diploma; History, General Paper, and Mathematics were also quite popular. The most common combination of A- and AS- qualifications to achieve the AICE diploma was one A-level and four AS-levels.

<sup>4</sup> See <[carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/methodology/ugrad\\_profile.php](http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/methodology/ugrad_profile.php)> for more information.

**Table 2. Individual AS- and A-Level Subjects Taken by Students Who Achieved an AICE Diploma**

Qualification	Subject	Number of Entries	Students Attempting Subject (%)
AS-level	English Language	626	92.33
	History	580	85.55
	General Paper	470	69.32
	Mathematics	337	49.71
	Literature in English	320	47.20
	Biology	245	36.14
	Psychology	237	34.96
	Economics	157	23.16
	Chemistry	144	21.24
	Thinking Skills	121	17.85
	A-level	Thinking Skills	439
Literature in English		232	35.86
Biology		104	16.07
Physics		64	9.89
Chemistry		62	9.58
History		54	8.35
Sociology		41	6.34
Economics		36	5.56
Mathematics		32	4.95

**Table 3. AICE Diploma Students, by Institution Type**

Type of Institution	Students (n)	Students (%)
Two Year	3	00.50
Four Year	598	99.50
Private	78	12.98
Public	523	87.02

## Enrollment

The enrollment rate at U.S. postsecondary institutions for students who obtained an AICE diploma in June 2011 was 88.79 percent (601 of 678 students). Just over 75 percent enrolled immediately (*i.e.*, prior to December 31, 2011). By comparison, 78 percent of IB diploma students graduating from high school in 2008 enrolled in postsecondary education by January 31, 2009 (Bergeron 2015); the U.S. national rate of immediate postsecondary enrollment was 68 percent in June 2011 (Kena *et al.* 2016).

Enrollment rates for the AICE diploma recipients were calculated by dividing the number of students who earned the AICE diploma in June 2011 and had an NSC returned record by the number of students who earned the diploma. Note that some AICE students (11 percent) had non-returned NSC records: These students either did not enroll in postsecondary education or a record for them was not found. Thus, the enrollment rates for AICE diploma recipients cited above (*i.e.*, 88.79 and 75.22 percent) could be underestimates.

The following analyses considered the 601 students who earned an AICE diploma in June 2011 and for whom an NSC record was returned. As mentioned, the majority of these students enrolled immediately (75.22 percent), with 11.50 percent and 1.92 percent enrolling in 2012 and 2013 or later, respectively.

A recent survey suggests that approximately 72 percent of college-bound students attend in-state universities.<sup>5</sup> This research reveals similar rates for students who earn the AICE diploma, with 87 percent of them enrolling at universities within their home states. If some students attempt to earn the AICE diploma because it helps them qualify for in-state tuition assistance programs, then it makes sense that the in-state enrollment rate would be high.

Tables 3 and 4 display the numbers and percentages of AICE diploma recipients who enrolled at different types of institutions. Table 3 shows that 99.5 percent of the students enrolled at a four-year institution and that the percentage of students enrolled at private institutions was small compared to the percentage enrolled at public institutions. Table 4 (on page 19) shows that the most selective institutions and those with the high-

<sup>5</sup> See <<https://ink.niche.com/going-away-college-data-dive-350000-hs-grads>>.

est ranking for research activity were the most popular among students with the AICE diploma.

The majority of students with an AICE diploma (83.7 percent) enrolled in full-time higher education. However, limited data were available regarding their majors (not all institutions collect and report these data to the NSC). Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, and Humanities were the most popular subjects (at the time of enrollment) among students who earned an AICE diploma (13.5 percent); other popular subjects were Engineering (12.0 percent) and Biological and Biomedical Sciences (9.5 percent).

## Graduation

Descriptive statistics were collected for the highest undergraduate degree obtained by the students in this study by year group.<sup>6</sup> Students were more likely to have graduated with a bachelor's degree than with an associate degree if they started their postsecondary education in either 2011 or 2012; the opposite was true for those who started in 2013 or later. As expected, the percentage of students without degrees increased from 2011 to 2013 or later. (Note that students without an undergraduate degree could be still studying toward it.)

Because the cohort starting postsecondary education in 2013 or later has not yet had the typical amount of time elapsed for them to complete a four-year (bachelor's) degree, further analyses of graduation rates focused on the 2011 and 2012 cohorts only. (Because only thirteen students with an AICE diploma started their postsecondary education after 2012, this restriction

<sup>6</sup> Students who started postsecondary education in 2011 had five years to complete their degrees. Similarly, those who started in 2012 had four years to complete their degrees. Students starting in 2013 or later are likely to have only recently completed or to still be enrolled in postsecondary education.

**Table 4. Enrollment by Type of Institution (Based on Level of Selectivity, Acceptance Rate, and Level of Research Activity)**

Type of Institution		Students (n)	Students (%)
Level of Selectivity	Inclusive	96	16.70
	Selective	58	10.09
	More selective	421	73.22
Acceptance Rates	75% or more	18	4.10
	50% to 74.9%	230	52.51
	25% to 49.9%	172	39.27
	Less than 25%	18	4.11
Level of Research Activity	R1	358	52.80
	R2	31	4.57
	R3	8	1.18
	Other <sup>1</sup>	281	41.45

<sup>1</sup> This category includes universities with low research activity or specialized programs.

**Table 5. Bachelor's Degrees Earned Within Four and Five Years (2011 and 2012 Cohorts), by AICE Diploma Status**

Graduation (Bachelor's Degree)		Students (n)	Students (%)
Within Four Years	All students	296	50.34
	Students Enrolled Full Time During Their First Term	258	54.66
Within Five Years	All students	317	62.16
	Students Enrolled Full Time During Their First Term	272	66.18

does not significantly reduce the sample size.) The remaining analyses therefore included 588 students.

If the AICE diploma typically allows students to earn credit for their high school courses, then one might expect students with the diploma to be particularly likely to complete their undergraduate studies within the expected program completion time. Table 5 presents the number and percentage of students who completed a bachelor's degree within four and five years<sup>7</sup> and shows

<sup>7</sup> Typically, time until completion of a bachelor's degree is also measured at 150 percent of program time, which would be six years. However, in this research, data were only available for evaluating graduation rates within five years.

that just over half of the students who had earned an AICE diploma graduated within four years, and 62 percent graduated within five years. These percentages were higher among those students who enrolled full time in their first term.

Table 6 presents the types of institutions from which students who had earned the AICE diploma graduated with a bachelor's degree and highlights that AICE diploma students most frequently earned those degrees at the most selective institutions and at those with the highest level of research activity.

Graduation rates were compared, where possible, with nationwide rates. For example, "The Condition

gree attained by full-time, first-time undergraduates at the four-year postsecondary institutions at which they initially enrolled.) Clearly, students who earn the AICE diploma were more likely than their peers nationwide to graduate from most types of institutions with a bachelor's degree. The only exception was that students who earned the AICE diploma were less likely to graduate with a bachelor's degree from institutions that accept 25 percent or fewer of their applicants (*see* Figure 3).

Finally, the graduation rates of students who had earned the AICE diploma were compared to those of students who had taken AP exams (Mattern, Marini and Shaw 2013). Figure 4 (on page 22) presents the percentages of students who completed

a bachelor's degree within four years at a four-year postsecondary institution. Students who had earned the AICE diploma graduated at higher rates than did U.S. high school students generally (based on the full sample of AP and non-AP students reported by Mattern, Marini and Shaw 2013). This was consistent with data for students who had enrolled in AP courses.

**Table 6. Type of Institution From Which AICE Diploma Students Graduated (2011 and 2012 Cohorts)**

Institutional Characteristics		Graduates	
		(n)x	(%)
Institution Type	Four Year, Private	63	14.69
	Four Year, Public	366	85.31
	<i>All Institutions</i>	429	100.00
Level of Research Activity	R1 (Highest)	327	76.22
	R2	28	6.53
	R3	2	0.47
	Other	72	16.78
	<i>All Institutions</i>	429	100.00
Level of Selectivity	More Selective	378	88.11
	Selective	47	10.96
	Inclusive	4	0.93
	<i>All Institutions</i>	429	100.00

of Education 2016" (Kena *et al.* 2016) examines the six-year graduation and retention rates of students in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. The results are specific to graduates who were enrolled full time and received bachelor's degrees from the same four-year institutions where they initially enrolled. Even though the current data set looks back five years and not six, it is possible to compare outcomes for a similar group of students from the cohort that first enrolled in 2011.

Figures 2 and 3 (on page 21) display the graduation rates within five years of Cambridge students compared to those of all U.S. college students within six years (U.S. national statistics). (Graduation includes bachelor's de-

grees attained by full-time, first-time undergraduates at the four-year postsecondary institutions at which they initially enrolled.) Clearly, students who earn the AICE diploma were more likely than their peers nationwide to graduate from most types of institutions with a bachelor's degree. The only exception was that students who earned the AICE diploma were less likely to graduate with a bachelor's degree from institutions that accept 25 percent or fewer of their applicants (*see* Figure 3).

## Discussion and Conclusions

The current research study examined university enrollment and graduation of a cohort of U.S. high school students who earned the Cambridge AICE diploma in summer 2011. Utilizing data from Cambridge databases and the National Student Clearinghouse, university enrollment and graduation were tracked for 678 students.

The findings of this study provided important insights into the association between earning the AICE diploma and the likelihood of graduating from college. Given the descriptive nature of this study, it is not possible to differentiate between the impact of the AICE curriculum on college outcomes and the self-selection of high-achieving students into a rigorous acceleration program. However, the current research does show that students who earn the AICE diploma enroll at prestigious universities and tend to graduate within 125 percent of the typical program time (five years). This



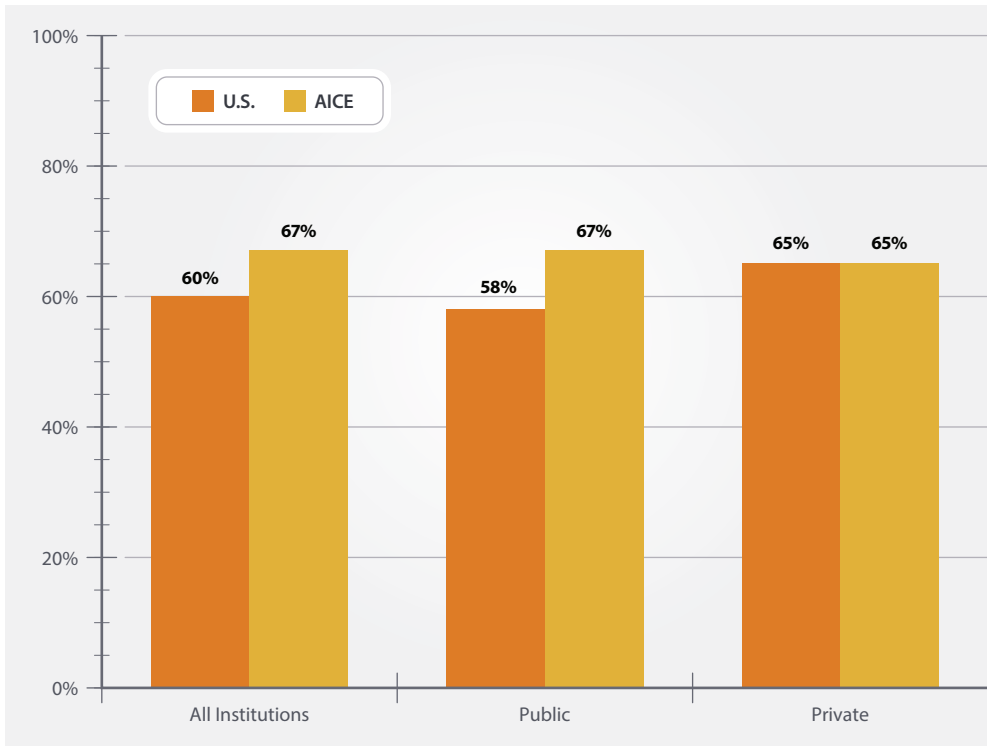


Figure 2.  
Five-Year Graduation Rates of Cambridge Diploma Students Compared to Six-Year Graduation Rates of U.S. Students Nationally

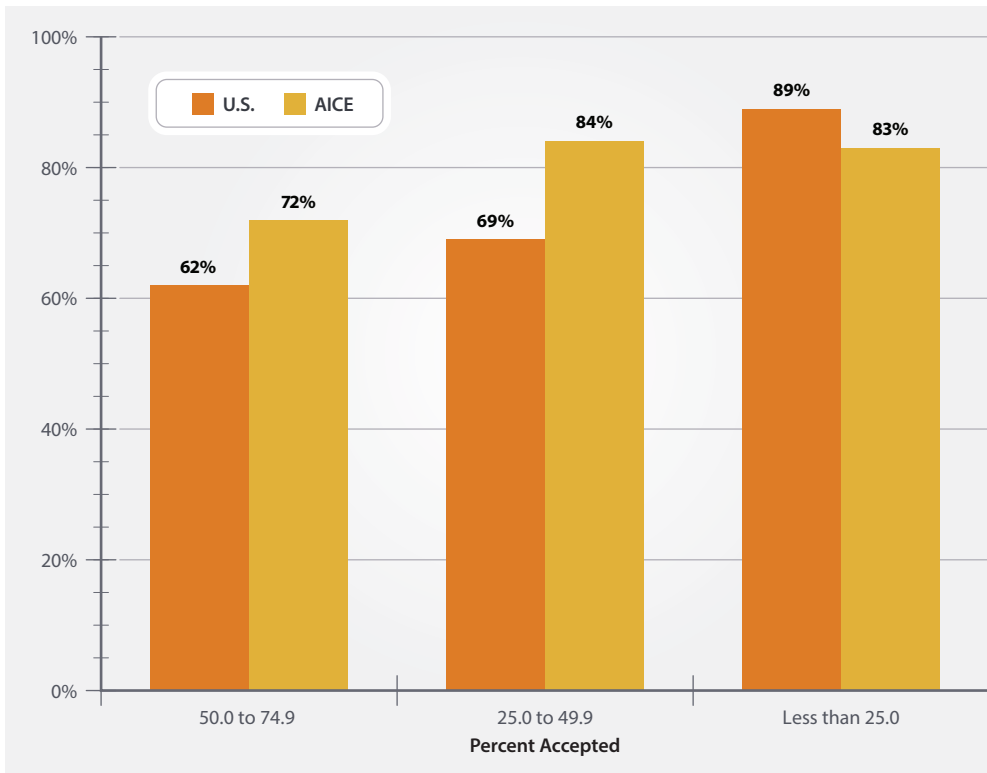


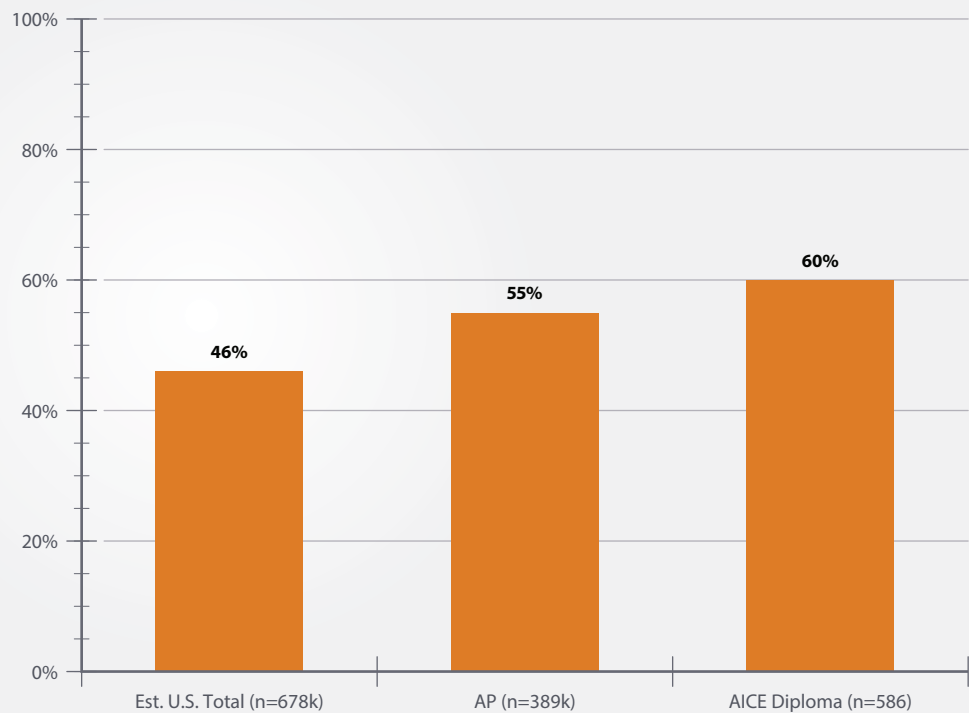
Figure 3.  
Five-Year Graduation Rates of Cambridge Diploma Students Compared to Six-Year Graduation Rates by Institutional Admission Acceptance Rates

suggests that pursuit of the AICE diploma can be a reliable indicator of a student’s potential to complete an undergraduate degree.

Due to the available data sources, this study had several limitations, including inability to examine the ef-

fects of the program controlling for students’ academic ability. Perhaps even more important, specific statistical comparisons could not be made between students who had earned the AICE diploma and typical college-bound students in the United States.

Figure 4.  
**Graduation Rates at Four-Year Postsecondary Institutions (Percentage of Students Who Complete a Bachelor's Degree within Four Years), Nationally Versus by Acceleration Program**



Future research should address these issues through the acquisition of state-level education data to evaluate how AICE students compare to those who do not participate in acceleration programs or in a competing program. These data sources could also provide students' test scores and other achievement data that could be used to evaluate the possible impact of the AICE program on college outcomes independent of students' characteristics and pre-AICE academic abilities. In addition, it would be worthwhile to examine the postsecondary outcomes of students who participate in AS- or A-level courses but do not complete the AICE diploma.

As soon as larger statewide datasets can be obtained in areas where many students participate in accelera-

tion programs, some of these issues can be evaluated. Other measures of postsecondary education success, such as first-year cumulative GPA, retention (that is, enrollment for a second year in the same degree program and at the same institution), or four-year cumulative GPA, could also be explored alongside graduation rates.

Despite these limitations, the current research adds to the literature on the Cambridge AICE diploma and suggests that students with this qualification are more likely than their peers without the diploma to complete postsecondary degrees if they start undergraduate studies.

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# Revolutionizing Academic Records: A Student Perspective

A young woman with long dark hair is smiling warmly. She is holding a white-framed photograph of herself, which is slightly offset from her face, creating a layered effect. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

This study discusses innovations in digital credentialing, namely the Elon Visual EXP, and the broader implications of documenting student experiences in co-curricular, high impact practices. Following a similar survey of employer observations of the new transcript, a survey was sent to all undergraduates of Elon University to assess their overall perceptions of the new credential. Results indicate a level of satisfaction similar to that of employers, but also highlights the need for future development. The study builds on the importance of mindfulness of the populations that use the transcript and highlights the importance of understanding campus culture as a precursor to expanding the traditional academic record.

**T**he digital revolution of the 21st century continues to produce numerous innovations that affect the way we live, learn, and communicate. Sixteen years ago, Apple introduced us to the iPod, a groundbreaking technology that paved the way for a decade of market dominance. In 2002, Mozilla's Firefox became the first browser to challenge the dominance of Internet Explorer, catalyzing the expansion of open-source software. In 2016, a start-up company within Google brought augmented reality to the fore and animated our surroundings with Pokémon Go.

For the last two decades, these and many other technological innovations have reshaped the human experience. Our lives are reckoned by activity trackers, enhanced (arguably) by smartphones, and recorded in public memory 140 characters at a time. However, higher education seems to have avoided modernizing at the same pace. More specifically, the evolution of students' credentialing needs outpaces what their alma maters can provide. Despite students' widespread adoption of new technologies, colleges and universities tend to adhere to a principle of gradualism, constantly looking to others to develop and troubleshoot new technologies before adopting it themselves. Some would argue it's the nature of higher education.

However, as institutional leaders are thrust into a collective public conversation about the merits of college in the information age, they have begun to quicken their pace of modernization at least in part to justify rising tuition. Many institutions have eliminated financially infertile initiatives and have reallocated resources to programs that promise their students competitive

advantages. These new programs, like Georgia Tech's online Master of Science in Computer Science or Southern New Hampshire University's College for America, are often framed by the popular metric of "return on investment" and increasingly involve employer partners. With today's employers spending \$177 billion annually on postsecondary education and training (Carnevale, Strohl, and Gulish 2015), the conversation between employers and universities is certainly overdue. The dialogue often produces solutions to the more complex problems facing today's graduates, such as skill gaps, leadership development, and societal costs. Indeed, employers and higher education share many goals.

Other higher education leaders remain dutifully committed to the virtues of liberal education, eschewing intimacy with selective employers for strategies that underscore the broad appeal of all students' skills and sensibilities. Instead of establishing inroads in the marketplace on behalf of their students, these institutions empower them with broad knowledge of the wider world and transferable skill sets. Both approaches advance the interests of all parties involved, but the latter is not predicated on market forces or employer preferences. Its value is based instead upon the enduring principles of adaptability, ethics, and pragmatism.

As posited by Norman Augustine, former chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin, "Who wants a technology-driven economy when those who drive it are not grounded in such fields as ethics?" (Wendler 2013). Indeed, it seems that even at organizations such as Lockheed Martin, a powerhouse of engineering and mathematics, the tenets of a liberal education are still desirable. However, without innovation on the part of the institutions that espouse these qualities, how will their students compete?

A promising solution has emerged in the realm of academic credentialing—more specifically, in the realm of digital credentialing. Institutions that have endeavored to expand the academic record hope to document more of the breadth and depth of their students' experiences, and they create advantages for their students by adopting a digital-first approach. The term “digital credential” is often used to refer to digital badges, certificates issued online, or even the completion of a massive open online course (MOOC), but for the purpose of this discussion it is used to denote *data-enabled transcripts that contain embedded information that could not be accommodated by a paper transcript*. The processes by which these transcripts are created, maintained, and distributed occur online, and this digital architecture allows for their rapid modification and expansion.

Early evidence suggests that employers find digital credentials—especially those that reveal more depth of the student experience—informative and reliable. In a study conducted by Parrish, Parks, and Fryer (2017), 78 percent of 144 employers surveyed agreed that Elon's visual experiential transcript “paints a different picture of the applicant,” and 80 percent agreed that it “differentiates an Elon applicant from the rest of the applicant pool” (Parrish, Parks and Fryer 2017). Nearly three-quarters (72%) also agreed that it “provides useful information for the hiring process” (Parrish, Parks and Fryer 2017). These are clear indicators that the development of digital credentials benefits employers, which also indirectly benefits students.

## Discussion

### Digital Credentials

Creating a digital credential seems complex and challenging as it seeks to overcome decades of institutional inertia. However, it can also be impactful, cost effective, and student centered. In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the student experience, its proponents seek to document student experiences that are already occurring but that are not captured by the academic transcript. If approached mindfully and resourcefully, the creation of digital credentials requires minimal capital investment and programmatic overhaul. The most significant investment is time: time to build interdepartmental relationships and time to test solutions.

Student information systems, bought or homegrown, can be tweaked to incorporate co-curricular data. For example, the addition of two fields to the course table can enable the capture of pertinent data from courses with experiential components (such as service-learning courses or undergraduate research). One field holds a descriptive title of the experience (*e.g.*, position with the service organization or title of the research project), allowing administrators to maintain standard short titles (*e.g.*, BIO 499—UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH) for the sake of curricular consistency. The other field holds complementary data, such as the location of the experience, to add depth and context.

For programs and experiences not integrated into the curriculum, such as leadership, it can be argued that documentation is merited only if students who participate are accountable to a university department or organization or are mentored by a faculty or staff member. Given this prerequisite, there is already a formal relationship for tracking student participation. The remaining requirement is the establishment of a tracking mechanism. Ideally, this mechanism is digital (such as an online logbook system), minimizing the proverbial hands through which the data must pass before being deposited in the student information system.

The goal of creating a comprehensive digital credential is not easily accomplished, but at most institutions the foundational elements are already in place. Students engage in valuable and transformative experiences; mentors monitor and appraise students' progress; and campus systems are structured to accommodate data assigned to unique keys. By operating with a digital-first mindset, enrollment management and student life professionals can collaborate to offer students and their future employers a record of meaningful, transformative experiences bundled in a portable and accessible package—an innovation akin to those our students have enjoyed for many years.

Many institutions with forward-thinking leaders have taken swift action, and the results are varied. A considerable variety of digital credentials already exists; each accumulates data from some aspect of the student experience and supposedly reveals a previously untold story. Badges, competencies, experiential learning, and universal transcripts are becoming lingua franca on many college campuses. However, little consensus exists about which of these innovations is most appropriate for conveying the true value of a college degree.

Even less is known about the impact these new credentials have on learners. Do students understand and see the value in documenting more of their college experience? Do these new credential types help them articulate their educational experiences in a way that is meaningful for employers? Will faculty members see virtue in supporting out-of-class experiences, or will they balk at the notion that academic learning needs supplementation? One thing is certain: Employers have little time to remediate talent gaps and instead must hire people who possess the right match of skills, competencies, and attitudes to ensure that they remain competitive (Gallagher 2016). Questions abound regarding what actions institutions should take, and the answers—many and varied—are being articulated across the nation.

### **Experiential Engagement**

Like other technologically advanced enterprises, colleges and universities collect enormous amounts of data from and about their students. Though these data are largely protected from view by FERPA, institutions know their students inside and out: where they come from, what courses they need and take, how they feel about their professors, how often they change majors, how well they do in class, how well they behave outside of class, their social affiliations, service hours, and so on. In addition, cloud storage technologies and enterprise data management tools have enabled the efficient capture and organization of that enormity of data. While some institutions have become adept at storing co-curricular artifacts, the concept of a suite of credentials remains contentious. Most universities are still a long way from providing a comprehensive academic record.

On the other side of the employment divide, the traditional college academic transcript (if requested at all) remains little more than a screening tool for employers overwhelmed with applications. Along with resumes—which often include fabrications (Tarpey 2014)—transcripts are typically fed through document readers that enumerate the presence of key words that match the employer’s desired traits (a practice that can disadvantage a large swath of the applicant pool in the name of efficiency). Records of learning and achievement have an impact on how employers and graduate schools appraise graduates, but the academic transcript often fails to provide relevant or meaningful information. Employers must see the experiences gained by a job applicant,

not just a list of courses taken. Traditional academic transcripts may signal to an employer the category of classroom learning that has taken place, but rarely do they reflect the different ways in which a student has gained knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Learning meaningful details about applicants usually requires a series of interviews. In fact, almost 50 percent of employers surveyed in a 2017 study by Parish, Parks, and Fryer ranked the interview as the most important element of the hiring process (NACE 2017). When employers rely on a prescreening process that is increasingly obfuscated by nondescript course names and fabrications, they may unintentionally eliminate top applicants prior to the interview. With inventive digital credentials, however, employers can confidently pinpoint the most attractive qualities of applicants, knowing that the artifact and its contents are certified by the institution.

Regardless of the marketplace potential of digital credentials, most employers are still unsure of their validity. They are reluctant to place much confidence in their use and continue to eschew them for traditional measures such as the transcript and resume. Their misgivings are rational and justifiable, because digital credentials are still firmly in the early adoption phase. Despite promising growth and expansion, there is still little standardization among issuers. Co-curricular learning is not always subject to accreditation, and although some credentials are undergirded by competencies, they may not align with those espoused by other institutions. Nevertheless, as experiential learning becomes more commonplace and as digital credentials become more widely accepted, the need for standardization will arise naturally.

In today’s working world, “experiential learning is just as important as academics” (Kline 2014). As Moore (2013) notes, the curriculum of experience exists where knowledge acquisition transcends the boundaries of the classroom, promoting understanding that can only be taught in context, such as “how the student handles pressure, deals with authority, works with people different from them, how hard they work, and so on.” (82). DelBanco (2013) upholds the importance of extra-academic experience, asserting that college should be “a place and process whereby young people take stock of their talents and passions and begin to sort out their lives in a way that is true to themselves and responsible to others” (p. 14). If a university’s purpose is to develop

the so-called whole person, then our superannuated transcript alone is a poor reflection of its realization.

With renewed appreciation for the fulfillment of this purpose, institutions in recent years have sought to expand the number of experiential learning opportunities available to students. This type of learning increasingly is viewed as critical to the developmental experience and, perhaps because of its attractiveness and outcomes, has a positive impact on student retention (Moore 2013). With 76 percent of company CEOs lamenting that finding qualified people is a major concern (Connecting Credentials 2016), it is time for institutions of higher education to use the data they collect to create a comprehensive credential. A number of colleges and universities have taken note of the power of experiential learning and have started new initiatives to document previously obscured elements of the undergraduate experience.

### **Elon University's Experiential Learning Model**

Elon University is nationally renowned for engaged and experiential learning. Though this pedagogical approach has been promoted by the institution for decades, it was not until the early 1990s that campus leaders took a preliminary step toward its legitimization. The Elon Experiences Transcript (EET), launched in 1994, was a first attempt by the student affairs office to capture and transcribe what are now known as high-impact practices (HIPs) (Kuh 2008). During an accreditation review in 2002, university faculty approved the official incorporation of these practices into the curriculum by adding a standard experiential learning requirement (ELR) to all undergraduate programs. Largely predicated on the university's developed expertise in the area, the decision was inspired by a collective desire to strengthen co-curricular connections to academic learning.

Once the ELR was added to the curricular structure, undergraduate students had to engage in experiences outside of the classroom in order to earn a degree. All students must complete at least two experiences among five experiential categories: global education, service, leadership, undergraduate research, and internship. Each category boasts a significant variety of opportunities for student engagement, and each experience is supervised by one or more faculty mentors. Participation in these experiences exposes students to concepts, theories, and methods that complement academic learning. Mentors help them make connections between the

two. The combination can be transformative, producing graduates who can think critically and solve problems based on prior experience.

By engaging students in opportunities that integrate knowledge and experience, the ELR fosters understanding of and appreciation for the learning process. Students prepare, act, and reflect to develop the habits of mind required to learn effectively and contribute as responsible global citizens (Kolb 2015). Importantly, the ELR also reinforces the institution's commitment to inclusivity and access: because the ELR is part of Elon's core curriculum, students of *every* discipline engage in and benefit from experiential learning. Students are encouraged to explore Elon's range of offerings independently, but curricular structures are also in place to ensure their completion of this requirement. For example, business and communications students are required to participate in an internship, which at once satisfies the major requirement and the ELR. Student teaching experiences for education majors qualify in the same way. Many courses have service-learning components, and some feature short-term travel experiences that qualify as global education.

The ELR encourages creativity on the part of faculty. To help students fulfill the ELR requirement, faculty members began to incorporate more experiential learning into their course designs and to expand their mentorship roles outside of the classroom. Once adopted campus-wide, the ELR inspired another innovation at Elon: the experiential transcript. The average of eight experiences far surpasses the degree requirement of two, so administrators believed that a record of those experiences might be useful. Though unsophisticated in its original incarnation (it was maintained in Excel and printed on letterhead), every student's experiential transcript would be populated with at least two experiences because of the ELR, making the transcript more consistently meaningful over time. Thus, it became a more frequent topic of conversation on campus, and the number of requests for the document began to increase.

Even though experiential learning had become an element of considerable importance to the university's value proposition, the document that reflected that dimension of undergraduate experience remained vastly underutilized for years. Elon developed a rich culture of extra-curricular erudition, but its experiential transcript was a poor reflection thereof. As late as 2012, student requests for the complementary credential hovered in the single



digits each term; the transcript did not carry enough value to be meaningful in the employment marketplace.

This was due in large part to the lack of attention the document received. Experiential learning activities were catalogued in parallel to the student information system and printed on letterhead by the Office of Student Life. They were not connected to student records, and there was no consistent scheme by which they were recorded. In 2013, the Office of Student Life partnered with the registrar to leverage its expertise in data management and document processing. The two departments assumed joint responsibility for tracking experiential learning and developed a plan to further legitimize experiential learning. Pertinent data were relocated to a custom co-file in the student information system and were cleaned of errors and inconsistencies. Once the data were restructured, the document was redesigned to complement the academic transcript. Changing the transcript's format and printing it on Scrip-Safe paper imbued it with credibility, and its new home in the registrar's office proved more intuitive and convenient for students. This change also meant that the experiential transcript could be ordered more easily through the institution's transcript vendor. Soon after this overhaul was complete, the number of orders for the experiential transcript increased exponentially (from three in 2012 to 727 in 2013).

### **The Visual EXP (Visual Elon Experiential Profile)**

In early 2015, AACRAO and NASPA brought together registrars and student affairs professionals for the purpose of identifying institutions with the vision to build more comprehensive credentials. The goal was to create a framework to guide the development of replicable credentialing models to better serve institutions, students, and external constituents. In July 2015, AACRAO and NASPA received a \$1.27 million Lumina Foundation grant to explore how to “collect, document, and distribute information about student learning and competencies, including what is gleaned outside of the traditional academic classroom” (Fain 2015). In recognition of the initial work to supplement the academic transcript with an experiential transcript, Elon University was selected to be one of eight participants in the initiative. One of the stipulations of the AACRAO/NASPA project was that each institution's contribution be replicable at other institutions, so Elon decided to focus on simplicity. The

university registrar identified the goal of converting the institution's recently redesigned experiential transcript into a visual—one that would replace flat-text experiential data with a collection of intelligible and aesthetically appealing infographics.

Elon used its portion of the Lumina grant to finance the development of a third-party platform that would render experiential data as visuals. In sustained collaboration with the institution's transcript vendor, Parchment, an in-house cross-functional design team guided the development of the new credential and the production platform. The platform is called Vext, and it transforms text-based input into the visuals on the Visual Experiential Profile.

In just under a year's time, the new visual transcript was introduced to the campus community. Spring 2016 graduates became the first to take the Visual Experiential Profile (Visual EXP) into the employment marketplace. The document's first page features a chronological summary of the student's experiences; the second page features visualizations of the five Elon experiences. (*See Figures 1 and 2 on page 30.*)

To date, more than 800 students have requested the Visual EXP either independently or with their academic transcript. To complement production of the Visual EXP and inform plans for ongoing development, the registrar's office surveyed students to assess their perceptions of the new credential.

## **Methodology**

To gauge general perceptions of the Visual EXP among students, the Office of the Registrar sent a follow-up survey to current undergraduates and the recently graduated class of 2016 three months after its release. Students were included in the distribution regardless of whether they had ordered their own Visual EXP. Respondents were asked various questions about the appeal and perceived utility of the credential, including its key features, the importance of documenting the five Elon experiences, and whether additional information should be embedded, among others. The survey was completed by 471 students representing all class years and schools of study. Survey responses were codified and tested for quantitative validity. Frequencies were conducted to evaluate Likert-scale questions, and cross-tabulations were used to better gauge impact according to class and school affiliation.

Figure 1.  
Visual EXP  
(Page 1)

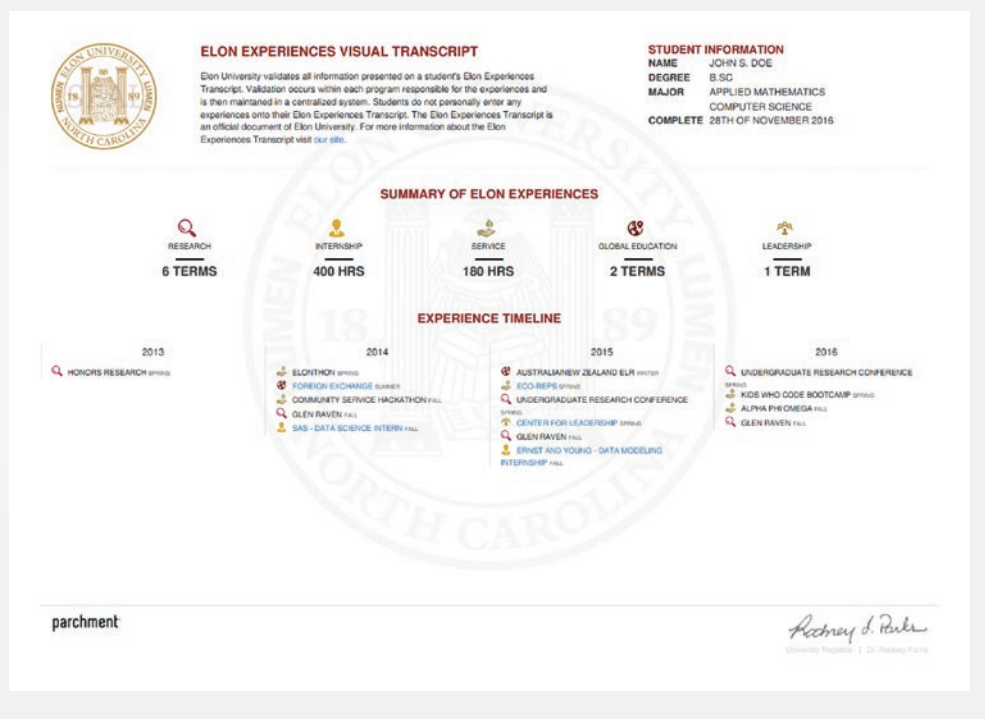
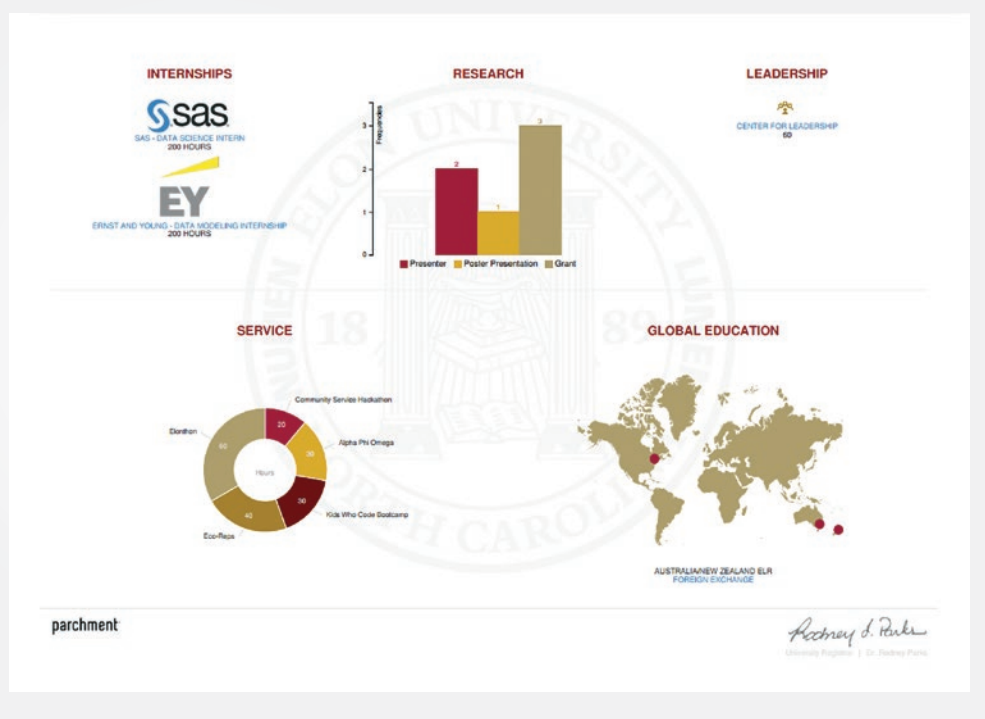


Figure 2.  
Visual EXP  
(Page 2)



## Results

Figure 3 (on page 31) provides details for the Likert-scaled questions about general perceptions of the Elon Visual EXP transcript. Nearly 90 (87) percent of respondents found this artifact visually appealing, and

85.3 percent of undergraduates indicated that the transcript is easy to understand. These results are similar to findings from a previous study on employer perceptions of the Visual EXP transcript: 86.8 percent of employ-

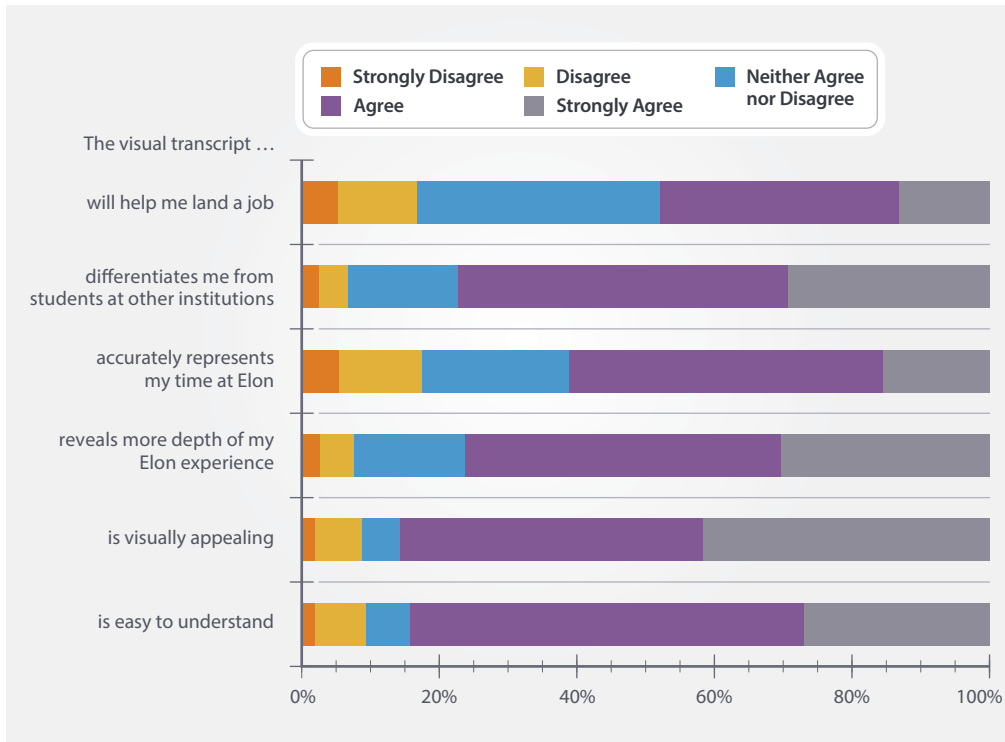


Figure 3.  
Survey Responses to Likert-Scale Questions

ers believed it was visually appealing, and 81.7 percent found it easy to understand (NACE 2017).

More than six in ten Elon students (62.7%) reported that the Visual EXP transcript accurately represents their time at Elon, and approximately 20 percent responded that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. This response likely is attributable to a single factor: Many students believe their on-campus work experiences should be included on the Visual EXP. Although on- and off-campus work can fill a considerable amount of a student’s time in college, including work experience on the Visual EXP is precluded by certain administrative barriers: notably, it would require officially recognizing part-time work as an Elon Experience, which by definition requires faculty approval. Further, documenting work experience completed through a university department would be markedly easier than documenting similar experience completed outside of the university. Fairness in reporting likely would become an issue. Nevertheless, the institution has not fully dismissed the possibility and in fact continues to explore potential solutions for documenting this dimension of student experience.

Despite a lack of confidence in its absolute precision, 77 percent of respondents believe that the visual transcript reveals greater depth of their Elon experience, and 78 percent think the transcript differentiates them

from students at other institutions. These results support Elon’s claim that the academic transcript severely restricts the representation of students’ learning by listing only courses taken and grades attained. Because most institutions still produce only an academic transcript, this new credential provides Elon students and alumni the opportunity to share unique, certified experiences with employers, thereby ensuring their competitive advantage in the employment marketplace. A previous study of employers’ perceptions of the Visual EXP revealed similar sentiments: 80.9 percent of employers thought the visual transcript differentiated Elon applicants from other applicants (NACE 2017).

When asked whether the Visual EXP could be used to help them secure employment, only 48.5 percent of respondents had a favorable or strongly favorable opinion; 35.13 percent expressed indifference. This is likely because Elon’s Visual EXP is a newly developed credential and exists with few parallels, so students are reluctant to place too much confidence in its reputation among employers. A previous study of employers’ perceptions netted similar results: 42.4 percent of employers agreed that the information on the Visual EXP could be useful when making hiring decisions whereas 42.3 percent were neutral on this position (NACE 2017). Like students who have a Visual EXP transcript, employers are reluctant to conclude that the transcript it-

**Table 1. Student and Employer Rankings of Elon Experiences, by Importance**

Student		Employer	
Aggregate Ranking	Experience	Aggregate Ranking	Experience
1	Internship	1	Internship
2	Global Engagement (Study Abroad)	2	Leadership
3	Leadership	3	Service
4	Service	4	Undergraduate Research
5	Undergraduate Research	5	Global Engagement (Study Abroad)

self will enhance an applicant’s value or desirability. As more students graduate and enter the job market with the Visual EXP, however, it will gain more exposure as a verified learning artifact, and perceptions of its utility may improve.

### Ranking Elon Experiences

Table 1 presents student and employer respondents’ rankings by importance of Elon’s five experiences. Responses were aggregated based on the average rank assigned to each experience. On average, internships and global engagement (study abroad) were ranked highest. When asked to elaborate on why their selection deserved to be considered most important, many respondents cited real-world applications and opportunities to broaden their understanding. Students’ opinions about the importance of each Elon experience may be influenced by their field of study, as each profession demands certain kinds of experience. Although arguments were made for each experience being the most important, internship and global education were consistently ranked among the most important. Interestingly, employers cited internship and leadership as the most important experiences for job candidates to possess and ranked study abroad as least important (NACE 2017). This difference of opinion substantiates suspicions about the misalignment of student skills with employer needs and will serve as a foundation for further inquiry.

### Embedded Information

Figure 4 (on page 33) presents students’ preferences for additional information that could be embedded within the Visual EXP. This information could be in the form of hyperlinks that end users could click to ac-

cess additional information about student activities and achievements. More student respondents participated in campus work experiences than in undergraduate research experiences. And although leadership was not ranked as the most important of the Elon experiences, respondents clearly indicated their desire for the addition of “leadership position descriptions” to the Visual EXP. The transcript currently presents only the title of the leadership position; many respondents—including 62.3 percent of employers—have suggested also including a short description of the position (NACE 2017). Respondents also frequently selected learning outcomes and internships as information that should be added to the Visual EXP. These results hint at systemic changes such as competency-based education and skill-based learning gaining acceptance in higher education nationwide (Dennis 2017; DePaul 2017; Jones and Ols-wang 2017; Porter and Reilly 2014).

It is important to note that because each of the Elon experiences is tied to the undergraduate curriculum and curated by a specific department on campus, students must meet certain criteria to ensure that they are represented on the Visual EXP. Specifically, each experience must be applicable to the ELR embedded in the undergraduate curriculum for recognition as an Elon experience. Grievances related to this stringency are common in the area of leadership. When students assume leadership roles on campus that do not satisfy the requirements set forth by the university’s Center for Leadership, the position they hold cannot be included on the transcript regardless of their commitment or duration of service.

For example, holding the position of orientation leader is not included in the leadership section of the Visual EXP. Students holding this position sacrifice

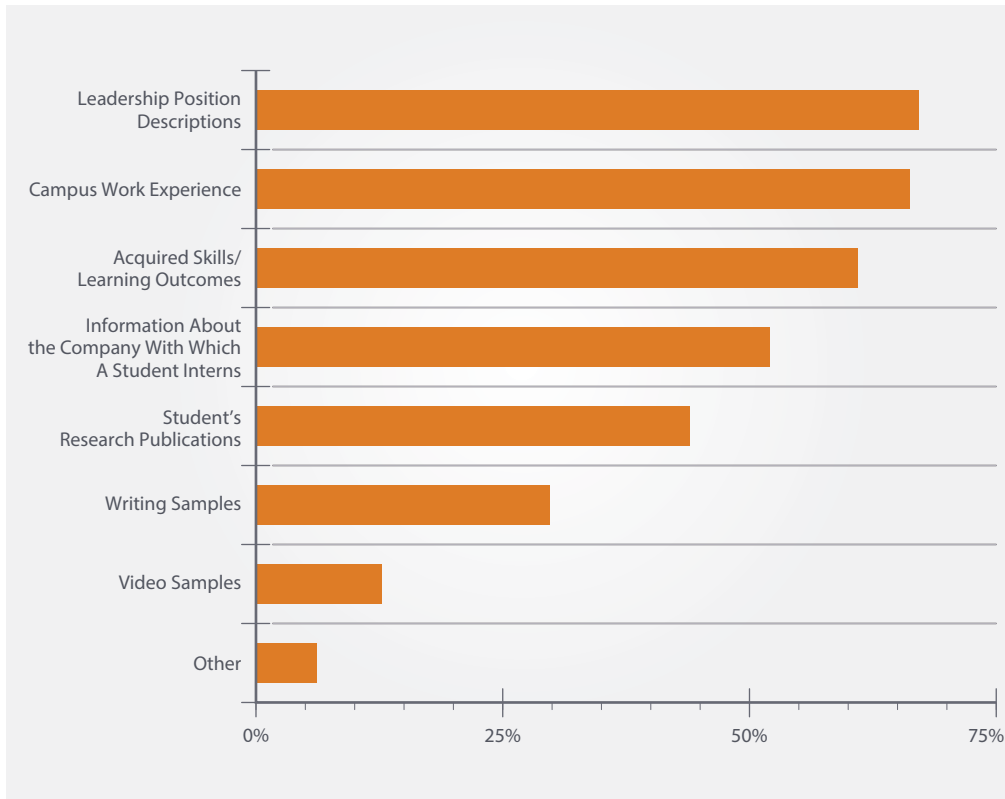


Figure 4.  
**Preferences for Additional Information to Be Embedded in the Visual EXP**

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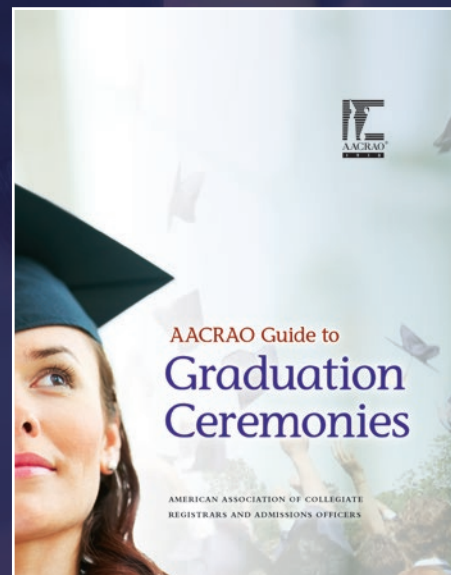


Table 2. Preference for Additional Information, Percentage by Major

If Elon were to embed...	Arts & Sciences	Business	Comm.	Education	Undeclared	Total
Leadership position descriptions	66.16	66.10	68.32	75.00	72.73	67.39
Campus work experience	72.22	62.71	61.39	75.00	54.55	66.74
Acquired skills/learning outcomes	62.63	61.86	53.47	79.17	59.09	61.12
Information about the company with which a student interns	45.96	63.56	52.48	54.17	45.45	52.27
Student research publications	57.58	33.90	31.68	45.83	45.45	44.71
Writing samples	28.28	22.03	46.53	25.00	13.64	29.81
Video samples	8.59	5.93	28.71	12.50	22.73	13.17
Other	8.08	6.78	4.95	0.00	0.00	6.26

weeks of their time, and their efforts are vital to the university’s success—yet their experience is not reflected on their transcript because it does not meet the requirements of the ELR. A potential solution to this issue could involve students’ co-authoring the Visual EXP. If students were allowed to self-report experiences after approval by the appropriate campus department, then a range of currently overlooked experiences could be added to the credential to further enhance students’ representation, albeit with an indicator of their source. To maintain the integrity of the credential would require explicit definitions and careful consideration by evaluators, but someday there may be a fusion of the resume (validated by the student) and the experiential transcript (validated by the institution).

### By Major

Table 2 presents a cross-tabulation of student preferences by school of study for embedded information within the Visual EXP. Indeed, some differences correspond to students’ fields of study. For example, most students in the College of Arts and Sciences suggested embedding acquired skills and student research publications within their Visual EXP. Students in the Love School of Business favored including information about the companies at which they interned. More than their peers in other schools, communications students wished to include writing and video samples. These preferences reflect a desire to highlight the primary activities of each field of study. The Office of the Registrar plans to use this information to refine its education and marketing activities relative to the Visual EXP.

### Future Inquiry

This study, along with the previous study on employer perceptions, affords the Office of the Registrar abundant insight into student attitudes toward the Visual EXP as well as areas for future development. It would be prudent to replicate these studies after several student cohorts equipped with the Visual EXP have graduated and entered the job market. This would create a more accurate understanding of its rate of adoption and utility among job seekers and employers. Researchers also could develop objective studies using metadata to determine the channels by which this and other digital credentials—*e.g.*, e-portfolios, LinkedIn, and other social media—are shared. Studies of credential distribution and access could reveal patterns of consumption, which could further refine how the credentials are created and presented. The survey asked students to indicate how often they consider employers when posting on various social media (Figure 5, on page 35). If this were compared to actual distribution patterns, the results could help students self-correct errors in presentation and self-promotion.

Researchers studying the development and expansion of credentials could assess administrators’ awareness of options at institutions that do not offer digital credentials. While many solutions are customized for the institutions that developed them, some credential frameworks can be modified and adopted peer to peer. For example, each solution developed by members of the AACRAO/NASPA project was designed to be replicable. These are not quite open-source solutions, but they

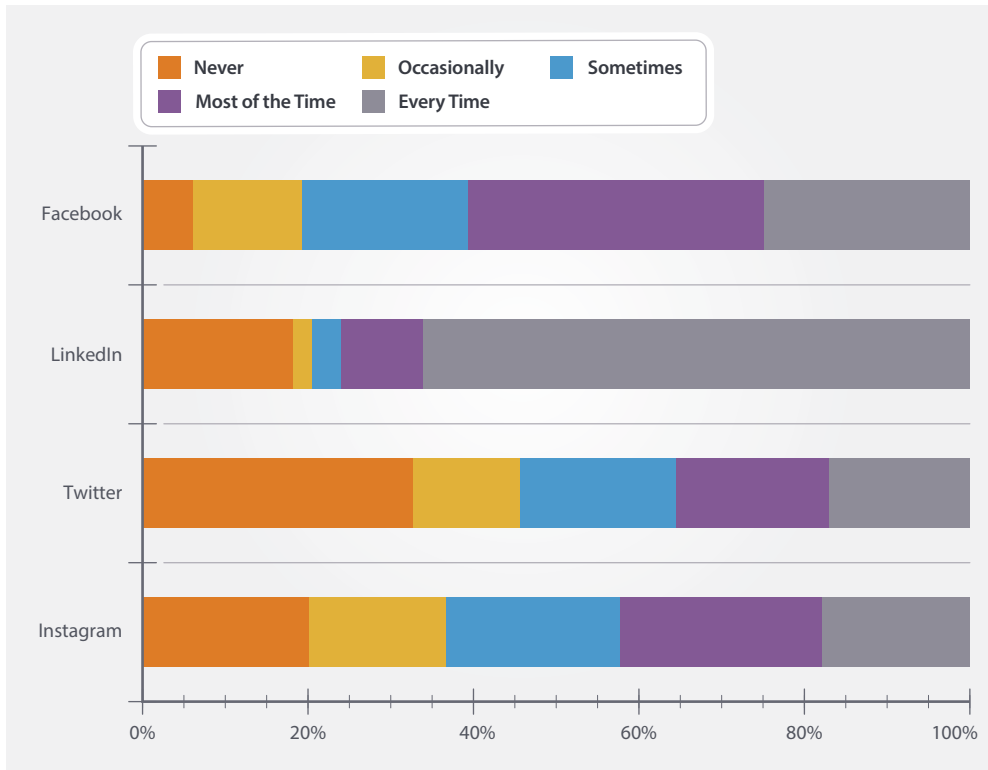


Figure 5.  
How often do you think about employers when uploading pictures or posting text on each of the following social media?

obviate a from-scratch approach. A study with this goal could identify gaps in credential issuers’ understanding and help vendors and advocacy groups address the needs of institutions, students, and employers as they evolve.

## Conclusion

In the knowledge economy of the twenty-first century, it is incumbent upon college and university leaders to develop better methods of representing the accomplishments of their graduates. For too long, the transcript and diploma have been the only artifacts available to students and employers; both documents have remained unchanged despite the rapid pace and abundant incidence of technological innovation. Institutions of higher learning have invested significant resources in strengthening the undergraduate experience by upgrading teaching and learning technologies, diversifying campus interactions, and providing substantially engaging out-of-class experiences. Today’s students are keen to take advantage of these opportunities, interspersing the steps along their curricular pathways with intentional experiential learning. At graduation, they are eager to translate the lessons of this learning into marketable knowledge and skills.

Why, then, must graduates continue to be disadvantaged by their alma maters’ inability to adapt? Why

are they and their potential employers still restricted to use of a flat and relatively uninformative record of courses taken? Aside from tradition and a lingering fear of change, there is little reason not to invest in upgrading and expanding credentials to reflect the depth and breadth of the modern undergraduate experience. Data are omnipresent, and existing student information systems can organize them. Students are well-versed in the maintenance of online identities, and employers know how to review them. Barring the widespread adoption of distributed ledger systems like Blockchain, the challenge thus falls to registrars and their colleagues to create and curate a record pursuant to students’ needs.

Elon’s efforts to expand the student record to include experiential learning constitute significant strides toward this more transparent and informative exchange of information. What began as a rarely used supplemental document later became an official expansion of the academic transcript and is now presented as data-enabled visuals. Employers have expressed a need for more comprehensive yet accessible information about college graduates, and preliminary research indicates that the Visual EXP is a step in the right direction. With further iteration and innovation informed by open conversations involving employers, institutions, and students, a co-curricular record may soon emerge that serves the needs of them all.

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### About the Authors

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## It's a Big Job, but We Have to Do It

By Daniel J. Bender

It is an honor to be asked a second time to submit a reflective essay on lessons I have learned in my more than 25 years in the registrar field. I have been pleased with the feedback on my first contribution, on leadership, which was published in *C&U* in July 2012 and subsequently included in *Leadership Lessons: Vision and Values for a New Generation* (AACRAO 2013). In that essay, I shared my ideas on the desired skills, abilities, and characteristics of a successful registrar. More significant, though, is that I also challenged the reader to think about the work of the registrar and its role in the institution as a *profession*. I wrote, “Being a *professional* implies a commitment to the profession as a whole, to its growth and development as such, to lifelong learning and ethical behavior of its members, and to helping shape the next generation” (AACRAO 2013, 14). I concluded that mentoring skills are at least as important to the successful registrar as the more traditional human and technical skills, because we play the critical role of identifying, nurturing, and growing the next generation of professional registrars. In fact, it is an important part of our job. This essay explores in greater detail approaches to mentoring that I have used and found helpful.

There are many definitions of “mentor,” but for this essay consider the following: an individual with more experience, knowledge, or expertise in an area or skill who counsels, advises, and guides an individual with less experience, knowledge, or expertise with the goal of developing greater competence and enhancing future growth and development. Notice that there is no

reference to training a replacement or the like. That is sometimes necessary, but it is a much more superficial and short-term relationship, and one that often builds on existing skills. The goal of mentoring is broader: it is to develop skill sets that are useful for the work of the registrar, to be sure, but that can also be used effectively elsewhere in the institution. Sets of skills, in contrast to purely technical knowledge and mastery, are transferable to other settings.

Mentorship takes a variety of forms: It can be short or long term, formal or informal, structured or unstructured. The intensity of mentorship can vary from infrequent exchanges to regular interactions, and the interactions change over time. Whereas mentorship relationships historically have been mostly within an institution, technological advances have freed us from the limitations of time zone and geography so that they can exist across cities, states, and institutions. My own mentorship experiences have been mostly long term, informal, and within the same institution. I have been a mentor only a handful of times but have found each experience rewarding and enriching. I regret that I didn't pursue them more actively throughout my career.

### It's Our Responsibility

Recall your own start in the field. Was it planned, or did it happen almost completely by chance, as in my case? How many people grow up dreaming of becoming a registrar? Many of us—myself included—came to

the job by happenstance, having started in a lower-level position and meandered up the career ladder. Sadly, I don't think much has changed in this regard; I believe strongly that we should not leave the profession to chance. I therefore encourage the current cadre of registrar professionals to make a concerted effort to reach out to the new (or not so new) hire who has the potential to grow and advance the profession. We must take chance out of the equation. We must be proactive.

There's no need to recreate the wheel; we can borrow from colleagues in institutional advancement and do "the big ask." I've done this a handful of times: After a period of observation, or when I had a pretty good idea of an individual's skills and potential, I'd pull him or her aside and ask outright about career goals and interest in the field long term. Most had little true idea about the job or what was necessary to succeed, and none had given it much thought. I told each that I had been quietly observing the work in the office and that I thought he had what it takes (flattery never hurts). I offered my help and agreed to provide opportunities to build on the foundation I had observed. To date I've received one flat-out no and a handful of tentative yeses. Not all of the latter have come to fruition, but over time I have learned to accept that. When I have had success, I feel I've made a substantive contribution to the profession, one that will last beyond my retirement. That feeling, because it is rare, is more rewarding to me than a successful graduation or the launch of a new room-scheduling software program. And it's a nice boost to my own motivation.

## Model and Demonstrate Good Behaviors

Leaders and people in positions of authority (a pool from which mentors are often drawn) are role models for those around them, whether they want to be or not. It's important to keep this in mind, even on difficult days. Some skills necessary for success in the registrar's office can be mastered independently with enough instruction and practice (learning an unfamiliar SIS, for example), but the development of relational (human) skills and finesse requires time, exposure, and experience. This means that the mentor is also under observation: the processes and rationales we use to make decisions, the ways in which we handle difficult students or faculty members, and how we behave under stress communicate our professional values and contribute to how others, especially

a mentee, perceive the work of the registrar. What we do today has potential to impact tomorrow.

To illustrate, I'll return to the idea of lifelong learning from my earlier essay. There is a lot of talk in higher education today about this idea. Lifelong learning is often perceived as a goal for students and faculty only, but a good mentor in the registrar's office can demonstrate that it applies equally to professional staff. I recommended previously that we keep our eyes open for and take full advantage of growth and development opportunities for ourselves *and* for staff members. A safe place to start is with internal opportunities that most institutions offer, often at low or no cost. Attend yourself, and always invite one or two staff members to join you. If you get a positive response to these local opportunities and see behavior changes you want to foster, ask a mentee to join you at a regional or national meeting. For many people new to the profession—and sometimes for those not so new—attendance at a national meeting is a big deal (it certainly was for me in the mid-1990s). Introduce them to friends and colleagues, orient them to the rules of the game, and upon returning home model for them how you apply new knowledge in the workplace. While away, talk openly about new ideas, and discuss how they might work at your institution. Challenge the mentee to do the same (being removed from the daily routine often inspires creative thinking). The right person will be eager, a little nervous, and thankful for these opportunities. This investment creates good will and loyalty and can improve the functioning of the office. And down the road, perhaps you can reduce your own travel commitments.

## Structured Independence

In my experience, the earlier stages of mentoring are the most intense. There are generally more questions and a greater need for confirmation and affirmation at this stage. This is not surprising as the person advances from novice to beginner and on to higher levels of competence and confidence. Development is a process; adjust your approach to mentoring appropriately. Be patient.

When I thought the individual was ready for more challenge and responsibility, I considered the list of projects in my head about which I had said, sometimes for years, "I'll get to that when I have a moment." Alternatively, a sudden request for a new service or product comes out of nowhere at the seemingly worst possible



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time. Could these projects or issues reasonably be delegated? This might be a good opportunity for the mentee to demonstrate a growing skill set while the work is done under your indirect supervision. Examples of such projects from my own experience include designing, testing, and releasing a transcript for a new post-doc program; designing and delivering a series of training sessions for co-workers and faculty users; and writing a first piece for publication or giving a first national presentation.

Try to consistently provide gentle and supportive feedback, even if it is not solicited, and always start with the positive. Neither of you should be afraid of mistakes or failure; both are powerful learning opportunities. Besides, if you choose an appropriate project, failure can be contained. If not, because your reputation likely is secure whereas your mentee's is not, bear the brunt of criticism or complaint. Have a private conversation with the mentee about what went wrong and why, ask

how the current problem could be fixed and what could be done to improve performance the next time. When things go well, step away from the limelight and let your mentee shine. Confidence inspired by success is priceless and lays groundwork for future growth. (If you're like me, you'll have to learn to let a few things go.)

## Conclusion

Be alert to the promising young staffer who has the right foundation to become a good registrar. Spend a little more time with that person, share a copy of *C&U*, or forward the weekly "Transcript" email. It's never the wrong time to think about the future of our profession; don't delay doing so until you are promoted or about to retire. By actively mentoring the next generation, we help individuals, our institutions, and the profession. It's a big job, but only we can do it.

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### *About the Author*

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## Seeking the Sage: A Personal Essay on Mentoring

*By Mary Hodder*

All of us are stories often untold and mostly unwritten. All of us are seeking purpose and wisdom and connection. We look to one another for validation and confirmation that who we are matters. We are in one another's debt for the accomplishments and achievements that we cannot, by any means, ever procure alone. We are the undocumented heroes of a multitude of lives, lived out earnestly hoping that what we show up each day and deliver will serve those around us. We are better at what we do because of those who take notice of our dreams and, remembering their own, lend us the wisdom they gained along the way. All we need do in return is the same for those whom we encounter when the day arrives and we find that we are the mentors.

The following is a collection of vignettes from my personal experiences as mentor and mentee. These relationships of my life and career were formative in how I lead and how I hope to inspire others to lead. Mentoring relationships are fundamentally acts of kindness that connect us in a never-ending desire to improve our abilities and passions. For those who come seeking the sage, I tell these small stories with a desire to inform.

### Inadvertent Opportunity

Stepping out of a conference session gone wrong, I was feeling badly about losing an opportunity to learn but was secretly happy to have a break. I needed a seat in a quiet area where I could charge my phone and scan emails. I found a seat in an alcove where a young man

was already ensconced in the seat opposite. I asked, in my polite Canadian way, if he would mind if I joined him. He smiled and said of course not. I settled in with my phone, grateful for the comfortable, out-of-the-way space. My young companion's phone dinged frequently with incoming messages. Seeing that I noticed, he smiled and said, "You just can't get away from the office, not even at a conference."

I sensed his inclination to talk. I had seen him earlier at the keynote session and wondered now if he was attending the conference alone. I knew that coming to such events alone often feels isolating, so I began a conversation with him.

It turned out that he had previously been an IT professional in private industry but had given up a substantial position and salary to take a role as assistant registrar at a small, private university in California. He made this choice so he could spend more time at home with his wife and start a family. Now that their son was three, they were feeling the financial strain. My companion was also wanting more from his career. When he learned that I was a registrar, he eagerly began asking questions. As we talked through his background, skills, and projects that could improve his university's registrar's office, I was struck by the extraordinary opportunity his knowledge and experience offered. His skill set is not the norm in a registrar's office. He was using his bright, technical mind to reengineer outdated processes, something I knew would be a welcome advantage. He laughed when I asked if he wanted to move

to Canada to join my team. We spoke for more than an hour; I found myself reluctant to depart for my next session—reluctant to leave our conversation that focused on creativity and opportunity and excitement. I was inspired by this chance encounter with a young man whose hopes and dreams for the future came readily to the forefront simply because I asked and listened. As I walked away, I felt I had provided him with some things to consider; in return, he had restored my lost session with something even better: the chance to be intrigued.

This welcome conversation at a conference represents the essence of the mentoring relationship. It is that easy exchange of ideas and encouragement that transpires when opportunity is met with genuine interest in the human story. We are all seeking a life of greater meaning and purpose. We all need validation that we are doing things that matter. We make choices based on our interests and also often on life circumstances. We do what we have to do until we can do what we want to do. Along the way, at pivotal moments, we pause to consider “what next” and “what if.” We turn outward for advice. We seek guidance and assurance that we are on our best path.

I have been at pivotal moments with a number of people over the years and have been privileged to build mentoring relationships with those who considered me wise enough to guide them. More often it has been by chance rather than by design that I entered into conversations and offered counsel. It is these encounters that stand out as particularly impactful.

## Lynched

My first mentor was my grade eleven English teacher, who also became my speech coach. He arrived in my classroom on the first day of school and called from the doorway, “Lynch: to be hanged without trial. That’s my name.” He walked into the classroom and my life, a large and boldly different teacher. He instilled great ideas, incited a love of reading unusual books, and provided a much-needed mental escape from my small-town world.

I spent many lunch hours in his classroom trying to impress him with my wit, style, and elocution while he critiqued and guided me to a better version of the spoken word and of myself. He was not cruel, but he was intimidating. His solemn, stern reviews of my naive and idealistic attempts to say something meaningful left me wondering if I would ever be anything other than me-

diocre in his estimation. I feared his exclamations and exasperations. I came to him already having won speech contests and thought he should be equally impressed with my proven speech prowess. Why could he not see that I had scores of accolades? Eventually I set aside my ego and acknowledged that I had come to him to learn, to get better, and to seek guidance. I quieted my ego in favor of listening. I did things his way. And I got better. I learned to trust and came to enjoy the process of fail-try, fail-try, and finally, triumphantly, succeed.

Standing in front of an audience has a particular form of magic that retains its allure to this day. Having a mentor to inspire me to not only improve my craft but also to respect the privilege of having an audience remains a significant gift in my life. It represents the value of someone wise enough to tell me not to let my swagger supersede the content and quality of my delivery. It taught me to heed the lessons of one who had much to impart once I kept quiet and listened. Ironically, in order to become a better speaker, I first had to stop talking.

## A Quiet Revolution

I spent a number of years working in higher education in the United States. Among my staff during that time was a woman whose life at work and at home held challenges. Over time, I provided her with more and more opportunities on campus, expanding her role and giving her authority to make decisions, lead meetings, and supervise staff training. I saw in her the kind of knowledge and willingness I needed on my team. She had not been given many opportunities to lead. While she was hesitant at first, over time she developed into the kind of employee and leader I knew she could be.

When I was leaving the United States to return to Canada, she asked for a private conversation. In my office, she tearfully told me that I had been her role model, a woman who influenced her by the way I conducted myself and how I treated her and others. She said that because of my belief in and support of her, she was far more confident and happy at work. She also revealed that she had stood up to her husband, telling him what she needed and desired in their marriage. He saw the change in her, and it made him work to win her back. He courted her, brought her flowers, and reignited a romance that allowed them to fall back in love and rebuild their marriage.

I did not in any way take credit for those transformations. It was her initiative and her desire to change that made them all possible. But what I took away from the experience is a recognition that what we say and do resonates and influences. I think of that conversation as one of the best accomplishments of my career. It was not an award or a public recognition. Rather, it was a quiet, personal conversation about an extraordinary change in someone's life in which I played a small part. It was and remains who I hope to be as a leader and mentor.

## Strong Women

Of particular interest to me is supporting other women to be more courageous in their careers. Perhaps it is because of being a child of the 1960s who grew up through the 1970s with women like Gloria Steinem that I am a woman who believes in lifting other women. It is my preeminent hope that I can impart enough motivation to other women that they will pay the favor forward, infinitum.

Gloria Steinem, at age 80, said:

*Don't listen to me. Listen to yourself... People often ask me at this age, "Who am I passing the torch to?" First of all, I'm not giving up my torch, thank you! I'm using my torch to light other people's torches... If we each have a torch, there's a lot more light.*

I love that message! It's a powerful image of women lighting the world, one bright torch at a time. Recently a young woman I worked with wrote to me, "You're a beautiful soul and a leader I will try to replicate for the rest of my career." When I received this compliment, it stopped me outright. I did not know I had made such an impact, but it moved me deeply to know that I had. I like to think that my "torch" is lit by my values as a leader who believes wholeheartedly in relationships being the center of importance. I am honored and indebted as one woman to another. I am accountable for that comment and responsible for maintaining my integrity to continue to be a light in the best possible ways for other women to follow and emulate.

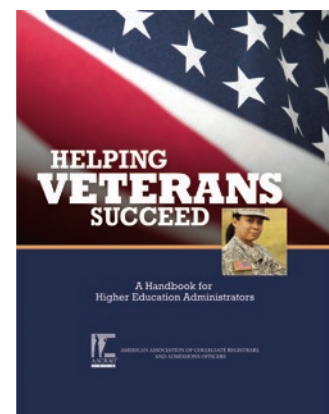
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## Leading Lessons

Mentoring relationships evolve where there is mutual benefit. They are give-and-give scenarios with both sides offering, both sides benefiting. In fact, during the times that I thought it my duty or requirement to mentor someone, I have rarely succeeded. A mentee cannot be forced (hence, my anguish and resistance in the early days with my speech coach). The mentor must be patient, much as my grade eleven English teacher/coach waited for me to stop fussing so he could get on with helping me. Looking back on that first mentoring relationship, I am glad my teacher patiently (albeit with some visual and guttural annoyance) waited for me to come around to his side. When I began to consistently win speech contests, I saw the benefits of his tutelage. I came to admire Mr. Lynch as my creative source, and I knew that because of his freely given investment in my improvement, I was successful. That formative relationship instilled in me the value of timing and the importance of approach. It is fundamental that the one seeking a mentor be fully present and willing. Just because I know something does not mean it will do another person any good if they are not ready.

As a leader, I strive to inspire others not by what I know but by how I can uncover, serve, and support what they know. Knowledge, talent, and willingness show up in abundance when people are given room to express themselves. I facilitated a year-long leadership development program for staff whose roles were defined not as leaders but as doers. The seminal outcome of that program was a collection of six projects that the

participants (six groups of five) researched, designed, and budgeted to positively impact the student experience. The senior team members were so impressed with the projects that there was swift uptake to implement them. The lesson I took from the program was that as college leaders, we often are seeking answers to problems through complex measures. But if instead we simply ask those who steer our operations—those who are close to the student experience—we can uncover the best options with less time, effort, and cost. The knowledge our people possess can be instrumental in reframing strategy and redefining culture. Let them lead. And let us have the courage to follow.

## Parting Wisdom

Finally, I see that it is the small things, the everyday things, that make the most long-lasting impressions and, ultimately, the difference in one another's lives. It is words of encouragement and genuine acts of caring that reach across to find people in their moments of doubt and need. It is the countless times you stop to say hello, listen, smile, laugh, console, say thank you, notice hard work, say please, say yes, praise success, say you matter, say you can, say I see you, which all add up to life's legacy of working with people. It is the joy of teaching what you know one day at a time. It is the certainty and blessing of knowing that no matter how wise I think I am, someone will always show up to teach me something new. It is remaining open to what can be that ensures that we remain creative participants in a broad landscape of opportunity.

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### *About the Author*

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**Mary Hodder** is former registrar at Douglas College. She has also served in leadership roles at four other Canadian institutions and one in the United States (Arizona). She has now retired from higher education and is a full-time writer and mentor through her own consulting practice in Vancouver, BC.

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## The Mentoring Relationship

*By Glenn Munson*

I never thought much about mentoring until I was well into my admissions and records career. I started in admissions, where I was pretty much on my own. It was not until I became a registrar that I realized the significance of the people from whom I was learning.

The man I consider my first mentor was the associate dean of academic affairs (to whom I reported), but I didn't realize that I was being mentored until I figured out that many of his meetings with me were like tutoring sessions. He would describe his thought processes about a decision he had to make and then tell me what his decision was. I'm not sure he knew that I saw him as a mentor or even if he intended to play that role, but I'm guessing he did. I was a young, first-time registrar with a lot to learn, and he was the associate dean who actually knew quite a bit about the registrar's duties (he had often had to cover for my predecessor). I learned from him that not all decisions set precedents; each situation is unique, even though it may not seem to be. Of course, some situations affected groups of students (for example, a certain section of a class), and related decisions had to be consistent. And there were times when a request from a student led to a new policy that we didn't know we needed but nevertheless had to have ("That's the 'Smith policy,'" we would say in jest).

Another of my mentors never knew that he served in that role. We were good friends. We usually saw each other only at professional meetings, but that was enough for me to know that I had a lot to learn from him. I enjoyed listening to his stories, many of which I

heard several times, and I very much appreciated his professionalism and ability to stand up for what he believed was right. Very rarely did I call or email him, but I respected him as I did very few colleagues I have known over the years. That respect was part of the mentoring relationship I had with him. Little did I know that over those years I would switch roles and become a mentor to others, whether I intended to or not.

What I came to realize is that if you stay in this business long enough, you will become a mentor. The mentor-mentee relationship is special: it can creep up on both of you, or it can be an objective decision by the mentee to see and utilize you as a mentor (or vice versa). Someone may choose you to be her mentor, or you may find someone you believe could benefit from your experience and so you become her mentor. Regardless, it is important to recognize the significance of mentoring in the admissions and records profession and to understand the mentor-mentee relationship.

Mentoring in admissions and records is not necessarily the same as it is in the business world or in a college or university academic department. In the business world, it is often the busy manager who has as part of the job description the mentoring of newcomers to the office or the business. In academia, it is usually an associate professor who mentors the new tenure-track faculty member. Or it could be a committee or work group that meets with young faculty members on a regular basis to discuss teaching methods, research requirements, and other factors in the pursuit of tenure. In admissions

and records, the mentoring relationship is usually more informal—so informal, in fact, that neither person may recognize when it begins or that it is happening. Mentoring in one’s office is common, of course; the director recognizes leadership abilities in a younger staff member and works with that person to help her grow professionally. Just as common, if not more so, is the long-distance mentoring that takes place by phone or e-mail—for example, with the mentor answering the queries of a less experienced registrar. Mentoring also takes place at conferences; often, a conference—for example, a workshop like Registrar IOI—may be the setting for the beginning of a mentoring relationship. One of my most long-standing and rewarding mentoring relationships continues with someone who attended a Registrar IOI for which I was a faculty member. In fact, all of my mentoring has been long distance since my long-time associate registrar left more than ten years ago for her own top management position.

Only one person actually told me that he recognized me as a mentor. He fit the model of a mentee: a young professional who sought me out and was willing to initiate the mentoring relationship. He wanted to take advantage of the knowledge I had gained as a result of years of experience, and he had the ambition and desire to use that knowledge and assistance to grow professionally. He accepted my encouragement to get involved in professional associations and develop his own potential.

Another new registrar saw me as the wise old guru for young registrars (herself, in particular). She had not sought the registrar position at her institution but rather had been promoted to it, so she often sought help via e-mail, phone calls, and at conferences.

I fit the definition of a mentor for each of those individuals. I was a more experienced, supportive colleague who was willing to share my expertise (especially that related to Banner and FERPA). I was often a sounding board for their ideas, and they knew that I would give impartial, non-judgmental feedback. Because of my belief in professional development, I also encouraged and often aided their participation in their state and regional associations and especially in AACRAO. But in most cases, I was an accidental mentor: I was the one who was sought out to be the mentor.

It is important to understand the formats that the mentoring relationship can take. As mentioned previously, mentoring in the admissions and records profession can be very different from that in other professions.

Yet there are similarities. The mentor-mentee relationship can be formal or informal, structured or unstructured. In formal mentoring (which is not as common in the admissions field), the relationship is often within an office and is based on a formal request with a contract or agreement that calls for a structured program of regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings within an expected time frame. There is often a set agenda with objectives and/or goals. Both parties have an understanding of where the mentee is expected to be at the end of the mentoring program.

An informal mentoring relationship is usually not a supervisor-employee relationship. More often, it is a casual, long-distance relationship in which the mentor is a sounding board or idea generator. In this often-spontaneous relationship, there is less of a sense of obligation or responsibility on the part of the mentee to follow the mentor’s advice or suggestions. Rather, it is up to the mentee to make whatever decision is necessary after listening to the advice and counsel of the mentor.

The structured mentoring relationship combines both formal and informal mentoring. The mentor is usually more in charge of both the process for and the agenda of the mentoring sessions, which are regularly scheduled and have established content including ideas, issues, and concepts to be discussed. Structured mentoring may include a formal contract with objectives and pre- and post-mentoring assessment measures. It is usually found in an institutional or office setting with staff members and employers or managers. A structured relationship may eventually morph into an unstructured relationship if the mentee’s needs or situation change.

Unstructured mentoring allows for more flexibility and spontaneity; the mentee often contacts the mentor as needed rather than according to a predetermined schedule. As a result, the mentee is more responsible for the process, seeking out the mentor, who responds in turn to the mentee’s needs or agenda. There is no formal developmental plan for the mentee; rather, mentoring takes place on an ad hoc basis and perhaps even by phone or e-mail. A concern about unstructured mentoring is that it may be more difficult for a shy or introverted person to initiate such a relationship. Alternatively, a person might perceive his seeking a mentor as a sign of weakness or as an acknowledgment of his lack of knowledge. In fact, such an individual may be more in need of a mentor than he realizes. It is important to remember that mentorship is not a closed-ended



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proposition. Rather, it can continue so long as both parties remain interested or until either of them leaves the office (if internal) or the profession.

So who can be a mentee or a mentor? A mentee is characterized by:

- ◆ some experience in the profession;
- ◆ a willingness to learn;
- ◆ eagerness to take advantage of learning opportunities;
- ◆ an ability to receive and appreciate non-judgmental, objective feedback;
- ◆ courage to try new things;
- ◆ acceptance of responsibilities;
- ◆ openness and honesty, respect, and gratitude;
- ◆ commitment to developing leadership and management skills;
- ◆ desire to succeed; and
- ◆ desire to give back to the profession.

A mentor is characterized by:

- ◆ experience in the field (more than the mentee);
- ◆ a record of professional success and accomplishment;
- ◆ a value system rooted in honesty, empathy, and authenticity;
- ◆ an ability to give non-judgmental, objective feedback;
- ◆ leadership and management skills;
- ◆ a desire to see others succeed;
- ◆ personal investment in the profession;
- ◆ a desire to give back to the profession; and
- ◆ a desire to “pass the torch” or leave a legacy.

Are you ready as a potential mentee to approach a potential mentor? It can be difficult to take that first step. There are several ways to start the mentoring relationship:

- ◆ Meet as many experienced professionals as possible at your state or regional association meetings.
- ◆ Attend the AACRAO annual meeting—especially workshops and the first-timers meeting (as appropriate).
- ◆ Find someone who does what you do, who is what you want to be, or who is where you want to be in the future, and take the initiative to ask for help, suggestions, and feedback. Establish the relationship over snacks in the vendor area or lunch. Be sure to ask for your potential mentor’s business card, e-mail address, and phone number, regardless of whether the individual knows you see him as potential mentor.

Are you ready to be a mentor? If you have some of the traits described above, you may be more ready than you think. Remember that a mentor provides feedback, not criticism. A mentor pulls, doesn’t push. The success of the mentee is not necessarily in the hands of the mentor, but the guidance a mentor provides can help form a confident, involved, and respected professional.

I did not seek out mentees; they found me, and I believe I have been successful (I possess most if not all of the traits described above). I continue to enjoy my role as a mentor. Neither did I search out my mentors; rather, I could learn from them by following their examples and listening to them. I am pretty sure they never knew that I perceived them as mentors; we never discussed it. These mentoring relationships were very informal and unstructured.

Similarly, you may already be a mentor without knowing it. Or perhaps you are being mentored but haven’t yet realized that your boss or a colleague has taken on this role in your relationship. Take advantage of either situation. You, your mentor or mentee, and the admissions and records profession will be better for it.

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### *About the Author*

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**Glenn Munson** spent 28 of his 40-year higher education career as the Registrar at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee and other years in Admissions and Records. Glenn served as Vice President for Records and Academic Services on the AACRAO Board of Directors, Chair of the Nominations and Elections Committee, as a member of other numerous task forces and committees, and was a frequent presenter at annual meetings and workshops. He was presented the AACRAO APEX Award in 2005. Glenn is a strong advocate of professional development. He was instrumental in restructuring AACRAO’s Registrar 101 workshop during his time on the Board of Directors, and he continues to participate as a faculty member for REG 101, both live and online. He also co-developed and helped introduce Registrar 201. Glenn received his bachelor’s degree from Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, and his M.S. degree from Kent State University.

# Disney in the Academy (and Other Disney Educational Experiences on College Campuses)

*By Christopher Tremblay*

Yes, it is true that a student can earn college credit for a visit to a Disney theme park. The study of Disney is not new to higher education. For decades, Walt Disney has been studied in history courses; the Disney version of customer service excellence has been touted as a best practice in business courses; and film/media courses have analyzed Disney's animated classics (Duncan 2012, Wantasen n.d.). But in U.S. higher education, there has been an emerging practice of creating single college courses focused on a Disney theme. This article presents a recent environmental scan of some courses on a variety of U.S. college campuses (and beyond) and then discusses other elements related to the presence of Disney in college communities.

## Disney Courses: For Credit/Experience

During this research process, more than 75 Disney-themed courses were found to be taught at more than 70 colleges and universities in 31 states as well as in Italy, Germany, and online. (Disclaimer: It is likely that there are even more than these Disney courses in existence. The courses highlighted here are those that were initially discovered in this research.) The predominant themes of the courses are gender, film, fairy tales, race, leadership/management, culture, Disney theme parks immersion, and Walt Disney. This article highlights twelve of the most unique of the 76 courses. (See Table

1 on page 55 for a listing of all of the Disney courses that were identified; note that some courses are no longer offered.)

## Ball State University (Muncie, IN)

### **"The Disney Experience"**

According to the Ball State University (BSU) website, students in the entrepreneurial management program in the Miller College of Business visit the Walt Disney World Resort in mid-February of their senior year (n.d.). This "exclusive opportunity" includes a visit/discussion with top Disney executives, a guided tour of the Magic Kingdom (including the underground), and a team-based activity based on Disney's business practices. In 2014, the five-day trip included a meeting with BSU alumnus Kevin Lansberry, who is Chief Financial Officer for Domestic Parks and Resorts at Walt Disney Parks and Resorts (BSU 2014). A student who participated in the 2014 trip said, "The Disney trip was a phenomenal experience as it allowed students to realize how a truly unique company operates successfully... Overall, the Disney trip exposed the senior class of entrepreneurship students to what is possible if a person works hard to pursue their dream" (BSU 2014). The five-day visit included learning about "the planning, construction, and daily operations of the park" (BSU 2014, 1).

## Buena Vista University (Storm Lake, IA)

### **INTM 202: “Storytelling with Walt Disney” Interim Travel Course**

Created by Jerry Johnson and Henry Hardt, this course is part of a unique experience at Buena Vista University (BVU) called “Interim.” Every January, students immerse themselves in a topic and “experience an education beyond the typical classroom setting” (Buena Vista University, n.d.). Travel courses during Interim date back to 1972 (BVU n.d.). In 2016, this non-credit Business and Media Interim travel course focused on the business and communication strategies of effective storytelling, focusing on Disney’s methods (BVU 2015). Eight students may participate in this seventeen-day trip, which begins at Walt Disney World and then continues on a Disney cruise ship, where students learn from Disney historian Jim Korkis (BVU 2015). (The cost in 2016 was \$2,750 per student.) Hardt hopes to incorporate an international component into the trip by someday including Tokyo Disneyland and Disneyland Paris (BVU n.d.).

## California Baptist University (Riverside, CA)

### **HIST 401: Special Topics: The History of Disneyland**

This course was created by Dr. Jeffrey Barnes, associate professor and dean of academic services at California Baptist University (CBU) in Riverside, California (Solano 2014) and author of two Disney leadership books. His was first offered in 2014 as an eight-week course providing a comprehensive history of Disneyland and including two field trips as well as guest speakers (CBU 2014). The course textbook is *The Disneyland Story: The Unofficial Guide to the Evolution of Walt Disney’s Dream* (Solano 2014; CBU 2015). The course is described as a “historical review of Southern California’s prominent cultural icon” (Solano 2014) and focuses on topics such as how the park mimics and mirrors the American Dream; the park’s place in American history and culture; its influence around the globe; and Disney’s impact on the entertainment industry (Solano 2014 n.p.).

Other topics covered in the course include the history, biography, culture, and construction of Disneyland (Solano 2014). A VIP visit to Disneyland and a private tour at Garner Holt Productions in San Bernardino are also included (Solano 2014). Guest speakers include Sam Gennaway (author of the course textbook), Bill Butler (creative director of Garner Holt Productions), and Mel McGowan (former Disney Imagineer) (Solano 2014). More than 20 students enrolled in the course in 2014 (Solano 2014). According to Barnes, “My main objective is to use Walt’s vision and all of the obstacles he faced as inspiration/motivation for today’s students” (Barnes 2015). Barnes has published two Disney-themed books: *The Wisdom of Walt* and *Beyond the Wisdom of Walt*.

## Calvin College (Grand Rapids, MI)

### **IDIS W44: Disney, Culture, and Progress**

This 20-day course was offered in January 2016 to “equip students to explore cross-cultural understandings of progress” (Calvin College 2017). The cost of the course was \$2,345 (Calvin College 2017). Students majoring in political science or international relations could use the course to fulfill an elective requirement (Calvin College 2017). Taught by an assistant professor in Calvin College’s Department of Political Science, the class took place primarily at Walt Disney World. Students “explored representations of human progress in science, technology, cross-cultural engagement, environmental protection, and global citizenship” (Calvin College 2017). Students’ grades were based on their participation in group discussions, active engagement with their partners, reflection papers, and a final class presentation (Calvin College 2017).

## Elon University (Elon, NC)

### **GBL 202 US: Florida & California: Happiest Place? The Science of Happiness at Disney**

This global education course is typically taught in the winter semester. Application, acceptance, and an additional travel fee are required. The cost of the course is \$4,100 (Elon 2016c). The course relies on literature

from seven academic disciplines and uses the Disney setting to understand and explain the role of happiness. The course includes a field trip to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, and fulfills part of the CORE requirement in Civilization or Society as well as CORE's Experiential Learning Requirement (Elon 2016a, 2016b). The course is co-taught by an assistant professor of sociology and an associate professor of music and education (Elon 2016c). Students must apply for admission to the course/program; a maximum of eighteen students may participate (Elon 2016c). Part of the itinerary includes the "Walk in Walt's Footsteps" program (Elon 2016c).

## Millsaps College (Jackson, MS)

### **SOAN 4750/COMM 3000: Disney and the American Way of Life**

In fall 2010, Dr. George Bey first taught this course as an offshoot of his American pop culture course (Millsaps 2015a). Bey, professor of anthropology and associate dean of international education, co-teaches the course with Dean Brit Katz, vice president of student life. The course "focuses on the ways in which Walt Disney and his creations have impacted American society as well as how society has impacted Disney" (Millsaps 2015a n.p.). The course was created at students' request (Millsaps 2015a) and costs approximately \$1,100, which includes transportation, hotel, dining, and theme park tickets (Bey 2015). Students of all majors enroll in the course. According to Bey, "It makes for a sophisticated group of young scholars who are invariably highly motivated and typically with some understanding of social theory and methodology" (Bey 2015). Enrollment in the course is limited to fourteen students; there is always a wait list (Bey 2015). "We use Disney as a prism to look at America and the larger issues in American culture," says Bey (Millsaps 2015a). At the end of the course, students travel to Walt Disney World to conduct field research (Millsaps 2015a). According to Bey, the course "is designed to explore the symbiotic relationship that has developed between American culture/society and Disney in a wide variety of areas, including gender, environment, science, history, pleasure, other cultures, our landscape, and way of doing business" (Bey 2015). Assignments include two essay exams, a

search paper/creative project, and a field-based ethnographic project completed at Walt Disney World (ibid.). The course has been taught four times, most recently in fall 2016 (ibid.).

## Oregon State University (Corvallis, OR)

### **WS 325: Disney: Gender, Race, and Empire**

Oregon State University (OSU) offers a women's studies course with a Disney theme (Duncan 2012). The course originated in 2002 at Portland State University (Duncan 2015). Course creator Patti Duncan said, "I was struck by what an impact teaching Disney films had on many of my students, so I created the course with the hope that it would provide students with a better point of entry into the concepts I was teaching" (Duncan 2015). According to the syllabus, the course "introduces key themes and critical frameworks in feminist film theories and criticism focused on recent animated Disney films" (Duncan 2012). This hybrid, three-credit-hour course fulfills the Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) requirement in OSU's baccalaureate core (Duncan 2012). The course has nine student learning outcomes; four reference Disney: demonstrate a theoretical framework for critical analysis of Disney representation in terms of gender, race, class, sexuality, and nation; recognize other, related themes in relation to the Disney canon, including colonialism, conquest, militarism, globalization, war, and genocide; recognize the distinctions between Disney's animated representations and the experiences of actual people and communities in various parts of the world; and demonstrate skills to be able to talk with others, including children viewers, about the power and social meanings of Disney and other images (Duncan 2012). Students' grades are based on their attendance/participation (20%), online homework (20%), critical response essays (30%), and a final project (30%) (Duncan 2012). The final group project requires development of a learning guide for children (Duncan 2012). The ten-week course requires students to view eleven Disney movies (Duncan 2012). Typically, multiple sections of the course are taught every term (Duncan estimates that 300 students annually enroll in the course) (2015). The course is also taught every year as an on-campus honors course (ibid.).

## University of LaVerne (LaVerne, CA)

### **HONORS 301/HONORS 306: Disneylandland**

The honors program at the University of LaVerne (UL) offers an interdisciplinary honors seminar with a Disney theme (n.d.). Honors seminars “introduce students to innovative interdisciplinary perspectives on unique and engaging topics” (University of LaVerne, n.d.). The Disney course was taught in January 2015 and again in January 2016 (Bernard 2015). The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) “city-as-text” program was the inspiration for this course (Bernard 2015). According to the syllabus, the course “critically examines Disney animated films and Disneyland Park through the lens of two disciplines: creative writing and cultural studies” (Bernard and Hills 2015, 1). Enrollment is capped at 20 students and is reserved for UL upperclassmen in the honors program (Bernard 2015). Textbooks include *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, and Disability* and *The Best American Travel Writing 2013* (Bernard 2015). The course is co-taught by Sean Bernard, director of the honors program at the University of LaVerne, and Ann Hills, associate professor of Spanish and chair of the modern languages department (Bernard and Hills 2015; Bernard 2015). Course assignments include Disneyland presentations, a travel essay, daily homework, and an oral presentation (Bernard 2015). The course meets for four weeks, four days a week, for three and a half hours a day and includes three days in residence at Disneyland in Anaheim, California (Bernard 2015). The residency at Disneyland takes place during week three of the course (Bernard and Hills 2015).

## University of Southern California (Los Angeles, CA)

### **405 & CTPR-460: USC/Walt Disney Studios Motion Picture Producing and Directing Class**

The School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California (USC) offered a beginning-level, 25-seat course in summer 2015 that focused on Walt Disney Studios (USC SCA 2015a). According to the course description, “In addition to directing two films of your own and one group project, you will experience

outstanding lectures and demonstrations on filmmaking and attend special guest appearances, VIP tours, and screenings at The Walt Disney Studios Lot in Burbank” (USC SCA 2015a). In addition, students shoot footage at Disney’s Golden Oak Ranch in Newhall, California (USC SCA 2015a). USC Professor of Cinematic Arts Thomas Sito is the course instructor; his movie credits include seven Walt Disney classic films (USC SCA 2015c).

## University of Vermont (Burlington, VT)

### **FTS 95: Florida: Walt Disney and American Culture**

The University of Vermont (UVM), through Continuing and Distance Education, offered a hybrid course entitled “Florida: Walt Disney and American Culture” (University of Vermont 2015b). The three-credit course has a program fee of \$1,010 and requires a four-day trip to the Walt Disney World Resort (Nilsen 2015, University of Vermont 2015b). The visit to Walt Disney World includes a Backstage Magic Tour along with participation in the Disney Youth Education Series program (Ibid.). The course was offered during winter session (FTS 95) and was taught by Associate Professor and Program Director of Film and Television Studies Sarah Nilsen (University of Vermont 2015a). Nilsen is listed as a “Walt Disney expert” on the UVM website and is currently writing a book on the cultural history of the Disney princesses (University of Vermont 2015a). According to the course syllabus, “This course... examine(s) the centrality of Walt Disney to the development of American media culture and its global spread” (Nilsen 2015). The course has five stated course objectives: develop the critical skills and terminology utilized in cultural analysis; understand the major questions and methodology in film historiography; appreciate the history of the theme park and Walt Disney’s impact on its evolution and reception; comprehend the history of The Walt Disney Studio and its impact on American culture; and develop the critical skills that can be employed to analyze the aesthetic, cultural, and industrial relationships between the varied and multiple Disney media products (Nilsen 2015). The course requires four textbooks and has four main assignments: daily journals, group essay discussion, short essays, and a



research paper (Nilsen 2015). The research paper (ten to twelve pages) is “an in-depth analysis of one of the attractions at The Walt Disney World Resort” and requires a theoretical orientation (Nilsen 2015).

## Western Illinois University (Macomb, IL)

### **COMM 379: Disney Communication Culture**

This course, first offered in spring 2010, was created by David Zanolla, senior associate faculty member at Western Illinois University (WIU) (WIU 2015). Zanolla is a fan of Disney parks and of showing students how Disney trains its cast members (WIU 2015). Zanolla has been approached by faculty at other universities about replicating his course (WIU 2013). The course originated in 2009 through the WIU Centennial Honors College (WIU 2011). According to the course description, “Through various tours and master classes at [Walt Disney World Resort], participants will learn how an organization of more than 60,000 people creates and maintains an effective culture. In addition, students will explore the layers of nonverbal communication utilized by Disney imagineers in the process of environmental design” (WIU 2011). Prior to the course’s debut, Zanolla taught these principles as a supplemental unit to his “Introduction to Human Communication” courses (WIU 2011). The eight-week Disney Communication Culture course includes an eight-day trip to Orlando, Florida, where students visit all Disney theme parks (WIU 2015). One class meeting takes place at the Magic Kingdom, one at the Disney Hollywood Studios, one at EPCOT with a Disney Leadership Program, one at the Animal Kingdom, one at EPCOT as part of the Disney Education Forum, and one day is a free/independent research day; the final day includes a backstage tour at the Magic Kingdom (WIU n.d.). The 2013 and 2014 versions of this course included not only the usual visit to Walt Disney World but also a trip to Disneyland in Anaheim, California (Disney Parks 2014, WIU 2013). According to the spring 2016 syllabus, assignments include a major paper and on-site participation/activities as well as participation/ assignments/quizzes (Zanolla 2016). The three primary course objectives are that students will be able to understand key communication elements of an organizational culture; understand how to perform a basic analysis of an organizational

culture; and understand the execution of two main organizational missions of the Walt Disney World Resort (Zanolla 2016). One of the required textbooks for the course is *The Wonderful World of Customer Service at Disney* by J. Jeff Kober (Zanolla 2016). According to WIU, “A communication course like this is not available anywhere else in the country” (WIU 2013). WIU students from all majors may apply; the application fee is \$45 (WIU 2015). Students are responsible for all program costs, including tuition (Zanolla 2016). Typically, ten to fourteen students are accepted (WIU 2015). The “study abroad” course is offered annually during the spring semester (WIU 2016). The course counts as an elective for students majoring or minoring in communication.

## Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo, MI)

### **HNRS 2900: Walt’s Pilgrimage: A Journey in the Life of Walter Elias Disney**

This honors college course, created by Christopher Tremblay (an alumnus of the Western Michigan University Lee Honors College), was first offered in summer 2015 as a part of the LHC Study in the States program (WMU 2017). Enrollment is limited to members of the Lee Honors College (WMU 2017). Like a study abroad program, “Study in the States” is a unique, place-based educational course. All students who enroll receive an all-expense-paid subsidy for this study experience. Donors and an LHC fee that students pay each semester underwrite the trip. Students receive honors and general education credit (in the area of U.S. History and Cultures) for the course. This unique, biographical road trip course surveys Walt Disney’s life—his struggles, risks, and successes—through the lens of his impact on U.S. history and culture. The trip offers an exclusive perspective on Walt Disney. More than 40 significant destinations in three states (Illinois, Kansas, and California) are visited in as close to chronological order as possible. Stops include the home where Disney was born, two official Disney museums, and Disneyland. For each of the past three years, eight students have participated in the course.

This brief survey provides evidence that Disney has emerged as a popular theme of credit-bearing college courses. Among other topics, the courses consider history, popular culture, business, communication, psy-

chology, gender/race, and animation as they pertain to Disney. In fact, Disney has been incorporated into a variety of academic disciplines and curricula at the collegiate level throughout the United States and beyond.

## Other Aspects of “Collegiate Disney”

Beyond single courses on particular aspects of Disney, there are other Disney-related collegiate programs and sites in the United States: Disney Research Lab, Disney Hall, Disney College Program, ACE Credit for Disney Training, UC-Berkeley’s “Disney” major, Girls Who Code Camp, and the Disney Youth Education Series. The following section highlights each of these seven elements.

### Disney Research Lab

The Walt Disney Company established a lab on the campus of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU n.d.) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The lab capitalizes on CMU’s strengths in computer science and the fine arts (ibid.). Disney has five research labs throughout the world (the other labs are in Burbank, Emeryville, and Glendale, California; Boston, Massachusetts; and Zurich, Switzerland (Disney Research 2012a); the lab at Carnegie Mellon is the only one directly affiliated with an institution of higher education (Disney Research 2012a). According to the Disney Research website, research at this lab focuses on antennas and radio, with an emphasis on sports visualization (Disney Research 2012b). “Pittsburgh researchers are currently executing projects inspired by ESPN, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, and other business units of The Walt Disney Company” (Disney Research 2012b). The website lists 70 research projects being conducted at the Pittsburgh Disney Research lab facility (2012b). There appears to be a twelve-member team at this Disney Research (2012b) lab. “Disney Research combines the best of academia and industry by doing both basic and application-driven research” (Disney Research 2012c).

### Disney College Program

Formed in 1981 as the Magic Kingdom College Program, the Disney College Program is a national internship opportunity for college students at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, or at Disneyland in Ana-

heim, California (DAA 2015). Disney first conducted college recruiting trips to the University of Alabama, the University of Georgia, and the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill in summer 1980 (DAA 2015). That fall, 250 students were hired to work at Walt Disney World (DAA 2015). The first official college recruiting visits by Disney took place in fall 1980 at 30 universities and community colleges east of the Mississippi River (DAA 2015). According to Disney, 248 students from 43 schools participated in the first official Magic Kingdom College Program in summer 1981 (DAA 2015).

### ACE Credit Recommendations for Disney Training

Participants in the Disney College Program (DCP) can earn college credit. Through its College Credit Recommendation Service (CREDIT), the American Council on Education (ACE) recommends awarding three to nine credits for completion of Disney’s collegiate courses (ACE 2015, DCP n.d.a). According to the ACE website, CREDIT “connects workplace learning with colleges and universities by helping adults gain access to academic credit for formal courses and examinations taken outside the traditional classroom” (ACE 2015). Each college and university is responsible for determining how many credits to award (DCP n.d.a). Five colleges and universities also permit students to register to earn college credit as a Disney College Program participant (DCP n.d.a). Disney offers nine collegiate courses through DCP (n.d.b):

- ◆ Disney Advanced Studies in Hospitality Management
- ◆ Disney Corporate Analysis
- ◆ Disney Corporate Communication
- ◆ Disney Creativity and Innovation
- ◆ Disney Experiential Learning
- ◆ Disney Human Resource Management
- ◆ Disney Interactive Learning Program
- ◆ Disney Marketing You
- ◆ Disney Organizational Leadership

The ACE website maintains thirteen Disney course descriptions (ACE 2015). Each ACE (2014) course description provides the length of the course, objective, learning outcome, method of instruction, and credit recommendation. The Disney College Program website contains the syllabus for each of the nine courses (DCP n.d.b).

**Table 1. Disney-Themed College Courses in Higher Education**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Course Prefix</b>	<b>Location</b>
Auburn University	Disneyfication	ENGL 4550	Auburn, AL
Ball State University	The Disney Experience	Unknown	Muncie, IN
Bates College	Decoding Disney: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Animated Blockbuster	ANTH s27	Lewiston, ME
Brandeis University	Disney to DC Comics: A Study in Villainy	UWS 28A	Waltham, MA
Buena Vista University	Storytelling with Walt Disney	INTM 202	Storm Lake, IA
California Baptist University	Special Topics: The History of Disneyland	HIST 401	Riverside, CA
California State University-Fullerton	Deconstructing Disney	Unknown	Fullerton, CA
Calvin College	Disney, Culture, and Progress	IDIS W44	Grand Rapids, MI
Chapman University	The Pursuit of Happiness and Knowledge: Walt Disney and Charles Darwin	IES 207	Orange, CA
Clark University	Reviewing Disney: Race, Class, and Gender in the Animated Feature Film	SCRN 218	Worcester, MA
College of St. Scholastica	Film Genres: Classic/Modern Disney Animation	CTA 2220	Duluth, MN
Converse College	Management: Disney Style	Unknown	Spartanburg, SC
Dominican University	Deconstructing Disney	CAS 227	River Forest, IL
Dowling College	The Disney Empire: Culture and Power	ASC 4108C	Oakdale, NY
Elon University	Florida & California: Happiest Place? The Science of Happiness at Disney	GBL 202	Elon, NC
Flagler College	Walt Disney: Conglomerate & Cultural Criticism	COM 340	St. Augustine, FL
Florida Atlantic University	Seminar in Disney Studies: From Classical City to the Magic Kingdom	IDS 4930	Boca Raton, FL
Florida Southern College	Walt Disney World Leadership	BUS 3997	Lakeland, FL
Fort Lewis College	Disney: Man, Mouse, or Machine	HON 221/421	Durango, CO
Furman University	Math and the Mouse: Explorations of Mathematics and Science in Walt Disney World	MXP 205	Greenville, SC
George Washington University	Walt Disney World: Innovation in Services	TSTD 6290	Washington, DC
Humboldt University of Berlin	Disney and Pixar: Constructions of Difference in Animated Movies	AMST 130	Berlin, Germany
John Cabot University	Myth and Media: Disney and Others	CMS 314	Rome, Italy
Lake Forest College	Disney, Music, and Culture	FIYS 141, MUSC 267, AMER 272	Lake Forest, IL
Lehman College	Theme Park Management	REC 360/680	New York, NY
Manchester University	Aspects of American Popular Culture: Disney and American Culture	SOC 230	North Manchester, IN
McDaniel College	From Grimm to Disney	FYS 1181	Westminster, MD
Milliken University	Designing Disney	TH358	Decatur, IL
Millsaps College	Disney and the American Way of Life	SOAN 4750 COMM 3000	Jackson, MS
Muhlenberg College	Arabian Nights, Disney Days	FYS 252	Allentown, PA
Northwestern University	"Disney"—Studies in Media Topics	Unknown	Evanston, IL
Odessa College	Literature in Film: Disney, Pixar, and Mickey Mouse	ENGL 1302	Odessa, TX
Oregon State University	Disney: Gender, Race and Empire	WS 325	Corvallis, OR
Pennsylvania State University	Designing and Managing Experiences: Walt Disney World Embedded Study Course	HORT 497	State College, PA
Pomona College	Language and Gender in Disney	LGCS 166	Claremont, CA
Princeton University	Into the Woods! What Disney Didn't Tell You About Fairy Tales	FRS 140	Princeton, NJ
Randolph-Macon College	Walt Disney's America	AMST 356	Ashland, VA

**Table 1. Disney-Themed College Courses in Higher Education**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Course Prefix</b>	<b>Location</b>
Rhode Island College	Mickey Mouse Monopoly	HONORS 100	Providence, RI
Roanoke College	Basic Leadership Practices: Focus on Walt Disney Company	INQ 277	Salem, VA
Robert Morris University	Creating the Magic	NHRS 3964	Pittsburgh, PA
Rollins College	Disney Victorians	ENG 315	Winter Park, FL
Saddleback College	Disneyland in the Postmodern World	Humanities 10B	Mission Viejo, CA
St. Louis University	Disney: From Mickey Mouse to Mary Poppins	ENG/FSTD 318	St. Louis, MO
St. Peter's University	Disney: Behind the Scenes	CU/TRV 308	Jersey City, NJ
Samford University	The Sociology of Disney: Behind the Magic	SOCI 409	Homewood, AL
Samford University	Exploring North American Landscapes: From Wilderness to Walt Disney World	HIST 391, GEOG 391	Homewood, AL
Skidmore College	Disney's America	Unknown	Saratoga Springs, NY
Southern Illinois University	Walt Disney: The Man, The Empire, and the Politics of Popular Culture	UHON 351	Carbondale, IL
Syracuse University	Diversity and Disney Princesses	COM 344	Syracuse, NY
Tarleton State University	Disney's America	HIST 4385	Stephenville, TX
Thiel College	Dissecting Disney	COMM 255	Greenville, PA
University of California-Santa Cruz	Walt Disney	80N	Santa Cruz, CA
University of California-Davis	Off with Their Heads: German Fairy Tales from the Grimms to Disney	German 10	Davis, CA
University of California-Online	Writing Disney	WRIT 2-37	Online
University of California-San Diego	Animation I: Introduction to Disney's 12 Principles of Animation	ART-40557	San Diego, CA
University of Colorado-Boulder	Disney's Women and Girls	WMST 3700-200	Boulder, CO
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs	Walt Disney: The Nexus of Communication and Imagination	COMM 3850	Colorado Springs, CO
University of Kansas	The Wonderful(?) World of Disney	ENGL 205	Lawrence, KS
University of LaVerne	Disneylandland	HONORS 301/306	LaVerne, CA
University of Massachusetts-Amherst	German Fairy Tales from the Grimms to Disney	GERMAN 270	Amherst, MA
University of Maryland-Baltimore County	Exploring Disney's World	AMST 357	Baltimore, MD
University of Michigan	Special Topics in Art and Culuture: Disney's Lands: Consuming Wonders in America	HISTART 489	Ann Arbor, MI
University of Missouri	Walt Disney and American Culture	HIST 2230	Columbia, MO
University of Mount Union	Gender in Disney	HON 110	Alliance, OH
University of Nevada-Reno	Breaking the Disney Spell	ENG 102.1041	Reno, NV
University of North Carolina at Greensboro	The Art of Disney and Pixar	ART210	Greensboro, NC
University of North Florida	Mickey's American Dream	Unknown	Jacksonville, FL
University of Oregon	Topics: Understanding Disney	J 412	Eugene, OR
University of Southern California	USC/Walt Disney Studios Motion Picture Producing and Directing Class	405/CTPR 460	Los Angeles, CA
University of Utah	From Grimm to Disney—The Birth of the Modern Fairy Tale	GERM 3650	Salt Lake City, UT
University of Vermont	Florida—Walt Disney and American Culture	FTS 95	Burlington, VT
Vanderbilt University	Disney in America	ANTH 115F	Nashville, TN
Wake Forest University	Disney, Culture, and Power	Unknown	Winston-Salem, NC
Wake Forest University	Fairy Tales: Grimm, Disney, and Beyond	Unknown	Winston-Salem, NC
Western Illinois University	Disney Communication Culture	COMM 379	Macomb, IL
Western Michigan University	Walt's Pilgrimage	HNRS 2900	Kalamazoo, MI

## **Imagine, Inspire, Illustrate: Independent “Disney” Major at UC-Berkeley**

An emerging practice at universities across the country is student-planned and student-originated curriculum (UWS 2016, WMU 2016). At the University of California–Berkeley, this is referred to as an independent major (Leung 2016). Disney fan and UC-Berkeley student Kristine Sanders created a major called “Imagine, Inspire, Illustrate” to support her Disney passion and aspirations to become a Walt Disney imagineer (Leung 2016). Sanders’ degree included courses in “psychology, sociology, art and theater, as well as architecture and landscape architecture” (Leung 2016). A recent article referred to this as “majoring in Disney” (Leung 2016). According to UC-Berkeley, this multidisciplinary major placed “Disney at the forefront of it all” (Eades 2016). Sanders’ thesis, “The Phenomenology of Theme Park Architecture in Modern Design” (Leung 2016), focuses on the unique approach of Disney design and methodologies. According to Sanders, “I argue that what happens in Disneyland in its theme park architecture, and all the micro theming and attention to details, connects you to this space. It makes this emotional-psychological connection that is undeniable” (Eades 2016). In the introduction, Sanders states, “Disney design shows that space can be transformed into an evocative experience, allowing for design to emulate and echo the realities and narratives of the people inhabiting the space” (2016, 2). Even the design of her thesis is based on a Disney theme park ticket.

Sanders was inspired by Professor of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning Chip Sullivan in UC-Berkeley’s College of Environmental Design (Sanders 2016). A pivotal course for Sanders was Landscape Architecture 103: Energy, Form, and Fantasy, taught by Sullivan, whom Sanders describes as “Disney-imagineer-like” (Sanders 2016). Sanders was able to create this Disneyesque major because of Sullivan. Sanders’ studies included reading books by Walt Disney Imagineer Steve Alcorn and former Disney cast member Marty Sklar (Sanders 2016). Disney is not in the title of Sanders’ major, but Disney’s style of architecture provided the inspiration for the curriculum. (If alive today, Walt Disney would be thrilled to know that his approach continues to be studied and is inspiring future generations.) Sanders hopes her unique curriculum inspires UC Berkeley and other universities to consider a curriculum track in Disney design because

it continues to shape the future of design—especially of theme parks—in America (Sanders 2016). After graduating, Sanders landed the position of Design Asset Specialist Intern at Walt Disney Imagineering, a dream come true for her (Eades 2016). (To read Sanders’ thesis, visit [imagineinspireillustrate.com](http://imagineinspireillustrate.com).)

## **Girls Who Code: Disney’s Computer Science Summer Immersion Program**

In June 2016, with more than 40 corporate partners, the Walt Disney Company launched another education-related initiative: Girls Who Code (The Walt Disney Company 2016). Disney described the program as “a seven-week coding program on the Disney campus for high school girls that will introduce them to computer science curriculum” (The Walt Disney Company 2016). The program’s goal is to inspire high school females to pursue a college degree in computer science. Twenty rising high school juniors and seniors participated in the experience, which included field trips to the Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Walt Disney Imagineering, Research & Development, and The Walt Disney Studios (The Walt Disney Company 2016). The program concluded with a graduation ceremony during which students showcased their projects to Disney officials (The Walt Disney Company 2016).

## **Disney Hall**

At the State University of New York (SUNY) Fredonia campus, residence “Disney Hall” is named after Walt Disney (SUNY n.d.). This residence hall opened in 1967, one year after Disney’s death (ibid.); it appears to be the only college campus building in the United States that bears Walt Disney’s name. (By contrast, more than a dozen elementary schools in the United States bear the name Walt Disney Elementary School.)

## **Disney Youth Education Series: College Edition**

Recently, The Walt Disney Company began a College Edition of its Youth Education Series (Disney Youth Programs 2015e). The Youth Education Series is a part of Disney Youth Programs, which are “unique, enriching experiences designed to engage young minds and show students the path to making dreams a reality” (Disney Youth Programs 2015a). As of fall 2015, the Disney Youth Education Series offered three College Edition courses: Disney’s Creative Leadership Program, Disney’s Leadership Strategies, and Disney’s

Techniques of Teamwork (Disney Youth Programs 2015b). All three programs are offered at Walt Disney World in Florida (Disney Youth Programs 2015b). The programs are for groups of ten students or more and range in price from \$147 to \$221 per student (Disney Youth Programs 2015b). Each college program is three hours in length (Disney Youth Programs 2015d). According to the Disney Youth Programs (2015b) website:

*With entry into the business world just around the corner, participants focus on the strategies and techniques utilized by Walt Disney World Parks and Resorts leaders to create a culture of teamwork. Engaging challenges, observations and interactions with Walt Disney World® Cast Members expand participants' knowledge and skills, and help them realize both immediate and future applications.*

One Disney Leadership Strategies program is offered Monday through Friday at Disney's Hollywood Studios; another is offered Saturday-Sunday at EPCOT (Disney Youth Programs 2015c). Disney's Techniques of Teamwork also takes place at Epcot (Disney Youth Programs 2015c). All of these educational programs

have a set of learning outcomes that is listed online (Disney Youth Programs 2015c). For example, the Disney Leadership Strategies program has twelve learning outcomes grouped under the categories of Introduction to Leadership, Leadership Tools, The Art of Communication, and Guest Speaker (Disney Youth Programs 2015d). According to the Disney Youth Programs website, these programs are accredited:

*The Disney Youth Education Series field studies are accredited by Northwest Accreditation Commission, certifying that all programs provide educationally sound experiences designed for academic achievement. The Northwest Accreditation Commission is dedicated to the advancement of education through the process of accreditation (Disney Youth Programs 2015b).*

These non-credit courses are referred to by Disney as “adventures” in which skills are acquired against the backdrop of Disney theme parks (Disney Youth Programs 2015f).

Thus, beyond the variety of Disney-themed college courses are a variety of other intersections between Disney and education.

# NAVIGATING TRANSFER CREDITS

OVER 1/3 OF STUDENTS TRANSFER  
at least once before earning their bachelor's degree, many also crossing state lines in the process!

SOURCE: Hossler et al. *Transfer and Mobility: A National View of Pre-degree Student Movement in Postsecondary Institutions* (Signature Report No. 2). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

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## Conclusion

Many “Disney matters” are referenced in the academy. From Disney research labs to the Disney College Program, Disney is embedded in the fabric of higher education.

The courses highlighted in this article demonstrate the growing interest in the study of Disney in U.S. higher education. Many of these courses use Disney theme parks as their learning laboratories. Many of the courses are short term, compressing a semester’s worth of academic content into a few days. Often, courses are offered during an interim or January term prior to the start of a full semester. Some of the courses are traditional classroom-based courses, some are travel courses, and some are hybrid. Faculty and students alike are interested in learning about Walt Disney’s life, the operation of the Walt Disney Company, Disney animated films, Disney corporate communication, and theme park operations.

In the future, as the Walt Disney Company continues to grow and evolve, many more opportunities to create

Disney-themed college courses will arise. Some college campuses may even develop a Disney Studies minor, especially given the volume of content and research available. Eventually, this area of study could give rise to a multi-university undergraduate or graduate certificate in the study of Disney, or perhaps a concentration or emphasis in a master’s degree program. Sanders, the first student with her self-proclaimed “Disney major,” blazed a new trail (Eades 2016).

Additional areas of prospective research exist. An environmental scan of Disney-themed master’s theses and doctoral dissertations is another possibility for studying how Disney is integrated into higher education research. Students’ perspectives on Disney-themed college courses could be studied to further understand the value of these courses in students’ learning experience. But do not fear: the Donald “Ducktorate” degree will not replace the doctoral degree anytime soon.

Individuals possessing information about Disney-themed courses in U.S. higher education are invited to contact the author at [cwtrem@umich.edu](mailto:cwtrem@umich.edu).

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## Leaders Who Attract Followers

*By Michael Hawkins*

What personal characteristics do leaders possess who attract followers? At the 2016 annual Strategic Enrollment Management Conference, Mark Hommerding presented a workshop entitled “Are You Happy?” I concluded that happiness not only creates a “better you” (as Hommerding convinced me), but that it also undergirds and sustains effective leadership. More than smiles and warm hugs, happiness is gratitude; it is passion, interaction, vibrancy, mercy—all these and more—that ultimately crown us in blessedness. Achieving happiness as a leader requires taking deliberate steps—steps that pick up speed and race toward service, the reason and essence of leadership. Service is not a byproduct; it is the goal. The race is exciting, but it requires change and a shift in paradigm from seeking the trophy to handing it to others.

### From Ingratitude to Gratitude

Of all students, I must have been the most ill-prepared entering college. Fortunately, the academy tolerated my poor abilities long enough for me to “get my head screwed on straight.” Today, I see many students entering college just as I did; ironically, now it’s my job to send reminders, execute deadlines, place students on academic probation and communicate the consequences, suggest alternative paths, respond to desperation, etc. I know that if I made it through school, these students can too. They just need a little help. Remembering the many friends who helped me along the way

drives my motivation to serve students and creates in me a sense of indebtedness. I owe students! I owe them *now* for what was given to me *then*. I especially owe those students who are struggling. Perhaps I can be part of the community that creates a sense of gratitude in them—a good starting point for leadership.

### From Insensitivity to Passion

Passion erupts over numerous issues. We each have causes that energize us. For example, who does not feel concern about \$1.3 trillion in student debt? More than 40,000 churches in our system contribute millions of dollars annually to six seminaries to assist students pursuing theological education, yet many young men and women who sense a calling to the ministry remain unable to enroll because they cannot afford to do so; others leave our schools with significant debt. Some students with debt will eventually start and perhaps even end their ministries in churches where their income is minuscule. They will struggle for years to pay off their debts, and that indebtedness will create other problems and pressures, ensuring an endless cycle of distractions.

Seeking answers to the challenges of affordability, cost of attendance, and debt is important but difficult. My first tendency is to avoid issues such as these because the answers are elusive; the problems are ongoing and complex. But to be a leader is not to be insensitive. Solving problems and resolving issues requires

passion—purposeful commitment—that generates action. Even though small, day-to-day actions may never completely solve a problem, effective leaders doggedly nip at problems in order to move toward attainment of a vision. Collecting and disaggregating data, preparing and analyzing funding reports, monitoring office expenditures, and creating innovative recruiting strategies can translate drudgery into joy when the outcome helps lower costs for students.

Expecting that watchdog efforts will in some way help lower and not increase tuition for our students creates possibilities and hope. Even those small but consistent contributions to a local church that offset the costs of a student's education may seem insignificant alongside trillion-dollar debts, yet the snowball effect of purposeful and individual actions ultimately has a positive effect on lives. True leaders never tire of channeling their passions into actions. Only when we continue to engage our concerns, seek answers, and take action (however small) will we experience personal satisfaction, draw followers to us, and ultimately make a difference.

## From Functionality to Vibrancy

A vibrant interaction with one professor is the reason I finished three postsecondary degrees. I fondly remember the interaction that not only increased my understanding of a subject but that also changed my whole attitude toward higher education and resulted ultimately in a strong resolve to pursue a course of study. In this particular interaction, the professor did more than fulfill the function of a professor. The interaction was much more than the delivery of a subject. It was characterized by energy and passion. Leaders who attract followers thrive on face-to-face encounters, those “magic” moments that change lives. These leaders do not wait for opportunities; instead, they chase after them and find joy in each moment. Students, faculty, and office staff need more from us than the dictates of our job descriptions: they need dynamic interactions. From a student's initial inquiries about higher education to advisement about degrees or courses, to possibilities of placement, and to life's many disruptions, leaders must respond with sincere regard for individual differences and need, create connections, and communicate hope and possibilities. The very heart and soul of leadership demonstrate themselves in these moments. Jerry Montag and Reta Pikowsy presented a workshop

on this subject that was entitled “Building Dynamic Relationships” at AACRAO's 2016 annual meeting.

## From Complacency to Action

Action that targets student success and student services was one of the attributes that attracted Montgomery County Community College—a school that has attracted national recognition—to its new president. Promoting student success and service is not only a pathway to a presidency, but it is also the most attractive quality of every office on a campus. At the 2016 SEM conference, Joellen Evernham Shendy and Tom Green presented “The Registrar in Tomorrow Land.” The session highlighted the need for action-oriented responses to campus routines and challenged me to exchange complacency for action. The very next day, I returned to my school, and a vice president asked me about the possibility of adding information to a transcript that would help students secure employment. I smoothly replied, “Oh, an extended transcript” (the concept I had just encountered at the workshop and discussed with another participant). With the help of our associate registrar and the vice president, we created our first extended transcript that same day. The next day, the VP presented the transcript to a committee that approved it unanimously. We implemented it immediately and received very positive reviews from students. Three simple lines on a transcript quickly proved to be a means by which to foster long-term student success, ingratiate students to the system, and empower staff. When students are successful, the entire community is bettered.

## From Hard-Nosed to Merciful

Sympathy is simply compassion for people in pain or distress. Mercy, however, implies action. In the context of higher education and from the point of view of the registrar's office, I witness pain and distress almost every single day. Earning a degree is not easy, especially for some students. Not only is earning a degree a challenge for some students, but also the process is a challenge for staff as they try to help those who are struggling. Frequently, I hear complaints relative to procedures—*e.g.*, “I didn't know I had to log in to my online class,” “I haven't been checking my student email,” “I didn't know this was the last day to drop the class,” “I haven't

been able to contact the student,” “May I have a larger room?” “My student had a death in her family; what are my options for providing a final grade?” and “I didn’t know there was an application for graduation.” Addressing stressful issues with clear and consistent policies and tempering them with mercy challenges leaders daily. It’s not easy to go to school. Perhaps that’s why it’s called *school*, as Amy points out in the classic novel *Little Women*: “I don’t believe any of you suffer as I do,” cried Amy, “for you don’t have to go to school with impertinent girls, who plague you if you don’t know your lessons, and laugh at your dresses, and label your father if he isn’t rich, and insult you when your nose isn’t nice” (Alcott 2000, 5). There are many like Amy who need a little mercy now and then. A complaint is always an opportunity to demonstrate kindness, compassion, sympathy, and *mercy*—perhaps the most godlike characteristic of all. I’m seldom godlike, but when I am, others are pleasantly surprised.

## From Vanity to Humility

As educators we are part of a vast and complex system. Sometimes theological schools are viewed as separate from other sciences, perhaps because of the relatively small size of our schools or, more significant, because of our particular disciplines. However, in the science of theology, most of us humbly confess that we do not “possess any special keys to special doors,” as Karl Barth said years ago (Barth 1975, 5). Those of us in the theological discipline fall under the same severe scientific examination as those in all other disciplines. Einstein said, “Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison (the delusion of separation from the rest) by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty” (Sullivan 1972). Separateness, for whatever reason, weakens a foundation. There are no bubbles, none of us is wrapped in parentheses, and we all stand side by side. Embracing this universal equivalency is humility. Several years ago, Michael Jordan responded to an interview question about motivation. His response reflected his personal understanding of humility: he was motivated by what he didn’t know. He said, for example, that what he did not know was how good he could be. What he did not know drove him to the gym, to the weights, to more and more practice. This humble, honest search for greatness energizes leadership. I hope this same humility moti-

vates me in my career and continues in our school just as it did for Jordan. I wonder what great heights higher education will achieve in the next ten years!

## From Disconnection to Integrity

Integrity is a complex characteristic. Defining it simply as truthfulness narrows its meaning and forgoes its essential elements. Integrity is created through unity and wholeness. Participants searching through the typical session titles at a higher education conference recognize predictable language—collaboration, partnership, relationships, communication, workflows, policies, pathways—all of which have one thing in common: a desire for integrity. One workshop title that caught my attention was “The Centralization of Registrar Services for Multi-Campus Institutions.” The search for unity and wholeness is evident in this title. Unfortunately, a common barrier to unity is internal and/or external conflict undergirded by the exaltation of one thing or person over the rest. In contrast, integrity is balance, relatedness, communication, commonality, and an appropriate connection to all things that are good and necessary. In addition to unity and wholeness, integrity requires awareness, full presence in the moment, and a healthy embracing of the multiple elements that factor into achievement. Kevin Pollock (2016), president of Montgomery County Community College, describes leadership as a variety of experiences and a balance of tasks including management, development, strategic planning, data collection, global awareness, etc. These experiences begin to reveal the many complexities of integrity. Possessing integrity is not only key to happiness, but it is also a vital and sustaining component of leadership.

## From Avoidance to Forthrightness

Awareness, engagement, listening, concluding, and debating are all essentials of good leadership. Walking with ears plugged, eyes closed, and hearts insensitive and isolated are not options for leaders. Strong leaders look for opportunities to learn. Leaders must be dynamic and growth oriented, not stagnant or complacent. I am grateful that my institution recognizes the need for continued learning opportunities and gladly budgets for my attendance at conferences and workshops such as AACRAO’s annual meeting and strategic enrollment management conference so I can stay on the cusp of advancements in

my field. In addition, we have added training for other members of our staff in the areas of technology and international services. Attending a conference, a committee meeting, or just coming to work is like heading to the frontlines of a battle where issues emerge each moment. Just as so many issues have been put to rest in the past few years, so these issues, too, will be conquered. When I avoid tough issues and difficult people, I'm dissatisfied. It's only when I'm in the midst of the battle and armed with the correct ammunition that I am fulfilled. Some of my greatest heroes in higher education are not only merciful and humble, but they are also courageous and bold, facing the toughest issues nose to nose.

The path of leadership is not for the faint of heart; it is fraught with challenges and expectations. I encourage you, as I do myself, to take those deliberate steps toward effective leadership. Be introspective as you

consider important questions: What makes you happy as a leader in the context of higher education? To which leaders are you attracted? Do you agree that happiness is an essential quality of leadership? What approaches, attitudes, and actions will you take to ensure your personal growth? What are the characteristics you want to avoid? Are you service oriented? Whether you rely on the topics discussed in this article or on other characteristics that you identify, do take action. (I plan to keep a leadership journal in order to track my personal growth.) As you seek change and growth, I challenge you to strew your own path with artifacts of experiences and principles that will remind you of your goals and give direction to your journey. Create your own formulas for leadership development based on the premise that happy people are the best leaders and that true leadership culminates in service.

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**Dr. Michael Hawkins** serves as Registrar and Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Midwestern Seminary. Hawkins received his bachelor of arts degree from Southwest Baptist University and both the master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS). Hawkins has been a pastor in Missouri for more than 25 years. During that time, he has been an adjunct professor at MBTS and Southwest Baptist University. In addition to these duties, Hawkins has served two terms on the executive board of the Missouri Baptist Convention. His first book, *Detour*, was published in 2009.

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## Office of the Registrar: Mission and Vision

*By Howard E. Shanken and David M. Sauter*

As the academic service leader of an institution, the registrar is responsible for development, documentation, appropriate interpretation, and enforcement of academic policy; under the direction of senior institutional leadership, manages complexities and ambiguities of and clearly defines policy for students, parents, staff, faculty, alumni, and other government, governing boards, and institutions interacting with the registrar's home institution; translates policy into processes and procedures for faculty and students; maintains records of exceptions to established policies, documenting situational decisions that impact an individual student and/or group; approves all new courses to meet institutional standards and oversees official records supporting all course changes; is a primary authority regarding student records and the expert on program progressions; and maintains institutional academic documents as a historical and legal record of each transaction.

The registrar is the expert on Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) compliance, the Solomon Amendment, Patriot Act, Health Information and Personal Privacy Act (HIPPA), Cleary Act, veterans' laws, and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act security law; and other federal and state laws that may have an impact on the Institution. The registrar is knowledgeable about industry standards in navigating legal language and formulating best practices in conjunction with legal counsel. The regis-

trar responds to subpoenas and may appear in court as a definitive voice and authority of the college or university regarding student records. All educational records are compiled from across the campus(es) and are submitted by the registrar, who may become personally liable for failing to comply on time or if errors and omissions occur (liability may include fines and/or imprisonment).

The registrar is the gatekeeper of student records and steward of data, enforcing FERPA requirements for accuracy of records and providing systems to correct or amend educational record deficiencies. The historical records of all students must be permanently maintained and the data retrievable for Institutional reporting and governmental compliance (*e.g.*, audits, subpoenas, and student requests), thus making the validation of data a key component of the registrar's daily responsibilities. Further, duplicate and incorrectly merged records must be historically reconstructed or decoded, with data mapped and corrected. The registrar handles all inquiries as to the accuracy of records and creates, maintains, and oversees student record retention, storage, and purging policies in coordination with other critical offices.

The registrar is the involved and key implementer of student information systems. As student records leader, the registrar works collaboratively to deliver to students and the community benchmarked and trend-setting best practices in student and academic services. On-

line enrollment services and in-person support require a student-centric focus that adapts new technologies as creative business solutions. This requires the registrar to possess analytical skills and comprehensive knowledge of institution-wide systems in order to make relational database decisions that ensure and enhance a positive enrollment service environment. Ongoing information systems implementation is a daily endeavor of initiating new functionality and improvement in services for students, staff, and faculty.

The registrar is the supervisor of staff and overseer of academic and student service processes that directly or indirectly support the strategic outcomes and ends of the institution. The registrar acts with breadth and depth of experience to ensure efficiency and customer satisfaction relative to everything from registration, grading, transfer equivalencies, graduation audits, and degree conferral to possibly developing the noncredit and continuing education units (CEU) issuance and record-keeping standards. Staff are typically responsible for multiple processes, including high transactional volume activity comprising phone calls, walk-ins, chat functions, e-mails, issuance of official transcripts, veteran certification, athletic eligibility, graduation audits, transfer credit and test evaluations, enrollment verifications, and student record problem resolutions, along with support for registrations or enrollment transactions, room assignments, and the coordination of decentralized processes such as the academic calendar with term starts and ends for all full- and part-of-term classes. Throughout all the activity, it is critical for the registrar to ensure satisfactory quality and customer care and to be an expert in customer relations management, communications, and conflict resolution.

The registrar is teacher and trainer for staff, faculty, and administrators in the student information system (SIS) for student record functions and verifies the key components of instruction and assigns appropriate security after reviewing each individual and group “role.” The registrar acts as the functional lead and expert for student records and helps resolve problems associated with inconsistent technology behavior, work-arounds, and fit-gaps for individuals and departments outside of direct supervision.

The registrar is reviewer and “resolver” of graduation audit conflicts (*i.e.*, human error, misadvising or cross catalog years) and works with other institutions as an advocate for students to solve transfer credit issues.

The registrar often acts as the official voice to external agencies regarding transfer issues, student educational experiences, and achievements. All enrollment verifications, discrepancies, and degree certifications made official by the registrar are validated with the registrar’s signature and the college or university seal.

The registrar is auditor of student systems and acts as a database manager, validating the integrity of data and monitoring compliance with data-entry standards. These data often are provided for external audits by state, federal, and accreditation agencies. Failure to comply by ensuring accurate and mandated record keeping and report submission requirements places the Institution at risk and the registrar directly or indirectly accountable.

The registrar is researcher and developer of academic and student service best practices for process development with external customers, such as concurrent enrollment and articulation agreements from area education partners; such agreements may include electronic transfer of data, a statewide transfer database, learning collaboratives, state or federal programs, along with specialized company enrollment procedures. All of these are ongoing activities in which the registrar takes a primary leadership role.

As the student records lead, the registrar has primary responsibility (at least, conducted on a regular but infrequent basis) for managing SIS testing, submitting cases, troubleshooting, resolving work-arounds, and signing off on upgrades as well as testing for development (identified under daily “Involved” category, above).

The registrar Interacts across department lines through participation on standing and ad hoc committees and teams. Typically these range from senate, to dean’s council, to academic standing, to student affairs leadership, and across departmental organizations such as financial aid, student financials and admissions, college catalog, class schedule, room scheduling, and advisory groups that require working with departments and deans to further develop academic operating models and policies.

The registrar supports and leads budget reductions and savings. In conjunction with IT and associated budgetary departments, the registrar can negotiate agreements with third-party vendors in order to obtain reduction of charges and/or improve return on investments in the purchasing and upgrades of student systems, such as document management, room scheduling software, transfer evaluation, and degree auditing.

The registrar serves and participates in state and national professional organizations, allowing the development of collaborative support for innovations such as statewide transfer database initiatives, electronic exchange of transcripts, and other efforts involving consortium registration record keeping. Further, the registrar helps protect industry standards, such as transcription and degree-granting status issues. The registrar often can serve on state ACRAOs in order to better handle academic issues on a broader level. Professional involvement helps provide firsthand knowledge to the institution about legal and compliance issues; serving on the national level enables the registrar to elicit action on matters of importance.

The registrar intervenes as a representative of the institution and may act as an administrator “on call” for evening and weekend supervision or emergency situations. The registrar often acts as an advocate for students and expedites the resolution of problems or provision of services for the institution’s “customers” beyond the normal eight to five weekday work day.

The registrar organizes and implements improvements as a leader using a strategic enrollment management approach (SEM). This requires the registrar to participate more as a collaborative member of a team helping to “connect the dots” across the institution. This approach can lead not only to improved utilization of resources but also to increased capacity through cross-training and shared knowledge.

Because strategic planning includes budget outcomes, the registrar acts as the unit’s budget officer. Using internal audits of time and dollars, the registrar continues to prioritize the work of the future while providing stability for current responsibilities. Examples of this can be seen in in-house diploma printing, reduction of mailing costs, and efficiency in processes. The new culture of accountability can best be exemplified by the registrar, noting that while budget reductions are necessary, the efforts of the registrar remain to bring the efficient and effective integration of services throughout the campus community. Therefore, creating and maintaining reporting capabilities to support enrollment targets are vitally important.

The registrar apprises and assists institutional research (IR) with information and understanding for federal and state reports as well as data gathering for other departments in the institution (this is a common commitment). External customers and agencies

also seek data, information, and understanding from the registrar relative to Solomon Act requests, Department of Education (federal and state) requests, and agency and organizational research surveys. The registrar supports these requests through research, query development, and data analysis. It is also the role of the registrar to ensure that all requests for data throughout the institution comply with FERPA requirements.

The registrar notarizes official documents for students as a commissioned notary of the state; in providing this service, the registrar does require being bonded. (Foreign governments as well as many local insurance and lending agencies require documents to be notarized.)

A primary goal of today’s registrar is to develop diversity within the office by providing services to a vast array of individuals and groups. Understanding how best to communicate and demonstrate respect and inclusion and provide relevant services or effective practices—such as actively participating in retention and student success efforts—requires a registrar’s staff to possess a humanitarian eye that incorporates human resources and organizational management in a caring way that proactively assists all students toward student success.

The registrar virtualizes the student, faculty, and external customer experience through the extensive development of the registrar’s home page. The registrar now serves in multiple delivery systems of service and levels of customer expectations. Through office teamwork and under the registrar’s guidance, students can access key information and services 24x7 from anywhere in the world. The registrar leads an office staff who work together to continually meet student needs relative to information and services, to analyze delivery formats, and to develop Web services such as a transfer database to provide the information students need when they need it.

The registrar investigates academic program model options and best practices for infrastructure and policies (*e.g.*, honors program, academic standing, study abroad, and prior learning experience). This supports the accreditation and performance award efforts institutions may be making as part of their own quality assurance.

The registrar supervises the progress of unit action plans and metrics. These are considered key institutional performance indicators. The action plans may include items that keep in scope departmental goals and objectives for the year. Creating campaigns and gather-

ing support for key initiatives demonstrates the effective and vital role the registrar plays in long-range planning.

The registrar improves customer relations and works toward streamlining procedures and forms so that students and others may experience “institutional values” and “walk the talk” of customer satisfaction. The registrar works to develop the staff professionally and provides opportunities for staff relationship building, teamwork, and customer care skill enhancement.

The registrar operationalizes document management planning and disaster recovery strategies so as to protect the Institution in the event of a crisis. Procedure

and process documentation is validated and readily available to support uninterrupted services and succession planning.

The registrar notices areas where improvement is needed and makes recommendations or takes action to achieve positive outcomes. Often this may mean working with academic departments, assistant deans and/or deans, cross-functional area leadership, or the community at large. The registrar continues to assess and evaluate, keeping open lines of communication, developing surveys, and building campus and external relationships.

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### *About the Authors*

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**David M. Sauter** has been University Registrar at Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) since 2006. Prior to returning to his alma mater, he was AVP and University Registrar at Wright State University (Dayton, Ohio), University Registrar at Xavier University (Cincinnati, Ohio), and Director of Records, Registration, and Advising at Miami University’s Middletown Campus. His contributions to the profession consist of several AACRAO publications, including a chapter in the *Handbook of Strategic Management* (also co-authored with Howard Shanken), a chapter in *The Registrar’s Guide*, and AACRAO’s *College and University*. He has served in various executive committee positions in Ohio ACRAO including President and on a broad range of OACRAO committees; serves as a consultant with the Ohio Department of Higher Education. Presentations at the local, state and national level have been across a variety of topics including space utilization, academic advising, staffing, fraud, and overall records and registration.

**Howard E Shanken** has been in education for more than 30 years as an administrator and faculty member. In July 2010, he retired from Grand Rapids Community College where he served as registrar, providing oversight of numerous student record processes and academic policies. His experience includes providing engaging presentations for faculty and staff professional development with a specialization in FERPA training. Howard served as the Past President of Michigan-ACRAO and was a member of the National Student Clearinghouse Advisory Committee. Howard Shanken currently is an AACRAO Senior Consultant. He has reviewed policies and processes at dozens of leading institutions including broad spectrum of national and international universities and colleges. Howard has served as the interim registrar for extended periods at a number of colleges and universities around the globe. His work extends nationally as a facilitator of readiness reviews for extended transcript innovations, which includes co-curricular badging and student portfolio development. Additionally, he has provided training and coordinated Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) planning at a number of institutions.



## Knowledge Games: How Playing Games Can Solve Problems, Create Insight, and Make Change

SCHRIER, K. 2016. BALTIMORE, MD: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS. 270 PP.

*Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt*

Could games help us solve complex interdisciplinary problems, produce new knowledge, and make effective change? (1). Can knowledge games give us insight into humanity and our world? (26). These are just a few of the many questions Schrier poses in her new book, *Knowledge Games*. According to the author, individuals around the world spend approximately three billion hours per week playing video games. In *Knowledge Games*, Schrier considers whether some portion of this time could be spent in the creation of new knowledge through individual and collaborative game play.

Schrier describes knowledge games as “games that seek to invent, create, and synthesize new understandings of the world, solve real-world problems big and small, and help us reconsider, reframe, and reflect on our humanity and our universe” (6). To be clear, *Knowledge Games* is not about gamification or applying game elements or features to nongame contexts for the purpose of education or training. Rather, it is an exploration of effective and engaging games and game designs that “generate novel solutions to real-world problems” (8). Despite this distinction, both knowledge games and educational games share similar literature bases and many common themes and authors (see Gee 2007; Gee and Hayes 2010; McGonigal 2011; Salen 2004; Squire 2006).

Schrier notes that knowledge games have many of the same attributes as *crowdsourcing* (online, distributed

problem solving) and *citizen science* (amateurs engaged in real-world science projects) but suggests that knowledge games are designed for the express purpose of solving authentic, applicable problems (25). She concedes that knowledge games “do not replace or necessarily surpass other knowledge-seeking methodologies” (27); they merely represent another lens through which to view the world.

### Knowledge Game Design

Schrier provides more than 100 examples of knowledge games as well as citizen science and crowdsourcing projects; all are well referenced in an appendix. For the purpose of illustration, *Foldit* can be used to demonstrate the principles of knowledge games and citizen science. Individuals or groups predict a protein’s structure by folding and manipulating a 3-D simulation of the protein. Schrier states, “One lab of 20 people would not be able to put a dent in the problem [of protein coding], but over 400,000 active game players certainly could” (33). According to Schrier, the reason *Foldit* has been so successful is because proteins move more like “Lego pieces or *Minecraft* parts than cold, lifeless shapes” (34).

This example suggests that to engage players, knowledge games must be fun and serve a meaningful purpose. Schrier observes:

*Designing a knowledge game may be even more challenging than developing a typical game. Designers of these games need to weigh several concerns, such as accurately and appropriately representing an open problem, making a game engaging for the right players, and dealing with the requirements of scientist or researcher stakeholders as well as the desires and interests of potential players* (44).

Schrier presents *Knowledge Games* as an exploration of the “potentials, pitfalls, limits, questions, and implications of solving problems and producing new knowledge through games” (3). Specifically, she addresses seven major facets of knowledge games: problem solving, motivation, social interaction, amateurs, participation, data, and knowledge.

## Problem Solving

“One of the reasons games are so effective, engaging, and fun is *because* they pose problems for the player to solve,” states Schrier (54). At the same time, however, knowledge games are uniquely positioned to pose problems with solutions that are yet unknown. Schrier continues, “In fact, solving a problem may not even be the ultimate goal; rather, the goal might be to stumble toward the solution and open up new problems” (55–56).

According to the author, knowledge games can be used to effectively solve problems because they create spaces for individuals to experiment. This is consistent with observations by Salen (2014), who states, “Game-like challenges offer a space of possibility for learners to tinker, explore, hypothesize, and test assumptions... And they support multiple, overlapping pathways toward mastery” (200). Schrier notes as well that effective games frequently bridge unapproachable scientific data through storytelling, complete with “characters, plot, worlds, and interactions” (67).

## Motivation

Drawing upon examples from the research literature on crowdsourcing, Schrier proposes that individuals who voluntarily participate in activities tend to do so based on intrinsic motivators, such as enjoying the intellectual challenge, rather than extrinsic motivators, like social prestige or career enhancement (81). Understanding participant motivations, she contends, can

help game makers and researchers better adapt current games and design new games.

Consistent with motivational theories of volunteering, the author observes that individuals frequently participate in online games and activities because doing so fosters a sense of community and makes them feel they are part of something bigger than themselves. She suggests that in terms of game design, the most potent combination of game elements and subject matter is one in which the two are “fully partnered and holistically experienced” (86).

## Social Interaction

While social interaction is not a prerequisite for game play, “knowledge is and has always been distributed across people and objects” (101). Schrier describes games as ‘emergent cultures’ in which “practices, norms, and values emerge in the community, group, or organization that forms around...the game” (104). To be successful in this environment, new players must acclimatize to the game space; they do this through ‘interactions’ with others.

In online spaces dedicated to knowledge creation, peer-to-peer tutoring and the transfer of existing knowledge are essential to building new knowledge. Schrier states, “Knowledge games can enable a variety of opinions by intentionally inviting and attracting diverse players and encouraging those players to feel comfortable sharing their opinions and providing different views” (111). The author acknowledges that, unlike other platforms for problem solving, knowledge games may lead to “more possible solutions, or a solution with a broader reach, which takes into consideration the needs and desires of many more people” (116).

## Amateurs

Schrier explains that prior to the mid 19th century, the term ‘amateur’ was used to describe someone who was passionate about a topic or area of interest, as in “citizen scientist.” As disciplines became increasingly specialized and as societal understandings of leisure and fun began to change, the term ‘amateur’ came to represent something *less than* or *inferior to* a ‘professional.’ Despite these shifts, Schrier proposes that ideas of fun and hard work can co-exist.

That is to say, “Perhaps the fun of games *is* the problem solving and *is* the discovery that occurs by caressing the limits of our systems and institutions...Games, possibly, are about knowledge production and *about* reimagining the limits of knowledge” (133). The fun of games, notes Schrier, “is the ability to seriously push boundaries, which, ironically, you may only be able to do if the game is framed as something not serious and not consequential” (134).

Carnes (2014) makes this same point in describing role-immersion courses as activities that promote academic competition through subversive play. Just as role immersion games serve as a bridge for students to engage in the life of the mind, knowledge games allow players to “traverse boundaries and subvert, reconfigure, and reevaluate the norms, institutions, and embedded social and scientific systems that we take for granted” (Schrier 2016, 134).

## Participation

Schrier notes that because online activities like knowledge games are populated by individuals with varying levels of interest and expertise, game designers should strike a balance between the number of players who participate (quantity) and the number who can make meaningful contributions to the project itself (quality). Further, she identifies factors that may either facilitate or hinder participation in knowledge games, including access to Internet-enabled technologies, literacy rates, skill level, and availability of free time.

Schrier observes, “Participation is not just about the technology or the platform used; rather it is about the culture and context and all of the practices, institutions, and values embedded in and around them” (151). As previously noted, participation in online communities frequently occurs both inside and outside of the game environment.

Gee and Hayes (2010) describe self-organizing communities that emerge from voluntary interactions and knowledge sharing as *affinity spaces*. Gee (2014) contends that these interest-driven sites become *passionate affinity spaces* when they are well designed and well mentored. Constructive “debate, deliberation, knowledge sharing, apprenticeship learning, and collaborative problem solving” can all occur within affinity spaces (Schrier 2016, 150).

## Data and Knowledge

According to Schrier, data not only are growing “bigger,” but there also have been “paradigmatic changes in how we are using data to create and accept new knowledge” (166). Further, some researchers suggest that big data, or “extremely large data sets that may be analyzed computationally to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behavior and interactions”(Oxford 2016, 1), may be moving us closer to an era in which correlation (that something is happening) may sufficiently override causation (why something is happening). This supposition, states Schrier, is patently false.

The author notes that all data are subjective and, as such, subject to biases and assumptions. Therefore, data should not be decontextualized. Schrier states, “We cannot just make claims and models using data without thinking about its context and how that context provides nuance and meaning to the data” (171–72). Data simply cannot “replace human interactions or humanistic methods of knowledge creation” (179).

Like other knowledge creation formats, knowledge game designers must recognize that there are inherent ethical considerations in dealing with data that involve human beings. For that reason, knowledge games must adhere to the highest standards of ethics and privacy. Far from impartial, the author suggests that the questions we ask and the types of games we produce will “shape our reality, our social relationships, our ways of solving problems, and our ways of knowing” (177). We must recognize the possibilities and limits of data, interpret data for actionable and meaningful knowledge, and reflect on the implications and consequences of knowledge creation.

Similarly, Schrier notes that knowledge is shaped by historical, cultural, interpersonal, and political forces (182); therefore, knowledge requires social context. She states, “The role of knowledge games should not just be to produce new, accurate, trustworthy, and widely accepted knowledge but also to know how to turn the knowledge into action and societal change” (190). According to Schrier, the goal of any knowledge enterprise, such as knowledge games, is to “help cultivate citizens who can ask critical questions, think ethically, and apply values and empathy-related skills to the use and meaning of that knowledge” (194).

## Summary

*Knowledge Games* is a thought-provoking and challenging assessment of knowledge games and their role in cultivating knowledge creation. Schrier's approach to describing recent developments in digital design is both straightforward and descriptive, and the text is filled with relevant examples. As mentioned, Schrier's inclusion of examples of knowledge games, citizen science, and crowdsourcing activities provides information about the scope, designer/producer, and website of each activity so readers can learn more.

Inasmuch as Schrier addresses salient questions about the nature of knowledge creation and the ways in which knowledge games can contribute to this endeavor, she raises equally important philosophical questions about access to knowledge; issues of power

between makers of and contributors to knowledge; and concerns regarding the protection of data, fair use, and individual rights versus the collective good.

Schrier makes persuasive arguments for the use of knowledge games in knowledge creation but remains ever mindful of the implications of data collection, analysis, and use. Regardless of platform, the author reiterates the importance of accountability in knowledge creation and encourages others to be equally vigilant. Considering that colleges and universities have long been the standard bearers for knowledge creation and that new models, such as knowledge games, are emerging to challenge traditional systems, *Knowledge Games* should be of interest to all of us—those inside and outside of academia.

## *Reengineering the University: How To Be Mission Centered, Market Smart, and Margin Conscious*

MASSEY, W. F. 2016. BALTIMORE, MD: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS. 288 PP.

*Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt*

In *Reengineering the University*, Massey argues that traditional research universities in the United States are where broad-based reform efforts are most urgently needed but most difficult to fully realize. Massey provides practical guidance to effect change by presenting a balanced view of academic values that coexist with both margins and market forces. Massey describes his overall intent for *Reengineering the University* as “preserving the traditional university sector’s essential characteristics while pointing the way toward changes needed to ensure its sustainability” (xii). Additionally, the author notes that while external forces have innumerable proposals for university reform, his goal is to identify strategies that traditional institutions can utilize themselves.

Consistent with McGee’s (2015) notion that higher education in the United States has reached a liminal point, Massey outlines key propositions that currently threaten the viability of traditional postsecondary institutions and that have “allowed continuance of the slow but seemingly inexorable shift toward maximizing the short-run goals of institutions and their constituencies, too often at the expense of students and long-term soci-

etal goals” (3). One of Massey’s most compelling arguments for reform is the avoidance of stranded capital. He notes that because the United States has invested heavily in the postsecondary education system since World War II, it would be more prudent to fix existing problems rather than to declare these investments “sunk costs” and essentially start over (3).

Massey acknowledges the value of other types of institutions in the United States but suggests that four-year institutions tend to be the engines that drive economic growth in society (Crow and Dabars 2015). He contends that “industrialized higher education” or “education delivered en masse through technology [*e.g.*, online, MOOCs] supplemented by lower-skilled (and lower-paid) knowledge workers [*e.g.*, adjunct faculty]... is not and cannot be as good as the more humanistic (*i.e.*, nonindustrial) experience” (9). Notably, Massey limits his review of higher education to the academic components of the university even though he recognizes that administration, support services, and asset management are also critical areas for further consideration (39).

Key attributes of traditional education that Massey argues to preserve include on-campus (face-to-face)

learning; the professoriate (*i.e.*, a pool of expertise and wisdom); research and scholarship; and its nonprofit status. To this last point, he observes that “traditional universities are driven by ‘intrinsic values,’ socially desirable objectives derived from their missions, rather than ‘instrumental values’ defined in order to further the private financial objectives of shareholders” (17). This is, in fact, the same observation Angulo (2016) makes in calling for the discontinuation of government subsidies to for-profit colleges and universities through student financial aid.

Unlike for-profit businesses, universities are uniquely positioned to pursue two value propositions—one driven by mission (motivated by intrinsic values) and one that operates in competitive markets. According to Massey, well-run traditional universities have an ability to appropriately balance mission with margins as well as to understand competitive market conditions (24). These three elements comprise the subtext of *Reengineering the University*: Equilibrium is achieved when institutions are mission central, market smart, and margin conscious.

## Academic Business Model

Massey suggests that even though they are seemingly contradictory terms, the ‘business’ of academic institutions is teaching and learning—outputs that have largely been implicit and, thus, unexamined. Nevertheless, he argues that the academic business model as currently exercised by traditional universities “harbors some fundamental flaws and indeed is no longer sustainable” (41). He identifies the five most serious flaws as over-decentralization of teaching activity, unmonitored joint production (*i.e.*, imbalances in teaching and research), dissociation of quality from cost, lack of rigorous learning metrics, and overreliance on market forces. Massey states, “Most traditional universities don’t know how to continuously improve either learning itself or the methods for measuring it” (53).

## Reengineering Strategy

To help universities transform educational practices, Massey articulates a strategy of reengineering that *starts small* in order to focus on the adoption process but *thinks big* so as to generate momentum toward scalability (54). Massey’s value propositions for change seem to be consistent with the small tests of change

implicit in continuous quality improvement (CQI) initiatives but adapted for higher education (Radowski 1999). The author recommends organizing classes and types of reengineering initiatives based on involvement and scope; he illustrates these concepts through a matrix that also depicts important synergies and complexities in attaining goals.

To ensure accountability, Massey introduces a ‘capability maturity’ (CM) rating scale that can be used to describe the degree to which an initiative has become embedded and where additional efforts are needed. Similar to other quality improvement (QI) maturity measures (see Joly *et al.* 2013), CM is criterion referenced and anchored to descriptions of specific situations that can be quickly scanned and easily interpreted. In addition to establishing robust processes for gathering data to track CM, Massey recommends the following elements to ensure a campus reengineering strategy: performance metrics, schedule for reporting progress, reengineering champion, transformation council, and leadership coach to guide the innovation process.

## The ‘Business’ of Teaching and Learning

According to Massey, institutional leaders should take a systems approach to improving quality teaching by considering the entire educational experience of students rather than by viewing classes as isolated or individual events. Similar to the ‘guided pathways approach’ posited by Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015), Massey advocates for educational improvement activities that are systematic rather than situational and that reflect collective responsibility for quality assurance at departmental and institutional levels.

Massey states, “The processes of teaching and learning should be designed as carefully as the curriculum and...should be subject to the same quality evaluations by faculty committees, administrators, and accreditors” (81); this, however, rarely occurs. The author cites numerous examples of protocols and techniques to improve teaching and learning and suggests that there are ample resources to help faculty members engage students, employ active learning strategies, and advance learning outcomes. Massey further proposes the use of departmental teaching improvement portfolios with articulated learning metrics to ensure both accountability and a shared commitment to learning.

## Improvement Activity and Cost Analysis

Massey also articulates a process for quantifying activities relative to teaching and calculating revenues and margins associated with particular courses and programs (112). Unlike top-down models for cost measurement, Massey proposes a bottom-up activity-based costing (ABC) model for planning and management. Specifically, he describes a course-based ABC model that provides enough detail to “identify possible inefficiencies and opportunities for improvement” (120).

The course-based ABC model calculates time for synchronous and asynchronous activities for students and teachers. Quantifying time and necessary resources per activity produces a total dollar equivalent per course. Massey states, “A good cost-containment strategy will address the trade-offs between effectiveness [quality] and cost” for individual courses and specific learning outcomes (123).

Massey suggests that these calculations would allow for a balanced “portfolio” of course types (*e.g.*, lecture, problem-based learning, seminars) in order to minimize costs and maintain quality standards. While the author equates course type with educational quality (an unsubstantiated assumption, though generally supported in the research literature), his point regarding data-informed decisions is well taken: “It’s better for everyone if [budget decisions] are based on meaningful evidence...[as compared to] guesswork and political jockeying” (131).

Beyond individual course-based calculations, Massey demonstrates that cost containment at the program or degree level can be performed using a university’s whole suite of transactional data systems to model system improvement. According to the author, the strategy behind a campus-wide, course-based ABC model requires only a few steps:

- ◆ Describe the demand for teaching as a function of course enrollments;
- ◆ Describe the supply of teaching as a function of faculty FTEs, teaching loads, and the number of sections taught by adjuncts; and
- ◆ Set the supply equal to demand (135).

This model allows departments to test “what if” scenarios, which moves the conversation beyond “minimally acceptable solutions” (satisficing) to optimal solutions

that can account for “complex situations...where the number of variables and the range of alternatives are both large” (155). Massey further notes that this model can be used to “determine whether particular patterns of courses are associated with high attrition, failing grades, and other time to degree and dropout rates” (158). He concludes, “The teaching activity and costs models will help people at the top levels of university administration determine budget allocations in times of plenty and places to cut in times of financial stringency” (161).

## Comprehensive Budget Modeling

Throughout *Reengineering the University*, Massey recognizes the challenges institutions face in trying to “balance mission-related priorities...[with] hard quantitative data on revenues, costs, and margins” (165). To reconcile competing interests, the author conceptualizes a dynamic financial planning and budgeting (FP&B) system that presents data in multiple, coherent, and engaging ways to a variety of university stakeholders. This system would include (a) dashboards for summary views of data, (b) navigational tools to allow users to visualize data at various levels, and (c) robust models to “forecast market behavior and predict how alternative planning assumptions will affect the university’s performance” (169). To his knowledge, no such system currently exists.

In terms of developing overall operating budgets, Massey states, “Too often [decisions] are made on an incremental basis using inchoate goals, opaque logic, and incomplete evidence... A good budgeting system will emphasize coherence across organizational units and programs as well as over time” (186). He communicates seven major goals of budgeting to improve quality and to promote cohesion within an academic setting and three methods for allocating budgets that are typically used in decentralized systems of revenues and expenditures.

The crux of budgeting challenges for traditional universities, however, is allocating scarce financial resources in a way that balances contributions to institutional missions as well as financial margins. According to Massey, “...these decisions pit the advocates of mission enhancement against the guardians of financial prudence” (199). To mediate competing interests, the author describes a mission-margin trade-off model that considers both intrinsic and instrumental values.

The author further recommends the development of a computer application that would display budget data graphically in the form of an options chart. He states, “Having such a display allows the budget group to focus on the dominant and affordable alternatives, knowing that other alternatives will come up for consideration in due course” (208).

## Summary

From the outset, Massey identifies a broad target audience for *Reengineering the University* that includes presidents and provosts, faculty and students, financial and budget officers, members of governing and coordinating boards, state and federal policy makers, as well as software developers and consultants (xiii). Arguably, all of these stakeholders would find value in one or more of his ‘soft’ insights based on informed observations and experiences and ‘hard’ analytics based on microeconomics and management science (216).

While Massey does a commendable job of explaining potentially difficult concepts and calculations, sections of the text remain fairly inaccessible to the uninitiated. Fortunately, Massey relegates the most complicated functions and formulas to appendixes. In addition, he

provides cues within the text to alert readers to examples they can either skip or skim without loss of continuity, and he effectively uses tables and graphics to illustrate key concepts.

Throughout *Reengineering the University*, Massey provides institutional leaders with practical tools and resources for re-conceptualizing the business of teaching and learning. By applying the principles of management science to the complex industry of academia, Massey demystifies the process of cost accounting in relatively simple ways and demonstrates that these practices are not only preferable but indeed necessary given current instability in higher education.

Massey’s proposals for change are presented in a way that promotes understanding and buy-in among faculty and encourages midcourse corrections on the basis of experience. Notably, the author consistently demonstrates his commitment to higher education by communicating the need for reform and providing the requisite tools while also advocating for the preservation of essential values of postsecondary education in the United States. This approach, he suggests, will help traditional universities meet the economic, competitive, technological, and political challenges of the 21st century (222).

# *Higher Education Reconsidered: Executing Change to Drive Collective Impact*

LANE, J. E. (ED.). 2015. ALBANY, NY: STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS. 226 PP.

*Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt*

*Higher Education Reconsidered* is a collection of essays written by education and industry leaders regarding collective impact and the ways in which organizations have built cross-sector partnerships to create transformative, meaningful, and necessary change. The editor and contributing authors never truly define “collective impact,” but they use the term to describe large-scale change initiatives in health care, business, and social services. Further, they suggest that collective impact can be used to tackle the significant challenges that U.S. colleges and universities now face, such as student access, retention, and graduation.

Citing examples of past collective impact projects in non-education settings, contributing authors Lane,

Finsel, and Owens note that large-scale change initiatives across sectors have been successful by:

- ◆ creating a shared agenda among multiple partners;
- ◆ defining an agreed-upon set of metrics by which to measure progress;
- ◆ implementing a set of mutually reinforcing activities;
- ◆ focusing on continuous improvement; and
- ◆ creating an organizational backbone to support collaboration (8–9).

Lane, Finsel, and Owens describe a *backbone organization* as a support entity with the explicit purpose of

facilitating collaboration and driving efforts to achieve a group's common agenda. This concept is more fully articulated by Price, for whom the responsibilities of a backbone organization for a collective impact initiative include:

- ◆ being a fiscal agent;
- ◆ housing the partnership physically;
- ◆ supporting fundraising and development;
- ◆ providing data support and analysis;
- ◆ convening the partnership;
- ◆ supporting policy advocacy;
- ◆ providing communication capacity; and
- ◆ providing staffing (161).

Price notes that the backbone organization is not and probably should not be maintained by a single partner. Rather, responsibilities for backbone activities should be shared among partners to increase buy-in and to maximize existing talents, skills, and resources. Given the important role of backbone organizations to the success of collective impact initiatives, the distance between the presentation of the concept (near the end of the book) and an expanded definition of the term seems like an editorial misstep.

## Collective Impact in Higher Education

According to Lane *et al.*, collective impact is not simply a program. Rather, it is “a process and a new way of tackling complicated social problems” (15–16). In higher education, collective impact would require college and university presidents to set aside their own institutional agendas in order to pursue a shared vision for system improvement. Regarding collective impact in higher education, Lane states, “Many challenges lie ahead, and some of them are quite daunting. But if we can shift our way of thinking from isolated interests to collaborative goals and ultimately collective impact, we can change the world” (5).

*Social innovations in higher education.* According to contributing author Gagliardi, higher education in the United States has benefited from social innovations (read: large-scale change initiatives), including policy and organizational innovations to increase access—for example through the GI Bill of 1944, the Higher

Education Act of 1964, the development of community colleges, and an increase in the number of public universities to meet growing demand. The author suggests that while these innovations were well-suited to increase access in the 1950s and 1960s, they appear to be misaligned with what is needed for today's student completion agenda (84).

Notably, Gagliardi observes that current higher education data systems are designed for retrospective rather than prospective analysis. Consistent with findings of previous authors (Conrad and Gasman 2015, Cox 2009), Gagliardi contends that data systems and reports “focus on singular institutions and specific populations that no longer compose the majority of students who enroll at higher education institutions” (75). Furthermore, this data infrastructure fails to consider students who start their education at one institution but graduate from another, and it frequently cannot disaggregate student populations in ways that include low-income and underrepresented minorities (86).

The author presents a number of new social innovations in U.S. higher education that have been designed and implemented specifically to address the challenges of student retention and graduation. For example, on several State University of New York (SUNY) campuses, faculty members have redesigned the math curriculum to remove barriers associated with remediation. This proposition is similar to the one introduced by Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015) which combines courses with skill-based requirements. Gagliardi states, “The (math) pathways are improving the progression of students who require remediation into college-level courses while also better aligning diverse campuses to suit the needs of an evolving body of students” (78).

## Lessons from the Field

The goal of *Higher Education Reconsidered* is to apply lessons and best practices from previous collective impact initiatives to higher education in the United States. Contributing authors present examples of collective impact initiatives in multiple settings, including, among others, enhancements to primary and secondary education systems in vulnerable communities; change initiatives to reduce the number of preventable deaths in hospitals; and large-scale programs to house homeless populations in select cities.



Lane notes that the topics of change across sectors are not as important as the ways in which individuals created and sustained these large-scale initiatives. Strategies for success, he suggests, can be studied and modified to meet the ever-growing demands of U.S. higher education. However, he and the book's contributing authors fail to bridge the lessons learned from these examples to higher education in any meaningful way. Other than providing background information and descriptions of their own collective impact initiatives, contributing authors offer little to demonstrate the ways in which higher education leaders could adapt lessons to their own settings.

*Lessons from business.* The contributing authors of two chapters present insights from the business sector regarding why large-scale change initiatives tend to fail and how design thinking can be used to drive collective impact initiatives. Keller and Aiken note that managers of large-scale change initiatives often implement strategies that are logical but ineffective. This, they say, is due to one simple reason: "People are irrational in many predictable ways" (29). In response, the authors identify a series of counterintuitive insights that underscore the irrationality of human behavior in workplace change initiatives.

Further, the authors compare and contrast deficit- and constructivist-based approaches to change management and note that the former frequently leads to fatigue and resistance whereas the latter can lead to watered-down aspirations and impact. Rather than framing this as an either/or proposition, Keller and Aiken suggest that effective change initiatives should utilize the best of both strategies to achieve maximum results.

Similarly, contributing authors Weerts, Rasmussen, and Singh describe design thinking as a strategy by which to encourage institutional leaders to "facilitate relationship building, co-creation, and shared problem-solving among diverse entities to bring about significant change [so that] knowledge and resources that originate across multiple sectors can be used to drive change processes in a state or region" (121). While these chapters are well-written and thought-provoking, they seem completely out of sync with the rest of the text. Again, more time and attention should have been paid to how the presentation of these chapters could effectively advance the narrative of change initiatives in U.S. higher education.

## Summary

*Higher Education Reconsidered* is less about higher education in the United States and more about large-scale change initiatives in non-education settings. In fact, the focus of the book is so diffuse as to render its title meaningless—or, at the very least, misleading.

Edmondson and Zimpher reflect on the important role that higher education leaders can play in commencing and sustaining collective impact initiatives in primary and secondary education (pre-K through 12th grade) in the United States; which will, presumably, result in benefits to higher education in the future. However, this connection to higher education is tangential at best.

In addition to poorly sequenced chapters, the strangest editorial decision was to include as the last chapter of *Higher Education Reconsidered* excerpts from a panel discussion at the 2014 SUNY Critical Issues in Higher Education conference. Panelists included experts from government and social services, and their focus was lessons that higher education might learn from their own large-scale change initiatives.

Not only did this chapter change the "voice" of the text, but panelists could only make the broadest of recommendations on the basis of their own experiences. Further, most of them only minimally addressed higher education-related questions posed by the moderator and seemed instead to rely on hackneyed business jargon to stress the importance of "making data-driven decisions," "serving our customers," and "standardizing education"—concepts other authors have described as antithetical to true learning (Bok 2013, Ferrara 2015, McGee 2015).

Collective impact may indeed be an effective tool for implementing large-scale change initiatives in higher education; however, *Higher Education Reconsidered* provides little evidence of its potential at this end of the educational continuum. Individuals interested in learning more about community transformation and grassroots efforts to improve early childhood education or business strategies for effectively implementing large-scale change initiatives in the workplace may benefit from reading specific chapters of this book. Otherwise, *Higher Education Reconsidered* has limited value for its intended audience.

# SEM Core Concepts: Building Blocks for Institutional and Student Success

SIGLER, W. 2017. WASHINGTON, DC: AACRAO. 59 PP.

*Reviewed by Kimberley Buster-Williams and Christopher Tremblay*

AACRAO's newest strategic enrollment management (SEM) book, *SEM Core Concepts*, was published in May 2017. The book provides an overview of SEM and is designed for the busy professional (it is a short read). Reading *SEM Core Concepts* is important because leaders with acumen in this area will likely be better positioned to ensure that their institution has sustained reliable revenue streams (*i.e.*, tuition, state funding, and endowments) is critically important. If college administrators have time to "dig deep" into the details of SEM, then several other books and outlets can serve that purpose. But if they do not have time for an in-depth look at SEM, then this is the book for them.

The book's seven chapters offer a high-level perspective on SEM by focusing on four areas: definitions, evolution, essential SEM concepts, and a planning model. The introduction states that the book can be used to create new or bolster existing SEM models on campuses. Readers will likely be left pondering the importance of SEM and will gain a deeper appreciation for the extraordinary work that must be done for universities to stay relevant in our ever-changing world.

Brad Stone (2017) remarks in *The Upstarts*:

*Ten years ago the idea of getting into a stranger's car, or walking into a stranger's home, would have seemed bizarre and dangerous, but today it's as common as ordering a book online. Uber and Airbnb have ushered in a new era, redefining neighborhoods, challenging the way government regulates business, and changing the way we travel (n.p.).*

Ten years ago, higher education looked different, too. For one thing, families thought differently about college costs. Between 1998 and 2006, the cost of the typical house in the United States increased 124 percent. By August 2008, 9.2 percent of all outstanding U.S. mortgages were either delinquent or in foreclosure. Throughout fall 2008, phrases such as *mortgage crisis*, *credit crisis*, *bank collapse*, *government bailout*, etc. appeared frequently in the headlines as the major financial markets lost more than 30 percent of their value

(Kosakowski 2017). As Sigler aptly states, "A true [enrollment] leader has to make the organization capable of anticipating the storm, weathering it, and, in fact, being ahead of it" (45).

## AACRAO SEM Thought Leaders

The acknowledgment section draws upon work of late AACRAO consultant and SEM leader Bob Bontrager along with many others. Readers unfamiliar with SEM thought leaders may not recognize the names the author mentions, but others will immediately recognize such familiar names as Jay Goff, Susan Gottheil, Don Hossler, David Kalsbeek, Donald Norris, Michele Sandlin, Tom Green, Stanley Henderson, Christine Kerlin, and Clayton Smith.

The acknowledgment section is followed by a brief "about the author" that is followed by a one-page introduction. From the outset, the reader is told that *SEM Core Concepts* is "designed to provide busy professionals with a *macro overview* of SEM (vii)." Sigler states further that "this publication is not intended to be a how-to-guide or a definitive exploration of SEM (vii)."

## *SEM Core Concepts vs. The Essentials of SEM Handbook vs. Managing for Outcomes*

The idea to compare and contrast *SEM Core Concepts* and *The Essentials of SEM Handbook (SEM Essentials)*, both AACRAO books, was one immediate reaction, despite Sigler's caution that *Core Concepts* is not intended to be a comprehensive exploration of SEM. In fact, *SEM Core Concepts* offers one chapter not covered at all in *SEM Essentials*. Familiar sayings, phrases, axioms, words of advice, etc. are provided in *Managing for Outcomes* (a favorite SEM book of all time). Following are observations about *Core Concepts* as compared to *Essentials* as well as some general thoughts about each chapter.



## Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement Program

AACRAO's Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement Program (SEM-EP) is designed to provide a well-defined professional development program and career advancement track for enrollment service professionals. For the individual, completion of the program is a valuable addition to a resume and a formal recognition by AACRAO regarding professional readiness to conquer current and future challenges in the field. For the institution, the program will offer a better way to evaluate the preparedness of prospective employees for SEM positions.

### How long is the program?

The SEM-EP is tied to the most recent SEM material and trends in the field. The program is designed to be completed in 12 to 18 months.

### What do I receive when I complete the program?

AACRAO will provide you with official documentation to verify your successful completion of the SEM-EP professional development curriculum. Graduates will be listed on the AACRAO SEM-EP national web registry.

### Program Eligibility

- Five years experience in the field of SEM (Registrar, Admissions, Recruitment, Financial Aid or related fields as determined by the SEM-EP program committee).
- Individual must be employed (full or part time) by an "accredited" post-secondary institution.
- Provide a one page vita or resume reflecting career experience, professional accomplishments and education.
- Hold a minimum of an earned baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution.

### Curriculum

The SEM-EP faculty are drawn from highly experienced professionals in the field of enrollment service.

#### 1. SEM 101 Online Course

A four week course to develop a baseline understanding of SEM.

#### 2. Webinars

Three pre-recorded webinars on topics focused on key components of SEM.

#### 3. Field Visits

Visits to three approved institutions of distinct types followed by a written report guided by prescribed questions. In addition, **attendance at the AACRAO Annual Meeting or AACRAO SEM Conference will fulfill one of the field visit requirements.**

#### 4. Capstone Research Experience

All SEM-EP candidates are expected to conduct a brief research capstone project during the course of the curriculum. The assignment focuses on tracking and analyzing a local population of students from the candidate's institution and concludes by reporting conversion outcomes or conducting an annotated literature research project.

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Advancing Global Higher Education

## Chapter 1: What is SEM?

Sigler offers the three most widely accepted SEM definitions and five examples of “what SEM is not.” Comparable information can be found in *SEM Essentials* in Part I: Setting the Context. Chapter one of *SEM Essentials* is entitled “Origins of Strategic Enrollment Management” and is ten pages; Sigler’s chapter is a mere three pages and covers only the basics.

## Chapter 2: The Evolution of SEM

Chapter two, “Understanding the Context,” is also ten pages long and was written primarily by SEM expert Stanley Henderson. It provides a historical overview of SEM and looks in depth at demographics, economics, and the broader enterprise of higher education, decade by decade. It is an effective approach for understanding the evolution of SEM. However, absent is recognition of the decade from 2010 to 2020. References to “today” seem insufficient, especially since the eighth year of this decade is well underway; most of this decade could and should be more formally acknowledged and described. Chapter two concludes with ten SEM challenges. (Again, comparable information can be found in *SEM Essentials* in Part I: Setting the Context.)

## Chapter 3: Implementing SEM

This chapter, “Successful Strategic Enrollment Management Organizations,” is fifteen pages long. It focuses on implementing SEM and offers several figures; indeed, it describes the “meat” of SEM. Sigler discusses the establishment of goals, the improvement of access/transition/persistence/graduation, the importance of strategic and financial planning, the need for a data-rich environment and research, the role of process and outcomes, the opportunity for communication and collaboration, and the place for technology. (Comparable information again can be found in *SEM Essentials* in Part I: “Setting the Context.” It covers key aspects such as goal setting and the importance of creating data-rich environments.) Sigler does an excellent job discussing the importance of outcomes as measured by key enrollment indicators (KEIs) and key performance indicators (KPIs). This chapter reminds the reader that *results matter*. This chapter is one of the book’s best. (Outcomes are a central theme of Sigler’s previous book, *Managing for Outcomes*.)

## Chapter 4: SEM and the Institutional Culture

This chapter is focused on structure: it introduces the four orientations of SEM and the four models of enrollment management. The most compelling statement in the chapter is “There is no single ‘best practice’ to institutionally organize for SEM” (23); this is true. This chapter concludes with a list of four variations on the four enrollment models, including emerging trends in financial aid/services, student affairs, the registrar, and enrollment research/analytics. Comparable information can be found in *SEM Essentials* in Part VII: “Putting the Pieces Together.” Chapter 27 of *SEM Essentials* is entitled “Strategic Enrollment Planning” and is seventeen pages; Sigler’s chapter, by contrast, is five pages and covers the basics. Comparing *Core* Chapter four and *Essentials* Chapter 27 clarifies why having a shorter reference book is important: Sometimes the concise version is really all one needs.

## Chapter 5: Enrollment-Related Plans

This chapter focuses on enrollment-related plans—specifically, the institution’s strategic plan. Sigler shares the purpose of the institutional strategic plan and the strategic enrollment management plan in an easy-to-read chart. He also shares key aspects of the SEM tactical action plan, which has a very specific purpose. Regarding the SEM plan, Sigler identifies four primary reasons that “developing an effective SEM plan is well worth the effort” (28). This chapter also differentiates between a SEM plan and a tactical plan. The SEM tactical action plan answers the questions “how,” “who,” “when,” and “with what?” Comparable information appears in *SEM Essentials* in Part 2: Choice, Markets, and Admissions and also in Part VII: Putting the Pieces Together. (Chapter five of *SEM Essentials* is entitled “Markets and Market Niches” and is 25 pages long.)

## Chapter 6: Transforming an Institution into a SEM Organization

This chapter describes how to transform institutions into SEM organizations and focuses on three specific frameworks: the SEM process framework, the SEM organizational framework, and the SEM planning framework. This chapter is rich in visual depictions of these models. Sigler extracts six key points about the SEM process framework from a 2012 AACRAO publication. For the SEM organizational framework, Sigler

highlights three points made by Bontrager and Green (2013). All of these elements hint at what can be found in Bontrager and Green's (2012) longer SEM publication. Comparable information is also presented in *SEM Essentials* in Chapter 27. As mentioned above, chapter 27 of *SEM Essentials* is entitled "Strategic Enrollment Planning" and is seventeen pages long; Sigler's chapter, by contrast, is six pages and describes the basics. Interestingly, identical charts appear in both books; Bontrager and Green were key sources of information for both books. Sigler does include a SEM Planning Framework—Topical Areas and Expected Outcomes chart provided only in *Core Concepts*.

### Chapter 7: It's About People and Service

Here Sigler offers insight about the human resource side of enrollment management: He discusses the traits of a successful SEM leader and presents 2014 AACRAO survey results. The results include information about CEMO duties and areas of responsibility. A highlight of this chapter is this quote: "The role of a symphony orchestra conductor provides an excellent metaphor for the role of the SEM leader. Leading a SEM program is not about control but coordination" (43). *SEM Essentials* does not provide any "comparable information." In this sense, chapter seven is unique. Not only is the information not covered in *SEM Essentials*, but it also is timely. Sigler was correct when he notes that "high-achieving SEM leaders fully understand that successful SEM is about building relationships and teamwork" (43).

## Conclusion: Taking Control of Your Enrollment Destiny

Sigler's concluding chapter reminds readers of the importance of SEM leaders' being business minded. The short conclusion (less than one full page) provides some remarks in which Sigler invokes a sports anal-

ogy. A better title might be "Crafting Your Enrollment Destiny" or "Managing Your Enrollment Destiny" primarily because a lot of variables in an enrollment management model cannot be controlled. The title of this chapter ties in nicely with the concluding quotation of Harvard business professor Peter Drucker "[Leaders] must offer direction and hope" (45). This conclusion is consistent with the overall tone: Sigler keeps it "short and sweet" from start to finish.

## Takeaways and Additional Thoughts

Two appendixes offer a list of SEM resources and an enrollment management assessment template (one of the most valuable pieces of content in this publication). Adapted by Clayton Smith, the template provides nine components by which to assess an institution's SEM program. Appendix A ("Strategic Management Resources") includes a list of AACRAO's SEM-related publications, a link to information about AACRAO's SEM conference, a link to AACRAO's SEM Endorsement Program (SEM-EP), and a link to AACRAO journals.

Despite being a short read (only 59 pages), it is packed full of worthwhile content. It could serve well as a workbook for college administrators and graduate students in a SEM course. It would be especially valuable for an institution's board members. The content is foundational but elementary. It does not offer much depth, but that is not the author's intent. The companion publications *The Handbook of SEM* and *Essentials of SEM* provide that depth and detail. This book is a "must read" for college administrators not yet familiar with SEM. Administrators who are familiar with SEM will want to include this book in their libraries. Despite some overlap in content with *SEM Essentials*, the information in *SEM Core Essentials* makes it an easy refresher read or first look at SEM.

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