



# COLLEGE *and* UNIVERSITY

Volume 93 Issue Nº 2

Educating the Modern Higher Education Administration Professional

When Less Is Not More:  
Recovery after a Decline in the Size  
of the Freshman Class at Private  
Small Liberal Arts Colleges

Reverse and Horizontal  
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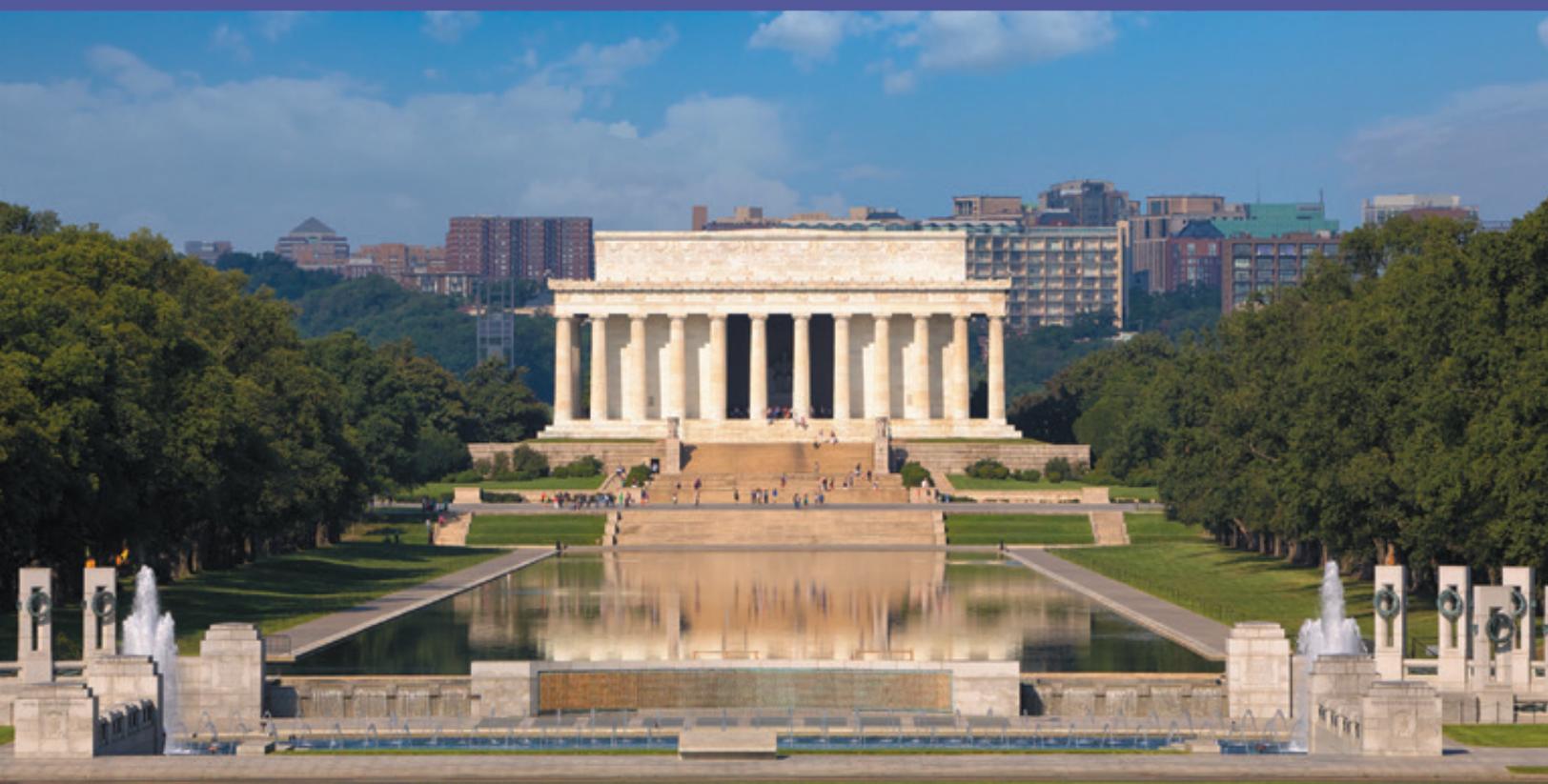
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# Editor's Note

*Jeff von Munkwitz-Smith, Ph.D.*  
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Welcome to Spring! Or, at least, the Spring 2018 edition of *College & University*! In this issue, we conclude the series on mentorship that began in Volume 91, No. 3. I am very proud to have been associated with the publication of these essays, which have now been collected in a book, *Mentorship in Higher Education: Practical Advice and Leadership Theories*, edited by my AACRAO colleagues Heather Zimar and Jessica Montgomery.

This edition includes two feature articles. In “When Less is Not More: Recovery After a Decline in the Size of the Freshman Class at Private Small Liberal Arts Colleges,” Robert J. Gitter, Faith MacDonald, and Daniel Greenleaf report on the results of a systematic statistical investigation of the factors leading to recovery after a decline.

In “Reverse and Horizontal Transfer-Out Behavior at Four-Year Institutions,” Terry Ishitani and Lee Flood examine patterns of transfer, the characteristics of students who seek to transfer, and the reasoning behind those decisions.

We have three research-in-brief articles. Wendy Kilgore, AACRAO’s Director of Research, reports on the association’s research initiatives in “AACRAO’s Research Year in Review.” Mariam Alamyar presents “Education in Afghanistan: A Historical Review and Diagnosis.” In “Financial Aid Policies and Practices as Impediments to Low-Income Student Access to Higher

Education,” Brad Pulcini reviews the literature and research on the impact of aid policies and practices on low-income students.

The mentorship series concludes with four articles: “Mentoring Millennials: Perception and Analysis” by Rajeev Jayadeva; “Giving back to the Profession: Reflections Related to Mentoring Support and Success” by Randall Langston; “Can a Campus-Wide Faculty Mentorship Program Improve Student Success?” by Jacquelyn D. Elliott and Rodney Parks; and “Choose Wisely: The Dark Side of Mentoring” by Monique Perry.

In addition, we have two commentaries, “College Funding” by Christopher Tremblay and “Creating a Digital Credential Strategy” by Rodney Parks, Jesse Parrish, and Alexander Taylor.

The issue also contains a book review by Stephen J. Handel, *A Home is Not a House, Place Not Race: A New Vision of Opportunity in America* by Sheryll Cashin as well as three reviews by Matthew Fifolt, *Parenting to a Degree: How Family Matters for College Women’s Success* by Laura T. Hamilton, *Practice for Life: Making Decisions in College* by Lee Cuba, Nancy Jennings, Suzanne Lovett, and Joseph Swingle, and *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning* by James M. Lang.

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!

# When Less Is Not More: Recovery after a Decline in the Size of the Freshman Class at Private Small Liberal Arts Colleges

The authors examined factors that affected the size of the freshman class at small liberal arts colleges after a decline of ten percent or more. Although top ranked national schools needed to do little, lesser ranked ones enjoyed a greater degree of recovery by offering larger amounts of financial aid and regional schools by awarding aid to more students.

**R**ecent times have not been good for many private small liberal arts colleges. Freshman enrollment decreased by at least 10 percent at more than a quarter of private four-year schools between 2010 and 2012 (Belkin 2013). The problem is especially acute for the smaller private liberal arts colleges, especially those with a limited endowment to provide revenue when fewer students enroll. When the number of entering freshmen declines, these tuition-dependent schools need to find ways to return the size of the entering class to its previous level and return tuition revenue to a level that can sustain the physical plant and employee base necessary to teach the curriculum and provide related services. Although schools have used several methods to increase the size of their entering class to previous levels, no empirical studies show which methods work. Studies that show how various background characteristics of a school impinge on or facilitate recovery seem not to exist.

This study looks at private small liberal arts colleges that have experienced decreases of at least 10 percent in the size of their freshman classes. The impact of various policy choices—such as the levels of tuition and financial aid, changes in admission rates, and sports offerings—on the number of freshmen enrolled in the year following the decrease was considered. Various background characteristics of each school, including

the year and regional location, were controlled for to be able to more clearly identify the effect of the changes. Results differed by type of small liberal arts college. For liberal arts colleges that drew students nationally and were more highly ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, the only change that led to a larger rebound was adding lacrosse as a varsity sport. For lesser-ranked national schools, increasing the financial aid dollar amount increased enrollment while raising tuition caused a decrease in enrollment. For liberal arts colleges that drew students more from a regional than a national basis, awarding financial aid to more students rather than increasing the average amount of aid increased enrollment. This article is the first effort to conduct a statistical analysis of the factors leading to a rebound in the size of the freshman class at small liberal arts colleges.

## A Look at Small and Medium-Sized Private Liberal Arts Colleges

There is not universal agreement as to what constitutes the liberal arts or a liberal arts college. A good starting point is the definition that Breneman (1994) uses:

*Educationally, liberal arts colleges award the bachelor of arts degree, are residential, primarily enroll full-time students between 18 and 24 years of age, and limit the number of majors to roughly twenty to twenty-four fields in the arts, humanities, languages, social sciences, and physical sciences. They rarely enroll more than 2,500 students, and most enroll between 800 and 1,800 students (12).*

The schools tend to be private, with most having their roots with a religious organization. Although many have added some professional and pre-professional programs, they maintain a core focus on the liberal arts.

The Carnegie Commission's 2000 definition of a baccalaureate liberal arts college as one with a major emphasis on baccalaureate programs and having at least half of the graduated students majoring in liberal arts fields such as "English, foreign languages, biological sciences, mathematics, philosophy and religion" (<education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1814/Carnegie-Classification-System.html>) is featured in this research. Most data come from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). A small liberal arts college (SLAC) meets the following criteria:

- ◆ Private not-for-profit, four-year or more
- ◆ Primarily focused on the liberal arts (Carnegie classification)
- ◆ Fewer than 5,000 students
- ◆ Highly residential (at least 50 percent of undergraduate students live on campus)

Of schools in the data set, 176 met this definition. They had a mean enrollment of 1,584 students and a mean freshman class of 406 students.

In the past, private liberal arts colleges played a larger role in U.S. higher education. At the beginning of the 20th century, these schools enrolled two-thirds of all students in U.S. higher education. By 1987, this had decreased to only 4.4 percent of total enrollment (Breneman 1994). More recently, Ferrall (2011) estimates that the top 225 liberal arts colleges in the United States enroll fewer than 2 percent of the students in higher education. Despite these small numbers, SLACs produce a disproportional share of leaders, including 12 U.S. presidents and one-quarter of recent Nobel Laureates who received their undergraduate education in the United States (Ferrall 2011). Further, graduates from these schools are twice as likely as those of larger universities to eventually earn a Ph.D. (Lemke 2006). In short, although small, private liberal arts colleges enroll a lesser share of U.S. students in higher education, they produce a disproportionately greater share of successful graduates. Hence, events and trends that threaten their survival could have a large impact on society.

## Tuition, Financial Aid, and the Size of the Freshman Class

Breneman (1994) constructed an insightful model of enrollment that was utilized for this research. To begin, the sticker price the school charged as tuition was considered. Room and board costs were assumed to be a wash, *i.e.*, the revenue from these would cover a school's costs of providing them.<sup>1</sup> Consider a school that at the beginning of an academic year had a great deal of fixed costs and few variable costs. The physical plant may be assumed to be a fixed cost, and wage and salary benefits for the most part are set before the sizes of the freshman class and total enrollment are known. Even with some contract workers and untenured faculty and staff who could be let go and potential maintenance that might be deferred and other cutbacks, all of these variable costs are small relative to the costs that are locked in before the final enrollment figures are available. Therefore, a relatively flat supply curve was postulated where the school was willing to enroll additional students of a certain level of ability for a very small increase in price (tuition). With so much of the cost for tenured faculty and the physical plant fixed, additional students might be enrolled for just a small increase in price.

Figure 1, on page 5, displays the supply—the number of freshmen the school will enroll at each price—as well as the demand—the number of freshmen who will enroll at the SLAC at each tuition price. The demand curve is more elastic because there are substitutes for one small liberal arts college—for example, a different small liberal arts college as well as other types of schools. Given that the vast majority of freshman, sophomore, and junior students will return for the following academic year, the research focus was on the freshman class. Suppose, for example the SLAC sets tuition at \$40,000 and is able to bring in a class of 300 students, each paying \$40,000. Yet schools have the ability to "price discriminate" by charging different prices through the use of financial aid: They can award need-based financial aid to students with fewer financial resources,<sup>2</sup> and they can award financial aid

.....  
<sup>1</sup> Private college data are available on the revenue and cost of auxiliary enterprises; room, board, health services, intercollegiate activities, etc. These schools expended \$13.7 billion on these services and had revenue of \$13.5 billion. Although expenses beyond room and board are considered, the two amounts are roughly equal (see <nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011230.pdf> Tables 5 and 6).

<sup>2</sup> Various government programs (such as the Basic Economic Opportunity—or Pell—Grants) award financial aid to low-income students, enabling more students to enroll in college.

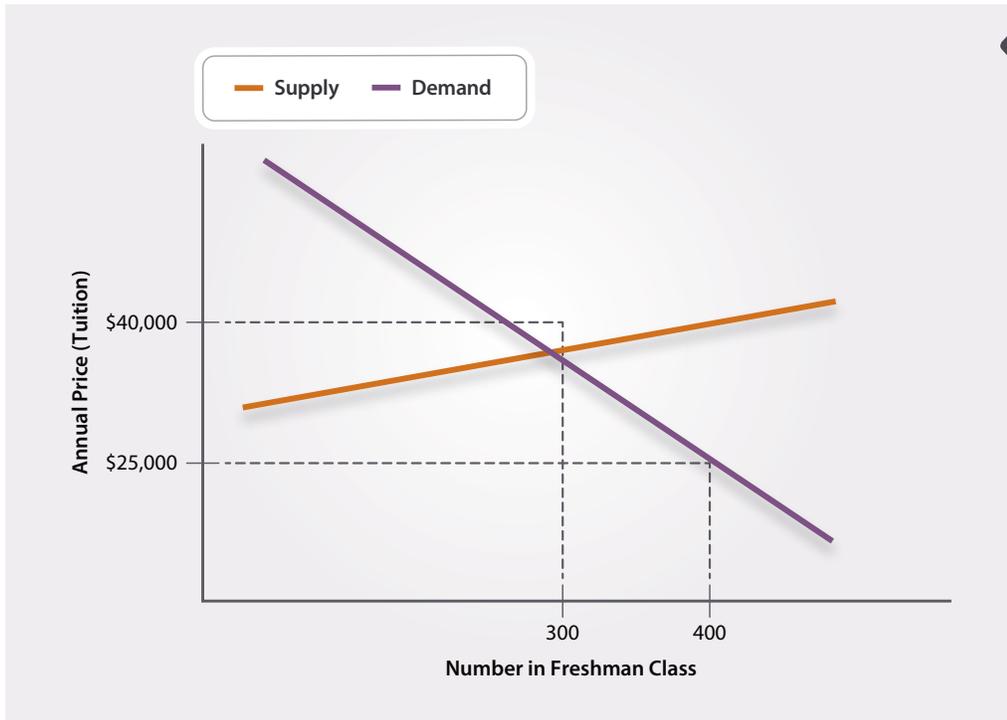


Figure 1.  
A Model of Tuition and Enrollment at Small Liberal Arts Colleges

(i.e., reduce the price) through merit-based awards to students who have outstanding potential or who meet some criterion, e.g., coming from a specific state, having a parent who is an alumnus/a or member of the clergy, or demonstrating great potential. If a school were to use these awards judiciously, it might attract 100 additional freshmen willing to pay at least \$25,000 annually but less than the full sticker price of \$40,000. So a school has some ability to control the size of the freshman class by setting both the level of tuition and financial aid.<sup>3</sup>

Schools can affect enrollment and net tuition revenue by manipulating tuition and financial aid. Reducing net tuition either by setting a lower tuition sticker price or increasing financial aid might attract more students. If, however, reducing tuition sends a signal that a school is not as high quality as other schools, then the result might be a decrease in the size of the freshman class and, consequently, less net tuition revenue.<sup>4</sup> Even

following a decrease in enrollment, schools tend not to reduce their tuition sticker price; in only two cases did a school reduce tuition after experiencing a decrease of at least 10 percent in the size of its freshman class.

Sometimes a shock such as the Great Recession might result in a decrease in the size of the entering freshman class.<sup>5</sup> Such a shock can have serious consequences for a small, tuition-dependent school: a small entering class will mean lower overall enrollment, all else held equal, for that year and the following three years (until the small class graduates). If the smaller freshman class becomes the new normal, then a freshman class that is 15 percent smaller than previous classes and that is followed by classes of a similar size will result in 15 percent fewer students enrolled after four years. Given the large share of expenses that is fixed, such as the physical plant and tenured faculty, this can threaten the school's fiscal stability.

Figure 2, on page 6, depicts a school experiencing a decrease in demand for spaces in its freshman class from D1 to D2. Even leveraging some financial aid, the size of the freshman class decreased from 400 to 340 students. The school's challenge is to find a bet-

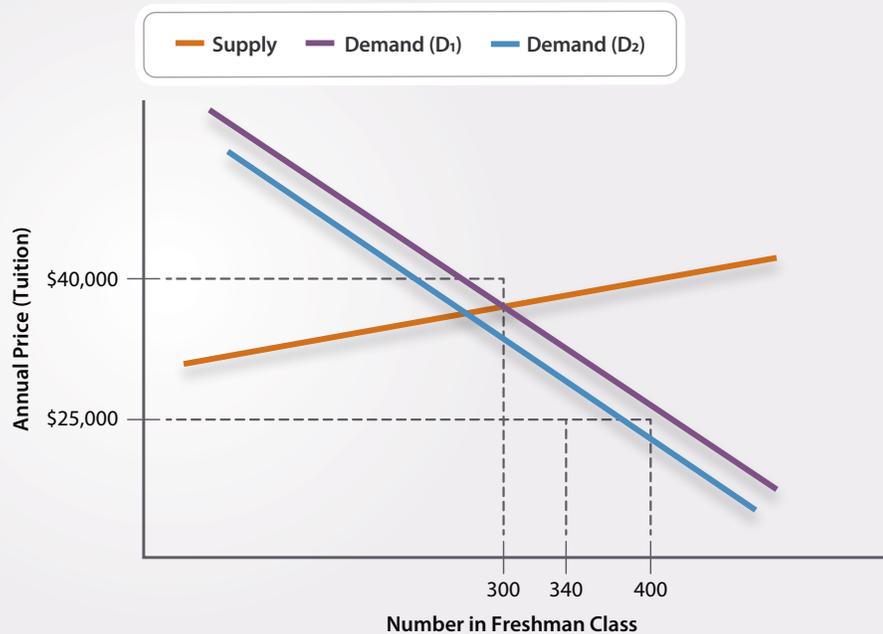
<sup>3</sup> In general, accounting procedures for private colleges require that revenue be counted as the full tuition price and financial aid as an expense. In practice, however, it is useful to think of tuition as net tuition, i.e. tuition minus financial aid. In the current example, the student who receives \$15,000 in financial aid from a school that charges \$40,000 tuition is really paying \$25,000 while the school is receiving \$25,000. In other words, financial aid is, in effect, a discounting of price rather than a true expense. When schools attempt to limit financial aid, they are just trying to garner more revenue from a student and not really generating an expense per se.

<sup>4</sup> Askin and Bothner (2016) found that schools whose U.S. News & World Report rankings decreased were more likely to increase tuition and that schools that increased their rankings were not. Hence, in order to deal with a decrease in rankings, schools increased their tuition—a so-called “Chivas effect.”

<sup>5</sup> The data for this study derived from 188 small liberal arts colleges. In 2006 (before the 2008 recession), the average freshman class numbered 391 students. The size of the class was greater than that for each year in the sample through 2014 and peaked at 405 in 2010. Overall, the recession did not appear to result in a decrease in the size of the freshman class.

Figure 2.

A Decrease in Demand by Prospective Freshmen at a Small Liberal Arts College



ter mix of tuition and financial aid to restore revenue or to leverage other changes to restore the level of demand to  $D_1$ . This study examines the factors that impact the recovery in the size of the freshman class after a substantial decline.

## Recovery From a Decrease in the Size of the Freshman Class

A school may adopt certain policies beyond changing the levels of tuition and financial aid to increase demand for spaces in its freshman class. Interestingly, there is only anecdotal evidence as to what might work; no statistical analysis of which changes are effective in returning the freshman class to previous levels seems to exist. Schools may choose to add new majors or intercollegiate sports or relax their admission standards.

Schools do not have the same ability to recover from a decline in the size of the freshman class. Prospective students may perceive some schools as better, and if those schools lower their standards and accept students they previously might not have admitted, they may be able to restore the number of entering students to prior levels. Factors such as the size of the school's endowment, the quality of students attending, and institutional ranking

in publications such as *U.S. News & World Report* might signal public perceptions of a school's quality. Because not all prospective students who are willing to pay the cost of tuition are admitted, those schools perceived as higher quality may lower their standards a bit and attract the number of freshmen desired. Schools of lower quality may not have this option. It should be noted that other factors—such as the state of the economy as well as the region of the country in which the school is located—may also affect recovery.

## A Model of Freshman Class Size Recovery

SLACs typically adjust to a long-run student body size and strive for a freshman class that will result in a sufficient number of students overall to maintain that size. A model that estimates the size of the freshman class does not indicate if the school is experiencing an increase or decrease compared to previous entering classes. If one school usually enrolls 450 freshmen and another 350, then an entering class of 400 represents a problem of too few students for the former and a bumper class for the latter. The current research focuses on factors associated with a recovery in the size of the freshman class.

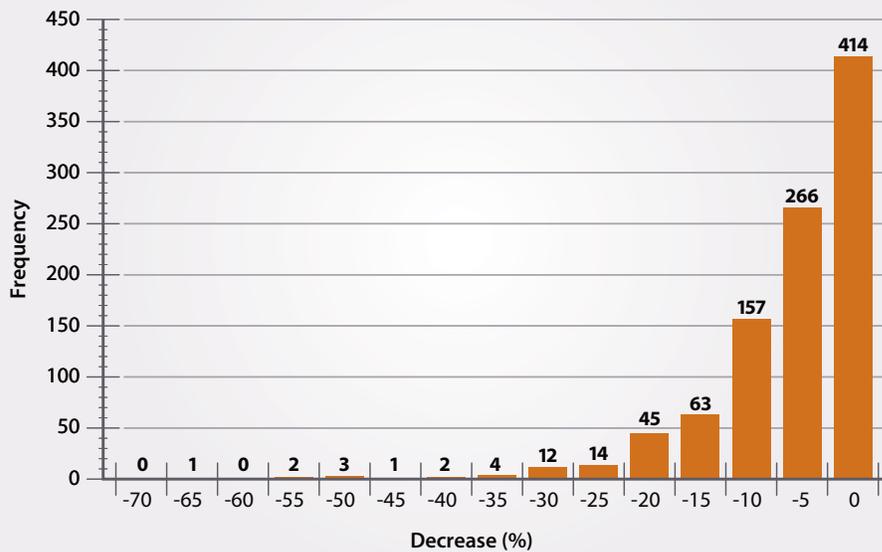


Figure 3.  
Distribution of Decreases in Freshman Class, 2001–13: All Small Liberal Arts Colleges

How large a decline must it be to be worthy of attention? A school that finds its freshman class 1 percent smaller than expected may be able to offset the relatively small decrease in revenue with its contingency fund. The change may be the result of random events, in which case the institution may not need to change any of its policies. By contrast, schools that experience a 25 percent decrease in the size of their freshman class experience significant problems (note that such precipitous decreases are rare). The current research focuses on schools that have experienced a 10 percent decline in the size of their freshman class and the factors associated with an increase in the entering class size the following year. Data on 176 SLACs over a fourteen-year period were utilized. The 10 percent decrease criterion for inclusion resulted in a sample including 130 of the 176 schools; a total of 304 cases of at least a 10 percent decrease in the size of their freshman class. Figure 3 presents the distribution of decreases by percentage for these schools.

The research model encompassed a three-year range. Schools had a freshman class of a certain size in the initial year followed by a decline by at least 10 percent the next year. The research focus was on the recovery, or increase, in the year following the decline. Year  $t$  represents the recovery year,  $t-1$  the year of the decline, and  $t-2$  the year before the decline. The years

should be thought of as academic years that begin in the fall. Suppose that in the fall of year  $t-1$  a school experiences a decline in the size of the freshman class of at least 10 percent from  $t-2$ . Schools typically have a good idea about the size of the class for year  $t-1$  by late spring of the previous academic year, *i.e.*  $t-2$ . The school has time from the late spring of  $t-2$  through late in year  $t-1$  to make changes to influence the size of the freshman class in year  $t$ . Recovery in year  $t$  is seen to depend on choices put into effect or announced in  $t-1$ , after the school became aware of the decline. The dependent variable becomes *Recit*, the percentage change in the size of the freshman class in year  $t$ , the year after the decline for school  $i$ .

There are two price factors a school can control to influence the size of the class and the revenue it generates: the sticker price (official tuition) and the level of financial aid. These are set and publicized in year  $t-1$  for year  $t$ , so that students making the decision to enroll in year  $t$  will know the net cost of tuition, *i.e.* tuition minus financial aid. (Empirical evidence demonstrates this.) Buss, Parker, and Rivenburg (2004) found that when the inflation-adjusted cost of tuition increased, the yield (*i.e.* the percentage of accepted students who enroll) decreased. The effect was greater for students who applied for financial aid (and likely had lower incomes)

than for students who did not apply for financial aid. The researchers also found that increases in financial aid were correlated with increased yield. Monks (2009) discovered that non-need-based financial aid (in essence, offering discounted tuition) resulted in more students accepting a school's offer of admission. In addition, he found a weak price illusion effect where increasing tuition (to some prospective students a measure of quality) and financial aid by equal amounts was correlated with increased enrollments; in other words, keeping net tuition constant but raising the sticker price increased enrollment.

There are also "non-price actions" schools can undertake to increase the number of freshmen who enroll. Breneman (1990), Ferrall (2011), and Baker, Baldwin and Makker (2012) note that SLACs are changing and adding course offerings in pre-professional fields such as business, education, nursing, and allied health fields, but it is difficult to gather data on majors that were added. Schools can also add varsity athletics in an attempt to increase the number of freshmen they attract. Students may choose to play a sport in addition to pursuing an education, and the opportunity to play a sport might incline a student to choose one school over another. Adrian College and Washington and Jefferson College, both participants in the current study, added a number of sports over the past decade with the express purpose of increasing the size of the freshman class (Cohen 2012). Among the sample of 176 schools, 39 added lacrosse between 2003 and 2014, 35 added track, and 27 added swimming. Although there is a trend toward adding varsity sports, there has not been a rigorous study of the effect of adding sports on enrollment.

Factors that may determine the success of a SLAC in recovering from a small entering class may include the school's strength and reputation. A school's *U.S. News & World Report (USNWR)* ranking may indicate a level of quality to prospective students. A school that has a high rank might be able to lower standards a bit, enroll the desired freshman class, and attain the desired net revenue. A school that is already admitting the vast majority of applicants and is essentially an open-enrollment institution cannot do much more than it is already and may have to undertake some other action. For schools with good reputations, recovery may not be associated with an action, though it may be for schools with weaker reputations. *USNWR* ranking is used as

a proxy in the current research for the reputation and quality of the school.

Other factors that are not features of a school can also affect freshman enrollment. For example, an economic downturn and consequent loss of family income may result in students enrolling at lower-priced public institutions. Because the sample period includes the years before, during, and after the 2008 recession, the recession can be considered a control factor. Also, the population of older teens that is the source of new traditional-aged college students will vary from year to year according to the number of births approximately 18 years earlier. The state of the economy and the number of high school graduates will vary by year as well as by location. Time and geographic fixed effects are used to control for these factors.

## Data on Schools With Decreasing Enrollments

The primary source of data was the IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) data set. IPEDS is a survey of higher education institutions conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Education. Information is gathered on a wide variety of institutional characteristics, and the data are made publicly available. The present analysis includes 176 schools that were classified as private, non-profit, residential, four-year colleges enrolling fewer than 5,000 students. The data set runs from 2001 until 2014, so that considering  $t-1$ , 2003 becomes year  $t$ , 2002 year  $t-1$ , and 2001 year  $t-2$ . As a result, the first year for which a recovery after a decline can be examined (from  $t-2$  to  $t-1$ ) is 2003; some background statistics exist for that year through 2014, the last year for which data are available.

Table 1, on page 9, presents descriptive statistics for the 130 schools in the 304 cases in the year after they experienced at least a 10 percent decrease in the number of freshmen enrolling. These can be compared to the characteristics of the full sample of 176 schools for the years 2003 through 2014. Some differences between the schools where enrollments decreased and the full sample were noted. First, the SLACs with decreasing enrollment tended to be smaller, enrolling an average of 1,261 total students compared to 1,582 for the full sample. In terms of resources, schools experiencing decreasing enrollments charged tuition that was, on average, \$3,500

less in 2014 dollars than the average tuition charged by the full sample but awarded institutional aid to a larger percentage of students. Adjusting for differences in tuition, the percentage of students receiving financial aid, and the average amount of aid, schools experiencing enrollment decreases netted, on average, approximately \$2,400 less per year in tuition revenue. They also admitted a greater share of their applicants—65.7 percent—than did all schools (58.6 percent) and offered institutional financial aid to more students—85.2 percent compared to 79.2 percent. Incoming students’ mean SAT scores were lower by 60 points at the 75th percentile and by more than 75 points at the 25th percentile at the schools experiencing decreasing enrollment. On average, those schools also had to accept a greater proportion of applicants, offered financial aid to more students, and enrolled students with lower standardized test scores.

Compared to the average for all institutions, those with decreasing enrollment had fewer resources in 2014 dollars: their endowments averaged less than 60 percent of the average of the full sample. Those schools with decreasing enrollments that were also classified by *USNWR* as national liberal arts colleges were ranked, on average, 103—more than 20 spots lower than the average for the full sample.

## A Model of Recovery

The primary research question is “what factors determine the recovery in the size of the freshman class after a decrease of at least 10 percent the previous year?” Hence, the dependent variable for this group of schools is *Recit*, the percentage change in the size of the freshman class at school *i* in year *t*, the year after the decline. As discussed above, schools must plan for the net tuition revenue they will receive after they offer institutional financial aid. While there are other types of financial aid, such as federal grants, state monies, and loans, institutional grants represent a real discount in the net tuition while other forms of aid make resources available to the student that in turn are paid to the school.

In taking action to increase the size of the freshman class, a school might reduce tuition or keep the increase below the rate of inflation, *i.e.* decrease tuition in order to increase the size of the entering class. As

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of SLACs Experiencing an Enrollment Decrease in the Decline Year and the Full Sample of SLACs**

Variable	Declining SLACs	All SLACs
Total Enrollment	1,261	1,582
Tuition (2014 Dollars)	\$29,163	\$32,614
Average Institutional Grant (2014 Dollars)	\$16,452	\$19,046
Percent Receiving Institutional Grant	85.2	79.2
Percent Admitted Year <i>t</i>	65.7	58.6
Percent Admitted Year <i>t</i> -1	65.0	59.1
Mean SAT 75Th Percentile	1219	1285
Mean SAT 25Th Percentile	995	1072
Mean USNWR Rank	103	80
Endowment (2014 Dollars, Millions)	\$149.7	\$265.3

noted above, there is a wide variance in the tuition that schools charge, so rather than using tuition as an independent variable, the change in the real sticker price of tuition (in 2014 dollars), *ChTuitionit*, was used. In order to gauge the effect of financial aid, the percentage change in the real level of average financial aid awarded to entering freshmen receiving this aid, *ChFinAidit*, was used. Schools have another policy lever in that they can also adjust the percentage of students receiving aid; this is measured by the change in this percentage from the previous year, *ChPercAidit*.

Schools can implement other policies than those related to price. One is increasing the admit rate, *i.e.* the percentage of applicants who are admitted. The change in the percentage of applicants admitted was measured as *ChAdmitit*. Schools may also add a varsity sport to attract freshmen. Although schools might add any number of sports, the current research focuses on the three most frequently added by the full sample and the year they were added: lacrosseit, trackit, and swimmingit. Between 2003 and 2014, lacrosse was added at 39 of the 176 schools, track at 35, and swimming at 27. Control variables included the real level of the endow-

ment, Endowit,, a measure of non-tuition resources available, and SAT scores at the 75th and 25th percentiles, SAT75it and SAT25it. In cases where the school reported only ACT scores, these were converted to SAT scores. Year fixed effects were also added to the model:<sup>6</sup>

$$\text{Recit} = f(\text{ChTuitionit}, \text{ChFinAidit}, \text{ChPercAidit}, \text{ChAdmitit}, \text{Lacrosseit}, \text{Trackit}, \text{Swimmingit}, \text{Endowit}, \text{SAT75it}, \text{SAT25it}, \text{Yeart})$$

Although adding new majors to the curriculum might result in the enrollment of additional students, related data are difficult to obtain and are not included as factors in the current study.<sup>7</sup>

## Data

This study examines recovery in class size of 130 SLACs that experienced a decrease of at least 10 percent in the freshman class. The mean decrease in the size of the freshman class was 17.8 percent. Three schools—American Jewish University, Pine Manor College, and Taladega College—each experienced a decrease greater than 50 percent during at least one year. The average recovery was 11.9 percent—less than the initial decrease—indicating that schools did not return to their prior enrollments in the following year.

Table 2, on page 11, presents the definition of all of the variables in the study. All dollar figures are converted to 2014 dollars. The values for each observation are for that school, *i*, in the year *t*, the year after the decrease in first-year student enrollment. Financial aid is calculated for the freshman class and not for the entire student body. The aid average is only for those students receiving institutional financial aid, *i.e.* a discount to their tuition price because of financial need or merit.

<sup>6</sup> Regional location data were available for each school. Because the coefficients for region were not statistically significant in any of the regressions, they were omitted from the model and the presented results. State fixed effects were not used because private schools usually draw their student body from multiple states.

<sup>7</sup> IPEDS data list the number of annual graduates of a school according to 40 broad categories. An increase in the number of graduates from zero to some positive number does not necessarily mean that a major was added. There are two reasons for this: first, there is the problem of the categories—for example, one category is “biological and life sciences.” A school that offered a biology major would report the number of graduates within the biological and life sciences category. If the number for the category were to increase, it would not be clear whether this was due to an increase in the number of students majoring in biology or the addition of a new major in, for example, genetics. Consider also the possibility that a school experienced a decrease in enrollment in year *t*-1 and added a business major. In theory, students enrolling in year *t* and graduating in year *t*+3 would cause the number of majors in that category to increase from zero and indicate the addition of the major; the problem is that students already enrolled in year *t*-1 might find the new major attractive, enroll in the program as sophomores, and graduate in year *t*+2. Thus, IPEDS data are not useful for determining when a major is added.

Not all freshmen received such aid, but 85 percent did. Schools often refer to the discount rate as the proportion of tuition that is given back in the form of financial aid; that rate was 48 percent, meaning that schools net only approximately half of their published tuition sticker price. Although on average 65.7 percent of applicants were admitted, this does not mean that the remainder were not rejected. For example, applications might have been withdrawn if students chose to enroll elsewhere before their application was acted on. These students would not be accepted but were not rejected, either. Further, some schools include incomplete applications in their total applicant pool. (Applications might be incomplete because the student is no longer interested in the school or did not submit required letters of reference or write the application essay.) This would increase the number of total applications, decrease the percentage admitted, and make the school appear more selective. The 65.7 percent acceptance rate might, therefore, be an underestimate of the true acceptance rate. For example, Fisk University, Tougaloo College, Transylvania University, and Pine Manor College each accepted more than 95 percent of their applicants in the year of their enrollment decreases, leaving little capacity to increase their acceptance rates in order to enroll a larger freshman class. Eight schools added lacrosse the year after their enrollment decreases, and three added track and swimming. The largest number of schools experienced decreases in enrollment in 2005, with 2006 representing the recovery year. Except for that year, those following the beginning of the 2008 recession saw more schools experiencing enrollment decreases than had before.

The sample was divided into three groups based on their *USNWR* rank: schools ranked in the top 100 national liberal arts colleges; schools ranked outside of the top 100; and non-ranked schools. The last group includes schools that might be considered regional because they enroll a more regionally focused student body.<sup>8</sup> Rankings are based on “assessment by administrators at peer institutions, retention of students, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, alumni giving, graduation rate performance, and, for national universities and national liberal arts colleges only, high school counselor ratings of colleges” (Ma-

<sup>8</sup> Regional schools not ranked by *USNWR* include those for which fewer than half of their students were enrolled in the liberal arts. These schools would not meet the criteria to be included in the current study.

Table 2. Definitions and Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in the Regression Model

Variable	Definition	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Recit	Percent Change in Freshman Class Size	11.90	-45.7	104.2
ChTuitionit	Percent Change in Tuition (2014 dollars)	2.70	-30.6	15.2
ChFinAidit	Percent Change in Institutional Financial Aid (2014 Dollars)	6.50	-82.1	310.0
ChPercAidit	Percentage Point Change in Share of Class Receiving Institutional Financial Aid	1.30	-85.0	64.0
ChAdmitit	Percentage Point Change in Admit Rate	0.79	-87.7	31.3
Lacrosseit	1 Added Lacrosse; 0 Did Not	0.03	0	1
Trackit	1 Added Track; 0 Did Not	0.01	0	1
Swimmingit	1 Added Swimming; 0 Did Not	0.01	0	1
Endowit	Endowment (2014 Dollars, Millions)	149.70	0	1,979
SAT75it	SAT 75th Percentile	1219	780	1500
SAT25it	SAT 25th Percentile	995	660	1300
NorthEasti	East South Central	0.24	0	1
Midwesti	West South Central	0.26	0	1
Westi	Mountain	0.10	0	1
Southi	Pacific	0.41	0	1
2003	Year	0.08	0	1
2004	Year	0.06	0	1
2005	Year	0.07	0	1
2006	Year	0.12	0	1
2007	Year	0.06	0	1
2008	Year	0.07	0	1
2009	Year	0.07	0	1
2010	Year	0.10	0	1
2011	Year	0.10	0	1
2012	Year	0.11	0	1
2013	Year	0.10	0	1
2014	Year	0.10	0	1

son, Brooks and Moore 2015). The first three categories make up almost two-thirds of the weight in the rankings (Mason, Brooks and Moore 2015). See Table 3 for descriptive statistics for the three categories.

When top-ranked SLACs experienced decreases in their freshman class of at least 10 percent, the decrease was, on average, only 15.0 percent less than the -16.6 percent experienced by the lower-ranked schools and the 22.0 percent of unranked schools. Even though their enrollment decreases were lesser, these schools had greater financial resources than those ranked lower (which, in turn, were better off than unranked schools).

If the percentage of students receiving institutional financial aid multiplied by the mean level of aid were deducted from the sticker price tuition, then it would become evident that top-ranked schools received approximately \$18,500 in net tuition per student—more than \$4,300 more per student than lower-ranked schools and \$5,700 more than unranked schools. The top-ranked schools had endowments averaging more than \$300 million, far in excess of the other schools, which averaged less than \$100 million each. SAT profiles of incoming students were much stronger, and admission rates were lower. The top schools differed

Table 3. Means of Variables by *US News* Ranking

Variable	All	Top 100	Rank > 100	Unranked
Recit (%)	11.9	9.8	10.1	16.1
Declinet-1 (%)	-18.0	-15.0	-16.6	-22.0
ChTuitionit (%)	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.7
ChFinAidit (%)	6.5	5.6	6.5	7.4
ChPercAidit	1.30	2.20	2.10	1.80
ChAdmitit	0.79	0.52	0.82	1.10
Lacrosseit	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.02
Trackit	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.02
Swimmingit	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
Endowit (\$)	149.70	311.20	86.70	54.80
SAT75it	1219	1342	1226	1084
SAT25it	995	1127	989	868
n	304	102	104	98

from the others, and as the factors that affected them may also have differed, the model was prepared separately for these groups as well as for the full sample.

## Results

Although the results for all schools (*see* Table 4, on page 13) provide some insights into what determines the extent of a school’s recovery from a decrease in the size of its entering class, the separate regressions for the different types of schools paint a more detailed picture of which policies seem to result in larger entering classes and the background characteristics that affect what schools can do. Considering SLACs ranked in the *USNWR* top 100 national liberal arts colleges, the only change that seemed to have an impact was adding a lacrosse program. Yet these were schools that also had substantially larger endowments, students with better test scores, and higher net tuition as well as higher rankings. Other policy actions did not seem to be associated with increased enrollments, perhaps because prospective students viewed them as attractive and students were eager to go there. Further, none of the year dummies was statistically significant, suggesting that if there were a decline during the 2008 recession, the schools were able to recover the following year without implementing any substantial changes.

A different picture emerges for schools ranked outside of the top 100. For these, the sticker price tuition

mattered, and higher advertised tuition resulted in a smaller enrollment rebound. A further indication of the importance of cost for these schools is that increases in the amount of school-supplied financial aid led to a greater rebound in the size of the freshman class. For this group of schools, on average, 93 percent of entering freshmen were awarded need- and/or merit-based financial aid. There was little room to increase the percentage of the class receiving aid, but there was the possibility of increasing the amount of aid to students receiving aid, which contributed to a greater enrollment rebound. It is possible that for top schools, net tuition cost

is not a factor in enrollment, though it is for schools outside of this group.

Unranked schools met the Carnegie Commission’s definition of a liberal arts college but were not considered a national liberal arts college by *USNWR*. These included schools that had a more regionally than nationally based student body. Seventy-nine percent of these schools’ entering freshmen received aid in the recovery year. Compared to the “lesser-ranked” national liberal arts colleges, 93 percent of whose students, on average, received aid, unranked schools had greater opportunity to increase the share of the freshman class receiving institutional aid; in fact, this appears to be an effective policy for increasing the size of the entering class. Somewhat surprisingly, increasing the share of applicants admitted had a negative effect on enrollment recovery. These schools admitted approximately 65 percent of applicants in the year of the decline and recovery, so while there was capacity to admit more students, this tactic did not appear consistent with a larger class. Regional schools whose applicants had higher SAT scores at the 75th percentile demonstrated a lesser degree of recovery, while those at the 25th percentile demonstrated a greater degree of recovery. It is possible that better academically prepared students chose to enroll at national liberal arts schools and other universities but that less well-prepared students still enrolled at regional schools because they had fewer choices. These schools saw a greater recovery in 2009, the most severe year of

**Table 4. Regression Results for Percentage Change in Freshman Class After an Enrollment Decrease**

Variable	All schools		Top 100		Rank > 100		Unranked	
	Coeff.	Std. Error	Coeff.	Std. Error	Coeff.	Std. Error	Coeff.	Std. Error
Constant	48.1 <sup>c</sup>	13.5	-57.0	44.1	50.0	41.7	24.0	27.0
ChTuitionit	-1.940	1.570	-0.996	5.150	-3.920 <sup>a</sup>	2.140	-1.260	4.370
ChFinAidi	-0.075	0.082	0.026	0.199	0.505 <sup>c</sup>	0.178	-0.163	0.130
ChPercAidt	0.220	0.145	0.216	0.260	-0.120	0.544	0.446 <sup>a</sup>	0.223
ChAdmitit	-0.346 <sup>c</sup>	0.121	-0.069	0.208	-0.092	0.196	-0.671 <sup>b</sup>	0.276
Lacrosseit	17.10 <sup>b</sup>	8.13	24.90 <sup>c</sup>	7.94	9.32	17.00	27.20	23.80
Trackit	-22.10 <sup>a</sup>	11.50	-5.94	12.40	–	–	-24.70	18.10
Swimmingit	3.31	11.50	–	–	4.90	16.90	-4.84	23.30
Endowit	-0.004	0.006	-0.007	0.005	0.032	0.049	0.009	0.048
SAT75it	-0.075 <sup>c</sup>	0.029	0.060	0.056	-0.007	0.067	-0.113 <sup>b</sup>	0.049
SAT25it	0.058 <sup>a</sup>	0.031	-0.011	0.049	0.028	0.071	0.125 <sup>b</sup>	0.058
R-squared %	18.4		33.7		24.8		49.3	
n	213		66		81		66	

<sup>a</sup> Statistically significant at the 0.10 level  
<sup>b</sup> Statistically significant at the 0.05 level  
<sup>c</sup> Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

**Note:** Year dummies were included in the model. None of the top 100 schools added swimming, and none ranked outside the top 100 added track. As a result, those variables could not be included in those regressions.

the Great Recession; this may have been the result of students’ choosing to enroll at less expensive schools. Recovery was also greater in 2013.

## Policy Implications

The policy implications for the three types of SLACs vary.

### Top 100 Small Liberal Arts Colleges

The only policy that had a positive impact on recovery was the addition of a lacrosse program. As Table 3 indicates, those schools whose freshman classes decreased by at least 10 percent experienced a first-year enrollment increase of almost 10 percent the following year. Changes in tuition, financial aid, and admittance rates did not seem to matter. Perhaps with their comparatively better reputations and larger endowments, they did not have to change much to experience a recovery in their first-year enrollment.

### Lower-Ranked Small Liberal Arts Colleges

For these schools, raising the tuition sticker price had a negative impact on enrollment whereas increasing the amount of institutional financial aid to those students

receiving it led to a greater recovery. If the sticker price of tuition were increased by 1 percent above inflation, or approximately \$283 per year (in 2014 dollars), estimates would be that the freshman class size would decrease 3.92 percent, or 11.3 students (controlling for other factors). (See Appendix A for the calculations in this section.) The high elasticity of demand based on the tuition sticker price indicates that these schools will suffer a decrease in revenue when tuition is increased in real terms. On the other hand, increasing the amount of financial aid in real terms has the opposite effect in that greater average levels of financial aid increase the size of the class that enrolls. Unfortunately, the demand is inelastic, and even though these schools attract more students by offering greater amounts of financial aid, doing so does not appear to attract enough students to generate a gain in net revenue. These schools are in a difficult position. When there is an enrollment decrease, they cannot raise the tuition sticker price, increase aid, award aid to a greater percentage of entering students, or admit more applicants: The first two tactics don’t increase net revenue, and the latter two do not have any effect. Neither did adding any of the three “most-added” sports affect recovery. A solution might

## Calculations for Policy Changes

Variables	Amount
<b>Lower-Ranked SLACs</b>	
<b>Change in Real Tuition</b>	
Mean tuition year t-1 (decrease year)	\$28,267*
One percent increase	\$283*
Mean freshman class year t-1	288.6 students
3.92 percent of mean freshman class	11.3 students
<b>Change in Mean Institutional Grant</b>	
Mean grant year t-1 (decline year)	\$15,610*
One percent increase	\$156*
Mean freshman class year t-1	288.6 students
0.505 percent of mean freshman class	1.5 students
<b>Unranked SLACs</b>	
<b>Change in Admit Rate</b>	
Mean admit rate year t-1 (decline year)	64.1%
One percentage point increase	1.0%
New admit rate	65.1%
Mean tuition year t-1	\$21,906
Mean institutional financial aid for students Receiving aid	\$11,939
Net tuition revenue from students on aid	\$9,967
Mean freshman class year t-1	213.3 students
0.446% of mean freshman class	1.0 students

\* 2014 dollars

be adding new programs, though no related data were collected. As Baker (2012) found, there is a decrease in the number of liberal arts colleges as Breneman (1994) defined them, as schools are offering more and more programs that are not in the liberal arts. The decrease in SLACs may mean that lower-ranked schools morph into different types of institutions—perhaps a small university offering more majors with fewer students enrolled in the liberal arts.

### Unranked Schools

On average, unranked schools offer institutional financial aid to 79 percent of their entering classes. Offering aid to more students would appear to increase the

size of the class. The order of magnitude is not great, however. Keeping all else constant, increasing by 1 percentage point the proportion of the class receiving aid would increase the size of the entering class by a bit less than 0.5 percent, or one student. The result would be an increase of only \$10,000 in net revenue. Interestingly, increasing the percentage of students admitted had a statistically significant negative impact on recovery, perhaps because schools enrolling a small class for a second year in a row increased their admission rate to prevent an even steeper decrease. Adding one of the three sports did not seem to matter for these schools, so once again, the addition of new programs might be their only alternative.

## Summary and Conclusion

Private small liberal arts colleges have played an important role in U.S. higher education. Although they enroll a very small percentage of all enrolled students, their graduates are more likely to achieve higher levels of success. These schools tend to rely heavily on enrollment and tuition and to receive very little if any direct government funds. A decrease in the size of the entering class can have a profound impact on an institution. Although many of these schools face severe challenges in the wake of enrollment decreases, there has not been a systematic statistical investigation of which factors lead to recovery. The current work seeks to fill this void.

While there are changes that can be made, what works varies by type of small liberal arts college. In

summary, the top-ranked national liberal arts colleges, with their large endowments and high student SAT profiles, need to do very little and are highly likely to experience a recovery in their the schools already have one. For lesser-ranked national liberal arts colleges, offering greater amounts of financial aid appears to be the policy to implement. But as these schools award institutional financial aid to almost all students, it becomes difficult to increase the percentage receiving aid, though the amount of aid can be increased. The problem is that such a change decreases total net tuition revenue. For regional liberal arts colleges, awarding financial aid to more students appears to increase the magnitude of the enrollment recovery.

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# Reverse and Horizontal Transfer-Out Behavior at Four-Year Institutions

The number of transfer students in U.S. postsecondary education has been growing. Of students who transferred from four-year institutions, 52 percent transferred to two-year institutions. Although transferring is an imperative for many students, little about the whereabouts of transfer students is known beyond descriptive statistics. Coupled with nationally represented data, this study investigated student transfer behavior at four-year institutions. The focal point of the current study was patterns of transfer, such as reverse and horizontal transfer. After controlling for student and institutional characteristics, it became evident that academic and social integration had significant effects on preventing students from transferring, particularly reverse transferring. Overall, this study suggests that transfer decisions are primarily the students' own decisions rather than the effects of institutional characteristics. Along with introducing the Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act of 2017, this study is an important contribution to current policy discussions about transfer.

**S**tudents transferring between postsecondary institutions are integral members of the U.S. higher education system (Cheslock 2005). In conjunction with a large number of postsecondary institutions in the United States, a steadily growing trend in multi-institutional attendance has been emerging for the last two decades (Li 2010). Simone (2014), using Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) data in his analysis of the transferability of postsecondary credits between institutions following transfer or during co-enrollment, notes that “about one-third (35%) of first-time beginning undergraduate students transferred or co-enrolled at least once during the six-year period of the BPS study” (iv). In addition to their contribution to the overall makeup of the student body, transfer students provide a variety of benefits to state systems of higher education and their respective institutions. Cheslock (2005) notes that transfer students aid in:

*...reducing the inefficiencies created by high attrition rates or departmental enrollment imbalances. These productivity gains are important to both individual institutions and state systems of higher education with the latter entities especially able to realize these benefits because they can partially control the supply of transfer students (264).*

Research on student transition has focused primarily on vertical transfers, students who move from two- to four-year institutions (Jackson and Laanan 2015; Jen-

kins and Fink 2016; Kirk-Kuwaye and Kirk-Kuwaye 2007; Monaghan and Attewell 2015); however, the vertical transfer student population accounts for less than half of the transfer student population at four-year institutions (McCormick, *et al.* 2009). McCormick *et al.* (2009) noted, “The motives behind horizontal transfer, by contrast, are far more varied, including unsatisfactory academic performance, academic, personal, or social dissatisfaction, financial difficulty, and pursuit of programs unavailable at the first institution” (1). Thus, research on transfer-out behavior has been largely overlooked despite the fact that this demographic represents a sizable student group within institutions of higher education (Alpern 2000; Kirk-Kuwaye and Kirk-Kuwaye 2007). Existing studies tend to focus on community college students and their transition to baccalaureate-granting institutions (*e.g.*, Ishitani and McKittrick 2010; Melguizo and Dowd 2009; Melguizo, Kienzl and Alfonso 2011; Townsend and Wilson 2006; Wang 2009). Cheslock (2005) notes, “Despite the importance of the transfer route in higher education, very little is known about why four-year institutions enroll transfer students and which institutional characteristics are associated with a large transfer student share” (263). Different patterns of transfer, such as reverse and horizontal, and the influence they have on students’ decisions to “transfer out” have not been investigated, despite the pressing need for research in this area.

Given the substantial share of undergraduates at baccalaureate-granting, four-year institutions who transfer, the researchers deemed it critical to analyze the factors that prompted students’ decisions to transfer (Laanan 2001; McCormick *et al.* 2009; Townsend and Wilson 2006). Alpern (2000) suggested using “lon-

gitudinal studies that analyze national databases that track enrollment patterns of persisters and dropouts... [to] provide researchers with important data that identify influential factors” (22). The current study explored students transferring from a four-year institution to another four-year institution or to a two-year institution. Recently, the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act of 2017, which evidences the rising importance of issues related to reverse transfer. The current study thus serves as a benchmark for student transfer behavior to inform policy makers’ discussions.

## Student Characteristics Affecting Transfer

Scholars have proposed a number of retention theories aimed at explaining student attrition, including the integration theory articulated by Tinto (1987) and the industrial theory articulated by Bean (1983). The integration model has been applied widely in retention and attrition studies. Given that transfer is classified as a type of attrition, the current study utilized Tinto’s (1987) integration model as the theoretical framework for investigating student transfer behavior.

Tinto’s (1987) theory focuses on the experiences of students within the institution where they originally enrolled and remained continuously until degree completion. The current study focuses on how these factors contribute to student transfer and to transfer patterns. Empirical factors rooted in the literature and deserving attention include academic integration, social integration, ethnicity, financial aid, and pre-college academic achievement.

### Academic Integration

Students who integrated quickly and well at their initial institutions were more likely to succeed and persist than those who did not (Astin 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Tinto 1987). Academic integration describes a student’s general level of engagement in academic opportunities and activities (Lundquist, Spalding and Landrum 2002). Stage (1988) discovered that the educational attainment of a student’s father had a positive effect on academic integration. In turn, the totality of the effect of the father’s educational attainment on academic integration showed a significant influence on a student’s persistence to second year. Lundquist,

Spalding, and Landrum (2002) discovered that institutional factors were positively associated with students’ decisions to remain in school. These factors included faculty support, accessibility to students, and quick responses to student questions. More recently, Swecker, Fifolt, and Searby (2013) found that the number of advising sessions in which a student participated was significantly associated with persistence.

### Social Integration

Tinto hypothesized that students who were socially integrated into their initial institution would be more likely to develop a sense of commitment, belonging, and persistence (Morley 2003). Receipt of financial aid bolstered the social integration of students, which, in turn, supported their decisions to persist. Berger and Braxton (1998) investigated the effect of social integration on persistence at a highly selective private research institution and found that organizational attributes such as fairness in academic and social rules and regulations significantly influenced students’ levels of social integration. Social integration may play a key role in promoting an institutional commitment in students and, as a result, in influencing students to persist (Woolesley and Miller 2009).

### Ethnicity

The effect of race/ethnicity on college persistence has been documented in prior research. Chen and Desjardins (2010) noted that “significant inequality of opportunity across racial/ethnic groups continues to plague the American higher education system” (180). In fact, students from racial and ethnic minority groups have an increased risk of dropping out of college altogether (Braxton, Duster and Pascarella 1988; Carter 2006; D’Lima, Winsler and Kitsantas 2014). Despite sharing first-generation status, African American and Hispanic students lag in degree completion compared to their white counterparts (Ishitani 2006).

### Financial Aid

The ever-increasing costs of college attendance make financial aid an important factor in the decision of some students to withdraw, transfer, or persist. The majority of studies have posited an inverse relationship between tuition/fees and student persistence (Paulsen and St. John 1997; St. John *et al.* 1994; St. John, Paulsen and Starkey 1996); however, the effect of tuition/fees

on enrollment decisions has varied depending on other factors, including type of institution and/or student-specific demographic information. For example, the effects of financial aid on student persistence varied across racial groups.

Minorities have a higher risk of dropping out when they do not receive grants to support their college enrollment; however, their risk of dropping out is reduced when they receive larger Pell grants (Chen and Desjardins 2010). Herzog (2005) noted that academically well-prepared students were more likely to transfer when they had higher unmet financial needs.

### **Pre-College Academic Achievement**

Students' pre-college academic achievement on the ACT and/or SAT has been shown to have an effect early in students' postsecondary careers. These measures of aptitude are significantly related to student retention from their first year to their second year (Johnson 2006). DeBerard, Spielmans, and Julka (2004) found that "universities which are more selective in terms of high school GPA (grade point average) and SAT should expect greater achievement and retention among their freshmen" (73).

The significance of students' performance on the ACT and SAT, however, appears to wane as students progress past their first year of college. Campus-based studies have found that college GPA is related to persistence (Nora and Cabrera 1996; Okun, Benin and Brandt-Williams 1996). Students' academic ability was a significant factor in students' decisions to persist (Li 2010).

While a plethora of studies on transferring from two-year to four-year institutions exists, studies examining how student and institutional characteristics influence different patterns of transfer are scarce. Using a multilevel modeling technique in conjunction with nationally represented data, this study investigated patterns of student transfer, such as reverse, horizontal, and switch transfers, relative to students' initial four-year institutions.

## **Data and Methodology**

### **Data**

The initial data used in the present study were drawn from the 2004–09 Beginning Postsecondary Student (BPS: 04/09) dataset sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). The original total

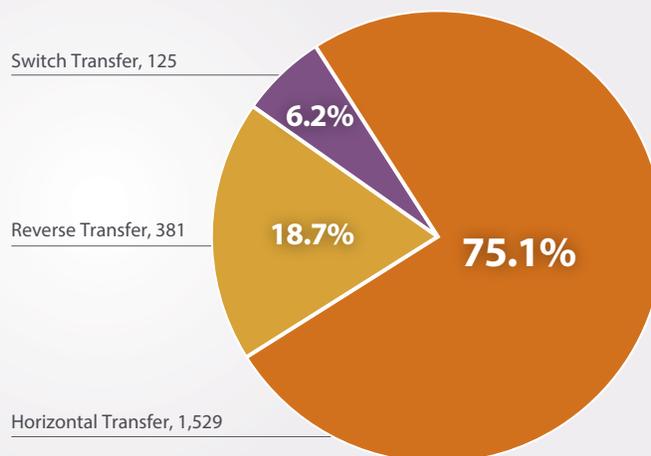
sample size in the BPS: 04/09 was 16,700; of that, 8,330 matriculated at either public or private four-year institutions as first-time, beginning students.

Transfer students might have been treated as withdrawals in previous studies—that is, as those who left their initial postsecondary institutions and never attended another. To examine the different types of departure to obtain more robust findings, therefore, is imperative. In order to archive more reliable estimates, the current study excluded students who withdrew or stopped out from their native institutions. Thus, this study included students who transferred but never returned to their initial institutions as well as those who graduated from or who were still enrolled at their original four-year institutions at the end of the survey observation. As a result, the study data contained 4,772 students, including 2,035 who transferred from their initial four-year institutions.

The focus of the current study was on three types of student transfer: from four-year institutions to public or private two-year, non-profit, or proprietary institutions (reverse transfer); from public institutions to other public institutions or from private to private institutions (horizontal transfer); and from public to private or from private to public institutions (switch transfer). Out of 2,035 transfer students, 381 students (18.7%) transferred to two-year institutions; 1,529 students transferred to institutions of the same control (75.1%); and 125 (6%) switched their institutions' control ( $n=125$ ). Figure 1 (on page 20) illustrates this division of students in the same by types of transfer. The current study included explanatory variables from two levels: students and institutions. Table 1 (on page 21) includes a descriptive summary of the study data. Approximately 42 percent of students in the sample were female; 74.4 percent, 7.7 percent, 7.3 percent, and 6.2 percent of survey participants were Caucasian, African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian, respectively. Income variables consisted of quartile dummy variables. In the BPS: 04/09, students' academic aptitude was measured either by ACT or SAT score (or, for some students, both). In order to have one variable for admission tests, all SAT total scores were converted to ACT composite scores. ACT scores were then broken down into quartiles.

The BPS: 04/09 included students' levels of academic and social integration in 2003–04 and 2005–06. The academic integration variable was based on aver-

Figure 1.  
Transfer Type  
Summary



age responses to how often students participated in the following: study groups, social contact with faculty, meetings with an academic advisor, or talks with faculty about academic matters outside of class. The social integration variable was developed based on the average responses for participation in the following: fine arts activities, intramural varsity sports, and school clubs. Average scores for academic and social integration variables were multiplied by 100 in the BPS: 04/09 data by default. In the case that students had both 2003–04 and 2005–06 scores, the average of the scores was incorporated into the analysis. Similarly, students’ grade point averages (GPAs) were surveyed in 2003–04 and 2005–06. When students had GPAs for both years, the GPAs were averaged. The effects of financial aid on student transfer were investigated using average amounts of Pell grants and loans during the enrollment periods at students’ initial four-year institutions. The averages of Pell grants and loans were \$2,530 and \$4,421 with standard deviations of \$1,153 and \$1,546, respectively.

A number of institutional characteristics were included in the analysis. Institutional variables were derived from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and were already merged in the BPS: 04/09. The study data were from 885 private and public four-year institutions; 457 institutions (51.6%) were private, and 428 (48.4%) were public. Approximately 38 percent of the institutions were classified as

doctoral, 39.3 percent as master’s, and 22.3 percent as baccalaureate institutions.

### Methodology

The data in this study were “nested” in that groups of students were “nested” in individual institutions. A single-equation regression approach does not allow researchers to estimate the effects of explanatory variables from different levels appropriately. By employing a single-equation regression, standard errors of coefficients for institutional-level variables would be deflated, and they would increase the chance of making Type I errors. In order to mitigate methodological challenges, this study employed a multilevel multinomial regression modeling procedure for two levels. The first level included the explanatory variables on student characteristics, and the second level included the institutional characteristic variables. This particular approach is most appropriate for nested data such as the current study data. Estimations for institution-level characteristics were adjusted by the number of institutions, not by the number of students, which resulted in more robust findings for institution-level variables.

All the explanatory variables were centered on grand means. Prior to the multilevel regression analysis, a number of statistical assumptions associated with this technique, such as multicollinearity, were examined. No such assumptions were violated in the study data.

Table 1. Study Data Descriptive Summary

Variable	Label	Count	%	Mean	SD
<b>Student Level</b>					
Gender	Female	2,788	41.6		
	Male <sup>1</sup>	1,984	58.4		
Race	Asian	298	6.2		
	Black	367	7.7		
	Hispanic	348	7.3		
	White <sup>1</sup>	3,548	74.4		
	Race Not Specified	211	4.4		
	First-Generation	1,759	36.9		
Parent's Education	One Parent With Bachelor's Degree	1,269	26.6		
	Two Parents With Bachelor's Degree <sup>1</sup>	1,744	36.5		
Family Income	1st Quartile <sup>1</sup>	823	17.2		
	2nd Quartile	1,099	23.1		
	3rd Quartile	1,197	25.1		
	4th Quartile	1,653	34.6		
Admission Test	1st Quartile <sup>1</sup>	1,078	22.6		
	2nd Quartile	1,051	22.1		
	3rd Quartile	1,189	24.9		
	4th Quartile	1,181	24.7		
	Not Reported	273	5.7		
Average Pell Grant Amount (\$)	Continuous			2,530	1,546
Average Loan Amount (\$)	Continuous			4,421	1,546
College GPA	Continuous			3.15	0.54
Integration	Academic Integration			96.98	34.13
	Social Integration			79.63	45.54
<b>Institutional Level<sup>2</sup></b>					
Control	Private	457	51.6		
	Public <sup>1</sup>	428	48.4		
Carnegie Classification	Doctorate <sup>1</sup>	340	38.4		
	Master	348	39.3		
	Baccalaureate	197	22.3		

<sup>1</sup> Reference groups in multi-level analysis

<sup>2</sup> Counts of institutions

## Limitations

A number of limitations pertain to the current study. A scope of explanatory variables was limited to the survey items available in the BPS: 04/09. The BPS: 04/09 lacked in variables associated with pre-college characteristics, such as students' and parents' educational expectations and high school extracurricular activities, which often are considered in retention research. Unlike the variables of Pell grants and loans, the college

GPA variable was surveyed only twice during the observation period. Although college GPAs were assumed to change over time, no follow-up survey was conducted to assess year-by-year college GPAs. This study also was not able to incorporate the timing of transfer in its analysis. While it is reasonable to believe that students have different reasons for transfer at different points in time, the methodological limitation of this study prevented inclusion of the timing of transfer.

Table 2. Reverse Transfer Multilevel Analysis Results

Variable	Label	Coefficient	Std Error	Relative Risk Ratio	Δ%	Sig <sup>1</sup>
<b>Student Level</b>						
Intercept		-2.076	0.119			***
Gender	Female	-0.533	0.172	0.587	-0.413	***
	Asian	-0.392	0.354	0.675		
Race	Black	-0.145	0.312	0.865		
	Hispanic	-0.107	0.310	0.898		
	Race Not Specified	0.578	0.353	1.783	0.783	*
	First-Generation	0.667	0.207	1.949	0.949	***
Parent's Education	One Parent With Bachelor's Degree	0.626	0.224	1.870	0.870	***
	2nd Quartile	-0.250	0.254	0.779		
Family Income	3rd Quartile	-0.267	0.291	0.766		
	4th Quartile	-0.577	0.298	0.562	-0.438	**
Admission Test	2nd Quartile	-0.599	0.213	0.549	-0.451	***
	3rd Quartile	-1.150	0.245	0.317	-0.683	***
	4th Quartile	-1.504	0.329	0.222	-0.778	***
Average Pell Grant Amount	Continuous (Every \$1,000)	-0.024	0.077	0.976		
Average Loan Amount	Continuous (Every \$1,000)	0.059	0.037	1.061		
College GPA	Continuous	-1.831	0.153	0.160	-0.840	***
Integration	Academic Integration (Every 10 Pts)	-0.179	0.027	0.836	-0.164	***
	Social Integration (Every 10 Pts)	-0.071	0.027	0.931	-0.069	***
<b>Institutional Level</b>						
Control	Private	-0.462	0.219	0.630	-0.370	**
Carnegie Classification	Master's	0.846	0.207	2.330	1.330	***
	Baccalaureate	0.213	0.297	1.238		

<sup>1</sup> Significance: \* p < 0.10; \*\* p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01

## Results

Tables 2 through 4 exhibit the multilevel multinomial analysis results by transfer types. Unstandardized coefficients, relative risk ratio, Δ percent, and statistical significance are included in each table. Interpretation of relative risk ratios is analogous to odds ratios in binary logistic regression. A relative risk ratio greater than 1 indicates positive effects on transferring to other institutions whereas relative ratios less than 1 are associated with reducing the likelihood of transfer. Δ percent indicates the change in the probability of transfer. For instance, Δ percent for females in Table 2 is -0.413, meaning that females are 41.3 percent less likely (due to its negative sign) than males to transfer.

## Reverse Transfer

Table 2 exhibits the findings on reverse transfer. The likelihood of transferring instead of staying enrolled at initial institutions was approximately 41 percent less for females than males. Students with higher admission test scores were less likely to transfer. A one-point increase in college GPA decreased the odds of transfer to two-year institutions by 84 percent. Every ten-point increase in academic integration decreased the chance of transfer by approximately 16 percent, whereas every ten-point increase in social integration decreased the odds of transferring by 7 percent.

As for students who were more likely to transfer to two-year institutions, first-generation students and stu-

Table 3. Horizontal Transfer Multilevel Analysis Results

Variable	Label	Coefficient	Std Error	Relative Risk Ratio	Δ%	Sig <sup>1</sup>
<b>Student Level</b>						
Intercept		-0.152	0.141			*
Gender	Female	-0.561	0.104	0.570	-0.430	***
	Asian	-0.221	0.212	0.802		
Race	Black	-0.067	0.203	0.935		
	Hispanic	0.254	0.207	1.290	0.290	***
	Race Not Specified	0.252	0.224	1.287		
Parent's Education	First-Generation	-0.040	0.129	0.961		
	One Parent With Bachelor's Degree	-0.028	0.130	0.972		
Family Income	2nd Quartile	-0.123	0.161	0.884		
	3rd Quartile	-0.300	0.167	0.741		
Admission Test	4th Quartile	-0.285	0.167	0.752		
	2nd Quartile	-0.640	0.145	0.527	-0.473	***
Average Pell Grant Amount	3rd Quartile	-1.296	0.146	0.274	-0.726	***
	4th Quartile	-1.938	0.174	0.144	-0.856	***
Average Loan Amount	Continuous (Every \$1,000)	0.007	0.150	1.007		
College GPA	Continuous	0.094	0.147	1.098	0.098	***
Integration	Academic Integration (Every 10 Pts)	-0.604	0.106	0.547	-0.453	***
	Social Integration (Every 10 Pts)	-0.125	0.017	0.883	-0.117	***
		-0.067	0.013	0.935	-0.065	***
<b>Institutional Level</b>						
Control	Private	-0.680	0.201	0.507	-0.493	***
Carnegie Classification	Master's	0.375	0.201	1.455	0.455	**
	Baccalaureate	-0.005	0.271	0.995		

<sup>1</sup> Significance: \* p < 0.10; \*\* p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01

dents of one parent with a bachelor's degree were approximately 95 percent and 87 percent more likely to transfer, respectively, than were students whose parents both held bachelor's degrees. Neither Pell grant nor loan amount had any effect on reverse transfer. Students enrolled at private institutions were less likely to reverse transfer (to two-year institutions) while students enrolled at master's institutions were more likely to.

### Horizontal Transfer

Table 3 displays the results of horizontal transfer analysis. Being female, having higher admission test scores, having higher college GPAs, and being academically and socially integrated were statistically significant relative to decreasing the horizontal transfer rate. Stu-

dents' decisions not to transfer to other four-year institutions were influenced particularly by their admission test scores. Compared to students in the lowest quartile, students in the fourth, third, and second quartiles were approximately 86, 73, and 47 percent less likely to transfer, respectively. Higher GPAs were also found to decrease the likelihood of horizontal transfer. Similar to the finding relative to reverse transfers, academic and social integration influenced students' decisions to transfer; this, combined with a student being female, decreased the likelihood of transfer by 43 percent.

The current study found that students were 9.8 percent more likely to transfer to other four-year institutions when their loan amounts increased by \$1,000. Students enrolled at master's institutions were approxi-

Table 4. Switch Transfer Multilevel Analysis Results

Variable	Label	Coefficient	Std Error	Relative Risk Ratio	Δ%	Sig <sup>1</sup>
<b>Student Level</b>						
Intercept		-2.877	0.168			***
Gender	Female	-1.050	0.252	0.350	-0.650	***
	Asian	0.101	0.482	1.106		
Race	Black	0.297	0.343	1.345		
	Hispanic	0.310	0.497	1.364		
	Race Not Specified	0.089	0.517	1.093		
Parent's Education	First-Generation	0.619	0.313	1.857	0.857	**
	One Parent With Bachelor's Degree	0.619	0.299	1.857	0.857	**
Family Income	2nd Quartile	0.540	0.377	1.717		
	3rd Quartile	0.655	0.418	1.925		
	4th Quartile	0.240	0.419	1.272		
Admission Test	2nd Quartile	-0.114	0.284	0.892		
	3rd Quartile	-1.202	0.417	0.301	-0.699	***
	4th Quartile	-1.365	0.431	0.255	-0.745	***
Average Pell Grant Amount	Continuous (Every \$1,000)	-0.036	0.091	0.965		
Average Loan Amount	Continuous (Every \$1,000)	0.121	0.050	1.129	0.129	**
College GPA	Continuous	-0.754	0.266	0.471	-0.529	***
Integration	Academic Integration (Every 10 Pts)	-0.115	0.036	0.891	-0.109	***
	Social Integration (Every 10 Pts)	-0.118	0.035	0.889	-0.111	***
<b>Institutional Level</b>						
Control	Private	0.548	0.332	1.730	0.730	*
Carnegie Classification	Master's	0.346	0.344	1.414		
	Baccalaureate	0.212	0.407	1.236		

<sup>1</sup> Significance: \* p < 0.10; \*\* p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < 0.01

mately 46 percent more likely to transfer to other four-year institutions whereas students enrolled at private institutions were approximately 49 percent less likely to transfer.

### Switch Transfer

Table 4 exhibits the analysis for students who transferred to an institution under different control. Students who were either first generation or who had one parent with a bachelor's degree were at a greater risk of switch transfer; they were approximately 86 percent more likely to transfer to another type of four-year institutions than were students whose parents were both college educated. As evidenced in the horizontal

transfer analysis, higher loan amounts increased the likelihood of transfer. Every \$1,000 increase in loans increased the chance of transfer by approximately 13 percent. In addition, students enrolled at private institutions were 73 percent more likely to transfer to public four-year institutions.

As the reverse and horizontal transfer analyses indicate, academic and social integration and college GPA were effective in reducing the likelihood of transfer. Every ten-point increase in academic and social integration was found to decrease the likelihood of transfer by approximately 11 percent. The findings also indicated that every one-point increase in college GPA decreased the chance of transfer by approximately 53 percent.

**Table 5. Ranked Order of Significant Factors by Transfer Type**

Rank	Revers Transfer		Horizontal Transfer		Switch Transfer	
	Variable	Label	Variable	Label	Variable	Label
1	Carnegie Classification	Master (+)	Admission Test	4th Quartile (-)	Parent's Education	First-Generation (+)
2	Parent's Education	First-Generation (+)		3rd Quartile (-)		One parent with BA (+)
3		One parent with BA (+)		2nd Quartile (-)	Admission Test	4th Quartile (-)
4	College GPA	Continuous (-)	Carnegie Classification	Master (+)	Control	Private (+)
5	Admission Test	4th Quartile (-)	College GPA	Continuous (-)	Admission Test	3rd Quartile (-)
6		3rd Quartile (-)	Gender	Female (-)	Gender	Female (-)
7		2nd Quartile (-)		Hispanic (+)	College GPA	Continuous (-)
8	Family Income	4th Quartile (-)	Integration	Academic integration (-)	Average Loan Amount	Continuous (+)
9	Gender	Female (-)	Average Loan Amount	Continuous (+)	Integration	Social integration (-)
10	Control	Private (-)	Integration	Social integration (-)		Academic integration (-)
11	Integration	Academic integration (-)				
12		Social integration (-)				

**Note:** (+) indicates a positive effect on transfer; (-) indicates negative effect on transfer

## Discussion

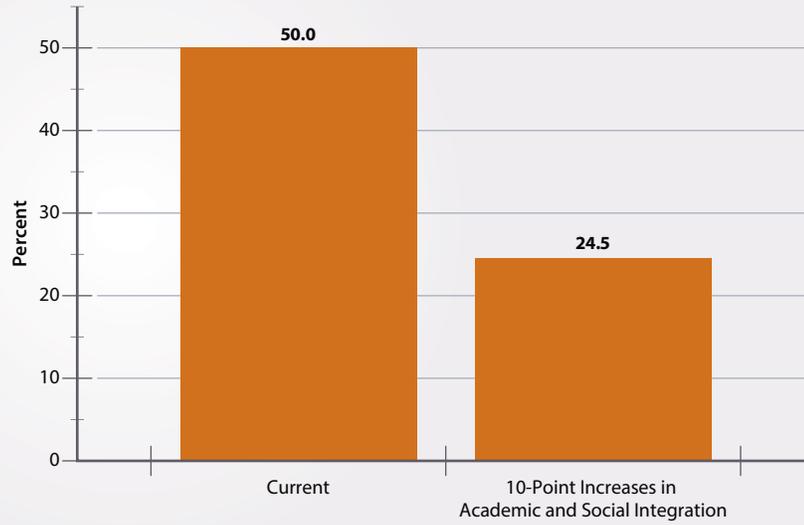
While a number of studies have examined students who transferred from two- to four-year institutions, there is a dearth of information on students transferring from four-year institutions. Transfer behaviors have been investigated less in part because of the complexity of tracking transfer students. For example, the destinations of students who transfer from four-year institutions are mostly unknown. Using national data, the current study investigated the transfer risk profiles of student and institutional characteristics at four-year institutions. The focal point of this study was to determine the impact of any student characteristic on different types of transfer behavior.

Table 5 summarizes ranked explanatory variables by types of transfers. The ‘+’ sign denotes a positive effect on transfer while the ‘-’ sign indicates a negative ef-

fect on transfer. The current study suggests that certain variables were statistically significant regarding specific types of transfer. For example, first-generation students were more likely to transfer to two-year institutions or to different types of four-year institutions. Higher loan amounts were not associated with students’ decisions to transfer to two-year institutions but did influence their transfer to another type of four-year institutions.

Some variables affected all three types of transfer: higher college GPAs, admission test scores, and integration scores were found to lower the transfer rate regardless of transfer type. Students with lower admission test scores were more likely to transfer. Their transfer rates increased when they earned lower college GPAs. While some may argue that students with higher college GPAs are more likely to transfer because they are seeking more rigorous academic challenges, the current study was not able to validate that argument.

Figure 2.  
Changes in  
Students'  
Transfer  
Probabilities



Conversely, higher levels of academic and social integration decreased transfer rates for all types of transfer. The effects of academic and social integration together were found to be the most effective in reducing the likelihood of reverse transfer. For example, assume that a Caucasian, male, first-generation student with no Pell grant or loan is considering transferring to a two-year institution because of his recent 2.50 GPA, a 0.5 point-drop from his previous GPA of 3.00. Assume, too, that he has academic and social integration scores of 65. Using the formula suggested by Hosmer and Lemeshow (1989), his estimated overall transfer risk would be 50.0 percent. Figure 2 depicts changes in the likelihood of this student transferring to a two-year college when institutional efforts are added. His likelihood of transfer decreases to 24.5 percent when his academic and social integration scores increase by ten points.

Many quantitative research studies include student characteristics such as gender, race, parents' educational background, family income, and admission test scores; however, these factors serve to control the effect of pre-existing characteristics prior to college matriculation. While institutional personnel may also learn to identify students with higher risks of transfer based on pre-existing characteristics, they have no ability to in-

fluence the status of these characteristics. Alternatively, this study demonstrated that academic and social integration were areas where institutions might focus their efforts to retain prospective transfer students. For the purposes of this study, the scope of academic and social integration was limited to general activities, such as meeting with faculty and academic advisors and participating in intramural sports and school clubs. Thus, an expansion of academic and social integration beyond these activities at each institution is expected to further decrease the likelihood of transfer among at-risk students. Future research exploring more specific activities associated with academic and social integration is recommended at the institutional level.

While it is reasonable to assume that some students transferred more than once in their college careers, this study investigated students' initial transfer to other institutions from their original four-year institutions. Thus, whether students had additional instances of transfer was not addressed in this study. Studying multiple transfer behavior posits certain important issues. For example, students who transferred multiple times may prolong graduation and accumulate greater loan amounts. The burden of greater loan amounts is assumed to have a particular impact on students from

lower-income groups. Such students may default on their student loans. Current governmental policies hold institutions of higher education accountable for students who fail to repay their educational loans. Studies examining the linkage between additional years to graduate, and student transfer and loan default will stimulate discussion of transfer students and their college success.

The timing of transfer is another area for future research. The current study defined transfer as whether

students transferred to other institutions from their original four-year institutions. It is reasonable to assume that students may have different issues concerning their transfer decision at different times during their college experience. The timing of college dropout from four-year institutions has been investigated (*e.g.*, Chen and DesJardins 2008). Exploring the timing of transfer from four-year institutions would be worthwhile and augmentative to the current literature on transfer students.

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# Mentoring Millennials: Perceptions and Analysis

*By Rajeev Jayadeva*

Millennials: a generation always in the news—and not just in mainstream media but in the more powerful and influential news outlet, social media. This generation has attention unlike any before (at least not since the Baby Boomers), and it is changing our world in ways we have yet to fully realize. Millennials are challenging the norms of previous generations, from the environment to technology to lifestyle. Clashes of the old and the new are inevitable. This essay considers older generations' perceptions of Millennials, analyzes these perceptions and Millennials' arguments against them, and considers how mentoring can help us understand these differences in order to better our society.

## Perceptions

“The 9–5 crowd,” “always on their phones,” “know it all,” “lazy,” “entitled,” “job hoppers”: these are some of the common descriptors of Millennials. All are stereotypes that, in the eyes of older generations, are valid and substantiated by what they perceive to be Millennials' failing to uphold established societal norms. I posted the question “What is the greatest challenge you face in working/interacting with Millennials?” on a popular listserv. Almost all of the many responses received touched upon the stereotypes mentioned above.

Consider the following:

*“When a project that is not part of their regular duties is given to them, they balk at it until they get used to*

*the idea. They are more likely to get on social media throughout the day.”*

*“I think the toughest part is their reluctance to take charge, to assert themselves and run with a project. They tend to wait for guidance and direction rather than asking questions or making suggestions.”*

*“It is a text message–driven group that [is] less likely to pick up a phone or talk face to face, leading to communication errors and problems. There is also a hint of entitlement and genuine surprise when their ideas are always the perfect solution.”*

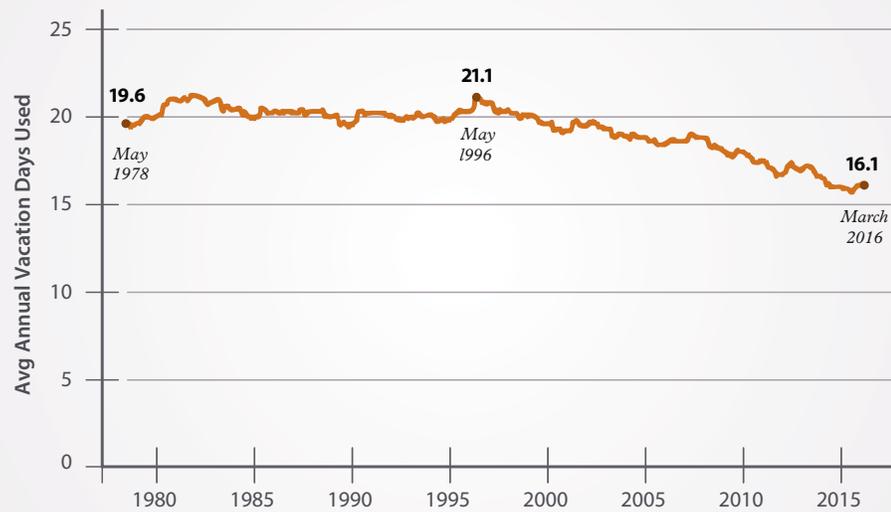
*“They are all so different. The youngest I have had issues with using all of [their] sick leave and/or vacation. Work ethic is really an issue [for] one of the Millennials in the office.”*

*“They do not want ‘duties as assigned by the supervisor’ added to their responsibilities without additional compensation.”*

*“The other issue can be their work/personal life balance. For some it comes across as they do not care about their job because they get to work when they get there and they leave right at 5. So what if they are a little late? This becomes an issue as they move into administrative roles, and their workday may not end at 5 because there is still work to be completed. It is also a problem when they are supervising staff [who] are older.”*

Figure 1.

## America's Declining Vacation Usage



Source: Carmichael (2016)

## Analysis: Breaking Down Perceptions

Older generations' perceptions of Millennials are clearly evident in these remarks. The remarks demonstrate the generational divide of how the older generation views Millennials through their lens of societal norms. While there are exceptions to every stereotype and generational difference, Millennials are “not lazy snowflakes,” as Wilkinson (2017) writes in her op-ed article for *The Guardian*. Millennials don't expect to work for free. An alarmingly overworked and underpaid generation, Millennials are taking a stand against the norm. Rather than “live to work,” Millennials “work to live.” Wilkinson (2017) writes, “As the line between work and home life becomes increasingly blurred, we need to resist the gradual erosion of labor rights that our ancestors strived to secure. As a demographic particularly likely to be low paid and insecurely employed, Millennials are on the front line of this battle” (2).

Does Millennials' need for work/life balance mean that they do not care about their jobs, or is the problem the misperception by members of the older generation, who for too long have “lived to work?” Data indicate that Millennials are working harder than any previous

generation and for far less; Millennials are more productive—despite their nine-to-five stereotype—than members of older generations. Are Millennials truly and simply “nine-to-five” but with better time management skills?

Although most Millennials leave their offices at five, they tend to be always connected through their smartphones and to constantly check their e-mail. According to Wilkinson (2017), “The claim that many Millennials leave work on the dot at 5 p.m. every day and refuse to answer work calls or e-mails over the weekend? Would that it were true. It's possible my social circle is just wildly unrepresentative, but among people I know, taking work home to complete in the evening and at weekends is the depressing norm” (2). In most cases, Millennial managers tend to be more available 24/7 than are members of older generations.

Research indicates that Millennials are actually workaholics. Project: Time Off and Gfk (the research team) surveyed approximately 5,000 full-time workers. Survey results indicated that Millennials are more likely than older workers to see themselves as “work martyrs.” Survey results showed that “43 percent of work martyrs were Millennials, compared with just 29 percent of overall survey respondents” (Carmichael 2016).

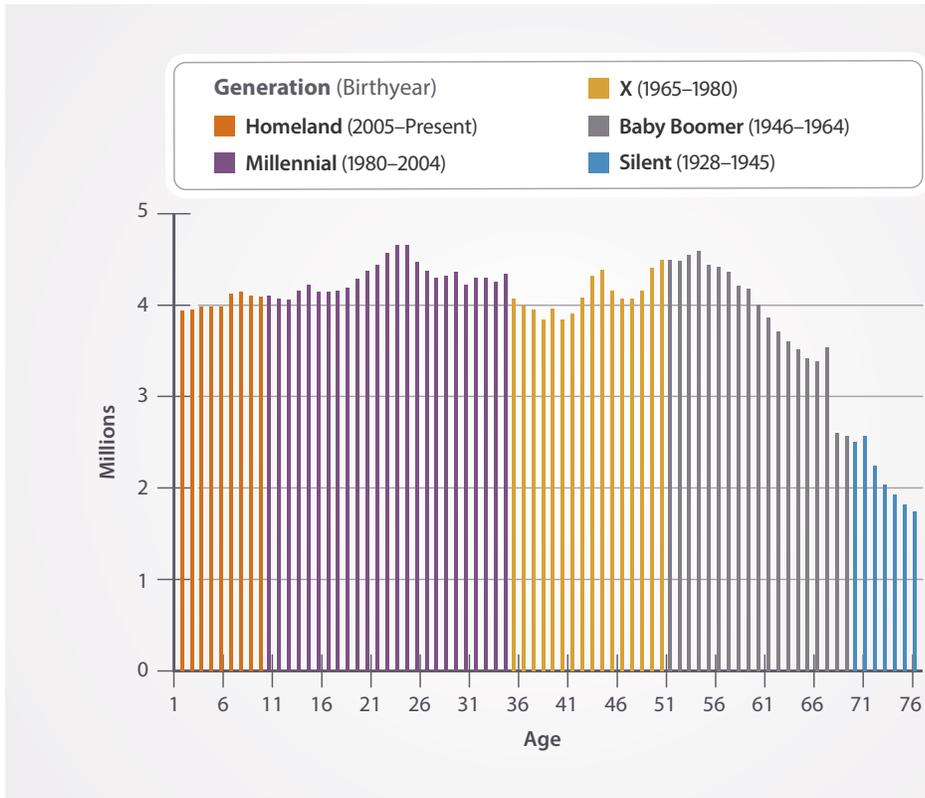


Figure 2.  
U.S. Population  
Distribution  
by Age, 2013

Source: Council of  
Economic Advisors (2014)

Millennials were also more likely than older workers to *want* to be seen as “work martyrs”; specifically, “48 percent of Millennials wanted their bosses to see them that way, while only 39 percent of Gen X did and 32 percent of Boomers did. Thirty-five percent of Millennials thought it was good to be seen as a work martyr by colleagues, while only 26 percent and 20 percent of Xs and Boomers agreed, respectively” (HBR 2016, 2). Additional data analysis from the *Harvard Business Review* shows that the average number of annual vacation days used in the United States decreased significantly from 1978 to 2016, a clear sign that Millennials are working much harder than their older counterparts and for much less in benefits and pay.

Millennials remain one of the greatest overachieving generations. In fact, more Millennials than any other generation are billionaires; consider Facebook co-founders Dustin Moskovitz, Eduardo Saverin, and Mark Zuckerberg and Airbnb co-founders Nathan Blecharczyk, Brian Chesky, and Joe Gebbia (Fottrell 2015). Conversely, many Millennials work harder than members of other generations to make ends meet: 21 percent of Millennials in the United States work more than one job in order to survive (Paoletta 2016). And many Millennials have enrolled in college only to find

themselves struggling with debt and having to work harder in low-paying jobs.

Data also indicate that Millennials differ demographically from older generations. As President Obama’s Council of Economic Advisors detailed in a 2014 report entitled “15 Economic Facts about Millennials,” Millennials now represent the largest generation in the United States—approximately one-third of the total population as of 2013 (White House Archives 2014).

Diversity also distinguishes Millennials from previous generations; many Millennials are children of immigrants who arrived in the United States after the 1940s (White House Archives 2014). Millennials in the United States are the most diverse generation by far in terms of ethnicity and race.

## Mentoring Millennials to Bridge the Differences

Mentoring can play a key role in a Millennial’s work life. As one respondent stated, “Honestly, I can’t think of any off the top of my head that cause me great angst. The rest of us in the office are old farts (she is 31; I’m the next youngest, at 47; and the remaining eight are spread out up to age 69), so it’s nice to have some

young energy. We appreciate her open-mindedness and acceptance of things/others that are different from us. We can teach her the business of the registrar's office and help her appreciate procedures and processes, and she can teach us (or remind us, perhaps) about acceptance and tolerance." There is a lot more that we can learn from one another than what sets us apart.

Mentoring a Millennial should not be seen as a challenge but rather embraced as an opportunity to teach the younger generation about your own struggles and why you perceive things differently. Fostering understanding of the struggles and the challenges of each generation will help build a strong foundation for the mentor-mentee relationship.

Communication and leadership are key elements in mentoring a Millennial. Millennials look to leaders but not necessarily to managers who micromanage them. They seek leaders who inspire them, and particularly those who lead by example. They expect guidance not because they cannot handle a task but because they look up to their leaders to guide them and show them the way. Constant feedback is important, but it should

not be assumed that the Millennial worker is in a hurry for success (in fact, quite the contrary).

*Harvard Business Review* (2010) describes five characteristics Millennials seek in their supervisor: someone who helps them navigate their career path; a leader who will provide straight feedback; someone who will mentor and coach; a boss who will sponsor them for professional development opportunities; and one who is comfortable with flexible schedules. Millennials set high standards for themselves and seek the same from their companies. They are much more inclined than previous generations to be socially conscious. Finding work that is personally fulfilling is of great importance to Millennials (Meister and Willyerd 2010).

*Harvard Business Review* also describes three styles of mentoring that can be utilized for Millennial mentees. Reverse mentoring "shifts the responsibility for organizing mentoring to line employees, who learn from senior executives by mentoring *them*. A Millennial is matched to an executive and assigned to teach him or her how to, say, use social media to connect with customers. It's an effective way to give junior employees

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a window into the higher levels of the organization, so that when the mentees retire, the younger generation has a better understanding of the business” (Meister and Willyerd 2010, 3).

Group mentoring “is a less-resource-intensive but still effective way of giving Millennials the feedback they crave. It can be led by a more senior manager or can be peer-to-peer, but in both cases, the company sets up a technology platform that allows employees to define mentoring in their own terms” (Meister and Willyerd 2010, 3–4). Anonymous mentoring is an approach that “uses psychological testing and a background review to match mentees with trained mentors outside the organization. Exchanges are conducted entirely online, and both the mentee and the mentor, who is usually a professional coach or seasoned executive, remain anonymous. The engagement, generally paid for by the

mentee’s company, lasts six to twelve months” (Meister and Willyerd 2010, 5–6).

## Conclusion

Millennials need to feel like valued members of the workplace and to have a good work/life balance. These characteristics should not cloud your judgement in mentoring and fostering a Millennial employee. Millennials as a collective are hard-working; it is our own perceptions that we as mentors must overcome in order to help Millennials become the future leaders of our institutions. A well-mentored Millennial is often a great asset with a diverse set of skills. As one respondent wrote, “My one staff member who is a Millennial is one of the sharpest, best staff members I have.” A little understanding can go a long way in mentoring Millennials.

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## Giving Back to the Profession: Reflections Related to Mentoring Support and Success

*By Randall Langston*

As I reflect on more than two decades of work in higher education, my mind takes me back 23 years to when I was a student in a graduate program in higher education. The professor told us neophyte students that working in the “academy” was more than just learning to read and recite theory: it also represented an opportunity to gain practical knowledge from those in the profession. He introduced us to a concept called ‘mentoring’ and remarked on how important it was that we, as ‘mentees,’ find someone in the profession who would help guide us in the journey from student to new employee, to mid-career, and, later, to leadership. At the time, I did not fully comprehend the point of this activity. For me, work was a linear process. Essentially, one secured a job, performed and achieved in that role, was promoted, and “rinsed and repeated” for the next job. Somehow, work in the profession would consist of some neat package where one would learn and gain increasing amounts of knowledge with each new opportunity. At some point one would be magically transported to “self-actualization.” (In deference to Maslow, it is not quite that simple.)

Over the years, I have been fortunate to have some truly amazing mentors take a vested interest in my growth and success in enrollment management. These individuals have helped me understand nuances and dynamics within the profession and how to navigate and learn from the many situational realities I have encountered. These people invested their valuable time in my success. (For that I am extremely grateful to each one of them!) Given that I have directly benefited from

these individuals, I firmly believe that giving back to the profession is key to helping a new generation of aspiring higher education professionals achieve their own success. What follows are some of my thoughts related to mentoring and how we engage in this valuable process.

Mentors, called “beacons of hope” by Dondero (1997), are essentially the sentinels who keep watch over individuals and shepherd them along a path for success in the profession. Heward (1996) called them “gatekeepers” who mentor, advise, and support the careers of others (20). This article seeks to clarify the reasons we mentor others and to articulate components of successful mentoring relationships.

### Why do we mentor others?

Given the hectic pace of work, it is often difficult to find time to have meaningful conversations with students or employees about their goals and objectives. Pressing meetings on critical topics happen virtually every day. This, coupled with ad hoc requests, may exacerbate one’s time constraints. Combine this with the imperative to provide transformational and principled leadership to professional and classified staff, and there is no doubt that many enrollment management (EM) leaders’ days are highly demanding.

Nevertheless, every day one reality comes back to me: Individuals whom I respect in the profession took time out of their equally busy days to make an authentic commitment to helping me be the best EM employee

and, later, leader. One mentor helped me understand the bigger picture by sending me out of state with a senior EM leader to participate in an externship at another college. The goal was for me to better understand how they approach the work they do. Another mentor asked questions related to the work that I did, how I interacted with others, and ways to solve work-related problems that confronted me. Other mentors offered me honest career advice.

With Generation Y and Z poised to enter or advance in the profession, I consider it imperative to mentor others. Studies suggest that young people need guidance and support if they are to be successful in the workplace (Eby *et al.* 2008, van Eck Peluchette and Jeanquart 2000, Wallace 2001). We need people who see the big picture and have wisdom and vision. We need people who appreciate the value of mentoring and who understand how their influence can make a difference for the employees they eventually will lead and the students they will serve. It is for all of these reasons that mentoring is of such great value.

## Listening

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks as a mentor is to listen. Snowber (2005) describes “listening and mentoring [as] partners in a dance” (345). Gardiner (1998) refers to active listening and showing genuine interest in others. As professionals, we are inherently problem solvers. But sometimes in the urge to solve a pressing issue, we are quick to interject with solutions. As achievers in the profession, many of us enjoy offering advice and solutions. As leaders of people, we are tasked with identifying issues, developing answers to problems, and working diligently to implement solutions. But mentoring is different from the daily work we do. Mentoring requires engaging in *deep listening* (Snowber 2005). But what is deep listening, and how does it manifest itself? Clutterbuck (1991) describes it as employing empathy, being a soundboard, and encouraging. Active listening, engaged thought, and providing different scenarios with probable solutions extend well beyond the courtesy of listening and thanking someone.

## Advice

Everyone has been there before—on the outside looking in and wondering how someone engages in a partic-

ular job or occupation. Fear or uncertainty may cause people to doubt their abilities. In meetings with staff or students, I often hear questions such as “how did you get where you are,” “how do you do your job,” “how do you understand all the complexities of your job,” “how can I do your job,” or “how do you balance competing priorities?” As a mentor, I work hard to help young professionals understand and visualize what success looks like; I define pathways (*i.e.*, internships) to help them “get in the door”; and I express how important it is for them to develop a plan that seamlessly shifts them from one part of their career to the next. Some advice is as simple as encouraging them to network by attending local or statewide conferences. Other advice is more pragmatic, for example, urging them to scour job boards to identify the qualifications that are requisite for students/employees to succeed in their roles. I always assess students on an individual basis and offer solutions that can successfully propel them from one career stage to the next. But I also tell students and employees to do the most exemplary job they can in their current role and to aspire to meet the qualifications of the next level up. This can also take the form of proactively reaching out and authentically sharing with mentees what issues may be holding them back from success and providing solutions, or pathways, to help them accomplish their goals. Certainly, entry-level staff members may not yet have the skill set for the next-level position, but the first way to be successful is for them to excel in their current role and then read about job expectations at the next level up. This parallel pathway can be most beneficial. Following are some components of the mentor/mentee relationship that can be applied to any situation and produce a successful outcome for both parties.

## Components of a Successful Mentoring Relationship

As higher education professionals, we are bombarded with messages or “norms” that prescribe how we should act, from ways we should provide transformational leadership to understanding the inherent role of political astuteness. One concept we are told is imperative is mentoring others. Drawing upon Gardiner’s (1998) “Model of Friendship in the Mentoring Relationship,” I apply some behavioral components as a way to describe mentoring in enrollment management today.

## The Contract

Gardiner (1998) notes that the “mentoring contract relates to the personal, professional, ethical, and moral boundaries of the relationship” (78). Typically, goals at this stage of the mentoring relationship are “established and set” (Gardiner 1998, 78). In higher education, we have contracts for nearly everything. Addressing issues ranging from procurement to those related to human resources, contracts are binding agreements that (1) describe the norms we should follow and (2) stipulate what repercussions may result from not adhering to the norms. Enrollment management leaders often are viewed as stewards of our youths. We work in a collaborative culture that supports and encourages shared governance and high-intensity interaction with others. Mentor and mentee (also called protégé) agreements in EM are often informal and emerge as a result of a number of factors. Perhaps the mentee has worked in the office of an EM leader and has developed a working professional relationship. In other cases, young aspiring EM and student affairs professionals have asked leadership for its support and guidance. Still other cases may stem from internships or graduate assistantships in which students were involved in the work of their leaders. Regardless, mutual friendship and shared common interests often bring together mentors and protégés. Formal contracts can prove useful between leaders and mentees. The contract essentially codifies the working relationship between the two individuals and explicitly sets ground rules and norms to guide that experience. Goals, expectations, and outcomes can be stipulated and a plan of action for the experience (as well as long-term) can be established.

## Reliability

Gardiner (1998) states that there is an inherent need for both parties to be reliable toward each other. Reliability is closely correlated with trust. Scott (2012) notes that “one of the most important elements in the mentor/mentee relationship is trust [and trust does not] come quickly or easily and requires time and patience to build” (n.p.). One of the easiest ways to build trust is to be dependable and consistent. Make plans to meet with the mentee, and make sure you prioritize this meeting. Meeting at a set time each week or month instills confidence and lets the mentee know that you are genuinely

committed to the relationship. (Know that the mentee looks up to you and that your advice and feedback will be contextualized and carefully analyzed.)

## Understanding and Patience

Often, mentees who are new to the profession have scant knowledge or background to draw upon. They have preconceived notions of work and their obligations but have little experience to lean on. As a mentor, one of my primary obligations is to demonstrate patience and understanding and, as Gardiner (1998) notes, to be not just a sounding board but also an advocate. Caring genuinely about the mentee’s opinions and comments and providing subtle excitement and encouragement are ways not only to build rapport (Gardiner 1998) but also to generate good will and trust. It is essential to remember that the mentee does not have the breadth or depth in the profession (or life experiences) that you have; your guidance and patience will be essential in their development.

## Shaping: Support, Active Listening, and Sharing

Gardiner (1998) notes that “as one of the purposes of a mentoring relationship is to help, the visibility of support is critical” (80). As a mentor, it is crucial to be fully engaged. Scheduling a meeting with the mentor for meetings’ sake is not productive; often, the mentee will see through minimal attempts to schedule time together. In contrast, I have tried to make sure that time I spend with the mentee is worthwhile for both the student and myself. Reminding each other of what we spoke about in previous meetings and of what we had planned to accomplish in the present meeting are ways to set a positive tone for the meeting. Supporting one another through active listening benefits both the mentor and mentee. By building this important foundation, a mentor can set in motion a series of events that can impact the life of the mentee for years and even decades to come.

## Conclusion

Mentoring should never be viewed as a chore but rather a dynamic and transformational opportunity to impact a student’s life. Often, the legacy that some people leave is the professional relationships they have forged with

others. In fact, it's not unusual to hear keynote and other conference presentations in which the speakers describe how their mentors helped shape who they are

today. Mentoring is a privilege; as I continue to work in the profession, so I will continue to treasure my relationships with mentees.

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### About the Author

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**Randall Langston** is Vice President for Enrollment Management at Texas Women's University. Reporting to the TWU University Chancellor and President, Langston serves as a senior administrative officer where he provides vision and leadership to staff in the Offices of Admissions, Registrar, Financial Aid and the Office of Admissions Processing. Langston is responsible for developing strategic enrollment management plans, high level statistical and mathematical data analysis, predictive modeling, and building systems and structures to assist students from matriculation to graduation.

Langston has worked in higher education for more than 20 years. During this time, he has enjoyed success in meeting or exceeding enrollment targets at each institution he has worked at. Prior to TWU, he worked at The College at Brockport—State University of New York as Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management. During his tenure at Brockport, the college consistently enrolled record classes. Prior to Brockport, Langston worked as the executive director of enrollment management at the University of Northern Colorado, where he provided leadership to the admissions, financial aid, and registrar areas on campus. Prior to UNC, Randall worked at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs as director of admissions services.

Additionally, Randall served as director of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Findlay, where he was the chief admissions officer and led enrollment management and marketing for the university. Randall also served as an assistant director of admission and then as associate director (regional director) at the University of Denver. Randall frequently speaks at statewide, regional, and national conferences on issues related to enrollment management, statistical data analysis, predictive modeling, e-communications, and marketing in higher education.

Randall earned a Ph.D. degree in higher education from The University of The Free State (Republic of South Africa), a master's degree in Higher Education Administration with a specialization in college student personnel administration from Texas Tech University, and a Bachelor of Science degree from Sam Houston State University (TX).

# Can a Campus-Wide Faculty Mentorship Program Improve Student Success?

*By Jacquelyn D. Elliott*

Mentoring in higher education takes many forms—faculty to student, student to student, and faculty to faculty (Phillips and Dennison 2015). Usually, we think of programs involving student mentoring as those aimed at student success, and, thus, as improving retention. This article posits that faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs also have an impact, though that impact often is not considered. The data are limited to a single institutional case study, but there is some early evidence that, indeed, faculty mentoring programs have a greater impact on students than one might think. The evidence for these observations derives from 22 semi-structured interviews conducted in 45-minute sessions over two days; three areas are highlighted: faculty satisfaction, meaningful relationships, and continued learning in one's academic field. All of these have a seemingly positive impact on students in the classrooms of faculty in mentoring relationships. Given these preliminary findings, the purpose of this article is to highlight some best practices for launching a campus-wide faculty mentoring program.

## Introduction

Higher education today, worldwide, faces the challenge of providing a new generation of students with the knowledge and skills needed to be globally competitive. The once-unscathed sector of higher education now faces financial cuts and strapped budgets. In fact, campuses are facing some of the most challenging

budget decisions in history, making it difficult to identify new resources, develop promising programs, and reward talent. How do institutions provide high-quality education in such demanding times? The answer lies in faculty—particularly in young, vibrant faculty who seek to advance their institutions through well-planned and formalized faculty mentoring programs.

A university-wide mentoring program evens the playing field for all faculty, leveling discrepancies between departments that do the work naturally and organically and those whose practices are siloed and fractured. A formalized program can help overcome junior faculty members' sense of isolation and lack of support or respect pre-promotion. A well-executed mentoring program ensures that junior faculty know they are cared for and positions seasoned faculty to share their knowledge, gain a new sense of purpose, and be energized in their own day-to-day work (Elliott 2017).

Such programs expose faculty to administrative best practices, help them feel more connected to the campus community, assist them in navigating bureaucratic politics, and aid them in developing stronger teaching and research skills—all aspects that increase student learning and satisfaction. In essence, the happier and more satisfied the faculty member, the happier and more satisfied the student.

Even though the one-on-one faculty mentoring model is best known, mentoring also represents a range of activities designed to gather individuals in a program for training, discussion, and celebration.

## Launching A Program

Deciding to launch a faculty mentoring program requires a lot of time and initiative. For a program to be successful will require the support of decision makers so that adequate time and funding are provided. Essentially, two stages are involved in launching an effective program: developing a program proposal and implementing the program after approval.

### Proposal Development

A proposal is the most critical component of the entire process. Be sure to assess feasibility, identify any potential obstacles, and address stakeholder concerns and questions. Write the proposal with the audience (the president and provost) in mind. One of the most important strategies in creating a successful proposal is to note that accreditation principles explicitly identify faculty development (Phillips, Crane and Dennison 2010). Presenting exemplar programs from other institutions helps win over naysayers, demonstrates good stewardship, and legitimizes the work.

The proposal should assess *the need* for mentoring. Areas to consider are faculty attrition/retention, student attrition/retention, the cost of hiring a new faculty member, an assessment of the current level of formal and informal mentoring on campus, and the desire of the faculty to participate in such a program.

Another important aspect to include in the proposal is the availability of campus resources such as Web/digital support, a program administrator, facilitators/trainers, meeting space, availability of participants, and adequate funding for supplies and meetings. Finally, be sure to describe how the program will be evaluated. (More information about evaluation is included toward the end of this article.) Program implementation is the next step after the program proposal.

### Program Implementation

Implementing a program can take as long as a year. This is because a pilot year should be introduced and assessed before a program is formally launched. The pilot year should include all the aspects of the intended program so any challenges can be worked out before the program goes public. During the pilot year, bring in only the closest allies of the institution—that is, those who have patience for any missteps and would not attempt sabotage.

Ensure the pilot year orientation session begins with an overview of the goals of the faculty mentoring program, followed by lifting exercises whereby participants work in assigned pairs before the formal mentoring relationship begins. Examples include setting times to meet, describing the expectations of the mentor and mentee roles, trust exercises, a plan and timetable for the year, and signing the mentor/mentee agreement. Include training exercises in the orientation session, and set up an electronic portal so that ongoing communication and resources can be shared with participants throughout the year. Conduct summative and formative evaluations throughout, and have a closing session during which participants can evaluate the program's strengths and weaknesses, participate in closure exercises, and volunteer to serve again as mentors and mentees (if interested). Finally, celebrate the participants.

Perhaps the most critical components of the pilot (and actual) program are the pairing of mentors and mentees and the recruitment of the program administrator. In the case study, two pairs dropped from the pilot program because they felt they *had* to participate—that is, they did not feel their participation was truly *voluntary*. If participants are not willing and excited, the program is sure to fail.

### How to Structure the Program

Many of the program's elements have already been discussed in the pilot-year section above, but a few more tips pertain to the structure the program. These include providing an overview of a model program, training the facilitators/trainers, articulating the role of the program administrator, and creating resources for participants' self-help and training.

Once the program is officially launched (following the pilot year), participants should be invited back for an orientation kick-off session. Here, two things should be done differently from the pilot program orientation: First, highlight a model program so participants can visualize what success looks like at another institution; second, share findings—best and worst—from the pilot year. Sharing the pitfalls of the previous year can help prevent new participants' replicating them. Sharing the victories can help participants see the benefits of engaging in the program, particularly when schedules are challenging and time is limited.

Facilitators/trainers will have been trained for the pilot year, but they now will have the results of the pi-

lot program to help them better guide program participants toward success. It may be reasonable to adjust the role or expectations of the program administrator in light of the findings of the pilot year.

A valuable resource to help guarantee a successful mentoring program is a Web-based resource library that includes self-help guides, training tools, mentor/mentee sample exercises, assessments, literature on mentoring, and a space where discussion threads can be posted.

## Program Evaluation

To truly understand a program's effectiveness, it is important to conduct an evaluation. Formative and summative evaluation processes should be used so that mid-year corrections can be made; also be sure to develop a summary of the final program and its effectiveness. Evaluation of faculty mentoring programs is still evolving, but the following three recommendations derive from the institutional case study described at the beginning of this chapter:

- ◆ Identify the primary purpose of the evaluation. Will it be formative or summative? A formative evaluation

provides information collected during the course of the mentoring program and is used to help improve the program during operation (Karcher *et al.* 2006). A summative evaluation is collected upon completion of the program in order to demonstrate the extent to which the program has achieved its objectives (Karcher *et al.* 2006). In preparing for the summative evaluation, be sure to determine what kind of information would be most useful. In the case study, the focus was on the value of the program, faculty perceptions of self-improvement/development/growth, and how the program was impacting students in the classroom as a result of improved faculty satisfaction. Other questions to consider are: What impact is the program having at the department level? On the institution as a whole? Are more women and people of color in leadership positions as a result of the program? These questions are important, but ultimately, descriptive data about the program and its participants must be collected so evaluation findings can be better understood.

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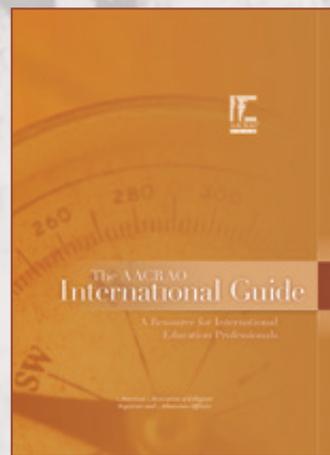
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- ◆ Examine the program goals and metrics. Consider process outcomes, participant/student experiences/perception outcomes, and organizational effect outcomes. Examples include such measurables as frequency of meetings, percentage of cooperation with the program, analysis of student add/drops of courses taught by faculty participating versus not participating in mentoring, and how many faculty completed a plan for engaging students in the classroom and in learning exercises. Other areas on which to focus include perception of the program's value by mentors and mentees, level of trust by mentors and mentees, job satisfaction, self-efficacy in the workplace, the ability to better navigate departmental/institutional politics, and feelings of inclusion within the workplace (Elliott 2017, Philips and Denison 2016).
- ◆ Determine how the data will be collected. In the case study example, the program administrator used quantitative and qualitative metrics. Evaluations were provided to mentors and mentees after the program launch/orientation session, each individual mentoring session, and at the end of the program year. Thus, all three programmatic areas were assessed using surveys. Qualitative data were derived

from mid-year formative interviews and end-of-year summative discussions. It was also important to determine why two mentees dropped out of the program; perhaps similar actions could be prevented in future years of the program.

Collecting data is of no value if it is not analyzed and the findings communicated to program participants, faculty considering participating in the future, and institutional decision makers.

## Conclusion

Findings from this single institutional case study revealed that faculty satisfaction, meaningful work relationships, and continued learning in one's academic field all had a seemingly positive impact on students enrolled in courses taught by faculty in mentoring relationships. It therefore stands to reason that schools experiencing student attrition may wish to consider implementing a faculty-to-faculty mentoring program. Such programs not only improve student satisfaction, but also have a positive impact on faculty members' own sense of value, professional development, and enthusiasm for their work.

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**Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.** applies her areas of expertise in recruitment and retention strategies, staff/faculty training and development, fund raising/capital campaigns, market research, database communications, strategic planning, organizational histories, and goal mapping. She currently holds dual roles as Chief Enrollment Specialist with Marion Military Institute and as President of enrollmentFUEL, a national higher education student search firm. She also has a faculty appointment with King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, where she works as a faculty development trainer with the Academic Leadership Center of the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She served on the AACRAO Board of Directors as Vice President for International Education and is the immediate past editor of the SACRAO Journal. Contact the author at [elliottjacqui@gmail.com](mailto:elliottjacqui@gmail.com) for samples of exercises she developed for her pilot faculty mentoring program.

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## Choose Wisely: The Dark Side of Mentoring

*By Monique Perry*

Mentorship is a critical and necessary practice in the journey of a leader. Whether a mentor is seasonal, functional, or even a celebrity aspiration; the ability to learn and be coached along the pathway to transformative leadership is a gift. Considering the mentoring practice in the workplace today, conversation often resonates around finding mentors, being a good mentor, and the overall benefits of mentorship. However, there is another side of mentorship that I think warrants dialog as well.

The dark side of mentorship is the context of this practice that includes misaligned expectations and general negative consequences. At the root of mentorship selection, an up-and-coming leader might assume that because someone has attained a leadership role they possess the leadership toolkit and values that should be replicated. But, unfortunately, as with any industry, those who have attained leadership roles are not always models to be followed. Consider examples of college administrators and more prominently CEOs of major corporations who have traded values and integrity for self-serving pursuits that have little to do with the mentorship and development of their organizations. You do not have to peruse far to find these examples. While mentorship is a practice that I fully endorse as a benefactor and provider, in considering these factors, there are a few realities of the dark side of mentorship that I would like to shed a bit of light on.

### Do Your Homework and Don't Make Assumptions

Oftentimes new or aspiring leaders assume that those in roles of prominence, influence, and functional leadership have skills that anyone in their immediate circumference would want to replicate. Upon closer examination, this may be a fallacy. It is important to note that in *any* industry (not just in higher education) everyone who is in a leadership role is not in that role due to their competence, transformational leadership skills, or ability to cast a vision that people will follow. Some are in roles due to political connections, timing, or a shallow talent pool. The latter can produce leaders in positions of high authority who would not otherwise be able to compete for the position. It's important as leaders seek mentorship to really consider the track record and reputation as one of the many data points in creating a mentorship relationship. This is critical, as mentees may set their sights on an individual who is not the best example or source for growth or development. It's a sound practice to identify people in target positions you aspire to, but, if possible, put yourself in a situation where you can learn about their true leadership brand and reputation. What do people say about this person's leadership style and impact when they are not around? Do they have a reputation of developing and breeding other leaders? How do they engage with

their direct reports? These are a few of the questions you should consider when selecting a mentor.

It is equally important to new and aspiring leaders to come to terms with the realisms that all leaders are not created equal—nor can all leaders contribute to a successful and fruitful mentor-mentee relationship. There are more good leaders vs. those who do not serve as good candidates; but this fact is something to be very conscious of.

## You Can Learn Mentorship-Like Lessons From A Leader With Challenges

Similar to family, we cannot choose who we work for in most situations. As a result, a leader may find themselves in a situation where they work for a supervisor who cannot serve in a mentorship capacity. It's important to note that a person can be an average supervisor or manager but not have the qualities to serve as a mentor. Most leaders do their best, but it is very rare to find a direct supervisor who also serves in a mentor capacity, as some leaders may not have the tools or the time. You may have situations where your direct supervisor or another leader provides mentor-like lessons on what you may want to avoid, or how you want to approach situations differently when you encounter them. When you observe them in situations where they may not build relationships the way you would, communicate, or manage work in a transformational way, observe those situations and always reflect on what to avoid. Consider what you would do differently, and how you would lead in that situation if given the opportunity. You may want to consider journaling lessons learned when working

for a poor leader to recollect things you do not want to repeat. You can learn from everyone, and in some cases, you learn what *not* to do. Some of the best tools in my leadership toolbox have come from observing challenged leaders.

## Remember to Pay It Forward

With leadership responsibility comes the expectation of being an example to those you lead formally and informally. As a leader acquires lessons from mentorship, it's essential that they remember to serve others as a result. Acquiring tools from mentorship lessons, but then refraining from sharing those to impact and develop others can be self-serving and is not a positive example others can learn from. Paying it forward in mentorship comes in two parts, and being a good mentor is the main goal. While you may have acquired tools from poor or challenged leaders, don't become that challenged leader! Maintain a commitment to constantly learn, be open to feedback, and stay humble. Additionally, embrace that you have a responsibility to impact and grow other leaders. When it's all said and done, the true legacy of a leader rests with the people they impact and grow.

As you search for mentorship or renew your commitment to being a quality mentor, I assert to you that I truly believe that the light of leadership truly outweighs the dark side. Yet, it's imperative for mentees and possible mentors to recognize all facets of a mentorship relationship and contemplate the themes I've raised to help shape future mentor connections and practice. But don't ever forget to let your light shine! Bright lights are needed in the higher education world; our students are counting on it.

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### *About the Author*

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**Monique Perry, Ed.D.**, currently serves as Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services at York Technical College, leading five areas at the College including Admissions, Recruitment & Orientation, Financial Aid, One-Stop Center, Academic Records, and Enrollment Data and Communications. Dr. Perry has been a member of the York Tech family for seven years having served as full-time faculty, and Director of Strategic Marketing and Communications prior to assuming her current role. Dr. Perry has a private-sector background, but developed a love for higher education that serves as the passion for her work to support student success. She enjoys sharing insights and opportunities through publications, conference presentations, and speaking.

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## AACRAO Research: A Year in Review 2017

*By Wendy Kilgore*

AACRAO examined nine research areas of interest to its members in 2017. Six took the form of 60-Second Surveys; one was a career profile; another examined community college completion initiatives including student attitudes about community college; and one was completed in support of an AACRAO publication. AACRAO partnered with the American Council on Education for a 60-Second Survey on data use to help support their related project on data and the college executive leadership. January's 60-Second Survey on student records management practices was in response to a couple of member authors seeking institutional practice information to support the content of their AACRAO conference session on the same topic. In addition, there was a confluence in research interests as one AACRAO member was studying coaching and mentoring for his dissertation. This allowed AACRAO Research to create a 60-Second Survey that would help both his research and AACRAO's.

60-Second Survey topics:

- ◆ Student records management practices
- ◆ A look at coaching and mentoring
- ◆ Transfer credit policy
- ◆ Social media monitoring and the admissions process
- ◆ The use (or not) of electronic transcripts
- ◆ Use of and access to data: opinions on institutional data practices

Other topics:

- ◆ Chief enrollment management officer career profile
- ◆ The state of college completion initiatives at U.S. community colleges
- ◆ Grades and grading practices

As with 2016 efforts, these initiatives were designed to help meet AACRAO's research goals:

- ◆ Contribute to a better understanding of the factors and conditions that impact higher education academic/enrollment services and ultimately student success
- ◆ Use the Research Advisory Board to engage the membership in determining the focus of the research
- ◆ Develop new insights and information for our members to help them successfully lead their institutions in a continually evolving environment
- ◆ Maintain current partnerships and develop new partnerships with other organizations and associations who share common interests with AACRAO
- ◆ Disseminating relevant, up-to-date research on student success to practitioners and institutional decision makers

The average number of unduplicated institutional responses increased over last year's average to 872 per

60-Second Survey. Included in this article is a brief introduction of the research topic and summary of the key findings, which have been modified slightly from the original reports. The purpose of this article is to provide a single source of research finding takeaways from 2017. With the exception of the data from the grades and grading practices survey, the related reports can be found in their entirety on the AACRAO webpage. The grades and grading practices data will be released as a book through AACRAO publications.

## Student Records Management Practice

A related AACRAO study was completed in early 2016. That study examined the impact of electronic management content (ECM) solutions (more recently branded as Content Services Platform) on student records management. The January 60-Second Survey contained similar content and provided a broader insight into institutional records management practices from a larger sample size than did the earlier study. The practice context for both was the same and can be summarized by the quote below from the AACRAO 2016 report.

*“Higher education is not exempt from the intensifying demands for effective records management. In fact, institutions that do not effectively manage their student records, regardless of format, face increased risks. The July 2014 edition of Records Quarterly: A Newsletter of the University of Cincinnati Records Management Program made note of these increased risks in their article ‘Hoarders Records Edition’ as an increased threat to the security of sensitive information and court sanctions for not following policies.” (4)*

### Key Findings from the 2017 60-Second Survey

- ◆ Nearly all (94%) of the responding institutions have a student records management schedule and/or policy.
- ◆ Nearly all (97%) identify the transcript as a permanent document.
- ◆ Almost three quarters (73%) of institutions with a policy and/or schedule use AACRAO guidelines as a student records management practice resource.
- ◆ More than half (59%) have a single records management document that covers both policy and the retention schedule.
- ◆ Document retention periods vary considerably among institutions.
- ◆ The institution’s SIS/ERP is identified as the official source of student records for fewer than half (46%) of respondents.
  - Fifteen percent (15%) still identify paper as the official copy
  - Nineteen percent (19%) identify the scanned paper copy as the official record.
- ◆ More than eight in 10 (84%) retain more than one copy of a student record for all or at least some current student records.
- ◆ Almost half (46%) do not purge any student records or only purge some records in accordance with the student records management policy and/or schedule.
- ◆ For most (71%), the office that “owns the record” is responsible for purging the records.

In this sample, the percentage of institutions that have identified the SIS/ERP as the official source of the student record is identical (46%) to the percentage reporting the same in the smaller sample from the AACRAO ECM ownership and impact on student records management report (AACRAO 2016, 21). This fact, combined with the more than 80 percent in this current sample who also reported keeping more than one version of current student records, warrants including the following recommendation from the ECM report:

*“The vast majority of institutions run most of their primary student records business based on data that resides in the SIS/ERP, not in the other systems or on paper, including billing, student transcripts, degree progression, internal and external reporting, records audits, and financial aid calculations among others. If this sample is representative of the population of institutions overall, we feel that those that do not identify the SIS/ERP as the official source of student records, but also rely on that data for any or all of the business functions above, must be able to ensure that data in the information source they have identified as official matches the data they are pulling the data for the business functions. Not doing so could potentially increase the risk for audit findings and student record errors such as transcript errors and degree status errors.” (21)*

Those who responded that their institution does not purge all records in accordance with the institution’s

policy and/or schedule were asked why not. Many of the replies can be grouped into one of the following explanations:

- ◆ A lack of staffing/time;
- ◆ Gaps in policy;
- ◆ The ability to identify document types in the document imaging system;
- ◆ Inability to purge electronic records;
- ◆ Fear of letting go of old documents “just in case”;
- ◆ Belief that since the records are now electronic there is no need to purge; and
- ◆ Difficulty in getting institution-wide buy-in to make it a priority (Appendix E).

The following two respondent comments highlight why AACRAO continues to address student records management in its research, publications, and conference sessions.

*“The most difficult part of maintaining the records retention policy is that we maintain both paper and electronic versions of records in some cases and there are different retention schedules for paper vs electronic. For example, we scan and keep transfer transcripts permanently in our ERP system, but we will also keep the paper original for 5 years from graduation or withdrawal. It would be great if AACRAO offered recommendations on these situations and guidelines for electronic vs paper retention. Guidance on keeping student email correspondence would also be helpful.”*

*“This ‘retention minimum’ versus purge date is the new standard for archivists nationally. In the digital age, they do not push purging, only push a minimum retention timeframe. Our university archivist is the person who handles this policy on our campus and it is broad- encompassing all documents from finance, payroll to student records.”*

## A Look at Coaching and Mentoring

The March 2017 AACRAO 60-Second Survey focused on the concepts of managerial coaching and mentoring. This survey was open to all AACRAO members instead of the more common model limiting responses to just one per institution. The purpose of this survey was

two-fold. First, it aimed to gain an understanding of educational attainment, number of years of experience, and interest in having an AACRAO member as a mentor or serving as a mentor for an AACRAO member. Second, AACRAO partnered with one of our members, Sam Carrell, Associate Registrar at the University of Texas at Tyler, to gain an understanding of managerial coaching practices in higher education. Ellinger, Ellinger, and Keller (2003) concluded from their study on the topic that “supervisory coaching behavior is positively associated with employees’ job satisfaction and performance.”

### Key Findings

- ◆ More than half reported holding a master’s degree, and this value does not vary much by institutional control or position level.
- ◆ The mean years employed at the current institution is 11.81.
- ◆ The mean years working for the current supervisor is 3.59.
- ◆ Almost half reported interest in being matched with an AACRAO mentor; nearly the same percentage reported interest in serving as an AACRAO mentor.
- ◆ Encouragingly, more than half report that their supervisors model the following coaching behaviors—
  - “Encourages me to broaden my perspectives by helping me see the big picture”
  - “Provides me with constructive feedback”
  - “Provides me with resources so I can perform my job more effectively”
  - “To help me think through issues, my supervisor asks questions, rather than provides solutions.”

## Transfer Credit Policy

AACRAO, in conjunction with other higher education associations, is writing new guidance for serving transfer students. The guidance is being written by AACRAO, the College Board, WICHE, and CAEL. Institutional membership on this committee includes: Montgomery College (Maryland), York College of Pennsylvania, Capella University, CUNY LaGuardia, the University of California System, Florida International University, Cleveland State University, and Everett Community College (WA).

The goal of the survey was to identify transfer credit best practices, to provide guiding principles for working with transfer credit and transfer students, and help the

advisory committee learn more about AACRAO member institutions' current transfer policy and practices. In addition, the survey sought input on the type of guidance members would like to see to help them better serve transfer students.

## Key Findings

- ◆ Just ten of the responding institutions do not accept any transfer credit.
  - Institutions with fewer than 1,000 students are less likely to accept transfer credit than others.
  - Among the eight in this particular sample, four are undergraduate, graduate and/or professional institutions; two are graduate and/or professional; and one each undergraduate, other.
- ◆ A quarter of graduate and/or professional institutions report accepting undergraduate transfer credits. It is unclear from this data what purpose that transfer credit serves.
- ◆ Not all institutions post their transfer policy in a location available to the public.
  - The majority in that sample are U.S. institutions and either public or private, not-for-profit schools. This data is of note because of the requirements for institutions participating in Title IV to post the “policies of the institution related to transfer of credit from other institutions” on the College Navigator website and the institution’s website “in an easily accessible manner” (Fuller and Salerno 2009, A-7, B-2). However, it is unknown whether the institutions in this group participate in Title IV programs. If they do not, they are not required to post the policy.
- ◆ The items addressed in the transfer policies varies widely by institutional size, type and control as well as the academic level of the policy.
- ◆ Several states and provinces maintain a website on transfer practices and policies.
- ◆ The most sought-after guidance includes accreditation regulations, international transfer credit, high school credit/dual enrollment, and length of time credits are valid for.

## Social Media Monitoring and the Admissions Process

Harvard University made national news recently when offers of admission were rescinded for “at least ten students” based on obscene social media content posted

to a Facebook page (Natanson 2017). Harvard’s official Facebook group for the class of 2021 was the platform where the admitted students became acquainted but was not where the remarks were posted. The group had formed their own messaging group. The Harvard Facebook group page includes the following statement: “As a reminder, Harvard College reserves the right to withdraw an offer of admission under various conditions including if an admitted student engages in behavior that brings into question his or her honesty, maturity, or moral character.”

The July 60-Second Survey evolved from the Harvard University news story. AACRAO aimed to acquire an understanding of how prevalent the practice is for institutions to review the social media of applicants and/or react to becoming aware of social media posts by prospective or admitted students. The survey intended to capture the frequency of active or passive monitoring of social media for applicant behavior that, to use Harvard’s phrase, “...brings into question his or her honesty, maturity, or moral character.” Given this approach and the anecdotal data collected through the free-text questions, the data presented here should be considered within the context that some who took the survey responded that there was not enough clarification on that purpose. Some may have responded to the questions about social media monitoring through the lens of routine marketing and admissions Q&A processes, rather than for questionable posts from prospect, applicants, and recently admitted students. As such, the data may be skewed.

Additionally, as is common with the 60-Second surveys, AACRAO received more than one response from a few dozen institutions. That data appears to identify a general misunderstanding as to whether or not social media is monitored or considered during the admissions process. In these instances, one respondent would indicate that the institution does not monitor social media where another respondent from the same institution indicated that the institution does, in fact, monitor social media. This mismatch in responses existed across departments (*e.g.*, between the registrar’s office and the admissions office) and within enrollment management (*e.g.*, between the director of admissions and vice president of enrollment management). The data was cleaned by retaining the data only for the person most closely tied to the responsibility and/or the most senior position within admissions or enrollment management.

## Key Findings

- ◆ Collectively, almost three-quarters either monitor social media as part of the admissions decision making or will review social media brought to their attention.
  - One-quarter do so “regularly and routinely”; private, not-for-profit institutions are more likely than other types to do so.
  - Forty-one percent (41%) will review social media content if a potential issue is brought to the attention of the institution.
- ◆ Twelve (12%) percent of those who do not monitor social media as part of the admissions process are considering doing so.
- ◆ In the aggregate of those who monitor social media at all, nearly one-quarter monitor both the institution-sponsored social media and the personal social media of applicants. Facebook is the most monitored.
- ◆ Among those who monitor social media, eleven percent (11%) have denied admission based on social media content; seven percent (7%) have rescinded an offer of admission; and half monitor the social media of admitted students.
- ◆ About one-in-ten who monitor social media have a formal policy on how to do so.

## The Use (or not) of Electronic Transcripts

In 2014, AACRAO completed a comprehensive survey of its members asking about electronic transcript use and return on investment. The 2014 survey was an update to the 1997 SPEEDE/ExPRESS study titled, *A Business Case for the Electronic Exchange of Student Records*, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. The results of the 2014 survey indicated that paper was still the predominant method for sending and receiving transcripts even though institutions had also adopted electronic formats such as EDI, XML, and PDF transcripts. At the time it was noted that:

*“This implies that staff at many institutions are now expected to know how to process EDI/XML, PDF, fax, and other forms of transcripts, in addition to paper. We can also reasonably hypothesize that transcript volume has increased in the same period of time because enrollment has increased for most institutions.”*

*Together, these two items beg the question of whether the true benefits of eTranscripts have been realized by the institutions that accept or send transcripts in this manner. While the cost per transcript appears lower, in most instances, for eTranscripts, the annual volume of transcripts received in this manner typically represents less than half of the total transcript volume. Furthermore, few institutions report using the receipt of eTranscript data to its full capacity. In other words, they do not use the data in an automated manner for transfer articulation, admissions decisions, and other tasks.*

*These survey results point to real value—both in the saving of staff time and dollars—by using eTranscripts. It behooves AACRAO to gain an understanding of why institutions are not fully adopting the features and reaping the benefits of eTranscripts.” (Kilgore, Hansen, and Hamill 2014, 24)*

The September 2017 60-Second survey was designed to be a short follow-up to the 2014 survey. Cost information was not sought in this survey. However, similar questions about the format and rate of use of electronic transcripts, the use of paper, and the use of automated processes with the electronic transcripts were posed. Data were differentiated by postsecondary transcripts (sending and receiving) and the receipt of high school transcripts.

## Key Findings

- ◆ PDF transcript use is now the most reported format for receiving and sending postsecondary transcripts, a change from 2014
  - 91 percent of all institutions report using PDF to receive postsecondary transcripts; in 2014 that value was 74 percent.
  - 83 percent of all institutions report using PDF to send postsecondary transcripts, compared to 43 percent in 2014.
- ◆ Among the small percentage of institutions who report still using paper-only processes for the receipt or sending of transcripts, a “lack of technological resources” is frequently noted as the reason for not using an electronic transcript process.
- ◆ Although the percentage of institutions reporting the use of paper for the receipt of high school transcripts has decreased, paper (90%) is still the most reported format closely

- followed by PDF (84%), compared to 98 percent paper and 58 percent PDF in 2014.
- ◆ PDF adoption has greatly outpaced the adoption of EDI or XML.
    - The EDI and XML formats were presented as a single combined response choice in 2014 and as separate response choices for the 2017 survey. Even with this disaggregation of data, it is clear that the use of either EDI or XML has not changed much since 2014.
  - ◆ Only 38 percent of institutions now report using electronic transcript data in any automated processes such as transfer articulation, workflow kick off, admissions assessment and imaging—an increase of 11 percent since 2014.
    - Among those that have automated processes associated with electronic transcripts:
      - ▷ 25 percent report using the data for admissions requirements including marking requirements as “met,” an increase of 14 percent since 2014.
      - ▷ 23 percent also use the data automatically for transfer articulation, an increase of 12 percent since 2014.
  - ◆ Institutions are still not taking full advantage of the automated processes that can be implemented with electronic transcripts.
    - This can likely be attributed, in part, to the adoption of PDF transcripts over EDI and XML because PDF transcripts typically require additional technology or processing to transform to data used in automation.
  - ◆ Between thirteen and 30 percent of institutions could not quantify what percentage of transcripts were received or sent electronically.
    - Among those that could, the most often selected percentage range varied by the type of transcript:
      - ▷ For the receipt of postsecondary transcripts, 29 percent selected “25–49%”
      - ▷ For sending postsecondary transcripts, 36 percent selected “50–75%”
      - ▷ For the receipt of high school transcripts, 22 percent selected “25–49%”

The AACRAO SPEEDE committee maintains several free resources on the AACRAO website to help institutions implement EDI/XML transcript exchanges. Among the benefits of EDI/XML compared to other transcript types are:

- ◆ “Time savings in getting information from the sender to the destination institution;
- ◆ Increased accuracy of data;
  - Elimination of data entry at the destination institution;
  - Data transmitted from the sender is exactly equal to the data received at the destination;
- ◆ Improved data integrity when used in conjunction with a data encryption software;
  - Improved privacy of confidential data;
  - Increased data authenticity; and
- ◆ Cost savings as manual systems are replaced by electronic ones.” (AACRAO 2018)

## Use of and Access to Data: Opinions on Institutional Data Practices

The November 60-Second survey (Appendix A) was a partnership between the American Council on Education (ACE) and AACRAO. Colleges and universities have invested in the use of data analytics to improve student outcomes, close attainment gaps, and improve organizational performance. As environmental conditions continue to evolve, the pressure to do so in more cohesive and sophisticated ways will grow. For institutional leaders to facilitate the modernization of campus data infrastructures, they need a more holistic understanding of the opportunities and challenges in doing so.

Both AACRAO and ACE are interested in gaining an understanding of the perceptions of data quality, and the current state of data use across institutions and position types. ACE’s Center for Policy Research and Strategy (CPRS) is developing its portfolio of work on the modernization of analytics functions and the use of data to promote transformational change. This work will include engaging the broader higher education community in a dialogue about the opportunities and challenges in doing so. It is AACRAO’s aim to approach other membership organizations to replicate this survey in 2018. A further intent is that it serves as a starting point for a better understanding of data and data use environment in higher education.

### Key Findings

- ◆ Two-thirds of the institutions with more than one person completing the survey submitted responses that differed from each other—that is, the

respondents have different opinions and experiences with their institution's data quality and use.

- ◆ Opinions about data use and quality varied by position title.
- ◆ In the aggregate, benchmarking data, external student outcome data, and student engagement data are used by more than half.
- ◆ Respondents representing different position types have different opinions about the type of data used by the institution. These differences could be a reflection on how the question was worded. The survey asked about data use in the business unit, and separate units in the institution may use discrete sets of data.
- ◆ Almost two-thirds rate their data as "Excellent" or "Good."
- ◆ Less than one-quarter indicate that data is "Difficult to access" or "Very difficult to access."
- ◆ Most are of the opinion that data created in one unit are available to other units and vice-versa.
- ◆ Data use is reported as "Widespread" or "Very widespread" for one-third, yet nearly nine-in-ten see the need for data use to be "Very widespread" or "Widespread" at their institution.
- ◆ Most senior executives are viewed as either "Supportive" or "Very supportive" of the use of data to inform decision making.
- ◆ Data use for informed decision making is viewed as effective by most.
- ◆ The following response choices were selected by more than half of respondents as ways to improve the effective use of data in the future:
  - Ensure that data are timely, accurate, relevant, and accessible.
  - Provide education, training, and resources to support the widespread use of data.
  - Connect data from different functions (*e.g.*, student, personnel, financial, and facilities records).

## Chief Enrollment Management Officer Career Profile

This was the second chief enrollment management officer career profile report. The first was completed in 2014. The number of respondents for the chief enrollment management officer (CEMO) career profile survey more than doubled from 153 to 329. For the purpose of its survey, the CEMO position was defined as follows:

*"The chief enrollment management position is responsible for developing and implementing comprehensive strategic enrollment management efforts focused on retention, recruitment, and admissions. The position often has direct managerial responsibility and oversight for key enrollment units and enrollment services of the institution and is responsible for strategies that focus on retention and completion, recruitment and student success."*

The report concluded that a chief enrollment management officer likely:

- ◆ is almost equally likely to identify as a male or female,
- ◆ identifies as non-Hispanic, white,
- ◆ is at least 45 years old,
- ◆ holds a master's degree,
- ◆ has been in higher education his/her entire career to date,
- ◆ has been in their current CEMO position less than five years,
- ◆ reports to the chief executive,
- ◆ came to their current CEMO position from another position in the same institution
- ◆ serves on a wide variety of committees,
- ◆ leads or participates in nearly every student enrollment related function at their institution, and
- ◆ likely to have a position title that includes "vice president."

More than 80 provided "words of wisdom" (first-hand comments, observations, opinions, and advice) based on their experience in the position, and seven volunteered to provide their own story with the following themes in mind:

- ◆ "A Day in the Life";
- ◆ "My Story So Far";
- ◆ "If I Could Do it Over Again";
- ◆ "Wow, I Wish I Knew That Before Becoming a CEMO"; and
- ◆ "My Path to the CEMO Position."

From the words of wisdom and personal stories, it is clear that the chief enrollment management officer position is complex, data-centric, and involves building and maintaining positive relationships throughout the institution. A willingness to relocate to gain differ-

ent experiences throughout your career is important for one seeking a CEMO position. It is an increasingly challenging position given current enrollment trends. The CEMO position can also be very rewarding personally and professionally.

Interestingly, anecdotally, an email call for assistance to the AACRAO primary contacts found that unlike the registrar and chief admissions officer positions, a fair percentage of institutions reported not having a single position that fits the role as defined below. The lack of a single position with these responsibilities does not appear to be limited to institutions of a particular size, type or control. In order to more accurately understand the prevalence of this position, a supplemental question was added to the September 60-Second Survey asking whether or not the institution has this position. From the 943 institutions responding to the question, 45 percent indicated their institution *does not* have a single position that fits the CEMO definition as provided. The percentage without a CEMO position is just about 50 percent, even when looking at institution types independent from one other. However, the larger the institution, the more likely the position exists. Private-proprietary institutions are less likely than public or private, not-for-profit institutions to have a CEMO position. Overall, this is interesting data in and of itself given the current highly competitive enrollment market in the United States and elsewhere: just 34 percent of U.S. colleges report meeting their new student enrollment targets for this year (Jaschik 2017).

Dr. Tom Green, AACRAO Associate Executive Director Consulting and SEM, had these thoughts about the CEMO role,

*“Some institutions do not employ a CEMO and employ a structure where the chief admissions officer and the chief records officers may be one in the same; this is most frequently seen in community college administrations. This person typically reports to a Vice President of Student Affairs or the Vice President of Academic Affairs. In other institutions, the Director of Admissions has broad authority for enrollment strategy and may work collaboratively with other institutional officers on student success and retention. Still other institutions have not yet adopted a CEMO administrative structure due to limited size, funding or awareness of the options of these structures, which have emerged in just the last 30 years in American higher education. CEMO*

*structures are even more uncommon outside the United States, where SEM is just beginning to take hold as a strategy for institutional enrollment health.”*

## The State of College Completion Initiatives at U.S. Community Colleges

College completion rates and how to improve them, have been in the forefront of the higher education agenda in the United States since 2009 when President Obama announced his 2020 goal to increase the percentage of citizens with college degrees. For this project, AACRAO chose to focus on how the completion agenda impacts student success and the institution, as measured by an increase in the number or percentage of certificates or degrees awarded at U.S. community colleges. The focus was to: gain an understanding of the rate of participation in any formal college completion initiative, understand the breadth of initiatives in progress, measure the fiscal and human resource impact on the institution, and determine the impact on student completion. In addition, AACRAO wanted to capture an understanding of students’ awareness of their colleges’ efforts to support degree completion.

### Key Points—Institutional Data

- ◆ The data alludes to the existence of at least one college completion initiative at more than half of community colleges in the United States.
- ◆ Most institutions are engaged in more than one initiative simultaneously.
- ◆ Most expect attention to completion initiatives to increase over the next year.
- ◆ Almost all multi-initiative institutions require students to participate in student success activities; the most common activities are advising, orientation, tutoring, and course placement.
- ◆ Nearly nine out of ten multi-initiative institutions rate their initiatives as “extremely effective,” “very effective,” or “moderately effective” compared to about eight of ten of single-initiative institutions.
- ◆ For institutions with internal and/or external reporting requirements related to the initiative(s), the majority view meeting those requirements as “moderately challenging.”

- ◆ Initiative funding is not generally an issue for multi-initiative institutions; single-initiative institutions face greater funding challenges.
- ◆ Twelve percent of multi-initiative institutions describe their faculty as “extremely engaged” in college completion efforts.

### Key Points—Student Data

- ◆ All of the students agreed their institution has programs and/or services in place to help them reach their educational goal.
- ◆ Most believe their institution has recently increased efforts to improve student success.
- ◆ Advising and guidance counseling top the list of services students report as helping them meet their educational goal.
- ◆ Almost two-thirds of students indicate they are familiar with the national push to increase the number of college completers.
- ◆ Only one-third report completing an educational plan of study and less than one-quarter use a guided pathway for completion.

### Key Points—Stories from the Field

- ◆ Access to data is very important.
- ◆ The ability to trust the accuracy of the institutional data is paramount to buy-in for completion efforts.
- ◆ An institution-wide culture of completion is key to success.
- ◆ Service redesign is a common component of completion initiatives.
- ◆ Special student programs and success courses have been created to support initiatives.
- ◆ Curriculum review and realignment is often utilized to support completion.
- ◆ Some have added more staff (such as advisors) or created entirely new positions to support the initiatives.

### Closing

AACRAO would like to once again thank all the members who regularly participate in research projects. The information collected and reported back to you would not be possible without your participation. If you have

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS



## Managing Academic Space: A Guide for Higher Education Institutions

Space use and management is an integral part of operating a college or university. From scheduling classes to events, understanding how to effectively manage space can result in increased productivity, cost savings, and overall efficiency. Part case study and part how-to guide, *Managing Academic Space* uses the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) as a case study of how to significantly increase efficiency of space use.

*“For those integrally involved in managing space as well as those new to the increasingly important issue of utilization and scheduling, studying this Guide is time well-spent. Exploring the eight chapters and related information will provide leaders with insights on issues of space management currently utilized at their institution and their impact on students, faculty, and the community, as well as a wealth of new considerations — woven together in a publication that you will want to read, share with others, and implement.”*

David M. Sauter, University Registrar, Miami University - Ohio

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[www.aacrao.org/bookstore](http://www.aacrao.org/bookstore)



any research ideas or any questions about the reports highlighted here and on the AACRAO research website, please contact me at [wendyk@aacrao.org](mailto:wendyk@aacrao.org).

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### About the Author

**Wendy Kilgore** serves as the Director of Research and Managing Consultant for AACRAO with more than fifteen years of experience as a higher education administrator and consultant in the United States and Canada. She has expertise in recruitment, admissions, financial aid, academic advisement, curriculum support, registration, records management, veterans' education services, technology, organizational restructuring, student-centric business practice development, policy development, and managing comprehensive collaboration to support enrollment efforts.

Prior to her full-time work with AACRAO, Dr. Kilgore served as state dean of enrollment services for the Colorado Community College system, and the director of admissions and registrar for the Pima County Community College district. Her professional and consulting experience spans a wide array of institutions, including large public universities, small private colleges, small private faith based colleges, private for-profit institutions, technical colleges, a large two-year multi-campus community college district, and a state community college system consisting of 14 colleges.

# Education in Afghanistan: A Historical Review and Diagnosis

*By Mariam Alamyar*

*Education is vital to the success, progress, and sustainability of every nation. In Afghanistan, the education system from primary school to higher education has been facing long-standing problems related to access, quality, limited resources, and equal opportunity. The nation is one of the most impoverished, ravaged, and beleaguered in the world. Since 2001 and the collapse of the Taliban, both the government and the international community have been exploring opportunities to reform the education system and to position Afghanistan as an admired educational destination. However, despite billions of dollars having been spent on reforming curricula, training teachers, upgrading facilities, and procuring equipment and resources, their efforts have not been successful. This is because often, only current needs were addressed while the roots of the challenges were neglected. Identifying the major factors and understanding the changes the education system has undergone are integral to re-shaping its future. This article describes the different types of education that existed during different periods as well as the historical, political, religious, and cultural factors that impede its proper functioning such that the education system continues to lag behind those of most of the rest of the world.*

The history of education in Afghanistan can be traced to the 1800s and the presence of the British alliance. It went through major upheavals due to historical, political, religious, and cultural dynamics since Afghanistan signed the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1919. (Even though Afghanistan was never part of the British Empire, the treaty

ensured Afghanistan's independence from Britain.) In particular, this article considers how education systems changed during Amir Amanullah Khan and Zaher Shah Kingdom, the Communist regime, the *mujahideen*, the Taliban, and with the presence of the international community. Data are from secondary sources and from the author's personal experiences, observations, and background as a learner and educator within the system. The author's understanding of various factors helps inform a vision of the government and the international community strengthening the foundations of the education system in a way that reflects the needs of society, prevents the recurrence of mistakes made in the past, and brings successful reform for the future of Afghanistan.

## The Emergence of Modern Education

The history of modern education in Afghanistan begins before the 1800s and has endured five major changes in different periods: (1) the independence periods—the emergence of modern education—1919–1929 and 1933–1973; (2) the Communist regime—the conflict between modern and religious education—1978–1992 and 1992–1996; (3) *mujahideen* control—a decrease in education—1992–1996; (4) the Taliban regime—the dark era of education—1996–2001; and (5) the current situation—efforts to bring back modern education—2001–2015.

## The Independence Periods (1919–1973): The Emergence of Modern Education

Prior to 1800, no formal government-sponsored schooling existed. Islamic teachers or *mullahs* provided males in *madrasa* (religious schools) with an education focused on laws and moral behavior from the *Quran*. Very little or no education was provided for females, especially those living in rural areas. However, in 1919, a period of independence from foreign countries—and particularly from the British Empire—began. When Amanullah Khan became the first *malik*, or king, in 1919, he expanded the secular (non-religious) education system so that girls could have access to it.

During the beginning of the independence period, numerous efforts were made to develop a close diplomatic relationship with Europe and the rest of the world as well as to reform the education system. King Amanullah, with the assistance of the foreign minister of that time, Mahmud Tarzi (who later became prime minister), promoted a modernist constitution that guaranteed equal rights and individual freedoms. The prime minister's wife, Queen Soraya Tarzi, also played a large role in advancing women's status in education and society. She attempted to establish policies and laws regarding women's rights, including access to education, employment, and divorce, and to make provisions for other hardships women were facing. These policies introduced ideas of equality and made suggestions for advancing women's status for the long term.

Cosmopolitan schools were built so that females and males could get a formal education. Dress codes for all females seeking education and for women across the country changed. Educated and non-educated women were free to not wear a scarf and dress, as they chose. Between 1920 and 1927, two primary schools and one middle school were established with approximately 700 female students and a large number of males in a coeducational system. Although efforts were made to increase females' enrollment rate, most families were reluctant to enroll their daughters in secular education. Most girls in coeducational schools were from urban elite families in Kabul and Herat who welcomed such opportunities for their daughters. However, such schools, including Amanya School, were ridiculed and even condemned by religious leaders. Nevertheless, progress in the coeducational system led to opportunities for studying abroad.

In 1928, for the first time in the history of Afghanistan, young unmarried women traveled to other countries. One destination was educational programs in Turkey. Fifteen famous daughters of prominent elites were graduates of the Masturat Middle School. Despite these advances for the elites, females in rural areas still did not have access to education; religious elders believed that sending unmarried girls out of the country was tantamount to westernizing them and, thus, going against traditional social and cultural norms. Open-minded government authorities also feared resistance from religious leaders (Heath and Zahedi 2011).

Unfortunately, the religious establishment did not want Amir Amanullah as king. Its members protested and ultimately caused education reform efforts to regress to the level prior to the king's reign. Nevertheless, Amir seized regional control of the education system and managed to modify and revise some of the reforms. For example, girls were no longer allowed to seek education outside the country; those who were already abroad were brought back to Afghanistan. Women returned to observing the dress code, including wearing scarves when going outside of their homes or attending school. Religious schools for males only were encouraged. Amir faced lots of resistance in rebuilding the political, social, education, economic, and gender policy infrastructure until his kingdom was overthrown in March 1929. After the collapse of the Amir government, progress in the education system was slow but somewhat steady. When King Zahir Shah seized the Afghan throne, which he held from 1933 until 1973, he brought numerous reforms and emphasized the importance of providing girls access to education.

## The Communist Regime: The Conflict Between Modern and Religious Education

The first massive destruction of the renewal stage of the education system began in 1978 with the Soviet Union invasion. Approximately 80 percent of school buildings were demolished. A large number of professionals, including qualified educators, either were killed or emigrated to other countries. Two types of education system existed: one was made available by the Communist Soviets, and the second was offered by *mujaheddin* groups with the support of westerners. The Soviets provided "aggressive literacy campaigns" across the

country with the aim of nurturing pro-Marxist values and downgrading the importance of religion. Soviet advisors were hired in all subdivisions of the Ministry of Education, and Communist Party affiliates started to teach and expand Marxist ideology.

In order to obtain higher education, a large number of Afghans were sent to Russia and other countries under the control or heavy political, economic, and military influence of Russia. The aim was the establishment of a “ruling cadre of pro-Soviet Afghans.” The *mujaheddin*, which included the religious leaders and Afghans living in rural areas, were strongly opposed to the Soviet education system because they believed that Marxist ideology was a threat to their religion, tradition, and social values. Enrollment rates in Soviet schools dropped off by 30 percent in rural areas, and roughly 80 percent of primary schools were shuttered. Similarly, the number of teaching staff decreased by 50 percent. The average class size increased from a range of 31 to 40 to between 60 and 90 students (American Institutes for Research 2006).

During the Soviet period, from 1979 to 1989, students were encouraged to learn Russian, not English. A large number of Soviet experts—including advisors, doctors, nurses, engineers, technicians, geologists, and interpreters—came to Afghanistan. In order to communicate with these experts, it became necessary to learn Russian. Thus, teaching and learning Russian became more important in higher education, especially at Kabul Polytechnic University in Kabul City. In fact, at this institute, learning Russian as a second language became compulsory. Most students, particularly male students (because more male than female students joined the mechanical engineering school), were required to learn Russian before enrolling in engineering school. Many students were also interested in obtaining scholarships, fellowships, or assistantships and in participating in exchange and other programs in order to study in Russia.

The education system provided by the *mujaheddin*, with the support of Westerners, attempted to oppose the Marxist influence and to conserve traditional culture. An Education Council of Afghanistan (ECA) was established by a coalition of seven main political parties to assist *mujaheddin*-sponsored education inside the country and in refugee camps in bordering rural areas. More than 28 NGOs and three U.N. agencies assisted in conducting educational activities and provided

teacher training, learning equipment, teachers’ salaries, and textbooks. As a result, by the year 1990, 70 percent of the 2,633 schools in Afghanistan educating 628,893 children (34 percent of them female) were supported by NGOs (American Institutes for Research 2006).

## Mujahideen Control: A Decrease in Modern Education

With the withdrawal of the Communists in 1989, the so-called “religiously inspired *mujaheddin* groups” (which in reality were misusing the name of religion) took their place. They were opposed to the modern system of education (which included education of female students), and they ended the coeducational system for primary, secondary, and high school students. The dress code became important once again, and women had to cover themselves when going out for education or any other purposes. The number of girls attending schools and seeking higher education decreased drastically. Major curriculum changes were implemented, from primary through high school. Primary school textbooks and curricula focusing on the ordinary lives of people and on moral lessons were replaced by stories and pictures of *jihad*, *mujaheddin*, and gun battles. Arabic was taught more than English.

In 1989, civil war broke out among the *mujaheddin* fundamentalist leaders seeking power. The country’s economic, political, social, and education infrastructures were ravaged. Schools functioned on an on-and-off basis due to the poor security situation. Severe political and security crises would force school closures for a month or more. Millions of Afghans, including educators, fled the country, migrating to neighboring countries and later to Europe and beyond. Some schools were shuttered due to the lack of teachers, teaching materials, facilities, and equipment, and others were completely destroyed. Young girls who attended school were vulnerable to sexual assault and murder by *mujaheddin* soldiers. Shocking stories were reported: According to Amnesty International, in 1994, when the *mujaheddin* were in power, a girl “was repeatedly raped in her house in Kabul’s Chel Sotton district after armed guards entered the house and killed her father for allowing her to go to school” (cited in Fleming 2005, 611). As education and security in Afghanistan continued to deteriorate and the Taliban insurgency dominated the country, “the dark era,” especially for education, began.

## The Taliban Regime: The Disappearance of Modern Education, or “The Dark Era”

In 1996, the Taliban took over the government in Afghanistan. According to CCN (2017), “Taliban, in Pashto, is the plural of Talib, which means student. Taliban is a Sunni Islamist organization operating primarily in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most members are Pashtun, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. The group’s aim is to impose its own interpretation of Islamic law on Afghanistan and remove foreign influence from the country” (para.1). In fact, the Taliban, with its wrong interpretation of Islam, was a political development that had a devastating and unprecedented impact on the education system, especially for females. Only females up to seven years old could seek religious education in such settings as *madrasas* or mosques. Women were barred from seeking education and employment. A few clandestine private schools were run by some educated women at their homes. The following poem gives insight into the effects on education for females during the Taliban regime:

*I stand by your ear unseen.  
Three years. My youngest sister sickened  
My father carried her to the hospital but  
they told him to throw her away. She died at the door  
That’s when my anger endangered all of us  
In her name I started a secret school. To read  
to write, five little girls and I risked our lives  
I would do it again. It was a way for ghosts  
to have hands and voices for awhile.*  
(Fleming 2005, 597)

Women suffered particularly and were treated unjustly during the Taliban regime. Some took the risk of opening schools to educate others so they could have voice within their groups and perhaps in the future. When the Taliban found out about the schools, they not only closed them but also punished both those who had opened them and those who attended them. Female nurses and doctors were allowed to work in hospitals only if they wore burqas and were escorted to work by male family members.

Schools and universities were stressful for male students, too. The change in the overall higher education system, especially in curricula, was significant. Regard-

less of their field of study, all male students were required to enroll in Islamic courses and learn Arabic. The dress code required that male students wear the *peran tun-baan*, a long dress commonly worn by Pakistani males, and a turban and/or hat. Students who failed to comply with the dress code were not allowed to attend class or were beaten; punishment was particularly severe for students enrolled in the Islamic law courses taught by professors who were also religious and government leaders. Many religious leaders started to teach Islamic courses at the universities. Their bodyguards, armed with AK-47s, served as “proctors” while they taught and administered exams. Any student caught cheating was scolded and beaten by the bodyguards in front of other students. Infamous extremism and misuse of Islam created a dark era, an era of fear and hopelessness for educators, learners, and the entire nation.

## The Current Situation: Efforts to Bring Back Modern Education

With the collapse of the Taliban in December 2001, after Afghan leaders signed the Bonn Agreement, the Afghan Interim Administration was established. It was put under the leadership of Hamid Karzai, who was elected president of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan. Afterwards, a group of elders called *Loya Jirga*, or “assembly of regional leaders,” convened and wrote a new constitution. Finalized in October 2004, the new constitution made education at government institutions compulsory and free for boys as well as girls. Thousands of non-governmental organizations started to rebuild the infrastructure of the education system nationwide. Many foreign non-governmental organizations (primarily USAID, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, and Save the Children) have since developed and modernized the education system, most importantly by providing opportunities for women to attend school.

This period of transition brought a radical increase in school enrollment—from 1 million to 7 million students. Overall, the number of girls enrolled increased from 839,000 to more than 2.5 million. In 2008, more than 79,000 students—26 percent of them female—graduated from high school. Approximately 110,000 of 160,000 teachers were provided with teacher training. School *shuras*, or “school management committees,” were founded in all provinces. They were responsible for having regular meetings to address the challenges

schools faced and to try to identify ways to overcome them. As of 2014, 10,462 of 11,724 Ministry of Education— or government-supported schools had an active role in school *shuras*. More than 3,000 new classrooms and more than 540 schools were built by the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) funded by USAID. The number of students enrolled in post-secondary education also increased, from 23,000 to 70,000 (including more than 12,000 females) between the years 2002 and 2010 (USAID 2014). The Ministry of Education, with the support of international donors including the World Bank and USAID, built more than 13,000 schools between 2002 and 2014. More than 18,600 teachers were trained and recruited, and enrollment rates for children increased more than 56 percent, the highest increase to date throughout the history of Afghanistan (USAID 2014).

In higher education, the Strengthening Higher Education Program (SHEP) had a crucial role in establishing eleven partnership programs between Afghan and foreign universities. The foreign partner universities—Purdue University, Indiana University, San Diego State University, Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand), Ruhr Universität Bochum (Germany), Technische Universität Berlin (Germany), Kansas State University, University of Hartford, University of Brighton (England), and Delhi University (India) assisted Afghan universities with developing and revising curricula, training teachers, and establishing computer labs, laboratories, and libraries with modern equipment. Approximately 150 teachers earned their master’s degrees from the universities named above as well as some other universities in those countries. In a few departments in the government-supported universities—for example, in the engineering department in Kabul—the credit system was introduced. The number of female students in higher education increased from zero to 19.3 percent, and the number of female faculty members from zero to 14.8 percent between 2001 and 2014. Standard vocational and technical training education was established and promoted by the Afghanistan Skills Development Program. In 2005, UNESCO developed a national five-year education strategic plan with an emphasis on eight national priority programs focusing on “faculty and staff development, curriculum reform, facility development, quality assurance, access to higher education, encouragement of private higher education, controlled access at public institutions, system reform, and management

improvement” (Afghanistan Ministry of Higher Education 2005). In 2014, approximately 2,700 students enrolled in the National Institute of Management and Administration at Kabul University, and the government continued its attempt to expand the management and administration programs in the provinces, districts, and communities. To assist the Ministry of Higher Education in establishing policies, monitoring systems, and evaluating programs, the first Education Management Information System was developed (World Bank 2014). Each year from 2003 through 2016, the U.S. Embassy and USAID university partnership programs send more than 100 students to pursue their master’s and bachelor’s degrees in the United States. The U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan also trains students and faculty through educational exchange programs such as the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship, the Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship, and the Junior Faculty Development Program, all of which sponsor stays in the United States. In 2013, the embassy started to send faculty and students with master’s degrees to pursue their Ph.D.s in the United States (United States Embassy in Afghanistan 2017).

Several foreign organizations from Japan, Malaysia, Turkey, India, Germany, France, and China have also provided opportunities either for professional training or education programs. Between 2001 and 2014, approximately 30 government universities and higher education institutions began to function. In Afghanistan, approximately 100 private institutions were established, 50 in Kabul and 50 in other cities. Among them is the American University of Afghanistan (Afghanistan Ministry of Higher Education 2014).

Despite this development, problems persist. Sifton (2003) states that millions of girls have gone back to school, but the majority of them are still out of school, partly because of security concerns; families fear their daughters might be sexually assaulted or kidnapped on the way to school, especially outside of major cities (Sifton 2003). Kissane (2012) claims that despite some reforms since 2001, real opportunities for women remain limited. The primary reasons for this inequality are security and logistics related to paying for school fees, clothing, stationery, etc.; cultural, traditional, ethnic, and religious considerations also play a significant role. It is clear that several logistical and ideological challenges and barriers remain in place despite efforts to address these challenges and pave the way for the

education of girls in Afghanistan. The ongoing phenomenon of the Taliban burning schools is also a significant risk to the education system, especially for girls. In 2008, there were more than 670 attacks on the Afghan education system; between 2006 and 2007, 230 individuals—including teachers and personnel—died as a result of attacks on schools (Kavazanjian 2010). Most of the schools were attended by girls, and most were in southern parts of the country, where insurgents have more influence and power. In the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Zabul, more than 380 of 748 schools cannot provide any type of education, depriving more than 105,000 students of learning opportunities. Supply-side factors include long distances to schools, poor infrastructure and safety at school, and a severe shortage of female teachers (4).

Personal observation and discussion with a range of professionals in different fields confirm that since 2001, billions of dollars have been spent to rehabilitate the education system in Afghanistan. Yet the nation lacks modern learning and teaching systems adequate to meet society's needs. Students cannot apply the skills

and knowledge they gain by attending education institutions. The nation also lacks facilities and equipment, laboratories, libraries, qualified teachers, research centers, access to electricity and water, effective and high-quality approaches to teaching and learning, the ability to teach critical thinking skills, and sufficient budget. Perhaps most important, there is a lack of coordination among and strong governance of the primary, secondary, high school, and higher education systems.

There is no doubt that developing the education system in Afghanistan, where there has been prolonged conflict; a legacy of crimes and violence; periods of Soviet occupation, rural resistance fighters, Islamic parties, the Taliban, Pakistani volunteers, al-Qaeda members, and power-seeking warlords; and the anti-Taliban coalition will be an extraordinary challenge. Stabilizing and modernizing the education system will demand a complete mobilization of government machinery and international support. Though it is said that “history won't be repeated,” the history of education in Afghanistan suggests that in fact history has been repeated, not only once but several times.

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# Financial Aid Policies and Practices as Impediments to Low-Income Student Access to Higher Education

By Brad Pulcini

A review of the literature reveals that low-income students encounter barriers to higher education. Common barriers include the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; College Board 2010; Dwyer 2015; Feeney and Heroff 2013; Goldrick-Rab 2016; Nagaoka, Roderick and Coca 2009; Perez-Antonia 2016) and the shift from need-based to merit-based institutional aid (Alon 2011; Capilouto and Tracy 2017; Conner and Rabovsky 2011; Feeney and Heroff 2010; Wexler 2016). This article reviews these barriers, explores best practices to limit their influence on low-income students' access to higher education, and seeks to determine whether colleges and universities embrace or shirk these practices.

## The FAFSA

Goldrick-Rab (2016) examines how current financial aid policies and models hinder low-income and marginalized students from having the same access to higher education as their more affluent peers. The total cost of higher education and limited access to grants, loans, and scholarship programs continue to impede low income students' access to higher education (Goldrick-Rab 2016). Although mechanisms are in place to provide students with necessary aid, a significant percentage of low-income students do not access that aid.

The FAFSA is typically perceived as a barrier to low-income students' access to higher education (Goldrick-Rab 2016, Perez-Antonia 2016). The FAFSA is a federal

form that students and families must file to establish an individual student's eligibility for federal grant and loan monies (Federal Student Aid n.d.). The greater families' financial need, the more aid they are eligible for. Research suggests that many low-income students who would be eligible for federal aid and grant dollars fail to complete the FAFSA (Bettinger *et al.* 2009; King 2004). Many perceive the form as complicated and difficult to complete, sometimes requiring verification of a number of documents that many low-income students and families have difficulty obtaining (Harrison and Price 2017).

If access to higher education is to increase, then filing the FAFSA—especially on the part of low-income students—is important. A number of studies show that failure to apply for and obtain need-based aid dollars negatively influences students' propensity to enroll in college (Cornwell, Mustard and Sridhar 2006; Dynarski 2000; Goldrick-Rab *et al.* 2016). The federal government now allows more time for families to complete the FAFSA: The FAFSA for the upcoming academic year is available in October of the previous year, a practice referred to as “early FAFSA.” Since this shift in policy in fall 2016, it has been suggested that students and families now have more time to complete the financial aid application process (Page, Castleman and Meyer 2016). Having additional time to complete the FAFSA is important for low-income students, especially since this population may not complete the form in a timely manner (Feeney and Heroff 2013). Early FAFSA does not resolve the issue that low-income students and families

often lack the necessary knowledge and cultural capital to successfully complete the form (Denning and Dynarski 2009; Harrison and Price 2017).

Research shows that a way to increase the number of low-income students who file the FAFSA and, consequently, to increase college enrollment by members of this group would be to provide personalized assistance in completing the form (Bettinger *et al.* 2009). Lack of *information* is not a barrier to low-income students' completion of the FAFSA; rather, the lack of understanding *how* to complete the form and to comply with requirements and verification processes is the primary barrier (Denning and Dynarski 2009). Knowing the importance of personal assistance to low-income students' completion of the FAFSA, financial aid offices at all types of higher education institutions should seek to provide such assistance.

Yet research also shows that many students do not find the assistance they need at university financial aid offices (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen and Person 2006). Financial aid offices typically do not have the number of staff needed to provide in-person support to guide students through the financial aid process (Goldrick-Rab 2016). In a recent study, a head administrator at a large public university reported having only one financial aid administrator for every 1,000 applicants to the school (Goldrick-Rab 2016). Recent surveys have found that staff at a number of financial aid offices throughout the country feel they are under-resourced and face moderate to severe resource shortages (Goldrick-Rab 2016). Institutions have been slow to increase financial aid operating budgets, even though the number of financial aid applicants has increased substantially (Goldrick-Rab 2016). Knowing how important personal assistance is in completing the FAFSA and navigating the financial aid process, schools should add resources to their financial aid offices (an effort that does not seem to be underway).

Not only does it matter *if* students file the FAFSA, but it also matters *when* they do so. As mentioned above, the federal government has made the FAFSA available earlier in an effort to provide students and families with more time to complete it. While federal Pell Grants are awarded as long as a FAFSA is submitted by the summer of the following funded academic year, most institutions and states have limited funding and set deadlines for applying for aid that may fall up to a year earlier (Cannon and Goldrick-Rab 2016). In fact, up to 46 percent of Pell Grant recipients who live in states with

deadlines for need-based grants “under-file” the FAFSA, meaning that they submit the application *after* stated deadlines (Cannon and Goldrick-Rab 2016).

Studies show that large numbers of students miss deadlines and priority dates that are tied to state and institutional need-based aid even though they do submit their applications eventually (Feeney and Heroff 2013; LaManque 2009). Late financial aid applications can result in less aid being available (LaManque 2009). This finding is especially worrisome for low-income students, who tend not to file the FAFSA in a timely manner (Feeney and Heroff 2013). In fact, a report found that many low-income students file the FAFSA after state and institution deadlines have passed and so do not receive the full amount of aid for which they are eligible (McKinney and Novak 2015).

In an effort to ensure that all students have access to the full amount of aid for which they are eligible, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) lists as one of its best practices that all schools maintain the National Association for College Admission Counseling college decision date of May 1 and do not create earlier commitment dates so as to ensure that students receive aid (NASFAA n.d.). That said, a quick review of highly selective public institutions shows priority aid deadlines between February 1 and March 1, with each school stating that applications received by that date will be considered for full aid eligibility (OSU n.d.; UCLA n.d.; UVA n.d.). It can be argued that schools' financial aid filing policies and deadlines put low-income students at a disadvantage and can limit their access to higher education since it is possible they will not be awarded the full amount of aid for which they are eligible. How schools choose to award their aid dollars also influences low-income students' access to higher education.

## Equal Access to Institutional Aid Dollars

Beyond providing additional assistance and resources for navigating the financial aid application process, schools need to reevaluate their strategies for awarding aid. The degree attainment gap between low-income and affluent students continues to grow (Zinshteyn 2016). A recent story in *The Washington Post* explores the changing needs of college students against a backdrop of higher education policies that are slow to change (McPherson 2017).

One change is the increase in the number of Pell Grant recipients by 2.4 million between 2005–06 and 2015–16 (College Board n.d.). The comparative increase in the number of students eligible for the Pell Grant is likely much greater, especially knowing that just in 2007–08, 2.3 million students who would have been eligible for the Pell Grant did not file the FAFSA (Kantrowitz 2009). This increase in the number of low-income students means that colleges and universities need to explore practices and policies that improve equity in higher education outcomes and opportunity (Cahalan *et al.* 2016). Should colleges and universities consider moving toward a more need-based strategy for awarding institutional aid?

Alon (2011) studied the influence of need-based grants on narrowing the economic-based gaps in college persistence and found that if need-based grants awarded to more affluent students had been awarded to low-income students, the first-year persistence gap between the two groups would have closed. This is consistent with other studies that found that college retention rates improved by two to four percentage points for every \$1,000 in aid received (Bettinger 2004, 2010). Hold-

ing all other factors constant, students would be more likely to attend college if their ability to pay increased (Toutkoushian and Paulsen 2016). Goldrick-Rab *et al.* (2012) found that low-income students benefit from having more aid dollars in hand, and persistence rates among low-income students would increase if rules regarding financial aid packaging were to encourage the award of more need-based aid.

A shift to a more need-based than merit-based financial aid policy may promote equal opportunity for higher education across socioeconomic classes. This argument is supported by research that shows that need-based grants and increases in the amount of need-based aid have the potential to positively influence the first-year persistence rates of low-income students (Alon 2011; Bettinger 2004, 2010; Goldrick-Rab *et al.* 2012). Although some schools, such as the University of Kentucky (Seltzer 2017), are moving toward awarding a larger percentage of need-based than merit-based institutional aid, the vast majority of colleges have moved away from need-based aid and toward merit-based aid models (Davis and Harrison 2013).

## NAVIGATING TRANSFER CREDITS

OVER  $\frac{1}{3}$  OF STUDENTS TRANSFER at least once before earning their bachelor's degree, many also crossing state lines in the process.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SOURCE: Fossler *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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The award of institutional aid on the basis of merit does not promote social justice or equality and drastically limits low-income students' access to education (Fain 2016; Goldrick-Rab *et al.* 2012). Segregation and inequality continue to describe K–12 education in the United States (Camera 2017). Gaps between the standardized test scores of low-income and high-income students continue to be an issue (Borg, Borg and Stranahan 2012). Standardized test scores are a main factor in the award of institutional merit-based aid. If colleges and universities are truly engines of equality, they should award aid more on the basis of economic need and less on the basis of merit, especially given that the academic preparation students receive in the K–12 system differs widely according to demographic and socioeconomic status (Anyon 1981).

## Conclusion

A review of literature, research, and best practices supports the conclusion that colleges and universities perpetuate inequality and provide different levels of access to higher education on the basis of prospective students' socioeconomic class. This could be due in part to the “rankings race” that rewards universities for enrolling the high-achieving students a meritocratic society values. Barriers to education such as having to apply for financial aid and having minimal access to institutional aid dollars still exist for low-income students. Although research suggests ways in which these barriers may be mitigated, schools continue to fail to act on these recommendations.

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## College Funding Specialists

*By Christopher Tremblay*

Certified college funding specialists™ are part of a growing list of professionals who specialize in college planning. This list includes but is not limited to high school counselors, independent college advisors/consultants, and admission and financial aid representatives. This article reviews the college funding specialists and their professional organization, the Association of Certified College Funding Specialists (ACCFS). The association educates, monitors, and supports member specialists in their work. The specialists directly serve students and families.

### College Funding Specialists

As of June 2017, there were approximately 400 active, licensed specialists, according to Dave Zoeller (2017) of the ACCFS membership department. College funding specialists are “licensed financial consultants qualified to share prudent tax, financial, cash flow, and lending advice that can help families lower the cost of college and pay the tuition bill” (ACCFS 2017a). In some ways, they complement the work of financial aid representatives employed by colleges and universities. The benefit is that CCFS®s are not affiliated with any college or university. According to the ACCFS website, these specialists are “certified public accountants, enrolled agents, certified financial planners®, registered investment advisors, wealth and retirement planners, financial advisors, lenders, and other licensed financial profession-

als” (ACCFS, 2017a). These are individuals who bring significant financial experience to the table.

Many of these specialists will provide a complimentary session as part of the initial consult for students and their families. It is common for specialists to create an additional business for this college funding planning; often, they extend their services to include college admission consulting, test preparation, college essay writing workshops, and career counseling (MCF 2017; Parros 2017). Families can search for a certified college funding specialist™ (CCFS®) at <hireaccfs.com>.

According to certified college funding specialist™ Robert Hoger of Michigan College Funding:

*College costs are enormous today and most families are just not adequately prepared to fund those expenses. One of the biggest retirement risks has been the need to carve out the money necessary to fund, in some cases, multiple children’s college educational costs. When dollars are diverted away from a future retirement nest egg to fund these expenses, it often results in a shortfall for retirement funding. We help our clients create a plan and maintain a balanced approach to designing an efficient funding method for their college costs, while having a greater understanding of the impact this may have on retirement and the need for an organized and methodical plan to meet their future retirement needs. By designing a plan to pay for college and to fund needs in retirement, it allows our clients to understand*

that they can accomplish both. (2017, n.p., personal correspondence)

Hoger's approach is to plan, accounting for all future financial needs. He elaborates further:

*Having been involved in college planning for over 15 years and having strong practical knowledge of the financial aid process allows us to take a holistic approach to the entire plan and make recommendations that serve all of the financial needs of our clients. This prevents a "bandaid" approach which very often can lead to poor results. We work on reducing the college expenses in many ways. Identifying scholarships and grants, creating a controlled and efficient borrowing plan for those in need, making sure families are taking advantage of both need and merit aid opportunities just to name a few. All the while stressing the importance of continued focus and participation in the retirement side of the equation. (2017, n.p., personal correspondence)*

## One Family's Experience

A Ford customer service manager used a college funding specialist and found it to be beneficial. The father had a single income with which to support two children in college. The specialist developed a financial model that took into account two college educations and funding for future retirement plans. The family felt that having an expert who could customize plans based on their situation and criteria was important. They believed there was no such thing as "one size fits all" in planning for college costs and felt that the most important element of this process was learning about all of the options and gaining confidence in planning for the future. For ten years, they have recommended the services of a college funding specialist for all families. They advise that it is never too early to start working with a financial college planner (2017, n.p., personal correspondence).

## Association of Certified College Funding Specialists (ACCFS)

AACFS was founded by Ron Them (2017) as the National Institute for Certified College Planners (NICCP) in 2002. NICCP originated from the Pittsford, New

York-based Savingforcollege.com and Plentywood, Montana-based College Funding organization. Originally, interested candidates had to possess a certification or designation within the financial services industry. According to Zoeller (2017), NICCP became ACCFS in early 2017 primarily so as to be ahead of changes being made by U.S. Department of Labor rules, particularly concerning the term "planner." ACCFS is headquartered in Dana Point, California, and maintains a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

ACCFS claims to be "the standard of excellence for college financial planning" (ACCFS 2017b). In reality, it seems to be the only player in this field (excluding financial aid representatives). The ACCFS website states, "ACCFS is the only advisor qualified to give specific advice on the financial aspects of saving and paying for college" (Them 2017).

In an April 2017 story on the ACCFS website, the organization criticizes colleges for their sticker prices, enrollment management "tactics," and financial aid leveraging (ACCFS 2017). Further, the website claims, "Families who work with a Certified College Funding Specialist™ will pay a lower price for college" (AACFS 2017). While that may be true, ACCFS does not cite any evidence or research to support that statement.

ACCFS members receive online access to a variety of tools and resources to use with their clients. Their trademarked Answers4College Blueprint is a technology tool that includes an EFC calculator, "what if" scenarios, a college search option, financial strategies planning, FAFSA Data and Answers key, private scholarships search feature, a 529 plan search option, and a scenario summary.

To gain access to the resources of the association—including the Answers4College Blueprint tool—and to use the ACCFS logo and badge, specialists must pay the \$795 initial fee plus a monthly \$50 membership fee. They also have to complete 24 hours of continuing education annually (Zoeller 2017). For an additional \$100 a month, members can upgrade to the Business Builder option, which provides marketing materials, presentations, college funding client questionnaires, advanced analysis calculators, a special discussion forum, and suggestions for building one's business. An add-on course entitled Education Loan Analyst™ is also available for an additional cost of \$395. That course was created in 2015. The association and its members maintain a Code of Ethics that provides statements on integrity,



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objectivity, competency, fairness, confidentiality, professionalism, and diligence (ACCFS 2017c). The certification covers these thirteen college-related topics: admissions, financial aid basics, financial aid formulas, financial aid income, financial aid assets, household information, sources of financial aid, financial aid forms and procedures, appealing financial aid awards, education tax incentives, other tax strategies for education, education savings accounts and qualified tuition (529) plans (ACCFS 2018). ACCFS indicates that their certification is “recognized” by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA); yet FINRA’s website states that “FINRA does *not* approve or endorse any professional credential or designation” (FINRA 2018).

ACCFS sent a marketing e-mail to prospective college funding specialists last year that stated that financial advisors “need to get into college financial planning ASAP” because “there’s virtually no competition.” It went on to state, “You can add a line of business to your current financial practice that can be very lucrative to your bottom line” and suggested that a professional could earn more than \$200,000. The e-mail message alleged that

“college planning is a niche market with few other financial professionals” and included a financial incentive to join AACFS. It is regrettable that this communication portrays the service as being motivated by financial gain for the professional rather than the altruism of helping families determine how to pay for college.

## Concluding Thoughts

You may not be aware that a college funding specialist may be working with families in your backyard. Ostensibly, these specialists are working to fill a gap in knowledge and planning and to help students and their families gain access to a college education. But will families be willing to pay for these services? How will low-income families be served, especially since they may be the ones who need this planning most? As college costs continue to increase, college funding specialists may come to be in even greater demand as families seek to learn how to pay for a postsecondary degree. It’s time to investigate which college funding specialists are working in your neighborhood.

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# Creating a Digital Credential Strategy

*By Rodney Parks, Jesse Parrish, and Alexander Taylor*

## Why are credentials important?

Learners of all types must be able to represent their achievements to prospective employers and education institutions to prove that they have the requisite knowledge and skills for success. The most recognized means by which students represent themselves is the credential. As in many other industries that engage with customers, partners, and authorities, the learner engaging with the employment marketplace must present a secure, reliable, and useful record of qualifications.

Credentials are a means by which learners can signal important information about their knowledge, skills, and aptitudes. Today, credentials come in many forms, but most are modeled on the traditional academic transcript. This document typically includes a learner's demographic information, a history of her academic activity (*i.e.*, courses taken) and corresponding measures of progress (*i.e.*, grades and degrees earned), and a brief version of the awarding institution's policies as they relate to academic affairs, accreditation, and grade assignment.

On paper, the academic transcript seems to be a satisfactory model for collecting information and enabling learners to represent their academic experiences to others. All relevant information that a third party might need seems to be included. In addition, most institutions offer means by which learners can view, transmit, and assume virtual ownership of their credentials even as the institutions curate and protect them. This model

has proven successful for many years, and learners, institutions, and third parties continue to exchange academic transcripts to meet their business requirements. This exchange is so prolific, in fact, that several large companies have emerged to meet the demand.

Despite the size of the credential economy and the continued expansion of the postsecondary student population, the traditional academic transcript suffers from several fundamental weaknesses that reduce its value in the information age. These weaknesses are interrelated and compound one another, so addressing them often requires substantial change in business processes, technology, and sometimes campus culture. For example, a major limitation of the academic transcript is the level of detail or “depth” at which learner experiences can be represented. Due to the technical constraints of an institution's student information system and the physical dimensions of the academic transcript, these descriptions are often limited to a short string of characters. Depending on the learner experience and the access that a recipient has to other sources of information, a short description may be cryptic or even meaningless, a shortcoming that dilutes the quality of the credential and its ability to represent the learner.

## Which credentials are important?

From the perspective of the learner, all credentials are important. Anything that a learner can use to represent personal achievements to potential employers and insti-

tutions of higher education has value. With this purpose in mind, credentials become a sort of currency or capital for learners. They are used to represent potential and exchanged for employment and educational opportunities. Unfortunately, the format or transmission method of some credentials can complicate their processing (*e.g.*, a college may not have the infrastructure to accept and process a digital transcript), much like a bounced check can complicate formal financial transactions.

Institutions of higher education must recognize that today's learners process everything electronically. Many employers already respect this expectation, accepting and assigning value only to credentials that can be efficiently processed, interpreted, and traced to an authority. To bridge the gap, the registrar must balance the needs of learners and employers while maintaining the integrity of their credentials. They must satisfy the requirements of students, recipients, and vendor partners, all while aligning business practices with the institutional mission.

## Key Considerations for Creating a Digital Credential Strategy

The three primary motivations for a digital credential strategy are to clarify the role digital credentials play in the student lifecycle and job marketplace; to outline the responsibilities of the Office of the Registrar in the development of these credentials; and to offer guidelines for the continued success of that development. The following are key considerations for creating such a strategy:

- ◆ **Recognize the importance of a digital credential strategy.** Registrars are now responsible for a critical service to students and alumni and cannot approach the task without strategy, lest it be reassigned to another department or contractor. The registrar must collaborate with the vendor partner to assess its technological capabilities (including data structures, SIS functionality, and student access), the needs of students and campus partners, and the departmental strategic plan (*i.e.*, how credential development fits with its other service strategies).
- ◆ **Connect credential strategy to existing strategies.** Enrollment planning, retention planning, procurement decisions, gainful employment, security, and brand identity are among the elements typically included in registrar's offices' five-year plans. As ap-

propriate, each of these should be addressed by the digital credential strategy to promote coordinated decision-making.

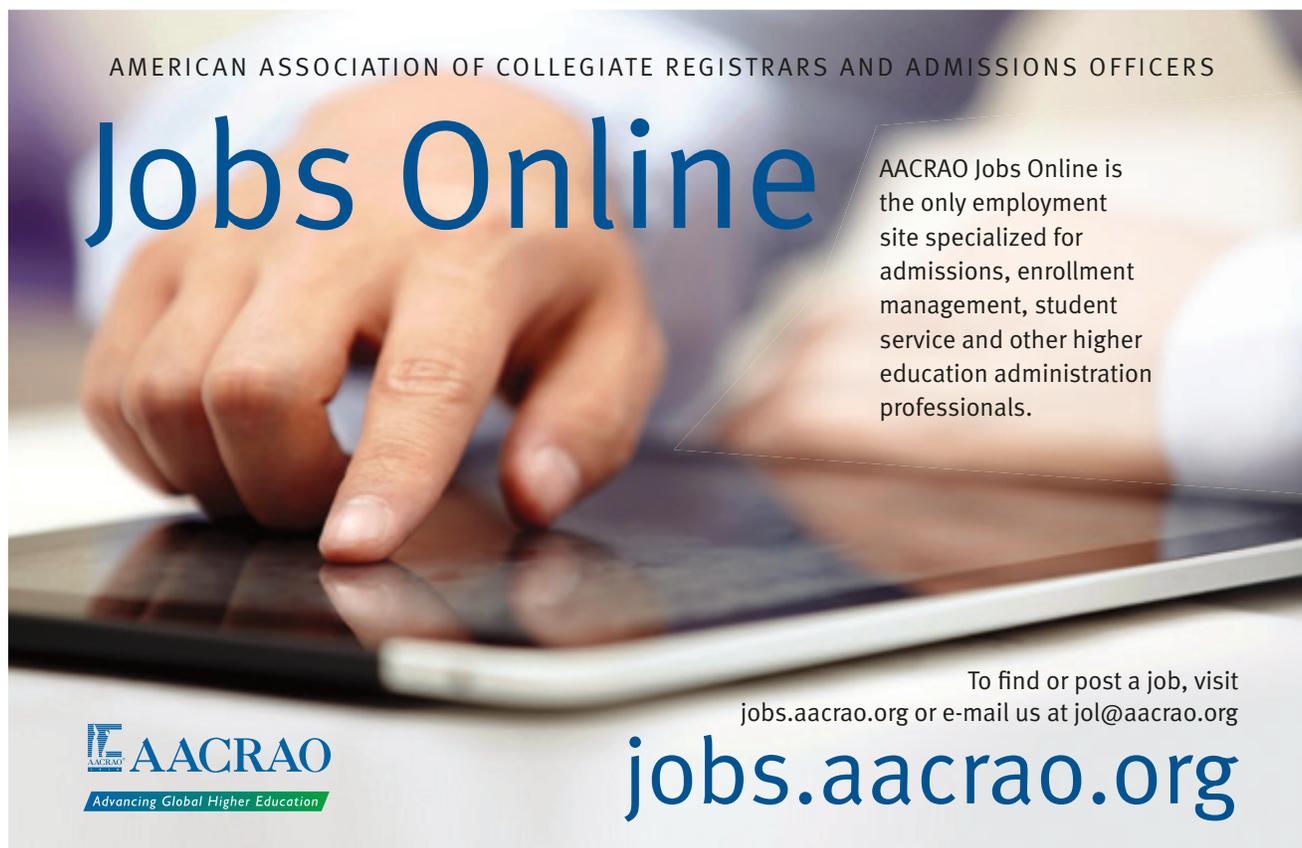
- ◆ **Choose a comprehensive digital credential platform.** Think about accessibility and utility from the student perspective. Do students have access to all their credentials in the same place? Can students use this "universal" platform to address all their credential-related needs? This is a key category of questions to address with the credential vendor. Can the vendor accommodate credentials produced by other vendors, *e.g.*, badging platforms, certificate authorities, etc.?
- ◆ **Consider the relative and absolute value of the credential platform.** Member institutions may consider the current platform as merely a sophisticated storefront, but it might be described more aptly as a suite of solutions that addresses storage, transmission, and verification issues that may arise in the credential marketplace. Registrars must be apprised of the importance of these solutions as well as their impact on students and third parties.
- ◆ **Acknowledge digital credentials as a commodity.** A commodity can be exchanged between two entities, usually for a fee or promise of service. A commodity also has intrinsic value or specific utility. For an institution, only the former is true for credentials; for students, both are true for credentials. Institutions must operate from a student-centric perspective, recognizing and, if possible, measuring the value their credentials possess and generate. This ensures that newly adopted credentials or changes to existing credentials are made with respect to the way students will use them.
- ◆ **Align the strategy to the culture and mission of the institution.** The credentials produced by an institution are not only a tool that students will use beyond graduation, but they also reflect learning processes that occur in the institution's various learning environments. Each credential must align with the institutional mission.
- ◆ **Complement the university-level perspective with a national perspective.** The framework for a digital credential strategy should be developed with an industry-level perspective to ensure interoperability, mutually understood exchange expectations between institutions, and consistency for employers (and other recipients) and students, especially as the latter begin to pursue a greater number and variety

of credentials. Shared expectations are a prerequisite for best practices, which promote a culture of collaboration and improvement.

- ◆ **Promote the digital credential strategy with a concise and accessible manifesto.** Registrars should develop a two-page document that answers the following questions: Why are credentials important? What resources can be leveraged to adopt a digital credential strategy? What questions must be answered to launch a credential service platform? Registrars should strive for a document that not only offers strategic recommendations and answers to common questions, but also evokes an industry-level perspective that empowers them in conversations with senior-level administration. It should cite key developments in credential innovation, secure communication and data exchange technologies, and research that addresses student and employer expectations.
- ◆ **Assume the role of credential expert.** Professional certifications are sometimes considered an extra-academic pursuit, and they are rarely considered a credential. Similarly, e-diplomas are a novelty, and

badging is helpful but non-essential. The registrar must become an advocate of credentials in their many forms and also serve as a quality assurance authority. The registrar should be able to appraise the potential value of new credentials under consideration by the institution (including its schools and divisions) and offer relevant recommendations. In addition, the registrar must create alliances with campus career centers and other auxiliary student service organizations to develop champions of new technologies and credential innovations. In doing so, they can assail the prevailing notion that electronic diplomas and other non-transcript digital credentials are merely ornamental.

- ◆ **Highlight the value of credentials and justify their costs.** Like other support units, the registrar is a cost center, accumulating costs for human resources, space, technologies, and material support. It is rarely considered a revenue center. The adoption of a digital credential strategy and the deployment of new credentials is unlikely to produce significant direct revenue, so the registrar must frame the value



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it creates in other ways. Consult with institutional leadership to discover how the strategy could create revenue indirectly (e.g., influence prospective students, enable or expedite the development of new curricular or co-curricular experiences that attract revenue, draw alumni back to the institution to pursue additional educational opportunities, etc.).

- ◆ **Leverage the digital credential strategy to attract resources and partnership.** For the last 200 years, the registrar has existed as a service to academic units. Now an opportunity exists for the registrar to portray the importance of the academic experience and package it in a strategic way—that is, as a structured-framework digital credential strategy. In other words, a digital credential strategy enables the transition from auxiliary support to expertise and leadership. Registrars have a unique view of the entirety of the student experience—from matriculation to graduation—through the lens of the data generated by students’ engagement in curricular and co-curricular activities. They see the whole picture: all students in a class, a program, or demographic

category; historical trends of enrollment, attrition, and success; and now, increasingly, a view of the credentials that students use in the marketplace. Registrars must take command of this rich information to capitalize on their strategic position in enrollment management.

- ◆ **Build flexibility into the strategy to accommodate institution- and industry-level innovation.** A digital credential strategy must have utility for any institution that currently offers or aspires to offer digital credentials to its students. It should contain guidepost information and contextual examples, where appropriate, but should be open and flexible enough to allow for iteration, customization, and expansion regardless of an institution’s size, student profile, or strategic priorities.
- ◆ **Guide the evolution of digital credentials with data collection and research.** Registrars must be students of their own work and responsibility. They must attempt to understand the impact of their services and solutions on the student experience and the institution’s bottom line, as well as the impact of innovation

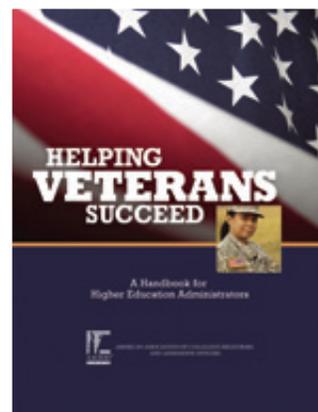
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on their own productivity and effectiveness. Registrars must identify metrics that correspond with their departmental, unit, and institutional priorities and deploy automated data collection and survey instruments that capture these metrics.

## Guidelines for a Successful Digital Credential Strategy

**Student-centric objectives.** Registrars must cultivate a “relational” versus a “transactional” relationship with students. Students should have access to a suite of credentials offered by the institution, and they should be considered more than customers who are party to a transaction. They purchase copies and transmissions of their credentials, and they access a platform to view and curate their credentials, but they are also *involved in the creation* of those credentials. They are part owner.

In addition, registrars need to define credential value in terms of student utility and use longitudinal data to strengthen their credential value. Students (as well as their prospective employers) should be able to appraise the value of the institution’s credentials not only by the competencies they document but also by their completion rate (how successful are students who pursue this credential?), usage rates (how often do students share or use this credential?), pathway development (what types of opportunities are available to students with this credential?), and other relevant descriptors. There may be discrete metrics that could accommodate these and other measures of value, and any used should be collected and publicly accessible.

## Principles of Interaction with Vendors and Third Parties

**Share transparent expectations.** Vendors and third parties should be apprised of the institution’s expectations concerning service delivery. These include *timeliness*, or the time necessary to develop a new credential that corresponds to learning opportunities at the institution and to deploy it to the student access platform; *responsiveness*, or the level of active participation on behalf of the institution and the third party in credential development, as well as the level of support provided by the third party; and *adaptation*, or the expectation that the nature, medium, and underlying data of digital credentials are subject to change.

## Technical Objectives for Accessibility, Utility, and Security

**Provide multiple useful credential access points to students.** Stanford University offers an instructive model for accessibility: MyLocker is a digital repository for all credentials that students earn and is accessible with a valid and unique student ID and PIN. The system also allows students and graduates to link social media accounts to their Locker, granting a “pass-through” authentication method in lieu of the student ID and PIN (which eventually expire or are forgotten by graduates).

This model presents two access points to students; there is also unexplored design space for additional accessibility, including mobile applications and the use of APIs to integrate credential representations into e-mail and other communication models. Student preference and proclivity should drive innovation in this area, so further developments should be preceded by survey, interview, focus groups, and/or peer study.

**Modularity improves utility.** Each credential offered by the institution should have unique utility, offering value that is distinct from others in the set. For example, there should not be two versions of a “business communications” certificate that are so similar that it is difficult for students to determine their differences without consulting multiple sources of information. This requirement prevents duplication of curricular offerings and ensures that the institution can pinpoint faculty and administrative expertise for credential development and delivery.

As a complement to this requirement of distinction, credentials should allow for integration and incorporation as part of a larger array of competencies. Whenever possible, the institution’s credentials should be structured in a way that allows students to arrange and combine complementary competency sets as a cohesive bundle. Credentials that lend themselves to assembly should be presented as “interlocking” or “stacking” components. For example, the business communications certificate has independent value, but could be presented as one of four components of a leadership certification.

**Competency-based credentials.** Each credential should be composed of discrete and interconnected competencies. These competencies should be defined by leading faculty members and should correspond to best practices identified by national consortia and other

leading institutions of competency-based education. Each competency should clearly contribute knowledge and skills to the credentials in which it is included. Competencies should also be represented consistently across credentials, regardless of their discipline. For example, if both a business communications and a project management credential contain a data analysis competency, then it should be presented in exactly the same way.

Expanding upon this idea, learners should be able to view the overlap of competencies between credentials. For example, they should be able to access a map, side-by-side comparison, or latticed view of competencies across learning paths that can be used in a self-assessment of their abilities and likelihood of completion.

**Metadata collection.** The institution's credentials should be developed in such a way as to allow for the automatic capture of metadata such as institutional ID, time to completion, number of competencies, cost, etc. The automatic capture of metadata obviates manual transmission of credential characteristics to credential search engines, such as Credential Engine, thereby improving their visibility and reach.

**Establish and maintain security protocols that account for credential expansion.** A security model should be developed to account for the suite of credentials offered by the institution as well as participation by a variety of vendors that meet the specific needs of each credential. This model should also account for global utilization of credentials and a variety of platforms to which they will connect (*e.g.*, social media, communication tools, forms and other applications, etc.).

## Conclusion

The proliferation of the credentialing market has created new opportunities to expand academic records to include learning outcomes and competencies. Many institutions have responded by adapting their processes and delivery models to meet the evolving needs of stakeholders. As part of a sustainable approach to student service, institutional leaders should consider implementing an integrated credential platform, thereby creating a single access point that students can access indefinitely. This effort must be guided by a digital credentialing strategy that accounts for the institution's mission and culture, technological limitations, and the expectations of students, peers, employers, and the vendor partner. The institution and vendor partner should communicate directly to ensure flexibility within the platform for future growth.

Some institutions may be deterred by the cost of adopting new digital credentials, especially when many are facing budget constraints. However, the modern registrar can make a compelling case for collecting, enhancing, and disseminating a range of credentials that promote student experiences and highlight activities occurring at the institution. A digital credential strategy incorporated into a larger strategic plan may improve the delivery of services and spark discussion of institutional outcomes tied to student achievement. Importantly, this strategy illuminates the registrar's expertise and insight into the student experience, and may enhance collaboration between enrollment management, academic affairs, and institutional leadership.

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### *About the Authors*

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## *Place, Not Race: A New Vision of Opportunity in America*

CASHIN, S. 2014. BOSTON: BEACON PRESS. 176 PP.

*Reviewed by Stephen J. Handel*

Sheryll Cashin's *Place, Not Race* is a cleverly titled contribution to the ongoing conversation about affirmative action in the United States. It is also an occasionally awkward memoir that nonetheless brings nuance and heart to a debate that often is characterized by neither. Although she is a professor at one of the nation's most prestigious law schools (Georgetown University's), Cashin avoids the temptation to treat the topic legalistically, understanding that the dialogue about race and opportunity in this country instead must be embraced in a common language that encourages the participation of all Americans. She stresses, however, that this common language is undermined by the growing economic divide in the United States, highlighting the need for new policies that secure opportunity for all Americans who want a decent opportunity to attain a middle-class life.

The context for Cashin's book is elite higher education in the United States and its place as the central battle ground for the ongoing debate over affirmative action. Cashin's strategy is sound, even if the context is narrow. Admission to selective universities—despite the relatively small proportion of students who attend these institutions—has never been so competitive, primarily because of its perceived utility in helping individuals establish an economic lifeline for the future. Were it otherwise, of course, plaintiffs such as Alan Bakke and

Abigail Fischer (and their lawyers) would not have devoted considerable resources litigating against the use of race and ethnicity in the college admission process. But Cashin argues that consideration of race and ethnicity, absent authentic deliberation regarding class and economic disadvantage, is a debate unlikely to bear much fruit in 21st century America. Although Cashin believes that diversity strengthens the nation's economic and cultural fabric and therefore supports the multitude of ethnic and racial cultures that populate this country, she emphasizes that it is precisely this multiplicity that renders the black-white dialectic a tired construct, unable to convey the more complex and egalitarian narrative of the modern American experience. She also achieves something rare in the crowded field of race study and higher education policy: pleading convincingly for a supportive society that honors the awarding of benefits and opportunities to all those with the drive to succeed while also acknowledging the nation's distressing history of racial and ethnic discrimination.

Cashin defines "place" broadly. By stressing the impact of "structural disadvantage"—economic forces that depress opportunity for a wide swath of the U.S. population, resulting, for example, in segregated housing and low-resourced schools—she articulates the plight of individuals whose life trajectory is buffeted more by economic than racial barriers:

*Neighborhoods with high poverty, limited employment, underperforming schools, distressed housing, and violent crime depress life's outcomes. They create a closed loop of systemic disadvantage such that failure is common and success aberrational... In fact, the same forces that create geographic disadvantage for many blacks and Latinos also disadvantage average white folk (25).*

Cashin demonstrates in considerable detail that while it is true that individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups suffer the most from structural disadvantage, substantial proportions of white, Asian American, and immigrant populations also suffer from its effects. Policies that address only one segment of the population must, by their very design, be seen as exclusionary.

By making geography the center of her argument about opportunity in the United States, Cashin broadens the debate about who ought to have access to elite higher education. By focusing on where an individual lives rather than on the color of an individual's skin, Cashin stresses the need for new metrics that emphasize cultural diversity and economic opportunity. Her analysis calls for greater reliance on micro-economic data, such as census information that describes housing and zoning patterns so that enclaves where intervention would be most beneficial could be pinpointed. Of course, Cashin's point of view is not new, but she approaches it uniquely, advancing it in a way that balances the nation's need to stay vigilant in suppressing discrimination while emphasizing opportunity for all individuals with the will to work hard and the courage to play by the rules. "Place is not a proxy for race," says Cashin. "Race is a social construct, place is a physical one" (49). To conflate the two, she argues, is neither politically transparent nor sensibly pragmatic.

Although the search for diversity "proxies" has been around as long as affirmative action has been threatened, the effort has been largely ineffective, especially in populous states such as California and Texas where the large number of poor, white Americans and new immigrants overwhelms income status as an effective strategy for enrolling more ethnic minority students.

Cashin suffers little ambivalence from the fact that she herself benefited from affirmative action. She understands that her influential position today is at least partly the result of policies designed to create a more equitable society. Moreover, she expresses no regret in

her self-interested search to use whatever economic advantages she currently possesses to provide advantages—especially access to better schools—for her own children. (What parent wouldn't?) Nevertheless, Cashin argues that affirmative action today is a policy without force or political attractiveness for even the most liberal politicians. "Although legions of non-blacks and women have benefitted from affirmative action, inconveniently for its proponents, the policy has a black face and remains a dog whistle for political mobilization" (xiv). Cashin believes that it is time to develop new and sophisticated policy levers that address the needs of more Americans. "The relevant debate is not whether we should have had affirmative action in the first place. That question is moot. Given the inevitable demise of race-based affirmative action, the relevant question is what is its logical replacement" (16)?

The primary weakness of *Place Not Race* is Cashin's simplification of the elite college admissions process. That the nation's most selective colleges and universities are implicated to some degree in perpetuating rather than liberating class division is not at issue; Cashin's criticisms in this regard are persuasive (if occasionally overdrawn). The problem is her and her fellow critics' solutions. For example, while urging elite colleges and universities to spend more time evaluating the applicants' academic potential in light of their economic or personal circumstances, Cashin hardly acknowledges that this strategy has been in use at elite colleges and universities for decades. Cashin also recommends that college admission officers require applicants to highlight their contributions in creating healthy and diverse communities. Yet she never acknowledges the potential pernicious effects of such policies—confident, apparently, that the well-healed will not devise ways to highlight their own "challenges" or community service efforts. Of course, none of Cashin's recommendations is ill-advised, but admission officers around the country will understand their limited utility.

Finally, there is Cashin's trenchant but largely shopworn criticism of standardized tests in the admission process; while true, it is largely beside the point. Cashin notes, for example, that student performance on the SAT and ACT largely track household income, with students from higher income brackets performing better on these tests. Alas, income correlates positively with almost everything else that has been shown to prepare students for college, including access to books, good schools, and

great teachers. Dispensing with one factor in the admission process can only give more prominence to other elements equally associated with family income.

*Place Not Race* is different from previous books that also sought to dispense with the hypothesized corrosive effects of affirmation action (e.g., *The Content of Our Character* and *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*). Cashin makes a principled effort to highlight solutions that provide policy makers with new frames of reference through which to address unequal opportunities

and outcomes in U.S. society while acknowledging an American historical narrative that appears to revel in a society of haves and have nots. That Cashin ultimately fails to identify unique strategies to ensure equal educational opportunity is to discredit neither her attempt nor the contributions of her book. We need more commentators like Cashin to articulate a collective and inclusive vision of social mobility in the United States—a perspective that stresses the common good and the pragmatic over the ideological.

## Parenting to a Degree: How Family Matters for College Women's Success

HAMILTON, L. T. 2016. CHICAGO, IL: THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS. 263 PP.

*Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt*

As a follow-up to her highly acclaimed book *Paying for the Party*, Hamilton revisits Midwest University (MU), a large, mid-tier state flagship institution, to look beyond institutional characteristics that promote inequality to “the role parents play in the processes of class reproduction and mobility at the postsecondary level” (16). Hamilton contends that social class goes “hand in hand with beliefs about gender to shape how parents approach the college years” (11). *Parenting to a Degree* is an in-depth analysis of parenting approaches, specifically parents of college women, connected to parental visions of *the college experience* that are frequently shaped by social class standing.

Consistent with research findings by Ferrera (2015) and Rhoads, Wang, Shi, and Chang (2014), Hamilton notes that colleges and universities in the United States are viewed less as a collective social good and more as a market-driven product. She describes college as a “high-stakes, high cost personal amenity” (8) for which parents and students will pay a premium. The author further states, “If parents can manage it, the right kind of help provides students with a distinct advantage” (3).

In *Paying for the Party*, Hamilton and Armstrong conducted a year-long ethnographic case study of the female residents of one floor of a reputed “party dorm” at MU to explore their academic and career trajectories through the university system and one year after graduation (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013). This research was based on interviews with the mothers and fathers

of these women at a critical juncture in their college careers: four years after initial college enrollment.

Despite acknowledged limitations of size and homogeneity of students and parents, Hamilton notes that this specific sample allowed her to focus on class differences and the “messiness of social class in the United States” with case histories marked by “cross-class marriage, financial emergencies, divorce and death, and rapid upward mobility” (13). This level of access provided her a unique perspective of the mechanisms (i.e., the underlying beliefs and practices) that “explain important variation in student outcomes within larger class groups” (18).

Hamilton divides the text into two primary parts: In Part I, she describes the visions of college that underlie the parenting approaches at the center of *Parenting to a Degree*. These approaches are grouped around parental levels of involvement and funding. In Part II, she discusses parental levels of satisfaction with their daughters’ college experience and the consequences of decisions for both parents and students. Hamilton closes *Parenting to a Degree* with observations regarding colleges and universities’ overreliance on parents as well as policy implications for higher education.

### Five Visions of College

Hamilton identifies five primary visions for college espoused by the families within her sample and notes

that these visions tend to develop among families with “similar financial, social, and cultural resources” (21). Hamilton pairs these five visions of college with five unique parenting approaches, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Visions of College and Parenting Approaches**

Vision of College	Parenting Approach
Career-Building Experience	Professional Helicopter
Social Experience	Pink Helicopter
Hybridized Experience	Paramedic
Mobility Experience	Supportive Bystander
Adult Experience	Total Bystander

While beyond the scope of this review, the following examples demonstrate some of the complex dynamics that characterize visions of the college experience and parenting approaches. Notably, Hamilton describes in great detail the ways in which these phenomena also have an impact on notions of femininity, types of interventions, division of labor in parenting, and levels of emotional and financial support.

## Visions of College/ Parenting Approaches

According to Hamilton, “helicopter parents” (mostly mothers) tended to hover over their daughters and swoop in with supplies, assistance, and guidance. “Their interventions were costly, requiring time, considerable financial resources, social savvy, comfort with authority figures, and cultural knowledge of higher education” (48). For parents who were “professional helicopters,” “career planning was a long-term game” (54). They were very involved in decisions about academic majors, both before and during college, and tended to use financial resources and social ties to enhance academic and career-building experiences (*e.g.*, study abroad, internships). These families were mostly characterized by upper-middle-class values.

Conversely, “pink helicopters” focused on building student strengths in terms of sociability, style, and appearance. “They [pink helicopters] invested in their

daughters’ social activities, consumption, and sorority status, hoping to increase the likelihood of marriage to a wealthy man” (48). Family members who identified the social experience as their vision of college were mostly of upper-middle to upper-class standing. In describing both types of helicopter parents, Hamilton notes that paying for college was assumed to be a parental duty and required large investments of financial and social capital.

Parents who envisioned college as a “hybridized experience” fused diverse beliefs about the purpose of women’s college years. While these parents placed value on moving students through college to adulthood, they also supported the young adult life stage that frequently characterizes the college years. Above all, parents saw autonomy as the most important trait that students could develop in college. Hamilton notes that “paramedic” parents “...wanted youth to practice being on their own—but offered emergency support to catch them when they (inevitably) fell” (36).

“Supportive bystanders” recognized the challenges of class standing and encouraged their daughters to be self-sufficient future wage earners. Many of these parents were stalled in their own careers because they lacked educational credentials, and they desired greater economic security for their daughters. These parents had limited involvement in the academic and social aspects of their daughters’ college experience because they did not have “college knowledge” or were unfamiliar with the processes and systems of higher education (see Duncheon 2015).

Parents seeking the adult experience of college viewed their daughters as adults and expected them to be entirely self-sufficient either before or during college. These “total bystanders” expressed ambivalence toward their daughters’ decision to attend college. They frequently viewed financial returns as uncertain, preferring alternatives such as the military, full-time work, or early marriage—especially if it would result in improved economic circumstances (34). Strained relationships and poor communication frequently characterized these parent-student interactions; the daughters of “total bystanders” “were disinclined to ask for help, even when they desperately needed it” (104).

## Consequences

Not surprisingly, the combination of visions for college and parenting approaches yielded significantly different results among students. For example, daughters of “pink helicopters” all graduated from MU within a reasonable timeframe, but they largely underperformed academically and had difficulty securing full-time employment on their own. Parents of these students wholly underestimated the demands of the social scene at MU, and while they succeeded in providing a social experience for their daughters, many of them expressed anger, bitterness, and frustration rooted in their children’s long-term economic and psychological dependence (119).

According to Hamilton, the “pink helicopter” approach to parenting “strips women of two essential resources: an internal locus of control—necessary for motivation and ambition—and career credentials. As a result, daughters were not “prepared to fend for themselves after college” (136–37). Instead, they relied heavily on familial social connections and continued financial support from their parents after they graduated.

The daughters of so-called “professional helicopter” and “paramedic” parents fared significantly better than their peers in securing professional positions and acceptance into graduate degree programs. Hamilton notes that “professional helicopters” left nothing to chance by protecting their daughters from social temptations, discouraging academic majors with a poor payoff, and fostering achievement at every level (144). These parents knew how to navigate higher education and advised their daughters so they could benefit from institutional resources clustered within the most competitive programs.

By letting their daughters make mistakes and learn from them, the approach that “paramedic” parents took was riskier in terms of outcomes; however, these students graduated with a greater sense of independence and a higher degree of autonomy than their peers. Hamilton states, “The *process* behind academic achievement—and what women learned along the way—was just as, if not more, important than achievement itself” (145).

The daughters of “supportive and total bystanders” struggled both academically and socially at MU. These women were more likely than their peers to churn through academic majors, transfer out of MU, earn

low grades, and accrue significant student debt (163). Individuals who received financial support from their parents were pulled into the party pathway, yet “supportive bystanders” “did not know how to push right back or, in many cases, even recognize the need to do so” (170). Consequently, these students faltered academically but did not have financial resources or social connections to fall back on.

Students of working-class families had to work to pay for school, which meant less time for studying and greater social isolation from peers. Hamilton states, “Students without the ability to access parental funds, especially in times of need, were...extremely vulnerable” (174). Perhaps the most poignant passages from *Parenting to a Degree* referenced two students from working-class families who struggled to make ends meet despite working multiple jobs. One student frequently went hungry, and the other was nearly evicted from her apartment due to her lack of financial resources. Hamilton notes, “There seemed to be limited recognition [by the university] that such students existed on campus” (174).

## Implications

Hamilton states, “How parents approach the college years shapes the life chances of young adults—sending youth on fundamentally different trajectories” (187). She also contends that institutions have largely outsourced many of their postsecondary responsibilities, tasks, and functions to parents. Parental involvement is a key to student success, but involvement in terms of academic and career success is more highly rewarded. However, Hamilton observes, “Intensive parenting approaches only work when paired with considerable class resources” (193).

Because class standing overwhelmingly advantages wealthy students, Hamilton proposes three basic policy “solutions” to provide relief for working-class families and to help level class differences associated with parenting: (1) provide greater access to information about the real costs and benefits of attending different institutions; (2) align school prestige with measures that reflect access and service to low-income, first-generation, and minority populations; and (3) apply more “socialist” principles to higher education, for example, by providing the first two years of college at low or no cost.

While these ideas all merit greater attention, they would require a political will that just does not exist in

today's environment of "upwardly mobile college-haves and downwardly mobile college-have-nots" (Crow and Dabars 2015, 54). Those who are currently advantaged by a system that favors intergenerational wealth and class reproduction are unlikely to forfeit this privilege to benefit society as a whole.

An alternative approach would involve four-year, public institutions' development of a mobility pathway in order to reduce students' reliance on parents for educational and career success (186). Such an approach would likely decrease the number of "glamorous" but low-pay-off academic majors (*e.g.*, sports communication) in favor of more vocational pursuits (*e.g.*, teaching, nursing, accounting). This strategy is similar to the guided pathways approach Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015) recommend for community colleges.

## Summary

*Parenting to a Degree* is an honest and revealing look at the lives and career trajectories of college women at MU as recounted by their parents. Hamilton's writing is richly descriptive and authentic, and her approach provides readers a unique opportunity to relate to the individuals featured in the book and to reflect on their own college experience through the lenses of college visions, parental approaches, and social class.

While *Parenting to a Degree* can be read as a stand-alone book, readers might find it helpful to read *Paying*

*for the Party* either before or concurrently with *Parenting to a Degree* as the books provide complementary perspectives on student experiences. In fact, Hamilton identifies specific chapters in the end notes of *Parenting to a Degree* that align with *Paying for the Party*. (See also a review of *Paying for the Party* in *College and University*, 89(4).)

The most compelling stories were those in which students' and parents' accounts differed. For example, "socialites" in *Paying for the Party* believed that their parents were more than willing to continue to provide financial support for them well past graduation. Parents, however, had significantly depleted their resources and were ready for their daughters to assume greater responsibility for their financial futures. Hamilton states, "These parents were calloused about their daughters' post-college circumstances. They did not see it as their job to offer more support as resources had run dry" (135–36).

Hamilton's policy recommendations seem overly ambitious and would require a system-level change well beyond one institution or even one institutional type. However, her research findings clearly demonstrate disparate outcomes for students of different class standing as well as many of the challenges associated with operating an educational enterprise in a market-driven economy. *Parenting to a Degree* is an exceptionally well-written and fascinating book; it should be of interest to a broad range of readers.

## *Practice for Life: Making Decisions in College*

CUBA, L., N. JENNINGS, S. LOVETT, AND J. SWINGLE. 2016. CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS. 238 PP.

*Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt*

In *Practice for Life*, Cuba, Jennings, Lovett, and Swingle assert, "College offers [students] practice at making, and then reflecting on, decisions that build foundational skills, habits, and values associated with liberal education" (3). The authors underscore the importance of decision making as an act of *becoming* rather than *achieving* and identify five critical areas of decision making for students: managing time, meeting friends, feeling at home, seeking advice, and engaging in academics.

Cuba *et al.* state, "No single college practice or policy...can address the complex question of how to edu-

cate students to be effective and engaged graduates... [However], every day students face decisions that can serve as opportunities for learning" (8). Thus, *Practice for Life* is less about the aspirational outcomes of a liberal education than it is about the process of decision making that can lead to those outcomes.

For this investigation, the authors define *liberal education* as a "broad curriculum grounded in the arts and sciences as distinct from pre-professional, technical, or applied fields of study" (x). Because the principles of a liberal education can occur in any type of institution,

the authors argue that *Practice for Life* “can and should be read as an affirmation of the enduring value of liberal education rather than a defense of liberal arts colleges as they are currently constituted” (xi).

However, Cuba *et al.* offer a research design based solely on student experiences at seven private, highly selective, residential, liberal arts colleges in New England. They state, “Because students at liberal arts colleges learn, play, eat, and sleep in the same space with the same people, these colleges are especially fruitful sites at which to explore our claim that college is practice for life” (11). While this may be true, the rationale the authors provide reads more like a justification for convenience sampling than a rigorous methodological approach.

Despite assurances regarding the “commonality” of everyday student decisions and an acknowledgment of the differences among institutional types, the authors underestimate the inherent biases in their research sample. In fact, multiple authors have noted that students

with limited financial resources frequently have fewer academic and social options (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Cox 2009; Hamilton 2016; Mettler 2014; Tierney and Duncheon 2015).

For example, Hamilton (2016) observes that students of working-class families have to work full or part time to pay for school, which leaves them less time for studying and frequently results in their social isolation from peers. Unlike students in the current research sample, working-class students do not have to “practice” for life: they are already dealing with many of the harsh realities of life just to make ends meet.

Notwithstanding these limitations, Cuba and colleagues suggest that developing a better understanding of the decision-making process can help students craft a meaningful adult life. Indeed, they argue that the “messy, complicated, ambiguous” process of becoming liberally educated is, in fact, “the point of liberal education” (11). This review seeks to share key concepts that may be of interest to the broadest possible audience.

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## Managing Time

Cuba and colleagues observe that students experience college as a temporal state based on class standing (*i.e.*, freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) as well as expectations placed on them during specific periods of time. During interviews, students noted that time seemed to accelerate during their sophomore year given deadlines and applications for experiential learning activities such as study abroad and internships and again during their senior year because of graduate school applications and job searches.

Commenting on student experiences of time, Cuba *et al.* state:

*Although academic and career-related objectives serve to advance students' focus on the future, social concerns tend to anchor them in the moment. But regardless of the directional forces at play, all of these heighten the sense of time compression in college (39).*

In terms of personal time management approaches, the authors note that students who employed strategies to achieve “balance” rather than impose rigid deadlines on time seemed to fare better academically, experience less stress, and maintain greater physical and mental health.

## Making Friends

Cuba and colleagues suggest that students' experiences making friends and building networks of peer support also varied based on school year, with freshmen benefiting from an “open marketplace” of potential friendships and institutional structures designed to maximize student interactions. In their sophomore year, students start to winnow first-year connections, and by their junior and senior years, students experience changing social dynamics based on study abroad departures and returns and graduations.

Within their sample, Cuba *et al.* identify two subpopulations of first-year students who had notably different experiences making friends: student athletes and minority/international students. Consistent with findings by Chambliss and Takacs (2014), college athletes' schedules frequently hindered their efforts to make friends outside of their sports teams. In addition, while the majority of international students and students of color appreciated special social programming efforts by

college administrators, some expressed feelings of being singled out based on “presumed social identities” that had “little salience” to them (56).

## Feeling at Home

Over the course of their investigation, Cuba and colleagues asked students to reflect on their experiences of college as “home” or “belonging,” which the authors describe as “establishing a physical and emotional space of comfort rather than a connection to a group” (215). The authors assert, “The choices of where to live in college, the changes students make in the physical places they inhabit, and the ways they feel about those spaces all serve as opportunities to reexamine what home means to them” (87).

Despite this definition, most students rooted their sense of belonging not to a physical space but to the friends and peer networks they had established. Others defined home as developing meaningful personal relationships with faculty members or thesis advisors. The experience of establishing social and academic relationships is consistent with findings by Chambliss and Takacs (2014), who state, “What really matters in college is who meets whom, and when” (16).

## Seeking Advice

As documented in the literature on academic advising, Cuba and colleagues found, “Learning how to interact with faculty and staff, particularly a faculty advisor, increases students' opportunities to obtain relevant, personalized advice—advice that can promote competence and growth and aid in decision making” (109). Despite these benefits, students had differential experiences of advising in their first year, often due to role confusion and unclear expectations by students and faculty advisors.

According to the authors, some students viewed advising as an opportunity to develop a meaningful relationship with a faculty member while others saw it as an obstacle to overcome. Cuba *et al.* note that many students did not see their advisors for what they represented: access to “important people, information, and resources outside of their own social networks” (117).

By their sophomore year, students started to recognize the increasingly important role of academic advisors in making significant academic decisions, such as

declaring a major or deciding to study abroad. These relationships were bolstered by a personal connection, a shared academic interest, and/or recognition that advisors indeed have students' best interests in mind. The authors contend that through practice, students become better seekers of advice.

## Engaging Academically

According to the authors, "Colleges pay a lot of attention to engagement because it's positively correlated to a number of valuable outcomes—persistence, personal development, learning, and satisfaction" (176). Yet current measures of engagement are too limiting, offering only dichotomous options: engaged or unengaged. Cuba *et al.* found more nuance among their sample by asking questions about academic engagement every semester on a course-by-course basis. Students can be engaged with "specific classes, assignments, professors, pedagogies, subjects, and methodologies" (144).

Based on orientations toward academic majors and curricula, the authors assert that students may experience academic engagement as episodic, sustained, or cumulative experiences. Cuba *et al.* observe, "Students who expressed an interest in getting a good or better grade each year were less likely to mention engagement themes...in their definitions of a successful year" (165). In this study, engagement themes included "desire to learn or taking interesting classes," "get to know faculty," "explore new subjects," and "do independent research."

These findings are consistent with those of Lang (2016), who suggested that the best and deepest learning takes place when it is driven by intrinsic motivators—when "the learner cares about the learning itself or the matter to be learned rather than some reward she will receive at the end of the learning period" (169). According to Cuba and colleagues, grades remain a "partial and imperfect indicator of what students have learned or how their habits of mind have been shaped" (168).

While the majority of *Practice for Life* focuses on student decision making, the authors briefly discuss ways in which colleges can alter institutional structures to increase the likelihood that students will find additional experiences for academic and social engagement. Specifically, the authors argue for creating more horizontal (interdisciplinary) linkages across curricula and pedagogy and structuring more opportunities beyond the first year for students to interact with racial and class

differences in the classroom. These ideas, while intriguing, are constrained to the last few pages of the book and receive only perfunctory analysis; readers may benefit from more robust discussion.

## Summary

*Practice for Life* is an interesting exploration of student decision-making processes at the postsecondary level. The research is well-referenced and impressive in scope. However, the authors focus on a very narrow population of students who attend highly selective institutions of higher education in the United States, and they conflate the *concepts* of a liberal education with the *experiences* of a liberal arts education. The academic experiences described in *Practice for Life* are simply not the same for the majority of college-bound students. The following example, based on college selection, clearly demonstrates this disparity.

Cuba *et al.* note that in response to recommendations from their guidance counselors, many students start looking at colleges as early as their freshman year of high school. Students' concept of "college going" is frequently influenced by family vacations and college visits with older siblings and on the tacit expectation that they would attend college after graduating from high school.

Working-class students do not have the same financial resources and family support that would make college attendance—let alone attendance at a private, residential, four-year college—a foregone conclusion. Almeida (2015) notes that first-generation, low-income students frequently lack knowledge about the world of higher education and may not know what educational options or resources are available to them. Students may also face obstacles such as multiple terms of poor academic preparation (Garcia 2015); lack of familial and societal role models (Duncheon 2014; Gardella, Candales and Ricardo-Rivera 2004); and self-doubt regarding their academic abilities (Cox 2009).

One major takeaway from *Practice for Life* is that students have the power to make decisions throughout their time in college, and the outcomes of these decisions can yield significantly different results in their academic and career trajectories. This point is most clearly articulated in the chapters regarding advice seeking and academic engagement and is demonstrated through comparative student case studies. (The earlier

chapters would have benefited from a similar format and structure.) The themes identified by the authors may be of interest to a general audience; however, given

current enrollment trends in higher education, *Practice for Life* may have greater appeal to students and families seeking a residential, liberal arts college experience.

## *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*

LANG, J. M. 2016. SAN FRANCISCO, CA: JOSSEY-BASS. 259 PP.

*Reviewed by Matthew Fifolt*

In his latest book, *Small Teaching*, Lang explores ways in which instructors at all levels and in all educational settings can implement incremental changes to enhance student learning. The author defines “small teaching” as “an approach that seeks to spark positive change in higher education through small but powerful modifications to...improve course design and teaching practices” (5). Recognizing the challenges of total course redesign, the goal of *Small Teaching* is to present strategies that are both easy to employ and well-supported in the research literature.

To ensure generalizability of recommendations, Lang outlines three basic conditions for including specific strategies in *Small Teaching*:

- ◆ Concepts had to have some foundation in the learning sciences.
- ◆ Learning principles had to have a positive impact in real-world educational environments—including higher education, whenever possible.
- ◆ Lang had to observe these learning principles in his own classroom or through direct observations of other instructors and their classrooms (6–7).

Notably, Lang states, “Small teaching is not a realist’s compromise, an inferior choice we have to make because we don’t have the time or energy to make the big changes that would *really* make a difference to our students” (9). Rather, small teaching strategies are designed to enhance the classroom environment and promote student success in real and tangible ways.

Lang organizes *Small Teaching* under three primary headings: knowledge, understanding, and inspiration. Within each chapter, he divides small teaching approaches by type and articulates concepts, models, learning principles, and examples for each. Lang notes that small teaching models can be used individually or

in combination to create new teaching strategies, and he encourages readers to search for ways to evaluate these strategies in order to measure changes in teaching and learning.

As a practical consideration, Lang provides conceptual and theoretical information at the beginning of each chapter and quick tips and application at the end. He recommends reading chapters in their entirety to gain a full understanding of the concept, but he also acknowledges constraints on faculty time and the occasional need for actionable, “back pocket” ideas.

### Knowledge

According to Lang, the first and most important task of teaching is to help students develop a rich body of content knowledge. In order for students to analyze and think critically, they first must have a solid understanding of factual knowledge. He states, “When we learn new facts, we are building up mental structures that enable us to process and organize the next set of new facts more effectively” (15). Leveraging small teaching activities in the first and last few minutes of classes, he suggests, can provide “a powerful boost to student mastery of knowledge” (18). Lang identifies three specific elements of learning: retrieving, predicting, and “interleaving.”

◆ **Retrieving.** Lang observes that the more frequently individuals retrieve information from their memory, the more capable they become of remembering that information in the future. Retrieving information and experiences from memory strengthens neural pathways that lead from long-term memory to working memory; the richer this neural pathway, the more retrievable information becomes in the future. Citing evidence-based research and practice, Lang encourages instructors to look for opportunities to

quickly assess student learning based on student recall. He also recommends sharing research findings on memory and retrieval and the rationale for implementing these types of activities in class as a way to improve students' learning.

- ◆ **Predicting.** Like retrieval activities, making predictions about course material increases students' ability to understand and retrieve learning in the future. According to Lang, asking learners to answer questions or anticipate outcomes for which they do not yet have sufficient information or understanding forces them to activate prior knowledge and experiences to make a plausible prediction. This, in turn, prepares their brains to “slot the answer” (when they receive it) into a more richly connected network of facts (49).

Like the scientific method, predicting activities allows students to pose a possible outcome, develop a rationale for their prediction, and explain why their prediction did or did not hold true. Lang observes that predicting or pretesting can also help students more accurately recognize gaps in their knowledge. Finally, Lang states, “Predictions make us curious... and curiosity is an emotion that has been recently demonstrated to boost memory when it is heightened prior to exposure to new material” (61).

- ◆ **Interleaving.** Yet another approach to learning that promotes long-term memory, interleaving involves spacing learning sessions over time and intermingling topics of learning. Lang describes its value: “Our brains need time to undertake the process of encoding, consolidating, and organizing newly learned material, and the gaps between spaced learning allow it that time” (67). Notably, researchers have shown that interleaving and intermingling topics allow students to assess context and discriminate between problems, both of which are necessary for the transfer of knowledge to new settings.

Interleaving strategies focus less on specific in-class activities and more on the structural design of courses. Lang recommends that major assessments “require students to draw—at least a little bit—on information or concepts or skills they have learned in previous units” (75). Online learning environments, he suggests, may work especially well for interleaving activities because staggered deadlines promote work that is spaced over time. Like predicting activities, the author warns that students may experience ini-

tial feelings of frustration; however, he advises that a little bit of discomfort can lead to deeper learning.

## Understanding

In Section II of *Small Teaching*, Lang describes tools for creating classroom experiences that “deepen student understanding, improve students' ability to analyze and improve their own learning, and become mindful practitioners of a large range of cognitive skills” (89). The author identifies three primary concepts to support understanding—connecting, practicing, and self-explaining—and proposes that these approaches, which are supported by research on human learning, can foster student comprehension and the acquisition of complex cognitive skills in powerful ways.

- ◆ **Connecting.** Connecting is a skill in which students bridge two or more ideas to develop a deeper understanding of course material. According to Lang, building comprehension helps students “forge rich, interconnected networks of knowledge—ones that enable each existing piece of information...to connect with lots of other information, concepts, and ideas” (96). While instructors cannot make connections for students, they can create learning environments that facilitate the formation of these connections (98).

Lang notes that students frequently come to class with inaccurate or insufficient information about the topic. Consequently, “existing networks distort new information to make it fit with what they already know rather than using it to build up rich and productive new networks” (100). Assessing prior knowledge can help instructors uncover faulty or incomplete connections. The author describes connecting activities, like concept maps, frameworks, and the Minute Thesis, as strategies to help students strengthen existing connections or envision new ones.

- ◆ **Practicing.** Consistent with his previous writing on academic dishonesty (Lang 2013), Lang recommends that students be given multiple opportunities throughout the semester to practice their skills through low-stakes assessments and in-class activities in advance of graded assignments. The author advocates giving students “small and regular opportunities in class (or synchronously online) to practice whatever cognitive skills you would like them to develop and that they will need to succeed on your

assessment” (126). Practice sessions, he notes, allow instructors to observe student work, give students feedback in real time, and monitor their progress.

- ◆ **Self-Explaining.** Lang describes self-explanation as a simple technique to foster mindful learning by providing prompts that encourage students to articulate not only what they are doing but also why they are doing it. For students to develop deep, meaningful learning, they must be able to make connections between their knowledge and their skills (139). Lang states: “Self-explanation helps learners recognize problems in their understanding—whether those problems are gaps in their knowledge or mistaken theories or ideas—and prompts them to take productive steps forward in their thinking” (147–48).

In terms of practical application, the author encourages instructors to identify opportunities for students to articulate principles as they are “making choices, searching for solutions, or revising their work” (156). In addition to improving comprehension, Lang cites research that demonstrates the benefits of self-explaining as a strategy to engage students

in class through constructive dialogue and active participation (Chi *et al.* 1994; Chiu and Chi 2014).

## Inspiration

In contrast to the previous two skill-based sections, Lang presents inspiration through emotions as an important element in orienting students to learning tasks. He states, “Emotions have the power to enhance learning as much as they do to detract from it” (162). Throughout Section III, Lang provides examples of emotional triggers (such as curiosity and purpose) that instructors can use to inspire learning and encourages instructors to demonstrate enthusiasm for the course material and compassion for their students. Lang divides the final section into the following three categories: motivating, growing, and expanding.

- ◆ **Motivating.** Lang describes the two basic types of motivation—intrinsic and extrinsic—and suggests that the best and deepest learning takes place when it is driven by intrinsic motivators, when “the learner cares about the learning itself or the matter to be

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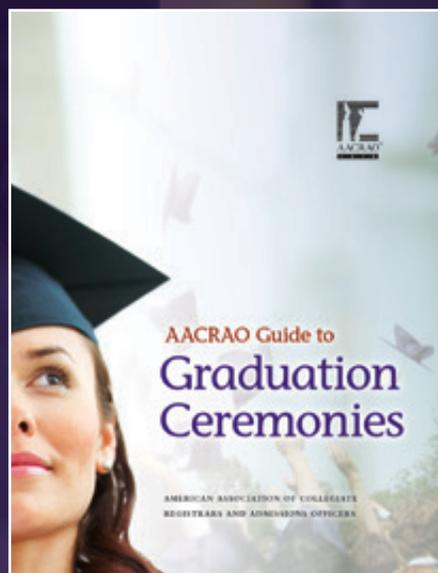
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learned rather than about some reward she will receive at the end of the learning period” (169). Recognizing the futility of trying to motivate students, Lang presents a more practical approach of working with emotions that currently exist (positive and negative) in order to give students the motivational boosts they need throughout the semester.

Specifically, Lang identifies three elements from the research on emotions that may be particularly helpful in engaging students in learning; use emotions to (1) capture their attention, (2) contextualize learning to things that matter (self-transcendent purpose), and (3) connect individuals to one another as social animals. Lang cites research findings by Chambliss and Takacs (2014), who state, “Motivation is crucial...and emotional connections to others and to a community provides the strongest motivation” (106).

- ◆ **Growing.** According to current research in cognitive science, praise for effort rather than praise for ability will motivate individuals to work harder and persist in the face of challenges and will even increase their enjoyment of learning-oriented tasks. Consistent with the “productive persistence” approach advocated by Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015), Lang notes that students perform better when they recognize that their academic abilities are not preset (fixed mindset) but rather malleable (growth mindset).

Because mindsets can change, Lang offers multiple small teaching strategies that instructors can use in course design, feedback on student work, and communication with students that will enable them [instructors] “to create a growth mindset classroom—one that encourages desirable academic qualities like creativity, risk taking, and even integrity” (206). Examples include creating early success opportunities through assignments and assessments and providing students with formative feedback and encouragement for improving future assignments.

- ◆ **Expanding.** In this final section, Lang describes three big teaching pathways that may be natural extensions of his small teaching practices. “Although teaching innovation can begin small, it can also expand” (223). The pathways include (1) activity-based learning, such as fieldwork, public service, community-based research, and internships connected to in-class work; (2) service learning; and (3) games and simulations. With regard to this last

category, Lang describes and endorses Carnes’s (2014) approach to pedagogy through role-immersion simulations. While role immersion is indeed a legitimate and effective pedagogical tool, Lang fails to acknowledge the significant research and support for other forms of games and game play in higher education (Gee 2007, 2014; McGonigal 2011; Tierney *et al.* 2014).

Given his focus on small teaching, Lang provides less detail in this last section but more resources should instructors wish to learn more about transforming their classrooms through immersive or experientially based learning activities. He does, however, suggest that instructors can incorporate games and simulations in class or online without significant investments of time and energy. These educational formats have great potential to introduce a topic and raise interest as well as contextualize relevant content for students.

## Summary

Lang closes this well-written and richly descriptive narrative by assuring instructors that they too can create powerful learning experiences for students through small, everyday decisions related to course design, classroom practices, and communication with students. The author states, “Small steps can make a big difference” (243). As noted previously, Lang organizes the text to be user friendly by dividing each chapter into sections and by offering theoretical constructs as well as practical recommendations for classroom instructors.

Throughout *Small Teaching*, Lang uses evocative and even humorous anecdotes from his personal and professional life to demonstrate the power of small teaching strategies, and he shares both his successes and failures. While the totality of concepts in *Small Teaching* may seem overwhelming, Lang encourages instructors to experiment and develop new strategies to best meet the needs of students. He also acknowledges that some small teaching activities may be better suited for introductory or survey courses (*e.g.*, retrieving, interleaving) while others would be better suited for upper-level seminars (*e.g.*, connecting, growth mindset feedback).

Recognizing the breadth of higher education settings and formats, Lang is deliberate in recommending strategies that are appropriate across institutional types and academic disciplines as well as those that can be

adapted for online platforms. He encourages readers to view *Small Teaching* as both a reference and a spark to ignite conversations about promoting positive change

in higher education. *Small Teaching* is a “must read” for individuals interested in improving teaching and learning practices in the classroom.

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