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—From former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz’s commencement address at Arizona State University, May 8

THE JOURNAL OF COLLEGE ADMISSION

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Our goal: “We love to tout that America is home to one of the world’s most comprehensive higher education systems. However, we also know that if this system is out of reach, it serves little purpose.” —Ramon Blakley

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

On a nice warm day my dad would pack up the family in his 1975 Black Dodge Tradesman conversion van and make the 45-minute drive to Lake Carlyle right outside my hometown of St. Louis. Sometimes we’d go fishing, sometimes just cook out, but one of our pastimes was skipping rocks. He taught me just the perfect angle to get rocks to skip. The trick was getting the right rock and right spot, preferably a smooth one that was shaped just right and near the shallow side of the lake or at the bottom of the spillway. A quick flick of the wrist, and whoosh!

It wasn’t the rock skipping that really did it for me. It was the ripples. Those ripples would go on and on spreading infinitely. Sometimes it even seemed as if those ripples would come in the opposite direction back toward me. It was fascinating to me that with an action I initiated, the ripples responded, and, if only for a few moments, I was able to make a change in the lake. Those ripples and the small change they bring about reminds me of the work we do in each of the lives we touch.

We are advocating for higher education opportunities with every college fair interaction, every scheduled meeting, every campus tour, every parent night, every file read, and every financial aid discussion—making those small ripples. If there were ever a time to make ripples, this is it. With decreases in revenue, postsecondary access and affordability faces a very uncertain future as state and federal legislatures attempt to balance priorities. We can debate whether these policies are based on political agendas or economic realities. No matter the angle, the current climate is causing us to examine our values and core beliefs. We must be dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing postsecondary education. When policies are enacted that counter our beliefs, whether at the state or local level, we have a responsibility to give a clear response.

The data speaks for itself: education is the best way to combat poverty, racism, sexism, economic inequality. When it comes to access and affordability, we’ve come a long way, but there is still a long way to go. Our membership needs to be better prepared for demographic shifts, as students will be more diverse, more of them will be first-generation, and even more will be adult learners. We love to tout that America is home to one of the world’s most comprehensive higher education systems. However, we also know that if this system is out of reach, it serves little purpose.

For 80 years NACAC has been making those ripples. Many of us have been around long enough to watch some of the students we helped along the way join the profession and in turn help the generations that follow them. The work continues. Just like the rocks, if we are impactful, work hard enough, and have the determination to see our work through, we just might see those ripples eventually come back our way.

Please enjoy this issue and see how your colleagues throughout the country are affecting change and making the dreams of higher education a reality for students all over the world.

Ramon Blakley, Director of Admission, Georgia College and State University, and NACAC Board Director
"Ranked #1 public university in Ohio for boosting graduates' earnings"
— The Economist

From small towns, big cities or the suburbs, students come to BGSU, establish roots, discover their passions and go on to lead lives that change the world. The moment you set foot on campus at BGSU you'll know this is a place where you can BELONG. In fact, BGSU is recognized by the Wall Street Journal for engaging students in their education. And with a faculty-to-student ratio of 19:1, you’ll never get lost in the crowd. This is a place where you can STAND OUT. Choose a program that fits you and take advantage of the Falcon Internship Guarantee – the first of its kind in Ohio. With a BGSU degree you can GO FAR. Confident in your qualifications from one of the nation’s top public universities, according to U.S. News & World Report.
MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

BOTH SIDES OF THE DESK
A private research university grounded in the ideals that inspired its Jesuit founders, Boston College urges students to look inward but always reach out—to develop their minds and talents to the fullest and use them in service to others.

**HOW DO YOU USE YOUR DEGREES IN YOUR COLLEGE ADMISSION WORK?**

I have a bachelor of arts in communication and a master of arts in higher education administration, both from Boston College. My communication major honed my interpersonal skills. Given how nerve-racking the college admission process is for many students and families, I feel my undergraduate degree helps me in many aspects of my work—from trying to put nervous students and families at ease in meetings to establishing a firm, yet caring tone during difficult or sensitive conversations.

**ARE YOU EXCITED TO HAVE NACAC IN YOUR HOMETOWN?**

We can’t wait to showcase Boston and New England ACAC to our domestic and international colleagues. The city and region are home to virtually every type of school and institution of higher education. September is a time when our colleges will be in session so conference attendees will experience what a spirited college town it is! I also think NEACAC is a vibrant affiliate comprised of members who are passionate about our profession. NEACAC is excited to welcome everyone!

**WHAT SHOULD CONFERENCE ATTENDEES MAKE A POINT TO DO WHILE IN BOSTON?**

Enjoy the Seaport section of city where the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center is located. This area has been revitalized over the last decade or so. Additionally, the Kenmore Square neighborhood of Boston is home to Fenway Park and the House of Blues (where the Social will be held). A great collection of restaurants, shopping, and entertainment options has sprung up around Fenway. It is, as some say, a wicked awesome area to visit.

**HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH YOUR AFFILIATE?**

I have been a member of NEACAC since 2002. Prior to co-chairing the Local Advisory Committee, I served as chair of NEACAC’s Professional Development Committee and Summer Institute training program. Volunteering has allowed me to assist younger professionals in the same ways colleagues helped me. Professional service has given me a deeper appreciation for the importance of our work.

---

**JEFF GALLANT**

Associate Director of Undergraduate Admission
Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts
NACAC member since 2007

**KATHI MOODY**

School Counselor
Lynnfield High School, Lynnfield, Massachusetts
NACAC member since 1995

Lynnfield High School is a four-year, coeducational public high school for students in grades nine–12.

**WHY ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT NEACAC HOSTING THE NACAC ANNUAL CONFERENCE?**

The Boston area—and all of New England, really—is a great place to be involved in education. We are education rich, so it’s exciting to have so many educators and counselors coming to Boston. The conference is an opportunity for us to share ideas and renew the profession.

**WHY DID YOU VOLUNTEER WITH THE BOSTON LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE (LAC)?**

Between budgets and the demands of the job, it takes a near-miracle for me to get to a national conference. The conference is local for me this year, so it’s an awesome opportunity to participate. I saw the excitement of past volunteers—like the ones in Columbus last year—and was inspired by their enthusiasm.

**WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE?**

I’m hoping to hear new ideas about tackling the changing social and emotional issues that affect my students. I’m always looking for ways to be a better counselor. Developing relationships with other admission counselors—especially at conferences—helps me keep current and is an important part of my job. It helps me do what’s best for my students and my school.

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER:**

This is my 19th year as a school counselor at Lynnfield High School. Before that, I spent five years in the admission office at the University of New Hampshire.

**WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?**

Without a doubt, it’s the kids… the students. They have great minds and so many talents, and no day is ever the same. The job is exhausting, but also energizing—students can do that.
Kathi, from page 7

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A YOUNG COUNSELOR PLANNING TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE?
Enjoy the conference and don’t be intimidated by the enormity of it. When I attended my first NACAC conference (which was also in Boston back in 1995), I didn’t know where to start. Now I would tell first-time attendees to jump in and to be confident. Approach new people and don’t go in with preconceived ideas about certain people or schools. Meet as many people as you can and ask questions. These are the people who will impact your life and your career.

NACAC CONFERENCE ATTENDEES ARE COMING TO BOSTON FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. WHAT SHOULDN’T THEY MISS?
Boston has a great food scene, varied cultural events, famous museums, and many historical sites. Conference attendees should enjoy the waterfront and our classic fall New England weather: sunny and beautiful.

Jeff, from page 7

COLLEGE RECRUITING CAN BE HECTIC. WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE WAY TO RELAX AND RECHARGE?
Running and spending time with my family. I’m also a big New England/Boston sports fan and the success of our teams has definitely made the hectic points of recent years more enjoyable.

GIVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO NEW COLLEGE ADMISSION STAFF MEMBERS.
Treat everyone with dignity and respect. Students are important but so are their counselors. Be professional to all members of a counseling office when you visit high schools. In my opinion, relationship-building is our goal.

New and Revised!

Check out the latest edition of Step by Step: College Awareness and Planning for Families, Counselors and Communities.

Revised in June, the curricula offer training for counselors and others in the community working with students.

This comprehensive resource provides activities and information you can use to create a college-going culture at every educational stage.

Each section is broken into sessions that can be integrated throughout the year or used for a more intensive program.

Learn more and download free at www.nacacnet.org/steps.

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National Association for College Admission Counseling

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Change a student’s life—help fund an innovative special project or school program.

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www.nacacnet.org/imagine
“We don’t just see ourselves as a college-access program—we see ourselves as helping students aim a little higher,” Gilbert Bonafé, Jr. said about Higher Edge. Bonafé is the director of programming at Higher Edge, a New London, Connecticut college access and success program serving 35 to 40 students in New London. The program has recently expanded to Willimantic, Connecticut, where it has 12 students enrolled with the intention to expand to serve about 40 students.

Higher Edge provides college counseling to high school students throughout their senior year, with mentors meeting with students for an hour each week to help them identify academic interests and potential careers, create a comprehensive college list, work on applications and essays, apply for financial aid and scholarships and, ultimately, review financial aid awards and make an informed college decision. The program also offers college campus visits and SAT tutoring.

Working closely with local high schools, the program recruits students at the end of their junior year. First-generation students, as well as those who receive Connecticut state health insurance, are given priority. Poverty is high enough among high school students in New London that nearly all students receive free or reduced-price lunch. Bonafé said finding students who are both in need and interested in attending a four-year college or university is Higher Edge’s chief priority.

Once students are enrolled in college, they transition into Higher Edge’s Success Program. Currently serving 120 students, the college program grew out of a desire to continue to support students after their transition to college. “There is more to all of this than just getting them into college,” Bonafé said. “We’ve had discussions internally about this a lot—there are support services on campus and we worry about replicating those services but our hope is that by providing a lot of support in the first year, the students are able to identify the support services they need and feel more confident looking for them as they become more comfortable in their schools.”

Higher Edge advisers check in once a week with students in their first year of college, tapering off to once every other week for students who are adjusting well to being college students. They also visit the students on their campuses once a semester. “For almost all our students, this is a very different environment. Many of our students don’t know anyone who’s ever been to college. It’s easy for administrators to forget that students don’t know what a bursar is or what a writing center is and why it might be helpful for them,” Bonafé said.

Programming is held before the beginning of freshman year to prepare students for the transition ahead. “We discuss everything from what it’s like to be a minority on a primarily white campus to who the registrar is,” Bonafé said.
THE AGE OF INEQUALITY?
Sociologist Examines For-Profit Colleges in *Lower Ed*

Depending on your point of view, one of two theories can help explain the rapid expansion of for-profit colleges in recent years.

In one scenario, students flocked to these schools, viewing the institutions as a new pathway to higher education. In the other, deregulation and easy access to federal student aid dollars spurred for-profits to enroll as many students as possible, often using predatory methods.

Author Tressie McMillan Cottom touches on both theories in her new book, but the researcher also presents another way of looking at the rise of for-profit colleges. Namely, that the schools can be viewed as indicators of social and economic inequalities.

“When students have complex lives, they choose for-profit colleges because those kinds of institutions appear to be organized to serve their needs,” said Cottom, author of *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy*.

Cottom worked in enrollment at two for-profit colleges before returning to grad school to study sociology. She is now an assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University where she examines higher education, work, and technological change in the new economy.

The sociologist took time out of her busy schedule to chat about for-profit colleges, the students they serve, and why lower ed is a topic educators can’t afford to ignore.

**Q:** More than 2 million students are enrolled in for-profit colleges. Why has that sector expanded so rapidly in recent years, and to what extent does the success of for-profit schools reflect America’s deepening inequalities?

**A:** Demand for higher education credentials is generally about two things: access to the labor market and a culture of mobility. The latter has been pretty stable in modern US society. People want to get ahead; it's the American way. The former is where things get more particular. For-profit colleges have expanded, in large part, because of increased demand for high-quality jobs. As the for-profit colleges themselves tell us, their likely student comes in the door because they have just lost their job or fear losing their job. That economic insecurity increased the perceived value of for-profit colleges for millions of Americans in the 1990s and 2000s.

**Q:** Did the structure of traditional (not-for-profit) colleges and universities contribute to the rise of for-profit schools? Why or why not?

**A:** Yes, but perhaps less so than is often argued. Again, it isn’t likely that for-profit college students are doing a great deal of institution-shopping. So, it isn’t likely that they are choosing a school for its convenience so much as they later rationalize their choice as being about convenience. What was more common for my students is that they had negative experiences of formal school in either K-12 or a previous college experience. Those negative experiences ranged from feeling overwhelmed (and) underprepared to feeling culturally isolated. They then project those experiences onto higher education and choose a for-profit college because it feels so different from those institutions, or the promised speed of completion minimizes their exposure to what they anticipate will be a hostile environment. In my research, what came up the most often was that for-profit branding and marketing had infiltrated communities that are spatially or culturally isolated from traditional college-going culture. That brand awareness...
became a type of institutional legitimacy. Students trusted the school name they’d heard often. Given this, it’s possible that traditional not-for-profit colleges’ lack of branding, marketing, and advertising contributes to the name awareness of for-profit colleges.

Q: In your book, you note that students in the for-profit sector are “browner, poorer, older, and more likely to be female” than their peers at not-for-profit colleges and universities. What can college counselors and admission professionals at traditional institutions do to better serve that population?

A: The tension is here is palatable. The greatest thing professionals can do to serve non-traditional minority communities is to violate some of the most deeply held tenets of professionalism: scheduled eight-hour work days (I hear people laughing at that because who really works eight hours, but please, give me a pass); weekends off; formal rules of access like making appointments. On-demand, culturally responsive institutional access is the greatest individual act a school or office or professional can provide. But, as we know, this is often expensive to provide. That’s the rub.

Q: What’s one thing you’d like anyone working in higher ed to know?

A: Lower ed isn’t just a set of schools; it’s a set of ideas and social processes. The idea of rationalizing access without paying attention to outcomes or risk isn’t just a problem among for-profit institutions even if it’s singularly a problem among them. All institutions have some degree of lower ed. What this book asks is if we cannot develop a more critical, nuanced, and generative language to talk about higher education that recognizes this. Only then can we organize around better social policy and institutional processes that better serve the mission of public, democratic higher education. We have to talk about lower ed—or we risk all becoming lower ed.

Author Tressie McMillan Cottom participated in a June 12 #NACACreads discussion of *Lower Ed*. View a full transcript: http://ow.ly/ADmp30cbM6W.

Mary Stegmeir is NACAC’s assistant director for content and marketing.

**FACT CHECK**

**HIGH SCHOOL VISITS**

Midsummer, many college admission counselors take a well-deserved break. But as the end of August approaches, professionals on both sides of the desk begin thinking about priorities for the early fall. High schools begin planning meetings with students and hosting college reps to make sure students are on track. Colleges begin recruiting—including making high school visits.

NACAC’s 2015 *State of College Admission* reports that these face-to-face visits are essential to connecting students with good fit colleges and for building rapport with potential applicants.

59% of colleges rate high school visits as “considerably important” for recruiting first-time freshmen.

73% of high schools report hosting college representatives as a frequent activity.
Coffee, breakfast, and making sure his 7-year-old stepdaughter gets ready for school on time—this is how Carlos Cano starts out each day. While his daily routine starts out similarly each morning, after that point there really isn’t an average day for him.

William Paterson University (WPU) has a rolling admission process, so he is always working in two admission cycles—the current season of applicants and recruitment for the next.

Cano traverses Hudson and Bergen counties in New Jersey when it comes to recruitment events for the state institution. If he doesn’t have any recruitment events, Cano will be in the office handling the day-to-day. This could mean anything from answering phone calls from applicants and parents regarding financial aid to walking students through the next steps in the enrollment process.

You can see evidence of Cano’s highly varied days on social media. As an avid user of both Twitter and Instagram, he utilizes these tools every day to reach students in an out-of-the-box way.

“It’s evolved into so much more than I ever thought,” he said. “For me, it’s one of those things that keeps the job fresh because I’m able to read about other perspectives—from students, from other colleagues at other institutions, from all over the place. It helps keep things a lot more relevant and in perspective.”

Cano has also taken on the role of a faculty adviser to several student groups, a task that helps keep him “proud to be a Pioneer.”

“My wife and kid put up with a lot because my schedule tends to be so nontraditional. There will be days when my daughter will be asleep and my wife will be half-asleep when I get home, but they are such troupers,” Cano said. “They totally respect and look up to what I do for a living on a daily basis, so I’m personally very grateful to them both because they allow me to do something that I’m very passionate about and that I really love to do as my career.”
And there might not be anyone as passionate about WPU out there. Cano has graduated twice from WPU, earning both his undergrad and his master’s degrees from the school.

In fact, Cano has spent most of his adult life at WPU.

As an undergrad, Cano was a student ambassador and tour guide around campus. During his junior year, an upper-level administrator asked what he was going to do after college. Cano said he didn’t know because he was having too much fun at WPU to think about leaving.

“He said to me, ‘Well you realize that if you’re having such a good time in college, you can always work at a college or university and still have that experience in the same atmosphere just from a different perspective,’” Cano recounted.

That got his wheels turning. A year after he graduated, a position opened up at WPU and the rest is history.

Cano said it’s the people who keep him at the school.

“A lot of the people who I worked for and helped mentor me as an undergraduate are still my mentors, but now they are also my co-workers and colleagues,” he said. “The evolution of a lot of different relationships I’ve had here on campus have kept me very grounded and very connected to the institution.”

This strong connection to the institution has also proved to be a huge asset to his work as an admission counselor.

“Having done my undergrad—having had the full experience—gives me a different perspective when I sit down with students and their parents. I’m able to talk about the university from a more personal perspective as opposed to just a broad overview,” he said.

“In terms of the vibe, the students, the demographics—that hasn’t changed much since I was here for my undergraduate. I’m able to give a perspective that you don’t necessarily get from a brochure or website.”

—Ashley Dobson
PROFESSIONAL NEWS

BOTH SIDES OF THE DESK
In April, the *Washington Post* called into question the appropriateness of communication between an institution’s campus development and admission offices about the fundraising potential of specific applicants for admission. The *Post’s* coverage took on an investigative hue, tapping into a long-running debate about wealth—as well as other attributes beyond a student’s ability to control—as a factor in college admission.

The continual effort to come to grips with the reality, as opposed to the ideality, of college admission in all of its varied forms manifests itself in the popular media, academic research, courts of law, and the halls of Congress. Indeed, Dan Golden authored a Pulitzer Prize-winning series of articles on the topic for *The Wall Street Journal* in 2003 that reportedly influenced the Supreme Court’s thinking in the *Gratz/Grutter v. Bollinger* cases involving the consideration of race in admission. He later expanded on the series in his 2006 book, *The Price of Admission*.

In 2010, an op-ed in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* asserted:

“Thomas Jefferson famously sought to promote in America a ‘natural aristocracy’ based on ‘virtue and talent,’ rather than an ‘artificial aristocracy’ based on wealth. By reserving places on campus for members of the pseudo-aristocracy of ‘wealth and birth,’…[such] preferences introduce an aristocratic snake into the democratic republican Garden of Eden.”

Heady rhetoric like the “democratic republican Garden of Eden” presents a contrast of sorts with the gritty process of crafting a first-year class at a typical college or university, yet terms like these at times frame the most hotly contested debates about college admission.

**THE AVERAGE EXPERIENCE**

How widespread is the practice of giving additional consideration to development cases?

“Think that virtually every college pays attention to development interests,” said Lou Hirsh, retired director of admission at the University of Delaware and the chair of NACAC’s Admission Practices Committee. What is less certain is the percentage of the admit pool who are development interests. “At most colleges it is probably tiny,” Hirsh noted.

**DEVELOPMENT CASES TAKE CENTER STAGE ONCE AGAIN**

By David Hawkins

The continual effort to come to grips with the reality, as opposed to the ideality, of college admission in all of its varied forms manifests itself in the popular media, academic research, courts of law, and the halls of Congress. Indeed, Dan Golden authored a Pulitzer Prize-winning series of articles on the topic for *The Wall Street Journal* in 2003 that reportedly influenced the Supreme Court’s thinking in the *Gratz/Grutter v. Bollinger* cases involving the consideration of race in admission. He later expanded on the series in his 2006 book, *The Price of Admission*.

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NACAC’s State of College Admission report indicates that factors beyond a student’s ability to control are, on average, significantly less important than the primary, academic factors (see table on right). NACAC hasn’t inquired as to the importance of development potential as a factor, although Alumni Relations could approximate the influence of development potential in admission considerations. “[A]pplicants that are being flagged by advancement are also legacy applicants... not 100 percent of the time, but more often than not these two things are in play together,” noted a private school counselor with 15 years of experience.

As a result, it is unlikely that students on average feel any singular negative impact of the admission of a development case. But, quite rationally, people don’t see the world as an average—they experience it individually. And the prospect of an underqualified student gaining admission, while another student with equal or higher academic indicators doesn’t, raises concerns among those engaged in the process.

MERITING A CLOSER LOOK?
What does it mean to be underqualified? College admission is idealized in the public consciousness as being based on a largely undefined, though clearly assumed, conception of merit. Broadly defined, college admission is a process that emphasizes academic achievement, whether by requiring a high school diploma for enrollment or by limiting enrollment to only a subset of students who have attained grades at an institutionally-preferred level. But the admission process also serves other purposes at colleges and universities. “When there’s a large group of students whose records are academically indistinguishable from each other, admission committees are compelled to look for tie-breakers,” said Hirsh.

Hirsh added, “development interest is one of those tie-breakers, along with legacy status; the likelihood of accepting an offer of admission; interest in an undersubscribed major; proficiency in a badly needed musical instrument or a badly needed sport; exceptional leadership; unusual life experiences; overcoming hardships; bringing geographic, socioeconomic, or ethnic diversity to the campus; ability to pay full tuition; coming from a high school the college is eager to cultivate; writing a compelling admission essay; or presenting compelling letters of recommendation.”

“The development interest student who is admitted isn’t taking the seat of a ‘better qualified’ student,” Hirsh continued. “Rather, these are all students who are ‘on the bubble,’ all more or less equally qualified, and the seats are going to those who have something else to offer the college.”

GOOD PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS
The NACAC Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP) doesn’t directly address the consideration of development potential in admission. In general, the SPGP requires that institutions be transparent in the requirements for admission, and that they adhere to core values ranging from non-discrimination to professional trust/judgment. A postsecondary institution’s right to establish its own admission policies has constitutional grounding. As former Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s majority opinion in the 2003 Gratz v. Bollinger Supreme Court case noted that a university’s ability to select its class “within constitutionally prescribed limits” was well-established precedent.

As such, institutions balance the messages they are sending to students and families about the academic standards necessary for admission with the possibility that some candidates’ chances might be influenced by the amount of money their family could contribute down the line. How best to operate in this climate?

Admission decisions “must be carefully made to ensure that the best interest of the student is considered in the process,” said Stefanie Niles, dean of admission and financial aid at Dickinson College (PA) and a member of NACAC’s Current Trends and Future Issues Committee. In addition, “one thing that isn’t being asked about is what happens to the student who is admitted with this particular hook,” noted the counselor. “These admitted students are still kids.”

Should colleges state openly that development potential could be a factor in some admission decisions? “If they are also willing to be upfront about all the other types of hooks that they take into consideration/preference in the application process, absolutely,” noted the school counselor. On the other hand, “if only a tiny percentage of students are admitted primarily because they are development interests, then referencing it as a factor on an admission website blows it out of proportion and obscures the more important message that the vast majority of students are admitted because of their own achievements, talents, and life experiences,” said Hirsh.

HOW TO TALK WITH STUDENTS AND FAMILIES
Absent a definitive answer to the philosophical question, and in the face of thousands of college policies and practices regarding development and admission, what is the best counsel to offer to...
students and families? “Honestly, just like I speak about all the other hooks that can be in play for applicants,” noted the school counselor.

In addition, despite their individual perspective, helping students and families understand the landscape of college admission is important. College admission counseling professionals are well-served by “focusing on the things [students] can control: their own academic performance and out-of-class accomplishments, their admission essays, and learning to understand themselves well enough so that they know a good college fit when they see one,” noted Hirsh.

Admission doesn’t exist in isolation, neither does higher education itself. Any discussion of development cases necessarily involves details particular to each institution, including (but not limited to) the diminishing level of public funding for higher education institutions, the dependence on tuition and donations to meet basic budget needs for many institutions, and the prerogative of colleges—particularly private institutions—to admit classes under the criteria and process they deem necessary to serve their needs. “For a student to have an advantage because of their parents’ ability to make a substantial gift feels less than fair, but it is simply a reality for institutions looking to ensure they have the resources necessary to deliver their educational experience,” said Niles.

As a matter of policy, it is difficult to draw distinct lines when considering development cases. Professionals advising students generally about the college admission process should share “the wide range of factors that go into how admission decisions are made,” said Niles. “There is both an art and science to the practice that is applied differently at each institution depending on their goals and the resources they have available to achieve them, she said”

David Hawkins is NACAC’s executive director for educational content and policy.

ANY DISCUSSION OF DEVELOPMENT CASES NECESSARILY INVOLVES DETAILS PARTICULAR TO EACH INSTITUTION, INCLUDING THE DIMINISHING LEVEL OF PUBLIC FUNDING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, THE DEPENDENCE ON TUITION AND DONATIONS TO MEET BASIC BUDGET NEEDS FOR MANY COLLEGES, AND THE PREROGATIVE OF INSTITUTIONS TO ADMIT CLASSES UNDER THE CRITERIA AND PROCESS THEY DEEM NECESSARY TO SERVE THEIR NEEDS.
“Underrepresented students can face a lot of negative messages about their place in education, particularly higher education. We want to present a different message, and in doing so, allow students to build leadership skills that can help them succeed.”

—Iowa ACAC member Lauren Garcia, quoted in an Admitted article about NACAC’s Imagine Fund. Garcia used an Imagine Grant to help coordinate a leadership conference that encourages teens to make higher education part of their postsecondary plans.

“Veterans value their education benefits, but it’s often a very difficult transition.”

—Tommy Lucas, interim director of the Office of Military and Veteran Enrollment Services at Saint Louis University (MO), quoted in an Admitted article about veterans in higher education.

“If we’re going to encourage students to consider starting at a community college, we need to make sure they are armed with information, and a plan.”

—NACAC Past President Patrick O’Connor, writing for Admitted about the transfer process. O’Connor is associate dean of college counseling at Cranbrook Schools (MI).

“Given the chance, students from low-income families do just fine in selective colleges.”

—New America’s Clare McCann, writing about educational outcomes for Ed Central. McCann is a senior policy analyst with New America’s education policy program.

“Students in career and technical education are happier with their high school experience, and more likely to finish high school, than students who don’t take CTE classes. But the career-oriented approach to learning hasn’t managed to shake the old stigma that it’s a pathway to blue-collar work for students who aren’t college material”

—Reporter Catherine Gewertz, writing about vocational and career education for Ed Week.

“Some education past high school has to be the goal for every young person.”

—Civic Nation’s Eric Waldo, quoted in an Admitted article about College Signing Day. Waldo worked closely with former First Lady Michelle Obama on the Reach Higher initiative.

For more from the Admitted blog, visit admitted.nacacnet.org.
COMMON APP INTRODUCES NEW FEATURES

Additional options for uploading documents and a new feature that allows students to self-report their grades are among improvements made to the 2017–18 Common Application.

The changes are aimed at streamlining the application process while making it easier for all users to access the platform’s full range of services, said Scott Anderson, senior director for access and education with the Common App. “This year alone, more than 3 million students, parents, counselors, and teachers used the Common App platform to apply to college, explore financial aid and scholarship options, or submit supporting recommendations,” Anderson said. “Many of the changes for next year’s application stem from the feedback we receive from the students and counselors who have used our platform.”

Here are four upgrades and additions you should know about:

**GOOGLE DRIVE INTEGRATION**
Many students and teachers already use Google Docs and Google Drive to create, collaborate, and access shared documents. Students will now be able to use the same tools to upload resumes, school assignments, and other materials within the Common App. “We recognize that some students don’t always have personal computers at home, but use Google Drive on school or library computers to store their documents,” Anderson said. “By incorporating the tools that they are already using, we are making the process more accessible for students.”

**MORE ACCESS FOR MENTORS**
Students receiving support from advising and community-based organizations will now be able to work with those counselors within the Common App system in the same way they collaborate with school-based counselors and teachers. Once granted access by their students, community-based college advisers will be able to manage their caseloads and view student progress within the Common App. In addition, students will be able to share access (read-only) to their in-progress application with their school counselor, CBO counselor, or other adviser.

**STREAMLINED REPORTING OF COURSES AND GRADES**
Many colleges and universities require students to submit academic records when applying for admission. A new Common App feature allows students to self-report their high school courses and grades. Eleven Common App member colleges plan to use Courses & Grades in the coming year. “By integrating the ‘Courses & Grades’ section into the Common App, those students who are already sending this information will be able to complete it and submit it with their Common App, making the process of self-reporting transcripts more standardized and streamlined for students, counselors, and colleges,” Anderson said.

**RESOURCES FOR SPANISH-SPEAKERS**
Key information for using the Common App will be translated. The new resources will help students, parents, and other family members who speak Spanish as their first language better understand the college admission process. “These new tools, which are part of Common App Ready, also benefit counselors who will be working with these families and will need Common App materials in Spanish,” Anderson noted.

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Mary Stegmeir

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COMING SOON
A new application specifically catered to transfer students will soon be available. Common App and Liaison International, a Boston-based firm specializing in admission management and enrollment marketing, are partnering on the project. A group of 10 to 12 colleges will pilot the app early next year. A full release is set for August 2018.

The new application is designed to serve returning adult students, as well as community college students applying to four-year institutions. “By offering this tailored transfer application, we’re ensuring that everyone—a returning veteran, an employee attending college part-time, a student parent completing her degree, a commuter at a two-year college—can pursue higher education and fulfill their dreams,” Common App President and CEO Jenny Rickard said in a press release.
NACAC is back on Instagram and better than ever.

NACAC’s Instagram features pictures from events, unveils features on the website and in the Journal, and offers behind-the-scenes access to the association and its work. Check in regularly to see exciting weekly features like #MemberMonday, which helps you get to know a different side of one of your fellow members.

Walk down memory lane with us every Throwback Thursday (#tbt, #NACACtbt) with a post that showcases a NACAC publication from the past.

The NACAC Photo of the Week (#NACACpotw) features admission-related photos submitted by members via the hashtag or email.

NACAC’s Instagram Stories are not to be missed. Ever wonder how to find helpful information on the website? We’ll walk you through it.

A deeper dive into some of those older publications, complete with amusing insights? We’ve got that too.

Each story only lasts 24 hours, so watch them while you can! Make sure to follow @nacacheadquarters to catch all the action.

BONUS ARTICLES ONLINE

The Journal is overflowing… onto the web. Visit www.nacacnet.org/journal every quarter to read even more from thought leaders tracking the pulse of college admission counseling; the foremost authorities on trends, data, and research; and members dedicated to ethical college admission.

This issue’s bonus article, written by retired college admission counselor Scott White, explores the latest phenomenon in overparenting: bulldozing.

Says White: “Anne Walker, one of the nation’s top golf coaches, noted on the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) Development Zone’s TM Resource Center that in the sports arena she’s witnessed a shift from helicopter parents, to Velcro parents, to bulldozer parents, who push problems out of the way for their children so they never experience discomfort, hardship, or failure.

“This is a whole new level of interference and much, much worse. Helicopter parents prevent a child from dealing with things like loneliness, self-sufficiency, and taking risks. Bulldozer parents prevent children with dealing with obstacles and setbacks. Helicopter parents prevent kids from growing up. Bulldozer parents prevent them from developing character.

“This has led to a rise in children who are fragile, not self-reliant, more fearful, and less independent…

“We in the college admission community must do our best to make this process one that encourages student growth.”

Read the rest at www.nacacnet.org/BlockingBulldozers. Bonus articles are available online only for limited time. Happy reading!
Visit one of America’s consummate college towns and connect with colleagues from across the globe at NACAC’s national conference in Boston.

This year’s gathering, scheduled Sept. 14–16, offers professionals from both sides of the desk a forum to explore college admission trends, share best practices, and network with peers.

Already planning your trip to Boston? Make sure to include these can’t-miss highlights in your schedule.

CATCH OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Racial inequalities in higher education continue to challenge schools and communities across the country. Renowned researcher Shaun R. Harper—who serves as the director of the University of Southern California’s Race & Equity Center—will delve into the underlying causes and share strategies for student success.

REGISTER FOR A COLLEGE TOUR
The greater Boston area is home to more than 50 postsecondary institutions. Make plans to attend one of the 32 campus visits organized in conjunction with the conference. Both individual and group tours are available.

EXPLORE HOT TOPICS
The national conference will offer over 130 educational sessions for attendees. Hot topics—such as cultural competency, financial aid reform, and the use of standardized testing in admission—are included in the lineup.

VISIT A HUB
Three new learning zones—called hubs—will debut at the Boston conference. The hubs will feature specialized sessions related to affiliate management, career development, and international counseling and recruitment. Hub sessions last 45 minutes and allow opportunities for smaller group discussions, hands-on activities, and networking.

STOP BY THE EXHIBIT HALL
Meet with representatives from over 200 companies from around the world that provide products, programs, and services of interest to counseling and admission professionals. The hall is also home to the conference’s popular Tech Lab, where professionals are invited to take part in hands-on, interactive learning. Six sessions...
PRECONFERENCE SCHEDULE

PRECONFERENCE WORKSHOPS
Sept. 13 – Sept. 14 | 7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
• Admission Middle Management Institute
• Chief Enrollment Officers’ Forum
• Directing a Dynamic College Counseling Program
• NEW! Fundamentals of Recruiting and Counseling International Students

Sept. 13 | 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
• Transitioning to Private Practice College Consulting

PRECONFERENCE SEMINARS
Sept. 14 | 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
• Advancing Women’s Leadership in Enrollment Management
• Advising Performing Arts Students in Dance, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts Admission
• College Essay Guy’s (Abridged) Guide to the Supplemental Essays
• Culturally Competent College Admission Counseling
• Financial Aid: Beyond the Basics
• Hotspots, Hooks, and Hidden Agendas: An Inside Look at the College Admission Process
• Mindfulness Practices for College Admission Professionals
• Reality Counseling Fuel – Swimming with the Sharks
• Tools of the Trade

To register for preconference events, visit www.nacacconference.org. Workshops require an additional fee—ranging from $325 to $550—and can be added during the conference registration process.

PARTICIPATE IN OUR STEP CHALLENGE
Join your fellow conference attendees in a friendly competition to see who can take the most steps over the course of the national conference. Anyone with a fitness tracker, such as a Fitbit or a mobile phone with a step counter, can join the fun. Registration fees support the Imagine Fund.

GROW YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK
This year’s conference—expected to draw more than 7,000 professionals from around the world—will include plenty of time for networking. The Meet Your Match game, First-Timers’ Orientation, and Welcome Reception are back by popular demand.

There will also be ample opportunities for job seekers to make professional connections. Register now for the National Conference Job Board and let employers know you will be available to discuss your future while in Boston.

—Mary Stegmeir

View a full schedule of events and register at nacacconference.org.
Guiding the 98% Counselor: Non-Scholarship Athletes

By Brennan Barnard
Guiding the 98%
Counseling Non-Scholarship Athletes
There is a mantra in the long-distance running community—“drink early and often.” Marathon running requires equal parts stamina and strategy, ample foresight and planning.

So does the athletic recruiting process.

A great deal of media attention is given to Division I athletics, with hype around early commitment, signing ceremonies, and full-ride scholarships.

But what about the majority of college athletes—those who don’t anticipate huge scholarships and national attention? They need to “drink early and often” too.

Collegiate athletics can be extremely rewarding, allowing students to continue something they love, while also creating connection, camaraderie and opportunity, honing character through rigor and adversity.

But all too often, it can also be misleading, complicated, and restrictive—forcing young people to narrow their college search.

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), colleges and universities offer over $2.7 billion in scholarships each year. However, only about 2 percent of all high school athletes can expect to be awarded any money to play sports in college.

As admission and counseling professionals who work with the remaining 98 percent, it’s our job to help aspiring college athletes understand the ins and outs of applying to college as athletes.

PASSION OR PATTERN
As with every aspect of the college search and application experience, students must start by articulating their reasons to pursue recruitment and competitive athletics in college.

Pure love of the game? The camaraderie and connection of a team? Admission to a more selective college?

If students aren’t clear about why they are pursuing this avenue, they risk losing ownership of their decisions and outcomes.

Some students—immersed in a sport as long as they can remember—don’t know any different. They need to pause and make sure they don’t get swept up in the influences of recruitment.

High school and club coaches have a vested interest in their athletes’ achievements, and college coaches and admission officers are concerned with fielding strong teams with quality applicants—after all, this is their livelihood. They may not pause either—unless the counselor or student asks for an honest assessment.

Andy Strickler, dean of admission at Connecticut College, advises students to get an objective opinion. “Someone needs to be honest with the student about their ability level. Too many student-athletes have an inflated sense of athletic ability and when they realize they are not the star player they once thought, we may have a retention issue,” he said.

In college admission counseling we explore what experiences a student hopes to have beyond high school. We take into account their abilities, then we help them build a list.

Athletic recruitment is no different.

SEARCH SMART
Student athletes and their families always want to know when they should start the recruitment process. As with most guidance in college admission, the answer is “it depends.”

While the NCAA has clear guidelines for coaches and athletes about when communication is permitted, there are certainly creative workarounds that enable recruitment to begin as early as ninth grade for some sports.

Despite increasing resistance to this timeline for student athletes, the reality remains that they must maintain an earlier focus on college than the average student. A NCAA survey found that a quarter of all Division III college athletes were walk-ons. And another 9 percent report being recruited after enrolling.

This means that almost two-thirds were recruited in high school.

Conventional wisdom is that students should consider the beginning stages of this process as early as ninth grade. Athletes must be sure that they have their high school courses mapped out to meet eligibility requirements and have a plan to attend summer camps and athletic showcases to gain exposure to college coaches.

As with other areas of college admission, there is no shortage of “experts”—websites and other outfits who are happy to take a family’s money with the promise of college recruitment.

While some students find agencies useful in managing the process, there are a host of free resources for the college-bound athlete. The NCAA provides a variety of helpful tools to aid students as they navigate recruitment.

Many sports organizations also offer recruiting information. Art McCann, dean of college counseling at Crossroads School (CA), said students can and should take ownership of this process.

“Research athletic conferences. Conferences are made up of like-minded institutions. This helps you find more schools. Then research the rosters and the players. Ask: How big and tall are they? Google the athletes to learn what accolades they received in high school. Are you earning similar accolades? Weak win-loss records could indicate a better opportunity to make a roster and/or receive playing time, but how much school culture and or selectivity/prestige are you willing to sacrifice to make the roster?” McCann advised.

Carey Thompson, vice president for enrollment and communications at Rhodes College (TN), said students need to get out there and investigate. He suggested, “Be proactive. Don’t wait to be recruited. Recruit yourself by reaching out to coaches early and often. Talk to the coach about the sport. Talk to admission about admission.”

The most effective resources are coaches and counselors, and success is found when the lines of communication are fluid and consistent.
RECRUITING REALITIES

According to the NCAA, out of the nearly 8 million high school athletes, only 6 percent (nearly half a million) will compete in NCAA sports in college.

Of those collegiate athletes, it is predicted that 2 percent will go on to play professional sports.

So for the typical student, college should mean more wins off the field than on it.

Make sure students understand the realities of their path. Those distracted by the strength of a team or recruitment offers may neglect to conduct a comprehensive college search.

Strickler warned, “Don’t let your college search get hijacked by a coach. Too many students end up looking at a particular college because they are being recruited to play a certain sport by a coach. A lot of times, that can steer an applicant to the wrong place athletically, geographically, financially, socially, or otherwise.”

Students may not feel like they’ll ever change plans, but remind them that life is unpredictable, so it’s best to have a Plan B… and maybe Plans C and D.

Rhody Davis, director of college counseling at Viewpoint School (CA), said getting students to consider other criteria is essential to their success. “Encourage students to have a host of options and to develop an alternate list that doesn’t take the sport into consideration,” he said.

And sometimes, plans are changed for them.

Mike Sexton, vice president for enrollment management at Santa Clara University (CA), said students need to consider the worst-case scenario. “Don’t forget the ‘what if you blow out a knee’ test. Is your college choice still the place you would want to wake up for four years if you couldn’t play anymore?” he asked.

Recruited athletes often note that the most valuable resources are former teammates or classmates who have weathered the process. They recommend connecting with others online.

Athletic participation can be an important part of a student’s college experience and the best guidance educators can offer scholar-athletes is that of managed expectations and setting clear and realistic goals. We are here to help young people courageously start, but dream smart.

Brennan Barnard is director of college counseling at The Derryfield School (NH) and a NACAC member.
Toward a Better Letter

Letters of recommendation don’t always measure up. How could they get better?
At a local high school, a counselor and an AP teacher both are again staying late, staring into their computer screens at letters they’ve been meaning to write for several weeks but never seem to complete. And just up the highway, also behind schedule, a group of college admission counselors are working their way through stacks of similar letters.

They all have something else in common. They aren’t certain about the value of the effort.

Letters or recommendation consume a lot of time and thought as they are solicited, written, and read, and, while many high school and college admission officials say that work pays off by providing a university with valuable and sometimes unique information about prospective students, most everyone also agrees they could be more effective.

“Sadly the goals of the letter writer and letter reader are sometimes at odds with each other,” said Nathan Kuncel, a professor at the University of Minnesota who has studied letters of recommendation. He said letter writers want students to get in the school of their choice while colleges want clear, accurate information that can help many students improve their status but might exclude others.

Former Dartmouth Director of Admissions Rebecca Sabky was more critical of the process in a recent New York Times article, even as she celebrated one letter that had an impact on her (see sidebar).

“Letters of recommendation are typically superfluous, written by people who the applicant thinks will impress a school,” she wrote. “They generally fail to provide us with another angle on who the student is, or could be, as a member of our community.”

Others, however, think they are useful but could be improved, especially if all three players do a better job of making sure the letters serve the purpose intended: helping the college and the student find the right fit.

“A so-so letter can make a reader question an otherwise solid application,” said Suzanne McCray, director of admissions at the University of Arkansas. “But others find a way to lift the student off the page. Those can improve a good, but not great, application and make a committee interview or accept a student or award them a scholarship.”

Beth Wiser, executive director of admissions at the University of Vermont, agreed.

“The most memorable are those that tell a story about a student and bring it to life,” she said. “I want to get a sense of the student’s personality, or find the student has really made a connection with their high school and the community. That will often make an impact in the review process.”

WHERE THEY GO WRONG

Kuncel said the letters aren’t as effective as they could be for a few reasons.

The writer typically is biased, he said. A student chooses a reference because they believe that person likes them or admires their work and is therefore a supporter. There also is pressure on letter writers, aware they might diminish the student’s chances at the school or that the student could see or hear about the letter.

Generally, experts also say people are flattered to be asked and usually are positive in their comments. In fact, research shows fewer than 7 percent of applicants for schools or jobs receive average or below average assessments.

LETTERS THAT STICK

A recommendation letter played a key role in getting a student into Dartmouth College (NH) recently, not so much because of what it said but because of who it was from and what the relationship behind it said about the student.

Writing in the New York Times, Rebecca Sabky, the former head of admission at Dartmouth, tells how the letter on behalf of an applicant from a school janitor convinced the Ivy League school to admit the student.

The custodian wrote about the student’s thoughtfulness—the only person in the school who knew the names of every member of the janitorial staff. He turned off lights in empty rooms, consistently thanked the hallway monitor and picked up rooms even if nobody was watching. This student, the custodian wrote, “had a refreshing respect for every person at the school, regardless of position, popularity or clout.”

“Over 15 years and 30,000 applications in my admissions career, I had never seen a recommendation from a school custodian,” Sabky said. “It gave us a window onto a student’s life in the moments when nothing ‘counted.’ That student was admitted by unanimous vote of the admissions committee.”

“Given that most applicants select the people who will be their reference providers, we probably shouldn’t be surprised by the lenient ratings,” said Michael Aamodt, a psychology professor at Radford University in Virginia, who also researched the process.

He said the writer’s personality plays a role. They may not think that a certain good or bad quality is important and downplay it—great social skills or introversion, for instance, or the student’s habit of planning poorly and turning in late work, especially if a similar trait afflicts them.

Kuncel said admission officials and others reading letters of recommendations should be aware of bias on both sides and differing goals. However, he and other experts warn against colleges being too cynical about letters of recommendation, discounting or ignoring them and missing good data.

“Even in their current form they actually capture some useful information and can add to admission applications if used correctly. Our research suggests that they give us the most information about a student’s motivation and drive, and can meaningfully improve our ability to predict whether they’ll finish the degree.”

Aamodt said readers should still search for information of value even if letters seem excessively flattering.

“Rather than using letters of recommendation as a separate evaluation tool, admission committees should use them to fill in missing pieces—things such as participating in class discussions or never missing class,” he said. “Those are things that are probably not in the application materials.”

THE READER’S PERSPECTIVE

Aamodt also said that because writers focus on issues important to them, colleges could get better information if they requested brief letters about specifics. “For example, they might want to know about writing skills, analytical skills, or the ability to work on team projects,” he said. In addition, he said individual schools should develop a rating system for their admission
“My job is not to draw big neon circles around a student’s achievements so that an admissions officer will pay more attention to them. Instead of bragging on behalf of the student, I want to render human the person admissions officers may view as a collection of letters and numbers, to say what those grades and scores cannot.”

FOR THE WRITERS

Experts say school counselors and others charged with writing letters of recommendation should provide applicable, specific insight.

“The more detailed the letter, the more likely we are to use it in the review of a student file,” said Aundra Anderson, director of admissions at Washington College (MD). She said standardized forms and block letters are less likely to be used. “Examples are the best. Johnny is a leader? Great, can you give us an example of a time he showcased his leadership skills.”

Nesbitt also believes letter writers should be encouraged to discuss any examples of character, interpersonal and collaborative skills, and resilience that a letter writer directly observed.

“We look for compelling information,” said McCray, “something that goes beyond a list. We look for stories that give a face to the student, that take us beyond service hours, GPA, and scores. What makes the student tick? Is the student really engaged in some way? We know that engagement will transfer to other kinds of involvement as well.”

Writing in Atlantic recently, teacher and writer Andrew Simmons put it this way: “My job is not to draw big neon circles around a student’s achievements so that an admissions officer will pay more attention to them. Instead of bragging on behalf of the student, I want to render human the person admissions officers may view as a collection of letters and numbers, to say what those grades and scores cannot.”

He wrote that letter writers should think of themselves as a combination of detective and journalist, accurately investigating the student and reporting their findings.

Related to that, McCray said she appreciates it when a counselor or other letter writer explains an issue that might come up elsewhere in the application. For instance, they might discuss the test anxiety of a student with lower than expected SAT scores, describe how an illness affected a student’s grades for a quarter, or even explain how a once unsuccessful student has developed new habits.

“Is there a hardship that the student has overcome that connects to motivation? If the writer has a real abiding concern, what is it? Has the student learned from whatever the issue might be? Can the letter writer make the case for why it should not be an issue?”

Kieron Miller, vice president for enrollment at Whittier College (CA), said recommendation letters should be a narrative more than a checklist.

“The best letters tell stories that offer insight. Stories that reveal something not revealed elsewhere in the application. Stories that are memorable and effective with concrete examples to make a student come alive in a way that goes beyond a list of achievements, adding color to an application.”

Jim Paterson is a writer and former school counselor living in Lewes, DE.
MOVING
Dual Enrollment is Fast Becoming The Norm
Moving the Needle

Dual Enrollment is Fast Becoming The Norm

By Elaina Loveland
Stephanie Mui completed her master’s degree in mathematics at George Mason University (VA) this May—before her high school graduation from Virginia’s Oakton High School in June.

She is the youngest-ever master’s degree graduate from the university—and it was made possible by a dual enrollment program.

It all began in fourth grade when Mui was told she could skip math class. In the summer of her fifth grade year, she enrolled in a dual enrollment program Northern Virginia Community College. Taking classes online and taking one or two classes a semester and two each summer, Mui finished her associate degree by age 13.

She then transferred to George Mason University and earned her bachelor’s degree in mathematics in the summer of 2016—before starting her senior year in high school. Her age never became an issue. She never told her classmates she was younger than they were—and she blended in just fine.

“I really felt like a normal college student with a normal college experience,” said Mui, about having finished her college and graduate degrees so early. “And it feels pretty good.”

**BENEFITS**

While Mui’s story is aspirational, dual enrollment programs offer a wide range of students many advantages.

Many families would say cost savings is at the top of the list. “There is a huge cost savings to students and families, and students have the opportunity to experience college in high school and it shortens their path to their degree,” said Yvette LeMore, director of the Lewis and Clark Community College High School Partnership/Dual Enrollment Program in Illinois.

And for specific student populations, dual enrollment can help with college preparation.

“Students, particularly those who are preparing to be first-generation college students, gain a great deal of confidence by being successful in these courses, knowing that they can negotiate challenging texts and ideas and take more ownership over their own learning,” said Christina Parish, director of Syracuse University’s Project Advance.

But the perhaps the most remarkable benefit of dual enrollment is that it cultivates a college-centric perspective—one rooted in success.

“I think it’s important to recognize that as we increase the numbers of students going on to college, we also need to be focusing on college success and getting a few of these courses under your belt has a very significant impact on your academic momentum,” said Adam Lowe, executive director of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships, the sole accrediting body for concurrent enrollment partnerships.

Parish added that dual enrollment is “a great way to jumpstart one’s college career.”

AACRAO’s *Dual Enrollment in the Context of Strategic Enrollment Management* shows that 63 percent of colleges say completing dual enrollment courses improves the likelihood of being accepted to college.

And after they are accepted, these students have a better idea of what to expect and are therefore more successful.

“Skills like syllabus navigation, advocating for yourself to your professor, understanding that in college there are typically fewer assignments and therefore the assignments that you do have a greater weight, and you need to put your 100 percent best effort into those assignments are essential understandings for any student going into college,” said Michael Dunn, director of college counseling at AIM Academy (PA).

**DUAL ENROLLMENT ADVANTAGES**

- Earn college credit in high school at no cost to the student
- Take challenging courses in subject areas that high school may not offer
- Explore subject areas for possible future careers
- Learn new and enhanced skills needed for college courses work
- Take classes in the summer
- Earn credit in transferable courses

Adapted from a list provided by Lisa Harper, director of College Credit Plus at the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

**MANAGING RISK**

“Students participating in these programs do generate a college transcript, and so poor performance in a course can have some negative impact in the longer run,” said Lowe.

Lowe advises school counselors to work and make sure students and families are aware that there is some risk to having a poor grade, but “at the same time show them the value of stretching themselves academically.”

Many dual enrollment programs closely monitor their student’s academic performance to mitigate the risk of a student not performing well and earning a poor grade.

To help make sure students on track academically, Dunn plays the role of a student support advocate in AIM Academy’s dual enrollment program with Cabrini College (PA). Twice a week, he hosts study hall sessions at Cabrini in the library for the students.

“We talk about how things are going in classes, how their notes are going, what method they use to take notes and whether it’s effective, and how they are studying for their next test,” explained Dunn.

If a student consistently performs poorly, Dunn pays close attention to the course withdrawal date so the student can withdraw from the course before the deadline.

Kent Scheffel, vice president of enrollment at Lewis and Clark Community College (IL), said that the state allows the Lewis and Clark’s High School Partnership/Dual Credit Program to withdraw dual credit students from courses on a later date than typical college students. Having a later withdraw date can allow students who are doing poorly to avoid a low grade appearing on their transcript.

“Parents and students need to realize early on that it really is a college course with the same rigor and standards and they need to take it seriously or it can have long-term implications,” said Scheffel.

The University of Connecticut’s UConn Early College Experience program goes a step further to help mitigate risk.

Students who earn a C or higher receive credit for their UConn courses. If a student earns a C- or below, the grade converts to an audit on their transcript.

“This opens up the opportunity to take these courses with a little bit of a safety net,” explained Brian A. Boecherer, executive director of University
of Connecticut’s Office of Early College Programs and UConn Early College Experience program. “This policy aligns with transfer credit policies—where classes with a C or higher would transfer to another university. The same principle is applied for our students for transferred courses.”

AN OPTION FOR ALL
Lowe said that dual enrollment programs aren’t just for high-achieving students, like they were several decades ago.

“We as an organization recently adopted a vision where we made very clear that we believe these courses and programs ought to be available to all high school students, rather than being available solely to the high-achieving students,” explained Lowe.

Lowe also emphasizes that there are several models of postsecondary education that dual enrollment programs fit into.

“College’ means any postsecondary education, and in this day in age, there are a lot of very high-value associate programs and high-value certificate programs that community and technical colleges offer that are often available through dual enrollment,” said Lowe.

AIM Academy sees dual enrollment as such an advantage to students that 100 percent of its seniors participate in a dual enrollment program in partnership with nearby Cabrini College.

The formal partnership between the school and Cabrini College began six years ago. The AIM Academy approached local universities directly to form a dual enrollment program because they wanted to prepare their students for the rigors of college coursework “without dropping them off in the deep end,” Lowe explained.

“Part of our philosophy is that we view dual enrollment as experiential learning for how to be a successful college student,” said Dunn. “We want all of our graduating students to walk away with the most solid understanding of what they’re going to need to do during their early years at college to be successful in the classroom.”

A growing number of high schools even host dual enrollment in the building.

For example, Syracuse University’s Project Advance (SUPA) trains qualified high school teachers teach university courses during their regular high school day.

Parish, Project Advance’s director, outlines how teachers train at a Summer Institute. “SUPA teachers spend the week working very closely with our SU faculty to become familiar with the courses, which benefits students’ college readiness. There is a constant dialogue and close collaboration between faculty across secondary and postsecondary institutions.”

Lewis and Clark’s High School Partnership/Dual Credit Program has approximately 2,000 students participating each year. This state-funded program allows high school students to learn without leaving their building.

Dual enrollment is also a great fit for homeschoolers.

Melinda Stewart, an independent counselor in Littleton, Massachusetts, has worked with community colleges to help homeschool students achieve associate degrees before they graduate from high school.

“It’s difficult to get an accredited [high school] diploma as a homeschooled student,” explained Stewart. Having the degree makes it much easier for these students to transfer.

“Students… gain a great deal of confidence by being successful in these courses, knowing that they can negotiate challenging texts and ideas and take more ownership over their own learning.”
Some students fulfill the requirements for an associate degree but take the courses as high school courses rather than for college credit, so they can apply to universities as freshman.

STATES TAKING THE LEAD

Minnesota launched the first statewide dual enrollment initiative in the 1980s. Three other states—Arkansas, Virginia, and Utah—were early to take dual enrollment programs statewide, and many more states have started programs since.

Ohio launched a dual enrollment initiative College Credit Plus as in the 2015–2016 academic year. Twenty-three community colleges, 13 universities, and 35 private higher education institutions participated.

The cost savings in just one year of the statewide program is considerable. The Ohio Department of Higher Education reported that in the 2015–16 academic year—the very first year of the program—more than 52,000 Ohio high school students took college classes earning college credit while meeting their high school graduation requirements, collectively saving more than $110 million on college tuition.

Ohio knows this is worth the investment.

“Advantages for Ohio include having citizens who have acquired education beyond high school, industry-recognized credentials, and degrees,” said Lisa Harper, director of College Credit Plus at the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

“This program is one strategy to help Ohio move the needle on the attainment goal of having 65 percent of its citizens with a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary workforce credential of value in the workplace by 2025,” she said.

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

School counselors are the link to both developing and established dual enrollment programs.

“School counselors play a huge role in terms of facilitating getting students in these classes,” said Lowe. “We see a number of places where school counselors are really the glue for our program, and are sometimes even called a site director for a concurrent enrollment program.”

For school counselors who want to explore developing their own dual enrollment programs, Dunn said to look beyond the local community college.

“There are lots of small liberal arts schools all around the country that would love to have high school students,” said Dunn. “We found that the liberal arts institutions in our area have been really supportive of our students, and offered much different opportunities for them than community colleges have offered.”

Dunn also encourages school counselors to have the conversation about college preparation versus transfer of credits. “If the goal is to transfer credits, maybe the community college is a fine option, but if the goal is to prepare kids for college, then I would say a liberal arts school might be a better option.”

No matter the formula, Mui, who will attend New York University to pursue a PhD in mathematics in the fall, said that balance is key for students who want to earn college credit in high school.

“With dual enrollment, you need to learn how to keep a balance in your life,” advised Mui. She said when students choose true academic interests, time management will fall into place.

Elaina Loveland is a freelance writer and the author of Creative Colleges: Finding the Best Programs for Aspiring Actors, Artists, Designers, Dancers, Musicians, Writers, and More.

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Just Starting Out

Advice and Opportunities for Emerging Admission Professionals
Whether it’s your first day or first year on the job as an admission counselor at a university or college, you may be struggling with balancing the demands of your job with family needs, positioning yourself for advancement, or finding valuable programs that offer growth opportunities.

You’re not alone. Every generation of admission counselors at higher education institutions has experienced similar challenges and asked the same questions. How can I juggle all my responsibilities on this road trip? How do I creatively reach out to students? Is this job right for me?

Career success and longevity in the admission field isn’t mysterious or even complicated. Experienced administrators across the country, many who started out as admission counselors, often cite numerous reasons behind their professional growth and accomplishments. However, some believe three practices are key to helping newcomers survive and thrive in their job: observe work-life balance to avoid burnout; cast a wide net to take advantage of resources, tools, and networking opportunities, both on and off campus; and break out of your silo to develop new skills, experiences, and professional relationships beyond the world of admission.

STARTING POINT
After serving 25 years in the industry, Terry Knaus, college counselor at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, believes some new counselors initially work in the dark.

“Oftentimes, when new professionals come in, (they) don’t really know what’s expected of them, especially when they’re out on the road,” he said, adding that he previously served 17 years in admission at Indiana University. “Get support from your office. Experienced staff can help you through the process, educating you about what the profession is all about, what your responsibilities are and expectations.”

In many cases, counselors aren’t much older than high school students, which can pose awkward situations. He said some counselors get caught up with fitting in and hang out with the same students they’re trying to recruit.

Big mistake. As a representative of your school, he said professionalism is the top priority. How you present information; speak to educators, students, or families; and follow through on requests generally reveals a lot about who you are and the character of your school.

So does punctuality.

“Our office saying is: ‘Early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable,’” said Knaus. “That means when asked to give a presentation to a group of students on campus at 11 a.m., don’t show up at 10:50 a.m. Show up 15–20 minutes ahead of time to help greet them and don’t be afraid to stay afterward.”

Likewise, seek opportunities to interact with students, staff, or administrators. If they request information that you’re unfamiliar with—such as the specifics about a business program—don’t wait to respond until you’ve returned from a road trip two weeks later. Follow through that evening or the next day. That will help you build and maintain professional relationships.

You’ll quickly develop a reputation as someone who can be trusted, is efficient and well organized, and values people’s time. According to Knaus, this is one area that some emerging admission professionals flunk.

One reason may be due work-life balance issues. Road trips, especially those lasting several weeks, are typically exhausting.

To better position yourself for advancement, constantly improve your knowledge, experiences, and skills. One effective way is to find mentors throughout different stages in your life or career.

“When you come back from the road, make sure you have down time or personal time to rejuvenate,” said Beverly Henry Wheeler, regional director of admission at Hendrix College in Dallas.

Take at least 30 minutes out of each day to relax, she said. Do yoga. Meditate. Exercise. Read a book. Call a friend. Listen to music. Visit a local attraction. There are plenty of options. Explore activities you consider fun or relaxing and then integrate them into your daily lifestyle. Always keep in mind that this job is a marathon, not a sprint, she said, which can help avoid burn out.

MINDSET, MENTORS, AND MONTHLY REVIEWS
It may take several road trips to the same location before people and places become familiar and comfortable, which positively changes the experience. After repeatedly visiting high schools in Chicago, for example, you now look forward to eating lunch or dinner at a favorite restaurant you discovered on your first trip. Some counselors make it a habit to visit local tourist attractions or favorite spots in between school meetings or job fairs.

While engaging in stress-free activities lends balance to a chaotic work schedule, your career also needs some checks and balances.

“Make sure you have your directives and time for a review,” added Wheeler, suggesting monthly performance reviews with your boss. “Ask, ‘Am I doing well? What do I need to change?’ Have a conversation of ideas and growth so you see yourself not just as a roadrunner, but as a professional growing in a career.”

To better position yourself for advancement, constantly improve your knowledge, experiences, and skills. One effective way is to find mentors throughout different stages in your life or career. Seek out people whose characteristics you admire—either inside or outside the profession—who will challenge you and hold you accountable, said Wheeler, adding that NACAC supports a professional mentoring program. Then reciprocate.

Serve as a mentor for someone else who can benefit from your experiences. Either way, be prepared to leave your comfort zone, said Eric Nichols, vice president for enrollment and dean of admission at Saint Anselm College (NH).

You may have been hired as an entry-level counselor and assigned a domestic territory to recruit first-year college students. Maybe there’s an upcoming opportunity to learn more about transfer or international admission, help develop a communication plan for admission, or serve as a liaison with an athletic team. There are so many specialties just within admission that go way beyond the basics of travel and application reviews.
Some areas include event planning and developing social media strategies or marketing campaigns. He said these are just the tip of the iceberg.

“If you have a chance to work in an office where you can wear a lot of hats and get involved in different projects, do it,” Nichols said. “That’s the best way to move up—by exposing yourself to a lot of different aspects in admission. You might find that you have a skill set you didn’t even know you had.”

EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND INTERESTS

More than likely, you’ll need to wait until your second year to perform stretch assignments or volunteer projects. The first year may be overwhelming. Early on, it’s important to stay focused on performing your basic responsibilities.

Nichols believes it takes two full years to develop a realistic sense of the job. During the first year, he said counselors often spend eight to 10 weeks nonstop on the road, routinely read student applications or files, and then transition into student enrollment activities like planning open houses. By the time summer comes around, they’re exhausted.

“A lot of counselors find their footing, have much more success, and feel more comfortable in their second year,” Nichols said. “Even if you think the job isn’t a perfect fit, it may not be the profession. Maybe being in a large office or at a big university isn’t for you. Maybe you’d thrive in a smaller office setting.”

Meanwhile, gathering background information about school administrators before meeting with them can also enhance job success. Bryan Rothstein, associate director of admission at Adelphi University in New York, said before every meeting, he spends a lot of time researching administrators and their schools to make himself more “relatable.”

“Walking in blind to a meeting with a principal or school counselor is not helpful usually,” he said. “It almost makes you seem as if you’re disorganized. Use this information as ice-breakers to show you’re personable, one human being relating to another human being, that you’re not a robot.”

By stepping outside of your four walls, you can also develop a better understanding about higher education and industry opportunities. Take the initiative to join committees or perform tasks unrelated to your job that open windows into the world of higher education.

Rothstein, for instance, volunteered to serve on the school’s diversity committee since he recruits diverse populations, and the technology committee, which helps coordinate the school’s social media efforts and updates its website. He also joined NACAC and other industry-affiliated organizations to gain additional capabilities that would further advance his career. Over the years, he said he has made connections with counselors and other individuals around the world through NACAC’s listserves.

“Don’t silo yourself,” he said. “Expressing an interest in something whether it’s directly connected to your job or not can make you more marketable moving forward and help you continue to climb that career ladder. Make yourself multi-faceted.”

STEPPING STONES

Planning a long-term career in admission is a little like playing chess. Sometimes, you need to accept lateral positions to ultimately capture your dream job. Take Rothstein. Back in 2013, he left his college job as a freshman admission counselor to join Adelphi as an assistant director of university admissions. Since then, he has been promoted twice—to senior director of university admission and once more to his current role.

“That was probably one of the best decisions I made,” he said. “I don’t think I would be where I am today without that move.”

Still, there are other ways to achieve upward mobility. Years ago, while working as an admission counselor at Emerson College in Boston, Sara Brookshire, now director of admissions at Brandeis University (MA), traveled to different schools across the country.

During her down time, she toured local colleges, familiarizing herself with a wide variety of recruiting strategies used by other schools that could be applied at her own institution.

She also advised a new fashion club on campus. Despite her lack of interest in fashion, she helped the club’s student members advocate for school resources, develop a budget for the academic year, create the club’s constitution and governing principles, and taught them how to bid jobs out to vendors for campus events like fashion shows.

Learning occurred in both directions. She said she used this opportunity to not only help students in the club, but to also discover what they liked best about the school. If these students—or others in her department—raved about professors, she would sit in on their classes. If students were excited about an upcoming event, she would attend. She used their experiences as leverage when recruiting other students, which also enhanced her credibility as an ambassador for the institution.

Brookshire added that many NACAC affiliates also offer summer institute programs for new admission professionals.

“We have people coming to our institute on the first day of their job before they come to their office,” said Brookshire, adding that NACAC also offers a free program called Emerging Admission Professionals in conjunction with National College Fairs. It targets individuals with less than three years of experience in the field, providing them with educational sessions and networking opportunities with industry professionals.

However, not every school’s budget can accommodate conference requests from new staff. Use this time to strengthen your abilities and gain new experiences. Then several years into your career, consider adding another skill—workshop presenter—to your portfolio, Brookshire said. Talk at conferences about your area of expertise like the nuts and bolts of corralling alumni volunteers affiliated with the admission office.

Until then, take pride in your profession. You’re in a unique position to positively change the lives of everyone you encounter.

“(This profession) isn’t about the title or money,” said Wheeler. “It’s about the people. Make each individual you encounter feel like he or she is the only individual you encounter. If you can keep that as your guiding light, you won’t get burned out.”

Carol Patton is an award-winning journalist in Las Vegas who covers education and other topics for many publications and websites.
Community colleges and the transfer process remain, almost exclusively, an American concept. While there are a handful of instances where community colleges or their equivalent may exist outside the US, no other country has as strong a presence of these schools within their system of higher education. Indeed, almost half of US undergraduates enroll in one of 1,100 community colleges in the country at some point along their path to a postsecondary degree.

Despite widespread unfamiliarity of the community college and transfer process outside of the US, 9 percent of all international students in the US, or 95,000, were enrolled at community colleges in 2015–16, according to the Institute of International Education’s annual Open Doors Report. Although this represents a small number of students compared to domestic numbers, this population has continued to grow over the last decade.

**INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER STUDENTS IN THE US**

**BENEFITS OF STARTING OUT AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Concerns relating to English language proficiency play a major role in many international students’ decision to begin at a community college in the US. Many community colleges offer intensive English programs, allow students to start taking classes while working on their English, and provide extra services for speaking and writing English. Nita Thirza, an international student from Indonesia at Green River College (WA), said extra services, such as the writing center, make a big difference for international students overcoming language barriers. “A lot of international students aren’t that confident about their English so these resources are really helpful,” she said. In addition, community colleges often have lower TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System) requirements for admission compared to four-year schools or offer separate assessments to test English language ability for admission.

International students also attend community colleges for similar reasons domestic students do: lower-cost tuition, smaller class sizes, and more opportunities for individualized attention.

In *International Education at Community Colleges*, authors discuss how finances can be a major concern for international students, the majority of which rely solely on personal or family funds to pay their tuition costs. “International students have very limited opportunities for scholarships or financial aid, and they are not eligible for any kind of federal student aid. . . [they] are required to be enrolled full time during their study and can only work part time in on-campus authorized jobs (often difficult to get), thus restricting their opportunity to help support themselves while studying,” they wrote.

In addition, whereas large four-year schools have average freshman class sizes in the hundreds, the same courses at a community college may have 20 students, which could be a huge benefit in getting to know faculty and adjusting to school in the US. “They can acclimate to the US college experience in a smaller environment than what they would have at [a large four-year]. They’re able to get used to what a registrar is, what’s an academic advisor, understand the culture a little more, and maybe feel more prepared when they transfer,” said Kailey Posterick, international admissions counselor at the University of Houston.
WHO, WHY, AND WHERE

- Almost half are from five countries: China (19.1%), Vietnam (9.6%), South Korea (7.5%), Japan (5.7%), and Mexico (4.8%)
- Top fields of study: business, STEM, and intensive English
- Top hosting states: California, New York, and Texas

BUILDING TRANSFER PARTNERSHIPS

Green River College, which currently hosts over 1,700 international students and ranks 10th in international enrollments among community colleges in the US, partners with about 25 universities across the country to provide guaranteed admission agreements for students in their international transfer pathway program. When students are admitted to Green River, they get their acceptance letter, I-20 form (certificate of eligibility for nonimmigrant student status), and conditional admission letter to partner four-year universities. Bjorn Myhre, director of international recruitment, noted that these partnerships originate from both sides. “Sometimes the universities approach us… and other times it’s the community college that approaches the universities. It’s always student first and then we take action,” he said. In the absence of formal guaranteed admission agreements, community colleges and four-year university partners serve students well by making the transfer process clear.

The University of Houston (TX) has articulation agreements with the Houston Community College System (ranked No. 1 in international enrollments among community colleges in the US), Lone Star College, San Jacinto Community College, and several other two- and four-year colleges. “Our [community college partners] are very open to us having a presence on campus,” he said. “When the university offers them something, they’re interested.”

Recruitment

Below are some of the main ways international students learn about starting their postsecondary education at a community college and transfer options in the US:

- Staff travel to visit high schools internationally and talk to principals, students, and families.
- Transfer fairs for international students in the US (often held at community colleges).
- Alumni and word of mouth. “I found out about Green River college from a high school friend. Her brother studied there and told us about the program,” said Thirza.
- International agents. “We work with good, reputable agents. They come visit our campus, we visit them, we give good updates about our school and services and it seems to work well for us. We spend our time and energy with good partners and we work hard to screen them,” said Myhre. (In 2013, NACAC modified its Statement of Principles of Good Practice to permit members to utilize agents, providing they ensure accountability, transparency, and integrity when doing so. Read more at www.nacacnet.org/SPGP.)
- Education USA, a US Department of State network of over 400 international student advising centers in more than 170 countries.

Community colleges and four-year colleges and universities can support international transfer students by providing on-campus jobs, year-round housing, and advising/programs tailored specifically to international students.

Green River College has six or seven full-time advisors and four part-time advisors to work with students on degree and transfer planning, as well as immigration and student visa requirements. “We advise students a lot on the front end before they come here, about the transfer options. Then when they get here, they get information at orientation and throughout their whole time here on the importance of good grades, getting involved with transfer clubs and organizations, application deadlines and requirements… We are very intentional about what they need to do to set themselves up for transfer success,” said Myhre. Green River also has an international peer-mentoring program called Foundation for Success, for international students to mentor other new students.

At Kirkwood, the international student office works with the transfer advising team to train them on communication styles and cultural differences: “We provide intercultural communication workshops for advising staff so students can feel comfortable going to them with questions and staff can feel comfortable that they can communicate well,” said Wood.

University of Houston’s Transfer Advising Program (TAP) advisers help transfer students “maximize the transfer experience and take classes that are most helpful for their pathway.”

In addition, Posterick said it’s critical, when considering institutional program or policy changes, to remember international and transfer students. “Ask that question—how will this impact those students? Sometimes we don’t ask that question enough,” she said.

—Heather Durosco

Learn about reverse transfer and international students on the Admitted blog.
NACAC met up with Jessica Sandberg, director of international admissions at Temple University (PA), to learn more about #YouAreWelcomeHere—a campaign that has been picked up by hundreds of schools, colleges, and universities across the country. Sandberg explained what the campaign is all about and Temple’s leadership role in sparking this grassroots effort within higher education.

WHAT IS THE #YOUAREWELCOMEHERE CAMPAIGN?
In essence, #YouAreWelcomeHere is a message of encouragement from US higher education to international students around the world. The campaign is designed to affirm that our institutions are friendly, safe, and committed to international student development. Participating institutions and organizations are communicating the message in statements, photos, videos, events and other creative expressions that feature students, faculty, and staff. The repetition of the statement, “You are welcome here,” by a broad array of people from different backgrounds—from college presidents to football players—is powerful and demonstrates that we support internationalization across our campus communities and across the country.

HOW DID THE CAMPAIGN GET STARTED AND WHAT WAS YOUR ROLE?
The first use of the hashtag in international education was in a video made by Study Group in November 2016. It featured six of their university clients—James Madison University (VA), University of Vermont, Roosevelt University (IL), Merrimack College (MA), Long Island University (NY), and the City College of New York. Upon watching it, I was immediately struck with the idea that it could become a national campaign to promote US education abroad.

The first step was to involve my colleagues at Temple University. With their help, we created a very successful video of our own in late November. From there, I set out to persuade my higher education peers to do the same. I checked hashtag activity for #YouAreWelcomeHere and saw that it wasn’t associated with any particular movement so it seemed like we had a great opportunity for US higher education to amplify the message and really bring it to life. I strongly believed that the more universities participated, the stronger the statement would become. At international conferences and across professional networks, I began sharing the two videos and promoting the campaign. Many fellow international educators embraced the idea and soon began to use the hashtag in videos and other messages across social media.

HOW ARE INSTITUTIONS USING THE CAMPAIGN? HOW CAN A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY GET STARTED?
I tell institutions to think of #YouAreWelcomeHere as an extension of their current marketing efforts. If you search the hashtag on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube you will quickly see many creative examples of how institutions are using the message.

But participation can be as simple as using the hashtag on social media posts to demonstrate support and appreciation of international students. If a school tags their posts and videos with #YouAreWelcomeHere, we will add their name to the participants list on the official website and share their post across the campaign’s social media channels.

Videos, while not essential, are central to the campaign. The majority of participants have videos that feature individuals on campus repeating “you are welcome here” into the camera. Take a look at the video page of the official website for inspiration. Two of my favorites are Hofstra University (NY)—for their creative approach—and Grinnell College (IA)—for their heartwarming community. While video production can be laborious and expensive, many institutions have used self-submitted mobile
phone videos to simplify the process and give it an authentic feeling. Those that have a film department on campus often find that staff and student videographers are quite happy to help.

Several institutions have also held events around campus wherein community members express their support of international students in spoken and written messages. One of my personal favorites is this color display of sticky notes created at an event held at Towson University (MD). Each note contains a message of appreciation for international students from classmates, staff, and faculty.

I’ve also seen pins, banners, T-shirts, hats, email signature images, and all sorts of other swag across colleges campuses that showcase a community’s enthusiasm for international students. I’ve been truly inspired by the creative ways institutions are using the message.

Finally, I want to mention that we’ve created a media toolkit on the official website. There are downloadable poster and sticker files that schools can customize and use as they wish.

**CAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS GET INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGN?**

Absolutely! I would love to see the campaign expand to secondary schools and it’s one of the reasons I’m excited about NACAC’s support. By chance, the campaign began in the higher education community but it’s purpose is absolutely relevant for any educational institution or organization that engages with international students.

**HOW DO PARTICIPANTS ADDRESS CONCERNS INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS HAVE ABOUT THE US?**

In recent months, some prospective international students have expressed a general worry that they might not find the US to be welcoming or safe. Some students also have practical concerns about changes to the student visa program and/or their ability to pursue an internship during their studies. In speaking with many #YouAreWelcomeHere participants, I’ve compiled a list of strategies that can be helpful in easing student anxiety.

- **Make it personal:** Whenever possible, address students directly or in small groups. Share stories from current students or create opportunities for current international students to speak with prospective students. Listen to their worries and give candid, compassionate answers.

- **Involve the whole town:** One of the reasons that the #YouAreWelcomeHere videos are so compelling is that they showcase the broad spectrum of college communities and even residents of their surrounding towns and cities. International students expect international student staff to be helpful and friendly. They may need added assurance that the rest of the community will welcome them too. At Temple, we produced a series of #YouAreWelcomeHere videos and distributed them to all of our international prospects by email and across our social media channels. Our videos emphasize the diverse community and global connections that have long been part of Temple’s identity. We also feature heartwarming testimonials taken from random people in the streets of Philadelphia where the university is located. The cherry on top? Our mayor and governor agreed to record welcome messages and we included those in one of the videos.

- **Emphasize existing support services and safeguards:** Concerns about safety are not new or even unique to international students. It’s important to address the safeguards that schools have in place to protect and support all students. These may include campus safety measures, counseling services, and student organizations that celebrate difference, diversity, and multiculturalism.

- **Communicate the value of internationalization:** It can help to demonstrate a long-standing commitment to internationalization. At Temple, we point to our international partnerships and overseas campuses. Other schools reference internationalization in their mission statements or in letters of commitment from their presidents. It’s also important to assure students that there is a great deal of national support for bringing international students to the US. In addition to the obvious cultural benefits, their presence supports the US economy.

- **Inspire courage:** Another place where candid expression can be meaningful is in discussions about cultural discomfort. The choice to study outside your country is a choice to embrace the unfamiliar. Certainly there are great adventures, deep friendships, valuable life lessons, and scholastic development but most people who’ve studied abroad also admit that their experience involved some uncertainty and discomfort. Embracing and overcoming this discomfort is one of the richest benefits of study abroad because it’s the path to understanding your place in the world and the direction you want to chart your course in the future. In our conversations with students and parents, international admission officers must emphasize the value of this transformative process.

**WHAT HAS BEEN THE BEST PART OF WATCHING THIS CAMPAIGN GROW?**

I’d have to say that the best part has been the collegial spirit and cooperation among international education professionals. As admission officers, in our day-to-day work, we are obviously focused on recruitment and branding for our individual universities. This campaign has given us a chance to pull together and celebrate our passion for and commitment to international education. Every time I watch a new #YouAreWelcomeHere video, I can feel the emotion that went into making it. International educators are truly an inspiring group of professionals. The experience of spearheading this campaign has reminded me why I chose to work in this field and recommitted me to it.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS EXPECT INTERNATIONAL STAFF TO BE HELPFUL AND FRIENDLY. THEY MAY NEED ADDED ASSURANCE THAT THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY WILL WELCOME THEM TOO.

—Jessica Sandberg

Towson University’s sticky notes of appreciation

Towson University's sticky notes of appreciation

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Sept. 19 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. & 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

BATON ROUGE
Sept. 20 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. & 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

DENVER
Sept. 24 | 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

MINNESOTA
Sept. 27 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. & 5 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Sept. 28 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

LONG ISLAND
Oct. 1 | 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 1 | 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

CHICAGO
Oct. 14 | 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

JACKSONVILLE
Oct. 14 | 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

MILWAUKEE
Oct. 15 | 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

ORLANDO
Oct. 15 | 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

INDIANAPOLIS
Oct. 20 | 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
### PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS COLLEGE FAIR SCHEDULE

**BOSTON**  
Sept. 18 | 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**CHARLOTTE**  
Sept. 24 | 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

**ATLANTA**  
Sept. 25 | 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

**PHILADELPHIA**  
Sept. 26 | 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**NEW YORK CITY**  
Sept. 27 | 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

**FT. LAUDERDALE**  
Sept. 28 | 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**GREATER WASHINGTON, DC**  
Oct. 1 | 1 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

**CINCINNATI**  
Oct. 2 | 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**CHICAGO**  
Oct. 3 | 6:30 p.m. - 9 p.m.

**CLEVELAND**  
Oct. 4 | 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**GREATER PHOENIX**  
Oct. 5 | 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

**ST. LOUIS**  
Oct. 7 | 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

**INTERLOCHEN**  
Oct. 8 | 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

**KANSAS CITY**  
Oct. 10 | 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**MINNESOTA**  
Oct. 11 | 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

### STEM COLLEGE AND CAREER FAIR SCHEDULE

**SILICON VALLEY**  
Oct. 8 | 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

**NEW YORK CITY**  
Oct. 15 | 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

**HOUSTON**  
Nov. 5 | 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
When I joined the New York State ACAC executive board as a delegate in 2001, I was passionate about being part of the counseling and admission world. I also knew I had a lot to learn.

During our meetings, we talked about providing representation to our members and to support their activities throughout New York. There was a lot of talk about the issues of upstate and downstate, including funding for K-12 schools, access to information about higher ed, and legislative representation.

I had grown up in New York City and thought of everything north of the Tappanzee Bridge—including Rye Playland and my grandparents’ house in Rockland County—as upstate New York. I had never heard the term “downstate New York” before. Finally, after a few meetings and conferences calls, I pulled a fellow delegate aside and asked, “What is downstate New York?” She laughed. “Downstate New York is where you live, Lisa. You live in it.” And that’s why I didn’t know what it was.

I live in privilege, too, and I can’t always recognize it either.

That’s not okay. I have to remember my vantage point and that my view is (and has always been) based on the height at which I stand. Being white in America gives me a lofty view indeed.

I always knew I was lucky. I was raised in economic comfort, attended private school, and graduated from a selective liberal arts college as one of a nearly negligible percentage of adults with no student loan burdens. I was grateful to my parents and, when I became a college counselor, vocally advocated in the hope of making my experience more common. I lobbied for Pell grants, Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grants, and support for need-based financial aid. I fought for access and fairness for all.

But through that, I continued to think that the privilege I had been granted was about money—and in some ways it was. Socioeconomic status is a significant determinant of privilege, but it’s not the only one, and lately it feels like it’s not the most important one either.

The ACCEPT Facebook group was created in large part as a response to a brutal summer when many African American men and boys were killed by police. I joined because I was outraged and hoped to find direction within this online group. What I realized in reading posts there, however, was that while I was outraged, many of my friends were frightened. For themselves, their husbands, boyfriends, friends, and children. They were frightened in a way I didn’t have to be. And that scared me.

I had always tried to look beyond race. I thought that was what I was supposed to do. I have lived in New York City and Los Angeles, diverse cities (not without problems) and worked for 21 years in an independent school in Queens, the nation’s most diverse county. I talked about our school’s diversity as being “organic” and based on our location and our mission. I sometimes took pride in not knowing the percentages of the racial make-up of the school.

Now I know that looking beyond race is only an option for white people and suspect that the students of color that I counseled over the years were themselves acutely aware of the numbers. Now I am deliberate in my awareness of the issues that race continues to raise in this country and within the admission and counseling community.

Education leads toward understanding and away from prejudice. To that end, it is incumbent upon those of us working with students in the transition to higher education to see not only that a diverse student population enrolls, but also that each student can thrive in an environment where they feel physically and emotionally safe. To do this we must recognize the inequity that exists throughout the country, including in our schools and on our campuses. The privilege of being white can create a false sense of things being all right when they are not, and this is a dangerous illusion.

I am coming to terms with my own privilege. While it may be impossible to see with the eyes of others and hear with their ears, it’s important to try. Just as upstate versus downstate is more than a purely geographical distinction of weather and landscape, privilege is multifaceted and manifests itself in many ways. It shows itself in an ability to express oneself freely, to be oneself without expecting to be challenged and questioned, to not have others determine how and who one should be.

Privilege is about race, gender, orientation, faith, physical ability, mental health, and many other factors. Privilege is freedom and freedom cannot be experienced by degrees—it must be consumed whole.

I didn’t truly understand privilege because, like downstate New York, it was where I lived.

Lisa Sohmer is an independent counselor and a member of NACAC’s Communications Committee.
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