

NUMBER / 237
FALL / 2017

THE JOURNAL OF
COLLEGE ADMISSION

INSIDE

SOCIAL MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON COLLEGE CHOICE
MUSLIMS ON CAMPUS
TRAUMA AWARE & SAFETY READY
TRANSFER PRACTITIONERS

**AUTHENTIC
CONVERSATIONS**

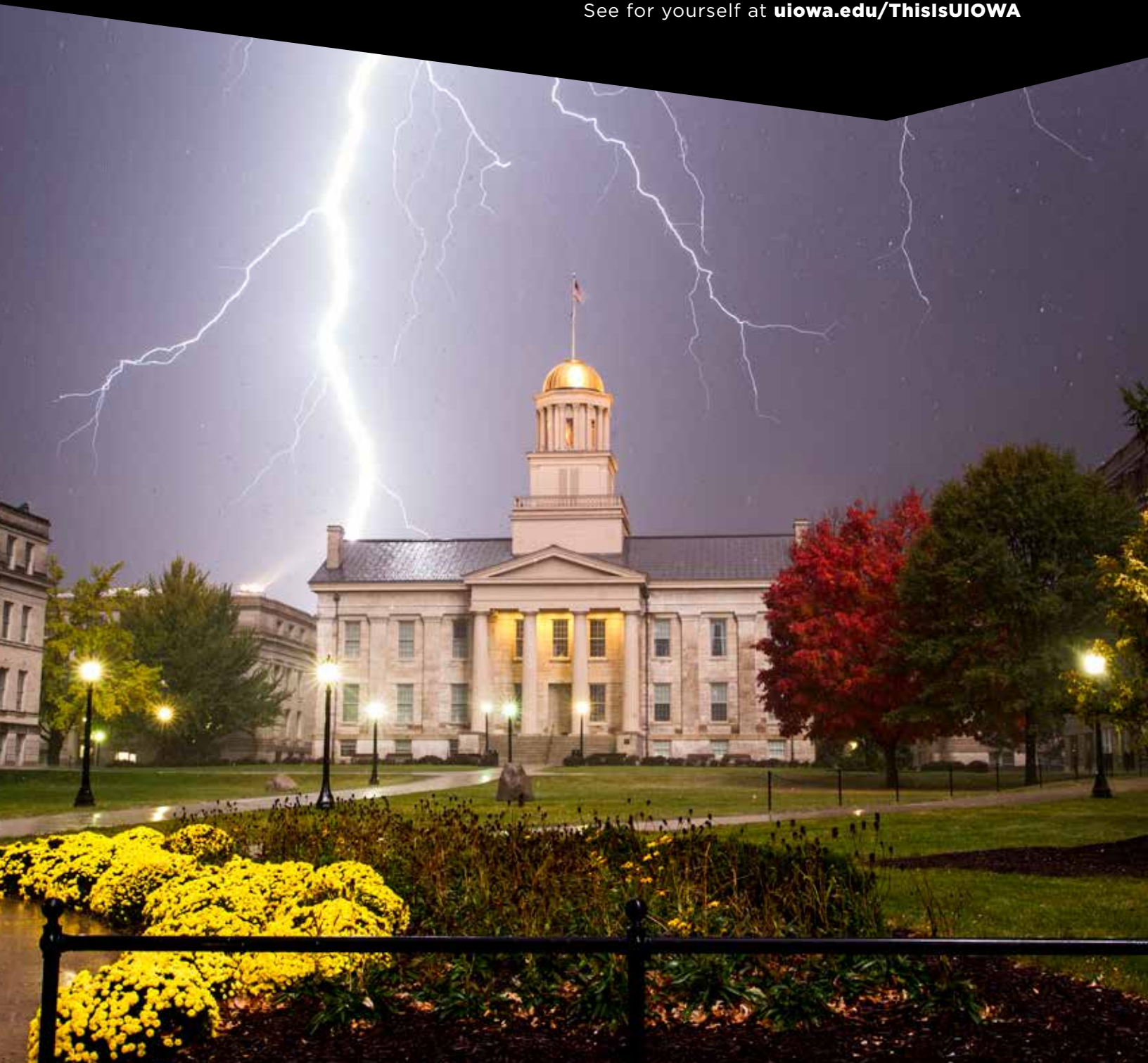
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National Association for
College Admission Counseling

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—Barry Mills, interim chancellor, University of Massachusetts Boston
at NACAC’s National Conference, Sept. 14

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Our goal:

“Built on a foundation of ethics and trust, NACAC is committed to carrying on our work to support the dreams of professionals and students.”

—Jayne Caflin Fonash



THE BOTTOM LINE

What do college admission counseling professionals and financial planners have in common? Both work to create opportunities for the future. The bottom line (no pun intended) is that for NACAC to champion opportunities for all individuals to pursue higher education, we must ensure fiscal responsibility for our organization.

We all face financial realities and tough choices at the institutions we serve. NACAC is no different. NACAC's operating reserve is an unrestricted fund balance set aside to fund our operating needs when necessary. As a result, the organization is protected in uncertain times, and can invest in infrastructure, and meet unexpected deficits.

I work at a STEM high school, but am naturally more of a writer. I was an undergraduate English major who barely survived freshman calculus. But, years later, my doctoral chair helped me to see how the language of numbers could describe the bigger picture with just as much eloquence as words.

That experience greatly informed my work this past year as chair of NACAC's Performance Committee. A committee of the board, we research and relay the information needed to assess the organization's performance, so the board can most effectively guide resources to achieve NACAC's mission and strategic priorities. As the board's audit committee, budget reviewers, and overseers of financial partnerships and sponsorships, we know NACAC's story of numbers is of huge significance.

NACAC has been able to grow and develop because of three strong revenue streams—the

national conference, the National College Fairs, and membership dues. But we'd like to push our growth beyond the norm. In developing the 2017–2020 strategic plan, the board has established objectives for organizational effectiveness. These objectives include the identification of a diversified stream of financial resources that is consistent with our mission and professional standards; and thoughtful planning to ensure fiscal responsibility and adequate reserves.

If you missed our Annual Membership Meeting in Boston—where we present a financial recap for the year and take questions from the membership—you can learn more about NACAC's financial health by reading the meeting minutes at www.nacacnet.org/AMM. NACAC's new strategic plan is available at www.nacacnet.org, under About, then Strategic Plan. If you have questions, email info@nacacnet.org. Please plan to join us for next year's meeting!

NACAC's strength is also built on the generosity of its members. Grants from NACAC's Imagine Fund go directly to your colleagues who need financial support to attend professional development opportunities or to implement a new school program. I invite you to contribute today at www.nacacnet.org/imagine.

Built on a foundation of ethics and trust, NACAC is committed to carrying on our work to support the dreams of professionals and students. The board will continue to build the financial foundation necessary to support our mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jayne Caflin Fonash".

Jayne Caflin Fonash, *Director of School Counseling, Loudoun Academy of Science and NACAC Board Director*

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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

BOTH SIDES OF THE DESK



COLLEAGUES' CORNER



KEVIN COY

College Consultant

Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School, Illinois
NACAC member since 2010

Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School serves nearly 3,000 students and is located approximately 25 miles south of downtown Chicago. The student body, just like the H-F community itself, is diverse—an attribute, along with quality education, that parents repeatedly cite for moving into the district.

AS THE NEW ADMISSION PRACTICES CHAIR FOR ILLINOIS ACAC, WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT THIS YEAR?

I'm excited about learning more about the SPGP. I'll be honest, there was a bit of learning curve on many aspects of the SPGP for me (except for the ones that pertained to my students). After being part of the IACAC AP Committee last year, I had fun discussing with my other committee members and learned so much from them!

HAVING READ THROUGH THE NEW SPGP, WHAT CAN NACAC MEMBERS EXPECT?

It's a much more streamlined explanation of the ever-changing college admission landscape, which allows us the ability to have discussions regarding certain topics. The new SPGP highlights the core values of both sides of the desk, and our commitment to the most important person in the equation—the student.

YOU PREVIOUSLY WORKED IN COLLEGE ADMISSION. WHAT IS ONE THING EACH SIDE GETS WRONG ABOUT THE OTHER?

When I was on the other side of the desk, some on the high school side thought that we were just out to get a body in a seat. I have a lot of friends still on the college side, and they are truly in it for the student, and what fits their needs. I've seen some of my college colleagues steer a student to another institution because that other institution was a better fit than theirs.

In high schools, I think we're seen as sitting and having powwows with students all day. These days, counselors are pulled in so many directions, and our calendars are so crazy that we're very seldom at our desks. There are days when I've left and suddenly realized that I didn't have lunch.

GIVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO ANYONE STARTING A POSITION IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

Keep the students' best interest at heart and you'll go far.

Continued on page 8



SETH WALKER

Associate Director, International Admissions Recruitment

Indiana University Bloomington
NACAC member since 2016

Founded in 1820, Indiana University Bloomington is the flagship of IU's eight campuses, known for innovation, creativity, and academic freedom.

WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

While not my choice, I had the privilege of growing up in a country different from the one on the front of my passport. At the age of 5, I moved to Tokyo and spent the rest of my primary and secondary school years in a Japanese suburb attending an international school. I moved back to the US for good when I enrolled in college as a third-culture freshman and started the journey of self-discovery shared by many traditional-aged freshman.

After college, I spent five years playing music in a wildly unsuccessful indie rock band (which will remain nameless to protect the innocent). It was during this time I had my first taste of international work travel and decided my love for global exchange and the environment fostered on a college campus could and should turn into a career. I crammed my brain full of GRE facts, applied to IU's Higher Education & Student Affairs program, was admitted, and started down the path to become an international enrollment manager.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STRATEGIES YOU USE TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THE PEOPLE YOU MANAGE?

I've been incredibly lucky to work with and for some amazing people. The experience has reinforced the fact that getting the best out of a team is most easily accomplished when I hire people smarter than myself and get the heck out of their way.

The field of higher education and student affairs is lucky to attract passionate people with a desire to affect change. Every great leader I've seen in the field enjoys the creative process of partnering with these wonderful colleagues (albeit supervisees) to build something together. I'm not sure if I'm there yet, but I hope I'm closer to a habit of amplifying the ideas, opinions, and viewpoints of the teams I lead.

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET BETTER AT?

Personally, I would like to get better at being introspective about the cultural bias I bring to

Continued on page 8



Kevin, from page 7

WHAT'S YOUR CAREER TRAJECTORY?

I'm extremely happy with where I am at this point in my life. I got into this profession wanting to better serve students as they make that transition to whatever postsecondary plan they desire. As the needs of my students change, I will have to evolve to better serve the needs of my students and families.

EXPLAIN YOUR CAREER PATH.

I graduated from Loras College (IA) with a business management degree. My first job out of college was an accountant at UPS. In all honesty, at the age of 22, I wasn't happy with what I was doing.

A friend of mine (who was in admission at Loras) suggested that I take a look at an opening for an admission representative. I missed the campus, and at the time, thought I wanted to get a master's in sports administration. So, I applied for the position and made the career change to be an admission rep.

Originally, I thought I'd be in the field for a couple of years, get my degree, and then move on. However, six years later I was still in college admission!

By my third year, I was trying to figure out my next move (after realizing that I didn't want to pursue sports administration), when my former college football coach suggested I consider becoming a high school counselor. I enjoyed admission and the relationships I developed with the students, but I felt like I wanted more... and I wanted to coach. To me, this sounded like the best of both worlds!

So, I ended up moving to Lewis University (IL), where I received my master's in school counseling and guidance, and was lucky enough to begin my career in the Lincoln-Way district. Then came the opportunity of being a college counselor at Homewood-Flossmoor.

Now, I'm doing exactly what I wanted to do. I'm helping students and families make a smooth transition after high school.

ANY HOBBIES?

I enjoy cars (specifically Corvettes) and sports (football being my love). I'm also coaching my two sons in our local flag football league and am really enjoying it!

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

A colleague (and friend) lent me *Race Matters* by Cornel West. With the current climate of the country's race relations, it's always good to be informed. So, when I get some spare time, I'll jump in.

BEST PART OF ATTENDING A NACAC CONFERENCE:

I always love catching up with my colleagues and friends. I get a chance to visit colleges in the area and attend sessions that keep me updated on current trends.

Of course, one of my favorite parts is that after everything is wrapped up for the day, my roommates and I head back to our AirBnB. (A few of us started this tradition a few years ago at NACAC in San Diego.)

My roommates and I have conversations about so many things, not just limited to our profession. 📍

Seth, from page 7

every interaction I have. Professionally I would like to work to provide a work environment where my colleagues' cultural history is acknowledged and celebrated.

I think a great way to achieve both these goals is through the exercise of cultural storytelling described by Kenneth Hardy in a few of his publications. This exercise consists of sharing "a significant story from [one's] respective cultural experience that highlights the relevancy of culture in [one's] life. After sharing the story, the group processes it together in hopes of the storyteller understanding a bit more about the role culture plays in their life and that their colleagues understand a bit more about their co-worker.

WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO KNOW ABOUT INDIANA?

What else can I say about the state that gave us Michael Jackson, Kurt Vonnegut, David Letterman, and Larry Bird? That you can easily identify a southern Hoosier by their Appalachian drawl?

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EVANSTON SCHOLARS



Rising seniors attend a fun, intense day at college boot camp.



Graduating seniors show their college pride.

Serving students from Evanston Township High School, Evanston Scholars (IL) is a homegrown program. It assists 174 students—high school juniors to college seniors—on their journeys to and all the way through college.

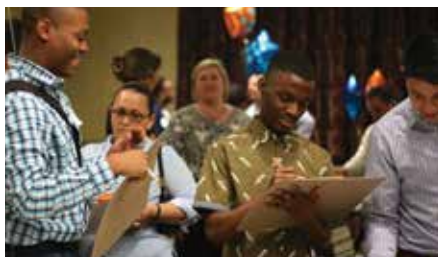
Supporting the journey to college success has always been the foundation of the program. “We are very much a ‘to and through’ program; the mission is college success and graduation, not just access,” said Alison Segal, the director of college access.

Evanston Scholars’ founder, Steve Newman, is a graduate of Evanston Township High School and was a teacher there for 20 years. “He saw so many ambitious and talented students graduate high school without a four-year plan or start college and then drop out because something got in the way of persisting,” Segal explained.

“Evanston is a very diverse place. Traditionally underrepresented groups comprise roughly 40 percent of the population. At the high school, nearly 40 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch and many will be the first in their families to pursue education and/or training beyond high school,” continued Segal.

Segal said to meet this need, Newman “conceived Evanston Scholars as a ‘to and through’ college program meeting needs unaddressed in the community.” The program’s students are 84 percent first-generation college students and 82 percent qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch.

The program recruits students in their sophomore year of high school through community outreach and information sessions in English classes. Applicants (who must have a minimum of a 2.7 unweighted GPA to be considered) undergo a comprehensive application process at the end of their sophomore



Seniors, parents, and mentors celebrate at the annual graduation dinner.

year of high school consisting of essays, the submission of a transcript, family financial information, and a teacher letter of recommendation. The staff interviews every applicant along with a parent/guardian to assess fit for the program. Students are also matched with volunteer mentors—college graduates in the community.

High school students attend workshops one Sunday a month, focusing on topics relevant to where students are in the admission process, with separate programming for juniors and seniors. Evanston Scholars staff come to the high school during lunch three times a week so students in the thick of applying can see someone as frequently as needed. “Some students come in three times a week and some every couple of weeks. It’s good one-on-one time to get things done,” said Segal.

In college, Evanston Scholars staff stays in regular touch with each scholar to support their academic and overall success. Mentor relationships

continue through sophomore year. College freshmen are also matched with peer mentors to support their transition from high school to university. Evanston Scholars helps students attain meaningful summer jobs and internships through an annual college scholar reunion/career information fair and organizational partnerships with area employers.

Students also participate in an annual day of service, summer programming, college visits, ACT tutoring, and application boot camps, as well as bi-monthly contact with their mentors. All the effort pays off.

Evanston Scholars have a 95 percent college persistence rate. “Our students are more than capable of college success,” said Segal. “Especially with Evanston Scholars in their corner for any questions or challenges that might arise.”

Segal is especially inspired by two college freshmen who came to the program as refugees from Sudan after 10 years of itinerant life. They made it to Illinois, and after just a few years of support from Evanston Scholars, they are both succeeding at highly selective liberal arts colleges.

“Each scholar’s path is unique,” Segal said. “What sets us apart is our high-touch and individualized approach. We’re plugged into the community and we take a really personalized approach with working with every scholar. Between the mentor and the staff and the family—we all collaborate to help the student. I think that any scholar in the program would feel that they had a team of people they could call on.”

—Hannah McIntosh Burke

For NACAC’s searchable database of CBOs, visit casp.nacacnet.org.



PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING COUNSELORS TODAY?

Photos by Chuck Fazio Photography

Managing the significant conversations required in today's application process is critical. When I say that, I mean conversations surrounding access, funding to support the cost of postsecondary education, and in particular, as an international college counselor, capturing a country's political climate as it may relate to a student's ability or level of comfort to study there. These have always been constant issues, but today, more than ever before, some of these issues are heightened.

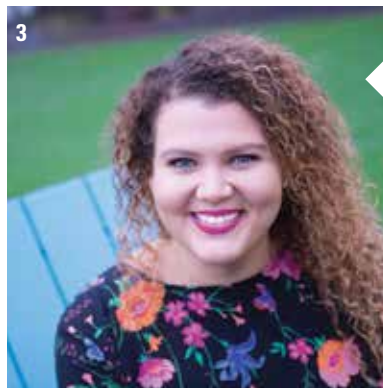


The complication factor of college is the biggest challenge facing students and professionals today. We have bureaucratized ourselves into chaos between the admission process and the financial aid process. When you're a transfer student, you enter a whole different world where you have to figure out: How are my credits going to apply? No school is the same and many schools will not give you straight answers. So it is a tough world out there for professionals and for students, alike. There's a lot to keep track of. It's not a user-friendly system—not by a long shot.

1. **Patience Fanella-Koch**, Director of College and Career Counseling, Aiglon College
2. **Christine Lan**, College Counseling Coordinator, Shanghai Wenlai International School
3. **Heather Riley**, Assistant Director of Admissions, Kentucky Wesleyan College
4. **Larry Alterman**, Admissions Counselor, Michigan State University
5. **Bart Grachan**, Associate Dean for Progress & Completion, CUNY La Guardia Community College



The biggest challenge is parents' uninformed and unrealistic expectations regarding university placements. Many parents have always dreamed of sending their kids to Ivy League schools, no matter what kind of situation the student is in. We have always educated the students and parents about best-fit principles, but it seems that it is really hard for them to accept it. They believe only those world-famous schools could ensure a successful career.



I think burnout is a really big challenge that a lot of counselors are facing. I think being overworked is nothing new in the realm of education, especially higher education, but a lot of times we are seeing turnover after one travel season. That's not the way it's supposed to be. For our institutions to be able to grow, to continue to progress, we have to have colleagues for longer than one year.



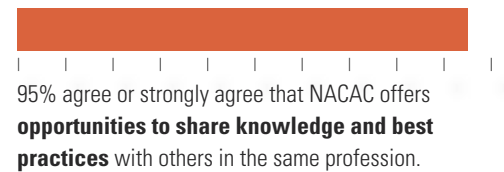
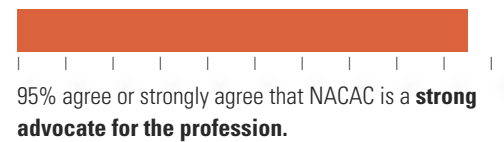
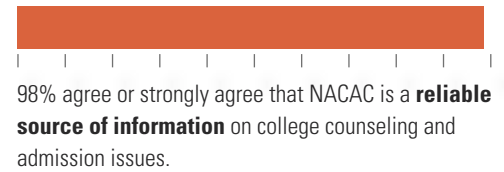
I think the biggest challenge is that students are so bombarded with information from so many different sources. To make them realize you are a credible source and that you really care about them and their outcomes is a challenge.



NACSTATS

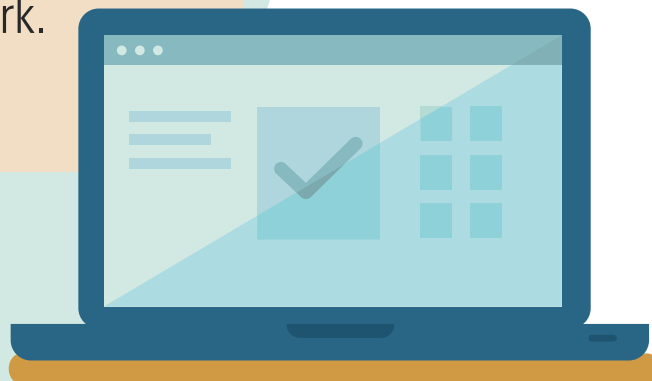
PERCEPTIONS OF NACAC

Members have very positive perceptions of NACAC.



Meet our new, regular columns, Professional Perspectives and NACStats, which highlight member feedback, create awareness of member segments, or show member work.

Enjoy!



More than nine in 10 members agree or strongly agree:

- NACAC offers **valuable networking opportunities**
- NACAC is a leader in establishing and maintaining **standards of integrity** for the profession
- NACAC helps them **understand emerging trends** to better do their job
- NACAC provides **quality education and professional development.**

Source: NACAC Value Proposition and Membership Pricing Research Results, 2017



PROFESSIONAL TRENDS

BOTH SIDES OF THE DESK



"Lethal Ladies of BLSYW" in the film *STEP*. Photo courtesy of Fox Searchlight Pictures. © 2017 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation All Rights Reserved

BEYOND THE BEAT

Step tells the true story of a student step team from the Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women (BLSYW). The Lethal Ladies of Baltimore must come together during their senior year if they want to win the step championship at Bowie State University (MD), a title that has eluded the team since its inception.

But this powerful documentary is about so much more than dancing. The movie's tagline might be, "Step is life," but the girls' futures and their acceptance into college plays just as big a role.

The film follows high school seniors Blessin Giraldo, Cori Grainger, and Tayla Solomon as they attempt to balance family issues, school work, college applications, financial aid forms, and, of course, the step team. But they don't do it alone.

Paula Dofat, the director of college counseling at BLSYW and a NACAC member, is there for the girls every step of the way.

Dofat spoke with *The Journal of College Admission* about working with these students, creating a college-centered atmosphere at BLSYW,

and what she hopes her fellow counselors take away from the film.

As you watch the film, you can't help but feel Dofat's passion for her students leap off the screen. Their accomplishments are her accomplishments. When they don't live up to their potential, her disappointment is palpable.

Dofat said she feels such a strong connection because like many of her students at BLSYW, she was a first-generation college student. But unlike her students, she didn't have the benefit of a good school counselor.

"I wasn't a great student. I was definitely not at the top of my class. When I graduated I probably had a 2.8 GPA. I hated high school," she said. "...I didn't know my counselor and the

one interaction I had with my counselor, they took one look at my grades and said, 'I guess you should just go to community college.' That was my counseling. That was it."

Dofat attempted to go through the college admission process herself and eventually received conditional acceptance at St. John's University (NY).

Unfortunately, Dofat said, she had no idea what conditional acceptance meant. She ended up becoming a "serial transfer student," bouncing between seven colleges in New York and racking up a lot of student loan debt in the process.

"I'm like, 'free money!' Those loans are not free money. But I was definitely the best-dressed girl on every campus I was on," she said with a laugh. "...I had no clue that my \$100 pair of shoes really cost me \$1,000 in the end."

In the end, Dofat didn't successfully graduate with her bachelor's degree until she was in her 40s. Part of the reason for this delay was a "lack of knowledge" of the college process, she said.



After college, Dofat found herself as the program director at a YMCA site in Connecticut, where she often heard stories from high school students that mirrored her own. She went to the school and met with the counselor whose schedule was overloaded. The counselor told Dofat that she simply didn't have enough time to cover the emotional duties of her job, her administrative duties, and the college counseling responsibilities for her large caseload.

Dofat saw the need and started an after-school college prep club. She worked with students and called colleges on their behalf.

"I started to realize that was the happiest time of my day," she said.

Dofat ended up making a career switch and was ultimately offered the director of college counseling position at BLSYW. She created the entire college counseling department from the ground up, working with the school's first graduating class—the class featured in *Step*.

BLSYW is different than most schools in that they have a goal to have every student accepted to and graduate from college. As highlighted in the film, Dofat focuses strongly on finding best-fit colleges for the students she serves.

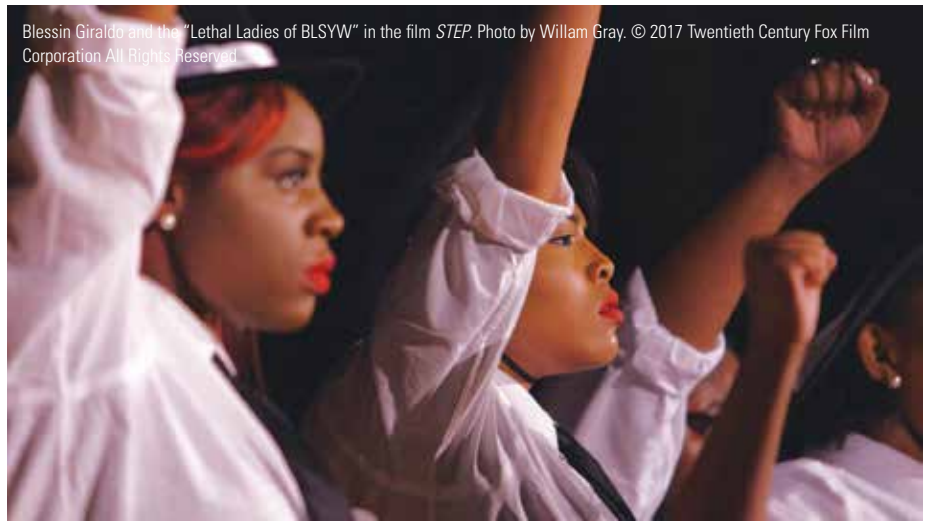
"I'm really grateful to know my students and to know their families personally," she said. "As you do that, it's understanding their personalities and you can start focusing on best fit long before senior year."

She starts college awareness counseling in sixth grade. Students explore what learning style works for them and discover how their personality fits into the college selection process. They find out whether they like large or small schools, what grades are needed for admission, and how much college costs. In eighth grade, BLSYW students see their first list of schools that might be a good fit for them.

Dofat said that her other focus is "employable majors."

"We talk to our students about employable majors. That's important for everyone, but it's especially important within our urban neighborhood," Dofat said. "We have to remind our students often, what is your reason for going to college? Sure, you grow there, personally and academically, and you mature. But you are there to be equipped to be gainfully employed in a career path. We just can't go there arbitrarily."

BLSYW students get the chance to meet and talk with people in a variety of careers. Dofat said



Blessin Giraldo and the "Lethal Ladies of BLSYW" in the film *STEP*. Photo by William Gray. © 2017 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation All Rights Reserved

"IT'S A TRIBUTE TO THE TIME, EFFORT, AND SOMETIMES MONEY THEY PUT OUT THAT NO ONE IS EVER GOING TO TALK ABOUT. WHAT THEY DO, EVEN IF IT ONLY IS AFFECTING THAT ONE OR TWO STUDENTS, IT MATTERS. IT MATTERS A LOT. IT'S NOT JUST CHANGING ONE LIFE. THEIR EFFORT CAN CHANGE GENERATIONS. IT CAN CHANGE COMMUNITIES." —PAULA DOFAT

this is part of her effort to make sure her students don't end up repeatedly changing majors, a process that can cost them time and money.

"If I ask one more student what their life plan is and they tell me they are going to be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer, I'm going to scream," she said. "Some of those students will, but (for many students) it's because of a lack of exposure they just say these careers."

Step also touches on the students' tough upbringing and highlights additional challenges the Lethal Ladies of Baltimore must contend with. Their road to college is filled with more than just the traditional high school student speedbumps: One student deals with her lights being cut off; another has a mother and a boyfriend who don't want her to attend college if it means leaving Baltimore; and one student struggles with food insecurity.

"We take those situations and we turn them not just into learning experiences, but we turn them into experiences that are going to encourage us to stay focused on the things we need to do that may allow us to be in a position that this may not happen again," Dofat said.

"While there are always going to be things that happen, if she's focused, if she's guided, if she has her employable major, if she graduates and is gainfully employed, most likely your lights are not going to get cut off. Using their education, I tell them that there are things within their power that they can control. So, that when the things come up that they can't control then they are better equipped."

Dofat hopes *Step* gives audiences a glimpse of what it takes for counselors to "onboard students to adulthood" and that counselors see it as a tribute to their work.

"It's a tribute to the time, effort, and sometimes money they put out that no one is ever going to talk about. What they do, even if it only is affecting that one or two students, it matters. It matters a lot. It's not just changing one life. Their effort can change generations. It can change communities," she said.

"...And it's not just my school. I think my school is a great example of education that is working, but there are others out there and I hope this movie gives those counselors and administrators pride and strength to continue this work." □

—Ashley Dobson



“For many students, feelings of fear, anticipation, and self-doubt continuously circulate, even as they set high expectations for their final year of high school.”

—NACAC member Nicole Shaub Cook, writing for *Admitted* about the college transition process. Cook is founder of Educational Horizons (GA) and an adjunct faculty member with Mercer University (GA) and University of California–Riverside.

“I’m going to miss everything about this job. Everything.”

—NACAC member Lillian Orlich, quoted in an *Admitted* article. Orlich, 89, retired this spring after 67 years serving students.

“Gen Z high school graduates—including those from private high schools—have an increased affinity for affordable public flagship schools.”

—NACAC Past President Phil Trout, quoted in an *Admitted* article examining college admission trends. Trout is a counselor at Minnetonka High School (MN).

“Creating transfer pathways and requiring students to choose a major or academic focus aren’t enough on their own. Advising is still crucial for the success of transfer students, so institutions have to allocate the staff and funds necessary to meet each student’s needs—a challenge in its own right.”

— Doug Comes, writing about transfer pathways for New America’s *Ed Central*. Comes previously served as an adviser with TRIO Upward Bound in Minneapolis–St. Paul.

“One of the most persistent myths that hurts our students is that stopping out or dropping out of college is totally on the student, an indication that they are not ‘college material.’ For many students, the issue is one of navigation.”

— Daniel Greenstein, writing about student success for *Impatient Optimists*, a blog published by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Greenstein, one of the foundation’s directors, is a supporter of the new Strong Start to Finish campaign.

For more from the *Admitted* blog, visit admitted.nacacnet.org.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM *SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS* REPORT

NACAC's latest report, *Supporting International Students in the College Admission Process: A Qualitative Study of College Counselors*, examines a small yet growing population within US high schools: nonimmigrant international students. Recently, the US has witnessed a dramatic increase in the enrollment of international students in both public and private high schools, welcoming nearly 23,000 exchange students and 60,000 diploma-seeking students in 2016 alone.

In advising these international students about the college admission process, high school counselors face new professional challenges. Drawing on interviews with 20 college counselors from a range of high schools across the country, NACAC's new report explores the counselors' experiences advising international students about postsecondary education, as well as highlights ways in which these professionals can be further supported.

Key findings included:

- On average, college counselors felt less comfortable advising international students about the college admission process than their domestic students.
- Most counselors reported their graduate programs in counseling and education did not address working with nonimmigrant international students specifically.
- Counselors cited negotiating language and cultural barriers as a significant obstacle in advising international students.

Read the full report at www.nacacnet.org/SupportingInternationalStudents.



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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



Zero schools had a written policy in place delineating the relationship between the counseling office and third-party agents.



Only four schools—all private institutions—offered in-house trainings for faculty and staff about working with international students.



Seventy-five percent of counselors interviewed reported their international students consult with third-party agents.



AN EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE FOR INMATES

For many years, America has struggled with criminal justice policies. Lingering challenges related to prison capacity and recidivism have been exacerbated by political one-upmanship. This mix has produced laws against a wider range of behaviors and inflexible sentencing.

Additionally, urgent social justice considerations have burst into national view—the disproportionate effects of criminal justice activity in minority communities; the role of money and for-profit prison services in increasing incarceration rates; excessive police violence and militarization; and local governments that use the criminal justice system as a means of raising revenue.

Millions of Americans are caught up in this complex web of interests.

The American criminal justice system currently houses more than 2.3 million people, more people per capita than any other country, according to the Prison Policy Institute's *Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2017*. Pew Charitable Trusts' *Collateral*

Costs: Incarceration's Effect on Economic Mobility calls into question the imbalance of incarnation across the nation, saying “[s]ocial science research has time and again come to the robust conclusion that exposure to the criminal justice system has profound and intergenerational negative effects on communities that experience disproportionate incarceration rates.”

According to the US Census, African Americans are incarcerated at a rate five times higher than whites, while Latinos/Hispanics are almost twice as likely to be incarcerated as whites.

And there are more areas of disproportion. American taxpayers spend roughly \$84.2 billion on incarceration each year. In 2016, the US

SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

i

The ACLU defines the school-to-prison pipeline as “national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional educational and counseling services. Instead, they are isolated, punished, and pushed out.” They also note that, “‘Zero-tolerance’ policies criminalize minor infractions of school rules, while [the police presence] in schools lead to students being criminalized for behavior that should be handled inside the school. Students of color are especially vulnerable to push-out trends and the discriminatory application of discipline.”

Department of Education found that state and local spending on prisons and jails has increased at triple the rate of funding for P-12 public education in the last three decades.

The US Secretary of Education at the time, John B. King Jr., advocated change: “Budgets reflect our values, and the trends revealed in this analysis are a reflection of our nation’s priorities that should be revisited,” he said. “For far too long, systems in this country have continued to perpetuate inequity.”

Those seeking criminal justice and education reform have begun to converge around the concept of educational advances.

Research shows that correctional education improves inmates’ outcomes after release. For example, findings from *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults* cites these benefits:



- Correctional education improves inmates' chances of not returning to prison.
- Inmates who participate in correctional education programs had 43 percent lower odds of recidivating than those who didn't—this translates to a 13 percent reduction in the risk of recidivating.
- Correctional education improves inmates' chances of obtaining employment after release. The odds of obtaining employment post-release among inmates who participated in correctional education was 13 percent higher than the odds for those who did not participate in correctional education.
- Inmates exposed to computer-assisted instruction learned slightly more in reading and substantially more in math in the same amount of instructional time.
- Providing correctional education can be cost-effective when it comes to reducing recidivism.

While the concept of creating prison-to-school pipelines is fairly new, it has already been shown break the cycle. For example, University of California–Berkeley has established the Berkeley Underground Scholars program, which creates a pathway to education for formerly incarcerated individuals. “We are building a prison-to-school pipeline through recruitment, retention, and advocacy. Our continued success directly challenges

THE COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING PROFESSION CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE BY ADVOCATING AND SUPPORTING ON- OR OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS THAT BUILD THESE KINDS OF CONNECTIONS. SOCIAL CHANGE BEGINS WITH PERSONAL CHOICE.

the stigmas associated with our population,” says the Berkeley Underground Scholars website.

Core elements of the program include:

- Helping previously and/or currently incarcerated individuals transition into the culture of UC Berkeley by providing peer counseling, scholarship information, and other resources as they become available
- Advocating in the campus community on behalf of previously or currently incarcerated individuals, especially those who are already attending, or may soon attend, UC Berkeley
- Networking with other organizations within the university to mitigate the effects of incarceration, especially those effects that create social and logistical obstacles that can interfere with acquiring an education at UC Berkeley
- Helping students and their families to find alternatives to incarceration with the empowering effects of higher education

- Forming a student-led working group to continue the establishment of a multiple resource center at UC Berkeley.

Clearly the program, which was the subject of a session at NACAC’s 2017 Guiding the Way to Inclusion conference, serves as a model for institutions wishing to bridge the divide between the criminal justice system and post-secondary education.

The college admission counseling profession can play an important role by advocating and supporting on- or off-campus programs that build these kinds of connections. Social change begins with personal choice.

Former Secretary King emphasizes that education is a large part of the answer. “We must choose to make more investments in our children’s future. We need to invest more in prevention than in punishment, to invest more in schools, not prisons,” he said. □

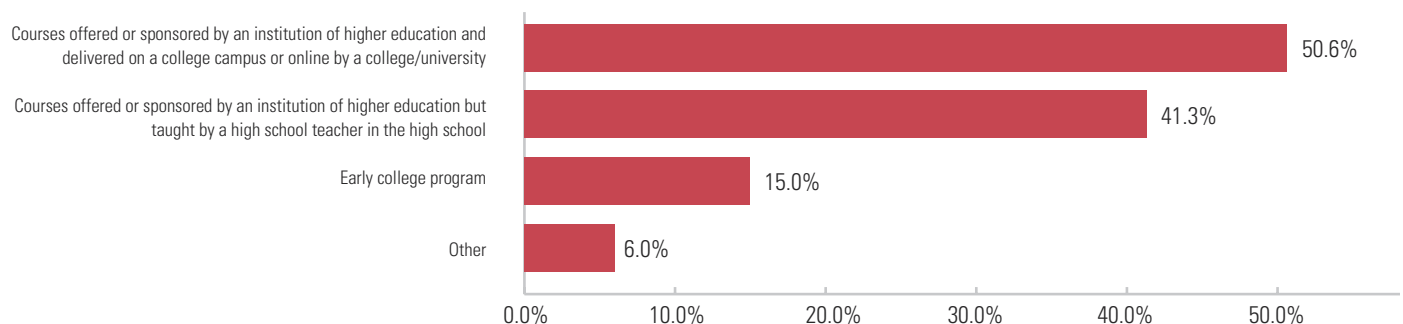
—David Hawkins



FACT CHECK

NACAC’s 2016 Counseling Trends Survey (new report to be published in late 2017) shows that 93 percent of public schools offer dual enrollment compared to 81 percent of private parochial schools and 65 percent of private non-parochial schools. More than half (53 percent) of counselors agreed that taking dual enrollment courses influenced both the colleges where students applied and the colleges where they ultimately enrolled. Only 18 percent disagreed.

PREVALENCE OF DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM TYPES





A BUSINESS OF ALLIANCES

By Fran Swift

Your Role in Professional Development

An eight-pocket folder has become the trusted companion of NACAC events.

Like an athlete preparing for the “big dance” with ritualistic care, I sort each day’s agendas, notes for my final Professional Development Committee meeting, suggestions for a colleague attending his first affiliate PD gathering, invitations, tickets, and RSVPs into my eight-pocket folder. I do this every year, and the action sparks a flashback of my first glimpse of a NACAC conference...Tampa.

I was not among the lucky keyholders of the hotel across from the convention center. Instead I trekked each day from near the airport and couldn’t risk leaving any necessary piece of paper at the hotel. So started the tradition that continues today! In subsequent years as a conference presenter, a delegate, and a committee chair, that eight-pocket folder has kept my outlines handy and my hand-outs straight.

Although my memories of NACAC conferences begin in Tampa, I was bit by the professional development bug early on in my county counseling organization, where I was introduced to leadership by a mentor. I learned quickly that professional development is an experience rather than a title. It implies that we have the *responsibility* to teach one another what we know, share our skills and divulge our insights—from simple to complex.

After my tenure as county president (spending seven years on my two-year term!), I served on many executive boards. I can’t say no to a teaching role... When it comes down to it, that’s professional development leadership.

Your teaching role can be that of a delegate or welcoming hundreds of first-timers to a NACAC conference. It can be on a NACAC or affiliate committee, being part of a Special Interest Group, writing a blog, or presenting at conference or a college fair.

Whether in the audience or on the dais, your professional development leadership role never ends. Your job continues at home as you share what you’ve learned with your office colleagues, and your students and families. As I continue to serve as director of school counseling at one of the finest public schools in New Jersey, my staff and families give me the chance to hone my skills every day.

This semester, I’ve been tasked with teaching a semester-long course on college admission to an eager group of graduate school pre-service school counselors and student affairs hopefuls. But I’m not on my own! All of you are my professional development colleagues, providing me with articles, books, workshops, and social media posts that will fuel the content of my class.

Professional development is a business of alliances—relationships that further our goals and help us perfect our craft. Remember that we all have a responsibility to contribute, provide feedback, encourage, and support productive collaborations and new initiatives. Sometimes it helps to bring an eight-pocket folder to get started. [📁](#)

Fran Swift is the director of guidance at Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School (NJ) and NACAC’s immediate past Professional Development Committee Chair.

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NACAC ADOPTS NEW SPGP: NACAC'S CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

College counselors and admission professionals have a new code of ethics to guide them as they assist students in the transition to postsecondary education.

NACAC's Assembly voted unanimously to adopt the document—*Statement of Principles of Good Practice: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*—during the association's 73rd National Conference in Boston, and the code went into effect immediately.

The document provides clear ethical principles, as well as procedures for implementing and monitoring them. It protects students from unethical recruitment practices and shields institutions from unfair competition.

New policies, procedures, and professional practices related to student disciplinary infractions, financial aid award letters, and the recruitment of students who have already enrolled at other colleges are among some of the changes NACAC members will find in the redesigned statement. The document also includes tighter restrictions on the use of housing deadlines to manipulate commitments, a stronger emphasis on the national May 1 Candidates Reply Date, and

detailed guidelines concerning school profiles and the use of commissioned agents.


Promoting ethical admission practices has been the cornerstone of NACAC since its founding in 1937. The association's code of ethics serves as the basis of the admission profession and an affirmation of the values guiding the work of NACAC's nearly 16,000 members.

"NACAC is known for its role as a trusted source of ethics within the college admission process, and the new code is unique in that it includes our mandatory practices as well as potential penalties if individuals or institutions don't observe these standards," said Joyce Smith, NACAC CEO. "Although we've always had them, procedures addressing education, monitoring, and penalties have been added to the code of ethics so members understand there are consequences if one is found to be out of compliance."

The last time the code underwent a major revision was 2007. The newly approved version

was crafted by a 20-member steering committee comprised of college counselors and admission professionals. Committee members reviewed thousands of comments before submitting the final document to the Assembly for approval. The new code is a more durable and globally applicable document, allowing NACAC to respond to changing practices.

"We hope this document represents a philosophy of doing the right thing," said NACAC member Todd Rinehart, chair of the steering committee that drafted the statement.

The code stands "as the conscience of our profession," he told Assembly delegates. 

IMPORTANT LINKS

- Newly approved: *Statement of Principles of Good Practice: NACAC's Code of Ethics and Professional Practices*: www.nacacnet.org/SPGP
- SPGP Background Information: www.nacacnet.org/SPGPBackground





WHAT'S NEXT FOR DACA?

In early September, President Trump announced the termination of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), with a six-month delay. NACAC strongly opposes the Trump administration's decision, saying it's a regressive step that hurts many of America's most vulnerable youth.

NACAC members, and other concerned professionals and citizens, are left wondering what they can do—and what NACAC can do to support DACA and the students and families affected.

We sat down with NACAC's Director of Government Relations Mike Rose—the association's main link to the administration and Congress—to get his perspective on this issue.

As NACAC's director of government relations, how does this decision affect your work?

Rose: In some respects, not at all. As NACAC's liaison to Congress, I already spend a lot of time urging the passage of the DREAM Act or similar legislation. In many of my meetings with elected officials, I urge them to sign on as co-sponsors of the bill (if they aren't already) and encourage them to weigh in on their respective party's

leadership to bring the bill to a vote. However, this announcement has added urgency to my work.

What would this order's impact be on students, schools, and employers?

Rose: The impact of President Trump's order is more far reaching than the administration would have us believe. In conversations with some of our colleagues and according to news reports, thousands of lives have been thrown into uncertainty. Most people focus on current students, but recent high school and college graduates, as well as teachers, counselors, and



“THE RECENT DECISION BY THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO END THE DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS POLICY LEAVES OUR DREAMER/DACA STUDENTS IN TURMOIL, WITHOUT OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK, GET EDUCATED, OR LIVE THEIR LIVES WITHOUT FEAR. THE THREAT THEY FACE IS VERY REAL, BUT WE CAN ALL FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT AND SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS...”

—Claudia Hernández-Ponce, speaking on behalf of the NACAC Latino/Hispanic SIG with the support of the Asian Pacific Islander and African-American SIGs, as well as the ACCEPT: Admissions Community Cultivating Equity and Peace Today community at the 2017 NACAC Annual Membership Meeting.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

- Call your representatives: www.house.gov/representatives
- Call your senators: www.senate.gov/senators
- Subscribe to NACAC's Legislative Action Center: cqrcengage.com/nacac
- Support the DREAM Act via NACAC's Legislative Action Center: <http://cqrcengage.com/nacac/app/write-a-letter?0&engagementId=379893>

other school employees may face deportation if nothing is done and DACA is allowed to end.

Our nation's businesses, which are already hard pressed to find qualified employees, will have a smaller pool of applicants to work with. In short, this decision is shortsighted and will harm families and our economy.

What are you hearing from NACAC members?

Rose: Most of our members are supportive of the DREAM Act and the DACA program so they are urging NACAC to get involved and get the bill passed so that students can rest assured and make plans for their futures. At the national conference, there were words of support for these students and those working with them—and not just at the related sessions.

What are you hearing on the Hill?

Rose: A lot. Every day there are new developments—some positive, some negative (and could have changed since this article went to print). The good news is that there is bipartisan agreement that *something* should be done.

The bad news is that there's not much agreement about what that should be. President Trump reportedly reached an agreement with Senator Schumer (D-NY) and Rep. Pelosi (D-CA), the Democratic leaders in the House and Senate, which would maintain the program; but, it is unclear how much support this agreement has among Members of Congress, particularly House Republicans.

The worst news is that some of the most conservative members of Congress want to end

this program and send these students “home.” It is unclear what Congress will end up doing... and if President Trump will up support whatever Congress passes.

What can NACAC members and other concerned citizens do now to make a difference?

Rose: Take action. Call your representatives and senators and urge them to support the DREAM Act. If you don't want to call, send a letter via NACAC's action center. Now is not the time to sit on your hands and hope for the best! Representatives and senators need to be told that this is a priority for their constituents—the very people that vote them into—or out of—office. 🗨️

—Sarah Cox



NACAC'S BOSTON CONFERENCE

Charting the Course for a New School Year



Attendees chat in the NACAC booth during the Welcome Reception.

Keynote speaker Shaun Harper delivered a bold and thought-provoking message.



Far left: The Counselors' College Fair provided counselors with the opportunity to meet with college and university representatives.

Left: The winners of the video scholarships were congratulated by NACAC President Nancy T. Beane.



The Access College Fair featured a wide range of access organizations aimed at student success.



Left: Learning Lounge sessions offered fast-paced, interactive sessions focused on a specific topic area, current trend, or case study.



The conference Social was held at the Boston House of Blues where attendees enjoyed a live band and other fun.



Below: Attendees entered the Exhibit Hall to explore the offerings of nearly 200 vendors.



NACAC NATIONAL CONFERENCE

View and download conference photos from NACAC's Flickr account: www.bit.ly/NACAC17Photos



Right: President Nancy T. Beane and President-elect David Burge share a laugh as she hands him the presidential gavel.



The Local Arrangements Committee volunteers helped attendees check in and gather materials.



Early risers welcomed the sunrise during the Imagine Fund Rise and Shine Yoga.



Two above: Preconference sessions offered attendees in-depth training for those seeking robust continuing education.

Photos by Chuck Fazio Photography

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Authentic Conversations

By Jamaal Abdul-Alim





When Anthony Grant, associate director of admissions at Earlham College (IN), attended a college fair in New Mexico this past summer, a student asked him to tell her more about the discrimination she heard had taken place on campus recently.

"I would say that was the most direct question that I ever had from a student," said Grant, an eight-year veteran admission counselor.

Grant told the inquiring student about the protest that shut down classes at Earlham back in February 2016. He also spoke of how the protest was sparked in part by students feeling like some faculty members harbored biases and had discriminated against them.

Grant also mentioned the list of demands that students had presented, including one that called for more faculty of color and faculty from outside the US. He even related how as an administrative faculty member and a person of color there were "many things" about the institution that he would like to see changed himself.

"And I told her, I know you're looking at a wide range of schools and you have to think about what's the best fit for you," Grant recounted. He told her he didn't want to "scare her off" but rather wanted to present an accurate picture of what Earlham students are "talking about now."

"But I also said to her that I really hoped that she takes a closer look at us because as she's thinking about discrimination based on social constructs, I do hope that students like her could come to Earlham and be a part of many of the changes that I hope and that our students hope to see," Grant said.

While the conversation that Grant had at the college fair was in many ways initiated by the inquiring young student, Grant and leading experts say college admission counselors need not wait for students to bring up specific incidents on campus to have a candid conversation about what students are likely to encounter once they enroll.

Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, dean of education at American University (DC) and a former professor of counseling, said there's a "huge need" for counselors—particularly high school counselors—to be "authentic and real" about what students could possibly experience on campus, especially when counseling students of color or students who represent any type of culturally distinct group.

"What we're seeing today on college campuses with increasing diversity of student populations is that there is not necessarily a tolerant community university campus," said Holcomb-McCoy, who served as a consultant for former First Lady Michelle Obama's Reach Higher initiative. Among other things, the initiative called for more support for counselors to help more kids get into college.

"I don't know if it's the political climate that we're in. I'm sure that has something to do with it. But we're just seeing a rise in the type of hate speech, experiences of micro-aggressions in classrooms and outside of classrooms," Holcomb-McCoy continued. "Students are not necessarily aware that these types of experiences are going to be a part of their overall college experience."





Indeed, at a recent forum at the University of Maryland at College Park—where last spring Bowie State University (MD) student, Lt. Richard Collins III, was allegedly stabbed to death by a white UMD student—US Rep. Anthony Brown (D-Maryland) cited a recent statistic that shows hate watch groups have tracked 150 racist incidents on college campuses in 33 states since last fall.

While opinions vary greatly about there being a link between them and President Trump's election, the growth of racist incidences is all too real.

"Something this year is different," said Brown. "These groups had not been highly engaged on college campuses in years past, but this year something has changed. The fact is that these issues reflect the complexities of race and prejudice in this country, issues that we've never fully worked through, a part of our nation that we've not yet perfected."

Brown then announced plans to introduce legislation titled "Creating Accountability Measures Protecting University Students Historically Abused, Threatened and Exposed to Crimes," or the CAMPUS HATE Crimes Act.

Among other things, the bill states that no institution of higher education shall be eligible for federal financial aid unless it certifies to the secretary of education that it has "adopted and implemented a program to prevent and adequately respond to hate crimes within the jurisdiction of the institution or by students and employees."

While the fate of the legislation is unclear, if it passes, institutions of higher education would also be required to educate students about what makes hate crimes unique from constitutionally protected speech.

Counselors have a distinct role to play in such education.

Holcomb-McCoy said it's important for counselors to help students "talk through" how they would manage events that challenge their sense of identity or deal with "hate-filled philosophies."

"I think we're doing students a disservice to act like you're going off to the university and you're never going to experience racism," Holcomb-McCoy said. "We pretty much are assured that there are going to be experiences where students will have experiences with others who have feelings of hate or feelings that certain groups are inferior to others."

"It's a sad thing but we are pretty sure they're going to have those experiences if they're attending universities in general, whether HBCUs

"Am I speaking to all of the nuances that makes the institution what it is? That means talking about good things, as well as those challenges, those institutions have."

or TWIs," she said, using the acronyms for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Traditionally White Institutions, respectively.

Indeed, as of late, neither type of the above-mentioned schools—or the range of schools in between, for that matter—have been immune from acts of racial or other forms of hostility.

Holcomb-McCoy's own campus has been beset by a series of such events, including one in which bananas were found hanging from strings in the shape of nooses at three different locations on campus of the elite private university in Washington, DC, last spring. And last fall, white students reportedly left rotten bananas at one black student's door and threw one at another black student. Just a few miles across town at Howard University, a prominent HBCU, two white high school girls visiting the campus from out of state this summer say they were accosted by students on campus because they were wearing "Make America Great Again" apparel in support of President Donald Trump.

Notably, the Howard incident took place in the wake of the tragic death of Heather Heyer, a counter-protester who was killed at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville in August that began the night before at the University of Virginia. Feelings were still raw throughout the nation over Trump's initial failure to condemn the white nationalists, white supremacists, and neo-Nazis who attended the rally by name.



Holcomb-McCoy said the incident in Charlottesville is “a really good starting point for high school counselors this year to be talking about what students would do if they were first year students at the University of Virginia.”

Dr. Adrian K. Haugabrook, vice president for student success and engagement at Wheelock College (MA), which has also been the site of protests in recent years, said it’s important for counselors to begin conversations with students as early as middle school about what they might encounter in college.

“We’re not just talking about college students who are addressing these issues, but also high schoolers and middle schoolers who are activists,” Haugabrook said. “You’re seeing that keenness that students have at a much earlier age, so they’re bringing those concepts, the complexity of social issues, they’re bringing those with them into their postsecondary settings.”

Indeed, if anyone needed proof that the activism starts early for some students, consider the fact that the white supremacist rally that ended in tragedy in Charlottesville this summer was over the pending removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee—a removal triggered by a petition started in 2016 by Zyhana Bryant, a then-15-year-old Charlottesville High School student.

Haugabrook also recommended that colleges and universities review the policies they have to “ensure they provide for the kind of space for protest and activism” and how contemporary protests might differ from the sign-wielding protests of old.

“The old school visual of people marching with signs, that is still a tried and true way of activism and protest,” Haugabrook said. “But as you know people are using all kind of platforms now to raise their voices.”

Haugabrook recommended that colleges and universities have some sort of “think tank” or “action tank” that can contemplate or anticipate what else might happen along the lines of protest and to ensure that there is space for students to voice their concerns.

Haugabrook also stressed the need for college admission counselors to be cognizant of the professional parameters that stand between counselors’ personal beliefs and activism versus their duty to students.

“So for any advising that I do with students or even other staff, I let them know, not hiding behind those guidelines or policies, I don’t say, ‘I’d be out

with you if I could but I can’t because I’m a vice president,’” Haugabrook said. “I have to think about the institution as an agent of the institution.

“But what I can do or say is in my role at the institution, I have a position which is to uphold the mission of the institution and protect the integrity of the student voice,” Haugabrook said. “People begin to understand that in that way.”

Mandy Hart, associate dean of admission and coordinator of diversity outreach at Amherst College (MA), said “value alignment” is critical for admission counselors when it comes to resolving the tension between reflecting their institutions in a positive light versus an authentic way. Sometimes, she said, the tension can’t be resolved—and in those cases it’s time to think about working somewhere else.

Amherst experienced a protest known as the Amherst Uprising in 2015. Among other things, students protested what was described as the “negative social climate created towards our peers of color and other marginalized groups.”

“At the end of the day, if I don’t have that value alignment and I don’t believe my institution is responding appropriately to incidents or responding to widespread climate issues, then I as a professional would not be able to reflect my institution in a positive way,” Hart said. She added that such a scenario would “kind of lend itself to the idea that it’s not the right fit for me as a professional.”

Grant said, earlier in his career, he was more concerned about making sure that he always made the institution where he worked “look good.”

But that has become less of a concern as he has evolved and “become more solidified in my own racial identity as a black person and as a person of color.”

He said it’s far more important to make sure that what he tells students is consistent with what is really happening on campus.

“Am I speaking to what I’m hearing from the student body, what I’m hearing from the institution and seeing the institution react to the student body?” Grant said. “Am I speaking to the reality of that? Am I speaking to all of the nuances that makes the institution what it is? That means talking about good things, as well as those challenges, those institutions have.” ▢

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Jamaal Abdul-Alim is a senior staff writer at *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*.



Like, Love, ~~Delete~~

Social Media's Influence
on College Choice

By Marcia Layton Turner

Ten years ago, NACAC published a report showing that 61 percent of college admission offices were using social media to recruit prospective students. The authors—and many people in college admission—could see the writing on the wall: Social media was becoming indispensable.

One of the study's authors, Nora Ganim Barnes, recently observed, "Social media is omnipresent on the campus. It would surprise me if you found a campus that was not heavily invested in their social media. Enrollments are generally down and competition is fierce. [Ignoring social media] is simply no longer an option."

And colleges have gotten on board, wanting to meet students where they are.

Barnes also reported finding that 41 percent of school officials "believe they can directly attribute an increase in enrollments to their social media efforts."

Social media is with us to stay. So how can admission professionals leverage these tools?

SOCIAL MEDIA'S PLACE IN THE PROCESS

First, it's important to distinguish between how prospective students use social media versus where they turn for college information, points out Gil Rogers, director of marketing for the National Research Center for College and University Admissions. "While students may spend several hours a day on Instagram or Snapchat, for example, that doesn't mean that those channels are used for college information-gathering and decision-making," he said.

During the college search, students are highly likely to use college websites to gather information, followed closely by review sites, according to the *2017 Social Admissions Report*, developed by Chegg, Target X, and the National Research Center for College & University Admissions (NRCCUA).

"It's not until later that students turn more to social channels for guidance," said Rogers. "Social is more of a decision-driver than a discovery engine."

As students begin to hone their list of potential schools, they turn to social media to get a sense of what the campus and students are like.

Perhaps most importantly, the report found that two in five students use social media to decide which school to attend.

The takeaway? Social media is not as useful for increasing student awareness as it is for influencing college choice.

WHERE STUDENTS ARE

"The four most popular platforms used by colleges are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat," noted Ashley Dobson, communications manager, content and social media for NACAC. "Facebook is typically a way to connect with parents, since its users skew older," she said. "Twitter is primarily how admission officers connect with each other, and Instagram and Snapchat are almost exclusively student-focused."

Her assertions are backed by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, which shares stats about American teens' social media usage: 76 percent use Instagram; 75 percent use Snapchat; 66 percent use Facebook; and 47 percent use Twitter.

While these numbers point admission offices in the right direction, taken alone, the big four don't make a full social media strategy.

The *2017 Social Admissions Report* found that 63 percent of students use social media to research a college they are interested in and 60 percent have followed or liked a college they are considering. The breakdown by channel is 68 percent YouTube, 67 percent Instagram, 63 percent use Facebook, and 42 percent Snapchat.

The path of a student's search and decision process is fragmented," added Sasha Peterson, CEO of TargetX. "Students will start, stop, and restart the process across multiple channels and devices. Institutions need to be prepared for that.

The report makes it clear that nailing down which platforms potential recruits use isn't an exact science, so schools tend to be experimental, casting a wide net. Of course, this means where admission departments spend their time varies by school—and by what's trending among students.

For example, Megan Bernier Keniston, higher education marketing professional and social media manager at St. Lawrence University's (NY), said her priorities are Instagram, followed by Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube. Melissa Richards, vice president for communications and enrollment management for Sweet Briar College (VA) said she uses a mix of Instagram and Facebook, while Graeme Menzies, director, marketing communications & social media at the University of British Columbia (UBC), said his strategy is all about Facebook, with Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and a little bit of YouTube.

HOW TO CONNECT

Social media should align with your school's brand and marketing focus. For example, Richards said that for Sweet Briar—and most other schools—the campus visit is the golden nugget. "It makes a huge difference in the decision to apply," she said. Consequently, Sweet Briar's social media focus has two goals: to entice students to come to their campus and to give students who can't visit a good sense of what the campus looks and feels like.

They achieve this through three main social media tools: Instagram, Facebook, and a student-run blog. Instagram, where the college features a lot of campus images, helps students imagine themselves on campus, explained Richards. Their Facebook community is mostly alumnae and parents, so they tell more stories there. Their student-run blog is a way for prospective students to hear about what life is like as a student—the classes, culture, and how they fit.

Richards and her department have been doing more with video lately. She said it appears to be a big influencer. Facebook Live video sessions and 360 shots give an enhanced view of the campus and have high click-through rates. Richards believes this "is a testament to this generation's visual nature."

Menzies sees social media as a great way to push students to the UBC's website, he explained. Once there, they can dig into more about campus life, programs, and admission.

Additionally, Facebook and Twitter are great for answering students' questions, while Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube help students picture themselves on campus. Facebook is used frequently to attract, inform, and engage prospective students, and UBC also has a page specifically for prospective students. Menzies said this is necessary—Canada uses Facebook more than any other country, so UBC relies on it more heavily than many schools in the US.

But the plan could change at any time, given the ebb and flow of social media platforms and popularity. Menzies said it's crucial to remain flexible and "constantly evaluate the performance of channels and adapt the way we use them to play to their strengths." For example, a couple of years ago UBC evaluated Snapchat, saw that it was primarily a channel for young people to communicate with each other. "We didn't want to intrude," said Menzies. But in 2016, UBC re-evaluated and jumped onboard Snapchat. After running a



pilot, they decided the effort was worth it. “Now it’s going like gangbusters,” said Menzies.

UBC had been using Weibo, a popular social media site in China (similar to Twitter), to communicate with Chinese students. But after trying it, said Menzies, UBC wasn’t seeing results and dropped it. As social media usage shifts, UBC shifts with it.

KEEPING IT QUIET

“It takes an unconventional idea to convince students to share their college acceptances on social media,” observed Keniston. Five years ago, students didn’t hesitate to post online about where they got in. You would see frequent mentions of acceptances on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

“Now students wait until they have decided where to attend before announcing,” said Keniston. “They’re much more private about that information.”

Keniston strongly recommends that admission teams send admitted students something cool—visual or physical—that they can feature in photos for sharing on social media.

GETTING CREATIVE

Many schools are getting creative with social media, using it to get attention, then convey their institutions’ unique personality and community.

“The University of Virginia’s blog, *Notes from Peabody*, is one example of social media done right,” said Dobson. Posts shared by Associate Dean of Admission Jeannine Lalonde (or dean) allow students to look behind the admission curtain.

When Lalonde created the blog in 2005, she did it quietly, making observations about the campus community and sprinkling in comments about the admission process. “I noticed that any time I talked about the admission process, traffic spiked,” she said. So she shifted the focus of her blog to demystifying the process.

Today, she still operates with that goal in mind and most of the posts feature her dog, Jack, creating a dogs-eye-view of campus happenings. Jack has also helped her expand on Instagram. While several of the photos feature him, Lalonde does a good job posting a mix of photos that show many sides of the school.

After sending a getting-to-know-you message to admits, Kristi Lafree Smith, associate director of enrollment marketing at Butler University (IN), used one question—what is your dog or cat’s first name—to build a connection with a large segment of students.

To students who responded, Butler sent “pet version” of their admit package. They were addressed to the cats or dogs from the Butler mascot, Butler Blue III (Trip) and had treats enclosed, said Smith. “In the print piece, Trip promised to look after the pet’s human for them while they were away!”

“We then encouraged students to share pictures of their pets on social media,” said Smith. “It was a huge hit and we saw a great response from admitted students, their parents, and current students and alumni.” With this one idea, Butler was able to create connection—a sense of caring about students personally—and engagement via social media.

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

While many tools exist, it’s up to individual schools to pick what they need, based on management and staffing.

To stay on top of what different departments and professors are sharing on social media, Lalonde keeps her phone on her and regularly monitors her Hootsuite account. When she spots something noteworthy, Lalonde shares it.

She doesn’t have a calendar for posts and she said thinks that’s part of the reason people respond so positively to her posts. “If it feels right to post and I know it would be helpful to students, I post,” she said. “Students prefer less produced, more authentic posts.”

Keniston said, while she still does a lot of social media monitoring manually, she relies on Sprout Social for scheduling of posts and tracking hashtags and Facebook. Facebook has introduced a new way to monitor comments and engagement, called Audience Insights, which St. Lawrence is using to track students who comment or engage. “Facebook Insights is a treasure trove of information,” said Keniston.

UBC has a full-time social media coordinator, said Menzies, who posts daily. The department has an editorial calendar designed on an Excel spreadsheet with broad themes that they create annually. Menzies also uses Hootsuite to schedule posts, evaluate open rates, and manage campaigns.

“Metrics and evaluation is the most important piece of the process,” noted Menzies, including measuring engagement levels and Facebook likes, as well as monitoring the profile of the audience UBC attracts, to ensure it matches the school’s strategic audience.

With social media channels and prospective student usage of them constantly in flux, staying on top of which platforms yield the best results is a big part of the challenge.

Marcia Layton Turner is a freelancer, based in Rochester, New York, who often writes about education. Her work has appeared in *University Business*, *Community College Week*, *Businessweek*, and many other publications.



MUSLIMS ON CAMPUS





College-bound students,
schools contend with
rising intolerance

By Mary Stegmeir

Hannah Shraim loves learning.

The teen graduated from high school near the top of her class and continues to excel as an honors student at Montgomery College in Maryland.

Yet despite enthusiasm for her courses and extracurricular activities, the 18-year-old admits feeling uneasy some mornings as she leaves her family's home to attend class, meet with friends, or run errands. In the current political climate, Shraim says the Islamic headscarf she wears—called a hijab—is a “target for people to look at me differently.”

Hate crimes and incidents of bias against US Muslims have soared to their highest levels since the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, according to data collected by the FBI and other organizations. And as Muslim youth search for a sense of security, counselors on both sides of the desk are called to ensure their institutions remain safe and welcoming for all students.

“I really haven't known an America that was not hostile to Muslims,” said Shraim. “I've still grown up to love my country and love everything that it offers. A lot of Muslim students—we want to be involved and embraced and fully integrated into society. But with the climate that's surrounding us, it's difficult because you're being told that you're not wanted by a lot of people.”

During the run-up to the last national election, President Trump called for a registry of the country's Muslims. Once in office, he enacted a ban restricting

travel from a handful of predominantly Muslim countries—a move has been denounced by NACAC and many other educational organizations.

Anti-Muslim sentiment has also surfaced on college campuses and in K-12 schools. In the past year alone, a hijab-wearing college student suffered a concussion after being hit with a bottle on campus. Posters calling for a “Muslim-Free America” were displayed at one school. And “Trump!” was scrawled across the door of a Muslim prayer space at another.

Those words and actions hit young US Muslims “at their core,” said Shraim. She applied to colleges in the fall of 2015 and recalls debating whether she should mention religion in her Common App essay.

“I was very hesitant to talk about my Muslim identity, because you worry: What if somebody doesn't want me at their school, just because of that?” recalled Shraim, now a college sophomore.

Ultimately, the teen decided to write about her experiences. But Shraim's initial hesitancy offers a glimpse into the constant state of vigilance that many Muslim students have adopted in response to rising Islamophobia, said Mary Ann Bodine Al-Sharif, director of recruitment and admissions at Oklahoma City Community College.

“I don't want to paint a picture that our Islamic students are weak or hovering in the corner—I would say that our students are empowered and

MUSLIM STUDENTS AND THE COLLEGE SEARCH

Looking to recruit more Muslim students to your campus? Here are five things to remember.



1. America's Muslim population is racially and ethnically diverse,

with foreign-born American Muslims hailing from 77 different countries. And when it comes to making decisions about where to attend college and what to study, social and cultural norms often play as large a role as religion. “Muslim students don't want to be put in a box,” said Ekhlas Ahmed, a Casco Bay High School (ME) teacher who helps prepare English language learners for college. “Some students may be comfortable taking loans, others may not. Some may be willing to go to an out-of-state school, others may want to stay close to home. The answer is different for each individual student and their family.”

2. Parents play a crucial role in college discussions.

It's not just the student that you're winning over to your campus, it's also the parents, said NACAC member Mary Ann Bodine Al-Sharif, director of recruitment and admissions at Oklahoma City Community College. “They want to see that there are going to be opportunities for their child to be involved and to gain some academic insight,” she said. “But more than anything, parents want to know that their son or daughter is going to be safe and accepted on your campus.”

3. Little gestures go a long way.

Halal food and single-sex dorms are often attractive to Muslim students. But even if your campus doesn't offer those options, providing a space for prayer is appreciated. “When students see there's a prayer space, that sends the message that your campus acknowledges differences and needs,” said Mark Braun, counselor at Crawford High School, a San Diego school that serves several immigrant families. Colleges with Islamic cultural centers

or educational programming are also attractive. “Awareness of the culture or the religion makes students more comfortable,” said Ted Critchley-Menor, a senior coach with College Possible-Minnesota.

4. Good information can help families make good decisions.

Officials at Elon University (NC) created a webpage highlighting prayer room options and upcoming campus events related to the Islamic faith. The Muslim Life at Elon webpage also provides answers to questions like “Can I have fun and fit in at Elon if I don't drink alcohol?” and “Are there any Muslim faculty and staff at Elon?” “You don't want to oversell your environment—we try to be as real as we can—but we want to have one place our students and staff can go for answers,” said Brooke Barnett, associate provost for academic and inclusive excellence at the university.

5. Statements of support make a difference.

Over 130 hate crimes against Muslims were recorded in the first half of 2017 by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, which tracks incidents of hate and discrimination. The total is nearly double the number recorded by the organization during the same time period in 2016, putting 2017 on track to become one of the worst years ever for anti-Muslim hate crimes. Muslim students and families take notice when schools stand against hate, said Hannah Shraim, a sophomore at Montgomery College (MD). Last year, her college sent an email to students condemning President Trump's proposals to start a Muslim registry and build a wall along the US-Mexico border. “Taking a firm stance is important, because it shows that the direction you're going in is not the direction of bigotry,” Shraim said.



proud of who they are,” said Bodine Al-Sharif, a NACAC member. “But there’s wear and tear. When you are constantly having to define who you are and who Muslims are, it’s like working two jobs. It’s exhausting.”

BATTLING STEREOTYPES

Misperceptions about the Islamic faith and Muslims abound, and at times, the rhetoric can seem overwhelming, said Bodine Al-Sharif, who converted to the Islamic faith as an adult.

Sixteen years after 9/11, many Americans still falsely equate Muslims with terrorism. A 2016 Pew Research Center survey found that 49 percent of American adults think at least some Muslims in the US are anti-American, including 11 percent who think most or almost all Muslims are anti-American.

And those attitudes trickle-down into America’s schools and colleges. Recent polls conducted by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding found that Muslim students in K-12 schools experience high rates of bullying because of their religious identity.

Women and girls who wear the hijab, like Shraim and Bodine Al-Sharif, report the highest rates of anti-Muslim discrimination, data shows. And oftentimes they are the targets of offensive assumptions. Common stereotypes include the belief that all Muslim women are uneducated and lack control over their lives.

“Imagine how it feels, as a young person, to be the target of that rhetoric,” said Bodine Al-Sharif.

Recently, while dining out with her son, the educator—who holds a doctorate—was accosted by another customer who demanded to know whether she spoke English.

She said she did, noting that she was born and raised in Missouri. His response? “Then why do you have that thing on your head?”

Bodine Al-Sharif told the man she was Muslim, to which he retorted: “You’re an American and you’re Muslim? There is no such thing as that.”

“We went on to have a conversation—it didn’t go rogue,” Bodine Al-Sharif said. “But I think that just shows the kind of climate our (Muslim) students find themselves in as they are discovering: Who am I? What are my goals? What do I want to do? Who do I want to become?”

On most college campuses and in many K-12 school buildings, American Muslim students make up a small minority of the study body. Worldwide, Islam is practiced by roughly 1.8 billion people—nearly a quarter of the global population. But in the US, Muslims make up just 1 percent of the population.

As a result, the unique needs of Muslim students often “get overlooked” in larger conversations about diversity, said Ka’rin Thornburg, associate director of admissions at the University of Texas at Austin and chair of NACAC’s Inclusion, Access, and Success (IAS) Committee.

Recent incidents of hate or bias toward Muslim students serve as an important reminder of the challenges they face getting to and through college, Thornburg said. NACAC’s IAS Committee organized a special educational session at the association’s 2017 National Conference examining the effects of Islamophobia and exploring ways to better support Muslim students.

In just the past year, both Harvard University and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, added full-time Muslim chaplains to their respective staffs. Like their Christian and Jewish counterparts, the new chaplains will offer support to students seeking counsel and serve the larger campus community



“It’s so easy for us as humans to judge others or to say stereotypical things about others because we don’t know them... But once we take that action of getting to know a person, we find so many things that we have in common. We connect with them on a more human level, and that’s what sticks out at the end of the day.”

by providing clear answers when questions arise regarding Islamic beliefs, practices, and traditions.

Such work is critical, because it helps dispel stereotypes, said Ekhlas Ahmed, a teacher at Casco Bay High School in Portland, Maine, who also works with an afterschool program that prepares English language learners for college.

Ahmed, who is Muslim, came to America as a teenager in the early 2000s fleeing violence in Sudan. Today she helps bridge the gap between Muslim students and their peers at Casco Bay by organizing special days that encourage teens to talk about their traditions and find common ground.

“It’s so easy for us as humans to judge others or to say stereotypical things about others because we don’t know them,” Ahmed said. “But once we take that action of getting to know a person, we find so many things that we have in common. We connect with them on a more human level, and that’s what sticks out at the end of the day.”

CONFRONTING HATE

When students feel comfortable at the K-12 level, they are more likely to succeed in the classroom and more likely to pursue higher education, said Mark Braun, a counselor with the San Diego Unified School District, which kicked off a campaign this fall to combat Islamophobia within its schools.

Support from counselors and admission professionals familiar with Muslim beliefs and cultures can also increase a student’s chances of postsecondary success, added Braun. Many American Muslims were raised within immigrant or refugee families. Obtaining parental approval to attend college—whether the campus is located down the street or across the country—is often a critical step in a student’s planning process.

Observant Muslims pray five times a day and may have special dietary needs. Islamic teachings, which prohibit debt, affect the willingness of some Muslim students to take on loans to pay for school. And religious and cultural practices

related to separation of the sexes could influence where a student chooses to live while in college.

"I always encourage my students to have those conversations with their families early on," noted Braun, whose caseload includes several Muslim students, many of whom are refugees from East Africa, Iran, and Syria. "We look at colleges and we talk about ways they can make it work while staying true to their culture, true to their beliefs."

A school-sponsored trip for students at the Urban Assembly School for Criminal Justice in Brooklyn helped pave the way to college for Maria Malik. Students at the all-girls school, which serves a large Muslim population, were encouraged to bring their parents on the overnight college tour, which included stops at Yale University (CT) and Wellesley College (MA).

Malik, whose mother accompanied her on the trip, said the benefits of the tour were twofold: It showcased the unique opportunities available to students on residential campuses, and proved to her mom that college life was about more than just partying—a concern Malik said is shared by many in her community of Pakistani Muslims.

Ultimately, Malik, the eldest of six, was admitted to Princeton University (NJ) on a full scholarship. After much deliberation, her parents allowed her to attend and live in a co-ed dorm. Now a junior, she's majoring in ecology and

evolutionary biology, with a minor in global health and health policy. Malik is active in the university's Muslim Student Association and has traveled abroad, completing internships in Vietnam and Kenya.

Her college experience, she said, has been everything she hoped it would be. Yet Malik admits that the past year—when anti-Muslim rhetoric in America hit a fever pitch—was difficult at times. From 2015 to 2016, the number of US hate groups specifically targeting Muslims nearly tripled, growing from 34 to 101, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry. And in the week following Trump's election alone, 17 Muslim girls and women at K-12 schools and colleges in America reported being threatened, attacked, or having their religious attire grabbed, yanked, or pulled, CAIR data show.

Malik says she has always felt safe and supported at Princeton. Recent national events, such as the travel ban and proposed Muslim registry, left her disappointed but not defeated.

They also showed that college campuses have a role to play in erasing hate, violence, and mistrust, she said.

"A lot of other students on campus reached out to the Muslim students and put forward messages of support," Malik recalled. "Even though all this crazy stuff was going on, you saw students coming together in solidarity." ▢

—Mary Stegmeir

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TRAUMA AWARE & SAFETY READY

Identify and support
vulnerable students,
and create a safe
campus environment



By Jim Paterson

The interwoven issues of trauma and safety have swept through college campuses over the last decade, and they've arrived at doors of admission offices, encouraging officials to think more carefully about those concerns and take a closer look at how they handle them.

Horribly violent and personally tragic incidents, the political climate, media coverage, societal pressure, and just age-old parental concerns about kids leaving home for the first time—they all have pressed these issues to the forefront, with demands that schools more closely screen their students on one hand, and protect a young person's privacy and right to an education on the other.

Experts recommend in this atmosphere that admission offices discuss these topics openly, educate and train themselves, and have clear policies that guide their handling of students who might be suffering from trauma or might be unsafe—and handling the worry associated with them.

"I think most incoming students and parents want to know what the school is doing to identify risks and protect their students from what they see on the news," said Brian Van Brunt, a campus security consultant in Berwyn, Pennsylvania. "Ten years ago, it was fine when a school told them sexual assault never happens on campus. Today, I think most incoming students and parents would see a school having zero data very differently."

LOOKING AT TRAUMA FIRST

As a first step, experts say, schools should become "trauma-informed," including admission offices, the filter for new students of all stripes coming to a campus, and high school counseling offices, where issues can be spotted.

Research shows that most undergraduate students have suffered some sort of trauma, according to a University of Minnesota study. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) reports about 25 percent of teens have suffered trauma severe enough to affect their school performance or behavior—due to events ranging from bullying and extreme stress to abuse or living through a disaster.

NCTSN notes that being trauma-informed doesn't mean someone can diagnose or deal with the effects of trauma—but that they are aware of the signs, understand the vulnerabilities and risks, and know how a student can get help.

"Trauma has a short and long-term effect on an individual's overall health and well-being. The impact is broad and life-altering and it really can affect a young person's overall potential," said Mary Wyandt-Heibert, a professor at the University of Arkansas who has studied and reported about the issue as it relates to college campuses.

She and her colleagues say it can cripple a student's learning, social skills, and ability to thrive in school—and affect others around them.

"High schools, colleges, and universities are systems," she said. "Everyone is interconnected and interdependent and what happened to—or what happens to—a student can affect everyone."

She said admission offices specifically can play a role because they are the first to meet students and often they gather extensive personal information through conversations or student essays.

"They have the potential through these conversations to recognize cues of trauma and share resources that could be helpful, or they might identify students with great potential who could otherwise go unnoticed or be erroneously and negatively categorized."

SPOTTING TRAUMA



Trauma-informed organizations, where people are aware that trauma is a concern, can often potentially identify it, and can help students find support.

Here are some indications a student is suffering from trauma, or has in the past, according to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network:

- Physical symptoms like headaches and stomach aches without an evident cause
- Poor control of emotions and mood swings
- Inconsistent academic performance with significant swings in their record
- Unpredictable or impulsive behavior
- Over or under-reacting to bells, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements, or even physical contact
- Thinking others are violating their personal space. "What are you looking at?"
- Blowing up when being corrected or told what to do by an authority figure
- Fighting when criticized or teased by others
- Resisting transition or change.

An even more detailed list can be found on the Recognize Trauma website: www.recognizetrauma.org/links.php.

Beyond that, admission office awareness about trauma or related difficulties experienced by a prospective student can be very important for the safety of a college campus, though their role in spotting it is complex.

TALKING ABOUT SAFETY


A Princeton Review survey of parents last year showed that 70 percent felt campus safety was a critical issue in choosing a school and half were "very concerned" about sexual assault. Popular media and resources advising parents about college choice often raise the issue of campus safety and some call for public ranking of schools with the information.

"Covering safety is not new, but we have expanded the level of information as the services have expanded and there's been more interest," said Kelley Maloney, director of marketing and communication for enrollment at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. "Safety questions tend to come more from parents than prospective students."

Urban schools such as Duquesne and Tulane University (LA) make a discussion about safety part of every admission counselors' presentation, officials say, but even at rural schools it's increasingly discussed.

"We know parents and students want to hear about it, and safety information is included in any discussions about the university," said Bud Grimes, a spokesperson at the University of Tennessee, located in the quiet, hilly western part of the state where a student body of 6,700 is about one-third of the surrounding town. "We also include safety information in university publications, and it's readily available online through our department of public safety."

Other schools such as Michigan State or Binghamton University in New York have a spot for safety information on their admission office home



Experts recommend in this atmosphere that admission offices discuss these topics openly, educate and train themselves, and have clear policies that guide their handling of students who might be suffering from trauma or might be unsafe—and handling the worry associated with them.

page, and all schools are required by the Clery Act to present certain safety information and records to prospective students.

Admission counselor Van Brunt said, we should let students know about things like “blue light” phones or escorts, emergency procedures, and other resources that are available, even if the information is going to be repeated after enrollment.

Wyandt-Heibert notes admission offices can also help make certain that vulnerable students know about support services that may be available. The Association of American Universities study showed, for instance, that while a quarter of college women reported being assaulted, less than half knew where to get help, and other studies have shown students are not well-informed about campus security operations or what to do in the event of an emergency.

Dealing with threats is more complex.

Kevin McCarthy, associate dean of students at North Central College and chairman of the school’s behavior intervention team, has been researching and writing about the admission office’s role in security for the National Behavior Intervention Team Association (NABITA), a group in which he and other campus officials concerned about safety are active.

He said every school has a different approach, but that many believe admission offices should be involved in the process of identifying students who may be dangerous or need support.

“They have a plethora of knowledge. They are sitting down and meeting with students who are sharing a lot of information about themselves, so they can play a key role. They should build relationships so that information is responsibly available.”

McCarthy added that admission officials might let officials know about a student who has an attention issue or an eating disorder, or a prospect who might be at risk of harming themselves or others. Some concerns might

WHERE TO LOOK



Here are some resources about trauma and safety:

TRAUMA

- The US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration on trauma and violence
- National Center for PTSD
- Fostering Resilience
- National Institute of Mental Health: Coping with Traumatic Events
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Facts for Families
- Recovering Emotionally (Red Cross)
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress
- National Library of Medicine: Coping with Disasters, Violence and Traumatic Events
- The American College Health Association on mental health and on college violence and trauma.

CAMPUS SAFETY

- The Association of American Universities Campus Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct
- Clery Center for Security on Campus
- Campus Safety and Security Data Analysis Cutting Tool
- *NotAlone.gov*
- US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights
- National Behavioral Intervention Team Association
- US Education Department on Campus Safety
- *Campus Safety* magazine.

prompt an informal chat, while more serious issues at his school are handled through an “early alert” system that allows any student or staff member to report a safety concern.

McCarthy continued, “Our team would then never weigh-in on or make a recommendation regarding any information referred to the Behavior Intervention Team (BIT). Instead, the BIT would simply gather this information in order to resource student in the most appropriate way.”

He said his team would either store the information for use if there are future concerns, offer a “soft referral” for available resources, or “offer a more formalized referral.”

“We all have the same goal. We just want our students to safely and successfully graduate,” said McCarthy.

Van Brunt, who is also active in NABITA, says admission offices should see teams like McCarthy’s as a resource.

“I can’t stress enough the importance of the behavior intervention team not being in a decision-making capacity around admitting a student. This isn’t why we are encouraging admission and other departments to share information with us,” he said, noting that those teams can also help train admission officials or share information with them too.

This issue of admission offices gathering background information about a student and reporting on safety concerns is complex, however, and it has played out in recent public debates, specifically about schools collecting disciplinary and criminal histories.

Last year, the Obama administration asked colleges to review the use of application questions gathering information about those records.

“An estimated three out of four colleges and universities collect high school disciplinary information, and 89 percent of those institutions use the information to make admissions decisions,” the Department of Education noted in its *Beyond the Box* report that argues for more care with application

WHAT THE ED SUGGESTS

i

The US Department of Education developed recommendations in May 2016 about the use of criminal history information in college applications. Here are its suggestions for colleges, which have been adopted to varying degrees by some campuses.

- Delay the request for—or consideration of—criminal justice involvement until after an admission decision has been made to avoid a chilling effect on potential applicants whose backgrounds may ultimately be deemed irrelevant by the institution.
- Create transparency and clearly inform potential students as early as possible in the application process on how to respond to the inquiry about criminal pasts.
- Ensure that the questions are narrowly focused, avoiding overly broad requests about criminal history.
- Give all prospective students the opportunity to explain criminal justice involvement and preparedness for postsecondary study.
- Provide admission personnel and counselors training on the effective use of criminal history data.

questions that ask students to disclose such information. Other organizations advocated for such a review, some with NACAC input.

One study found about half of high schools disclose disciplinary information about their students to colleges, and at about 40 percent of those that do, guidance counselors make that call in isolation. About two-thirds don’t have a formal, written policy regarding disclosure of student disciplinary records.

ONE APPROACH

At Colorado Mesa University, school officials look at the issue of safety differently. They believe some thinking about it is just backward.

John Marshall, vice president for student services, explained, rather than be concerned about revealing safety information to prospective students, the school is happy to talk about it, though he admits that it isn’t much of an issue on the campus, located in Grand Junction in the scrappy mountainous region in western Colorado, surrounded by high desert, open space, and national park land.

But perhaps more importantly, as the debate has raged about whether gathering and acting on information concerning past student criminal and disciplinary records, school officials stuck with a different path.

Marshall said the school, which offers degrees ranging from technical certificates to doctoral degrees for students who mostly come from the vast region’s small towns and blue collar families, uses that information to give more students a chance to complete it with the appropriate resources rather than limit the opportunity by *only* allowing students to check the box on the application.

“We need to know if they check that box. Campus safety and common sense demand it. But we really look for every opportunity to say “yes” more often—an *informed* yes to giving a student who’s had a serious problem a second chance. We really felt that if they can’t find a second chance here, they won’t find it. So we take our charge very seriously.”

Marshall explained that once they’ve gained sufficient information on the most serious cases, the school conducts in-person interviews, “to get to know them as people, beyond what’s simply on paper.” In rare cases the university will determine that a student simply shouldn’t be on campus, but generally through a structured review process the school finds a path for a student to attend, sometimes through deferred admission while they stabilize their life circumstances or sometimes using counseling or mentors or other academic supports on campus combined with careful monitoring.

“We offer a lot of support and a require a lot of accountability,” he said. “Over the years, we’ve enrolled hundreds of students with criminal backgrounds who’ve gone on to be very successful, and we’re proud as they become a valuable part of our student body. It isn’t always easy, but it’s the right thing to do.”

The Education Department also asked that “colleges and universities help remove barriers that can prevent the estimated 70 million citizens with criminal records from pursuing higher education, including considering the chilling effect of inquiring early in the application process whether prospective students have ever been arrested.”

In response, some schools stopped gathering or examining this data. The Common Application after a review last year announced that it has changed its policy about the two questions, but is keeping them.

“Working to meet the diverse needs of 700 members while also being responsive to the concerns of counselors and their students, the 2017–2018 Common App will provide more context about the criminal history and school discipline questions, such as the ability of colleges to suppress answers to those questions” the organization announced. It also provides students more information about how their answers will be used, and individual school policy toward the questions.

In May 2015 when one report on the issue came up, Todd Rinehart, associate vice chancellor for enrollment & director of admission at the University of Denver, then chair of the NACAC Admission Practices Committee, told *Education Week* colleges could responsibly use the material.

“When we conduct a holistic review of each student, we’re shaping a community. We should have every bit of information that’s possible,” Rinehart said. “If the student has done something severe or has a history of poor

behavior, the college or university has the right to know that and make an admission decision that is best for their institution.”

He added, “admission committees do a good job of considering discipline issues within proper context, and many students are still offered admission.”

Most importantly, Kenneth Anselment, dean of admissions at Lawrence University of Appleton, Wisconsin, said admission offices should be well informed and have a clear policy.

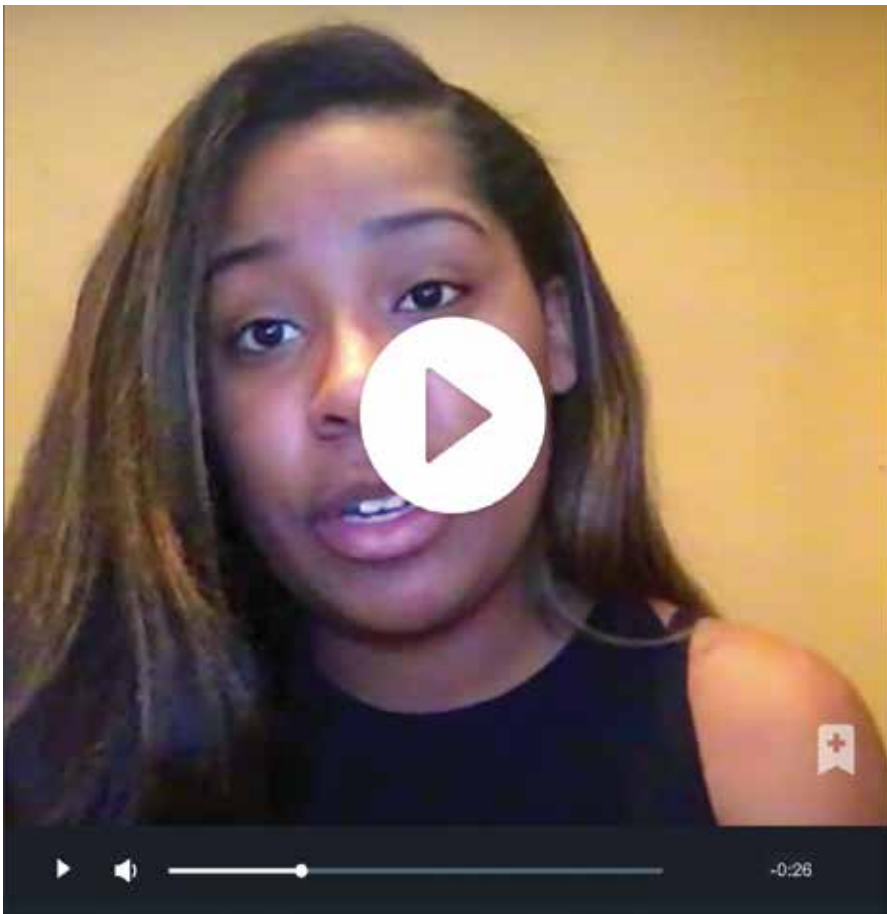
“We cannot control for everything that a student might do once they enter our community, but on the front end we in admission need to ensure that we have done everything we can to provide a safe environment for all students.”

He notes that his school gathers information about disciplinary or criminal issues, and concerns are directed to him for a decision, perhaps in consultation with other administrators.

Anselment said the process is not intended to be used as “a blunt instrument.” It’s a “more precise, personal, and particular follow up is necessary to reach a decision that fits the individual student,” he said. “When a student presents information on the application about disciplinary or criminal issues, we need to ensure that we are doing our due diligence in the admission office in considering whether to invite that student to join our community.”

Jim Paterson is a writer and former school counselor living in Lewes, Delaware.

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CLOSE-UP VIEWS OF TRANSFER PRACTITIONERS

In early 2017, the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education (JNGI) distributed an online survey to transfer practitioners across the country. The responses shared here are from professionals in 27 states who work with transfer students, the majority (76 percent) of which were from transfer-receiving institutions. The survey was part of a planning grant from a major national philanthropy to identify promising approaches to improve transfer student outcomes, particularly among low-income, minority, and first-generation students. (Read the full survey report at www.jngi.org/surveytransferpractitioners.)

NACAC spoke with Dr. Michael J. Rosenberg, JNGI's technical consultant for transfer, about the larger themes that emerged.

WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS WHEN PROFESSIONALS WERE ASKED, "WHAT IS MOST ESSENTIAL FOR AN INSTITUTION TO HAVE, DO, OR PROVIDE, TO EARN THE DESCRIPTOR 'TRANSFER-STUDENT-FRIENDLY?'"

When we coded the responses into categories, having an effective set of institutional policies

governing transfer received almost twice as many mentions as any other category. This was no surprise, since good policy is a reflection of transfer as a leading institutional priority. These policies included effective processes for awarding students transfer credit, minimizing lost credit, efficient credit evaluation—especially pre-admission—and equitable transfer admission policies which are easy to understand. Having dedicated, visible staff tasked with assisting transfer students on their academic path was next on the list.

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT WHO THESE STUDENTS ARE, HOW THEY DO, AND WHAT THEY NEED IS CRITICAL.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING CAME UP A LOT IN THE SURVEY RESPONSES—TELL US MORE ABOUT THAT.

When practitioners were asked how best to involve the upper levels of campus leadership in making transfer a high priority, the answers overwhelming surrounded the provision of demographic data on transfer students, their place in the makeup of the overall student body, retention and graduation rates, and levels of student satisfaction. Many administrative and faculty leaders may not know how well transfer students perform, or even how many transfer students exist on campus. Raising awareness about who these students are, how they do, and what they need is critical.

WERE THERE ANY INTERESTING FINDINGS REGARDING PROFESSIONALS' VIEWS OF TRANSFER STATE POLICY?

We learned that there are often unintended consequences to some state policy efforts if not implemented correctly. One example is block gen ed transfer. Some students end up taking courses pre-transfer that may not apply towards their intended bachelor's. This slows progress to degree and can cause issues with aid.

We also asked about policies that help private institutions serve transfer students. Half of the responses centered around private school participation in statewide transfer efforts, such as curriculum and general education alignment, and financial aid and tuition policies committed to transfer students.

WHAT WERE SOME BEST PRACTICES MENTIONED FOR ACCOMPLISHING COLLABORATION BETWEEN TRANSFER PARTNERS?

Not surprisingly, academic partnerships, such as transfer pathways, articulation agreements, reverse transfer, 3+1, and like programs were mentioned most. Students should know what's involved in pursuing their desired degree from day one.

Cross-institutional review, such as regular meetings among faculty and staff at partnered institutions to review course equivalencies and curricula from both institutions, discussions between admission offices about effective recruitment, relationship building activities between staff are key—as are effective

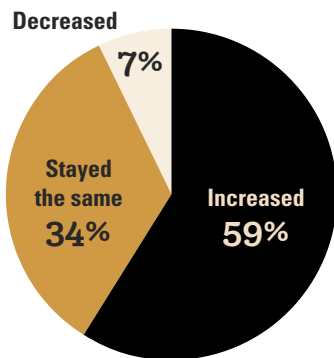
student wraparound services and sufficient transfer staffing.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR JNGI AND TRANSFER?

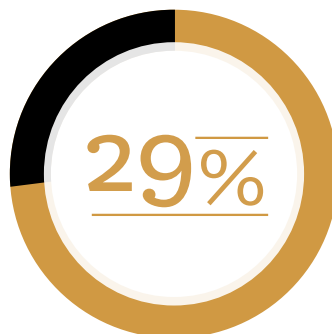
JNGI is deeply invested in the idea of transfer as a social justice issue. Transfer is a key path to the baccalaureate for many underserved populations. Any office or department working with these students needs to understand that transfer drives campus diversity and builds economic opportunity for low-income, minority, first-generation, and adult students. Additionally, the institute continues its work with institutions, individually or partnered, in building effective strategic action plans to improve transfer outcomes and minimize issues with barrier and gateway courses. ▢

—Heather Durosko

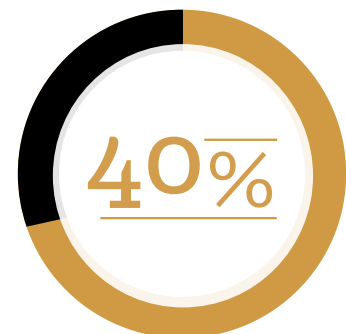
OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS HAS YOUR INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY FOR TRANSFER DECREASED, STAYED THE SAME, OR INCREASED?



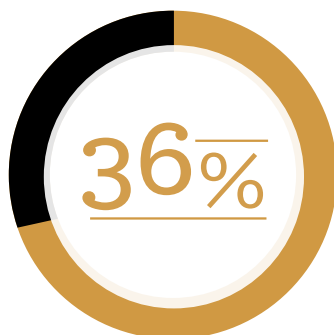
DOES YOUR INSTITUTION HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO IMPROVE TRANSFER? (YES)



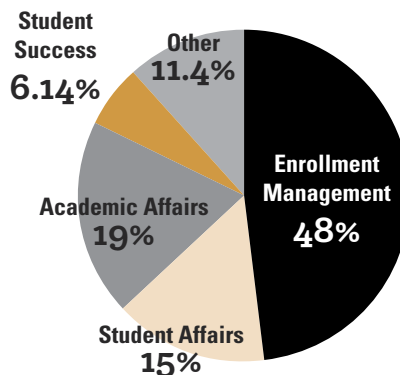
DOES YOUR INSTITUTION HAVE ANY KIND OF INSTITUTION-WIDE TRANSFER STAKEHOLDERS' GROUP TO ADVOCATE FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS? (YES)



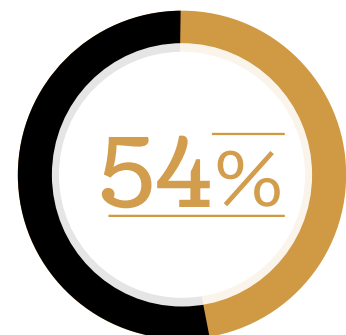
IS THERE A STRUCTURED PROCESS AT YOUR INSTITUTION TO PERIODICALLY SHARE AND DISCUSS DATA AND INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSFER (TRANSFERRING IN OR OUT) AT YOUR INSTITUTION? (YES)



IN YOUR CURRENT INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE, WHO IS MORE LIKELY THE PRIMARY "OWNER" OF TRANSFER ADVOCACY?



HAS YOUR INSTITUTION DONE ANYTHING IN THE PAST ONE TO THREE YEARS THAT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED TRANSFER OUTCOMES? (YES)





By Jim Rawlins and Yukiko Ishikura

ADMISSION REFORM IN JAPAN How Osaka University is Transforming its Practices

Countries such as the UK and the US have long led the trend toward internationalization in college admission and education, and some Asian countries are starting to follow. The UK and US are seen as having advanced practices, while South Korea has borrowed from the US model and introduced an admission officer system to implement holistic admission.

In Japan, the government is a key driver in pressuring universities toward admission reform, and has called for a shift in admission practices from a test-score based to a holistic review approach. This is done in the hopes of selecting and attracting students with diverse learning backgrounds, rather than having such complete reliance on a single, high-stakes exam. Furthermore, this comes at a time when the national population is shrinking. It is predicted that the 18-year-old population will drop from 1.2 million to 800,000 students by 2040.

In 2013, the government's Education Rebuilding Implementation Council stressed the necessity of college admission reforms to reflect a multifaceted and comprehensive assessment of students' cognitive and non-cognitive attributes. The council also noted that the parallel efforts to reform student learning in high schools would complement the changes to the application and admission process.

Representatives from Osaka University, a NACAC member and one of the leading national universities in Japan, have visited the UK, the

US, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan to learn about college admission and education practices over the past two years. By collaborating with international colleagues, Osaka University wants to transform its own admission practices, as well as help its colleagues at other institutions toward the same goal.

Though difficult for US institutions to imagine, consider what it would be like to essentially craft an admission office from square one. Traditionally, Japanese national and public universities have utilized a system where admission decisions are based on mainly test scores: the National Center Test for University Admissions, or National Center Test. They also have additional examinations at the department level, led by faculty. These exams are tied to the expectation that a student must have chosen a course of study prior to applying, and should stick with it throughout their degree. With no admission officers, and no culture of centralized decision-making or collection of broader information from the student, universities in Japan have many steps to take to reform the process.

In addition to visiting a variety of colleges, Osaka established the Center for the Study of Higher Education and Global Admissions (CHEGA). The development of CHEGA signaled an institutional commitment from Osaka's senior leadership to go about these reforms in a methodical way. Led by its director, Professor Tatsuo Kawashima, and distinguished faculty, CHEGA began offering seminars with guest speakers from the US, UK, and South Korea, and consistently made these seminars available to universities and organizations throughout the country. With participants from across the nation (from as far as Hokkaido and Okinawa), these events provide attendees with valuable information to quickly set things in motion at their home campuses.

Japanese universities are seeing several benefits of the US holistic model. Most importantly, seeing another country's approach to fairness and consistency has opened the possibility of considering additional factors in admission, not just test scores. Because some of those factors involve a closer examination of the qualities of each high school, it is also clear that universities could benefit by working more directly with the high schools to explain the process, and to gather and share data.

Meanwhile, CHEGA faculty have visited 32 institutions or organizations in five countries, and are beginning to attend NACAC conferences to network, sit in on policy meetings, visit with colleges and high schools, and learn best practices. Topics discussed include: setting new selection policies, conducting effective admission interviews, assessing varied strengths of high schools, reader training and norming, building review rubrics, and data management. As valuable as these learning opportunities are, Osaka faculty know the work doesn't stop there. They will need to adapt and customize these practices to their local needs and policies.

A key milestone has been reached this summer through the initial offering of a three-day training for newly established admission officers, the Handai (abbreviation of Osaka University) Admission Officer program (HAO). HAO's introductory-level course successfully trained 40 university faculty and staff members from 30 institutions who are involved in college admission practices. The thorough, comprehensive curriculum is situating institutions to launch programs in the coming year. The HAO curriculum was presented by CHEGA faculty, including a US admission officer who has become a cross-appointed visiting professor, and speakers from other institutions in Japan, as well as from the National Center for University Entrance Examination, which is also undergoing reform toward similar goals.



The first HAO cohort poses with their completion certificates, joined by Osaka University mascot Dr. Wani (Dr. Crocodile).

new system, and have offered to support students through this new admission model, and not always in the best interest of the student or process. In some of the worst cases, these schools have created fictitious organizations to allow their students to claim a longer list of community activities. Universities in Japan hope to avoid this process of gaming the new system, and have taken a great interest in how organizations like NACAC illustrate a strong value in universities and high schools working together directly, and more closely, rather than through intermediaries.

The changing idea of fairness points toward increasing transparency throughout the process

THOUGH DIFFICULT FOR US INSTITUTIONS TO IMAGINE, CONSIDER WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO ESSENTIALLY CRAFT AN ADMISSION OFFICE FROM SQUARE ONE.

Applicants to Japanese universities opt into a holistic review process before they take the national exam. To allow universities to conduct a review, students fill out a special application, and submit additional materials as requested. While many offers of admission will still rely heavily on test scores, these applicants can show their readiness in additional ways. Already, students have been admitted under this new admission model for the current year at universities that are some of the earliest adopters of this approach.

Another consideration in these reform efforts is cram schools, or *juku*, where students spend much time and sometimes considerable expense to maximize their scores at written examinations. *Juku* have quickly made efforts to learn about the

and between professionals who are advising students. But direct connections between the university and high school are not typical in Japan. Because of this, there is concern that the reformed admission practices present new opportunities for unfair advantage based on insider information, and that the *juku* will continue to play an inappropriately significant role in shaping outcomes. However, the existence of NACAC, admission officers, and professional school-based counselors in the US presents Japan with ways it can drastically rethink what it means to build professional relationships.

There is also much for the US to learn about itself through the process. In many ways, things that have been done in the US over a long period of time start to be taken for granted:

- CHEGA's work and symposia have drawn on best practices from universities in other countries, including Cambridge in the UK and Seoul National in South Korea. The models are different enough to offer several ideas for US practice.
- Because the tendency in the US at the undergraduate level is to admit to an institution instead of to a department, faculty at campuses with larger applicant pools don't tend to be directly involved. Many don't want to be! It may be helpful for US institutions to look for ways to tether at least a small portion of their decision-making to faculty and departments, especially if it is with the goal of understanding success and prediction of potential.
- Examining the review process from the ground up can provide US institutions with a renewed appreciation for the importance of how a holistic process is constructed. We should occasionally examine the approaches used in the US to study their effectiveness and look for ways to improve. Osaka's HAO program represents an invaluable level of openness and collegial group work that should be modeled more often in the US.
- The strong connection NACAC fosters between secondary and postsecondary professionals shapes our work in more ways than many of us notice. That awareness should drive a renewed commitment to advocacy that strengthens secondary-school support for these positions.

While the work in Osaka is getting underway quite successfully, there is still much to do. Between now and 2020, Osaka University and its fellow institutions will learn how effective their initial steps have been through collecting as much data as possible, assessing which factors are truly helping select students in a better way, and exploring strengthened connections directly with high schools. As more students in Japan—and for that matter, international applicants—are selected with holistic approaches, it will change what it means to choose a college or be admitted to one. [↪](#)

Jim Rawlins is the assistant vice president of enrollment management/director of admissions at the University of Oregon and CHEGA visiting faculty, and **Yukiko Ishikura** is a specially appointed lecturer at Osaka University in Japan. Both are NACAC members.

CONFERENCES AND OTHER EVENTS

OCT. 19

WEBINAR

A National Look at the High School Counseling Office: Can It Do More to Help Students Get to College?

NOV. 2

WEBINAR

NACAC *State of College Admission*

To learn more about webinars and register, visit www.nacacnet.org/Webinars.

FEB. 25–26

NACAC ADVOCACY MEETING

Washington, DC

To learn more, visit cqrcengage.com/nacac/advocacyday

JULY 29–AUG. 1

GUIDING THE WAY TO INCLUSION (GWI)

Washington, DC

Call for proposals is open. To learn more, visit www.nacacnet.org/gwi.

SEPT. 27–29

NACAC NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Salt Lake City

Call for proposals is open. To learn more, visit nacacconference.org.

NACAC CALLS TO SERVICE

NOV. 1

2017 IMAGINE GRANT REIMBURSEMENT DEADLINE

DEC. 1

2018 IMAGINE GRANT PROPOSALS DEADLINE

For more details, visit www.nacacnet.org/ImagineGrant.

DEC. 1

NATIONAL COMMITTEES CALL FOR CANDIDATES

JAN. 1

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CALL FOR CANDIDATES

For more details, visit www.nacacnet.org/about/Governance.

MARCH 15

2018 RISING STAR AWARD CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

APRIL 15

AWARD NOMINATIONS DEADLINE

JUNE 15

RISING STAR AWARD NOMINATIONS DEADLINE

For more details, visit www.nacacnet.org/Awards.

NATIONAL COLLEGE FAIR SPRING SCHEDULE

PITTSBURGH

Thursday, Feb. 8

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 9

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

MIAMI

Sunday, Feb. 25

12 p.m. – 4 p.m.

SYRACUSE

Thursday, March 15

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

5 p.m. – 8 p.m.

UPSTATE SOUTH CAROLINA

Thursday, March 15

5 p.m. – 8 p.m.

TAMPA

Sunday, March 18

12 p.m. – 3 p.m.

CHARLOTTE

Sunday, March 18

12 p.m. – 4 p.m.

ROCHESTER

Sunday, March 18

1 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Monday, March 19

9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

RALEIGH

Tuesday, March 20

4:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

BUFFALO

Wednesday, March 21
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
6 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Thursday, March 22
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

ATLANTA

Sunday, March 25
12:30 p.m. – 4 p.m.

WEST MICHIGAN

Tuesday, March 27
8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

METRO DETROIT

Wednesday, March 28
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.
Thursday, March 29
8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

HARTFORD

Wednesday, March 28
9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Thursday, March 29
9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

SPRINGFIELD

Monday, April 9
9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

DALLAS FORT WORTH

Monday, April 9
5 p.m. – 8 p.m.

PROVIDENCE

Tuesday, April 10
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

AUSTIN

Tuesday, April 10
5:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Tuesday, April 10
9:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Wednesday, April 11
9:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

HOUSTON

Thursday, April 12
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

MEMPHIS

Thursday, April 12
9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

BOSTON

Thursday, April 12
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
6 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Friday, April 13
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Friday, April 13
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

LAS VEGAS

Monday, April 16
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

VENTURA/TRI COUNTY

Tuesday, April 17
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

SAN DIEGO

Thursday, April 19
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
6 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

COLUMBUS

Saturday, April 21
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

NEW YORK

Sunday, April 22
11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

ORANGE COUNTY

Sunday, April 22
1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

CLEVELAND

Sunday, April 22
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

HONOLULU

Tuesday, April 24
8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
5 p.m. – 8 p.m.

INLAND EMPIRE

Tuesday, April 24
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

NEW JERSEY

Wednesday, April 25
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
5 p.m. – 8 p.m.

LOS ANGELES

Thursday, April 26
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
6 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

SAN FRANCISCO

Saturday, April 28
1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

VANCOUVER

Sunday, April 29
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

NASHVILLE

Sunday, May 6
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

For more information, visit
www.nacacfairs.org



By Sonali Hutchison

TRANSITIONS

“Will they be nice to me?”

It’s a simple enough question, but different versions of it hit me every spring, usually a few weeks after students receive their college acceptances and are getting closer to deciding among their choices. To put their question in context, I am a counselor working abroad in Asia, and my students are part of the increasing wave of international students who dream of studying in the United States.

Most are fairly well-traveled and have been to the US before, but transitions are tough, especially for young adults leaving the comfort zone of their families and close-knit international school communities to move to university overseas. Even some of my more confident seniors, eager to make friends outside of their international bubble, wonder if their American peers will be nice to them and find themselves nervous about how they will fit in as first-year college students and as international students.


I can empathize. Four weeks into a new school year, settling into my office—in a new country—I find myself asking a middle-aged version of what my students repeatedly ask: Will I fit in with my new colleagues? Will I settle into my new school community and home? Will I make friends? The answer is usually yes,

of course, but I have come to realize that it takes time and that I have to ease myself into my new life.

Sometimes it’s hard to follow the same advice we share with our students. When they come to me those last few weeks of the school year, just about to graduate, I remind them to take part in all the new orientation activities at college; to be open to meeting people from different backgrounds; and to try out new clubs to extend their network of potential friendships. However, after a long work day at my own new school, I find myself rushing to head home and connect online with family or friends from my last home, not quite ready to move forward in my new community. I’m avoiding the transition rather than facing it head on and embracing all the good things that come from change.

But this most recent transition, moving to China, has highlighted all the exciting possibilities of new experiences. When I moved to the Philippines in 2004 and started teaching at an international school there, an early counseling mentor recommend joining Overseas ACAC (now International ACAC) even though I was not yet a counselor. It was the best \$50 I ever spent.

It brought me directly into a community of friends, on both sides of the admission desk, who would travel with me, from Manila to Dhaka and now to Shanghai. It opened the door to invaluable professional development that has helped to ease the transition as I changed careers and moved into my work as a college counselor advising international students. It led me to people—wonderful, supportive, and always willing to listen—who were just so nice to me, even as I bombarded them with a laundry list of questions, both professional and personal, whether related to college admission or simply where to find the best pizza in my new neighborhood.

Transitions are not easy, but they are opportunities: chances to meet people from whom we can learn so much when we are willing to let them into our lives. This is what I need to remember to tell my students the next time they ask me if their future college classmates will be nice to them. I can offer no guarantees, but I remain hopeful that they will be fortunate, just as I have been, in forging strong international friendships in the years ahead. 

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