

Recruitment Practices Change, but Issues Remain the Same

Response to “Student Recruitment Practices: A Survey Yields Some Surprises” on page 34

What I found most surprising about Richard Haines’ survey on 1974 recruitment practices was that the major issues are still relevant. His main points about recruitment, college and counselor interaction, and the need for better information still resonate as our profession consistently calls for clarity and transparency in the college admission process.

Contact and communication between colleges and students was Haines’ top issue; that is still a priority today. The article discussed the protocol of high school visits and the importance of making appointments with the counselor—but only one, as counselors expressed rank disapproval when a second visit was scheduled.

Today, economic and staffing pressures have reduced the number of in-person college visits. How colleges market themselves to students evolves and morphs daily. The process is more immediate and interactive. Colleges have expanded the use of marketing techniques in the age of Google, Facebook and Twitter.

While the methodology has changed, the need for information remains constant. Students go online in live chat rooms, speak with colleges and professors and students through streaming video, and take virtual campus tours. Students email and text admission counselors and expect an answer in a day. They do not have to wait until the college representative comes to the campus, nor do they have to get permission from their physics teacher to miss class for that appointment. The flow of information is no longer restricted to the school. It’s more democratic.



To a greater degree, tech-savvy teenagers direct the flow of information. But even in our media culture, I often wonder how deeply the surface of things gets penetrated and if students will discover the information that should matter to them.

Today, colleges will use “demonstrated interest” to determine how serious the student might be in selecting a campus. The degree of commitment has intensified and the frenzy is palpable. It’s a problem when students feel they have to apply to 14 colleges to gain access to one.

Interaction is still a critical component. There is still a great need to have the college admission process personalized for the student; indeed, that is the only approach that will lead to the best fit between student and institution. What we know about human psychology tells us that we can’t make informed decisions based on information alone. Students need direction, guidance and emotional support as they make the life-changing decision about college, and

that support needs to come from professionals on both sides of the process.

Financial aid as a recruitment tool was a big point of discussion in 1974. One has to think back on the heated discussions in the NACAC Assembly about need-blind admission to realize the timeliness of this topic. Haines talks about “blowing your financial aid budget” on “merit money.” In the survey, college and high school counselors gave high rankings for the need for clearer admission and financial aid information, but it made no mention of the responsibility of colleges for getting that information to the students who need it the most.

There are still large numbers of first-generation students who don’t know how to navigate the system. Colleges need to reach more of the underserved population, as the deficit in college-going is most stark among racial minorities and the poor. The current use of technology in the process may leave out those students.

I believe that the changing demographics will dictate the institutional priorities. As our country becomes more diverse, both domestically and internationally, we need the guidance of our professional ethics because that what elevates and distinguishes our profession.

With the many references to an “admission takeover” company, the use of outreach, marketing and creative use of financial aid one can begin to see the seeds of today’s enrollment management concept. Working under the pressure of better results with shrinking resources as illustrated by Haines’ “F. Stanley Goettum” has not changed.

Affiliate Achiever

Lisa Meyer

Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid

Lewis & Clark College, Portland, OR

Pacific Northwest ACAC

Any advice for newbies?

There are three pieces of advice I would give to people who are new to the profession:

Listen, look for a mentor, and bring joy to your work. You were hired for your position because someone felt you would be the right person to do it. That doesn't mean you already know everything there is to know about this field. Watch how people who have held these positions for years are doing their work.

Keep yourself open to learning new ways and to disproving assumptions you may have had. I continue to learn from my colleagues, even after more than two decades in the field.

Finding a mentor can be the key to making this job into a career. Mentors can help you learn about how to do your work, but they are also great at advocating for you, providing perspective during difficult times and giving advice as you consider career moves. It is especially helpful to have a mentor who works for another institution, as they won't have conflicted loyalties. Finally, I encourage new employees (as well as old) to recognize that finding the right job is not what will bring you joy. Instead, if you bring joy to what you are doing, you will find satisfaction in your work. When I talk with anxious prospective students I often let them know that they don't need to worry about finding that one perfect college. There are many very good colleges out there, and they will have a positive experience if they get involved and engaged. Work is the same. If you bring curiosity and interest to your job, you will find yourself learning and appreciating what you do.

The recruitment questions of "Does it work?" and "Does it matter?" posed 37 years ago still resound, as recruitment professionals constantly strive to meet institutional expectations and priorities while performing a meaningful service to students and families.

These constant pressures, and the need to allow our ethics to guide our actions, have led to the complete overhaul of our Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP). While the SPGP has dramatically changed, the need for ethics has not. The spirited discussions between high schools and colleges are a practice that remains as compelling and energizing in 1974 as it does in 2012. Indeed, the nature of that discussion defines NACAC's distinction as the network of professionals to best serve students and families.



ESTHER HUGO holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership from UCLA and a master's degree in Counseling from Loyola Marymount University (CA). She is a member of the Executive Board of Western ACAC, where she serves as the inter-association committee chair. She also served on the NACAC executive board as multicultural coordinator. A former College Board Trustee, she has served as the director of the College Board Counselor Training Grant.



Printed in *The Journal of the Association of College Admissions Counselors*
Volume 17, Number 3, January 1973