The ADMISSIONIST
by LIAISON
Winter 2020

DRIVING THE NEXT ACTION

A Renewed Commitment to Building on Success

As we begin a new year, it is important to reflect on the past and to focus anew on the future so that we can take our next action, growing, thriving and making the most of the opportunities that await us.

And as the articles in this issue of *The Admissionist* make clear, these opportunities are abundant. Why? Because higher ed is at a turning point. It is now imperative that students acquire not just knowledge, but also the practical skills that employers will expect new hires to possess. Today's students also have different expectations about the value of a college education and the role it can play in their lives. At the same time, admissions officers are under increasing pressure to demonstrate that their processes for admitting students remain untainted by bias or inequity.

We cover these important topics — and more — in the pages of this magazine. For example, the article on pages 8 and 9 ("Knowledge vs. Job Prep: Is Your Program Teaching Students What Their Future Employers Will Expect Them to Know?") addresses the fact that just 33% of executives and 39% of hiring managers believe that recent graduates are "very well prepared to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings." On pages 22 and 23, "Confuse Them at Your Own Risk: How Gen Z Students Differ from Millennials" highlights some of the compelling differences that distinguish members of the two demographic groups now filling most of the seats on traditional campuses. (Did you know that 40% of Millennials think they can have a successful career without going to college, while only 25% of Generation Z feels the same way?)

I look forward to continuing these important conversations with you at the 2020 Liaison User Conference, which will take place July 23-24 in Boston. If you have attended a past Liaison User Conference, you already know what a great event it is for learning and networking with your higher ed peers. Registration is now open; you can learn more at events.liaisonedu.com. I encourage you to consider sharing your expertise by hosting a speaking session while you are at the Conference. Information on how to submit your idea is available on the registration page, along with tips on how to draft a winning session proposal.

Best,

G. Haddad

George Haddad
Founder and CEO

LIAISON

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H1GHER ED BY THE NUMB3RS

Just as economists and business leaders assess different indicators of future performance potential to inform their short- and long-term planning strategies, higher education institutions also need to consider the latest data in order to better plan their future initiatives. In this edition of Higher Ed by the Numbers, we're taking a look at recent trends that may foreshadow the opportunities and challenges awaiting colleges and universities in the years ahead.

TUITION REVENUE GROWTH IS EXPECTED TO SLOW IN 2020

Moody's Investors Service is predicting that tuition revenue will increase modestly at public and private colleges in 2020, albeit at a slower rate than in 2019. Median net tuition revenue is expected to increase by **1%** at public universities and **2.3%** at private colleges next year, down from **1.5%** and **2.8%**, respectively. Part of the reason is relatively flat enrollment growth, which is attributed to factors including fewer international students and a strong economy that's luring Americans into the workforce instead of college. The outlook is somewhat brighter for large, public schools "due to better brand recognition that allows them to draw nonresident students and offer a wider variety of programs."

Source: Education Drive

FULL-TIME MBA PROGRAMS MOVE CLOSER TO GENDER PARITY

Despite the overall decline in the number of applications to MBA programs in recent years, there is some good news to report: The number of women enrolled is on the upswing, both in the United States and internationally. Women now account for **39%** of the full-time MBA student population in U.S. programs and **36%** in non-U.S. schools. According to the Forté Foundation, which represents 54 "top" MBA programs in the United States, Europe and Canada, the overall share of women in the classroom has grown to **38.5%** from **37.7%** last year. Five years ago, the total was **36.2%**.

Source: Poets & Quants

WILL THOSE WHO DROPPED OUT OF COLLEGE RETURN?

According to a report by the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), tens of millions of Americans — a number equal to approximately **14%** of the nation's population — attended college but dropped out before earning a degree. Although it is possible for students to re-enroll, it is fairly uncommon. It is even more uncommon for students to earn a degree after dropping out and then returning from a hiatus. In 2014, there were approximately **29** million people in the country who had previously attended college and left without earning a degree — more than the total number of all students who were enrolled in college that same year. The NSC tracked those students who had dropped out by 2014 and found that only **3.8** million, or **13%**, subsequently re-enrolled in a college or university within the following five years. Of those, only half are still in school today or have earned a degree. Since college dropouts are "much closer to high school graduates on the socioeconomic ladder than to those with a bachelor's degree," they are less likely to pay back their student loans. Online college classes may be the answer for students who have dropped out of college and still want to earn a degree because the flexibility of classes allows them to balance work and family obligations.

Source: Forbes

COLLEGE PRESIDENTS SHARPEN FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

In a recent survey of more than **400** college presidents, **80%** said mental health has become a focal point on their campuses over the past three years, and **72%** said they have reallocated additional funding to mental health programs. By one estimate, the use of counseling services by students rose about **35%** from the fall of 2009 to the spring of 2015. However, many counseling centers can't handle the increased demand. The most common mental health issues among students were depression, anxiety, stress and family and academic issues. This increase in demand has colleges taking steps toward teaching students how to cope and "de-stress through yoga and meditation and [how] to identify burgeoning mental health concerns in themselves and their peers."

Source: NACAC

HOW DO WE MAKE SENSE OF DECREASED COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT?

A recent research study from the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) found that many postsecondary institutions are facing difficulties in recruiting students. SREB found that from 2012-2017, there was an **11%** drop in two-year college enrollment nationwide while four-year college enrollment remained "flat." Contributing factors to this decline include an improving economy with many "opting to go straight into the workforce rather than college since they can get a job easier." However, those with an associate's degree earn "**18%** more in wages than those with a high school credential while those with a bachelor's degree earn **71%** more."

Source: Diverse Education

POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS DOUBLE THEIR NUMBER OF UNIQUE CREDENTIALS

There are now more than **738,000** unique credentials offered at U.S. schools, including "traditional degrees as well as badges, certificates, boot camps and other short-term credential types." This number has doubled from 2018 according to Credential Engine, a nonprofit that tracks the credential marketplace. Although not much is known about their impact regarding "social mobility or whether they're effective in closing skills gaps," early research suggests "short-term programs can boost earnings and help students land a job." As part of their efforts to embed or tie in short-term programs with traditional course offerings, some colleges and universities are launching "shared credentials" that are recognized by employers so students are better prepared for the workplace.

Source: Education Dive

EMBA PROGRAM APPLICATIONS SPIKE

Applications for executive MBA programs have been flourishing, according to findings from the Executive MBA Council's annual member survey. According to the survey, applications to EMBA programs have increased by **31.6%** since 2015. The survey also found that the percentage of female EMBA students has risen from **27.6%** to **31.2%** since 2015, further underscoring the growth in demand for EMBA programs. The survey also found fewer companies were supporting their employees, with "**53%** of students [funding] their own education, compared to **41%** in 2015."

Source: Poets & Quants

For links to full articles, check out our weekly *Highlights from Higher Ed* blog series at liaisonedu.com/blog

The Two-Minute Talk That Will Change How You Think About Admissions

ONE

For college and university admissions teams across the country, numbers are down and enrollment targets are being missed. There's more competition than ever, yet applicant pools are shrinking.

The facts are alarming:

- Only 38% of colleges meet enrollment goals by the traditional target date of May 1, according to the Inside Higher Ed-Gallup 2018 Survey of College and Admissions Directors.
- From 2017 to 2018, there was a 7% decrease in applications for MBA programs, according to the Graduate Management Admissions Council.
- Nationwide, there was a 4% decline in the number of international applications for Fall 2018 enrollment, according to the Council of Graduate Schools.

And it only makes matters worse if your office still relies on an outdated, decentralized, manual admissions process.

But there is a better way. Liaison's Centralized Application Service — or CAS™ — is an efficient cloud-based platform available at no cost to your institution that dramatically expands marketplace presence and grows applicant pools for thousands of programs across the nation.

TWO

A smarter way to grow

"A CAS is a national marketplace for schools that offer programs in a particular profession. For example, nursing schools use NursingCAS™ and engineering programs use EngineeringCAS™," says Mike Margitich, Liaison's vice president of CAS products. "A CAS provides a source of applicants from a pool that's bigger than you might get otherwise, and you can use it to complement the systems you already have on campus for taking in and processing your applicants."

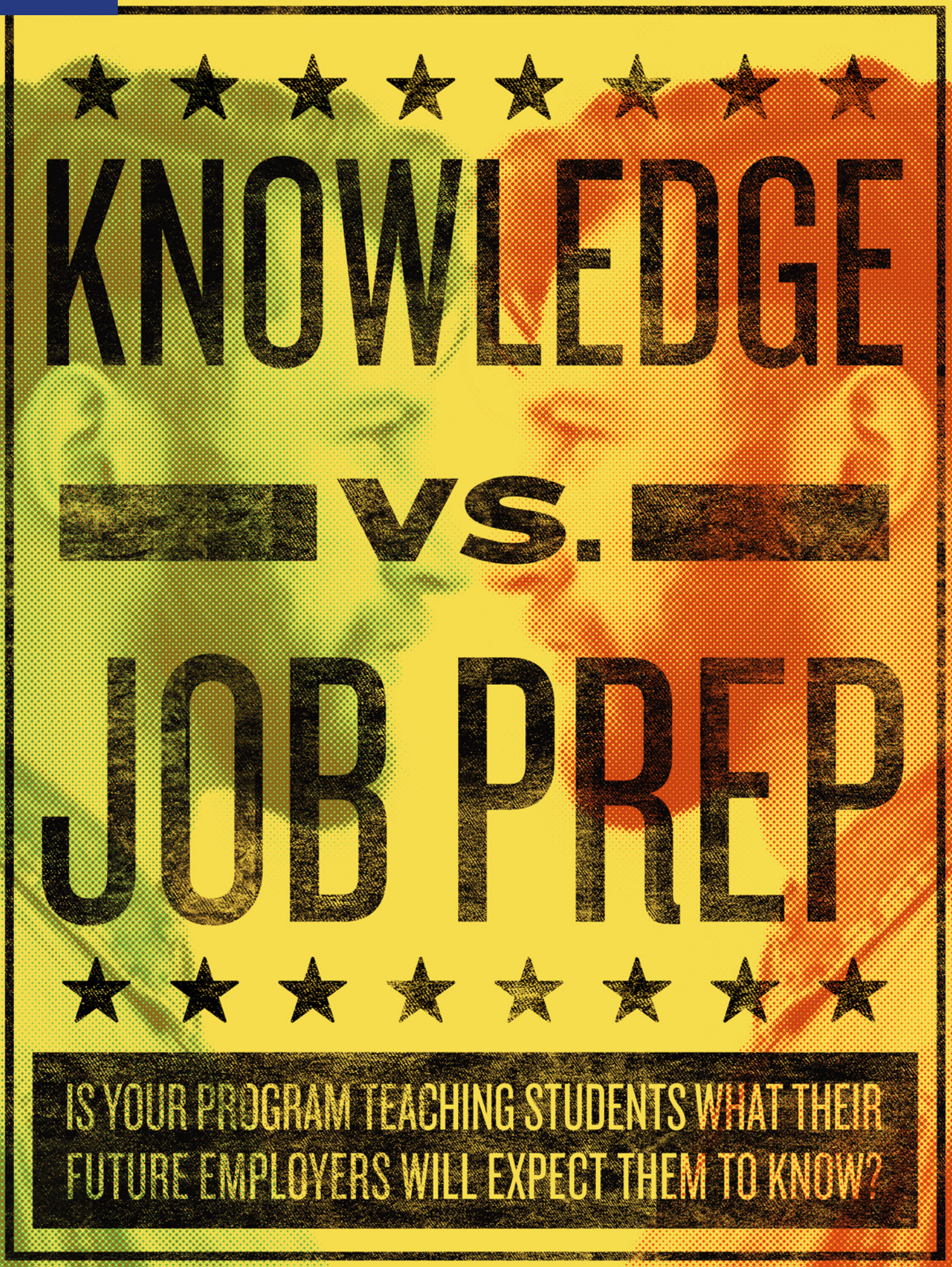
"CAS has enhanced visibility and interest in our program," says Carsi Hughes, Ph.D., director of Dominican University's postbaccalaureate premedical program. "The numbers are unbelievable."

On top of that, CAS provides students with the modern application experience that they expect — a single, mobile-friendly portal from which they can apply to multiple programs.

For your staff, CAS means faster application packaging to make your programs more competitive. Liaison's Boston-based services team processes over two and a half million applications per year, handling the labor-intensive transcript and document scanning as well as data entry and coursework verification when required.

For your administrators, CAS means powerful analytics. One central hub highlights critical KPIs (key performance indicators) across your institution — with clear, actionable data that you can leverage to achieve immediate goals and effect long-term change.

To learn more about how joining such a vast network instantly expands your reach, watch "What Is a CAS?" at liaisonedu.com/CAS. You may never think about admissions the same way again. ■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JOB PREP
IS YOUR PROGRAM TEACHING STUDENTS WHAT THEIR FUTURE EMPLOYERS WILL EXPECT THEM TO KNOW?

According to a report released by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2019, 85% of freshman said that being able to get a better job was a "very important" factor in their decision to attend college. That outranked all other considerations, including gaining a general education, becoming a more cultured person, learning more about personal interests and being able to make more money.[1]

That may explain why most provosts say they feel "pressure" from presidents, board members and donors to focus on career-oriented programs.[2]

What educational outcomes do employers want?

Unfortunately, not everyone is confident that today's graduates are well prepared for the workforce they're preparing to enter. A 2018 survey of employers noted that just 33% of executives and 39% of hiring managers believe that recent graduates are "very well prepared to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings."[3]

According to the same report, the "learning priorities" most valued by executives and hiring managers (respectively) are:

- **Ability to effectively communicate orally (80%, 90%)**
- **Critical thinking/analytical reasoning (78%, 84%)**
- **Ethical judgement and decision-making (77%, 87%)**
- **Ability to work effectively in teams (77%, 87%)**
- **Ability to work independently (77%, 85%)**
- **Self-motivation/initiative (76%, 85%)**
- **Ability to communicate effectively in writing (76%, 78%)**
- **Ability to apply knowledge/skills to real-world settings (76%, 87%)**

How wide is the gap between employer expectations and reality? Consider how few executives believe that recent college graduates are well prepared in the three most important areas listed above: Only 40% think they communicate effectively orally; just 34% feel they're able to think critically and reason analytically; and 34% are confident in their capacity for ethical judgement and decision-making.

Recognizing the obstacles

Why are colleges and universities producing graduates who struggle to meet the expectations of employers? There is no single "correct" answer to that question, but credible theories abound.

Some pundits rely on the old adage that traditional higher ed institutions are simply slow to change. They also suggest that because colleges and universities aren't necessarily evaluated on the career outcomes of their graduates, they have little motivation to make curriculum changes that specifically address the demands of employers.

Yet those sound more like excuses than credible explanations. After all, programs that fail to change with the times are at significant risk of falling behind and, ultimately, failing.

The marketplace that prepares Americans for the workforce today includes players and attitudes that were barely even blips on the radar of higher ed leaders just a few short years ago. For example, skill-specific "bootcamps" and on-demand, online learning venues now allow workers to obtain valuable new abilities without ever setting foot on a college campus. Their rise — and their perceived value by employers — has even spawned the term "new collar," which emphasizes the importance of the skills workers possess rather the traditional educational credentials they've earned.

Identifying the opportunities

So how can educators and admissions professionals realign their outlooks and strategies to ensure that students and their future employers alike will be satisfied with the education provided by American colleges and universities?

One common suggestion is that program leaders and campus career counselors should attempt to advance the goals of all stakeholders by helping students secure meaningful workplace experience that's directly relevant to their career goals. Students may also be able to improve their career prospects before graduation by engaging in activities that help develop the "soft skills" so many employers want them to possess. That could be achieved, for example, by signing up for writing-intensive classes and participating in team-based projects or elective service learning initiatives.

But it's also crucial to remember you can't help students, employers and your institution achieve shared goals if you don't remove barriers to learning. And that starts with the application process. Without offering the type of intuitive, responsive and personalized processes and responses today's applicants expect, you run the risk of losing best-fit students before they even get a chance to know you. ■

[1] Cooperative Institutional Research Program and the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2017.

[2] InsideHigherEd.com.

[3] American Association of Colleges and Universities, Selected Findings from Online Surveys of Business Executives and Hiring Managers.

FROM FITS & STARTS TO A ONE-STOP SHOP:

Transforming TAMU's Engineering Admissions

In the previous era of admissions at Texas A&M University's (TAMU) College of Engineering, the application process was consumed by fits and starts.

First, the College of Engineering would need to wait until initial application data from the ApplyTexas online platform was translated for TAMU's own admissions office. Then, the data was uploaded to the TAMU system, after which point each applicant received a student ID number. This multi-step process meant delays ranging from a few days to a full week before applicants would receive any kind of communication from TAMU's admissions office — ultimately causing the ripple effect of delays in TAMU's decision-making times on each applicant.

"One of the challenges we faced was that our graduate engineering advisors in each department did not have very much hands-on involvement regarding the pre-decision process in admissions. They had to wait to hear from the admissions office that all the applicant documents were received before they could ever make a decision or reach out to the applicant," says Tandilyn Morrel, Tandilyn Morrel, director of Graduate Programs for TAMU's College of Engineering.

An additional problem, Tandilyn Morrel explains, related to "those prospective students who were interested but may not have completed an application."

"We were not able to access data from in-process applicants in order to reach out to recruit them or communicate with them. Applicants would have to fully apply and then we had to wait for all the application data to be received and uploaded in our system before we could actually reach out," she says, adding that TAMU was seeking a "one-stop-shop where we could have everything uploaded in one place."

TAMU found its **one-stop-shop** through **Liaison's EngineeringCAS™**, which brings admissions offices an **improved way to recruit, admit and enroll** best-fit engineering students while **saving money and better allocating staff resources each admissions cycle.**

EngineeringCAS is one of 40 application services that service a particular education discipline and was launched in partnership with (ASEE), the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. The cloud-based student admissions solution has helped over 31,000 programs on more than 1,000 campuses optimize their application and enrollment processes. All **Centralized Application Services (CASs™)** are available at **no cost to participating programs.**

As TAMU discovered during its first year using the platform, EngineeringCAS benefits all admissions stakeholders.

For applicants, it offers a single portal which streamlines their process for researching and applying to multiple programs of interest, offers a modern application experience that guides them through the process and provides 24/7 access to real-time application status updates.

For programs and institutions, EngineeringCAS drives awareness of engineering programs through a streamlined application process and communication tools that enable targeted, personalized communications to those interested in a program; decreases decision-making times by providing a processing team to scan transcripts and package application components as an extension of an admissions staff; and provides insight into enrollment trends and performance on a campus through robust analytics and reporting tools.

"EngineeringCAS gave us one central location for applicants to do everything — a one-stop shop," says Tandilyn Morrel. "It helped us close the gap in the previous delay between students applying and getting any response from our admissions office. That really changed our pre-decision process. Our graduate advisors now have greater access to admissions documents pre-decision, and they're able to play a more active role rather than waiting on the admissions office to gather this information. They are also now able to reach out to in-progress applicants. This has been a significant benefit to our advisors."

Catherine Roueche-Herdman, TAMU's associate director of Admissions, says **EngineeringCAS has given the University** a newfound **"opportunity for national exposure."**

"With ApplyTexas, no one is going to be applying unless they're specifically interested in the schools that the platform serves. And ApplyTexas only works with Texas-based schools, so the increased exposure offered by Liaison was attractive," she says.

EngineeringCAS also offers a "branding opportunity" which was previously unavailable to TAMU, notes Tandilyn Morrel.

"We're now able to use our own university logos and images in the application process, not only for the College but for each individual department," she says. "So when each prospective applicant applies, they're able to get more details for every department. It looks like they're applying to Texas A&M University, instead of just completing a generic application."

Although TAMU is still awaiting specific data points on application volume and other key metrics from its first admissions cycle with EngineeringCAS, Catherine Roueche-Herdman reports that the admissions staff "didn't work much overtime this season" after previously enduring as many as 550 overtime hours during the prior season.

"It was a nice relief," she says. "We used to come in over the winter break and spring break, arriving at 7 a.m. and leaving the office at 7 p.m. on some days. The shift to EngineeringCAS really did help free up more resources in the admissions office."

Now equipped with EngineeringCAS, TAMU has set ambitious admissions goals moving forward — such as simultaneously boosting its bases of domestic and international students as part of a broader commitment to cultivating diversity. In Tandilyn Morrel's estimation, Liaison's commitment to high-level customer service has set the stage for achieving that big-picture vision. ■

CAS™ ON CAMPUS:

How Centralized Application Service Integration Works at Emory University

EMORY UNIVERSITY

What's it like to use a Centralized Application Service (CAS™) with your existing on-campus systems? Angel Hurston, business analyst II, recently shared her experience at the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health.

"The Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University implemented the SOPHAS™ (Schools of Public Health Application Service) application review process during its first cycle in 2006," Hurston says, using the acronym for the CAS for schools and programs of public health. "That included integration with PeopleSoft Student Administration."

"We used our existing PeopleSoft application staging tables and load process to map the SOPHAS fields to corresponding PeopleSoft fields. This load included all application data — bio/demo, SSN, test scores, schools attended, employers, etc."

Hurston explains that SOPHAS field values were then mapped and converted to the PeopleSoft field values using a translate table. At that time, the application review process was completed using a paper application file. The School implemented OnBase for online application review in 2013, which involved importing the SOPHAS full application PDF into OnBase. A second import of the full application PDF was used to parse the PDF into specific application materials (references, personal statements, resumes, etc.).

In 2016, the School implemented Slate, which included imports for all SOPHAS application data, the full application PDF and most of the individual application materials.

"The application data is exported from WebAdMIT each week and imported into Slate," she says. "Then, the application data is exported from Slate and imported into PeopleSoft which is Emory's system of record. After the application data is loaded into PeopleSoft, we export the unique PeopleSoft ID/application number and import it back into Slate using the SOPHAS ID. This allows us to import decisions from Slate to PeopleSoft.

"Overall, we have had a great experience with all three of our implementations with SOPHAS application data — PeopleSoft, OnBase and Slate. Having the Custom Export Layout files made it easy for us to determine which fields required translate values.

"With the Slate implementation, we were able to add fields to capture SOPHAS/organization-specific data and include PeopleSoft values in the export file that would translate to the PeopleSoft values. We collect additional data that is specific to Emory; having the **custom fields** has allowed us to collect the data with the application, **eliminating the need to follow up with applicants** later in the application process." ■

Mark Your Calendar for Intro to WebAdMIT™: Unlock the Tools to Manage Your Applications

We've all been there: Someone in your office leaves, and you're responsible for training their replacement. Or, perhaps you're the new person on the job and need to quickly learn new software and processes.

Liaison Academy's new virtual course, **Intro to WebAdMIT™: Unlock the Tools to Manage Your Applications**, is designed specifically for beginners using WebAdMIT. This crash course on WebAdMIT covers all the core functionality and gives you, or a new employee, the tools needed to get up and running with the software.

By the end of the course, you'll be able to:

- Use Local Statuses to create your admissions review process workflow.
- Find specific groups of applicants using List Manager.
- Customize GPAs specific to your prerequisite course requirements.
- Correspond with applicants using emails.
- Export data into your Student Information System (SIS).
- Improve your efficiency using other core functionality.

Virtual courses are an easy way to learn WebAdMIT. Over the course of a month, you'll participate in four 1.5 hour-long sessions from the comfort of your office or home. Each session is led by a trained WebAdMIT expert who leads you through hands-on activities, answers your questions and helps you engage with other WebAdMIT users through an online platform.

Learn more and register at academy.liaisonedu.com

FROM A NIGHTMARE TO A DREAM

How Saint Mary's University of Minnesota found a better way to track practicum hours

Before Saint Mary's University of Minnesota began using Time2Track™, students in their Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) Graduate Program had to manually track their hours, which meant extra work for faculty and staff, as well as a hassle for students. "We literally had to go through paper files, pull practicum logs and make sure individual evaluations were in," said Sara Heinzen, associate professor and clinical director for the program. "There was a lot of time and effort involved with the process."

According to Kate Bowman, MFT Program Coordinator, Saint Mary's current MFT students "don't realize how difficult it is" to log practicum hours on paper since they've always had the convenience of using Time2Track instead.

Time2Track is an online solution for clinical training that includes hour tracking, reports, evaluations, approvals and analytics. The Saint Mary's program, which recently started its second year using Time2Track, is nationally accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). When COAMFTE changed its MFT practicum standards in 2014, Heinzen knew it was time to modernize and adapt the tracking process.

"We knew this was a good opportunity for us to overhaul all of our paperwork and how we were tracking hours for our students," she said, adding that the program wanted an eco-friendly solution. "We were looking for something that saved trees and saved time. Because of the number of students we had and the amount of paper we were dealing with, a lot of their forms — and the valuable data collected on them — were a challenge to even find, let alone compile and review. We had been searching for an online system for quite a while."

The MFT program was aware of Time2Track through the Psy.D. program at Saint Mary's, which was already using the service. But due to the differences in tracking requirements for MFT and Psy.D. practicum hours, the MFT program needed a tailor-made system — and that is where Time2Track's forms and evaluations option entered the picture.

An individualized, one-stop platform

Using Time2Track, the MFT program has created customized user guides for Saint Mary's students, encompassing the substantial level of detail and the diversity of options they need when tracking their hours.

"All of our students now have an **individualized guide** so that they're inputting their hours correctly. We're dealing with **a lot fewer errors,**" Heinzen said. "We're one of the first programs to use the forms and evaluations options with Time2Track, and that was something very important to us. We wanted to have everything in one place for students."

Bowman said the implementation of Time2Track came at a particularly auspicious time for Saint Mary's due to COAMFTE's new requirements. For instance, the MFT program never had to track 50 live supervision hours when it was using a manual system.

Time2Track also empowered the graduate program with new reporting capabilities.

"For the activity types that we count as live supervision, I can select those activity types and then see a breakdown of each student, how far along they are and how many hours they have," said Bowman. "It's really helpful since we have to note that per our interpretation of COAMFTE education standards."

Nipping crises in the bud

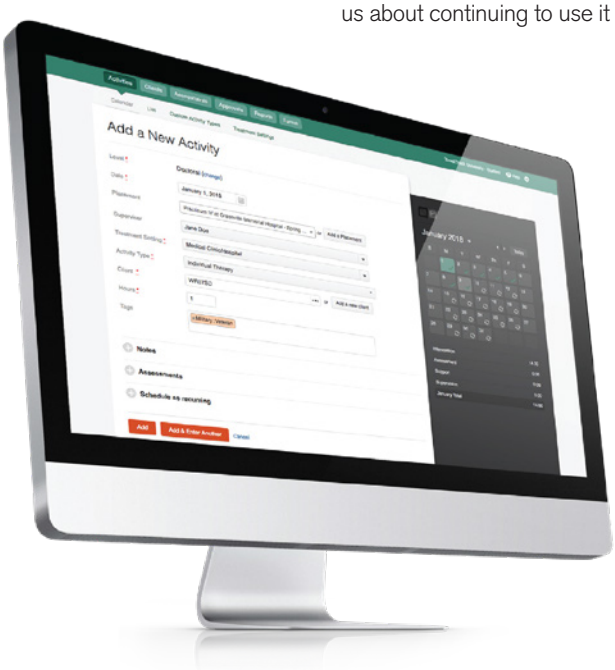
By providing Saint Mary's with up-to-date information on students' progress towards fulfilling their practicum hours, as well as a breakdown of the types of hours they are completing, Time2Track enables the MFT program to proactively address potential problems.

Bowman explained, "If we have students who aren't getting as many relational hours as they need, that's something we'll notice and talk about with their practicum site. We can suggest to the student that they try a different site while they still have time to do so."

"Previously, we wouldn't see students' hours until they were complete and ready to be approved," noted Heinzen. "The only time I knew if a student was struggling at their site was if they made an appointment with me to talk about that, and many times they didn't. **Time2Track gives us a bird's eye view,** allowing us to go in and look at, per practicum class section, how everyone's doing and how the numbers are breaking down. It gives us a **more preventive timeline** to work with students and **take any measures before it's too late.**"

Time2Track has made a longer-term impact on students who need to track their hours after they complete their MFT degree, such as those alumni on licensure track.

"We wanted our graduates to have that as an option," Heinzen said. "Many students currently using Time2Track have talked to us about continuing to use it post-degree." ■



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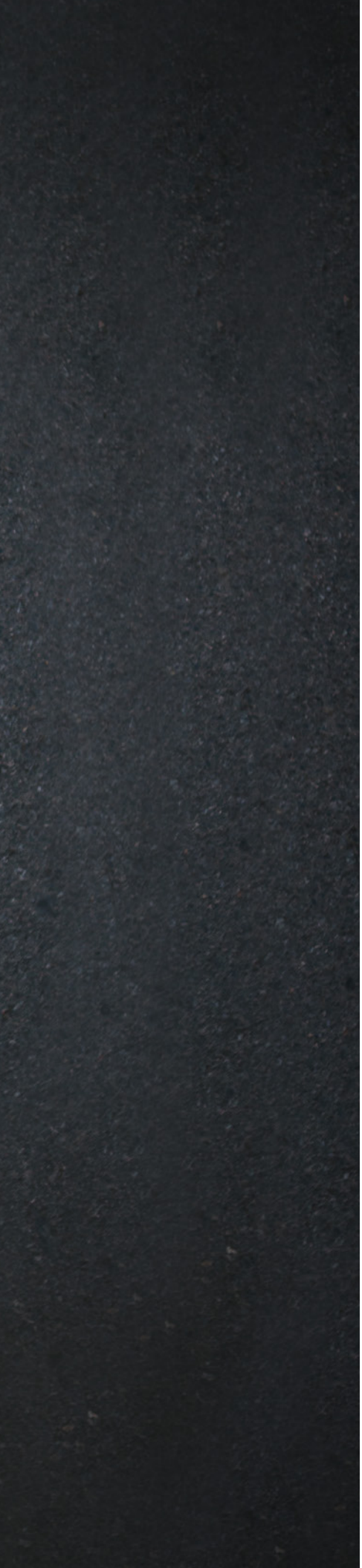

How to Address the Next Decade's Three Biggest Admissions Challenges

In light of decreased or stagnant budgets, inefficient operational processes and growing competition from programs and schools in other countries, it's not surprising that the 2019 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College and University Admissions Officials recently revealed that most admissions leaders today are "very concerned" about filling their classes.

While every college and university faces a unique array of challenges that require customized solutions, admissions and program leaders from institutions across the country have successfully implemented a variety of innovative strategies and technology to help achieve some of their institution's most critical short- and long-term goals.

CHALLENGE #1
Doing more with less

University of the Pacific, for example, has been using Liaison's Centralized Application Service (CAS™) in multiple programs for more than 20 years. While each version of a CAS is designed to meet the needs of a specific type of program or institution, they all have one thing in common: They provide applicants and admissions offices with an easy-to-use, cloud-based application technology that reduces paperwork, simplifies workflows and improves communications between students and schools.

"We have launched several new programs in just a few years, but we weren't given additional staffing resources," says Olivia Nash, assistant dean for enrollment and student services at University of the Pacific. "Of course, it's very difficult to manage multiple workflows and multiple systems. By going to an all-CAS model, we now have just one review tool. That saved us a lot of time and, honestly, a lot of overtime. It also cut down on our troubleshooting costs."

St. Cloud State University, on the other hand, is a relative newcomer to the world of Liaison's CAS. It recently joined **GradCAS™**, a single application portal that gives admissions offices an improved way to recruit, admit and **enroll best-fit students while saving money** and headcount each admissions cycle.

"We've already seen **a significant increase in applications** in a very short period of time," says Sean Pitzer, associate director of graduate admissions at St. Cloud State. "In addition, some of our programs noticed very quickly that they began receiving a lot of applicants from students who were not already on their radar. Some of the students who found us would not have known about our programs before we joined GradCAS."

CAS also made a meaningful difference at Weill Cornell Medicine, according to Matt Cipriano, associate director of Enrollment and Education Operations.

"Our previous process took literally weeks on end, with people working 80 hours a week to prepare applications for review. With **CAS**, we **didn't have to spend that time** processing applications to get everything where it needed to be or sending requests for letters of recommendation out — all those things were handled by the software itself or by Liaison's services team."

CHALLENGE #2:
Improving transparency

Having grown up as "digital natives" who expect immediate responses to their demands, today's students and applicants want nothing less than timely, personalized information about the entire application and enrollment process. As you probably know by now, they're not content to sit around wondering where things stand and waiting patiently for you to get back to them.

Also, they don't want to guess about what motivates your admissions decisions. They want transparency in the process. And if you leave them scratching their heads, they're likely to go elsewhere.

According to Katherine Ruger, assistant dean of admissions and pre-college programs at Michigan State University's College of Osteopathic Medicine, achieving transparency requires educating faculty and staff as well as applicants about admissions expectations.

"With internal stakeholders, we share what we're looking for when we're screening applications," she says. "We provide an overview of what the admissions committee decision-making models are and what kind of applications we're getting through the pool."

"We also offer applicants the ability to come into the office and talk. That's not to say everybody has to do that, but we're finding it works pretty well for us. We will invite them to come in and talk to us about how to prepare their application and what the process looks like from our perspective. Also, if they're not successful, we invite them to come back and talk to us about why that may have been."

CHALLENGE #3: Attracting and enrolling more international students

Although there were nominally more international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities during the 2018/2019 school year, the number of new international students dropped to a six-year low. Possible explanations include the high cost of a U.S. education, increased competition from schools in other countries and federal immigration policies that may be perceived as unwelcoming.

It's worth noting that engineering students make up one of the largest categories of international students in this country — a fact not lost on those who work to bring them into the profession.

"I think some of the political rhetoric about immigration these days is potentially hurting the image of the United States as a welcoming country. That could have a dampening impact on international applications," says Nathan Kahl, managing director of communications and society advancement at the American Society for Engineering Education.

"People need to remember that a lot of international students stay here in the United States and become productive members of society," he said. "They start companies. They create wealth. For instance, Elon Musk, who co-founded Tesla and several other companies, and Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google, fall into that category. I like to remind people, too, that there's a long-held argument in engineering that when you bring a diverse set of perspectives and life experiences to a problem, it increases your likelihood of creating an elegant solution for that problem."

Dr. Lorie Liebrock, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology's dean of graduate studies, says her institution makes extra efforts to ensure that international students feel welcome.

"We provide a focused orientation for our international students to illuminate the cultural differences that they may experience," she says. "We invite faculty and staff to attend. In addition, our international director and our university president communicate regularly with international applicants, faculty and staff about what New Mexico Tech is doing, and can do, to assist international students."

The school also hosts a Global Village Day featuring exhibits, food and other cultural offerings representative of students' home countries. That, in turn, helps make international students some of New Mexico's "best ambassadors" for recruiting new students.

"Because we serve a global marketplace, we also use **EngineeringCAS™** to **increase the number of potential applicants** who can see our programs and to process their applications," she says, referring to Liaison's Centralized Application Service™ designed specifically to **improve marketing and enrollment initiatives** at engineering programs. "In tandem with **Liaison's WebAdMIT™ portal,** it allows us to make decisions and **respond to students more promptly.** That's important, considering all of the documentation we have to collect in order to process international students."

While it's true that many of the challenges facing higher ed today would have been difficult to anticipate at the beginning of the last decade, we now have the ability to identify and implement meaningful solutions. Are your strategies for navigating the future still rooted in the past — or do they meet the expectations of today's discerning applicants and students? Your institution's success depends on the answer to that question. ■

New Ways to Look at Portfolios

A cross-disciplinary discussion about helping applicants distinguish themselves

In admissions, some things never change. And that's fine. Applicants to programs in a wide variety of disciplines — ranging from the performing arts to business management to architecture and beyond — have long been required to submit portfolios of their work. That's not going to change.

At the same, time, however, the need for change is inevitable. For example, best practices regarding the way you require applicants to submit portfolios and then ask faculty to review them have changed dramatically in recent years.

A better way to spot potential

Your failure to recognize that fact and innovate accordingly could put your program at a significant disadvantage when it comes to identifying and enrolling the "best-fit" students who will bring the most to your school — and get the most out of it.

"Our portfolio is kind of a hybrid," says Blaire Moody Rideout, director of undergraduate admissions at University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. "We do a lot of case analysis in the business school world, so the first component is what we call the business case discussion. This is a way to understand a student's critical thinking, essentially. There is also a second component to our portfolio, which we call the Artifact, that is very open-ended. Students submit something that shows their learning and their actions. It helps us get a better understanding of how they learn. We've seen blogs, we've seen skits, we've seen pictures of things that are meaningful to applicants. In this way, the portfolio has become the differentiator we needed."

Cross-campus sharing

"As one of the premier music schools in the country, we obviously have very strong performance programs, but we're also known for being really innovative and forward-thinking," says Karen Kerr, director of admissions at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music.

"All of our portfolios have one required component: a video presentation of the student performing on their instrument or voice so faculty can assess their music skills. But then some programs — like composition and media writing and production — have supplemental pieces of the portfolio that can include additional videos, audio files, PDFs or even fully scored orchestrations. Students can also link to social media, YouTube and SoundCloud, for example, so faculty can get a good idea of what they're really involved in and how they employ entrepreneurial skills."

"When I arrived here, we were still receiving paper applications, CDs, DVDs and videos as part of the application process," Kerr says. "I decided that we quickly needed to move into electronic submissions. That **improved the management of the process significantly.** It allowed us to measure a more broad range of factors and to **be more individualized when assessing an applicant,** because no two applicants are the same. The technology also helped us share all these different components across different areas of the School."

Learn more about **SlideRoom™, the technology** that Rideout and Kerr rely on to host their portfolios and streamline the review process, at slideroom.com. ■

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We'd love to connect at these events. We're looking forward to hearing about your school's top goals for 2020 and how we can help you achieve them.

CONFUSE THEM AT YOUR OWN RISK:
How Gen Z Students Differ from Millennials

If you want to come across as outdated, out of touch and unconcerned about the future of your college or university, just work with your "Generation Z" applicants the same way you've been interacting with Millennials.

Of course, a better strategy would be to recognize the key differences between these two cohorts of students and then adjust how your institution communicates with them and tries to address their needs.

Who's who?

The age ranges may vary by a few years depending on the sources you consult, but generally speaking Millennials are defined as those born between 1980 and 1995 whereas Generation Z comprises those born between 1996 and 2015 (or so).

To better understand the differences between the generations, however, it may be more informative to focus on what has occurred during their lives rather than simply look at their dates of birth.

For example, some demographers suggest the most significant demarcation between the generations is Sept. 11, 2001, which many members of Generation Z do not recall. Others believe the defining difference is the economic environment in which they grew up. While Millennials are more likely to remember a childhood played out against the backdrop of a relatively prosperous economy, Gen Z students and applicants are more likely to recall the financial hardships that burdened millions of families — perhaps including their own — during the "Great Recession" that began in 2008.

Consequently, Generation Z is more likely to place a high value on the return on investment provided by a college education. Whereas Millennials may have grown up thinking about college as an experience to be savored for its own sake, Gen Z students are more inclined to think about the future financial value it can provide via access to jobs that pay well.

What does it mean for higher ed?

As a result, Generation Z is more likely to be concerned about long-term financial security — and see college as essential to success in life. Consider the differences in the generations' responses to the following statements:

"My goal is to make it to the top of my profession/future profession one day."
65% of Generation Z said "yes," compared with 43% of Millennials.[1]

"College is an important steppingstone for future success."
67% of Generation Z, 61% of Millennials.[1]

"I can have a rewarding career without going to college."
25% of Generation Z, 40% of Millennials.[1]

The generations also prefer to learn differently. For example, 59% of Generation Z says YouTube is their preferred way of learning; 60% of Millennials prefer printed books. And despite their love of social media, members of Generation Z are less likely to prefer taking online classes whenever possible (26% vs. 45%).[1]

Despite a lack of research on the topic, anecdotal evidence also suggests that the parents of Generation Z students are much more involved in the college selection process than older parents. Furthermore, some admissions professionals believe that Generation Z has unprecedented expectations of customer service during the application process. That may even include a belief that schools are responsible for collecting application materials, rather than an understanding that students are responsible for submitting them.

Making marketing matter

In order to connect with Generation Z, colleges and universities need to meet them on their own terms. First of all, that involves developing highly personalized, omni-channel digital communication strategies to reach them before, during and after the application process. Those strategies shouldn't be limited to students, though. Considering the major role their parents are likely to play in the decision-making process, it's a good idea to conduct parallel marketing campaigns for each household: one for the Gen Z student, one for the parents or guardians.

Once you have their attention, focus less on trying to sell them on the experience of attending your school and more on emphasizing the long-term financial benefits. Remember, to them, paying for college is a major investment. They want tangible outcomes, such as good jobs and a rewarding career path. They don't want to be underemployed after graduation, struggling to pay off student loans. To demonstrate the value of a degree from your school, consider showing them how much graduates earn once they enter the workforce.

Finally, keep in mind that Generation Z has largely upended the traditional notion that a college needs to be a "good fit" for a student. Instead, they want to know if they will be a good fit. That means your application process needs to focus on who they are as people, not just on their grades or how great your campus is. Encouraging Generation Z students to share what's important in their lives — such as by encouraging them to upload multi-media portfolios that illustrate their passions and personality — lets them know they'll be valued on your campus. Without that guarantee, you run the risk of losing them. ■

[1]Source: Pearson.com, Beyond Millennials: The Next Generation of Learners, 2018.

Does It Make the Boat Go Faster?

Tips on Winning the Admissions Race

One of the guest speakers at the 2019 Liaison User Conference in Boston last summer was Tony Wynne, who at the time served as director of the Veterinary Medical College Application Service™ (VMCAS™) and director of admissions and recruitment affairs at the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC). One of his sessions — called "Does It Make the Boat Go Faster?" — was inspired by the motto of the British rowing team that won Olympic gold in 2000 for the first time in decades. It referred to the team members' decision to focus exclusively on initiatives that would help achieve their ultimate goal.

Wynne, in turn, applied that concept to his admissions processing and applicant development at AAVMC.

According to Wynne, the landscape of admissions is shifting from traditional to holistic, yet in some cases these changes can create new obstacles for admissions offices — i.e., they can make the boat go slower, so to speak.

While Wynne believes holistic reviews can help students "present who they are as people" and allow schools "to look deeper into their soft skills," he challenged attendees to consider whether they are doing the best possible job of instructing students how to present information about themselves — and whether reviewers are truly grasping that information in a way that allows them to make the best possible admissions decisions.

Wynne, who is now executive director of the National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions, Inc., recently spoke with *The Admissionist* about his views on identifying and implementing more fair and equitable admissions strategies.

Liaison: What made you question why new and seemingly better admissions strategies sometimes have the potential to produce unforeseen and potentially counterproductive results?

Tony Wynne (TW): At the time I came up with the idea for that talk, I had been wondering quite a bit about why our program was not getting some of the people we wanted in terms of diversity and gender. It occurred to me that perhaps our application was actually presenting obstacles rather than creating opportunity. I thought, "Are we providing a service that creates optimal opportunity for anybody who wants to take part? Are we being equitable across the board for those who may not have the same opportunities as others?"

Liaison: How should holistic-minded admissions professionals ask students to present information about themselves, and how should reviewers try to understand it?

TW: Clearly, we don't know enough about implementing holistic or competency-based admissions yet for us to be able to tell anybody what's working and what's not. This is all so fresh.

So my concerns are, if we are going to implement holistic or competency-based admissions, are we looking at it from all angles? Not just from the admissions committee point of view or from the institutional point of view, but from the perspective of the individuals who are applying, who we say we are supposed to be helping. I suspect that many programs are going to approach it solely from the institution's perspective. In other words, they'll be asking, "How do we manage the holistic process?" instead of, "Is this process really helping those who are applying?" So that's where I see this entire process potentially making the boat slow down.

In veterinary medicine, for example, some schools still have a GPA cutoff. So if you don't have the right GPA, you're never going to be seen by the committee. But there are plenty of really good folks who don't do well academically for one reason or another who would make excellent practitioners. How do we use holistic or competency-based admissions to figure out who those people are?

Another good example of it is the GRE syndrome, as I call it. If you can afford to take the GRE, and you can afford to take it multiple times, you basically have an advantage over those who can't afford it or who can only afford to take it once. So, in my opinion, those schools that are getting rid of the GRE are making the boat go faster. I am really passionate when I feel that the processes that are in place are impeding progress rather than making it possible.

Liaison: What changes should programs make to their admissions processes in order "to make the boat go faster?"

TW: I don't have a universal answer for every program out there, but generally speaking I think we need to do a better job of explaining our expectations. That involves not just asking for certain types of information, but also letting applicants know why we want it and how programs will use that information in their decision-making process. I also think providing exceptional customer service is important for this generation's applicants. Be available. Answer their questions. Don't beat around the bush. Be clear about what you're looking for and why.

For example, what if a veterinary medicine program only tells applicants they need 500 hours of shadowing experience with a veterinarian? Two students could spend the same amount of time with the same veterinarian and have very different learning outcomes. If the application isn't very clear about why a school is requesting information and how it's going to be evaluated, then applicants are left in the dark trying to understand how to make themselves stand out.

Another way we made changes in the application service at AAVMC was to provide better instructions regarding letters of recommendation. We made sure to be very specific about what we were looking for and provided guidelines on how to ask somebody to write one.

Liaison: What other trends have you noticed regarding the ability of programs to implement better admissions processes?

TW: It seems to me that applicants' anxiety about their academic records has increased in recent years. In many cases, they're losing sight of who they are as people and they're starting to see themselves only as their academic record. They say, "How can I be denied? I have a great GPA." That's only one factor, but they think it's the most important thing.

So how should admissions professionals ask applicants to present soft-skill data about themselves as people? That's a burning question. And I don't have a definitive answer.

However, I do think it's very important to make admissions professionals and recruiters understand that change is okay. We hear over and over again that, "Yeah, this is all wonderful, but we're not going to change anything because this is the way we've always done it." That just kills me because every few years, with generational changes, you're going to have a new breed of individuals coming in with new expectations. If you're not changing your process to address the significance of that then you're going to have fewer applicants. ■

Seven Best Practices

for Effective Graduate Student Recruitment Communication

Results from the 2019 NAGAP Inquiry Response Project

Every year since 2016, Liaison has conducted studies that involve submitting inquiry forms to hundreds of schools and then tracking the schools' responsiveness to those inquiries. Data collected includes information about the timing, methods and types of responses received. The purpose is to uncover trends in communications to potential applicants and, in turn, to identify and share best practices for driving applications and increasing enrollment. The results of the NAGAP member-focused study reveal how and why graduate student engagement initiatives should meet user expectations. They also provide actionable insights about the current recruitment landscape and strategies for achieving enrollment goals.

Regardless of the size or location of their institutions, graduate admissions professionals are united by the need to attract and enroll best-fit applicants faster and more effectively in a highly competitive and uncertain environment. In addition to the challenges posed by high recruitment costs, budget constraints and declining application volumes, many admissions professionals are operating in a vacuum, unsure how to gauge the success of their efforts and unaware of the strategies other schools are using to reach high-value students first.

To address those questions and concerns, Liaison conducts an annual inquiry response project in which researchers pose as prospective students online, searching for and then submitting "request for information" (RFI) forms when they are available. In 2019, Liaison reviewed the web sites of 517 NAGAP member graduate schools in such a manner and assessed the results based on a variety of criteria.

The goal was to find out how accessible schools were to interested students requesting information, how fast they responded, how relevant their responses were and how many communication channels they used.

The results identify important trends around student engagement. The insights they provide allow admissions professionals to compare and contrast their inquiry response strategies to those of other schools and to plan strategic changes that will help drive applications and increase yield.

Liaison ultimately identified seven best

practices regarding inquiry forms and responses. Inquiry forms must be:

- Easy to find.
- User friendly.
- Mobile ready.

Responses must be:

- Immediate.
- Personalized to each student.
- Delivered through multiple channels.

For the reasons described in this report, including all seven of those features in your inquiry response strategy will allow your school to clearly explain the benefits of its programs and develop a relationship with students based on meaningful information and communications — even before the application stage.

Methodology Overview

Posing as potential applicants, Liaison researchers visited the web sites of 517 NAGAP-member graduate schools and submitted the institutions' online "request for information" forms when they could be located. They then recorded information regarding the availability of those inquiry forms, the speed of response, the relevance/personalization of responses and details about the channels used to deliver responses.

Best Practice Takeaways

Make sure your RFI form is easy to find. Graduate school requires a substantial investment of time and money. In order to clearly explain the benefits of your programs and develop a relationship based on meaningful information and communication — even before the application stage — prospective students must be able to effortlessly locate your RFI form.

What we found:

- 32% of schools had an RFI on their home page; 20% were visible without scrolling.
- Researchers could not locate RFIs for 15% of the schools surveyed.
- The number of clicks required to find an RFI ranged from zero (when the forms were on the school's home page) to seven.

Keep forms user friendly. Make sure your form makes a good first impression. Keep it short and ensure all of the information it contains is still accurate and up to date. Also, it's preferable not to require the student to create an account in order to access the form.

What we found:

- 120 schools displayed outdated information on their RFI.
- 148 schools asked for a text message opt-in.
- 24 required the prospective student to create an account to get information.

Be mobile ready. Mobile devices are everywhere. How many students do you know who don't have one? It's critical that your site is "responsive" — i.e., optimized for mobile.

What we found:

- All but two schools had a web page with responsive (i.e., mobile-friendly) design
- 84% of the RFI forms were responsive.
- 98% of applications were responsive.

Send a dynamic "thank you." Have you seen your response page recently? Someone who takes the time to fill out a form is eager to hear more about what your institution has to offer. Don't send a generic acknowledgement of their interest. Provide a dynamic, personalized response based on the information they were willing to submit.

What we found:

- Nearly 62% of schools display a generic thank you message upon submitting the RFI.
- Only 6.3% provided a dynamic personalized page upon submission.

Be fast. Be first. No one wants to wait for information. Immediate response is key. In fact, one recent study of online students showed that 61% enrolled at the institution that contacted them first. Your school can't afford to take its time replying.

What we found:

- 6.3% provided an immediate response with a personalized web page.
- Just under half of the schools respond within one hour.
- 16% of the schools did not respond to a submitted form within four weeks.

Make it personal. Studies show a 135% increase in response when a mail piece is personalized with first name and up to a 500% increase in response rate when a piece is personalized with first name plus additional relevant information. If a student took time to fill out the form, they are ready to hear more and engage with you – but do them the courtesy of using the information they have provided.

What we found:

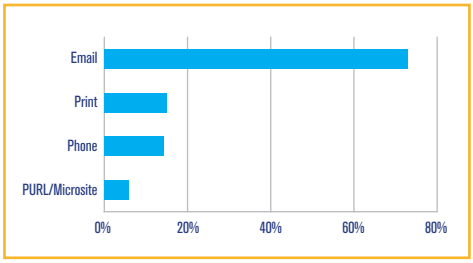
- Over half of the schools respond and used name plus another factor of interest to the student (usually the academic program of interest).
- 9% use the student name only.

Deliver through multiple channels. It's science. Messages are more likely to reach long-term memory if repeated across multiple channels. Liaison has found that adding digital to a search campaign with print and email can increase response by up to 200%.

What we found:

- Only 5% of schools used at least 3 channels.
- 46% used only email to communicate.
- 12% sent just a single email in four weeks as a response.

Channels used:



Our project resulted in several insights into how graduate programs are responding to student inquiries, only a sampling are shared here. A few other interesting findings include:

- 60 schools offered a chat feature on their home page.
- 54% of schools offered social media links on their home page.
- 67% of schools had a link to an application on their home page.
- The number of emails sent by each school within four weeks ranged from zero to 23.
- 94 print pieces were received in four weeks. Of these, 56 arrived in oversized envelopes, 5 arrived in clear envelopes and 16 were postcards.
- Our "student" received 60 voicemails and 29 text messages over a four week period from all schools.

To learn more about this study and how to craft effective inquiry reply strategies, contact Dr. Suzanne Sharp, executive director of enrollment management consulting, Liaison (ssharp@liaisonedu.com). ■

LIAISON in the NEWS

ENGINEERINGCAS by LIAISON

Liaison's EngineeringCAS™ Now Serves More Than 1,000 Programs, Offers Scholarships

In its first two years, the only Centralized Application Service (CAS™) for graduate engineering programs has helped many of the country's top programs significantly decrease time to decision, reduce manual administrative tasks and revolutionize their pre-decision process.

Launched in July 2017, EngineeringCAS has allowed Liaison to form important strategic partnerships with many engineering organizations and societies, including the Global Engineering Deans Council (GEDC), International Federation of Engineering Education Societies (IFEES), the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE), the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) and the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE).

"**EngineeringCAS helps expand our applicant pool** by promoting our program-specific landing pages to any potential applicant exploring graduate engineering education," says Dr. LaTonia Stiner-Jones, assistant dean of graduate programs at Ohio State University College of Engineering. "As a result, we get the same exposure as other top institutions around the world — and the solution makes it easier for talented students to apply who may not have otherwise learned about us."

After just two years, EngineeringCAS:

- Now serves more than 1,000 programs on dozens of campuses nationwide.
- Is expected to process applications from 28,000 unique applicants during the 2019/2020 cycle.
- Now offers scholarships to qualified engineering students.

"The potential that I see in EngineeringCAS is almost limitless," says David T. Poole, director of admissions at the University of Miami College of Engineering. "It brings together all the aspects that you would need within enrollment management."

ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Illinois Institute of Technology, One of the Nation's Top STEM Schools, Joins Liaison's EngineeringCAS™

Institution devoted to helping students "meet the needs of the age" joins innovative higher ed admissions community to attract more qualified applicants

Accustomed to success and anticipating more, admissions leaders at Illinois Tech knew that participating in EngineeringCAS would give their school better exposure to a greater number of students from across the country and around the world. That, in turn, will help accomplish the institution's goal of continuing to provide the best engineering education to the best engineering students, year in and year out.

"EngineeringCAS makes perfect sense for us because we don't want to be left behind," says Natacha DaPaola, Illinois Tech's dean of engineering who serves on the EngineeringCAS advisory board and as the chair of the Global Engineering Deans Council (GEDC). "Since GEDC introduced EngineeringCAS to our international engineering community in Fall 2018, it became clear that EngineeringCAS would soon become the tool of choice for students around the world to learn more about — and apply to — graduate programs in engineering. Innovation requires looking beyond what happens in the classroom. It also requires us to make sure that we have the best tools available to recruit and admit the students who will be tomorrow's engineering leaders. EngineeringCAS is definitely one of those tools."

"Illinois Tech chose **EngineeringCAS** because it is uniquely suited to help us **achieve our goal of drawing from a larger, more diverse pool of qualified applicants,**" says Mike Gosz, vice president for enrollment at Illinois Tech. "Today EngineeringCAS gives us access to **significantly more data about application and enrollment trends,** which will allow us to make the right admissions decisions faster."

BioMedCAS™ by LIAISON

Centralized Application Service (CAS™) optimizes admissions process and boosts application growth, application completion rates and gender parity in student populations

Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education Works with Clinical Training Management Leader to Benefit Students and COAMFTE-accredited Programs

Launched in July 2017, BioMedCAS was developed by Liaison in partnership with biomedical science program directors. It brings admissions offices an improved way to recruit, enroll and admit best-fit students while saving money and better allocating staff resources each admissions cycle. Participation is restricted to institutions that offer one or more PhDs in biomedical sciences, but participants may accept research master's applications through BioMedCAS.

Compared with its inaugural cycle in 2018/2019, BioMedCAS posted the following results in 2019/2020:

- 114% increase in female applicants
- 47% growth in the size of the applicant pool
- 34% average application growth.
- 30% increase in the number of unique applicants

Matthew Brandon, associate director of graduate studies at the University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine, was an early adopter of BioMedCAS: "Now that we're **a member of the CAS,** our admissions officers, faculty members and prospective students are seeing **time and effort savings.** I'm excited to see our **program promoted far and wide as more programs join the CAS.**"

Programs that have recently joined the BioMedCAS community include those at Marshall University, Stowers Institute for Medical Research, the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, University of Mississippi Medical Center, City of Hope National Medical Center and Temple University.

For individual programs, the benefits of membership increase as membership itself increases. Applicants, who often apply to multiple programs from coast to coast, stand to gain as well. By its very nature, success with a CAS begets success, particularly in a field as specialized as the biomedical sciences.

Dr. Daniel C. Jupiter, assistant dean for recruitment to the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the University of Texas Medical Branch, saw the promise of the BioMedCAS application from the very beginning: "Being able to focus on the content of our application, rather than the design of it, has helped us collect the information that is integral to making strategic admissions decisions. With BioMedCAS, we benefit from application interface best practices while showcasing our uniqueness as an institution."

To read full news articles, visit liaisonedu.com/news

In each edition of *The Admissionist*, a Liaison team member joins us in The Fourth Quadrant to share a unique perspective on one of the issues facing higher ed today. This quarter, we sat down with Robert Deutsch, Liaison's vice president of marketing, to discuss the "Internet of Admissions." Robert draws on his eight years in higher ed tech and the many tech-forward experiences, including launching some of the Web's first sites and developing a range of mobile apps, that have inspired his admiration for the "Internet of Things."

Waiting on the "Internet of Admissions"

"Alexa, apply me to Harvard for the Fall 2020 semester."

Perhaps the most preposterous assumption that sentence makes is that I could get into Harvard, not that one day applying to college will be as easy as talking to a smart speaker. We don't know the exact steps from where we are now to that point, but borrowing a central tenet from the "Internet of Things," or "IoT," we do have a name for the process: the "Internet of Admissions," or "IoA."

IoT is a technology rubric coined by Kevin Ashton (and used by the leading thinkers in science, technology and conspiracy theories) which posits that devices and products that are connected to the Internet can, without human interaction, collect, analyze and help synergize insights that lead to improvements in the devices and products themselves.

Think "smart" things like homes, televisions and speakers.

For the Internet of Admissions, apply that same concept to eliminate unbearable, overlapping application documentation and wonky, aged IT — and the nearly unavoidable human errors that result from the two coming together. See: Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health's accidental mailing of 277 acceptance letters in 2014. ("Siri, accept this list of 227 graduate students.") The goal: improving the process by which prospective students make one of the most consequential decisions of their lives.

IoA began in earnest a few years after IBM and Apple launched personal computers, but before America Online was a voice in your head and a pile of free CDs in your mailbox. I'm proud to say that Liaison was among the pioneers when we went online to enable dental graduate programs (among others) to recruit and enroll students with marketing automation and admissions management technology and services. Later in the decade, the Common Application went online and began connecting high school students to prospective undergraduate programs. (When you think about it, the college connection makes sense because the first IoT device was a modified coke machine at Carnegie Mellon University.)

As the rapid innovations in tech continued everywhere, academic institutions benefited too. Their processes became more optimized as a wealth of new data points and recruiting tools increased their likelihood of admitting best-fit students.

Critics contend that for each new efficiency realized on the admissions side there was an equal or similar difficulty realized on the applicant side. For applicants who already couldn't meet the technology qualifications of a standard application (like access to a desktop computer) the new requirements (like consistent access to reliable Internet) seemed to put college even farther out of reach.

Emerging, expensive technology threatened to create a chasm between admissions officers and applicants, and two groups saw opportunity in that space — college marketing folks, eager to take advantage of the wider, easier, more accessible audiences and paid college advisors, who took it upon themselves to declutter the environment for the students who were now overwhelmed and perhaps confused about college in a whole new way. And that was just version 1.0.

The Internet of Admissions 2.0 is built on three bedrock concepts: Big data, holistic theory and the rise of mobile technology. These three things require the Internet, create new learning-insight opportunities and, by design, necessitate new tools to manage the input.

Big data was created when schools moved applications online for tracking students from first interest to first day on campus, and then introduced the need for the right kind of data visualization to handle it all for meaningful insights. Holistic theory is the still-fluid and developing concept of non-cognitive data like video, performances, engineering/architecture schematics or large-scale art being accepted (or even required) as part of the admissions process. (Portfolio management systems like SlideRoom help translate this theory into practice.)

Mobile technology, where the students live every day, is now the place where the students get status updates on their applications (so long, big envelopes), compare schools, and even apply (see Goucher College's democratizing video application).

As each of these elements threatens the other two in some way or another, I predict that future technology innovations will further disrupt the process even as all involved parties start to get comfortable with the tech status quo. One component will remain constant: Both sides (admissions offices and students) will continue on their mission to identify themselves in the most authentic, efficient and "platform-positive" ways possible for the purposes of building the best class for admissions offices and getting the best education for students.

But what about the marketing people and the paid college counselors? They may get in the way — after all, they have for years — but that's not the fault of IoA. The true question is: Will they find a way to influence your smart speaker, or will their intrusion be just an Echo? ■

[1] Sorry, That College Acceptance Letter May Just be a Computer Glitch, MarketWatch

[2] The UnCommon Rise of the Common App, Market Design

[3] Internet of Things, Wikipedia

How has the Internet changed how you manage admissions? Share your answer by tweeting @liaisonedu and using #buildabetterclass

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