



The Career College Information Source

Career Education Admission Symposium Reveals New Truths and Exciting Direction for the Profession

*By Shannon Gormley, Licensed School Counselor, Type 73/National
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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

On June 8, as the Career Education Colleges and Universities (formerly APSCU) annual conference came to a close, NortonNorris, Inc., along with The Grandview Group, hosted the inaugural **Symposium for Career Education Admission Professionals**. Velocify generously sponsored the notable event that brought together high school counselors and professionals working in and for career colleges and community colleges to understand the similarities and differences each share in serving students. In many cases, this includes underserved, first-generation, or at-risk student populations who are not looking to take a traditional route when it comes to their post-secondary education.

The concept for the Symposium was born out of an idea posed from a steering committee comprised of high school and higher education professionals (Advancement of Career

Education Admissions). As the group discussed ways to serve students to a greater degree, the natural next step was to get others involved in a meaningful dialogue.

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unlikely partners could collaborate to provide meaningful guidance for students interested in alternate paths to higher education. The Symposium provided an opportunity for each of the three groups to share insights regarding the current state of higher education in their respective sector, discuss the challenges that each face, and highlight best practices across the space in a variety of areas.

Presenters and participants alike shared exciting ideas for moving the admissions profession forward.

Symposium key data and findings

In the months leading up to the Symposium extensive research was conducted that focused on gaining the insights of college admission

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personnel and admission directors at career colleges and community colleges related to four key areas: the changes and challenges in higher education, effective admission practices, best

practices for serving the underserved, and the impact that professional development has on the admissions profession.

The research findings reinforced the idea that higher education has changed dramatically over the years and these changes impact professionals in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. The survey results show that admission professionals in both career colleges and community colleges experience the following challenges:

- Technology plays a major factor in the way prospective students interact with admission professionals.
- Prospective students are underprepared and overwhelmed by the admissions process, particularly with testing.
- A majority of admission professionals do not feel as though the profession is well-respected across all sectors.
- Seventy-four percent of those surveyed agree that membership with a professional association would somewhat or greatly enhance their feelings of professionalism. Despite that shared sentiment only a small portion indicated that they currently belong to a member organization.

In addition to surveying college admission professionals, NortonNorris, Inc. conducted a survey of high school counselors to gain a better understanding of their thoughts and feelings related to working with college admission professionals as well as their insights related to their job and professional development. The findings shed positive light on counselor perceptions of college admission



SHANNON GORMLEY began her career in higher education 17 years ago as an Admission Counselor. Since then, she has served in the role of Student Activities Director, Student Advisor, Director of Admissions, and Executive Director of Graduate Recruitment. Shannon went on to work in admissions

training, serving as the Director of Training and EnrollMatch® Master Facilitator. She has worked extensively with Dr. Jean Norris in the development of EnrollMatch®, a comprehensive admissions training program offering proven results to balance compliance and outstanding performance.

After receiving her Master's degree in School Counseling, Shannon worked in secondary education as a school counselor, assisting students in the development of their academic, social, and career pursuits, with a focus on college and career readiness. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and her Master of Arts in School Counseling from Lewis University and is a licensed school counselor with the state of Illinois.

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professionals across both sectors in relationship to their careers. Seventy-five percent of high school counselors surveyed indicated a favorable perception of college admission professionals and their ability to assist their students in college planning. In the survey, 63 percent of counselors reported that college and career counseling was an area of their job that provided them the greatest satisfaction and yet counselors reported spending approximately 18 percent of their daily activities on these tasks.

These findings further demonstrate that an opportunity exists for all groups to come together to determine ways to best serve students interested in alternate paths to post-secondary education.

Guest presenters

The Symposium featured top experts working in all facets of higher education to share information on the current state of their representative group along with the challenges they face in serving students. Dr. Jim Black, President and CEO of SEM Works, addressed the current state and challenges related to the community colleges as well as private, not for profit colleges. Joe Sallustio, Vice President of Marketing and Admissions at National American University, also shared his thoughts regarding the current state and



challenges impacting career colleges. While Christy Heckman, Counselor at Abraham Lincoln High School in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Rhonda Cracco, Assistant Principal of Student Services at Tinley Park High School, spoke to what they see happening regarding high school students.

In addition to the speakers, the Symposium also brought together some of the best minds in marketing and admissions to share their best practices. As the panelists presented their information, Symposium

participants were encouraged to write down any questions or remarks to pose to all presenters during a question and answer session. The panelists included, Vince Norton, Norton Norris, Inc.; Rick Rios from Bridgepoint Education Group; and Brent Passey, Hodges University, to share marketing and admissions best practices in for-profit as well



as non-profit higher education. Additional panelists expanded on related areas impacting admissions, such as Debbie Muno who talked about finding the right people for the job and the concept of “fit” in hiring;



Bill Ojile shared his expertise on compliance in recruitment and admissions; Amanda Opperman, from Wonderlic, discussed the benefits of credentialing and badging admission professionals; and our faculty expert, Gary Carlson, brought an interesting perspective on the important relationship between faculty and admissions to positively impact

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enrollment AND retention. Finally, Carla Cheatham, from Bremen high school, shared advice on how colleges and admission professionals can effectively partner

with their local school counselors and ideas on how to serve students in a more meaningful fashion.

To round out the presentations, Angelia Millender, President Olive-Harvey College (City Colleges of

Chicago) joined Dr. Jean Norris, in moderating the best practices question and answer and shared her experiences working at for-profit and non-profit colleges across the country. Dr. Jean Norris, Norton Norris, Inc., identified trends shaping the future of the admissions profession including how automation of the admissions interview through **MyGuidance Coach®** has had a significant impact already!

Presenter takeaways

Not only did the Symposium attendees walk away with new insights regarding the admission profession but a number of the presenters also noted the workshop was a benefit for them. Amanda Opperman commented that “the level of engagement and professionalism at the Symposium was a testament to the great strides that admission professionals have taken recently to better serve the sector and contribute to greater student outcomes.” Carla Cheatham felt that the Symposium was a great way to “review information and make changes based on results. In other words, admission professionals are listening to the needs of students, which is important to me as a high school counselor.” Angelia Millender shared, “The Admission Symposium was very informative and covered a variety of topics regardless of your role in secondary or post-secondary education – career, public, or private. The breadth of knowledge of the speakers was vast and covered pre-admissions to understanding the challenges of people who do this work to how to reward people for doing this work. The knowledge shared at the Symposium continues to inform me that we are more alike than different regardless of our institution type.”

Symposium takeaways

The Symposium lent itself to the discovery of a number of ideas to help the college admission professional move forward especially when it comes to serving students with alternate pathways to post-secondary education. Attendees collaborated during the workshop to identify specific action items for the **Advancement of Career Education Admissions** steering committee to consider for next steps. These contributions include: forming an organization for admissions professionals in career education, offering professional development and certification opportunities to enhance the level of professionalism and exploring ways to expand partnerships with the high school counselors to help bridge the gap between high school graduation and preparation for the next step of a student's education and career.

Credentialing

A common idea for moving forward centered on the credentialing of college admission professionals by offering badging to demonstrate achievement of specific competencies related to the position. "It was no surprise the attendees were vocal in their request for a professional credentialing organization because the admissions profession is just that: a profession, and I was pleased that credentialing through digital badges was discussed as the preferred method to verify Admission Advisors' skills," noted Amanda Opperman in regards to badging. Cheatham was equally excited about the idea and expressed her appreciation in hearing Opperman's insights.

Member organization

A second takeaway from the Symposium was the opportunity to create a member organization for college admission professionals



working in career education, whether at a career college, community college, or beyond. As the landscape in higher education continues to evolve, both presenters and attendees agreed that a member organization would help college admission professionals stay abreast of important regulations impacting the profession and open the door to participate in professional development opportunities and develop their leadership skills. Millender agreed that "managing peoples' performance can be the greatest asset and can be our barrier to delivering any process or achieving our goals."

Education of high school counseling professionals

A third takeaway from the Symposium was the idea of continued education and partnership with high school counselors for all groups. Cheatham stated that she "appreciated the insight of career education admission professionals in higher education." She also shared that the experience gave her "a different outlook now regarding for-profit schools. I appreciated putting a

face with the school and hearing their struggles with communicating with counselors. I think it was definitely a learning process for both sides.”

Conclusion

While these three groups may come from different places, through the Symposium it became apparent that our similarities appear to be greater than

our differences. Most importantly, we are all united in what we do – helping students. We need to continue to keep our students at the forefront. It is our hope that with the insights and ideas shared at the Symposium we can collectively reach more students to make a difference in more lives. Stay tuned for more exciting updates as our steering committee moves forward on next steps!

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Chancellor Emeritus, Herzing University

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