

The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

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News and Information from the
Collegiate Information and
Visitor Services Association

From the President

The CiVSA mid-year Executive Board Meeting was held November 4-6 at beautiful Florida Gulf Coast University. Although the new terms for Officers just began this August, the first quarter was extremely productive, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of my fellow board members.

- Our new membership recruitment brochure has just been completed.
- Headquarters is now fully operational.
- Renewals have been recorded and we are preparing for new member recruitment.
- The re-design of the new CiVSA web site is well on its way and has an exciting new look.

I am honored to serve as your President this year. It is my goal to uphold the tradition of the leaders before me who have guided our organization with such dedication and distinction. I am truly fortunate to be a part of an Executive Board made up of so many talented professionals.

This year we would like focus on boosting member involvement. There are so many opportunities to become more active in our organization. I promise your participation will lead to both personal and professional growth. If you would like to become more involved, just send me an email at nancy.franco@yale.edu and we can find the right committee for you. With your participation, CiVSA will continue to thrive.

Nancy Franco
Yale University



CiVSA board on the beach

How I Ended Up in South Bend

Here's the story of how I got to visit fellow CiVSA member Jaime Cripe, Assistant Director, [Eck Visitors Center](#) at the University of Notre Dame one hot weekend in July.

I left Severn, Maryland on Thursday morning for a trip to Cedar Point Amusement Park in Sandusky, Ohio. My husband Greg and I followed behind the car occupied by our son Rob; Adam, our Naval Academy Midshipman sponsor son; and their girlfriends. Almost eight hours later we arrived to check into the "cabins" we had rented at a local campground. The cabins were about the size of a nice-sized shed some of you may have in your backyard! After checking in we headed over to the park.

The plan was to go to the park during the evening hours of both Thursday and Friday. After spending five hours in the park and riding "the tallest and fastest roller coaster in the world" everyone agreed that they had done the biggest and best and were pretty much done at Cedar Point. After a bit of discussion over a midnight all-you-can-eat pizza buffet and a phone call to Adam's mom it was decided to drive both cars three more hours west for a little side trip to South Bend. We got up Friday morning and were on our way!

Adam gave us a few options of how we could spend our day and one of them was visiting the University of Notre Dame. Of course being the CiVSA girl that I am I thought this was a great idea! Jaime was so surprised when I showed up at the desk in Eck Visitors Center. While I was only there long enough for a quick peek around the center and to have Greg snap a few photos, I will tell you it is a beautiful building and I want to go back when I have more time to spend.



Eck Visitors Center lobby

I think Nick Kovalakides is on to something – visiting CiVSA friends and having the chance to see their Visitor/Welcome center operation is a great way to spend vacation. Last summer it was a visit with Tami Tassler at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers Florida, this summer Notre Dame in South Bend Indiana. I wonder where I might find myself on my next trip out of town!

Betty Spengler
Anne Arundel Community College

Ed Note: I visited Nancy Franco at Yale University this summer - and I have to agree that Nick and Betty are on to something!

The Welcomer is a quarterly publication of the Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association. Please send comments, suggestions, or photos to:

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Special thanks to Jim Stapleton of Rutgers for his help proof-reading this issue!

Congratulations

Many congratulations to former CiVSA President LeAnn Stroupe and her husband Chris on the birth of their son, Langston Scott, on Sunday, November 20!

Congratulations are also due to CiVSA President-Elect Troy Selk and his wife Corinne on the birth of their daughter, Brinley Corinne, on Thursday, December 1!

Welcome to both the Stroupe and Selk new arrivals!



CiVSA Listserv Reminders

CiVSA's listserv (civsa@civsa.org) is intended to be one of the many benefits to CiVSA membership. The listserv is designed to share information, practices, and standards with others in the profession. All members should also feel free to use the listserv to ask questions relating to visitor and information services. When replying to questions sent out on the listserv, please reply back to the original writer only. The original writer can then summarize the responses in one email to the list.

We also now have a separate email group for more personal email messages. This group, civsajun@civsa.org, can be used to send out CiVSA pictures, wedding announcements, birthday wishes, etc.

If you would like to be added or removed from either list, please e-mail me at mcjen@umich.edu. Feel free to also ask questions about listserv usage and etiquette.

Still Need to Renew Your Membership?

If you are unsure whether or not you've renewed, you can contact CiVSA Headquarters at (336) 499-6207 or e-mail civsaHQ@civsa.org. Renewing your CiVSA membership takes only a few minutes and can be done online at <http://www.civsa.org/memberapp.shtml>. You can pay online with a credit card, or print a copy of your membership application and mail it along with a check to:

P.O. Box 971
Clemmons, NC 27012

Several of you have requested the Federal ID number for use when processing your payment. In case anyone else needs this, here it is...**13-384-4646**.

From a Customer Service Standpoint,

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?



See answer on page 11

CiVSA Best Practices

Southern Utah University's Personalized Visits

Southern Utah University prides itself on quality academics with a great deal of personalization. In the [Admissions Welcome Center](#), we try to start prospective students off with the same quality and personalization. We have developed a web interface that allows students to customize their tour to meet their needs. Once the tour has been scheduled, a back-end web program allows us to create a personal schedule and respond to the student within 48 hours of scheduling their tour. Prospective students or their parents are able to select a standard tour and then add from the following options: Meet with an Advisor, Financial Aid & Scholarship session, learn about the Honors Program, attend a class, take a detailed housing tour, visit the Multi-Cultural Center, have lunch in the T-Bird Circle, and more (see below for an example of a personalized schedule).

Students are welcomed by name as they meet with an Admissions Counselor before taking a one-on-one tour with one of our Presidential Ambassadors. Their campus visit experience could be as short as 90 minutes or as long as several hours. We've been giving customized personal tours for about one year and have had great reviews. One student said, "I felt welcome from the moment I entered the college, it was just so welcoming." Another said, "Very well done, you answered all the questions and made us feel great. Thanks!"

*Jared Wilcken
Southern Utah
University*



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Welcome New Members!

Alex Adjei
James Madison University

Dianne Bell
Purdue University

Tara Bopp
University of Kentucky

Pam Bourg
University of Florida

Danielle Bristow
Saint Louis University

Tk Childress
Baylor University

Francine DeMarco
Cal Poly Pomona

Cynthia Gay
Texas A&M University

JoAnn Gore
Texas Tech University

Wendy Hamstra
Saint Louis University

Andrea Hitsman-Ryan
Saint Louis University

Amy Hook
Boston University

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Georgetown University

Adrienne Kincade
University of Texas at Arlington

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Baylor University

Rance Larsen
Washington State University

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Emily Matthews
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Anna Mueller
University of Michigan

Wadzi Mushangazhiki
James Madison University

Dara Newton
University of Texas at Arlington

Mindy Nichols
Colorado State University

Jennifer Pacheco
Colorado State University

Heather Rodenhizer
Anne Arundel Community College

Ginny Rogers
University of South Carolina

Laura Simpson
Baylor University

Nancy Stricklin
University of Rhode Island

David Vitatoe
Case Western Reserve University

Lorie Williams
Georgia Southern University

Amy Winger
University of Kentucky

On the move is Kelly Terrill, formerly of Texas Tech University and now at the University of Maryland-College Park. Congratulations to Kelly on his new job!



CiVSA Conference

June 3-6, 2006

American University, Home of the CiVSA 2006 National Conference

It will be here before you know it – June 3-6, 2006 – and it's not too soon to plan to attend the 2006 CiVSA National Conference at American University. The university, located in a scenic residential area in Northwest Washington, D.C., is just a short distance from Washington's centers of government, business, research, commerce, art, and steps away from the Japanese Embassy along Embassy Row.

Your conference experience will kick off Saturday, June 3 with a trip to the National Mall, an authentic 'AU Barbeque' and a top-notch keynote by [Joan Fox](#), a nationally recognized Customer Service and Service Leadership expert. Engaging concurrent sessions and activities, a visit to nearby George Washington University, and conference favorites such as an Information Fair and Souvenir Exchange will round out the conference schedule. Scheduled activities like the 'Monuments by Moonlight Tour' and plenty of free time will give conference participants a chance to make some great Washington, D.C. memories.

All that Washington D.C. has to offer is located within just a few miles of [Days Inn Connecticut Avenue](#), our conference base. Hotel guests can walk to neighborhood restaurants, shops, the National Zoo and Rock Creek Park. Other nearby attractions such as the Smithsonian Museums and the National Monuments are easily accessible via the METRO subway system.

Plan to bring your student employees with you to the conference because American University is pleased to be the first CiVSA conference to offer a special program track designed for students. Ambassadors from American, George Mason and George Washington Universities will host concurrent sessions specifically for student employees that will be educational and fun. Students will attend at a reduced conference rate and space will be limited.

Specific conference information and online registration will be available at www.civsa.org soon.



The Woods-Brown Amphitheater on the AU campus

If you missed CiVSA's 12th Annual Conference in June, or if you just weren't able to attend every session of interest to you, fear not. **Janey Wheeler** of Oklahoma City University had the foresight to enlist a team of other conference attendees to send her their session notes, which she is compiling to share with you in this and upcoming issues of *The Welcomer*. (CiVSA members are nothing if not generous!)

Running a Big-Time Visit Program Like a Small-Time Shop

Presented by *Rahsaan Burroughs and Tim Townley, Undergraduate Admissions, The George Washington University*

What is our Point?

- Any University's visit program is a unique reflection of that University's circumstances.

Themes

- Know who you are: *what are your circumstances, what is your budget*
- Know your Audience/Plan for Success: *is your plan long term or short term?*
- Know your limitations: *entails being creative inside the parameters*
- Know where you want to go: *the ideal program that you want to have*

Who are we?

The George Washington University is a private city school with 10,000 undergraduate and 10,000 graduate students.

* History

- GW is founded in 1821
- Visitor Center opens and tour guide program (STAR) starts in summer of 1989

* Campus

- Foggy Bottom: *is the first campus, located on the northwest part of the city.*
- Mount Vernon: *is the second campus, 3 miles off the main campus.*

Students can choose which campus to live on. There is a 24-hour shuttle between campuses.

* Demographics

- 50 States, 130+ foreign countries
- Largely draw from East Coast
 - MA, NY, MD, *CA, *IL (*California & Illinois are big states for them*).

* Where else are they going?

Local, regionally, and nationally

* Numbers and Offerings

- 30,000 visitors a year (*includes prospective students and their families*) + 1,200 special group visitors
- 150 tours guides on both campuses and 1 student coordinator

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- Tours of both campuses, trolley tour of DC, info sessions, special groups/events and overnights
They do not do Open Houses. Instead, they do 11 mini open houses in April for seniors. The info sessions are done by admissions reps and senior students, to be able to give both perspectives. Tour guides have a minimum requirement of one tour per week.

* Mission:

- “To provide the best quality (intimate) experience regardless of number of visitors, so students and parents leave GW with a sense of who we are and a positive feeling about the University”.

They can have anywhere from 10 to 700 students visit on any given day.

Planning for Success

* Visit number projections and patterns
- Yearly, monthly and weekly

Identify busy periods and slow periods so you know what to expect. Also, find out in advance special dates that other states have when students have no classes and they go visit colleges.

* Utilizing University partnerships

* Sweating the small stuff: *like cards with directions so people don't get lost*

* Staying two steps ahead of Visitor's needs: *look at what their needs are*

* STARs (Student Admissions Representatives)

* Fine tune internal processes

- Classrooms visits
- Overnights

They have 24 admissions reps and 90 student employees (10 of which are assigned to the Visitor Center) working in the Admissions office.

Knowing your Limits

* Space

* When to say no: *especially with special groups. Their first allegiance is to prospective students. Whatever compromises that, they have to say “no”. But they can offer self-guided tour booklets in those cases. Also, a group of out-of-state students prevails over a group*

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of 8th graders. If they don't have a host, they tell the group that they can't.

* Special groups

* Schedule conflicts: *with other local universities and tour guides' class schedules.*

* Over programming: *sometimes they run the risk of doing too much. Solution: cut back on low-attended events.*

They try to keep tours small.

Where do you want to go?

* Feedback: *from tour guides, guests, university constituencies.*

* Relaying information: *they have a newsletter that comes out every month and a half. It contains new information, what the Dean says tour guides need to talk about, who was the Superstar of the month – recognizes one tour guide.*

* Benchmarking (local and national): *what other universities are doing – they travel around and visit other schools every two years. Some visits are “official” and some are “secret”. They do this to keep up with the competition.*

* CIVSA: *utilizing professional organizations for restructuring their handbook for tour guides for example.*

* NACAC

Running GW's big time tour guide program like a small time operation

It's 100% volunteer program.

They offer no scholarships, no pay, no early registration.

Classes come first. It's important being flexible. Tour guides are asked to notify if they can't make it.

* Knowing our Audience

- STARS are volunteers first
- Ebbs and Flows to semester

As small as possible is their keystone. Maximum 25 people on a tour. If they have 150 visitors and 15 tour guides, all of them go out. If they have 30 visitors and 15 tour guides, all of them go out.

* Knowing our limitations

- Course schedule
- Unlimited Visitors
- Construction



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* Knowing where we want to go

- Quality of the program

- Reputation of STAR program: *Freshmen that attend Orientation come and ask about the STAR program. The STAR program also has a presence at events on campus.*

- Selection Committees: *STAR students select who will be part of the program next. There is one round of selection every year in October. First are paper applications, then group interviews, and finally individual interviews. Applicants find out if they were admitted around Thanksgiving.*

- Training: *at the beginning of Spring semester and usually takes one month before they do their first tour. They go through steps:*

- 1) *they observe current STARs*
- 2) *fellow STARs observe them*
- 3) *they go on their own*

There are also monthly meetings.



* Building Community

- Recognition small and large

- Sense of belonging

- Reciprocity

- Advancement/leadership

- Senior leadership

- Ownership

- Personalization

STARs are recognized in different ways: if their name is mentioned on an admissions application, it is highlighted; they get recognition pens when a guest gives them compliments; the best STAR student gets a blanket with a star. There are also a couple of events per year, like bowling, to show them recognition. There is a banquet to recognize Senior STARs. A top management person speaks to them about how they fit in the big picture. Special VIP tours are offered to the best tour guides and they love it.

Pitfalls: going back to the same tour guides every time they recognize someone, and neglecting to recognize others.

It is important that they have a sense of belonging. There is a kick-off party at the beginning of the year.

There is a Student Coordinator who is paid and is the link between tour guides and staff.

STAR students are involved with tours, as well as info sessions and special events. At the info sessions, staff will talk about Admissions, financial aid and stats. Students will talk about what it's like to live in the residence halls, to attend classes, how they are involved, internships, how their transition from LAS to Business was, etc.

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*** Commitment**

- Breeding a culture: *Rules: they know their minimum requirements, they always sign in. They may have a “STAR sabbatical”, where they may take a break and then come back. There is a Point System:*

*You show up, you get points.
You attend College Fair Nights, you get points.
You do an overnight, you get points.*

STARs with low points are contacted about it.

They announce Super Stars at the meetings. It’s very subjective. The Super Star of the year gets a plaque.

** Notes taken by the note taker are in italics.*

Session notes provided by Ariadna Coffman, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs



WHAT’S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? - The Correct Version! *(from page 3)*



While it seems customary these days that the words “can” and “may” are used interchangeably, still there are many who feel that the word “can” has to do with ability and the word “may” has to do with permission.