

The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

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Cal Poly Pomona hosts CIVSA's Fifteenth Annual Conference!

This year's annual conference, held June 19-22 at Cal Poly Pomona, was another smashing success, with 111 participants from 67 different institutions. There was a variety of insights to be gained from our keynote speakers, sessions, roundtables, and tours of both Cal Poly Pomona and the University of California, Irvine. Another huge thank you to all the session presenters and roundtable leaders! Handouts and PowerPoint presentations from the conference are available in the Members-Only section of the CIVSA website (http://civsa.org/members_only/members-notes.htm).

There was plenty of fun at the conference as well – we got to see horses, shop at the CPP Farm Store, sun ourselves on the beach, visit Disneyland, and have dinner aboard the famous Queen Mary. At the closing dinner, the Nick Kovalakides Outstanding Member Award was presented to the well-deserving Kim Burdett from the University of California, Irvine. And we unveiled a brand-new look for CIVSA: a new logo! Check it out below.

But as always, the hugest benefit of the conference was the chance to meet and get to know amazing people from all over the country (and Canada!). Thank you to Steve, Rosa, Anne, Bryan, and everyone else for making it happen.

Jennifer McGowan
University of Michigan



News and Information from the
Collegiate Information and
Visitor Services Association



2008 Study of Campus Visit Programs

by Denise Wellman, Clark Lee, and Laura Heidelberg, University of South Carolina

The 2008 Annual Conference of the Collegiate Information & Visitor Services Association (CIVSA) at Cal Poly Pomona was once again a wonderful experience and a valuable opportunity to network and learn from our colleagues about what is going on in the field of campus information and visitor services. During this year's conference the results of a national study on campus visit programming among CIVSA member institutions was presented. The results presented reflect responses from 59 of the 117 member institutions (as of May 2008) and was the first of what is hoped to be many studies conducted and published by the CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee as well as other members of the organization. It is the hope of the Research & Assessment Committee that all members of CIVSA will recommend research topics to insure that an extensive research base might be developed to inform all of the fields that encompass our profession.

Introduction

The selection of a college has been considered one of life's most important and difficult decisions (Miller, 1990). This process is complicated, involving a fair amount of uncertainty and doubt; yet it is one of high personal importance and carries with it long-term consequences for the many students and institutions involved. Each year, thousands of prospective students and their families engage in this process, expending vast resources of time, energy, and money as they travel across the country in search of the right college in which to invest. Additionally, high school, as well as college and university personnel, invest significant time and energy in developing publications, hosting events, examining applications, and reflecting on how students negotiate the college selection process.

While recognizing that the most influential sources of information vary from student to student and also vary in importance as the student moves through the college awareness and choice process, the experiential nature of the on-campus visit has consistently been

recognized as an important factor in this process (Allen, 2007; Arts & Science Group, LLC, 2004; Barnes & Boxman 1993; Eduventures, 2007; Gormly, 2005; Greenough, 2003; Noel-Levitz, 2005; Sevier, 1987; "Tours Help Students," 1993). Through more than 25 years of conducting recruitment studies for colleges and universities across the country, Richard Hesel (2004) also highlights the importance of the campus visit and identified it as the single most important source of information for college-bound students. In a study conducted by Eduventures (2007), they found that the campus visit was the most trusted source of information by high school juniors and seniors. In another study of high school juniors, Noel-Levitz (2005) found that the prospective student who visits a college campus is significantly more likely to enroll than the student who does not, and suggested that even the electronic age has not diminished the importance of the campus visit. Of those they surveyed who had previously visited a campus, an overwhelming majority (86%) said that the campus visit had increased their interest in attending a particular school and 46% indicated that they were interested in speaking directly with currently enrolled students (Noel-Levitz, 2005). Furthermore, while college web sites have been found to be the leading source of information used by college-bound high school juniors and seniors, this same group of students recognized the campus visit as the most trusted source of information and identified currently enrolled college students as a leading influencer on where they apply to college (Eduventures, 2007).

Not surprisingly, research on the importance of the campus visit has led post-secondary educational institutions to pay more attention to their campus visit programs and the work of currently enrolled students who lead campus tours. This topic is also apparently of great interest to members of CIVSA who manage campus visit programs (Research & Assessment Committee, 2007), and therefore, was the purpose of the first study of the Research & Assessment Committee. The purpose of the Campus Visit Programming Study

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was to explore the institutional and programmatic factors of current campus visit programs and to lay a foundation for: 1) collaboration with the Executive Board to establish and enhance the development of a searchable database, ideally residing on the CIVSA webpage, that would not only make this information continually available to CIVSA members but enable them to identify colleagues throughout the country that might assist them with specific programmatic questions, and 2) a system for the identification of “Best Practices” within the field of campus visit programming.

Survey Information

With the support of the CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee and the approval of the CIVSA Executive Board, the University of South Carolina Visitor Center developed a survey to gather information about various aspects of campus visit programming among member institutions during the Spring 2008 semester. Survey Monkey, web-based software for survey administration, was utilized to collect the information and all member institutions of CIVSA were invited to participate. To address expressed needs (Research & Assessment Committee, 2007), this study focused on issues of the organization (i.e., organizational reporting lines, staff and level of faculty support for campus visit programs), facilities (i.e., stand alone Visitor Center or part of Admissions), and procedures (i.e., types of tour programs offered, types of visit participants served, methods utilized to capture campus visit reservations and feedback), in addition to programmatic issues of the campus tour guide program itself (i.e., campus tour guide selection, professional development and training, compensation/recognition, evaluation, and dress code). As previously stated, 59 of 117 (50%) member institutions (as of Spring 2008) responded to the survey. On average, survey respondents have been a member of CIVSA for 2 years and the majority (71%) indicated that they were classified by the Carnegie Foundation as four year public institutions.

Major findings of the study include:

- Campus Visit Programs
 - o Most (71%) are housed in undergraduate admissions with only 13% reporting to a stand-alone visitor center. Despite where the visit program is managed, however, most report a strong working relationship with undergraduate admissions (80%)
 - o Principally managed (62%) by either an assistant director or coordinator, who most often reports (36%) to a director of admissions. The program is most often staffed by full-time staff (73%); however, part time staff and graduate students are also utilized.
 - o Small four-year institutions reported an average campus visit budget of \$2,500 and employ an average of 23 guides, most (63%) of which are volunteers.
 - o Medium sized four-year institutions reported an average campus visit budget of \$30,000 and employ an average of 42 guides, the majority (78%) who are paid.
 - o Large two-year institutions reported an average campus visit budget of \$45,000 and employ an average of 9 guides, which were evenly split between volunteer and paid guides.
 - o Large four-year institutions reported an average campus visit budget of \$143,200 and employ 52 guides, the majority (63%) who are paid.
 - o The largest number of campus visit programs surveyed schedule campus visits through an online reservation system (35%), however also schedule visits on the phone (34%) and/or accept walk-ins (31%).
 - o The largest number (50%) of respond-

continued on next page

- ing institutions offer two tours a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Responding institutions most typically (35%) offer tours that last between 90 and 105 minutes; however, tour lengths also range from less than 60 minutes (7%) to 3 hours (2%).
- o The majority of tours (80%) average less than 26 people per tour, with 40% averaging between 16 and 25 participants and 40% averaging less than 15 participants per tour.
 - o Close to half of the reporting institutions provide at least one tour on Saturday (46%) and fewer provide tours on Sunday (6%).
 - o The campus visitor or welcome center is the most common location to start and end a guided campus tour. Responding institutions also indicated that their tours commonly show the library (78%), the student center (71%), classrooms (59%), residence halls (51%, usually (78%) showing 1 hall), and other academic buildings (45%). Only 10% regularly offer tours that only show residence halls.
 - o All respondents (100%) provide group tours, in addition to open house tours for prospective undergraduate students (85%), individual tours for prospective graduate students (34%), as well as prospective athletes (20%) and prospective transfer students (2%). Many also provide tours for campus dignitaries (58%) and alumni (48%). Virtual tours (46%), MP3 tours (9%), self-guided tours (73%) are additional methods of offering a campus tour and 7% also offer historic campus tours.
 - o The majority of respondents do not offer overnight visits (69%).
- o The majority of campus visit programs surveyed (70%) offer an admissions information session, with 47% offering it before the campus tour. The session is most often conducted by an admissions counselor (85%); however, the location of the session is almost equally split between the visitor center and the office of undergraduate admissions.
 - o Only 39% of responding visit programs regularly schedule appointments with a variety of campus partners (faculty and/or staff in academic units, other departments of interest to prospective students, etc.). 15% do not offer additional appointments to campus visit participants.
 - o The majority (78%) offer free parking to campus visit participants.
 - o The majority (90%) collect feedback from campus visit participants, with 98% sharing this information with guides, 86% sharing it with the central administration, and 58% utilizing this information in the development of their annual report.
- Campus Tour Guides
 - o Other forms of compensation include a scholarship (7%) and tuition remission (2%).
 - o Many (76%) utilize tour guides in leadership positions and pay them (27%) for their work.
 - o Most (84%) institutions pay their guides during the summer months.
 - o All responding institutions offer some type of training for campus tour guides, with the greatest number offering training once per semester/quarter (35%) or monthly (20%).
 - o The majority of responding institutions (67%) require their guides to wear a polo shirt, however are evenly split between allowing them to wear jeans (33%) or not (33%).

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- Impact of campus tours
 - o 88% of respondents believe that their campus tour supports informed college choice.
 - o The majority believe that their institution supports their campus visit program to either a great extent (36%) or somewhat (62%); and most (64%) do not believe that they utilize a “best practice” in the administration of their campus visit program.
- Average size of Visitor Center
 - o Stand alone Center – 4826 sq. ft.
 - o Undergraduate Admissions – 6642 sq. ft.
 - o Center within Admissions ranged from < 1000 sq. ft. to over 519,000 sq. ft.

Recommendation

The CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee has suggested to the Executive Board that this survey be administered at least once every two years and also to new members as they join the organization to insure that the information is accurate and up to date.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the institutional and programmatic factors of campus visit programs among CIVSA member institutions. It is the hope of this research team that this study will serve the membership of CIVSA in addition to others in higher education who manage campus visit and information service programs. By coupling a better understanding of campus visit programs with valuable research on the way in which prospective students and parents approach the college decision making process, all stakeholders in college choice may be served, and the profession of visitor services may begin to establish a professional foundation within the field of higher education.

CIVSA members interested in receiving a full report of the findings from this study may check the Research & Assessment link on the CIVSA website or contact the research team. Please remember, the results of this survey are simply a beginning, one initial study. With the help of the membership, the Research and Assessment Committee plans to conduct research throughout the field of campus information and visitor services, research that we believe is necessary to establish professional credibility and a foundation for the identification of “best practices” within the field. Members are encouraged to contact the Research and Assessment Committee (member contact information is listed on the website) if you have any questions, research interests, or needs. The Committee is holding monthly conference calls to address expressed needs as well as other research interests.

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Clark Lee
University of South Carolina

Membership Renewal

Have you renewed your CIVSA membership for one more year? If not, don't forget that your yearly membership ended on **July 31**. To continue to receive your fabulous CIVSA benefits including access to the CIVSA website, the listserv, and first notification about the annual CIVSA conference, you must renew your membership immediately.

There are several types of membership available:

Professional Membership (one person) - \$90/year

Institutional Membership (up to three people from the same institution) - \$200/year; plus \$40 for each additional member

Emeritus Membership (members who are officially retired from their institution) - \$40/year

You can visit the CIVSA website to read more details about the various types of membership.

To renew your membership, go to http://civsa.org/membership/membership_application.php and fill in all the required fields. You can pay for membership by check or credit card. If you choose credit card, you will be automatically redirected to PayPal (you do not need a PayPal account to pay). If you pay by check, mail your check and the printed membership application to CIVSA Headquarters:

P.O. Box 971
Clemmons, NC 27012
phone: 336 499-6207
fax: 336 499-3319
e-mail: civsaHQ@civsa.org

Contact Headquarters with any questions about the current status of your membership.

Our Federal ID number for use when processing your payment is **13-384-4646**.

Solidarity with Customers is Secret to Success in Call Centers

ANN ARBOR, Mich.—How do the best call center agents get cranky, dissatisfied customers to calm down and find satisfaction? They show solidarity with the caller, says Priscilla Rogers, associate professor of business communication at Ross Business School.

Rogers studied stressful calls between customers and agents at a Singapore call center in the financial services sector. She and her co-researchers found a high correlation between agents who showed solidarity and the courtesy rating of the call. The courtesy rating was calculated based on the customer service agent's deference, respect, self-control, and successful regulation of the caller's emotions during the conversation.

"Solidarity expression challenges traditional views of politeness and is less about the presentation of self and more about enabling collaboration with the other," says Rogers. "Solidarity can only develop if the agent becomes engaged with the caller to fully, not superficially, understand the caller's needs."

Rogers' colleagues in the study included Colin Clark of the University of Sydney and Ulrike Murfett and Soon Ang of the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore. They found solidarity also was highly correlated with other characteristics of successful calls, such as whether an agent anticipated the caller's needs, showed attentiveness to the caller, asked for direction from the caller, and empathized with the caller only without distracting from the task.

According to Rogers and her team's research, callers express satisfaction when agents employ with a wide variety of responses to implement these tenets.

Anticipate needs. Grasp the customer's unstated needs or concerns, making an effort to confirm and address them ("Do you want me to check the amount?"). Offer information or help before the customer has to ask for it ("Yes, that's true. In addition, you need to call your bank.") If the customer has to ask you to explain a procedure or calculate a figure, you may not have anticipated his or her needs adequately.

"Offer suggestions, solutions, or resolution without the caller's direct request," advises Rogers. "In other words, think ahead on the caller's behalf."

Be attentive. Be fully committed to the conversation, listening to respond in a way that moves the call toward resolution and customer satisfaction. Showing attentiveness may involve confirming that the customer understands your explanations ("Should I explain this another way perhaps?"), or adjusting your speech to match the customer's level of comprehension (Agent: "How do I address you, Sir?" Customer: "Huh?" Agent: "What's your name?").

"We came to understand showing attentiveness as being present in the conversation," says Rogers. "An agent could do this via acknowledgment tokens ('yes,' 'alright'), commenting, or giving feedback or explanations."

Ask for direction. Try hard to discover what the caller really means or needs. Solicit follow-up information and ensure that any assumptions you make during the course of the interaction are correct. A customer's request may sound familiar, but is it really? Check your understanding ("You want to review your investment policy, is it?").

"It's okay to acknowledge lack of information, but work with the customer to ensure that it's eventually obtained," says Rogers.

Be wary of empathy. Focus on the caller's request. Expressions of empathy may distract from this. Be aware of and respond to a customer's feelings, but don't let the conversation deviate from the task by getting personally involved in a customer's situation.

"It's as much about offering empathy to the caller as it is about withholding it," says Rogers. "To get it right, the agent and caller need to be on the same page and work in a spirit of togetherness to resolve the caller's concerns."

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Welcome New Members!

Jackie Acosta
Franklin College

Sheila Adams
Kettering University

Lisa Allison
Southern Nazarene University

Bryan Bauer
Stevenson University

Richard Bryant
University of Florida

Tim Carter
Northern Illinois University

Carol-Ann Casey
Rensselaer

Shana Circe
SUNY-New Paltz

Rebecca Esposito
University of Texas-Arlington

Josh Fein
New York University

Anil Gnanamuthu
University of California, Santa Barbara

Gina Gonzales
University of California, Santa Barbara

Jennifer Hacke
Iowa State University

Lea Hanson
Colorado State University

Trey Hattaway
Kilgore College

Kevin Holmes
George Mason University

Erin Jarvi
Michigan Technological University

Eric Johnson
University of Georgia

Anne Kuka
Franklin College

Lisa Laird
Berea College

Lisa McGrady
Florida State University

Stacey Meyer
Heartland Community College

Brittany Monroe
University of Colorado, Boulder

Deirdre Mullins
Kilgore College

Chris Porterfield
Northern Illinois University

Warren Rogers
Southern Nazarene University

Greg Rountree
University of Georgia

Meghan Schmeusser
Wilmington University

Craig Sohl
Lake Forest College

Stephen Steppe
George Mason University

Continued on next page

New Members, continued from previous page

Meredyth Thomas
Boston University

Kendra Thomson
Southern Nazarene University

Nick Torres
Franklin College

Christina Vanmiddlesworth
Florida State University

Aviva Walls
New York University

Greg Whitt
North Carolina State University

And a **Welcome Back!** to Beryl Bowden of
New York University and Gayonne Quick of
the University of Texas-Arlington!

Solidarity, continued from page 7

Above all and related to these, show solidarity.
Treat the customer interaction as a quest for mutual understanding regarding a customer's concern and respond in a way that fosters working together to address it. "The authentic collaborator takes pains not to place the caller in a passive role or to thwart feedback the caller may wish to express," Rogers and her collaborators conclude. "Solidarity involves collaboration in which both interactants are actively involved."

Written by Leah Sipher-Mann

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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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Reach us all at exec@civsa.org

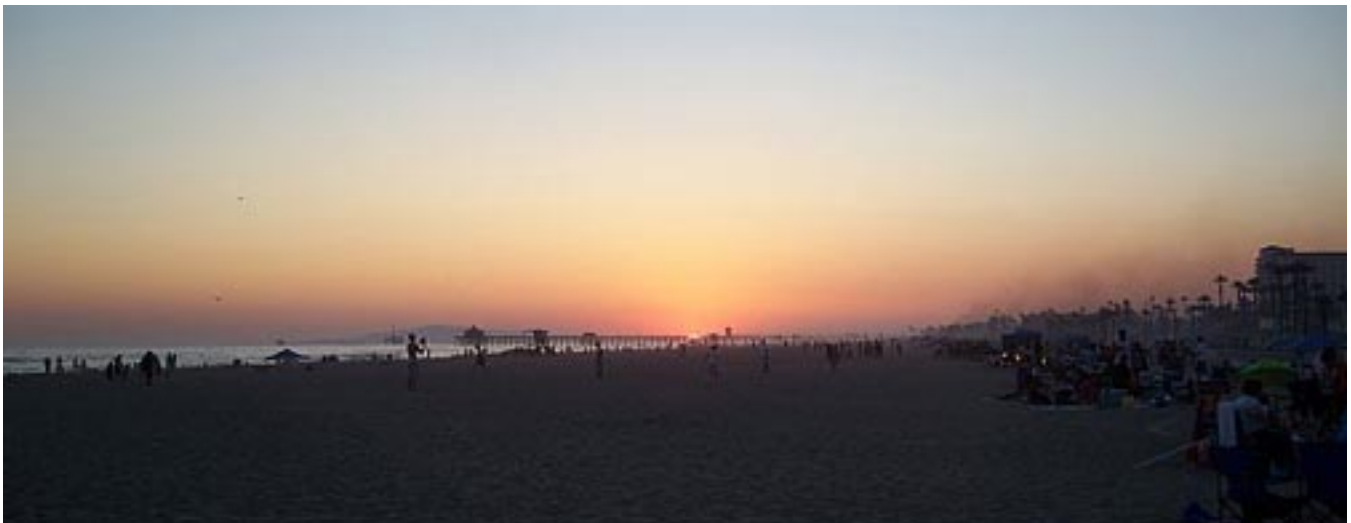
Conference Photos



Region 3 puts in a valiant effort during the tug-of-war competition



Kim Burdett (l) accepts the Nick Award from President Tami Tassler



The California sunset over Huntington Beach