

The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

Vol. 13 Issue 3

Summer 2004

In This Issue

2004 CiVSA Conference

page 1

A CiVSA Thank You!

page 2

Update from the President

page 2

Who Provides the Best
Customer Service?

pages 3-4

New CiVSA Officers

page 5

CiVSA Best Practices

page 5

CiVSA Membership Info

page 6

Conference Notes

pages 7-9

Conference Photos

page 10



News and Information from the
Collegiate Information and
Visitor Services Association

Yale and UConn host CiVSA's Eleventh Annual Conference!

For three days, CiVSA members from over 30 schools gathered in Connecticut to collect and share ideas from colleagues across the country. Our opening session, led by Jeff Brake from the University of Michigan, taught us how to think like [Leonardo da Vinci](#). Over subsequent days, sessions taught us how to use survey data to strengthen services and marketing; how to create engaging exhibits and materials; how to work with campus attractions to promote visitation; how to personalize campus visits; how to successfully write a grant proposal; how to develop effective town/gown relations; and how to recognize good (and bad!) customer service wherever it appears. We were also lucky to have Neil Howe as a keynote speaker, teaching us about the attitudes and habits of the [Millennial Generation](#) which we are now encountering on our college campuses. Notes from these sessions will appear in this and future editions of the Welcomer.

The conference also gave us the opportunity to enjoy some delicious food, explore two beautiful campuses, spend time catching up with old friends, and greet new members. Huge thanks to Nancy, Sheila, Meg, Pamela, and everyone at [Yale](#) and [UConn](#) for being so welcoming!



2004 Nick Award winner Betty Spengler (center) poses with previous winners Barb Dallinger, Nick Kovalakides, Kate Steinbach, and Denise Wellman.



A Huge CiVSA Thank You!

Our deepest and sincerest thanks go to [Rutgers University](#) for serving as CiVSA's national headquarters for the past eight years. During this time, their duties included (but were not limited to) maintaining the CiVSA membership database, processing payments for conference attendance, and updating the CiVSA website. CiVSA is a much stronger organization today due to the dedicated and supportive efforts of Matt Weismantel, Jan Stubbs, Danelle Miley, Eric Jacobson, Jim Stapleton, and everyone else at Rutgers who lent a hand. Thank you!

Update from the President

It is with deeply mixed emotions I sit down to write this final Welcomer message as your CiVSA president. On one hand, my presidential year has been a busy and eventful one filled with many duties. I don't mind admitting I'm looking forward to the light at the end of the tunnel after a crazy organizational and transitional year. On the other hand, I have constantly wished I could be doing more for our organization. I wish I had more time to complete the projects started and take the organization down more exciting and unknown paths.

Everything has been set up to move the treasury from Rutgers to South Carolina at the end of our fiscal year. The University of Michigan is working closely with Ryan Leigh and Joe Runyon who have all agreed to keep our web presence active, supported, and top rate. Kate Steinbach is ready to work with your Regional Directors on recruitment and your new executive board is ready to take office and begin their year together. As we look to the future, I feel certain CiVSA is primed and ready to move on to a new set of challenges.

I have been very blessed to have my presidential year "sandwiched" between Leslie Baumert of the University of Oklahoma and LeAnn Stroupe of the University of Missouri. In these two women, I have had the luxury of an incredibly supportive past president and a president-elect whom I respect and trust completely. Leslie eagerly shared her knowledge with me, making sure I stayed on the right course and also acted as my official listener on "those bad days" we all have. As I approach the time to pass the gavel to LeAnn, I will do so with confidence knowing that she will do everything in her power to lead CiVSA successfully.

My heartfelt thanks go out to our current executive board, regional directors, and committee chairs for all their support this past year. Their "behind the scenes" work truly helped make my job much easier. To my friends at Rutgers – rest assured I'll finally be taking Jan's phone number off my speed dial function. I'll miss our frequent chats, but promise to call just to check in. Headquarters has been my steady source of support since my days as Indiana's 2002 conference chair. I thank you.

My past eight years with CiVSA have been very memorable and filled with an amazing amount of both personal and professional growth. I am honored to have served as your president and thank each of you for sharing this incredible journey. May the sun always shine on your tours and may your team members always give out accurate information!

I'll see you in Utah next June!

*Barb Dallinger, President
Illinois State University*

Who Provides the Best Customer Service?

by Nick Kovalakides

I ask that question as it pertains to the individual you are going to place in a front line position to greet and serve visitors to your school. Where do you find the best candidates? How can you tell the good ones from the others? How can you get them to divulge their thinking and skills before you bring them aboard and put them to work?

I live in a Maryland suburb of Washington, D.C. and, generally speaking, I think the people here who should be providing me, the customer, with good service are “customer-service challenged.”

For example, at my local pharmacy, part of a national chain, I stand in line waiting to be served. As I make my way to the front of the line, which is about 10 feet from their front line person, I’m looking for him/her to recognize that I’m next to be served. But, instead of greeting me with a smile, making eye contact with me and a “Yes, sir, how may I help you?” I get the front liner looking down, clearing items from the counter and announcing, “Who’s next?” Or, I might get, “Can I help the next person in line?”

Duh! Here I am. I’m the next person in line. There can’t be any confusion. Everyone else is in a single file behind me – I’m next. How difficult would it be to greet me more personally? And since I’ve been here many times before, couldn’t you at least recognize me, in some manner, as a repeat customer?

I like “thank-yous,” especially when I have chosen your store in which to spend my money. So, who’s doing whom a favor? Are you doing me a favor by having what I want in stock and at a reasonable price? Yes, but I might be able to find it cheaper elsewhere. I’ve chosen your store. That’s my favor to you.

When you put my item in a bag and hand me my change, I expect you to thank me for spending my money in your store. I, in turn, will thank you for having it for me to buy. We both should say, “Thank you.”

But, instead, here’s what I get: “Here’s your bag and change. Have a nice day.” Or, it might be, “There you go. Have a nice one.” If I ever get a “thank you,” it’s usually when their head is down and they’ve begun to do something else. I guess it’s too much to ask that they smile at me again, make eye contact and make me feel as if they really do appreciate my shopping at their store.

I once bought an item in a stationery store and when it was handed to me with my change, I lost my head and was the first to say, “Thank you.” You’ll never guess what the front line person said to me – “You’re welcome.” Well, since I was the only customer in the store at the time, I asked, “By the way, was I the only one who benefited from that transaction?” All I got was a puzzled look.

I once asked the pharmacy manager if his employees are trained as to what to say to customers. He replied, “Not really. We just make sure that they know how to work the cash register. We figure that they already know what to say.”

So, how does all of this relate to your situation on campus? Simply put, do you have people with similar shortcomings on your front lines?

Having excellent front liners takes a combination of efforts. First of all, of course, there’s the recruiting. Rather than post our visitor-center welcomer job openings at our student employment center, I personally approached our campus tour guides, freshman orientation advisors, members of [Omicron Delta Kappa](#) (national honorary leadership fraternity) and anyone recommended by our current welcomers.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

Next was the interview. I asked questions that would elicit certain responses. I looked for students who loved the university — those who were proud to be a Maryland student. I looked for those who wanted to show off their school to others. I also looked for prejudices, narrow-mindedness and a lack of knowledge of the campus other than where most of their classes were held.

After convincing the powers-that-be of how important this front line job is, I was able to pay our welcomers well. It was one of the best paying jobs on campus. Furthermore, their pay was better than what they could have made at most part time jobs off campus. They also got a raise after working 100 hours at the center.

I also believe that good skills come readily from those who are treated well by their supervisors. Each welcomer knew that I counted on them for ways to improve our center and services. Although we had around a dozen welcomers, each usually worked the center alone. Because learning from each other by observing was impractical, I had a welcomer journal. It was a three-ring notebook of plain paper on which each welcomer was to write about what happened on his/her shift. I wrote items in there daily, as well. It was my way of getting the word out to everyone. My office was in another building and e-mail wasn't as prevalent then.

I also treated our welcomers to dinner once a semester. It enabled them to put faces and personalities with their colleagues' names on the staff roster. By scheduling it around the fifth week of classes, I was able to get their feedback on how it was going at the center, plus discuss any ways for improving our services, giving us ample time in the semester to implement them. It was good team-building. I believe they appreciated the fact that I was interested in their opinions and ideas.

Finally, there was continuous evaluating of their performances on the job. Not only from my observations, but we received feedback from our visitors on pre-paid postage postcards that were given to them during their visit. The returned cards were shared with our welcomers. While they enjoyed reading the glowing responses, they took to heart any critical comments and changed their ways accordingly.

I can't say that I never had welcomers who became "customer-service challenged," but there were only a few and they didn't last very long on our staff.

To me, what it all boils down to is that good customer service comes from those who have a genuine love for what they do and the institution they represent and are treated well from within. The task at hand is to find them, screen them, guide them, listen to them, and then let them shine.

*Nick Kovalakides, Campus Visitor Advocate, Retired
University of Maryland, College Park*



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

Jennifer McGowan
Campus Information Center
530 S. State St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1308
734 764-2526 (phone)
mcjen@umich.edu

Have you visited the CIVSA website recently?

There's a wealth of information available, including a member directory, past issues of the Welcomer, and much more!

www.civsa.org

If you don't remember the CIVSA member login and password, contact Jen McGowan.

Newly-Elected Officers for 2004-2005

President

LeAnn Stroupe
University of Missouri
573 882-6333
StroupeL@missouri.edu

President-Elect

Nancy Franco
Yale University
203 432-2301
nancy.franco@yale.edu

Secretary

Janey Wheeler
Oklahoma City University
405 521-5345
jwheeler@okcu.edu

Treasurer

Rahsaan Burroughs
George Washington University
202 994-7459
rahsaanb@gwu.edu

Director of Communications

Jennifer McGowan
University of Michigan
734 764-2526
mcjen@umich.edu

Past President

Barb Dallinger
Illinois State University
309 438-8540
bldalli@ilstu.edu

Membership Chair

Kate Steinbach
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee
414 229-6235
ksteinba@uwm.edu

CiVSA Best Practices

Oklahoma City University Visitor Marquee

We use a marquee in the lobby of the Ann Lacy Admissions and Visitor Center to add a personal touch to our visitors' campus experience. Below is a picture of our marquee, which is situated near the lobby's information desk. Whether it is an individual prospect or a group tour, acknowledging their arrival with this type of welcome is always noticed by our visitors.

We also encourage other tenants in the Lacy Center to give us the names of alumni, trustees, or other friends of the university who will be coming on campus to visit their offices so we can help them extend a warm [OCU Stars](#) welcome.

*Janey Wheeler, Visitor Services
Oklahoma City University*



CiVSA Membership Overview

As of September 1, 2003, we had 76 dues-paying members:

SIX were from each of the states of:

- Florida (3 from Florida Gulf Coast U.)
- Illinois (3 from U. of IL-Urbana)
- New Jersey (4 from Rutgers, 2 from Princeton)

FIVE were from each of the states of:

- Maryland (2 from Anne Arundel CC)
- Texas

FOUR were from the state of:

- South Carolina (all from USC)

THREE were from each of the states of:

- Connecticut (2 from UConn)
- Michigan (all from UM-Ann Arbor)
- Minnesota (all from UM-Twin Cities)
- Ohio (2 from Miami U.)
- Pennsylvania (2 from Kutztown)
- Wisconsin

TWO were from each of the states of:

- California (both from Cal St - Pomona)
- D.C. (both from George Washington U.)
- Georgia (both from UGA)
- Missouri
- Nebraska (both from UN-Lincoln)
- Oklahoma
- Utah (both from Brigham Young)
- Washington (both at WSU)
- West Virginia (both from WVU)

ONE was from each of the states of:

- Colorado, Kansas, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, plus Canada and the United Kingdom.

The 76 individual members represented 38 schools; 19 schools had more than one member.

Since last September, our numbers have continued to grow. We now have over 120 members from 72 different schools in 30 different states, plus D.C., Canada, and the United Kingdom. Thanks to everyone who has encour-

aged colleagues and friends to join CiVSA! Word-of-mouth is a great way for us to keep spreading the news about CiVSA and the benefits it can provide to members. Let's all help CiVSA to grow!

*Data compiled by Nick Kovalakides
Campus Visitor Advocate, Retired
University of Maryland, College Park*

Message from the Membership Chair

A hearty welcome to new members who have recently joined our dynamic organization! I invite you to jump into organization activities by replying to e-mail questions or tossing one out to the membership yourself and, hopefully, marking your calendar to join us at [Brigham Young](#) next June.

I also ask all members, new and continuing (notice the lack of the use of the word "old"), to spread the word to colleagues and work associates about CiVSA. Please pass along names and general contact information to me at ksteinba@uwm.edu. I will be glad to contact them to discuss the benefits of joining.

Thanks for your assistance!

*Kate Steinbach, Membership Chair
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee*

Membership Renewal

Did you renew your CiVSA membership for one more year when you paid for the Yale/UConn conference? If not, don't forget that your yearly membership must be renewed by **August 1** to continue to seamlessly receive your fabulous CiVSA benefits including access to the CiVSA website, the e-mail group, and first notification about the CiVSA conference. Visit the CiVSA website to read about the various types of membership available and renew your membership today!

If you missed CiVSA's 11th Annual Conference in June, or if you just weren't able to attend every session of interest to you, fear not. **Kate Steinbach** of the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee 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!)

The University of Connecticut's Pre-Admissions Tours from Reception, Information Session, Guided Tour, and Follow-Up

Presented by students and staff at the Lodewick Visitor Center

The Lodewick Visitor Center is open Monday through Sunday. The Center hosts around 30,000 visitors per year. Tours are offered twice daily during the school year. Guests can make reservations via telephone. When they arrive on campus, guests check in at the front desk of the Center. Presentations are limited to 55 people.

Prospective students and their families are shown into the presentation room. They are given a 25-minute presentation led by two current students. The same students who lead the session also give the campus tour.

The session consists of an overview of campus, class sizes, schools and colleges within UConn, academics, and faculty. The presentation is geared toward parents and the questions that they ask. They end the 25-minute session with time allotted for a short question and answer wrap-up.

In determining how to produce their session, UConn researched a number of different schools. They use a DVD presentation with three integrated videos, offering parents and students a different voice to hear during the session! They send the presentation out for updating.

Student Employees:

The Visitor Center employs around 45 student staff. The starting wage for student staff is \$7.25, and a raise is given each semester. Students who work over the summer receive a \$1.00 raise.

Students must work a minimum of six hours per week and four weekend days per semester. They are also required to attend a staff meeting every other week.

Student staff begin with three days of paid training before school starts. Each day is concentrated on a specific item. On Day 1, they discuss basics, etiquette, timeliness, and other housekeeping items. On Day 2, they talk about regional campuses, role-play, and phone etiquette. On Day 3, they cover the tour and presentation, and do some



continued on next page

continued from previous page

group bonding activities. Meg Malmborg has a training guide; she is willing to share if you have questions!

Student staff must wear a uniform that has a UConn logo; however, they are not required to look alike. Staff are given a new shirt every semester and two new shirts in the summer. They are required to wear those shirts with either nice pants or shorts or skirts.

Tours:

Tours are given by the student session presenters. They begin their tour at the front of the Lodewick Visitor Center. A group picture is taken of the tour from the front steps. This picture is emailed to each student while they are on their tour.

The tour groups are shown a model room in one of the dorms that has been decorated by students. The tour also goes through the sports arena. The tour ends at the admissions office.

notes taken by Heidi Meyer, University of Minnesota

How to Use Survey and Focus Group Data to Build and Strengthen Visitor Services, Marketing, and Public Relations

Presenter: John Barry, University of Connecticut

John started by presenting the “State of UConn” prior to 1995 when UConn enrollments were decreasing. The state was exporting too many college bound students, UConn facilities were outdated, and they were considered large and impersonal with little to do on campus, a campus with a great value but at best a “back up” school.

UConn 2000 is basically a strategic integrated marketing plan, which came out of survey and focus group research. The Storrs campus conducted 8 years of research and determined that: the UConn brand was undervalued in many markets; the campus offered little or no community for students; the campus held a strong national profile in athletics; the campus wasn’t “thinking marketing”; there were too many institutional voices speaking on behalf of UConn; there was an internal inferiority complex; and that the campus was poised for change. John’s office took action and established a marketing committee to focus on:

- identifying key marketing audiences
- developing appropriate communications for these key audiences
- integrating all aspects of their marketing messages
- conducting further research to add validity and credibility to their work
- establishing strategic partnerships that supported enrollment efforts, especially with the Office of Admissions



continued on next page

continued from previous page

Specifically, their research verified that prospective students thought of UConn as

- a safety school
- big and impersonal campus
- campus offered nothing to do
- outdated campus facilities
- outstanding value and athletic traditions

Their research also studied the frequency with which various target audiences visited the Storrs campus within a specified time frame. They found that over 8 years of research, the results were pretty consistent and presented a wealth of information for them to take action on.

The marketing committee identified various needs for the Storrs campus, specifically that they:

- needed a front door
- needed a place that would send the right first impression to prospective students
- needed a center that would be focused on customer service
- needed to be providing more information to all key audiences
- needed a campus “hub of enthusiasm”
- needed a temporary “base of operation” for campus guests
- needed to be working more closely with the Office of Admissions
- needed a launching point for campus tours
- needed a center that would be a resource for the University community
- needed a symbol of institutional pride

Through research, UConn determined that they needed a Visitor Center.

John defined what he considered a “Passive Center,” one that is simply an information hub, operating through the use of high tech equipment. He also defined an “Active Center,” one that is actively involved in campus tours and Open Houses, the recruitment and training of students as tour leaders (i.e. student development), and constantly revising the tour presentation to be structured around key marketing tools and highlighting new facilities.

From my perspective, John made a case for utilizing survey and focus group research to build and strengthen all aspects of an integrated marketing and public relations plan. Visitor and information center professionals need to build and strengthen their investigative skills and utilize research to validate action. Furthermore, integrating marketing plans, while difficult to implement, makes a significant difference to the support, utilization, and success of visitor and information services.

notes taken by Denise Wellman, University of South Carolina

Useful Conference Website

Too busy being fascinated during Neil Howe’s conference keynote to take notes? Don’t worry! His whole presentation about the Millennial Generation can be found here:

http://www.lifecourse.com/special/040616_conn.html

Conference Memories!



CiVSA members gather outside UConn's Lodewick Visitor Center.



There's nothing CiVSA President Barb Dallinger can't handle!



Yale's beautiful Visitor Center.



Quinnetta Norman, Leslie Baumert, Barb Dallinger, and Denise Wellman chat inside Yale's Hall of Graduate Studies.

Photos courtesy of Sandy Roberts, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill