

The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

Vol. 12 Issue 3 Autumn 2003

In This Issue

The Bottom Line

page 1

University of South Carolina's
CAS Self-Assessment

page 3

Customer Service Tips

page 5

Perfecting the College
Search Process

page 6

Member Update

page 6

CiVSA Best Practices

page 7

Campus Tour Survey

page 7

Conference Notes

page 10

Mid-Year Board Meeting

page 11



News and Information from the
Collegiate Information and
Visitor Services Association

The Bottom Line: Are You Running Your Information Center as a Business or an Educational Experience?

by Esther Howard and Peter Swerdzewski

With budgets that are forever becoming more rigid and with upper-level administrators continually demanding efficiency from student affairs and enrollment services offices, it is becoming increasingly important for information and visitor services coordinators to reevaluate their roles at their universities. The challenge is to recognize the importance of business practices such as customer service and resource efficiency, while at the same time upholding our charge as members of the higher education community to the students that we seek to teach and prepare for society.

From a business perspective, information and visitor services offices are steeped in policies and procedures created to maximize resource utilization. Assessment tools measure efficiency of operations that result in output such as guest satisfaction levels. A successful bottom line for the business-minded professional is the achievement of high quality customer service through the best cost-effective methods.

Conversely, information and visitor services offices also exist to help fulfill the overall educational missions of their institutions. From the point of view of the educator, our offices must practice a student learning and student development ethic that, above all else, seeks to teach our student employees, prospective students, and current students in an educational environment. This environment must continually challenge them to learn and must support them in their academic endeavors. The bottom line for the educator is student learning and development.

These two dynamics, business theory and student learning, may seem somewhat dichotomous—as though they cannot coexist within the same office. It may appear that an efficiency-oriented office that seeks to maximize productivity cannot concomitantly educate the students that the office exists to serve. Likewise, how can an office espouse textbook customer service practices that

Continued on next page

suggest “the customer is always right,” while at the same time employing learning theory that demands students be constantly challenged so that learning may occur?

The answer to this paradox of business concepts versus student learning is surprisingly simple: we must recognize both dynamics and seek a balance between them to provide the high-quality services demanded by guests while enriching our students in an environment conducive to student learning. To do so, we must look toward our resource management practices and toward the theories that are the foundations of our practices.

In resource management, we can continually strengthen our individual institutions by maintaining fiscal conservatism and sound budget practices. As long as upper-level administrators recognize that our offices are operating efficiently and we are responsible custodians of budgeted resources, we will be able to concentrate on our greater mission: service to our guests and the education of our students. The bottom line is to be a good steward of our resources so that we may concentrate on the primary functions of our offices.

The theory that serves as an office’s foundation must also necessarily involve both business practices and student learning theories. In particular, when informa-



The information desk at Anne Arundel Community College, located in Arnold, Maryland. Run by CiVSA members Betty Spengler and Robin Oldfather and their capable student staff, this center was opened in September 2002.

tion and visitor services professionals craft a theory on which to base their office procedures, they must temper a customer service philosophy with the creation of an environment that is educationally challenging. Most offices already recognize the importance of a “customer is always right” philosophy. We are not strangers to the belief that information and visitor services centers must strive to meet the needs of our guests. “Going the extra mile” is often our credo, and “service with a smile” is standard operating procedure.

Concluded on page 12



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

The Welcomer
c/o Denise Mercier
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-2569
(850) 644-1278 phone
(850) 644-2099 fax
dmercier@admin.fsu.edu

*This issue edited by Jennifer McGowan,
University of Michigan*

Have you visited the CiVSA website recently?

There's a wealth of information available, including a member directory, past issues of the Welcomer, and information about next year's conference in Connecticut (it's never too early to start planning!)

www.civsa.org

If you don't remember the new CiVSA member login and password, contact Denise Mercier or CiVSA headquarters!

CAS Self-Assessment: University of South Carolina Visitor Center

by Denise Wellman

Wow! As Fran Lane, my dear friend and CiVSA colleague would say, life is rich and full! I bet y'all feel the same. As life in visitor services continues to spiral upward, it is more difficult than ever to find the time (and the energy) to carefully review what we do and how we do it. Thankfully we have a valuable tool, the [CAS Standards and Self-Assessment Guide](#). As we approach our ten-year anniversary, Visitor Services at the University of South Carolina took full advantage of this instrument during the summer of 2003 and conducted our first CAS Self-Assessment. This is just a glimpse of what we did.

Those of you who know me well, you know of my great love for working with undergraduate students. This passion is what has kept me from the annual conferences during the past few years. I look for every opportunity to fully engage our students in meaningful activities that benefit their personal development and deeply engage them in the programs that illuminate the mission of our visitor services program. Of equal importance is the fact that we need their perspective. Who better to help us evaluate what we do and why we do it than those students who from the start have been a part of our work? Who in fact made decisions about the [University of South Carolina](#) as a result of our programs and services?

We are blessed to be working with an exceptional group of students at the [USC Visitor Center](#). They are considered the most elite corps of students on our campus and are called [University Ambassadors](#). They volunteer a minimum of four hours each week guiding campus tours, but also meet and greet the almost two million visitors who come through our doors each year. During the summer, we typically hire six to eight students from the University Ambassador team to help us carry on with visitor services during the busy summer months. This past summer, we strategically decided to hire two gifted students who knew nothing about the USC Visitor Center and nothing about visitor services. Working under the guidance of one of our talented graduate students (many of you will remember Beth Hanneman from the Indiana conference) and working in collaboration with one of our University Ambassadors, this team conducted a thorough self-assessment using the CAS Standards and Assessment Guide. Over the course of three months, I was in the dark. I gladly put the entire project in their hands. They met, gathered information, reviewed tour participant evaluations, interviewed faculty and staff across the campus (including my staff in the Visitor Center) as well as key contacts throughout the Columbia area to gather information about the breadth, depth, and quality of our programs and services.

Continued on next page



The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was established in 1979 and represents an ever-growing consortium of higher education profession associations. CAS was created to establish, disseminate, and advocate professional standards and guidelines on a nationwide basis for higher education programs and services.

CAS currently has 34 member organizations. These associations represent the vast majority of higher education student programs and services practitioners throughout the country.

They even looked at our satellite center at the Columbia Metropolitan Airport. At the end of the summer, they produced a comprehensive report for my review. This report was then utilized to develop goals for the 2003-04 academic year and will also offer a wealth of information as we plan a move in May 2004. We have been asked to move our Center onto the historic quadrangle of our campus and will utilize this report to strengthen our programs and services at this new location.

We were pleased to learn that we were in full compliance with eight of the twelve CAS Standards. Other than the obvious need for more staff and resources, this assessment specifically helped to reinforce the following:

1) While we have significant support both on and off campus and have grown exponentially, keeping the entire campus and surrounding community aware of the variety of programs and services we offer is an ongoing effort. Additionally, this effort requires significant time and resources. As we move to a new location, this will become even more critical; however, the communication and public relations program currently in place will make this transition much easier.

2) Regular self-assessment and evaluation are critical to our survival. The CAS Assessment reinforced the need to keep accurate records of the programs and services being offered that support the mission statement of our operation. We now have 10 years of data in addition to the CAS Self-Assessment to clearly articulate and justify how we support the mission of our institution and can quickly identify critical operational needs on a moment's notice.

I would encourage you to take some time at your earliest convenience to conduct an assessment of your center. The results will provide excellent guidance as you make plans for the new year, write your annual report, and identify your center's greatest strengths and growing edges. I would also encourage you to involve your students in this assessment. Their insight and contributions are valuable and I would encourage you to not miss this wonderful opportunity. More importantly, conduct an assessment of your center because it will enhance the professional credibility of our work. We are all involved in a very young profession, one that goes unrecognized on many college campuses. We are strapped with the problem of little research and even less tangible evidence of professional publications. I challenge all of you to help move our profession forward by contributing to the base of scholarly research.

Denise Wellman
University of South Carolina

Officers 2003-2004

President

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

President-Elect

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

Secretary

Sherry Case
Colorado State University
970 491-1166
sherry.case@colostate.edu

Treasurer

Marsha Fortney
University of Nebraska - Lincoln
402 472-8545
mfortney2@unl.edu

Director of Communications

Denise Mercier
Florida State University
850 644-1278
dmercier@admin.fsu.edu

Past President

Leslie Baumert
University of Oklahoma
405 325-1188
lbaumert@ou.edu

Headquarters Director

Matthew Weismantel
Rutgers, The State University of NJ
732 932-9342
weismant@rci.rutgers.edu

How Are You Doing in Your ABCD's?

No, that's not a misprint. It stands for "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty." We know what your basic purpose is and we know you do it well, but what are you doing above and beyond that makes you stand out from the others? Regardless of whether you run a campus visitor center, information center, Admissions office, tour-guide service, parking service, or you name it, here are some additional things that you might want to provide:

** Good signs on- and off-campus that help get your visitors to you.

** Free parking spaces that are for visitors only.

** An after-hours phone outside your entrance door with maps or other helpful materials.

** Public restrooms and a water fountain.

** A comfortable place to sit.

** A computer and access to the Internet.

** A pay phone and a campus phone.

** A voice-mail message that promises that you'll call back (even if it's long distance).

** Access to a copying machine.

** Racks for academic and local tourist attraction brochures and free carry bags.

** A television monitor, VCR and cassettes showing all aspects of your school.

** Color wall photos depicting current campus life.

** Large display map of your campus – wall or three-dimensional.

** Flags on display – US, state, school.

** A source of food and drink (at least snacks).

** A collection of menus from local restaurants.

** Umbrellas and strollers for temporary use.

** A copy of last year's school yearbook for browsing.

** An "Answer Book" – answers to all of the strange questions you've ever had.

** Free school-related souvenirs (campus aerial-view postcards, school pens, etc.).

** Access to school T-shirts, hats and memorabilia for sale.

** A guest book for keeping track of visitors.

** Feedback/reply postcards with pre-paid postage given to visitors.

** Living and well-cared-for plants.

** A first-aid kit.

** Printed directions to other area colleges and tourist attractions.

** A change machine.

** A pick-up and drop-off service (of items) for faculty and staff.

** Self-guided campus walking and driving tour maps and texts or cassettes.

** Conveniences for those with disabilities.

** Access to your campus newspaper.

** Business cards for your staff members.

** State and city maps.

** Directions to or maps of local shopping, lodging and dining properties.

** Access to parking permits for other campus lots.

** Vans or buses for campus tours.

** A calendar of campus events for the day.

SERVING AN ANGRY CUSTOMER ("FACT")

Finish, Let them — Don't interrupt them as they make their point.

Apologize on our behalf — "I'm sorry this has happened."

Correct the problem, or indicate that it will be corrected.

Thank them for bringing it to your attention.

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

Perfecting the College Search Process

Have you ever felt like your students need to know literally everything about your college or university to answer questions on a campus tour? Probably so, but just when you had it all worked out, in comes the [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\)](#) with a new brochure titled [College: What you need to know before you go](#). This brochure was distributed to hundreds of thousands of high school guidance counselors last year (with rumors of more on the way) and is designed to help prospective students ask the “right questions” on a college campus visit. This guide is based on the National Survey of Student Engagement, an annual survey designed to collect information directly from students at hundreds of colleges and universities across the country.

This guide, packed full of information on how to plan a college visit, is part of NSSE’s ongoing public awareness campaign about what constitutes quality in a college experience. This brochure encourages prospective college students and parents to get a sense of how much they “...are likely to learn, grow, and develop at a given college or university...” and suggests key questions to ask the tour guide, the admission staff, overnight hosts, faculty members, and currently enrolled students. The questions in the NSSE guide are focused on more “involved” elements of the college experience. These questions are generally more subjective than objective, which means they inevitably lend themselves to a great deal of ambiguity and present a significant professional development opportunity for the students we work with. I encourage you to check out this new brochure and identify interesting ways to enhance your training and professional development programs. Visit

www.iub.edu/~nsse/html/pocket_guide_intro.htm

Denise Wellman
University of South Carolina

Have you filled out the CiVSA
member survey yet?

Welcome New Members!

Kim Burdett
University of California - Irvine

Christine DeSalvo
Case Western Reserve University

Elizabeth Greenberg
Princeton University

Eric Hamblin
Princeton University

Natalie Harris
University of Georgia

Bryan Jue
University of California - Irvine

Eric Margiotta
Princeton University

Jennifer Story
Florida Gulf Coast University

Member Update

A hearty welcome to new members who have recently joined our dynamic organization! I invite you to jump into organization activities by replying to listserv questions or tossing one out to the membership yourself, considering a program proposal for the conference and, hopefully, marking your calendar to join us at [Yale/UConn in 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

CiVSA Best Practices

Colorado State University Visitors Center Holiday Tree

We have a tradition of putting up a “Holiday Tree” at the [Colorado State University Visitors Center](#) for the month of December. In the picture below you can see some of the ornaments that have been turned in these past years. The ornaments come from departments on campus and are reflective of their service or academic programs. Some people really got creative! I invited the President’s office to provide the topper. We intentionally use the name “Holiday Tree” so as not to offend people with the word Christmas. We have an Open House on the Wednesday before finals each year. This tradition helps expose the University’s departments to our visitors in a unique way.

*Sherry Case
Colorado State University*



Campus Tour Survey

Thanks to all who took time to answer the Campus Visit Survey sent out in September. I was overwhelmed with the reply and the continued input from many CiVSA institutions. A copy of the survey and a summary of half of the questionnaire follows. The remainder will be compiled for the next issue of *The Welcomer*.

We are arranging to post each institution’s entire response so you can research further information in more detail. Directions will accompany the second summary.

Thanks again for the great information!

*Kate Steinbach
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee*

The Survey:

Who/what office on your campus coordinates campus tours?

Do you have a set tour schedule or can guests get a tour anytime they wish? Please provide the schedule or time parameters for taking a guided tour.

Do you have a self-guided tour option? Please briefly describe.

Is your tour walking, riding or a combination? Please explain.

Do you limit the size of your tour groups?

How large do you let your groups get?

Do you use paid student tour guides?

How much are guides paid? If hourly, how much per hour and how long is the average tour?

How many guides go with a group? What is the guide/guest ratio?

Does your campus tour take guests in and out of buildings? If yes, please give examples of what you highlight.

Does your campus tour include the residence halls?

Does your campus tour include the library? Do you take groups into the library?

Do you host special visit days such as Open Houses, Preview Days, overnight visits? If yes, please provide a brief description.

Please provide any other information related to your campus tour program you feel is relevant or perhaps, unique.

See next page for survey results

Institution	Office Coordinating Tours	Tour Schedule	Reservation Required
American University	Admissions	M-F at 10, 12, 1 & 3; select Sat. at 10:30 and 12	
Cal Poly Pomona	Visitor & Information Centers	Set tour schedule that varies by term based on guide availability. Required to work three 3-hour blocks per week	
Colorado State University	Admissions and Undergraduate	M-F at 10 & 2; Sat at 9:15 in Oct, Nov, Feb-April	
Florida State University	Visitor Services, under University Relations	Tour schedule not published to avoid folks just showing up. Tours depart every hour most days.	Yes
Howard Community College	Admissions	M-F 11 & 2; Sat. 11 & 12	Yes
James Madison University	A student org. runs tours with assistance from Admissions	Varies based on demand. M-F one a.m. & p.m. offered daily; Sat. 1 offered	
Midlands Technical College	Student Information Center, reporting to Recruitment		
Ohio State University	Admissions	Typically, 2 per day at 10 & 2; will add in peak times	Ask for 2 week notice
Princeton	Orange Key Tour Guides/student organization	M-Sat at 10, 11, 1:30, 3:30; Sun. at 1:30 & 3:30	No
Texas State University-San Marcos	Visitor Center	MWF at 10, 12, 2 and Sat. at 11 & 2 when in session. When not in session at 10 & 2	Yes, but do not turn anyone away
University of California, Santa Barbara	Visitor Center	M-F at 12 & 2; Sat at 12 (Oct. and April)	No
University of Michigan - Central Campus	Undergraduate Admissions	Generally Mon-Sat at 10 & 1	Yes; online system
University of Michigan - North Campus	College of Engineering	M-F at 1:30	Yes
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	Asst. Director of Admissions within Van Brunt Visitors Center	9 a.m. and 1 p.m.	
University of North Texas	University Communications and Marketing	M-Th at 9, 10, 1, 2 & 3; F at 9, 10, 1 & 2; Sat. at 10 & 1	Yes, 24-hours. Handle walk-ins as possible.
University of South Carolina	Visitor Center	Based on volunteer availability; weekdays only except special events	Yes, online system
UW-Milwaukee	Dept. of Recruitment and Outreach	M, W, F at 1. Th and F at 10. Th at 3 and 1st and 3rd Saturdays during academic year at 10:30 & 1:30	Yes; handle walk-ins if possible.
Yale	Visitor Center	M-F at 10:30 & 2 ; Sat. & Sun. at 1:30	

Institution	Paid Guides	Pay	Type of Tour
American University	No, except in the summer	Volunteer. Summer rate is \$8.50 per hour averaging 1 hour. Many work in office, too.	Walking
CSU-Pomona	Yes	\$8 per hour for first year, \$8.50 per hour second year. Required to work 9 hours per week.	Walking
Colorado State University	No	Volunteers with Student Ambassador program	Walking
Florida State University	Yes	\$5.50 per hour. Van tour is one hour; walking tour is about 90 minutes	Van; one walking tour daily (Oct-April)
Howard Community College	Yes. Student Ambassadors earn points toward a stipend paid at the end of the semester, 2 tours/month required	The stipend is a waiver of university fees. Tours average 90 minutes	Walking
James Madison University	Only in the summer when most student guides have left campus	It is the current campus workstudy rate...\$6.85 per hour. Most tours are 90 minutes	Walking
Midlands Technical College	No, full time tour coordinator within SIC. Information Center staff will help if group large		Walking
Ohio State University	Yes	\$7.90 per hour Tour is typically 90 minutes but guides arrive 30 min. ahead and stay 30 min. after.	Walking. Admitted students get van/walking combo.
Princeton	Not during academic year. Yes, during breaks & summer	\$9 per hour. The tours last about 60-75 minutes.	Walking
Texas State University-San Marcos	Yes, but use volunteer University Ambassadors	\$5.50 to start with .50-.70 increases annually.	Walking
University of California, Santa Barbara	Until recent budget issues, yes with use of volunteer ambassadors. Now all volunteer.	Was \$7 per hour with tour about 1 hour long	Walking
University of Michigan - Central Campus	Yes		Walking
University of Michigan - North Campus	Yes	Start at \$7.50 per hour with most tours an hour and a half	Walking
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	Yes, but use volunteers for larger events as well	Start at \$6 per hour with average tour taking 2 hours. This includes pre-tour prep, post tour follow-up postcard or email.	Walking
University of North Texas	Yes. Eagle Ambassadors are required to work 10 hours/week (no more than 20).	\$7.50 per hour. Tours last about 2 hours. Also paid to write postcards to tour participants.	Walking
University of South Carolina	No, volunteers except during holidays, exams and summer	Starting around \$6 with range based on length of service, performance, etc.	Walking. Depending on weather, size of group and driver availability may be combo bus with walking in special areas
UW-Milwaukee	Yes	\$12 per tour whether the 1 hour or 1-1/2 hour version	Walking
Yale	Yes	\$11.15 per hour. Tours last an hour and a half	Walking through the central part of campus

If you missed CiVSA's 10th 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!)

Last issue, we included summaries from two terrific sessions: Juli Burney's keynote presentation, "How to Maintain a Sense of Humor in Uncertain Times," and Kate's own session, "Presentations 101." This time, here's a summary from Janey Wheeler's presentation "Networking - The Overlooked Human Resource."

Networking: The Overlooked Human Resource

Presenter: *Janey Wheeler, Oklahoma City University*

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." – Aristotle

Of all the resources available to develop and maintain a viable visitor services program, often the most attainable source is networking. Not the type of networking that pours from servers to overload the senses with electronic data, but the often-overlooked technology of human networking. This session offered one perspective on understanding organizational culture and utilizing the most valuable resource on campus.

First things first: You must understand and conform (the antonym for conform is rebel). If you do not understand the system, you'll never be able to work effectively within it. So study the organizational culture at your institution and discover its purpose, mission, and philosophy. What is important on your campus? Be sure to familiarize yourself with your organization's legends, myths, stories, ceremonies, and rituals.

Really look to see how things get done. An excellent way to do this is to look at your organization's leaders – who are they? How did they get to be successful? Remember, these leaders are important people to have on your side if you're trying to change or add to your organization's culture. Don't overlook past presidents, current influential faculty and staff, and important donors.

Once you understand the culture, networking becomes a key resource. The secret to networking is perfecting the Art of Listening, which helps you avoid miscommunications while making people feel like they matter. Listening is a skill as well as a common courtesy, but it is something that can be difficult to do well. Some of the barriers to effective listening include:

- **Being in a hurry
- **Making assumptions about the speaker
- **Distractions
- **Stress
- **Self-centeredness

So how do you listen well? First, keep your focus on the other person. Be an active participant, helping to move the conversation forward. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and listen for cues in what the other person is saying. By engaging fully in each conversation you have, you are helping to build rapport.

Rapport comes from more than conversation, however. First impressions are crucial, so pay careful attention to things such as Physiology (posture, weight shifts, head position, gestures), Voice (tone, tempo, volume, rhythm, timbre), and Word Choice.

Finally, remember that to be successful, you have to use your own gifts and talents. Start small, and celebrate your small victories while working yourself up to larger goals. Take risks, tell the truth, understand that things may not work out exactly as you'd hoped, be flexible, and remember to always keep people in mind – not just your end goal.

notes taken by Shannon Kennan, James Madison University

Highlights from the CiVSA Executive Board Midyear Meeting

by Sherry Case

I had never attended a Midyear Executive Board meeting before and this was an experience! From November 21-23, we gathered at [Illinois State University](#), and here are a few of the topics we discussed:

Past Presidents Council: A Past Presidents Advisory Council was established to assist the current president. All past presidents who have remained CiVSA members will be invited to participate, but the past 3 years' presidents will be considered the core advisory group.

Conference Phone Call with Nancy Franco about 2004 Conference: Yale/UConn have sent out 80 postcards to specific contact people in their area, announcing the 2004 conference and inviting them to attend. Have **you** invited anyone from your area to attend? Watch your mailbox for a postcard advertising the 2004 conference, including a website with more specific information. Nancy announced that the hotel price is \$115.00, not \$155.00 as printed on the postcard. Main conference dates are June 6-8, with pre-conference activities on June 5. Executive Board will meet the mornings of June 5 and June 9. Most conference participants will want to fly into Hartford ([Bradley Airport](#)). If people want to visit NY or DC or other areas, the conference website will have information on all local airports. Monday we will take busses to spend the day at UConn. Program should include panel discussions, as they are well received and offer many viewpoints.

Discussion of National Headquarters Move: We discussed several possible alternatives to moving national headquarters to a member institution. What about someone who might be interested in being a part-time manager of the association? [ACCED-I](#)

(Association of Collegiate Conference & Events Directors – International) is hosted by Colorado State University and Sherry knows them well. They have a Strategic Partnership Program to share duties with smaller collegiate associations. The goal is to maximize shared resources and assist smaller associations as they grow. Sherry



Present at the meeting were (L-R): Denise Mercier, Director of Communications; Sherry Case, Secretary; Leslie Baumert, Past President; Troy Selk, 2005 Conference Host; Kate Steinbach, Membership Chair; Barb Dallinger, President; and LeAnn Stroupe, President-Elect.

will talk with them and get a proposal of what options would be open for CiVSA and the costs involved. She will report the findings to the Executive Board by email. This could be a short term solution for having a Headquarters presence until a new home is found. Barb will contact Matt to change the contact request on website to Kate and her information. Kate will send out new member information for now.

Communications: Next *Welcomer* will have information about the 2004 Conference. The May issue will have more information about plans for Headquarters, along with an interest inventory so members can begin thinking about service opportunities for the coming year. Listserv Surveys – remember to tabulate your responses and send the completed information to Denise Mercier to be published in the newsletter. We are looking to find someone to handle the website – perhaps we can farm it out to a company that does that.

Miscellaneous Discussion: Student Membership? Good idea, but one for the future. It will require additional programming to gear it to them. Matt would like to continue to be our representative with CAS. CAS is based on seniority of members which means that CiVSA has a valid voice. We started working on suggestions for 2004-2005 officers. Nothing like getting an early jump on things!

CiVSA 2005: Troy Selk from [Brigham Young University](#) met with us Saturday morning to discuss details of our 2005 conference. We will identify a Program Chair so they can start preparing!

2003 Conference Evaluations: We will look for suggested topics people would like to see presented at the conference, keeping in mind our diverse membership – parking, information, tours, welcome centers, etc.

Barb was a wonderful hostess – but who would expect anything less?! All in all, the 2 days seemed a blur of ideas, activities, and phone calls. It was an eye-opener for me, as to the wheels of the organization turning all year long, and I felt honored to be a part of it. This is a great association to belong to!

*Sherry Case
Colorado State University*

Rarely, however, do our offices consider the impact that we can, and should, have on the students with whom we come into contact. As members of the higher education community, we share a common responsibility to teach students to be productive members of society and to create environments that will be conducive to their development as individuals and as members of their communities. The strictest adherent to student development theory would advocate a philosophy that calls for an environment that relentlessly challenges students, believing that “cognitive dissonance,” or difficult situations that involve tough decisions, is the best way to help students learn.

Student learning through challenging situations can easily coexist in a customer service environment. The best opportunity that we as information and visitor services professionals have to create an educational environment for students is with the student employees and volunteers who work in our offices every day. Student employment is an ideal setting for creating challenging environments that cause students to think, hypothesize, test their theories, and rethink the problems they encounter. Not only will students appreciate the opportunity to learn and grow in an intellectually stimulating atmosphere, but they will also better serve the guests who are our ultimate focus utilizing the knowledge and skills they have developed. By placing an emphasis on our students’ educational growth, we are taking advantage of our most valuable commodity: human resources.

Front-line services for our customers can be another opportunity to involve a degree of challenge designed to foster learning and development among the student population. Although we must be careful not to look

away from our focus on customer service, we can also remember that the theories of our offices can involve a certain amount of challenge designed to encourage learning. For example, in offices that frequently deal with information inquiries from students (as opposed to prospective students, parents, or visitors), a separate set of procedures could exist that call for a student to receive the requested information, but also a reference to the resource in which that information is located. In practice, an employee in an office with these specialized procedures may answer an incoming telephone call from a student interested in finding out the hours for a dining establishment on campus. The employee would respond to the inquiry with the requested information, but would also suggest the direct telephone number or Web site so that in the future the student will know where to directly find the information on his or her own. The student will now be better prepared to navigate his or her environment because of the intentional educational process in place at the information and visitor services office.

The bottom line is that every office must evaluate its processes to determine how much the office is designed to run like a business and how much it is designed to run like an educational experience. We have responsibilities both as custodians of valuable university resources and as educators of our student populations. Successful information and visitor services offices recognize a balance between business practices and student learning and ascribe to an intentional and strategic combination of the two different dynamics.

Esther Howard, Master's of Business Administration Candidate
Peter Swerdzewski, Master's of Education – College Student
Personnel Administration Candidate
James Madison University



Are you ready for next year's conference? Mark your calendars for **June 5-8, 2004** when we will be in Connecticut with our two hosts, **Yale and UConn**. Now is the perfect time to start thinking about what topic you can present!

