

The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

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News and Information from the
Collegiate Information and
Visitor Services Association

Washington, D.C. Awaits You!

by Betty Spengler

Every CiVSA conference has its own unique personality and memorable highlights and the 2006 Annual Conference at American University promises the same! For three amazing days in June you will experience the best that CiVSA, American University and our Nation's Capital have to offer.



The Odyssey cruises up the Potomac, past the monuments at night

You will be inspired from the time you arrive on the lovely American University campus for a good old-fashioned AU BBQ, until the [closing dinner cruise](#) down the Potomac River past some of our country's most treasured monuments bathed in moonlight.

All hotel reservations should be made by calling the [Embassy Suites at Chevy Chase Pavillion](#) directly (888-324-2728). Our block is almost full so please make your reservations as soon as possible and be sure to mention CiVSA!

We've planned lots of opportunities for you to learn from and share with CiVSA colleagues. The programming kicks off Saturday with a panel discussion and a dynamite Keynote address from [Joan Fox](#), a nationally recognized customer service expert.

continued on next page

Conference, continued from front page

And it doesn't stop there! Between Sunday morning and Monday afternoon you will have six opportunities to participate in concurrent sessions and roundtable discussions. With 16 different sessions to choose from, you may find yourself wishing you could be in two (or three) places at once!

Here are just a few of the sessions we have planned:

- *How to Avoid Being a MISinformation Center*
- *Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse, Multi-faceted Ambassador Staff*
- *Marketing Your Program*
- *Solving Staffing Headaches*

With so many sessions planned, you might wonder how there will be time for anything else. Never fear! This conference schedule is jam-packed with everything you have come to expect from a great CiVSA conference!

Nearby [George Washington University](#) is rolling out the red carpet for CiVSA members on Monday afternoon. Our visit to GW will include a lunch and campus tour. They have been welcoming visitors for over 180 years, and their tour promises a “glimpse at the traditions, diversity, intellectual community, and spirit of the real GW.”

All this, and we've even left some free time for exploring! By the way, as you stroll AU's campus and take in the gorgeous flowering plants and landscaping, you may wonder if you somehow ended up at the National Arboretum. Your thinking isn't far from the truth because in 2003, the campus was designated a national arboretum and garden!

Check out our conference website: www.civsa.org/conference-conference2006.htm, for a complete conference schedule, as well as information about getting to Washington, D.C., and hotel information.

We can't wait to see you at this year's Conference at American University!

Your 2006 Conference Committee

Sara Goode, Emily Jones, Quinnetta Norman, Heather Rodenhizer, and Betty Spengler



Beautiful flowers outside the Mary Graydon Center, American University's main student center

A Note from the Immediate Past President

It is one of my responsibilities to put together the proposed slate of officers for the 2006 fiscal year. While I have actively been making calls to people in the organization, I still need your help!!! You ask, “How can I help?” You can do so by nominating a colleague or by nominating yourself; either way, you get to work with a great bunch of folks. Serving on the Board of this phenomenal organization is a lot of work, but it is also a lot of fun, so please seriously consider getting involved! If you think of anyone please forward their name(s) to me at StroupeL@missouri.edu or call me at 573-882-6333; can't wait to hear from you.

My First CiVSA Conference

by Monte Cooley

Having attended the CiVSA 2005 conference at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, I'm going to take a few moments to describe the event, the benefits that the University of Idaho and our Visitor Center gained from our membership and attendance at the conference, and how I hope to benefit in the future from this truly outstanding organization.

CiVSA is a national organization, with a membership consisting of institutions ranging from large to small, old to new, Ivy League to community college. The conference this year had approximately 70 participants, with workshops, presentations, and – most importantly – an opportunity to meet and network with professionals and students with successful Visitor/Info Centers all over the nation. I was frankly amazed at the friendly openness and willingness to share which I encountered from every single participant at the conference. To have someone from Yale, or Cal Poly Pomona, or Princeton say things like “Just go to our website and download our training manual, see if you can use some of it, we actually got it last year from Cornell” (or wherever) was truly a delight. There is SO much experience in this group, in terms of what works as well as what doesn't work in the realm of Visitor Services that realizing that all of that experience is available to me and to the University of Idaho with merely a phone call or an email is simply amazing. Now I have the tools, and the available experience, and the encouragement, to make our Visitor Center be all that it can be – and it's all there for the asking, from friendly people who genuinely want to help and who have been there themselves.

I attended several workshops and presentations, dealing with everything from how employees are recruited, hired, and trained to how to succeed in an office with phones ringing off the hook and a line of customers waiting to be served. In every presentation, the presenters had reached the level of success that they were currently experiencing due, in no small part in many cases I'm sure, to the help they'd received over the years from their CiVSA

fellow members. The camaraderie I saw between the members from these prestigious – as well as not so well known – colleges and universities was worth the price of admission, and now the University of Idaho's Visitor Center stands to gain from that camaraderie as well.

I'm looking forward to putting into place some of the things I've learned already, and I know that as time goes forward I'll be calling on many of the people I've met for suggestions and help – it's no longer necessary to reinvent the wheel, and I've got many of the country's top universities' Visitor Center leadership to call upon whenever I need to.

My little write-up about the 2005 conference at BYU wouldn't be complete if I didn't mention the fun, the food, the special trip to the Sundance Resort and the ride on the ski lift thereof, the food, and – oh yeah – the fun (and the food). Hopefully I'll see everyone at the Conference at American University in Washington D.C. in 2006, and anyone reading this who has never attended one of these wonderful opportunities – I hope to see you there too!

Monte Cooley
University of Idaho



A reminder of an amazing dinner at Sundance Resort!

Awesome Accommodations!

by *Ryan Leigh Runyon*

If you will be attending the National Conference in Washington, DC, this summer, you are in for a great time! Not only are Quinetta, Betty, and Heather working on some great programming, but your Conference Committee has arranged accommodations that can't be beat! The [Embassy Suites at the Chevy Chase Pavilion](#) is a beautiful, all-suite hotel with dozens of amenities, including a cooked-to-order breakfast each morning, nearby shopping, and access to a full-service fitness facility (or you can Walk & Talk with Sandy each morning!). As a conference participant, you can book a king suite for \$189 per night or a double-double suite for \$199 per night. Each suite includes a pullout queen sleeper sofa for additional sleeping space. Rooms in Washington, DC, are at a premium, so make your reservations early! The special CiVSA rate can be obtained by calling the hotel directly – 888-324-2728. More details are available on the Conference section of the CiVSA website.

If you would like to share hotel expenses, Headquarters will assist in matching up attendees with similar travel plans. Please email civsahq@civsa.org to let Ryan Leigh know that you are interested in sharing a suite, including details of your arrival and departure from the hotel. She will share contact information with potential pairs, and final arrangements will be up to paired attendees.

For undergraduate students (who may attend the conference for the guest rate of \$150!), there is also an option to stay in [Centennial Hall](#) on the campus of American University. For around \$80 per night, each student will have private room in suite-style accommodations. Additional details are available – just email civsahq@civsa.org or call 336-499-6207 for more information.

How “suite” it is to have such fantastic options for conference accommodations! Don't forget to make your reservations now!

Ryan Leigh Runyon
CiVSA HQ

Insider Conference Hints

Some things to think about that you might not already know about the CiVSA Conference:



What's Walk & Talk with Sandy?

Walk & Talk with Sandy is an opportunity to get together with your CiVSA friends for a brisk morning walk and conversation, led by Sandy Roberts of UNC-Chapel Hill. Walk & Talk with Sandy will take place on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday mornings at 6:30am. Be sure to pack your walking shoes so you can be a part of this CiVSA conference tradition!



Information Fair!

The Annual CiVSA conference provides a wonderful opportunity to exchange information with colleagues! As you are making your plans to attend, think about best practices, brochures, and promotional materials that you can bring to share at the Information Exchange. You might also want to pack some business cards and something bearing your school logo to swap at the annual souvenir exchange!



Notes from Headquarters

What an exciting nine months it has been since Headquarters moved to North Carolina! In that time, I have worked with the Executive Board on many projects, most notably a new CiVSA brochure, recruitment plan, and website. Thanks go out to Lamont Doss, Joe Runyon, and Jersey Wilson for their behind-the-scenes work on our biggest, most visible project so far – the website! Our goal is to provide a great-looking, easy-to-navigate site that is a useful tool for our members and a great source of information for prospective members. We will continue to enhance the site, and you can be a part of the process – let me know if your contact information changes in the course of the year so we can keep the membership listing up-to-date, and please send a photo (or photos) of your visitor or information center to be included on the homepage. Photos should be high-resolution digital, horizontal/landscape orientation preferred, and may be interior or exterior shots of your facility or shots of your students/staff. Be sure to include a few details about your photo(s) so they can be properly captioned. We'll select one photo from each institution to be included on the homepage, but the more options available, the better! E-mail photos to civsahq@civsa.org.

Our new recruitment plan was initiated in late 2005, and is running smoothly. We hope to see the benefits of these efforts very soon! If you think that there are others in your institution who could benefit from membership in CiVSA, please consider including them in an institutional membership for 2006-2007. To have information sent to prospective members, please contact Headquarters with the name and mailing address of those who may be interested.

On a personal note, it has been wonderful to reconnect with all of my CiVSA friends, as well as to work with those who are new to CiVSA since I left USC in 2003. This opportunity has allowed me to focus on my family while remaining a part of the profession and the organization which are so dear to me. I appreciate the confidence the Executive Board has shown in me and in my team as the transition has taken place. I look forward to working with the entire membership of CiVSA as we continue to improve this great organization.

Ryan Leigh Runyon
CiVSA HQ

Welcome New Members!

Jane Alexander
George Washington University

Kristin Chapman
Iowa State University

Sara Goode
American University

Julie Kiefer
Iowa State University

Jessica Lawrence
George Washington University

Lori Nilsson
University of Idaho

Julian Olivas
Texas Tech University

Members on the Move!

Congratulations to our CiVSA members who are moving on to new jobs and new institutions!

At new institutions are:

Emily Jones (George Mason to American University)

Kelly Terrill (Texas Tech to University of Maryland)

At new jobs within the same institution are:

Stephen Barnett (University of Kentucky)

Chris Chipps (University of Texas at San Antonio)

Monte Cooley (University of Idaho)

Jennifer McGowan (University of Michigan)

CiVSA Best Practices

Ohio University Developing a Tour Guide Mission Statement

“Our mission is to give a positive, real view of the college experience while showing how each visitor can be a part of the rich tradition of Ohio University.”

Okay, we might not be a Fortune 500 company with thousands of world-wide employees, but it doesn't mean we can't learn from them! Several years ago in a tour guide training session, the debate began about the “real” job of a tour guide – was it to give a factual tour of the campus and provide knowledge about the buildings and campus life? Was it to promote the university to prospective students? Was it to follow a pre-determined tour route and offer a well-spoken presentation about the university and its programs? We needed clarity. We needed inspiration. We needed a Mission Statement.

Mission Statements are typically short, clear declarations of what we do, why we do it, and who we do it for. Add a little inspiration and commitment and you've got yourself a winner! We use the Mission Statement creation process at the beginning of our annual training program to break the ice and get conversation going, especially with new members. (Truthfully, we could just review last year's statement and move on to the next issue, but that would be too easy....) This exercise is a time to focus less on the attributes of the tour guide and more on the attributes and goals of the actual tour.

To begin the process, we asked the guides to form small discussion groups consisting of new and veteran guides. Each group is posed three questions:

- 1) The Business: What happens on a tour?
- 2) The Purpose: Who do Tour Guides provide service to and why?
- 3) The Values: What beliefs or commitments guide you in your work?

Each table then presents their answers to the entire group (Walk backwards! Show the buildings! Tell about the history! Give directions! Show school spirit! Because we love OU!) These words and phrases are sorted for similar themes and organized into several categories, including:

- 1) Call to Action Statements and Words
- 2) Motivational and Emotional Phrases and Words
- 3) Measurable, Tangible Goals

These categories are then developed into statements to answer the questions of Business, Purpose and Values, or what we do, why we do it, and the level of commitment each Tour Guide makes to their job.

Three drafts of the statement are written before the final statement is agreed upon. We post each year's statement EVERYWHERE! On bulletin boards, schedules, the Tour Guide office door – any place where we can remind our staff of what we're doing and why we're here. It's great to read just before giving a tour, and a useful self-evaluation tool for new and veteran guides.

Not only does this activity produce some memorable options, (“Quality tours, in about an hour...”) but it also begins to develop discussions on other ways in which Tour Guides might serve their university. It has helped our veteran Tour Guides begin the new school year with a renewed sense of purpose, and our new Tour Guides, perhaps reeling from information overload, discover the true purpose of their role at the university.

*Paige Alost
Ohio University*

What's Wrong with this Picture?



See Answer on Page 9

CIVSA

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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Rewarding and Reprimanding Student Staff

Presented by Emily Jones, George Mason University

At George Mason, there are about 20 paid student office workers and about 75 volunteer Mason Ambassadors who do campus tours, open houses, and shadowing programs. The two groups of students have different rewards and reprimands.

Rewards for Paid Student Staff:

- Buy lunch of their choice several times a semester
- Student of the Week Award – goes to student who goes above and beyond
- Funny Student of the Week Award – goes to student who makes the funniest face in response to caller inquiries
- End-of-the-year ice cream social
- Discount in student bookstore
- Use of office/conference room for studying needs when office is closed

Reprimands for Paid Student Staff (which they established themselves):

- If not dressed appropriately, sent home. If sent home three times the student's job is terminated.
- If late once, a warning is issued; if late twice, sent home without pay. If sent home three times the student's job is terminated.

Rewards for volunteer Mason Ambassadors:

- End-of-the-year Recognition Dance (with catered food, DJ, and trophies)
- Bowling Nights
- Winter end-of-semester party
- Fleece scarves with school logo
- Hats
- Invited to attend the Celebration of Distinction held every April
- Invited to President Merten's house for a welcome back party in September
- Ambassador of the Month Award – goes to student who exceeds all expectations (student gets their name on the office door, so all tour-takers can see it)

- In the works: a point-based incentive program – if you go over the required number of points by a certain amount, you get to register for classes early, etc.

Reprimands for Volunteer Mason Ambassadors:

- If required number of points is not met, put on probation. If the following semester does not improve, released from organization.

One thing Emily stressed is that most of these rewards and reprimands were not imposed by her, but were developed by the students on her staff. They set their own rules and punishments, as well as the number of “points” required each semester (students earn points by giving tours, working at open houses, etc.).

Last year, Emily started putting her Mason Ambassadors into teams. She has three teams that she assigns the students (not quite randomly) to. The points earned by each person go toward their team’s point total. At the end of the year, the team that has amassed the most points gets a reward party. Each team also has a Team Leader who acts as an encourager, a cheerleader, and an organizer. After staff meetings, each team also holds a separate meeting, run by the Team Leader who has an agenda and makes announcements and gives public recognition to outstanding students. Emily says the team system has really worked out and that it has fostered some healthy competition among her volunteers. She’ll definitely be using teams again this year (making sure that the team members are switched around every year).

Other schools at this roundtable have their own ways to recognize the achievements of their students. Rutgers has Spotlight and Super Service awards, where the winning students receive gift certificates to the mall and also get their names on a plaque. The University of South Carolina has special ribbons that students attach to their nametags to designate how many hours they have worked. Others use pins, candy, pens, professional massages, and handwritten notes to reward their students.

*Notes taken by Jennifer McGowan
University of Michigan*

Athletics Recruiting and Risk Management

Presented by Denise Wellman and Erin Burfield, University of South Carolina, and Chad Gwilliam, Brigham Young University

Athletic compliance has taken interesting turns in recent years.

A brief history was given about the changes relating to athletic recruiting. In February of 2004 there was emerging legislation on this subject. In July schools received added information faxed to them. Each school needed to comply with official copies of the schools “official visit policy”. Changes required that tour guides for athletic recruiting must be student athletes or tour guides consistent with university policy.

“We need to lean forward in this regard and find out what is happening on your individual campus.”

We then discussed the University of South Carolina and how they were dealing with changes including how to adapt the “Carolina Classics” and the “Student Gamecock Club” to meet NCAA guidelines. Issues discussed were funding and how to incorporate additional students into a campus visit program, as well as how to train them.

*Notes taken by Jared Wilcken
Southern Utah University*

Have you enjoyed reading notes for sessions you could not attend at the 2005 conference? Then please consider being a note taker at this year’s conference - it’s easy and much appreciated! E-mail Jen McGowan (mcjen@umich.edu) if you’d like to help.

What's Right with this Picture?



When you are expected to answer the phone with a certain greeting, it's easy to get into the habit of rushing through it, because you've said it so many times. However, you must keep in mind that most of your callers are calling you for the first time and hearing your greeting for the first time. The first thing they want to know when you answer the phone is that they have reached the right place. If they don't understand your greeting, they might even hang up and call another school!

Not only should you speak at a moderate pace, your caller should easily detect the smile in your voice. It also makes it more personal if you accent the word "YOU" at the end of your greeting. It implies that you have helped others and now you are ready to help your current caller.

From Nick Kovalakides



The American University campus covered in snow - it's beautiful, but we're happy that the conference will be there in June!

Register today!