

The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

Vol. 18 Issue 1

Winter 2009

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You won't want to miss this year's conference in Boston, with the exciting mix of sessions, tours, and an amazing keynote that we have planned. Be sure to check out the updated [conference schedule](#) online.

Registration for the 2009 annual conference is now open! Make sure to take advantage of early-bird registration before the conference fee rises on April 2. Apply to be a presenter and you can even save an additional \$50! Details and the session proposal form are available at <http://civsa.org/conference/proposals/>. Hurry though, because proposals are due on February 16.

You can also now make your hotel reservations at the conference hotel, the [Hyatt Regency-Cambridge](#). Our special conference rate is available June 6-14, but you must make your reservation before May 23.

See you in Boston!



*News and Information from the
Collegiate Information and
Visitor Services Association*

My First CIVSA Conference Experience

After being a member of CIVSA for seven years, I was finally able to attend the conference in California last summer. It was such a great experience that I am kicking myself for not attending sooner.

In addition to getting to see some beautiful campuses, I got to meet people from all over the country who share my pain and my passion when it comes to working in the field of visitor services. The First Timers' breakfast was a great way to start the conference and break the ice. I also learned a lot from the breakout sessions that I was able to take back to my campus to make improvements in my own program.

The research presentation was also a tremendous benefit! I am able to refer back to those statistics when making presentations to my boss for additional resources or changes. Plus, it's really interesting to see how your own program compares to others across the nation. The atmosphere was so relaxed that it was easy to share openly and ask for help in areas you might not have had a resource for in the past.

It's one thing to send questions out through a listserv and get feedback, but it's completely different to put a

face with the names you hear from all the time. For instance, I was sitting in the back of the bus on the way to the beach talking to a woman from another campus. She was so friendly and down to earth. Then someone else asked her a question and I realized I was talking to *the* Tami Tassler! It was so cool to have a face to face conversation with someone who had been so helpful to me in the past. I played it cool though.

I have to say that even though the conference was great, the location might have had a little bit to do with it. Being in sunny California was amazing! I was even able to take a few of my students with me to the conference (see photo below). Watching them experience Disneyland for the first time was a highlight of the trip, and we were able to talk about the way Disney treats guests versus the way we treat guests.

Overall, attending the CIVSA conference was a fun and educational experience. I highly recommend it to everyone who is considering attending. I enjoyed it so much I would love to host it on my campus someday!

Jennifer McLendon
University of North Texas



Polo Gutierrez, Jennifer McLendon, Lynzjie Trimble, Amy Schreiner, and Susan Perry at Disneyland

From the Research and Assessment Committee

Call for Research Proposals

Do the words research and assessment strike fear in you? Dictionary.com defines Assessment as “the act of assessing; appraisal; evaluation” and Research as “the diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover or revise facts, theories, applications.”

Are your palms sweaty just reading this? They needn't be.

We are assessing and conducting research related to our programs and services every day. Do we provide the right mix of services to meet the demands for information or tours? Do our staffs do a good job handling requests for information? To what extent do our students perceive they are effective? Are they satisfied in their work? Is there old information on our web pages? Can we provide more info or faster service by updating or changing our web presence? How do our services benefit our institutions and justify the budget we receive, or would like to receive? How can we do it better; more efficiently; or add something new to our already full plates?

In the growing budget crisis many of us find ourselves in, finding the time and money to participate in professional development opportunities has become increasingly difficult. The Research and Assessment Committee may be able to help. If you have an idea for a research project, we would love to learn about it. Each year, the Executive Board agrees to help fund a research project that will advance the field of information and/or visitor services. If your proposal is selected, you will receive compensation in the form of your conference registration fee being waived for the annual conference held in June. You will be asked to present a session at the conference, post your results to the web and provide a follow-up article for *The Welcomer* when the research is completed.

Deadline to submit a research proposal is **February 17**.

Submitters will be notified in late February.

The Research Proposal form is available online at <http://civsa.org/doc/research.pdf>

Contact ksteinba@uwm.edu if you have any questions about your submission.



Results of Fall 2008 Survey

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

Thank you to all who took the time to answer the Research and Assessment Committee's survey this fall. The following pages contain a summary of the results. As you can see, there is an expressed need for more information on how to motivate, evaluate and retain our student staff and also how to conduct assessment. A special thank you is owed Kyle Moore for compiling this information on behalf of the committee and CIVSA membership.

Any comments or questions about the survey, or suggestions for further survey topics, should be directed to DENISEW@mailbox.sc.edu.

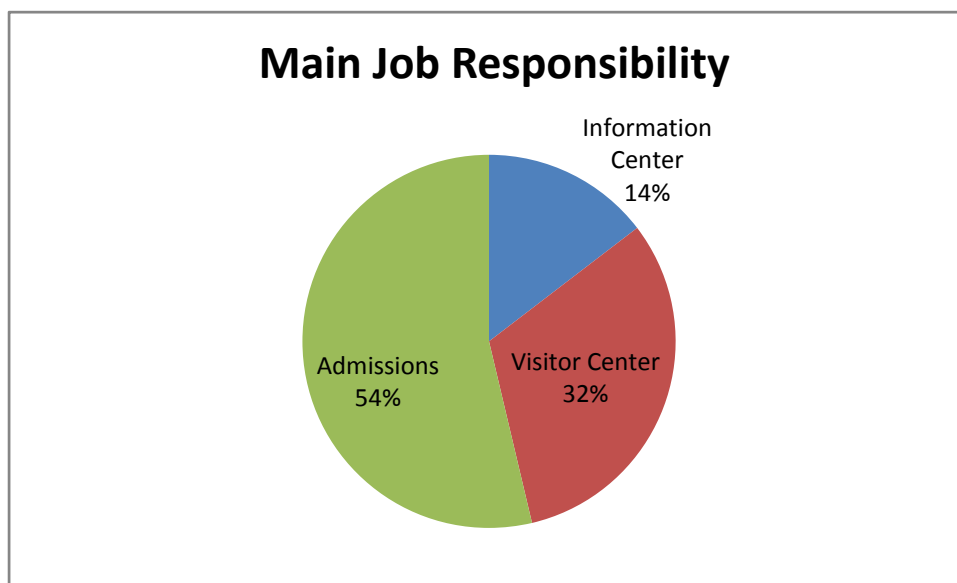
The CIVSA Research & Assessment Committee conducted a survey of all members in December 2008 to answer four questions:

- Principle job responsibility of organization membership,
- Size and type of member institutions,
- Current methods of program evaluation, and
- Areas of greatest need

Forty-two member institutions responded (36%) and the results to these four questions are provided below.

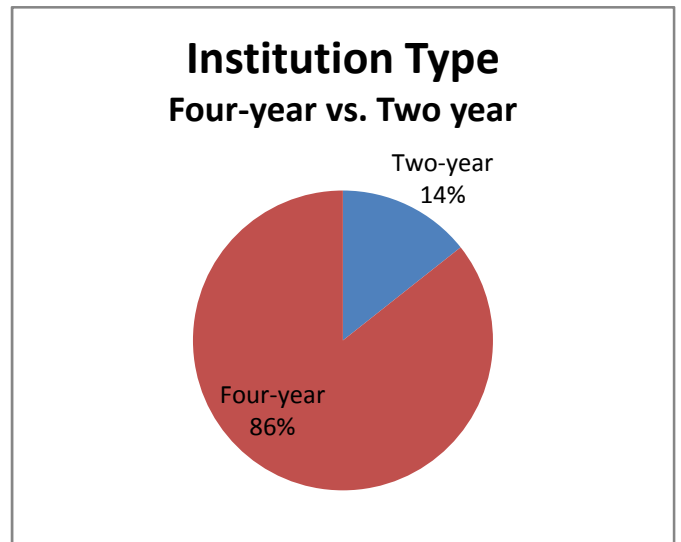
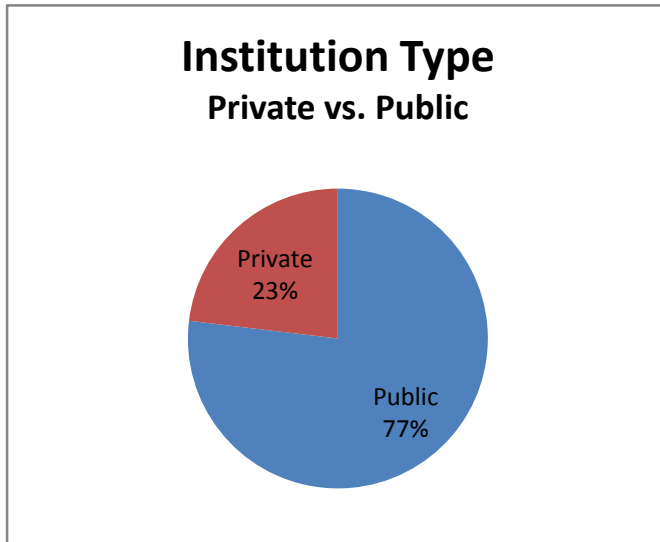
I. Core Job Responsibilities

Main job responsibility (respondents were asked to select the one area where they spent the greatest length of time):



Of the surveys collected, no responses indicated main responsibilities in the areas of housing or a student union.

II. Respondent Type and Size of Institution



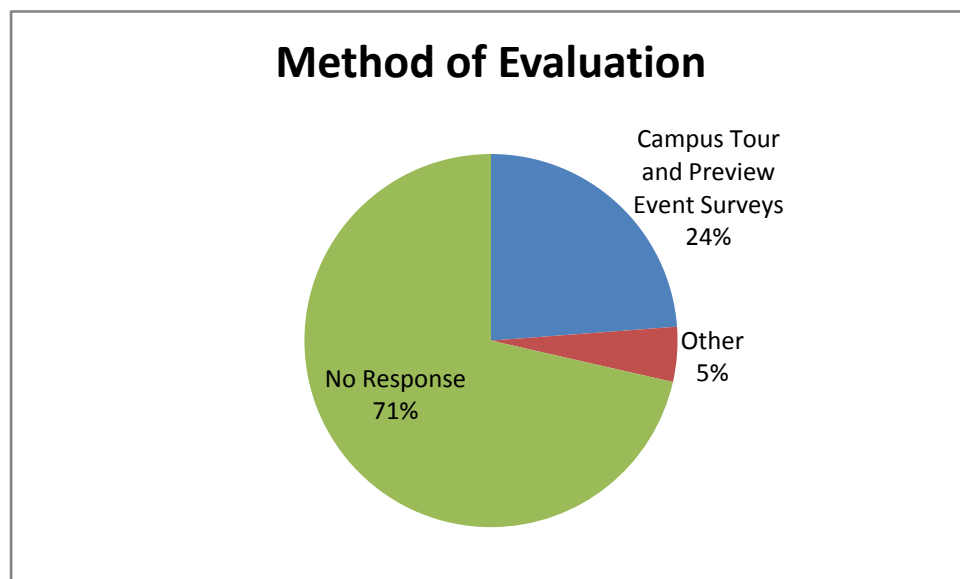
Results suggest the majority of respondents represented four-year public universities.

Approximate size of respondent's undergraduate student body:

Mean:	15379
Range of approximate sizes:	1250-34000

III. Evaluative Methods

Methods of evaluation reported to assess and/or justify visitor and/or information programs and services offered.

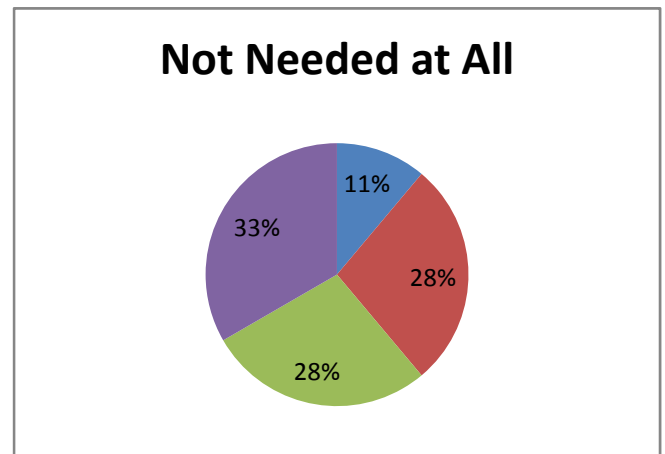
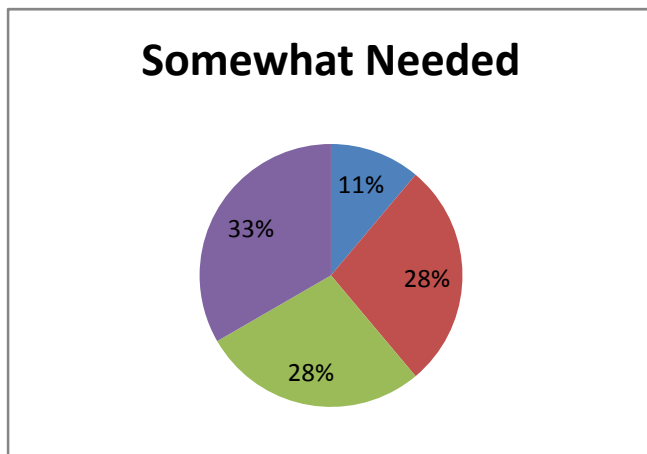
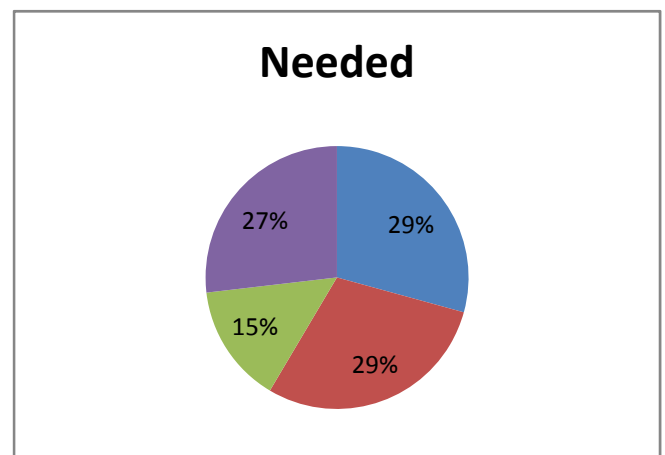
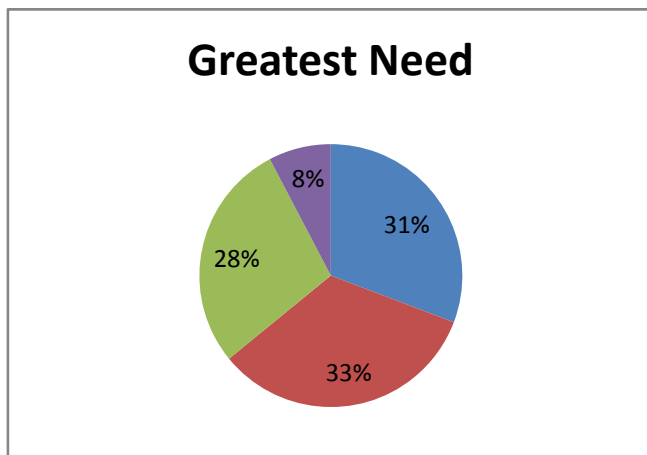


The majority of survey participants did not respond to this question; however, of those that responded, a great number used a variety of methods to evaluate the effectiveness of *campus tours* for all parties involved (prospective student, tour guides, and faculty/staff). Surveys often followed individual tours, as well as preview events. Different responses indicated that the number of participants for each event were collected as was their level of satisfaction with the event, the matriculation rates of prospective students that visited versus prospective students who did not visit the campus, and an increase in admission applications. Other methods of evaluation included review of the annual budget, expenses, and income to the visitor center.

IV. Expressed Needs

Areas of greatest need in information and/or visitor services:

- Professional development & training for student workers
- Motivations, retention, and evaluation of student workers (including how students are compensated)
- Ways to evaluate services offered to visitors
- Methods utilized to serve group tour participants



A rating average was used to determine the results. The area of professional development and training for student workers and the area of motivation, retention and evaluation of student workers were the areas of most concern. Serving group tour participants was not identified as a high priority at this time.

CIVSA Best Practices

How Anne Arundel Community College Motivates Student Employees

Betty Spengler shared a story with me a few years ago called **The Starfish** adapted from *The Star Thrower* by Loren Eiseley. If you've never heard it, here's an excerpt from the story:

Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had the habit of walking along the beach before he began his work. One day he was walking along the shore; as he looked down the beach, he saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself to think of someone who would dance to the day, so he began to walk faster to catch up. As he got closer, he saw that it was a young man and the young man wasn't dancing, but instead, he was reaching down to the shore, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer he called out, "Good morning! What are you doing?"



Heather McFarland (far left) with some of her student employees

The young man paused, looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I guess I should have asked; why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?"

"The sun is up and the tide is going out and if I don't throw them in they'll die."

"But young man, don't you realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it, you can't possibly make a difference!"

The young man listened politely, then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves. "It made a difference for that one."

Recently I had several people leave their positions at the Information Center; most of them transferred to four-year universities, moved away, or had gotten better paying jobs. Even though I was happy to see them move on to bigger and better things, I was still sad to see them go. I began the hiring process this past fall and hired five excited, ambitious, yet nervous Campus Information Assistants. I decided to share with my

staff the story that Betty once shared with me. From this inspiring story I created a motivational incentive called the "Starfish Award." The employee who received the most nominations would receive a prize. Every time they noticed their fellow teammates making a difference, providing excellent service, or going above and beyond, they could nominate them for a Starfish Award. I

hoped by sharing the story and creating the Starfish Award it would bring everyone a bit closer and help them realize that what they do truly matters. We cut starfish out of construction paper and on the starfish was a place to put the person's name and thank them for making a difference. Each time someone was nominated we would hang them around the Information Center. At the beginning of August there was one starfish hanging and by the end of September the entire Information Center was covered with hundreds of different colored starfish. It was remarkable to see that they were being nominated not only by each other but also by students, faculty, and staff from many departments all over campus. I also received a dozen phone calls and e-mails from people who wanted to hear the story about the man and the starfish. I felt inspired knowing that by sharing this story I was making a difference.

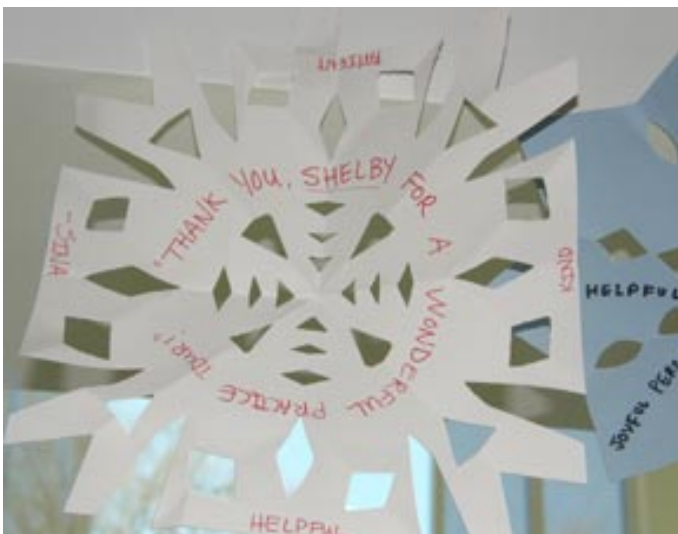
Starfish, continued on next page

Starfish, continued from previous page

After the Starfish Award became such a huge hit in our Student Services Center, I decided to continue having themed recognitions at the beginning of each semester. At the beginning of the spring semester, we started our “Snowflakes are one of a kind, just like you!” theme. Our Campus Information Staff cut out snowflakes and each employee was given 5 snowflakes to nominate their teammates for one of a kind deeds. Anticipation grew throughout the semester and at our last staff meeting I revealed the next semester’s theme – “Great Service comes from the Heart” – and shared a video I found called the Simple Truths of Service inspired by Johnny the bagger. Having these activities promotes teamwork and gives them a sense of accomplishment. This provides them with the confidence they need to give each student a “one of a kind” experience. I love to see their smiling faces when they come in for their shift and notice they’ve received another nomination. They realize now that even though they direct people to classrooms, transfer professor’s phone calls, and give campus tours every day, it still makes a difference to each person they help. I live by the saying that it’s the small things in life that matter and this proves that being recognized for those small things can truly make a difference.

To view the Simple Truths of Service inspired by Johnny the bagger video please visit <http://www.simpletruths.tv/movies.php?movie=STSR>

*Heather McFarland
Anne Arundel Community College*



Welcome New Members!

Belinda Arredondo
Texas Tech University

Grant Blume
University of Washington

Cindy Creveling
Palm Beach Atlantic University

Karla Crucke
Case Western Reserve University

Wanda Dudley
Saint Mary’s College

Diane Feckanin
Case Western Reserve University

Kim Hodges
Mitchell College

Brittney Joyce
The University of Texas at Arlington

Amanda Lively
University of Dallas

Joe Sharp
Palm Beach Atlantic University

Amy Spurlock
University of South Carolina

Katherine Todd
University of South Carolina

Marquel Wheeler
Palm Beach Atlantic University

Members on the Move

Congrats go out to Chrysandra Ford, formerly of the College of Southern Maryland, who is now working at Indiana State University. We’re glad to have you still involved, Chrysl!

CIVSA Member Profile

Betty Spengler, University of Maryland

In the recent CIVSA communication survey, several members suggested a “get-to-know-other-members” or “get-to-know-the-Board” feature for the newsletter. This is the second column in the series; look for more profiles of other members in future issues!

Job Title: Visitor Services Manager, Conferences and Visitor Services

How long have you been in the information/visitor services world? A long time! I am approaching the ten year mark in information and visitor services in Higher Education. Before discovering my love for working on a college campus I spent six years in the retail world as the Marketing Coordinator of a one million square foot shopping mall where I was responsible for supervising the Information/Customer Care Center. Almost every job I have ever had has involved sharing information with people.

When did you join CIVSA? I have been a CIVSA member since April 2000. I joined right after I started working at Anne Arundel Community College and have been a member ever since. I was very fortunate it was a priority for my Dean that I become a member and attend the conference at Rutgers University in June that year. I was again fortunate when I accepted a position with the University of Maryland in August 2007 that one of the first things I did was to submit my CIVSA application and continue my membership.

How many CIVSA conferences have you attended? Boston University will be number 10! I have been to every conference held since I became a member. I love CIVSA conferences because I learn so

much from other people who do what I do, not to mention how much fun I have! I believe the conference is the best opportunity for professional development specifically targeted for our field.

What are your major job responsibilities? My primary responsibility is oversight of the University Visitor Center (including the satellite desk in our Main Administration Building) and the great students who staff these locations. As a member of the Conferences and Visitor Services (CVS) team I am involved in providing customer-centered hospitality for larger campus events and initiatives that bring visitors to our university. The largest event the Visitor Center participates in each year is *Maryland Day* when over 70,000 visitors come to campus for a gigantic open house. We recruit approximately 100 volunteers from campus groups and organizations to staff 11 Information Stations set up across campus that help people find their way around.



At Huntington Beach during last year's conference

What is a typical day like at your job? I have two offices so many days find me going back and forth between the Visitor Center and the CVS office at some point. Many days I stop by the Visitor Center in the morning so I can be around when prospective students are arriving for undergraduate admissions information sessions. Most days I catch up with my awesome student manager to chat about tours and staffing issues.

Betty, continued on next page

Betty, continued from previous page

Afternoons are often spent at the CVS office so I can stay in the loop on bigger department projects and initiatives. I spend a lot of time working on projects and answering email, as I am the gatekeeper for two departmental email boxes. I almost always eat lunch at my desk because I like to!

What is your best piece of advice for other CIVSA members? My best advice is to build a strong team because if you do they won't let you (or each other) down. The Visitor Center opens early - 8am Monday through Friday and 9am on Saturdays - and the student scheduled is rarely late or a no-show and they always show up for their tours. Once our schedule is in place each semester the students are completely responsible for finding replacements if they can't work and they always figure it out. I credit the lack of scheduling problems completely to the fact that my students feel like family. An email asking someone to cover a shift can go out and two or three people will immediately offer to help. This is pretty amazing since there are currently only 15 students on staff.

What is the most fun thing that your office does? The most fun for me are soup days! I bring a crock pot full of soup or chili and brownies or fudge and spend the day catching up with the students when they drop by to eat. It is a really great way to get to know them better and an informal way to learn about issues in the Visitor Center that may need attention. I have been known to send out an email with the subject line: "Tomorrow it will be chili." This only works when it is cold outside!

What is your favorite part of working in visitor/information services? I absolutely love working with the students. I know everyone says this, but my students are the best and the brightest! I love what they teach me and I think it helps me stay young. This is the perfect profession for me because I like helping and taking care of people. It is kind of an extension of the mother in me. Now that I am an empty-nester I think it is even more perfect!

How many items are on your current to-do list? Hmmmm.....don't make me look!



The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was established in 1979 and represents an ever-growing consortium of higher education professional 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 36 member organizations. These associations represent the vast majority of higher education student programs and service practitioners throughout the country.

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Have a question for the entire Board?
Reach us all at exec@civsa.org