

# the CIVSA WELCOMER

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

## Why your students can benefit from our conference

By Julian Olivas, CIVSA President



*Pictured above: A snowy Houston Street in San Antonio, Texas*

### *In this issue*

Letter from the President	1
Conference Programming	2
5 Reasons to Attend the Conference	3
My First CIVSA Conference	4
Have you seen CIVY?	6
Membership Drive Winners	6
CIVSA Member Profile	7
Noel Levitz - Campus Tour Best Practices	8
Lending Library	10
New Members	11

One of my favorite things about attending our annual conference is the opportunity it presents to expose our student leaders of President's Select, our student ambassadors at Texas Tech, to our profession. Not only is it a bonding experience for them, it allows them to develop as individuals and leaders. Since the first time I attended the CIVSA conference in Washington, DC in 2006, I've made an effort to ensure that we have student representation at each conference. This exposure to a professional conference setting is invaluable because it allows them to see what it is like to network and exchange thoughts and ideas from representatives in a cross-section of institutions in the profession. It also gives them the opportunity to learn about the various models and structures when it comes to our student workforce and how they can improve upon the group that they lead.



*Julian and Texas Tech President's Select at the 2009 CIVSA Annual Conference in California.*

I mostly appreciate the fact that our students have left previous conferences with a renewed sense of energy and excitement ready to lead and share their knowledge with their fellow President's Select members in the upcoming year.

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After previous conferences, our student leaders have taken the lead in implementing new ideas and programs that they've learned and developed from examples at other institutions. The ability to see and learn about the challenges and similarities between institutions is eye opening but they eventually learn about possible solutions to the issues they face. These experiences have also allowed them to have a more informed conversation with us about our program at Texas Tech.

In recent weeks, I've seen inquiries and discussions about student ambassador programs or conferences that students might attend. I believe that now is the time for CIVSA to lead the way in these efforts. Whether you work in the information or visitors services area of our field, the one constant is our student workforce.

Certainly at Texas Tech, we would not be able to do our jobs without them. With the support of the CIVSA board, we will begin feasibility discussions on the implementation of a CIVSA sponsored student ambassador institute. I hope you would support these efforts with your thoughts, feedback and ideas by emailing or calling me. In the meantime, it is important to note that your students are welcome at our annual conference this summer in San Antonio. A student rate has always been a part of our conference registration structure and your students do not need to be CIVSA members since an Institutional Membership allows multiple conference registrations.

I am thrilled with the work that has been done so far in preparation for our conference in San Antonio. To date, we've had the most registrations of any previous conference and the programming will prove to be the best yet. I look forward to seeing you AND your students there!

Cheers,

*Julian Olivas*



*Julian with Texas Tech President's Select at the 2006 CIVSA Annual Conference closing dinner along the Potomac River in Washington, D.C.*



**Thank you to the 2011 Annual Conference Programming Committee and all our selected members for helping to create an amazing session list for this year's conference!**

- \* The Foundations of Training Your Student Staff
- \* Embracing Visitors with Special Needs
- \* Empowering Student Ambassadors to be Storymakers
- \* Counselor Visit Programs
- \* The P.E.T.S. Personality Profile
- \* Student Tour Guides: Reducing the Bottom Line while Maintaining Quality
- \* Tour Craft: The Art of Creating a Remarkable and Meaningful Campus Tour Experience
- \* Are You ADA Compliant with your Guests?
- \* Training and Motivating Student Volunteers on a Limited Budget
- \* Counselor Fly-In 101: Show Em What You Got!
- \* Setting the Expectation: How to Treat Your Student Staff like a Professional Staff
- \* Active Listening and Presentation Skills
- \* Changing Your Daily Visit: The Oxford College Story
- \* The Visit and Evaluation Cycle
- \* Working Smarter, Not Harder: Getting the Most Out of your Student Employees
- \* Welcoming International Visitors
- \* Involving Faculty in the Recruitment Process
- \* Burning Out? Guide to Understanding and Managing Workplace Stress
- \* 3.12.120: The Model of How One Person's Vision Became 120 Peoples' Vision
- \* Engaging the Senses while Engaging Your Visitors
- \* Training, Inspiring, and Motivating Your Tour Guides
- \* Discovering Talent: Finding & Hiring the Right Students
- \* Collaborating in the Cloud: Using Google Docs to Manage and Communicate with your Student Workforce
- \* Performance Planning and Annual Goal Setting
- \* Technical Enhancements to Augment the Visitation Experience
- \* Crisis Management Training for Student Ambassadors
- \* Workplace Etiquette, Unspoken Rules for Building Rapport and Credibility in the Workplace
- \* How to Showcase the School Experience in a Visit Program
- \* How CRM Systems are being utilized at Visitor Centers
- \* Staff Retreats and Team Building
- \* Building a Visitor's Center: The Good, The Bad, The Successful
- \* Gifting for Student Workers
- \* Paid versus Unpaid Student Tour Guides



## Five Reasons You Should be in San Antonio in June

by Betty Spengler, CIVSA Immediate Past President & 2011 Conference Committee Chair  
University of Maryland, College Park

- 1. The educational opportunities!** With almost 40 sessions to choose from including plenary sessions, presentations, discussions and panels you are sure to walk away with new ideas and information you can put to immediate use on your campus. Our Keynote Speaker Jason Young, a former leader at Southwest Airlines, has been called a "rare breed" when it comes to developing leadership, team and customer service initiatives. In his presentation '*The Ultimate High-Performance Workplace*' Jason will discuss how to create and sustain a high performance workplace where people can do their best work. Check the conference website for a complete list of Concurrent Sessions and Discussion topics.
- 2. The networking opportunities!** CIVSA conferences are designed to provide time to learn from each other and build relationships that can benefit you over the course of your career. Whether it is during scheduled events or while enjoying the lovely San Antonio River Walk, you won't want to miss the opportunity to develop these connections or reconnect with old friends.
- 3. Learn from TargetX!** TargetX returns as our Signature Conference Sponsor for the second consecutive year, and we couldn't be happier. They are the leading provider of interactive marketing technology and services in higher education, helping more than 400 colleges and universities recruit today's web-savvy students and make campus visits an experience to remember. Trent Gilbert (*Chief eXperience Officer*) and Jeff Kallay (VP of Consulting) will present a breakfast session, host a Happy Hour at the Tower of the Americas and be around all week so you will have plenty of time to pick up a few tips on improving the campus visit experience for your visitors.
- 4. Campus Visits!** You will have the opportunity to select from a broad range of college campus tour experiences, the most ever offered during a CIVSA conference! Tour options will include private, public, big and small. A complete list of tour offerings will be posted on the conference site soon.
- 5. Location, Location, Location!** San Antonio is a wonderful destination and we are making the most of all it has to offer by incorporating some sweet events into the conference experience. You will visit and dine at the Institute of Texan Cultures (thanks to our friends at the University of Texas San Antonio!), float along the river and experience the sweeping view from atop the Tower of the Americas during a Happy Hour event. There will also be plenty of free time so you can experience a few of the amazing restaurants and spend time shopping on the River Walk!

**There are already 140 people registered so we know this will be the biggest CIVSA conference ever. Be sure to register and pay by March 15 and continue to encourage others do so until registration closes May 15.**

**Believe us - you won't want to miss this!**

## My First CIVSA Conference

by Brittany Monroe, CIVSA Region 3 Director  
University of Colorado, Boulder

Greetings from Colorado! I've been a member of CIVSA for about three years now, but the conference last year in Kentucky was my first. I've been asked to write about my experience, and I am more than happy to, because attending a CIVSA conference is one of the best decisions you and your office can make!

Having done some work on the planning committee, I knew the names of some members, but had never actually met any of them in person. You never would have guessed that, as I was hugged and warmly greeted by Niki and Sarah at check-in. I've been to multiple conferences in the past, but have never been surrounded by a friendlier, outgoing, group of people, starting the moment you arrive.

The pre-conference session with Jeff and Trent from TargetX was fantastic. I had read articles about their Campus Tour consulting, and was excited to meet them in person. Their session was not a sales pitch, but a great analysis of what many college campuses are doing wrong and what they are doing right with the visit experience. They made the presentation interactive, where we each got a few tips for our own campuses as well. I left the session energized and ready to run back to my campus with all of my new ideas, when I realized that was just the pre-conference session!

When I attended conferences in college and after, I remember faculty advisors and supervisors stressing to take as many notes as possible, to absorb the creative energies from noted presenters, but that it was also extremely important to network with those attending the conference. In the past, I have attended conferences where I found this difficult to do. Everyone seemed to go to a session and then run back up to their hotel room. CIVSA however, builds group dinners and activities into the conference that give you ample opportunity to network and meet others. On the bus rides, campus tours, or conference meals, I often found myself in conversations with others about how they run their group visit programs or how they train their tour guides.

The conference is built in a way that you are sure not to get bored by the last day. There is a good mix of presentations as well as small group discussions. You're not just sitting passively all day listening to presenters, but often times interacting, sharing ideas, and getting feedback on new things to try. The conference is a great sounding board for ideas and inspiration, much like the listserv, but even better because you are in a room with other visit coordinators and admission counselors who want to share ideas and help you. There is great variety in the size and types of organizations we all work at as well.



*Brittany and Sarah Walz (George Mason University) are winners in the Derby Hat contest at the 2010 Annual Conference in Lexington, Kentucky.*

One of my favorite sessions was a group of high school seniors who shared their experience having just finished the college search process. It was an open Q&A session, where I think many of us gained insight in to how important the parent opinion is to the student, what they wanted to see on a campus tour, and how they ultimately chose their university. It was great hearing from students who had gone through the process and to get their feedback on what they like and don't like.



*Brittany and Niki Mendrinis (Temple University)  
inside our conference hotel in Lexington, Kentucky.*

**Biggest piece of advice:** Go to every programmed event on the schedule, meet as many people as you can, and make sure to go to the Hospitality Suite each night to get some free food and meet more people. That may be more than one piece of advice, but if you do the above things, you are sure to leave the conference with new contacts, new ideas, and completely reenergized about our profession and ways to improve your campus visit experience.

One of the great things about a CIVSA conference is that you may not know a single person when you arrive, but you are sure to leave with great friends and colleagues that you can turn to throughout the year. Thank you to all of you who made CIVSA 2010 conference such a great experience, and I hope to see you all in San Antonio in 2011!

I have also never left a conference with so much free stuff! I practically needed a second suitcase to bring it all back. We were showered with gifts by our buddies, for being a first time conference attendee, and for sitting on the planning committee. The t-shirt exchange during lunch was a fun way to share some school spirit, while picking up a t-shirt from another school. And the conference bag as they say, "is a keeper!"



*Brittany visiting Woodford Reserve in Versailles,  
Kentucky - one of our many conference excursions!*



# REGISTER NOW!

**June 6 - 11, 2010, Omni La Mansion del Rio**  
Registration early for the best rates at [www.civsa.org](http://www.civsa.org)!

February 16 - March 15: \$345 (member) / \$445 (non-member)

March 16 - April 15: \$395 (member) / \$495 (non-member)

April 16 - May 15: \$445 (member) / \$545 (non-member)

# Have you seen CIVY?



CIVY is a civet and he is traveling the country to meet CIVSA members. If you find CIVY in your mailbox, continue his adventures by sending him to another member of CIVSA within ten days. Before you drop him in the mail, make sure to take a creative photo of him on your campus. You may also choose to teach him something unique that your office does. E-mail your photo and lesson to [web@civsa.org!](mailto:web@civsa.org)

## CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER!

Congratulations to our following CIVSA members on winning the 2010 - 2011 Annual Membership Drive! We appreciate you finding our newest members!

### Region 1

**Elizabeth Marshall**  
Gonzaga University

### Region 2

**Eloise Alexis**  
Spelman College

### Region 3

**Ryan Harder**  
University of Cincinnati

### Region 4

**Meredyth Thomas**  
Boston University

We hope you enjoy your free registration to the  
2011 CIVSA Annual Conference in San Antonio!



# Member Profile

Nick Missler,  
Oxford College of Emory University

*In the CIVSA Communications survey, several members suggested a “get-to-know-other-members” or “get-to-know-the-Board” feature for the Welcomer. This is the ninth; look for more profiles of other members in the future issues.*

**Job Title:** Admissions Advisor

**What are your major job responsibilities?** I oversee the Student Admission Association (SAA) which is our tour guide association. I coordinate on-campus tours and special visits with large groups. I maintain the Guidance Counselor Database, answer general online web inquiries, complete college data surveys, travel and recruit Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and two counties in Metro Atlanta. I also read admission applications from eight additional states.

**How long have you been in the information/visitor services world?** 2 years in July 2011

**When did you join CIVSA?** I joined CIVSA shortly after signing onto the Admission staff. The organization was recommended to me by a fellow staff member who held my position previously. I am the first member of Emory University to become a member!

**How many CIVSA Conferences have you attended?** Just one in Lexington, Kentucky!

**What is your best piece of advice for other CIVSA members (about student training, customer service, unique traditions, your website, or anything!)?** The hallmark to visitor services is to be flexible and to be hospitable. The visitor always comes first, no matter what else may be going on, those tasks are dropped in lieu of visitors' needs.

**What is the most fun thing that your office does?** Each year, we have the opportunity to take a staff retreat. It varies from lakeside meetings and boat cruises to wine vineyards and team building!

**How many items are on your current to-do list?** Right now, I have over 50 applications to read, 78 online emails to answer, a campus visit scheduling program to have edited, 4 students to hire for next year, an accepted student presentation to edit, and as I type this email, I need to schedule a special visit for 40 Washington D.C. public high school students coming in April. It's a busy day!

**What is your favorite part of working in visitor/information services?** There is a 2-way tie for this one. I absolutely love working with our current students and having them come to my office; I also really enjoy meeting a student during travel, seeing them visit campus and then seeing them enroll. It's a very rewarding experience to see students come to the realization that Oxford is where they wish to begin their experience and knowing I had something to do with that is the best part of my job.



*Nick's students in SAA find time to crop Nick's head into a variety of fun pictures for him to enjoy.  
Sorry Nick - we had to!*

# Campus Visit Best Practices: What works in campus visit programming

*Reprinted with permission from Noel Levitz Planning Tips - April 2002.*

**The following observations are among those we have made when consulting. These comments are based on years of research and direct observation of campus visit practices on hundreds of campuses each year.**

**Push hard to get each student to campus.** Research has confirmed that visit a campus significantly increases the likelihood that a student will apply and enroll. Hence, it is important to focus a significant portion of your recruiting efforts on getting students to campus.

**Emphasize the importance of the campus visit by the entire family.** Parents are significant influences in the college decision process. Family-friendly visit programs can also impress siblings who are future prospects.

**Make sure admissions runs the show.** In our experience, running the prospective student visit program directly from the admissions office works far better than asking a separate campus visitor center to run the program.

**Provide adequate hosting space.** A waiting area that is big enough to accommodate visitors on high demand days, private breakout rooms for confidential counseling, and an accessible "home base" to return to throughout the day are important resources to consider here.

**Show off your distinctives.** Review tour routes and agendas for all programs to make sure that the unique appeals of your campus get the attention they deserve.

**Show off your current students.** Find lots of ways to show off your students. While it is important to showcase your campus and its academic programs, it is equally, if not more important, to feature current students.

**Show off your best faculty and classes.** There is no need to cross your fingers and hope that students will have good classroom experiences. Instead, select the best faculty and classes and provide visitors a menu of these to choose from.

**Find out what students want and provide it.** By surveying students, you can learn what types of visit events they prefer and plan your visit calendar accordingly. Students might prefer individual visits, open houses, fine arts weekends, athletic days, scholarship days, honors days, bus trips, etc.

**Keep collecting information.** After a student expresses interest in a campus visit, collect as much information as possible regarding what the student and family is interested in, their objectives for the visit and any particular needs the student has (academic, social, etc). Then send the family pre-visit correspondence with their customized itinerary, directions, places to stay, places to eat, advice on how to make the most of their campus visit, etc.

**Plan special events for accepted students to improve yield.** Planning extra open houses and recognition days can be well worth the effort if you have a significant number of accepted students who have not yet visited campus.

**Offer flexible visit times.** More often than not, additional visit programs are added as a result of our consultations. These may include open houses in the fall and/or spring for specific groups, scholarship recognition days, Saturday morning visits, etc.

# Campus Visit Best Practices

(continued....)

**Get everyone on board.** Successful visit programs must be supported by many campus offices and participants. Be sure to meet with these groups to coordinate your programs and procedures with theirs. College and academic department offices, student affairs offices, the bookstore, food facilities, and maintenance, are among the groups worth seeing.

**Make it easy to schedule a visit.** Promote a calendar of visitation opportunities and provide easy processes - online, by phone, in person and in print - for scheduling and confirming a visit.

**Offer an agenda.** In our experience, students and parents like to know what you have planned for them. Providing a written agenda in their visit confirmation package will be appreciated.

**Train your tour guides early.** Training should be thorough. Tour routes should be mapped out with specific messages for each tour stop. Be sure to include at least one residence hall. To the maximum extent possible, each tour and message set should be customized to each family's objectives for the campus visit and each student's needs and interests.

**Test the tour and open house.** Take part in your own campus tour, if possible, and an open house. You may want to send outside representatives, incognito.

**Test your signage and parking.** Is there adequate signage leading to campus and, when on campus, leading to the admissions office/welcome center and other likely destinations? Is there adequate parking available?

**Use a welcome sign.** Some schools use a nice welcome sign with the student's name on it in the admissions office/welcome center. You should know who on your staff will welcome the family as well - and be ready to serve refreshments. Attending to these details is important, because the first impression is typically formed within the first 30 minutes of arrival on campus.

**Offer hotel recommendations and discounts.** When making these arrangements, consider the routes from the hotels to your campus. It will be part of the first impression you make.

**Offer free parking and campus maps.** Parking should be readily available, free, and within easy walking distance of the admissions office/welcome center. It should also be the most impressive entrance even if it takes a bit longer than using an unimpressive short cut.

**Offer free lunch and free or significant discounts on campus memorabilia.** Discounts on selected bookstore purchases can be a great investment in that families will create an affiliation by leaving campus with a tee shirt, sweat shirt, hat, etc, while also providing additional exposure for you in their home community.

**Anticipate special needs.** Some needs to plan for include free use of umbrellas on rainy days, free shuttle for persons with disabilities, or free shuttle to sites that may be too far for parents and students to walk.

**Call scheduled guests a few days before their scheduled visit.** This is a mark of true hospitality. Students and parents will appreciate the individualized attention.

**Track attendance.** You should know your inquiry-applicant conversion and admit-to-matriculant yield rates for students who visit your campus. You should know your highest-demand visit days, and why they are high demand.

## Campus Visit Best Practices

(continued...)

**Track no-shows and unexpected visitors.** Knowing which students and family members attended the visitation program is essential for appropriate follow up and evaluation.

**Pull out all the stops on high demand visit days.** Make sure admissions staff are not off traveling, reserve additional space, line up extra hosts and tour guides, and alert others on campus so they are prepared.

**Use pre-completed applications and contact cards.** Consider providing inquiries who visit with a pre-completed, fee-waived application that they can finalize during the visit. For tracking purposes, you might also want to have students update a pre-completed contact card confirming their visit.

**Send an evaluation form afterward.** A thank you letter with an evaluation form - coded with the student's ID in small font - can be very helpful in strengthening your campus visit program.

**Stay in touch.** In addition to the evaluation, visitors should receive priority calls and/or written correspondence to keep the relationship going, to respond to additional questions, and to qualify the student's interest in attending.

## Don't forget about the Lending Library!

As members of CIVSA, materials in our Lending Library are available for you to "check out". CIVSA will mail you the requested resource - all you have to do is pay postage when you mail it back to our Association Manager.

Here's what some of our members are saying about the CIVSA Lending Library:

"For those of you who have not seen it, this CIVSA Visitor Center photo book is a great collection of visitor center photos from different campuses. CU-Boulder does not currently have a visitor center, so I was really drawn to the book for the simple reason that it was proof my campus is falling behind when it comes to the visit experience. Not too long after the conference, I checked the book out and showed it to my Director. He was impressed and borrowed it for a few days to take to representatives on campus. Thanks to the inspiration, as well as the support of campus officials, we got a new room in a brand new building on campus! It is a beautiful room with mountain views, a fire place, and conveniently located in our new Center for Community. There are also tentative plans already underway to break ground for a new visitor auditorium. The Lending Library can support your efforts on campus as well as support your growth as a professional. There are movies and books right at your finger tips that can help motivate and inspire you throughout the year. I highly recommend taking advantage of the Lending Library!"

- Brittany Monroe, Region 3 Director, CU-Boulder

Visit the Lending Library's temporary home at [civsalibrary.wordpress.com](http://civsalibrary.wordpress.com)!

## Welcome New Members!

Kristina Bakas  
Suffolk University

Jennifer Birchwood  
University of Toronto

Jessica Borey  
Southern New Hampshire University

Carol Ann Casey  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Amanda Cokonougher  
McMurry University

Vicki Cornett  
Bethany College

Lindsey Darling  
Suffolk University

Lisa Ellrich  
University of Maine-Farmington

Jonathan Evans  
Baylor University

Mitch Finer  
New College of Florida

Emily Germany  
McMurry University

Mary Hearne  
Furman University

Tedgie Hennel  
Southern Illinois University

Jim Jones  
Hardin-Simmons University

Andrea Konkol  
Penn State Erie  
The Behrend College

Ann Larson  
Miami of Ohio

Ellen Levay  
University of Maine-Farmington

Jamie Loomis  
Oklahoma State University

Jody Lowe  
The University of Mississippi

Amanda Mathis  
Auburn University

Darien Moore  
University of North Texas at Dallas

Nancy Nichols  
Auburn University

Ike Okafor  
University of Toronto

Cassandra Pope  
University of South Carolina

Eric Rodriguez  
St. Mary's University

Stephanie Ruybal  
Western State College of Colorado

Erica Solis  
St. Mary's University

Christine Speicher  
University of Kentucky

Drew Steding  
University of Michigan

Veronica Thompson  
Baylor University

Ashley Thompson  
The University of Mississippi

Nora Torres  
St. Mary's University

Kendal Vreeland  
Arizona State University

Chelsea Welch  
The University of Mississippi

Donna Whitmore  
Oklahoma State University

Monique Wimberly  
St. Mary's University

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Missouri Baptist University

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