

Enrollment MANAGEMENT

REPORT

Route to:

Practical Guidance in Recruitment, Admissions, Retention & Financial Aid

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 6

SEPTEMBER 2002

EM STRATEGIES

Making sure your lightbulbs all function will make students more secure, and less likely to drop out or transfer.

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Cal Poly communicates with teens on their terms, turf and time

So, another mailing to prospects has been run through the meter, shipped to the post office, and you're proud of the quality of the message. But the part of the equation you didn't account for was opening and reading the letters. And these days, you better not count on that happening.

Horrified at hearing student focus groups report boxes full of unopened letters, **James Maraviglia** absorbed the message: "You have seven seconds basically to capture my attention. You better do it and you better do it on my time."

So, the assistant vice president for admissions, recruitment and financial aid at **California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo** began hunting for an electronic solution to entice prospects.

(See **COMMUNICATION** on page 6)

MORE ON PAGES 6-7

- SAMPLE E-MAIL
- EFFECTIVE RECRUITING
- WORKING WITH A VENDOR

Projection models enable Indiana University to anticipate, prepare for huge freshman class

There is no shortage of factors that contributed to probably the most tumultuous enrollment year administrators may ever see in their careers. The economy was already sagging when the tragedies of Sept. 11 occurred.

So when applications ran 20 percent above normal last November at **Indiana University at Bloomington**, **Don Hossler**, vice chancellor for enrollment services at the Bloomington campus and associate vice president for enrollment services for the university, took note.

MORE ON PAGES 4-5

- CLOUDY CRYSTAL BALL
- REGISTRAR TAKES ACTION

The trend continued at 10 to 12 percent ahead in January and February.

Deposits rates were 6 to 7 percent ahead of last year, and the deposit projection model provided confirmation. "By early January, the trends were clear enough that they were a concern. We were much more certain by the first of April," Hossler says.

The target class size of 6,750 was going to be exceeded. The only question was by how many hundreds. It was time to alert campus offices that adjustments might have to be made.

(See **INDIANA** on page 4)

Unclutter your hallways to make students feel more comfortable.

There has been an increase in concern over what is called “the butt brush effect,” says **Neal Raisman**, a consultant.

The Idea File is a regular feature that provides suggestions that you can implement on your campus. Have an idea you'd like to share? E-mail Editor Jay Margolis at jmargolis@lrp.com.

“Butt brush” is the natural aversion to having things brush against us. This occurs in crowded areas of narrowed halls. It can be easily solved by making sure halls are clear and open, free of boxes and clutter. Aisles in bookstores need to be far enough apart so people or sales goods do not brush against people. Keep enough space between lines so that people do not have to brush against others.

In other words, keep areas lit and open so students do not feel hemmed in or threatened. You'll see the results in increased retention and enrollment.

Contact Neal Raisman at academicmaps@rcn.com. ■



PRIVATE
INSTITUTIONS

Celebrate milestones by turning them into events.

Telephone registration had its day at **Ohio State University**, but it has passed as students turned to their computers to register. So the registrar's office decided to turn a simple task into a ceremony — a “wake” for turning off the phone.

The computer system that supports telephone registration will be draped in black, and people attending will wear black as well. Even the Grim Reaper will be present. ■



PUBLIC
INSTITUTIONS

Use your Web site to conduct student satisfaction surveys.

Students love convenience, so providing an online survey measuring their satisfaction with university services was a natural to **Jo Volkert**, assistant vice president for enrollment planning and management at **San Francisco State University**.

And in trying to get to the bottom of a slide in enrollment, insight from students was essential.

So, she developed questions, field-tested them to be sure they were worded correctly, then had her technicians place the survey online.

As soon as students responded and hit send, the results were registered by the fields. Within 30 minutes, she had 50 responses.

A good response for a mail survey is 15 percent. Volkert achieved a 30-percent response to the online survey.

“If you keep it simple enough, they respond and send it instantly,” Volkert says.

“The data is very good, very complete, and easy to analyze.”

One of the issues she was able to confirm was how students heard about the university. The Web was a major source of information, reinforcing the need to make the Web site more user-friendly.

“I think it's become a major factor,” Volkert says.

“It's another way for students to hear about the university.”

The new library is already in line to conduct a survey of the services students want.

For more information, contact Jo Volkert at jvolkert@sfsu.edu. ■



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Sept. 11 reinforces importance of lightbulbs as retention factors

By Neal Raisman

Institutions must realize that Sept. 11 had a major effect on what students seek in a college and when they choose to stay or leave. One area colleges have to deal with quickly is checking to see if all their lightbulbs are functioning. Not the ones that we see over cartoon character heads but the ones in your parking lots, walkways and halls.

For the first time since I have been auditing colleges for customer service, a concern has shot up on my top 10 list. Rising from off the screen to No. 3 is "a safe environment in which I feel secure and protected." Over the years I have studied customer service issues in colleges, students would mention safety after some specific issue occurred on their campus. Sept. 11 has made students at all institutions very safety conscious.

About the author

Neal Raisman is president of AcademicMAPS, a consulting firm on customer service and enrollment growth. His column will appear periodically. To obtain his book, *Embrace the Oxymoron: Customer Service in Higher Education*, call (800) 341-7874, ext. 346.

In fact, since Sept. 11, 37 percent of students I have interviewed indicated that "feeling safe on campus was a major factor in my decision to attend this college." Another 32 percent ranked safety as an important determinant. I see a trend for resident students to define distance

from home as a comfort factor. The closer the school was to their home, the safer they assumed it was.

Don't leave them feeling vulnerable

Commuter students still see a trip of more than 10 miles as an annoyance and a factor in choosing to attend one college over another. But, their attitudes about distance to a college have shifted depending on how they feel when they come for classes. This is especially so for those attending at night. If they arrive at a parking lot at night that is distant from their classroom and it feels dark, many students will turn around and leave. They are feeling more vulnerable since Sept. 11 and do not want to have to walk through a dark campus. If this is the feeling that a student has during her first week as a night student, it is likely that the student will withdraw.

A recent government study reached conclusions important to customer service in colleges regarding enrollment and retention. The study found the solution to dark areas that cause anxiety in students is in the technology of the lightbulb. The study said colleges

that do not replace burned-out bulbs or use undersized bulbs cause themselves customer service problems.

Over the past decade, colleges have become very conscious of the cost of electricity. To cut costs, colleges reduced the number and wattage of bulbs throughout the campus, especially in lobbies and halls. They also installed less expensive but also less light-intense neon bulbs and are lackadaisical about replacing burned-out bulbs. This may have been okay prior to Sept. 11 but now what might have passed as a romantic or atmospheric darkness is now a precarious and foreboding area.

On vacation

The EM Expert at the **University of Miami** is on vacation. If you have a question for The EM Expert, e-mail jmargolis@lrp.com. The authors will try to respond to as many questions as possible.

Let them see the light

I have watched students approach a lobby and hesitate to enter before scanning it. They also halt before entering a hall to get to classes when the hall is not well lit. In an audit recently, I saw six students individually approach a weakly lit rear entrance of a classroom building, look in, see no one else inside and not enter. Four waited until another student came to the door and they entered together, and two left.

Parking lots are worse. At one institution, I observed five cars enter a poorly lit parking area at night, circle it three times looking for a spot near one of the working lights and leave when they could not find a well-lit spot. Those who circled and stopped in a darker area left their cars hesitantly and walked across the lot looking anxiously for any signs of danger.

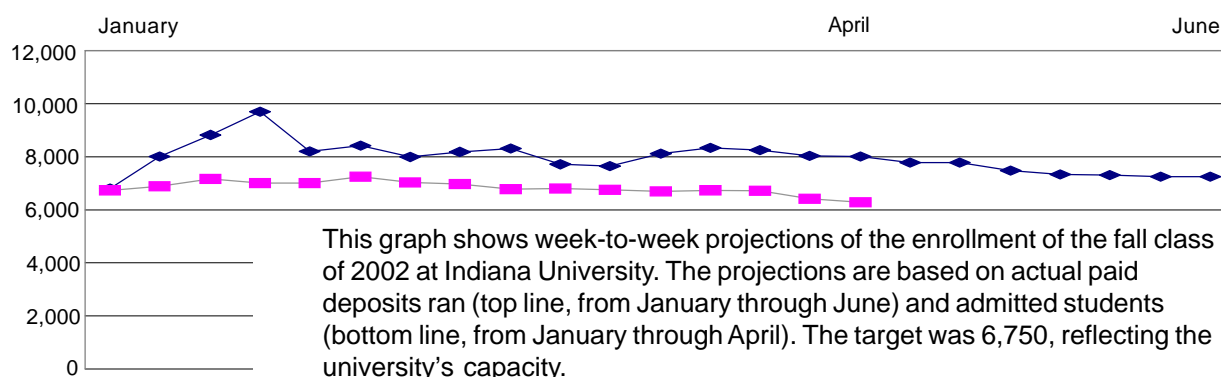
I see the same reaction in students walking across lit campuses. Students will travel the brightest pathway and not go onto ones where lights are too dim or out. At one institution, I saw a path was well lit until students entered an area where a dead bulb was not replaced. They walked up to that spot, and left the walk to cross over an open, better-lit grassy area to get to another walk 200 yards away.

We were not able to determine the number of students who drove up to the college, felt unsafe and never came back or decided not to enroll. Your retention numbers will show that.

The solution is easy. Replace all lightbulbs that are out. Increase wattage wherever you can. If possible, increase the number of lights in parking areas. Offer escort services to night students. ■

Admissions

Indiana University's wild ride: Projecting the freshman class



SOURCE: Indiana University.

INDIANA (continued from page 1)

Applications at the Bloomington campus have been rising by 6 to 8 percent per year.

"This year there were only three things that were different," he says.

Sept. 11, for one. Early on, enrollment managers saw signs that parents wouldn't want children to go too far from home and might prefer campuses in remote locations.

"Well, Bloomington is pretty small," Hossler says.

The economy's deterioration affected affordability, prompting some students to attend IU rather than some private Eastern institutions.

"For the Bloomington campus, almost 50 percent of all admitted resident students subsequently matriculate," he says.

Before the 2001-02 academic year began, *Time* named IU's Bloomington campus the college of the year.

And just before the deadline for deposits, the men's basketball team made an unexpected run to the **National Collegiate Athletic Association** championship game.

"There were some interesting things that happened that all might have played a role," says Hossler, though he generally doesn't believe athletic success makes much impact on students' decisions.

Staying the course

In February, IU considered denying admission to some students who were qualified academically. But the volatile environment, including major cuts by the **General Assembly**, persuaded administrators to hold off because they couldn't run the risk of failing to reach 6,750 in the freshman class.

"We decided to ride this year out," Hossler says.

Meanwhile, the registrar's office had to work with the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the budget

office to make sure there was an ample supply of courses and instructors available. The housing office had to postpone plans to close one residence hall for renovation. Instead, only a portion of the hall was closed.

Hossler praised the offices' collaborative efforts. The budget office had to approve unallocated funds for hiring instructors, mindful that the funds would be recouped when students registered.

"This speaks to the value of having projection models so you could react," he says.

The rule or the exception

Though IU is still formulating its strategy for next year, it plans to stick to its target of 6,750.

"We don't want to be this large in perpetuity," Hossler says.

"I'm trying to understand the factors that influence enrollment. There isn't an analyst out there who could build a model to predict how all these factors influenced enrollment."

Predicting this year's enrollment surge was impossible, he maintains, repeating the most prominent factors.

"And God forbid some of the strategies we were presenting made a difference," Hossler says.

"We feel like we're entering new territory. Bloomington has not had a waitlist before. This may just be an aberrant year. Our applications may fall off."

Besides a waitlist, IU is considering delaying decisions on borderline students until second-semester grades are reported.

The admissions office is already telling high school guidance counselors to be prepared for some changes (see *article page 5*).

"We're still in the process of investigating what we're going to do," Hossler says. "We're viewing this as an anomalous year." ■

IU to tighten pace of admissions to avoid another overflowing class

The admissions office at **Indiana University at Bloomington** has formed a committee to examine the procedures it wants in place to prevent a recurrence of a freshman class well beyond the 6,750 target.

"7,100, 7,200 is too many," says **Mary Ellen Anderson**, IU's director of admissions.

Her committee will look at past application history, what applications are like and how to manage the admission of next year's freshman class.

There was an opportunity at midyear to control the size of this year's class, she says, but the flagging economy and impact of the Sept. 11 tragedies provided unpredictable wild cards.

"If we could look at past history and if the environment were exactly the same as what occurred the year before and the year before that, I would be confident," Anderson says. "But it was not the same. We didn't know when we could tighten things up. So we continued with business as usual and as a result, we have a large class."

Her staff could not predict if it would lose students from the East and West coasts — 35 percent of IU's freshmen typically are from out of state. The university looks to out-of-state students to provide the desired diversity as well as revenues.

"You don't know how Sept. 11 had an impact on the students to maybe not look at an urban area and look at a community like Bloomington that is a smaller environment," she says. "What I did think happened was the Indiana students wanted to stay closer to home. The East

and West Coast students were not affected. They wanted to go away."

Between 2000 and 2002, the number of students coming from Atlanta has jumped from 25 to 55, from Washington, D.C., the number has climbed from 48 to 76, and from Houston, the number was risen from 10 to 23.

IU's pipeline from Chicago remains impressive. Last year the Chicago area sent 599 freshmen to IU. This year it will be 766 — a 28-percent increase.

Anderson's committee wants to be able to empower the admissions staff to issues yeses and nos more quickly to the "no-brainer applications." IU receives 20,000 applications and accepts more than 17,000, but don't misinterpret the number.

"We're very up front about what we expect a student to bring in academic credentials," Anderson says. "I think students self-select out of applying to Indiana."

Of course, others who should, don't.

In the middle group are students who look good on paper, but have average or below-average grades in the core academic courses or have good test scores, but average grades.

"This year we'll probably ask for more information," Anderson says.

IU might ask for grades from the first marking period. Or it might wait until the end of the fall semester, which could be anywhere from late December to the middle of February because the starts of high schools range from Aug. 12 to after Labor Day.

Her office has sent postcards to guidance counselors directing them to a new Web site for counselors and advising them of the three priority dates for applications — for possible merit aid, for need-based consideration, and the priority date for all applications (those received afterward are judged on a case-by-case basis).

"That gives us the opportunity to continue to admit the students we'd really like to have at Indiana and give us some flexibility with the students who aren't as strong," Anderson says.

"We hope that will allow us to control our numbers."

Applicants will probably have to be somewhat more competitive to get into IU because of a specific target of 6,750.

Although the past academic year is deemed an anomaly, it will be used with the previous four years to study who applies and when as well as analyze data on deposits.

"This will be another year where it's going to be hard to take a look back and do a comparison," Anderson says.

So, what does she expect?

"I have absolutely no idea," she says. "The crystal ball is completely cloudy."

For more information, contact Mary Ellen Anderson at manderso@indiana.edu. ■

Management system enables registrar to steer the course

When the freshman class burst beyond **Indiana University at Bloomington's** capacity, **Roland Cote**, the registrar, headed straight to the data.

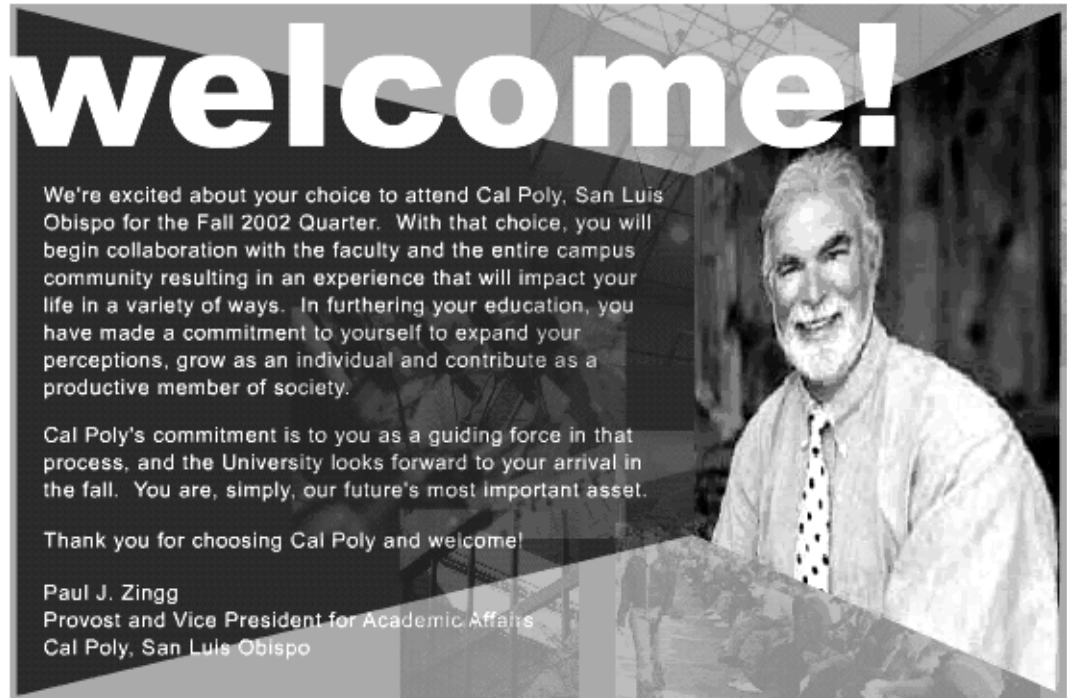
"We have in place a pretty good course-management system," he says. "We're able to go back several years and figure out the course-taking pattern — what the typical freshman takes."

All IU freshmen are admitted to the University Division, which simplifies matters. Before embarking on the meat of their majors, freshmen take introductory courses.

"Math and English Composition are the two highest-demand courses because they are required in all degree programs," Cote says.

"We can't offer 7,300 spaces of English Comp," Cote says, noting that the number will be lower because some freshmen will test out of the need to take the course. "We still can't offer 6,000 spaces. We plan on spreading them over two semesters." ■

Recruiting



This e-mail message from the provost at California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo is typical of the communication strategy used to recruit students.

COMMUNICATION (continued from page 1)

"I wanted to be able to communicate with students, not only in ways they liked, but responded to," Maraviglia says. "I thought mail was it. They told me 'it' wasn't it. Anyone who doesn't use focus groups or surveys students will be 10 years behind the times. And the communication has to be two ways."

All of Cal Poly's applications are submitted online — more than 60 percent of them between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m., another 25 percent between 9 and 11 p.m.

"I don't know an admissions office in the country that's open after 9 p.m.," Maraviglia says.

Only 5 percent are submitted between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Enter **Hobsons**. Three years ago, an executive approached Maraviglia about how the software company's products supported higher education. None of them cured Maraviglia's drive to communicate by e-mail and to manage the flow of communication around the clock.

The two sides formed a partnership to develop an e-communication system, highlighted by Flash e-mail animation, that has reformed life in the Cal Poly admissions office, saved money, and allowed the staff to be deployed elsewhere.

"We saved \$120,000 on postage this year," he says. His office used to spend \$180,000 to \$200,000 on postage.

One element of the system was the business card. Maraviglia learned how important the card was from his then six-year-old daughter.

The business card allows students to personalize their Cal Poly Web pages through attribute filters to deliver information students have specified are of interest.

Because the university is a decentralized operation, with each college responsible for admissions decisions, the admissions office plays a supporting role. Working individually with the colleges, Maraviglia's staff has generated 12 different marketing campaigns with 10 messages from the campus community to prospective students. Another 18 campaigns have been developed for the 7,000 students who are accepted.

Profile goes up, so does access

Cal Poly needed to rely more on the Internet because its staff of four admissions counselors has experienced a 130-percent increase in applications in the last eight years. It receives 30,000 applications for 3,000 spots in the freshman class. Less than 5 percent of those spots will go to out-of-state students. So the heavy campaign to enroll the accepted students is for the in-state competition.

That more students are applying means the credentials have increased to gain acceptance. In the last 10 years, the profile has improved from a 3.4 grade point average and an average SAT score of 1095 to a 3.85 GPA and a 1235 SAT. Cal Poly's graduation rate has also improved 10 percent.

In improving the efficiency of his operation, Maraviglia is able to deploy his counselors in areas that are technologically challenged. Cal Poly accepts only online applications, so it has adopted 32 high schools where students are least likely to have access to computers. Its counselors work with those schools' students to file applications.

"Everyone has access. If you don't, we'll bring it to you," Maraviglia says. ■

E-communication helps San Francisco State recover from drop

San Francisco State University had to reverse a disturbing trend. Enrollment fell off when a residence hall had to be closed because of a toxic mold and a new residence hall didn't open on time.

After consulting with **California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo**, SFSU turned its energy to e-communication to follow up with students who expressed interest in the university. They received notes thanking them and telling them about the institution's features.

Students, both prospective and continuing, receive e-mails pertaining to their needs, such as deadlines, opportunities and reminders, says **Jo Volkert**, assistant vice president for enrollment planning and management.

"It saves on postage," she says. "People are not readers in terms of print."

She need look no further than her 17-year-old son to see the reading habits of the generation-to-be-recruited. She piles up his mail as it goes unopened. Volkert knew her office had to work harder on its communications methods and messages. She turned to Cal Poly's example.

"It seemed to suit our needs," Volkert says.

When prospects indicate interest in a major, they receive e-mails from department chairpersons, which include contact information so they can find out more about the program on the Web. It also demonstrates to students that someone on the SFSU campus cares about them, she says.

After enrollment dropped by 900 because of the residence-hall problems, SFSU regained 600 of that last year, the first impacted by the e-communication efforts. Volkert expects the remainder to be recovered when classes begin.

"It was mostly a matter of reinforcing the strong points of our campus," she says.

The messages were modified from printed materials because e-mails should not be wordy, Volkert says.

"You want to be short and to the point — a little punchier," she says.

A calendar was created by which three or four e-mail messages per week would be sent to different populations.

Volkert still wants to get a more automated system. Her e-mails can only be sent manually and she would like to select the times they go out.

Contact Jo Volkert at jvolkert@sfsu.edu. ■

Working with a vendor develops a product suited to your needs

Working directly with a software company to develop the product you need can pay handsome dividends, as **California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo** has demonstrated.

But other institutions can profit as well from the solutions the partners come up with since they are not applications converted from business packages.

Cal Poly has worked with **Hobsons** for 10 years.

"It's obvious they have a keen eye on what the future looks like," says **Craig Heldman**, vice president of new business development.

Cal Poly identified a communication gap all institutions had dealing with this generation of prospective students raised on the Internet, he says. Students demand an institution communicate with them when they want, how they want and providing the information they need.

So when the question is: It's 11 p.m., do you know where your kids are, Cal Poly can answer, "Up in their rooms, on their computers." E-mail should be a more efficient method for admissions offices to communicate with prospective students than answering phone calls.

"Everyone has to operate more efficiently," Heldman says. "The way to operate more efficiently is automate technology. You're reacting quicker and in a customized format. You're getting a competitive benefit and an efficiency benefit."

Through the business card, an institution can present itself in the way it wants, Heldman explains. Cal Poly does a good job in knowing what its students want in content and format through the surveying it does.

You have to know your audience

An institution has to know what its ideal student is looking for, both generally and specifically, says **Craig Heldman, Hobsons'** vice president of new business development.

The institution should know that the student prefers to receive e-mail over a phone call or snail mail.

"They like utilizing the Web. It's kind of their own time. They control it," Heldman says.

Such insight is helpful when an institution analyzes the shortcomings of its communication methods with prospective students.

"I think it all starts with understanding their current service level with their prospects (response time to questions and easy access to information)," Heldman says. "How do the students who enrolled or didn't enroll compare your college on these areas to your competitors?"

In looking for a product to solve the electronic communications problem, Heldman says the biggest areas are:

- Is it user-friendly?
- Is it flexible?
- Is it comprehensive? ■

Hobsons' E-coms product permits an institution to set up a page to suit a prospective student's situation (such as freshman, transfer or graduate), to conduct surveys, tabulate the survey results, and react. ■

Oklahoma tries to plug leak in higher education pipeline

WASHINGTON — Keeping college students from dropping out is not easy: it takes time and money.

But the results are well worth the effort, according to a pair of reformers from Oklahoma.

“Retention programs are expensive, but if you put in the resources they pay great dividends,” said **Joe Wiley**, president of **Rogers State University** in Claremore, Okla.

He was a member of the **Oklahoma Higher Education Task Force on Student Retention** that developed suggestions to increase student retention.

Wiley and another member of the panel, **Cindy Ross**, discussed the recommendations at a **Noel-Levitz** conference.

Ross, executive vice chancellor for academic affairs for the **Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education**, said the task force included representatives of each public and private college in Oklahoma.

She said the panel quickly learned that 65 percent of freshmen at regional universities and 45 percent of freshmen at comprehensive universities failed to graduate in six years.

“We found that the Oklahoma higher education pipeline leaks significantly after the freshmen year,” Ross said.

She said the task force discovered that many Oklahoma freshmen failed to take a pre-college curriculum in high school, did not enter college right after graduating from high school and enrolled part-time in college.

Wiley said the panel also found several categories of barriers to student retention including financial, academic, social (emotional/personal), student services (enrollment/advising) and future expectations (primary goal of taking college course(s) was certification for a job).

The panel then “looked at national best practices to come up with ways to overcome these barriers,” he said.

Wiley said the task force gave high marks to a couple of programs.

For example, the Gateway Program at the **University of Texas at Austin** is a two-year program that serves about 100 at-risk freshmen per year with weekly meetings offering peer advisors, tutoring, writing workshops and monthly group activities.

“While the college had an overall freshman attrition rate of 4.4 percent in 1998, none of the dropouts came from Gateway,” Wiley said.

He said the Access Plus/Western Advantage Program at **Missouri Western State College** also served freshmen with interest groups, tutoring and a Unity Services Office.

“There was a 10-percent increase in retention, and 15-percent increase in minority retention in the program’s first four years,” Wiley said.

Wiley noted that the programs are not cheap. The University of Texas spends \$211,200 or \$1,148 per student annually, and Missouri Western spends \$2.6 million or \$2,889 per student each year.

How Oklahoma plans to improve retention

The Oklahoma task force’s proposals to improve student retention include:

- **Focus on persistence to completion** — Retention and graduation data should follow the student upon transfer.
- **Improve student preparation for college.**
- **Explore collaboration between high schools and colleges.**
- **Provide public recognition of high schools that prepare students well for college.**
- **Presidential leadership** — College presidents should play an important role in strategic planning and should create institutional cultures that encourage student success.
- **Provide “Quality Initiative Grants” for innovative college proposals to increase student retention.**
- **Endorse statewide goals to increase the number of citizens with bachelor’s and associate degrees** — Provide adequate funding to achieve these goals.
- **Conduct more institution-based research and encourage colleges to use national research data to assess institutional effectiveness.**
- **Encourage faculty to get involved** — Conduct workshops and provide financial incentives for faculty members to take part in student retention efforts.
- **Conduct statewide conferences to raise awareness about student retention.**
- **Develop an institutional inventory of barriers to reform.**
- **Identify and evaluate student goal attainment.**
- **Consider using block tuition as an incentive for students to enroll in more coursework.**
- **Develop an institutional early warning system to identify and assist at-risk students.** ■

Wiley said the panel distilled all of its research into recommendations including focusing on persistence to completion (*see box*).

“We have made it easy in Oklahoma for students to transfer to different colleges and there are 4,000 courses in the matrix where credits transfer,” he said.

He said the task force also recommended using a “more realistic time frame” — such as 10 years — to track students to degree completion.

The panel also called for improving student preparation for college. “The single most important predictor of academic success is the intensity and quality of the secondary school curriculum,” Wiley said.

He said the panel suggested encouraging collaboration between colleges and high schools and recognizing individual high schools that show improvement.

The task force’s complete report can be accessed at www.okhighered.org/reports/retention-taskforce.pdf. ■

Retention programs, services should focus on a student's feelings

WASHINGTON — For too long, professors, administrators and enrollment and admissions officers have looked at college students as interchangeable cattle, according to one longtime educator and student retention expert.

The result has been soaring dropout rates and a lack of student persistence, said **Randi Levitz**, cofounder of **Noel-Levitz** consulting company.

"The path to retention success involves the use of intrusive, proactive strategies to reach freshmen before they have an opportunity to experience feelings of failure, disappointment and confusion," she said.

Retention programs must be highly structured and interlocked with other programs/services, Levitz said at a recent Noel-Levitz conference (see box at right). But they also must concentrate on something long ignored by the higher education field: a student's feelings.

"What has been missing in retention practice is attention to the 'soft,' less academic, affective side of students," Levitz said.

The most successful retention programs track and monitor student satisfaction to predict dropout proneness before the student leaves, she said.

"Retention success mirrors attention to student needs," Levitz explained.

There are many missing elements from standard cognitive assessments of students, including measures of academic motivation, general coping ability, receptivity to help, and other emotional variables, she said.

"At-risk students have common characteristics including a poor initial impression of the institution, a negative attitude toward educators, a low sense of financial secu-

Components of a productive program

The ingredients of most successful retention programs, according to **Randi Levitz**, cofounder of **Noel-Levitz**, a consulting company, include:

- Are highly structured.
- Are interlocked with other programs/services.
- Rely on extended, intensive student contact.
- Are based on a strategy of engagement.
- Place special emphasis on staff quality.
- Focus on affective as well as cognitive needs.
- Track and monitor levels of student satisfaction.
- Predict dropout proneness before the student drops out.
- Predict academic difficulty before it occurs.
- Predict academic stress before a student experiences it.
- Determine the student's receptivity to institutional help to better leverage your time for interventions. ■

...rity, poor study habits and little interest in career planning," Levitz said. (See box lower left)

These characteristics are exhibited by all types of students from naïve 18-year-olds away from home for the first time to 42-year-old married working people going back to school for the first time in decades, she said.

Colleges must try and identify dropout-prone students as early as possible because many start to think about leaving within their first few weeks of starting school, Levitz said.

"Who we put in front of students at orientation in freshmen classrooms and in advising roles is the most important decision we can make in terms of retention," she said.

The college employees who see students first, who talk to them first and who advise them first must help students connect to the environment, make the transition to college, work toward goals, succeed in the classroom, and feel like a respected member of the campus, according to Levitz.

"You have to have the teachers who can connect personally and relate best to students lead your orientation programs and serve as academic advisors," she said.

"If you can only afford to do one thing, put all of your money into getting people on the frontlines who care about students." ■

What a dropout looks like

Common characteristics of students who are prone to drop out of college, according to **Randi Levitz**, cofounder of consulting company **Noel-Levitz**, are:

• Personal

Lost, stressed, closed to new ideas experiences, low self-esteem, undisciplined, unmotivated, insecure, uninformed, unrealistic expectations, student-institution mismatch.

• Social

Alienation and social isolation, subject to negative peer pressure, uninvolved in college activities, little involvement with faculty.

• Academic

Underprepared, poor academic skills, poor study habits, doesn't see value in course, low academic performance, part-time course load, lack of career and educational goals. ■

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Restrictions eased, permitting bonuses for some enrollment people

WASHINGTON — The **U.S. Department of Education** plans to liberalize rules governing the payment of bonuses for people indirectly involved in the enrollment of students or who secure financial aid for those students.

Under a proposed rule published in the Aug. 8 edition of the *Federal Register*, the ED regulation would permit colleges to pay bonuses to employees and consultants indirectly involved in enrollment or financial aid, compensate recruiters based on retention, and share profits with employees. (See *related story for a complete list of safe harbors.*)

In its *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, the ED said the rule is needed because the current regulation is a barrier to students enrolling in online courses and colleges providing distance education, and other innovative programs.

The current ban on all types of incentive compensation was the result of “people trying to do a good thing going too far with an overly prescriptive reading of the regulations,” said **Jeff Andrade**, the ED’s deputy assistant secretary for postsecondary education.

The proposed rule mirrors congressional intent in the underlying statute that covers this area, Andrade told a press briefing. The new rule still bans the direct and indirect payment of bonuses or commissions for success in securing enrollments or financial aid, he said.

“We basically tried to come up with activities that everybody agreed were not intended to be covered by the restriction,” Andrade continued.

One example, he said, was allowing colleges to provide bonuses to employees and companies that recruit stu-

dents who enroll in programs that are ineligible for federal financial aid.

Another safe harbor permits the payment of incentives to recruiters based on the number of students that complete a program of study or one academic year for a longer program, Andrade said.

“This supports the original intent of the restriction on bonuses and that was to encourage completion by preventing the enrollment of students who will drop out,” Andrade said.

Most members of the higher education community supported the ED’s list of activities where incentive compensation should be allowed, he said.

Few opponents of the plan emerged during the several months a panel of representatives of colleges, students, financial aid administrators, business officers and others met, Andrade continued.

He called the few detractors “outliers” with “extreme views” that were opposed to any change to the status quo because of unconfirmed fears.

There is a 60-day comment period on the rule and the ED indicated it plans to release a final regulation Nov. 1.

Andrade said he did not think there would be much opposition to the ED’s proposed rule because the **American Council on Education** and other higher education groups wanted the agency to “exempt ev-

everything.” ■

Safe harbors spell out legal ways for institutions to pay bonuses

The **U.S. Department of Education** has issued a regulation that allows institutions to pay bonuses to employees and consultants working in enrollment, financial aid or retention. The regulation includes these guidelines, or safe harbors, spelling out legal ways for institutions to pay employees indirectly involved in recruiting.

- Provide up to two salary adjustments during a 12-month period for recruiters and admissions officers.
- Provide bonuses to recruiters bringing in students who enroll in programs and who are ineligible for Title IV aid.
- Compensate recruiters based on retention for students that complete an entire educational program or one academic year for a longer program.
- Pay bonuses to employees who perform “pre-enrollment” activities, such as answering telephone calls, as long as the bonus is not based on actual enrollment.
- Pay bonuses to supervisors who do not manage workers directly involved in recruiting or admissions or the awarding of Title IV program funds.
- Provide incentives to firms that provide Internet recruitment and admission services.
- Pay third parties for services as long as none involves recruiting, admissions or awarding financial aid.
- Pay third parties that assist with recruiting and awarding of financial aid, provided that the firm’s workers do not receive incentive compensation.
- Share profits with full-time professional and administrative employees at the same organizational level, as long as recruiters do not dominate that level.
- Share profits with individuals who own at least 25 percent of the college.
- Pay people who arrange contracts with a business whose employees enroll in college, when the employer pays directly or by reimbursement most tuition and fees. ■

Comments on the proposed rule should be sent to Wendy Macias, U.S. Department of Education, P.O. Box 33076, Washington, D.C. 20033-3076, or via e-mail to ProgramNPRM@ed.gov.

Acknowledging nontraditional courses, ED kills off 12-hour rule

WASHINGTON — Students enrolled in any type of college program would be eligible for financial aid if the program delivered a minimum of one day's instruction per week, under a proposed **U.S. Department of Education** rule.

Published in the Aug. 8 edition of the *Federal Register*, the regulation would eliminate the controversial 12-hour rule that many educators say is a barrier to innovative programs and creates inequities in the amount of federal assistance that students receive.

The current rule requires that students in nontraditional programs spend at least 12 hours per week in classrooms to qualify for financial aid.

The ED proposal would reduce the seat-time requirement to one day for all programs. The one-day rule currently applies to semester, trimester and quarter term programs.

The ED had been talking about eliminating or modifying the 12-hour rule for the last three or four years, according to **Jeff Andrade**, the ED's deputy assistant secretary for postsecondary education.

Andrade said in a press briefing the ED felt that applying the one-day rule to nonstandard term programs "was a good way to go."

Although the 12-hour rule was originally enacted to stop fraud, it never served as a fraud-prevention measure, he said.

Taking issue

Comments on the proposed rule should be sent to Wendy Macias, U.S. Department of Education, P.O. Box 33076, Washington, D.C. 20033-3076, or via e-mail to ProgramNPRM@ed.gov.

"No school was ever thrown out of the financial aid program because of a violation of the 12-hour rule," Andrade said.

The proposed change will allow colleges to "offer a wider variety of educational options" such as

online courses and weekend-only classes.

Although there is a 60-day comment period, Andrade does not anticipate any changes to the final version of the rule, which is slated to be issued Nov. 1.

"This rule was the result of negotiated rulemaking and most negotiators agreed with our proposal," he said.

A 14-member panel of representatives of two- and four-year public and private colleges, for-profit institutions, financial aid administrators and business officers, students, lenders, accreditors and others spent months debating changes to the 12-hour rule and other financial aid regulations aimed at simplifying the process.

Every member of the negotiating team supported changing the 12-hour rule and all but three wanted the regulation eliminated, Andrade said.

The people who opposed the ED plan — such as representatives of the **United States Student Association**, the

State Public Interest Research Groups and several legal aid assistance organizations — were "on the fringe," according to Andrade.

In the proposal, the ED argues elimination of the 12-hour regulation is necessary because many colleges offer programs in shorter time periods with overlapping terms and rolling start dates.

"Compliance with the 12-hour rule has become increasingly difficult and at odds with the educational advantages that flexible formats provide for students, especially nontraditional students," Andrade said. ■

The proposed rule

This is the **Department of Education's** proposed rule to replace the 12-hour rule:

- Apply one-day rule to all programs.
- Modify definitions of academic year and eligible program.
- Modified disbursement rules to include calendar time component. ■

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AT A GLANCE*A REVIEW OF THIS MONTH'S
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FERPA

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■ **Financial aid**

■ Decision:

State educational grants to further the education of community college graduates did not violate the Washington state constitution, a court ruled.

■ What it means:

Institutions of higher learning are not necessarily defined as "schools."

Mary Gallwey, in her capacity as a taxpayer and resident of the state of Washington, filed suit in 1995 to invalidate that state's Educational Opportunity Grant program.

The program disbursed financial aid to community college graduates unable to travel to state universities to obtain baccalaureates at public or private universities.

Gallwey asserted that the program violated the state constitution's provisions that (1) state "schools" be free from sectarian control or influence; and (2) no public money be spent in support of religion.

The trial court, **Thurston County Superior Court**, interpreted Washington law to include colleges within the term "schools," and struck down the program.

The treasurer of the state of Washington, **Daniel Grimm**, appealed to the **Washington Supreme Court**. *State ex. rel. Mary Gallwey, No. 68565-7 (WA 2002)*.

The appellate court decided the term "schools" in the state constitution did not include institutions of higher learning. It also stated that the program did not promote or further religion.

The court notes, "if (Gallwey's) argument were meritorious virtually every form of federal financial student aid, which is given neutrally to public and private school students, would run afoul of the First Amendment."

With three justices dissenting, the trial court was reversed, and the program was upheld. ■

■ **FERPA**

■ Decision:

New York-based Fashion Institute did not retaliate against student who sought to design menswear, a District Court ruled.

■ What it means:

Deny exceptions to course requirements if objection is based merely on curriculum preference.

In his senior thesis course at the **Fashion Institute of Technology** in New York, **Cameron Mostaghim** was required to design and produce two womenswear or two childrenswear garments that might be eligible for public exhibition.

He challenged the policy and was allowed to design one menswear garment for a grade but not exhibition and still was required to produce a womenswear garment for his second project.

His professor determined that Mostaghim's projects were of poor quality and gave him a C. Mostaghim screamed obscenities at the professor in class.

As a result of this outburst, the institute set a disciplinary hearing at which Mostaghim refused to present any evidence, and the institute suspended him.

Mostaghim requested all of his education records under the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**. The institute conducted an exhaustive search and produced all records it could find.

Mostaghim sued the Institute, claiming that it retaliated against him and denied him his FERPA rights.

The **U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York**, considered the defendants' motion for summary judgment on these issues. *Cameron Mostaghim v. Fashion Institute of Technology*, No. 01 Civ. 8090(HB) (S.D. N.Y., 06/19/02)

The District Court found that the institute did not retaliate against Mostaghim for seeking approval to design menswear, as he claimed.

It held that he deserved a C, that he was not allowed to design or exhibit menswear because he did not follow course requirements, and that the institute provided all appropriate school records under FERPA. ■

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■ FERPA

■ Decision:

A suspended student who is enrolled cannot force a university to give him grades in those courses.

■ What it means:

FERPA rights are not unlimited.

A former student at **San Diego State University** complained that SDSU erased information from his transcript relating to courses taken during the spring semester of 1997. *Letter re: San Diego State University, (FPCO 11/01/01).*

The student provided the **Family Policy Compliance Office** with a letter from SDSU stating his transcript would not include grades for courses in which the student improperly enrolled while under suspension.

It appeared to the FPCO that the student was asking SDSU to revise the transcript to reflect spring 1997 grades. FPCO pointed out that while the student might disagree with the school's decision to remove the grades from the transcript during the suspension period, the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act** does not require SDSU to reinstate those grades at the student's request. Rather, such a decision would be made at the university's discretion.

FPCO noted FERPA's legislative history states the statute "was not intended to overturn established standards and procedures for the challenge of substantive decisions made by an educational institution."

FERPA affords students the opportunity to seek amendment of their education records if they believe the records contain information that is inaccurate or misleading. The right is not unlimited. An institution is not required by FERPA to provide the student the right to change substantive decisions made by university officials, such as grades or other evaluations of the student. ■

■ FERPA

■ Decision:

A student's letter expressing her opinion of a professor's class is a protected record under FERPA.

■ What it means:

Letter is a record relating directly to the student and maintained by the institution.

A faculty member inquired as to whether a letter written by a student complaining about a professor is an education record subject to the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**. If so, he asked whether its contents could be disclosed to others if the student's name and individual characteristics had been redacted. *Letter to Bonnell, (FPCO 08/08/01).*

The professor furnished the **Family Policy Compliance Office** with a copy of the letter in question, which

contained the student's assessment of his class. He had deleted her name and the class section number, but did not redact references to her enrollment in the English class or her marital status.

The FPCO informed the professor that the letter from the student was an education record since it contained information directly related to her, even if certain personally identifiable information had been redacted. So, FERPA would not prohibit disclosure of the redacted version of the letter if it did not include information that could identify the student to the party to whom it was disclosed, according to the FPCO.

It was unclear to FPCO whether the information the professor had redacted was sufficient to protect the identity of the student. It explained that if the student could be identified based on any of the remaining information by anyone (such as another student in the same class), then the letter should not be disclosed to unauthorized third parties without the student's consent. ■

■ FERPA

■ Decision:

FPCO cannot force a college to give a former student a copy of his diploma.

■ What it means:

A college must only provide copies of records if a student lacks access.

A former student asked the **Family Policy Compliance Office's** assistance in obtaining a copy of an associate's degree obtained in 1985 from "**Malcolm King College**" in New York City. Before answering the student's inquiry, the FPCO noted it was unable to identify the college. *Letter re: Malcolm King College, (FPCO 08/21/01).*

FPCO told the student the college did not have to provide a copy of the requested records unless the student could demonstrate he didn't have access. Based on the information contained in the complaint letter, it appeared the student resided within commuting distance of the college.

Although not required to furnish copies, the college was obligated to offer the student an opportunity to inspect the records within 45 days of its receipt of a request. It suggested the student contact the college and request an opportunity to review the records related to the associate's degree.

But, FPCO also pointed out that there was no requirement for the college to maintain documents relating to the student's degree, including a copy of the diploma. It observed that the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act** does not require any educational institution to maintain particular records. The school may destroy education records unless there is an outstanding request by a student to inspect and review the material. ■

More convenience makes students happier, saves UIC money

Financial aid to **University of Illinois at Chicago** students goes directly to their accounts electronically. They can pay their tuition and fees online. There are no checks to write, nor envelopes to address, stamp and lick shut.

Of course, they lose the excuse, "The check is in the mail," but make up for it by not having to stand in line.

UIC unveiled electronic financial services in December.

"It's really driven by our students," says **Judith Flink**, director of student financial services at UIC. "Students, in today's environment, are technologically advanced. They are, as a group, not 9 to 5. They're not a group used to getting a paper bill in the mail."

Through discussions with students and a customer service survey, her office found there was interest in an online financial services project. Then it was sold to the administration as a way to do more for students and reduce costs.

"The biggest decision was would we develop it in-house or go outside," Flink says.

UIC opted for hiring a vendor and struck a partnership with **infiNet Solutions**, resulting in applications for the Web and e-commerce.

"It had to flow electronically all the way to the bank," Flink says.

QuikChek™ is a Web-based program that permits students to accomplish a variety of self-service functions such as direct deposit and pay bills.

Direct deposit works through the Automated Clearing House, the electronic method of transferring payments between financial institutions. The ACH is a network of providers governed by the **National Automated Clearing House Association's** operating rules. **Bank One** is UIC's NACHA provider and UIC abides by the bank's encryption standards.

Students must fill out and submit a direct deposit application online. That allows them to receive financial

aid and student account funds directly into either their checking or savings accounts, as they choose.

Quicker access to their funds is just one benefit students derive. Transactions are also posted quickly and there are fewer lost checks.

UIC gets its money faster, needs fewer employees to process payments and disbursements, reduces paper costs, improves reconciliation procedures, and reduces fraud.

The QuikPay™ pay program allows students to make Web-based payments by credit card or e-check. There is a 2 percent convenience charge for credit- and debit-card transactions.

QuikPay™ accepts Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express.

Students can designate a third party to look at their account history or to make payments. The formal designation enables UIC to comply with the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**.

QuikPay™ has processed more than 13,000 transactions totaling more than \$11 million.

"There's very little interaction and very few problems," Flink says. "We were able to bring up a new service without adding staff or costs. We're providing much better customer service giving them what they want."

Instead of two cashier offices staffed with four full-time people, UIC uses one office with just two full-timers.

"We're able to devote more time in person to the people who need help," Flink says.

"Our default rates are the lowest they've ever been."

The university's Champaign and Springfield campuses are also on the system. Developing standard policies and procedures to suit all three was the biggest challenge to implementing the system, Flink says.

For more information, contact Judith Flink at jflink@uic.edu. ■

Working with a vendor helps university develop the product it needs

Institutions seem to benefit from working with a vendor to create a product that fits their needs instead of purchasing a solution generated for the business world and adapted to higher education. The student financial services system developed by the **University of Illinois at Chicago** and **infiNet Solutions** is an example.

"We needed to be able to aggregate transactions and billing information into a single view and allow multiple payers in," says **Harvey Gannon**, infiNet's chief executive.

The system is designed to blend into any institution's Web site. Single sign-on allows the student log in just once to pay a bill or buy something.

Students can designate a parent or guardian to have access to the student's account, a formal declaration that meets **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act** requirements. The student assigns the sign-on code and password.

A parent/guardian may view his payments made to the student's account. He does not have the rights to access the student's entire payment history.

While the student benefits from convenience, the institution saves money. A paper bill costs 60 cents to send, compared to 30 cents for an electronic bill. A paper payment costs 35 cents apiece, compared to 25 cents for an electronic payment.

For more information, see www.infinet-inc.com. ■

Slowly, institutions are adding disciplinary notations to transcripts

Some are. Some may. Many won't — make notations on transcripts of disciplinary actions. The issue is simple to the many, yet complex to the some.

"I think most student services personnel believe that disciplinary actions — at least for us — are not usually related to academics and therefore do not belong on a transcript that goes with the student the rest of his life," says **Chestine Kurth**, director of records and research at **Central Wyoming College**.

But others feel that severe disciplinary actions, resulting in suspensions or dismissals, should be noted so that if a student applies to another institution or an employer, the recipient of a transcript is aware of a problem.

When an inter-association task force recommended that the academic transcript should list disciplinary dismissals, the **American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers** refused to supply its endorsement.

"We have resisted this because of the nature of what the transcript is," says **Barmak Nassirian**, AACRAO's associate executive director of external relations. "We are not the guardian of every objective footnote about students. We are the guardian of the academic record."

The proposal was underdeveloped when presented to registrars, he says.

"The notion that the academic transcript is the place to record disciplinary action is at least debatable," Nassirian says.

"AACRAO decided against endorsing the report because we're not in the business of telling institutions what to do on matters that are contested."

But institutions do set their own policies. The provost at **Ohio State University** recently approved a policy that adds notations.

"I don't think there's an expectation that an institution has to do this," says **Brad Myers**, OSU's registrar. "We would appreciate it."

So a committee of four offices developed a proposal awaiting the provost's approval that would enable OSU to treat others the way it would like to be treated, he says.

Representatives from the committee on academic misconduct, judicial affairs, legal affairs and the registrar's

office began the process with a consensus that notations were a good idea.

"There is a slow, but ever-growing number of institutions taking the position that if the situation was serious enough to warrant separation from the institution, it should be noted on the transcript," Myers says. "Things are pretty extreme for a student to be dismissed or suspended."

The notation will not disclose the disciplinary violation, only that one was taken.

At the **University of North Carolina**, disciplinary notations are left to the student affairs office.

"We really try to hold that down so it is never seen by the public," says **David Lanier**, UNC's registrar.

The notation will say, simply, "judicial action pending" and remain on the transcript until the suspension ends.

The wording is left to the student honor court and student affairs office. If the student affairs office puts a disciplinary action on the student's record, it also puts a stop on the transcript. Then student affairs informs the student so the student knows that if the transcript is sent out, the notation is on there.

Some other institutions are comfortable without notations.

"We have not felt the need to alert other schools about a potentially dangerous student," says **Claudia Sullivan**, director of enrollment service at **Rogue Community College**

in Oregon. "At RCC we have internal mechanisms that alert a staff or faculty member that a student has been suspended for academic or disciplinary reasons. This flag blocks a student's ability to reenroll at RCC and can only be lifted by me. I have never lifted a disciplinary suspension. Luckily it doesn't come up very often."

When a **Clemson University** student is suspended for disciplinary reasons, there is a notation.

"We do not label it disciplinary. We just say suspended," says **Stan Smith**, Clemson's registrar.

"When you look at the academic record, you cannot be sure of the reason, though there are some pretty good clues. If a student with good grades is suspended, you can guess it is for disciplinary reasons. And the disciplinary suspension dates will sometimes begin in the middle of the term." ■

Student affairs, judicial affairs hope to find common ground with registrars

Disciplinary notations on transcripts has certainly stirred up controversy among the higher ed community. It's an issue in which — for the most part — registrars and student affairs do not see eye-to-eye.

But the field of student affairs and judicial affairs hopes it can join together with registrars to pursue a common ground.

"It would be my hope that at the point a student is not eligible to re-enroll at an institution, that would be the common ground that would warrant the documentation on the record, that would only be for the most egregious cases," says **Liz Baldizan**, dean of student life at **South Seattle Community College**.

"If a student is a danger to themselves or to others and has been permanently expelled from an institution, that's common ground. And by way of having that notation on the academic record, (that fulfills) our duty and our ethical and educational responsibility to our colleagues (and other students) when that student might re-enroll at another institution." ■

Off-campus law makes colleges pay fines, gather vehicle information

A new law in Philadelphia, aimed at addressing rowdy off-campus student behavior, has triggered concerns among campus administrators. The main concern is the vicarious responsibility placed on universities.

Here, **Greg Dell'Omo**, vice president for external affairs at **St. Joseph's University**, one of the institutions affected by the bill, provides a perspective of the bill.

The new law requires students, defined as full-time undergraduates under the age of 23, to provide their local addresses to the institutions they attend.

And, under the new law, universities:

- Must develop safety plans for on-campus residence halls and off-campus housing.
- Must collect vehicle information from students, even if they don't plan on bringing their cars to campus, and issue stickers to them.
- Will receive violations when students violate noise, property damage, littering or zoning laws.
- Pay tickets students fail to pay.

Prior to the legislation, St. Joseph's had already taken the following steps to address off-campus concerns:

- √ Required first-year students to live on campus.
- √ Worked with the community, city officials and landlords to address off-campus issues.
- √ Collected addresses of all students.
- √ Did not allow on-campus students to have cars.
- √ Planned for more on-campus student housing.

St. Joseph's is taking additional steps to comply by:

- Working with police to develop safety plans and hiring off-duty police to help oversee off-campus living areas.
- Requiring all sophomores to live on campus.

"Students living off campus are still subject to the student code of conduct and the judicial process," Dell'Omo says.

"If students violate the law, we will not impede the process between students and the law."

But he disagrees with vicarious responsibility and leaving the landlords out of the bill.

"If we're going to have vicarious liability, then the landlord should have it, too," he says.

Landlords and police have more access to off-campus students than the university does, he says. ■

Appeal of Michigan law school case goes to U.S. Supreme Court

Not until late September or early October will we hear whether the **U.S. Supreme Court** decides to take the admissions lawsuit involving the **University of Michigan School of Law**, according to the *Detroit Free Press*.

Barbara Grutter, an applicant denied entry to the law school, turned to the High Court after the **6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals** ruled in May that the university can consider race as a factor in its admission decision.

If the Supreme Court accepts the case, oral arguments would not be held until at least January. ■

ETS forced to shut down GRE test

Suspicious of cheating by test takers in Asia, the **Educational Testing Service** suspended the computer-based Graduate Record Examinations General Test.

It will reintroduce paper versions beginning Oct. 1 in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. Test takers in those countries will be able to sit for the paper exam on Nov. 23 and March 15.

An investigation found Asian-language Web sites offering questions from live versions of the test, provided by test takers who had memorized the questions and shared them with others. ■

University of Georgia continues to tinker with admissions process

Every denied application at the **University of Georgia** will be reviewed at least twice before the decision is final, under a revised admissions policy to avoid discrimination.

Applications will be sorted into three categories — academically superior, academically competitive and not competitive. The emphasis will be on high school grade point average and the rigor of the high school's curriculum.

Students rated academically superior are expected to comprise 75 to 80 percent of the freshman class of 2003.

Evaluation of the academically competitive group will look for students who exhibit intellectual curiosity, integrity, personal maturity, creativity, commitment to service and citizenship, ability to overcome hardship, and a respect for cultural differences.

A revised application form will seek information on those characteristics, require a recommendation from an applicant's teacher in an academic subject in the junior or senior year of high school, and include a restructured form for evaluation by the high school. ■

ACT ends flagging practice

ACT has joined **The College Board** in ceasing to flag the test scores of students who take the ACT Assessment under extended time conditions. The change in practice will take effect with the 2003-04 testing year. ■