Smooth Student Transitions: Hand-off from Undergraduate Admission to the Registrar’s Office

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SACRAO Annual Meeting
Session: M3.06
Monday, February 2, 2015
1:30-2:30 PM
202B
Topics

- Relationships
- Retention
- Freshman Admission
- FASET Orientation
- Goals
- Challenges
- Managing expectations
Georgia Tech Basics

- Public, STEM-focused
- 35 majors
- 6 colleges
- Located in Atlanta, GA
- Fall 2014 enrollment: 23,109 (7.63%)
  - Undergraduate – 14,682
  - Graduate – 8,427
- Global presence
- Approximately 30 staff members in admission and registrar
- Orientation managed out of a separate office
Relationships

- Undergraduate Admissions and Registrar report to Vice Provost for Enrollment Services (as well as Financial Aid and the President’s Scholar Program)
- Housed in separate buildings, but very near each other on campus
- Transfer credit is processed in the Registrar’s Office
- The Communication division within Enrollment Services manages the website for UG Admissions and oversees communication to all prospects, applicants, admitted, and deposited students
- Both Admissions and Registrar work closely with the orientation office (FASET)
Critical Partners

More important than the formal reporting lines, strong enrollment management works through partnerships created on campus. If a campus defined enrollment management as admissions, financial aid, orientation, and registration, for example, a strategic chief enrollment officer would also have critical partners: marketing, academic advising, career development, student accounts, and possibly athletics in a DIII environment sit at the enrollment management leadership table as associate members or partners. Undergraduate Admissions and Registrar report to Vice Provost for Enrollment Services.

Institutional Priorities

- Mission
- Vision
- Strategic plan
- Recruitment and retention of students
Another institutional “hot potato” is where retention responsibilities are housed and owned. Clearly, student life and academic affairs have to be major players on the retention team, ideally having forged a strong, collaborative relationship. But retention is one of the three enrollment streams along with new freshmen and new transfers. So enrollment management, by definition, should include managing all enrollments—not just new students.

Retention

- Georgia Tech currently holds a freshman to sophomore retention rate of 96 percent.
Retention

• Three major players:
  • Enrollment Management (Admissions)
  • Student Affairs (Orientation)
  • Academic Affairs (Registrar)
• These players all have critical partners on campus.

Three Major Players in Retention

If admissions enrolls large numbers of at-risk students with little opportunity to succeed, the institution could hemorrhage students after the first semester or first year. So for retention, there are really three major players sharing information, problem solving, and developing data-based intervention strategies. All three should share ownership for retention, although one area needs to champion the effort and be held responsible for the results. Which area that should be, again, is a function of each institution’s culture, history, and past retention challenges.

Critical Intersection
Why higher education experts believe you should attend orientation:

- “The research on orientation clearly indicates that successful orientation programs have a powerful influence on first-year social and academic integration and, furthermore, that social and academic integration have a significant effect on student persistence and educational attainment” (Rode, 2000, p. 3)

Source: http://www.suu.edu/ss/orientation/why.html
Orientation: A Critical Intersection of Campus Services that Affect Retention

- “Effective [retention] programs commonly stress the manner in which their actions serve to integrate individuals into the mainstream of the social and intellectual life of the institution and into the communities of people which make up that life. They consciously reach out and make contact with students in order to establish personal bonds among students and between students, faculty, and staff members of the institution” (Tinto, 1990, p. 36)

- “Involved students are committed to their college and are retained at a significantly higher rate, and a quality orientation program encourages and facilitates these important initial involvement opportunities” (Muldendore, 2010, p. 1)

Source: http://www.suu.edu/ss/orientation/why.html
Role of the Registrar in Retention

Registrar staff play a strategic role within the SEM organization at an institution primarily because of access to vast amounts of data that are needed to drive SEM efforts. However, that data is best utilized when seen through the lens of desired educational outcomes, something that can happen when partnerships exist between enrollment and academics. Registrar staff are uniquely suited to fulfill this role due to the crossroads within the institution where the position sits—between service to students and the academic programs that students pursue.

Source: http://consulting.aacrao.org/publications-events/the-strategic-role-of-the-registrar/
Admission

But first, let’s get to know our recruiting and admission process at Tech, and learn more about the incoming population.
Admission Trends
Admission Trends

![Admission Rate Chart]

- 2008: 62%
- 2009: 41%
- 2010: 57%
- 2011: 51%
- 2012: 55%
- 2013: 41%
- 2014: 33%
Shaping the Class: Holistic Review

- Academic Performance & Course Selection
- ACT/SAT Scores
- Extracurricular Involvement
- Personal Essays
- School Report
- Recommendations
- Other Standardized Tests
- Online Interview (non-native English speakers)
2014 Freshman Class Profile

**ADMISSION OVERVIEW**

- **Applications**: 25,880
- **Admitted**: 8,560
- **Class Size**: 2,800

Admit Rate: **33%**
2014 Freshman Class Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014 ACADEMIC PROFILE</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Mid-50% Ranges</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ACT</strong> 30-33</td>
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94% of students have taken at least AP calculus or equivalent
2014 Freshman Class Profile

**GEOGRAPHY**
- States: 47
- Countries: 63
- Ga Counties: 87
- High Schools: 1,300+

**RACE/ETHNICITY**
- African American: 6.72%
- Asian: 27.6%
- Caucasian: 51.06%
- Hispanic: 7.36%
- Multiracial: 4.08%
- Unknown: 4.18%

**GENDER**
- Female: 39%
- Male: 61%
Communication is Key!

- Prospects:
  - Campus Visits
  - Monthly newsletters
  - Search piece
  - Summer mailer
  - Application pushes
  - Name buys, college fairs, vendors (Cappex, Zinch, College View, etc.)
Communication is Key!

- Applicants:
  - Monthly newsletters
  - Deadline reminders
  - Triggered messaging based upon decision codes entered by counselors
Communication is Key!

- Admitted Students:
  - Events (overnight, Open House, socials, meet and greets)
  - Accept packet
  - Celebration mailer
  - Social media engagement
  - Student newsletters
  - Parent newsletters
  - Targeted messaging by major
  - Targeted messaging by cohort group
Preparation for Enrollment

- Tuition classification
- Final high school transcripts
- AP/IB, SAT II scores
- College Transcripts
- Verify lawful presence
Preparation for Enrollment

• They are now recruited.
• They are now admitted.
• They have deposited.
• They have signed up for FASET.
• The next critical step is about to be taken.
FASET Orientation

- Familiarization and Adaptation to the Surroundings and Environs of Tech

- 2-day, overnight orientation program for new undergraduate students (freshmen, exchange, and transfers) as well as their parents, family members, and guests
A Georgia Tech tradition since 1972
- Freshmen select one of six sessions offered in the summer
- Transfer students attend orientation held at the start of each semester

Managed by the Office of New Student and Sophomore Programs
FASET: Creating a Community

• Students are offered a variety of opportunities to meet classmates and acclimate to Tech before classes begin:
  – Rats on Ropes
  – Wreck Camp
  – Tech Treks
  – Tech Prep
  – Challenge (URM)
What Happens During FASET?

- Academic Advising

- Register for first semester courses and complete other “business” items

- Faculty, staff, and administrators discuss important campus services, student organizations, the undergraduate curriculum, and academic programs

- Most importantly, students, parents, and guests will have an opportunity to meet and interact with current Tech students as well as to get to know other new students, parents, and guests
Parent Breakfast

- The parent breakfast is where the face of the Registrar’s Office enters the picture.
  - Assistant Registrar, Customer Relations is our primary liaison for this FASET activity.
  - Aside from questions about tuition classification and other policies, this is our first opportunity to interact with parents.
Presentations and Registration

• Several offices, including the Registrar, do a presentation for the parents and students that outlines the functions of the offices.
  – This is part of the overall acclimation process.
  – It is our goal to have parents and students understand how Tech operates and what is expected of students.

• After the presentations, students go to Schools or Colleges and then to the registration clusters.
Registration

A funny thing happened on the way to the registration cluster....
What’s your major?

It’s the defining question for college students — and the cliché that’s launched a thousand friendships and romances. It’s also a question that has become harder for students to answer.

• Blame it on the growing number of possibilities. Colleges and universities reported nearly 1,500 academic programs to the Department of Education in 2010; 355 were added to the list over the previous 10 years as colleges, to stay competitive and current, adopted new disciplines like homeland security and global studies, cyber-forensics and agroecology.

At the University of Michigan and Arizona State University, students choose from a dizzying 251 and 250 majors, respectively. DePaul University in Chicago offers 24 more majors than it did in 2002, for a total of 98.

And graduating with a double (or triple) major, minor or concentration as a way to hedge bets in an uncertain job market has become increasingly popular; the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded with double majors rose 70 percent between 2001 and 2011, according to the Education Department.

Some students go to college knowing exactly what they want to do. But most don’t. At Penn State, 80 percent of freshmen — even those who have declared a major — say they are uncertain about their major, and half will change their minds after they declare, sometimes more than once.

Colleges and universities have vested interests in students declaring early. Retention rates for declared students are better, and they are more likely to graduate in four years. But college officials also recognize that deciding on a major can be overwhelming, especially when coupled with the fear that a wrong choice will result in added semesters and tuition. “Students no longer have the luxury of stumbling into a major or making mistakes,” says Neeta P. Fogg, a research professor at Drexel University’s Center for Labor Markets and Policy, and a co-author of “College Majors Handbook With Real Career Paths and Payoffs.”

FASET: Changes of Major

We typically process over 500 changes of major at FASET. Since many of our courses are restricted by major, this creates a wild scramble to update the records for registration purposes. The wilder this gets, the more we worry about the quality of the overall experience at FASET.
After FASET

We have a debriefing to talk about what worked and didn’t. We then start planning for next year.
Ongoing FASET Office Goals

Dartmouth says it well....
The purpose of the New Student Orientation program at Dartmouth College is to prepare students to be academically successful by:

- Providing information and resources that will allow students to make informed and appropriate academic plans and healthy social choices;

- Creating a welcoming environment that builds a sense of community among the incoming class and connects them to faculty, staff and other students;

- Providing a framework for four years of success through the communication of expectations, norms and standards.

Source: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~orientation/goals/
Ongoing Admission Goals

• Track the performance of the incoming freshman class for insights that might help guide the next recruiting season

• Stir the ashes with Registrar and Financial Aid to determine what went right and wrong leading up to enrollment in fall

• Using findings from retention and graduation efforts to help guide future planning
Ongoing Registrar’s Goals

• High-tech - improving technology
• High-touch - focusing on customer service
• Accessible - making sure students know who we are and how to contact us
• Responsive - being very responsive to student needs
• Supporting advising - investing in DegreeWorks and a more sophisticated registration system to make sure students are registering for what they need to graduate
• Supporting degree completion – Graduation and Retention Coordinator jointly reports to Registrar and Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Challenges

• Managing expectations, parents’, students’ and ours
• Keeping the automation in both offices from overwhelming our desire to connect with incoming students in a personal way
• Keeping FASET focused on orientation, not on devices, social activities, etc.
Managing Expectations

• Admission: sets the stage that Tech is hard, but you can do it
• FASET: introduces them to campus culture
• Registrar: works with registration, and supports students if/when grades drop
• Financial Aid: reaches out to students on the brink of losing scholarships to find a Plan B
Virtual Reality: Personal Touch versus Technology

As colleges and universities face an increasingly tech-savvy applicant pool, many recruiters are seeking out novel ways to speak the new generation’s language. …Now many institutions are beginning to embrace technology on their own as a marketing tool to attract potential applicants.

“On the one side, we’re moving to more online instruction and more automated or nearly automated processes. The idea is to both increase convenience for students -- especially those with jobs and/or families -- and to improve the economics of the college by increasing enrollments and cutting costs. By going high tech, we hope to get around some of the cost issues that bedevil us when we do what we’ve always done.”

Source: https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean/high-tech-high-touch
“On the other side, we’re trying to improve the success rates of students generally -- and of students from underrepresented groups specifically -- by a panoply of “high touch” strategies. Intrusive advisement, mandatory orientation, learning communities, freshman interest groups, and mini-prep classes -- all of which we’re using -- have been shown to help, but do so through increased labor intensity per student. They’re expensive.”

Source: https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean/high-tech-high-touch
High Tech, High Touch

“It’s just hard to do both sides at the same time.”

Source: https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean/high-tech-high-touch
Closing Thoughts

• We think of ourselves as “one Georgia Tech,” not a collection of related services and functions.
• As “one Georgia Tech” we operate as a cohesive unit. The sum is greater than the parts.
• UG Admissions, FASET, and Registrar start off as “one,” or we try to do so, and we all understand what is at stake…
• The faces we see at FASET are the ones we want to see again at commencement.
Resources

• High Tech, High Touch, Confessions of a Community College Dean

• Virtual Reality and the Brave New World of College Recruiting

• What is helicopter parenting?

• GT’s FASET homepage
  – http://www.nssp.gatech.edu/
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Connectivity

Conference Guidebook App
- Download Guidebook (free) on your smartphone.
- You’ll have vital conference information plus good intel about nearby entertainment, dining, shopping, and tours in the palm of your hand! The app is available for download for iOS and Android devices. Once you download Guidebook, search for SACRAO2015.

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