

Graduate Admissions: Best Practices and Problems

Duane K. Larick

Interim Dean

North Carolina State University

Admissions Process - Overview

- Establishing admission policies
- Collecting applications
- Evaluating credentials
- Selecting applicants for admissions
- Notifying applicants of admission decisions
- Assessing the admission process/policies
- Others
 - Entering and maintaining accurate admissions data
 - Tracking applicants progress through the system
 - Communicating with applicants throughout the process

Common Admission Issues

- Variation in application and admission protocols among programs or colleges
- Financial considerations
- The application itself and application processing
 - Advantages of on-line application
- Admissions process
 - Admission dates
 - Prospect contact
 - Fraud
 - Other admission challenges
- International admissions issues
- Legal issues
 - FERPA
 - Race/Ethnicity Data Collection
 - Student behavior

Variations in Protocols Due to Structure

- Organizational structure (policies and process)
 - Centralized (51%)*
 - Decentralized (30%)
 - Collaborative (19%)
- Who makes admission decisions?
 - 71% Program level*
 - 12% Administrative staff
 - 7% Academic Dean
 - 10% Other

*Source: 2003 NAGAP Survey of Member Organizational Structures

Financial Considerations

- Application fee
 - Amount Charged
 - Who Receives the Funds?
 - Fee waiver policies
 - Financial need, special programs (McNair), etc.
- Enrollment deposits

On-Line Applications

- Provides solutions to many admission issues
 - Much more user friendly for prospective students
 - Can be accessed by program as soon as submitted
 - Can receive supplemental materials as attachments
 - Helps minimize stray docs
 - Allows for electronic recommendation submission
 - Improved communication with programs
 - Allows for direct communication with applicant
 - Encouragement e-mails, status updates, decisions, etc.

On-Line Applications-Innovative Solutions

- Semi on-line where the applicant prints a hard copy and mails
- Partial on-line where other credentials are sent directly to the admissions office or program
 - Credential matching issues
- Credential scanning by student (hard copies later)
 - Also self-reported GPA's, standardize test scores, etc.
- Credential scanning by institution
- Global Transcript Delivery Network: eSCRIP-SAFE
 - Electronic warehouse where you can participate as a “sender” and “receiver” or just to “receive”
- Common Graduate School Application
 - Would likely require separate supplemental applications for each institution

Admissions Process - Dates

- Rolling vs. fixed-date admissions
- *CGS Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees and Assistants*
 - Students are under no obligation to respond to offers made prior to April 15th; earlier deadlines violate the intent of this resolution
 - Must inform prospective students of both admissions and financial assistance before April 15th
 - Is this a timing issue for international students (especially in fields on the State Department's Technology Alert List)?
 - <http://www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/CGSResolutionJune2008.pdf>

Admission Process - Prospect Contact

- Notification of application status
- Notification of admission decisions
- Encouragement contacts
 - Letters and postcards
 - Automated electronic campaigns
 - Student surveys



NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

[Search for Answers](#)

[Ask Us a Question](#)

[Chat with Us](#)

[My Stuff](#)

[Login](#)

[Help](#)

Choose a Topic

Graduate School

All Subs

Find My Question (optional) [Search Tips](#)

Search

Powered by **RIGHT NOW**

214 Answers Available

Page: 1 of 18 [Go](#)

Summary

- 1 **New** - [The CoAT program](#)
- 2 **New** - [Eligibility for CoAT](#)
- 3 **New** - [Teaching experiences at other institutions](#)
- 4 **New** - [Prior teaching experiences](#)
- 5 **New** - [Teaching NCSU courses in CoAT](#)
- 6 **New** - [Cost of CoAT program](#)
- 7 **New** - [Timeline for CoAT](#)
- 8 **New** - [Course credit in CoAT](#)
- 9 **New** - [Compare PTP and CoAT](#)
- 10 **New** - [Office hours in CoAT](#)
- 11 **New** - [CoAT Workshops](#)

Admissions Process - Fraud

- Have a publicized, clearly stated policy that indicates fraudulent applications will be denied or student terminated if already admitted!
 - This must apply to all components including transcripts, recommendations, testing scores, criminal background, etc.

Other Admission Challenges

- There needs to be standardized procedures for the following:
 - Appeals
 - Deferrals
 - Readmission
 - Transfer
 - From one institution to another
 - Within institution
 - Application to more than one degree program
 - Special programs
 - Accelerated bachelors/masters programs

International Admissions – Issues and Opportunities

- **Credential evaluation**
 - In-house
 - Central vs. local (program)
 - External educational credential evaluation service
- **Government sponsored programs**
 - Fullbright Scholars
 - Chinese Scholars Council
 - 2 year and 5 year scholars

International Admissions – Issues and Opportunities

- Three-year baccalaureate degrees (Bologna Process, India, etc.)
 - Equivalent to U.S. degree
 - Add conditional admission requirements
 - Waive degree requirement
 - Exceptions on case-by-case basis

International Admissions – Issues and Opportunities

- English proficiency
 - TOEFL
 - IELTS
 - Establishing minimum scores
 - Word of faculty/staff

Legal Issues Related to Admissions

- Best practices
 - Collect only the information you want and need
 - Do not discriminate based on race, sex, age, disability or citizenship
 - Publish admissions standards and adhere to them
 - Base admissions decisions on the total application
 - Document admission decision and rationale

Legal Issues Related to Admissions

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)
 - Provides access rights of **admitted students** to their admission records, except for confidential recommendations for which a valid waiver to the right to access has been signed by the student.
 - Does not apply to unsuccessful applicants or applicants who do not enroll

Ethnicity Data (New Requirement)

- New requirements for maintaining, collecting and reporting data on race and ethnicity to the Department of Education (OMB, 1997 Standard)

Race/Ethnicity

Are you Hispanic or Latino? Yes No

- (Select one or more)
- American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - White

Legal Issues Related to Admissions

- Prospective student behavior – screening for safety
 - Collection and use of information related to nonacademic factors such as criminal history or prior college disciplinary actions
 - Questions should be limited to convictions!
 - Criminal background checks – works for US citizens but what about internationals?
 - How will the information obtained be used?
 - Consideration should be given to: the nature of the activity; elapsed time since committed; rehabilitation efforts of the applicant
 - Must work with University Counsel b/c State laws vary
 - Who should pay the costs?

QUESTIONS?

Supplemental Slides

Goals of a Good Admissions Office

- Timely processing of applications
- Efficient use of resources
- Outstanding customer service
 - To both the prospect and program
- Consistency of process and outcome
- Provide accurate admissions data
- Periodically assess the efficiency of the process

Admission Policy-Guiding Principles

- Admission decisions are based on the “total” application
 - Approval or denial cannot be based on any one part
- Meeting minimum requirements does not guarantee admissions
- Decisions should match the interests and competency level of the prospect with the enrollment goals and priorities of the institution
 - When a goal of the institution is to increase “diversity” (multicultural, gender, socio/economic, etc) it is especially important that admissions decision makers look for indicators of admissibility rather than causes for rejection.

Criteria Evaluated & Requirements

- Required documents
 - Application form
 - Official transcripts of all previous academic work
 - Letter(s) of recommendation
 - Proof of English competency
- Required exams/test scores
- Minimum standards

Criteria Evaluated & Requirements

- Optional application materials
 - Standardized test scores
 - Personal statements
 - Writing samples
 - Interview
 - Portfolios
 - Work/research experience

Admissions Processing - Categories

- Degree seeking students
 - Full admission
 - Conditional or provisional
 - Specific information missing from the student's file
 - Student is deficient in some academic area
 - Denied
- Non-degree seeking or post-baccalaureate
 - Certificate and licensure programs, etc.

Admission Decisions - Process

- Have a written policy stating who has authority to make an admissions offer
- If “provisional” or “conditional” admissions is offered, clearly outline the conditions and timelines
- It is not necessary to provide details in denial letters
 - But, admission recommendations should include reasons
- Have a clearly written policy about FEPPRA and to whom it applies

Funding Decisions

- Who makes funding decision?
 - Majority at Program Level (>50%)
- Some institutions with large endowments have college/institution level competitions

Data Management

- In order to respond to Federal, Organizational (CGS) and Institutional requests
 - Applicant, admits and enrollee credentials
 - Demographic information
 - Rate of attrition for applicants to acceptances to enrollment to degree completion
 - Etc.

Assessment of Admissions Policies

- Need a centralized database to “track” application pool
 - Quality of applicants, program selectivity, etc.
 - Need to understand difference between programs
 - May also use data to:
 - Predict enrollment
 - Identify “feeder” schools
- On-line applications also provide opportunity to collect information on admission decisions and reasons (why accepted or declined)

Legal Issues Related to Admissions

- **Affirmative Action – two-part analysis**
 - Does it serve a compelling reason?
 - To remedy present effects of an institution's own prior discrimination
 - Achieve educational benefits that come from racial & ethnic diversity in the classroom
 - Is it specifically designed to serve this purpose?
 - Not permissible to:
 - Set quotas or numerical goals
 - Use race or ethnicity as a sole criterion
 - Have different admission requirements
 - Review applications differently
 - The institution must examine alternatives to affirmative action to determine whether methods other than race consciousness are effective
- **Programs should encourage all forms of diversity**