CAS Standards Assessment for
Admission Programs

Program Evaluation in College Student Affairs
CSA 592
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The Office of Undergraduate Admission at a private institution in Southern California runs its office and its programs quite effectively under the CAS standards. According to Part 2-Program, CAS states that admission programs must administer programs and services that encourage the achievement of student learning and development that is both “holistic” and “purposeful.” The areas of growth fall into 16 different categories. I find it quite difficult to see how admissions can affect students through programming, as their main goal is to attract potential students to its campus. Some of these categories are, however, demonstrated through a few of the programs that the admission office provides.

Overall, the CAS standards institute that admission programs and services should be able to “establish, meet and maintain desired enrollment.” The University’s upcoming admitted student event is one of several programs the admission office provides in its attempts to meet enrollment standards. The event invites admitted students and their families to come on campus to obtain a more personal view of the institution. The program has two tracks: one for students and one for their guardians. Breakout sessions for the students include mock-class setups, student life panel, athletics information, a housing workshop etc. The parents track involves financial aid and academic advising and learning resources as well as alumni speakers. The CAS standards also indicate under Programs that information should be easily accessible for everyone. At Spotlight, written information will be provided in Spanish for students’ parents as many admitted students at the University are often first generation. Both workshops for the parents also have Spanish-speaking presenters.

Distributing “current and complete information” is a major priority of our office just as it is as a CAS standard. Other ways the Office of Admission ensures that it provides accessible information to potential students as well as marketing (another CAS standard under Programs) is
through numerous college fairs, campus visits, daily information sessions on campus, road shows, mass mailings and home Web site. The college fairs we attend include the large fairs that are held regionally by the National Association for College Admission Counselors as well as smaller, more local college fairs that may be more easily accessible for students. The admission counselors also have select territories in which they personally attend the high schools to provide information to high school students that have interest in the university. For those students who are even more interested in attending the University, the Office of Admission offers tours Monday through Friday as well as on select Saturdays for those parents who work during the week. If students have a particular interest in a certain major, the office will also set up faculty information sessions. With the small size the campus, around 1,700 undergraduates and close to 400 incoming freshmen, the Office of Admission is able to cater to potential students. However, the downside of a smaller University is that the admission staff is also smaller. Although the institution appears to provide accessible information to all, it could have the potential to do more with a larger staff.

All of these programs provide such information that that CAS standard recommends including programs offered, selection criteria and financial aid. However, many of the programs and services provided by the University do not include how acceptance decisions are made or notified. In addition, although the Web site has selection criteria listed, it does not list a required GPA or standardized test score, which should be added.

A number of other programs are also provided to attract students such as a day for prospective students, phone campaigns and college major-related events. In addition, however, there are several programs that attract high school and community college counselors. One of the larger events for counselors includes a program that encompasses the participation of five or six
private colleges in the area who host a four-day event for close to 30 counselors. These institutions provide lodging, airfare, food, transportation and event costs for all counselors interested in learning about and visiting these colleges. It is vital that counselors visit college campuses in an effort to increase enrollment at the selected schools.

Under the CAS standards, Part 5 – Human Resources, it seems that the admission office is up to par. The professional staff from the associate dean of admissions and up all has at least their graduate degree. All admission counselors and associate directors have a masters or working on one, with the exception of one employee. Student interns are thoroughly trained by one of the assistant directors. The student staff has a handbook to refer to as well as a tour guide handbook as they are all equipped to lead campus tours. One of the assistant directors works closely with the interns to understand what each student hopes to learn more about in their position. Each full-time staff member is assigned as an informal mentor to each student intern, although I have observed that the students float to whom they feel the most comfortable with, regardless, they build strong bonds with full-time staff. In addition, the University meets the CAS standard of having technical support staff. Two appointed staff persons provide internal support when needed on admission-specific software. The Office of Information Technology provides support when it can, although it appears that the office lags with assistance and is sometimes ill-equipped for technology issues and in the past has not provided support for the admission software, however, this will soon be changing. In addition, the undergraduate admission staff itself is somewhat diverse in compliance with CAS standard. The senior professional staff that works the most closely with the undergraduate admission staff is knowledgeable in the area of marketing, financial aid, testing and the needs of the target audience; she has also worked in admissions for more than 10 years.
Admission staff training is somewhat informal on a learn-as-you-go basis for the most part, which in my opinion is the most helpful. The following are CAS standards which the institution meets in the sector of staff training: a campus tour, admission policies and professional growth opportunities. All new admission counselors from the University are sent to a Collegeboard summer institute with other new-to-the-industry counselors to learn the ins and outs of the job as well as tools to use and information for professional growth. There are several areas in the Human Resources sector that are not met by the campus, these include: orientation of the institution, social aspects of the institution and familiarization with financial aid operations.

For new employees it appears that they are trained on assessing applications and so forth, however, it seems that after the training, there seemed to be a few holes that were not and led to further confusion. Another void was training on financial aid. Proper training on the available grants, how the grants are given out or who receives them was not provided. Financial aid is a major factor in a student’s college decision and it is important as a part of the admission office to be highly educated on the process. In addition, there was not information provided on the academic programs provided by the institution first-hand.

Amongst the met and missed criteria of the CAS standards, I would like to further investigate a few areas in the Office of Admission. The first area is the accessibility of information which is mentioned under Part 5 – Programs. Although the University does a suitable job in providing accessible information to its potential students, as mentioned earlier, more could be done. Considering the number of first generation students and the geographic areas that the admission counselors travel to, there should be printed material available in Spanish as well as on the admission Web site for parents whose primary language is Spanish. I would want to spend some time looking into how effective and informative the marketing
materials are as well as how effective each program and service is to gaining applicants. Perhaps some of the college fairs would be more effective if literature was available in Spanish or if information sessions were translated as a large chunk of the student population is Latino. Further investigation is needed to see if this has been done in the past, and if not, I would want to look into how the admission office begins to test the waters in Spanish publications.

The second area for further assessment includes Part 4 – Organization and Management. The management flow of the office appears to be seamless from first glance; however, I feel there are some areas for improvement and clarification which I’d like to look into further. There are policies and procedures provided for various functions of the office such as reading applications etc., however, as mentioned earlier, some of these policies need to be more detailed. It also appears that many staff members have the role of “director” whether it’s “associate director” or “director” of something. In addition, I was unable to locate an employee review policy: how often the reviews occur, when they occur, if raises are applicable, the form of which the review takes and who evaluates whom.