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My First D.A.S.U.M. A Perspective on the Directors of Admissions at State Universities in Michigan

by Christopher Tremblay

This past June, I returned from two days in Traverse City, Michigan, where fifteen Directors of Admission at state universities in Michigan gathered for one of two bi-annual meetings. It was my first D.A.S.U.M. meeting since joining the University of Michigan–Dearborn in December 2005. I had been looking forward to my first D.A.S.U.M. meeting since 1994, when I first became an admissions counselor. Finally, I had arrived at the table as a director.

D.A.S.U.M. is considered a subcommittee of the Academic Affairs Officers of the Presidents' Council. This council was formally established in 1952 to be a forum where the presidents and chancellors of Michigan's fifteen public universities could meet to discuss major higher education issues and policies. We meet twice a year—usually in June and December—to share our successes, struggles and best practices.

I knew that D.A.S.U.M. had been formed for the purposes of support and information exchange among admissions directors. Those of us in the field know the severity of the pressure to practice strategic enrollment management in order to protect institutional retention rates and selectivity. Yet we know of no other such group, in any state. The D.A.S.U.M. group, to include its meetings and activities, is designed to complement state, regional, and national professional associations. D.A.S.U.M. has a specific focus and role and is an effective mechanism within the State of Michigan.

The location of our meetings rotates throughout the state, from the Upper Peninsula to the Lower Peninsula and everywhere in between. Some are held on college campuses, others in resort towns. Shifting the location periodically ensures that drive times fluctuate accordingly, so that representatives from the same school don't always have to travel a great distance. (I commend my colleagues at schools in the Upper Peninsula for their dedication to this group and for their willingness to drive five to nine hours each way just to attend.)

D.A.S.U.M. has four primary roles in our field:

Information Exchange

An agenda is established in advance on the basis of suggestions from all of the directors; yet the agenda remains flexible as new topics arise during each meeting. From time to time, special guests are invited to update the directors on certain issues and activities. For example, a representative from our Presidents' Council in June shared information about tuition increases, higher education funding, legislative referendums, new proposals, and other items of interest. We also share current practices. These are recorded on pre-printed grids on which all universities are listed; there is also a place where we can take notes to share with our home campuses. At our last meeting, we shared information about our scholarship competitions, campus visit programs, and catalogs and applications. We also discussed technology, dual enrollment, and federal grants. Information that was shared is certain to prove useful.

Data Collection and Reporting

Four times each year, one colleague collects and reports our application, admit, and deposit numbers for incoming freshmen and transfer students. These figures are then compared with data from the previous year. The resulting summary provides a complete picture of application activity among all fifteen public state universities. We are looking forward to the creation of a Web site where this information will be more easily collected and reported; the resulting "historical documentation" of our admissions activity will be beneficial.

Listserv

All directors are automatically subscribed to the D.A.S.U.M. listserv, which is hosted by Ferris State University. The listserv is used regularly as a place to ask questions, seek clarification,

tion, and check in with one another. It is a convenient and efficient way to communicate.

Promoting the Publics

Four years ago, D.A.S.U.M. launched an event called “Promoting the Publics.” This free event, held on the centrally located Michigan State University campus, is a college fair for all high school counselors and career center coordinators in Michigan. In September, all fifteen public universities set up booths to distribute recruitment materials and information; they also conduct two informational presentations about their school. Last year, this event served 600 high school colleagues. A counselor from a public high school on the west side of the state wrote: “At a time when it’s increasingly difficult for counselors to visit campuses or even to spend time at their own schools visiting with college representatives, “Promoting the Publics” has enabled counselors to get current information from many colleges at one time and place. The cooperation, financial support, and personal involvement of directors of admission reaffirm the commitment of each institution to maintain strong ties with high school counselors throughout the state.” The 2005 event received the MACAC Achievement Award from the Michigan Association for College Admission Counseling. The award is given annually in recognition of a tool, program, or procedure that

greatly aids in the college counseling process. To our knowledge, no other state sponsors such an event.

For not having a true “state system” in which all fifteen public universities are united under one governing board, Michigan nevertheless is a role model when it comes to fostering collaboration and information exchange. And of course, it’s all done in the spirit of competition! D.A.S.U.M. is an extremely valuable resource that provides professional development while assisting institutions with their admissions operations. Certainly, every state should have its own version of D.A.S.U.M.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher W. Tremblay is Director of Admissions and Orientation at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. He earned his bachelor’s degree in public relations in the Lee Honors College at Western Michigan University and his master’s degree in organizational communication also from WMU in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He previously served as Director of Admissions at Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania and as Coordinator of Orientation at Western Michigan University. Mr. Tremblay has presented at state and national conferences on issues such as admissions staff hiring, judicial issues in orientation, Disney customer service and Web/e-recruitment. He has been published in the *Journal of College Orientation and Transition* and the *Journal of Intergroup Relations*. He is an active member of the Michigan Association for College Admission Counseling and the Michigan Association for Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. He has been a part of the faculty at the Chautauqua Institution in New York.

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