

# Editor's Introduction

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As the old Dylan song notes, *the times are a changin'*, and summer sessions are no exception. A central theme at the summer session conferences this year was the increased pressure that many summer session administrators are under to produce more money for their institutions. Most summer sessions are no longer the sleepy, barely visible enterprises that they were just a few years ago. Today a number of universities and colleges see summer sessions as *cash cows*—sources of revenue that are becoming increasingly more important to the operations of the institutions. Hence, the pressure on summer session administrators to do more to create greater net revenues is increasing.

From my observations this increased pressure produces two very different but equally common responses among summer session administrators. For those summer session deans and directors whose primary aim is *administration*, the increased pressure can be a challenge or a headache, but ultimately it is a part of the administrators' regular duties. On the other hand, for those summer session deans and directors who consider themselves to be primarily academics, the added focus on net revenues is dehumanizing and alienating. The academic qua administrator (versus the academic administrator) is increasingly less common, because he or she is of a mindset that current central administrations can't afford. Less state and federal dollars to go around, along with

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increased competition, make the administration of academic units far more business-like than collegiate. Whether this will have long-term consequences for the academic quality of programs is to be seen, but for now this is the trend.

Regardless to which camp one belongs, however, one thing seems clear: the increased focus on producing greater revenues is a general trend that is changing the nature of summer sessions. If we think, for instance, about the kind of language used in discussing summer sessions, we find that terms like “profitability” and “cost effectiveness” prevail. We speak less of academic integrity and pedagogical value, and more of net margins and cost reductions. Our focus is on business. That isn’t to say that summer session administrators aren’t concerned with the academic aspects of their programs, but that concern seems to have become secondary. Summer session administrators often leave the business of academe to the faculty, while they tend to the *business* at hand. The not-for-profit label has become a tax advantage rather than a description of an institution’s—and especially the summer session’s—professional conduct.

Yet summer session administrators do work for institutions that have been entrusted with developing the realm of human knowledge, and so they must continually juggle the business side with the academic side to produce the best product possible. It is important to keep in mind, though, that the best product is the one that meets the academic aspirations of higher education first. The business aspects of higher education are necessary parts of the current scheme of things, but they are not the *raison d’être* of the enterprise.

The articles in this volume are representative of the business vs. academe struggle that summer session directors face daily. Some of the articles, such as the DiGregorio paper, focus exclusively on the academic aspects of summer session administration; others, e.g., Trewatha *et. al.* are more concerned with the business side. Both, however, offer important insights into the constituent parts of the summer session.

The DiGregorio paper is featured first because it connects this volume to the one that preceded it. In Volume I, in her paper “Non-Classroom Interactions Between Students and Faculty,” DiGregorio explained the importance of students connecting with faculty in informal ways. As DiGregorio notes, “...students’ non-classroom interactions with faculty can indeed become essential encounters, positively affecting student development.” In her current article DiGregorio develops her thesis and expands her study. She delves more deeply into the reasons students engage in out-of-classroom interactions with faculty, and she explains why such interactions can be so meaningful. Given that many

students and faculty have more available time in the summer, the possibility of out-of-classroom interactions increases. If faculty are aware of the importance of these interactions, they can help students make the connections that deepen the students' investments in their own academic experiences.

Trewatha, Coulter, and Coulter explore the anatomy of students' decisions to attend summer sessions. In particular, the authors investigate the timing of the decision and the information that students use to make the decision. The authors note that "knowledge about the summer session student's decision-making process should provide administrators with useful information about how and where to reach the regular, as well as the potential, summer session student with a media plan designed to point out positively the merits of attending the summer session." Marketing to summer session students is a recurring theme at summer session conferences, and an issue that almost all summer session directors must address annually. However, there is little systematic exploration of this issue in the literature, and most summer session directors make marketing decisions either based solely on their experiences or in consultation with colleagues. This study serves as an important pilot project in what needs to become an extensive, empirical investigation of issues of marketing and "selling" summer programs.

Precollege programs have become integral parts of many summer sessions. For some institutions, precollege programs serve as recruiting devices for their undergraduate programs; at other institutions precollege programs are simply money-makers; and for some schools, precollege programs are ways by which high school students become assimilated into the schools' environs. Gallagher and Rios conducted an interesting study of precollege programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, but their findings have broader applications than just at UW. The authors conclude that colleges and universities cannot ignore precollege programs, because those programs "create an entry point to campuses, link programs to constituent groups, and most importantly meet the needs and interests of a wide variety of students."

In his article, "Student Achievement in Summer Session Versions of Traditionally Semester-length Courses," Martin furthers the thesis that summer session courses are academically equivalent, and sometimes superior, to courses offered during the traditional school year. To substantiate his claim, Martin uses a survey of student performance in terms of grades that was carried out at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The article includes comparisons of student performance in specific academic areas.

"The Aesthetics of Summer Session Administration" is an article

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that examines the aesthetic components of the practice of administration. Highlighted in the article is the dichotomy between the pragmatic and the aesthetic. “The pragmatic aspects of a practice are independent of the aesthetic ones in that they serve different functions, yet they can be the same practice.” The values of noticing and becoming aware of the aesthetic components of administrative practices is that it allows one to focus on the *process* of administration, rather than solely concentrating on the end product. This, in turn, facilitates a new appreciation for well-crafted administrative practices, not because they produce considerable revenues or accommodate large numbers of students—all worthy endeavors—but because they exhibit aesthetic virtues that are essential parts of human life.

Section 2 contains synopses of surveys conducted at various institutions throughout the country. These synopses can help summer session administrators who are faced with having to formulate surveys to gather information, or who need information about a given topic, but don’t have the time or resources to have a survey done. The individuals listed in the contact sections of the surveys have said that they are willing to explain their surveys to interested parties, and most of them are also willing to share their surveys. The purpose of this section is to aid in cooperative information exchange, so if the reader has conducted a survey that is not listed in the synopses, please send a synopsis in the style of the survey synopses listed in Section 2 to the editor. (See the inside front cover for mailing information.) The new synopses will be published in Volume 3.

Finally, Section 3 contains a call for research proposals from the North American Association of Summer Sessions, and descriptions of upcoming conferences and contacts for those events.

The Editorial Board hopes that you find the material in this second issue of the journal useful, and we look forward to receiving contributions for future volumes.