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Preface

This book began from a discussion among three colleagues at an annual professional conference. They undertook the challenge of collaborating to create new subject matter, with the goal of writing on an issue within the field of higher education where little research had been done. A few months later, a proposal emerged to investigate a topic that seemed of great importance—a review of the impact of student displacement, not only on higher education, but also on students, parents, and administrators.

This book is a collection of research, narratives, and best practices drawn from qualitative paradigms and methodologies. The final product is a journey of over two years of collective work identifying the various impacts student displacement has on the industry and community of higher education. In many respects, this is a story of people involved in difficult situations and how they overcame them. They shared their stories in an effort to make future challenges easier for others. For that, we are grateful for their contributions.

While the book may have started out as a “how-to best practices” piece, it took on a larger context inclusive of case study research. The reader will not only receive takeaways about what to do in situations surrounding displaced students, institutional policy, and operational procedures, but also engage in these true life stories that have impacted faculty, staff, and students in the U.S. higher education community.

The authors wish to acknowledge those individuals who contributed their time, experience, and often painful accounts to ensure an accurate portrayal of student displacement and promote ways to better address these unfortunate situations. A special thanks goes to the AACRAO staff for their support in this

PREFACE

project, and especially to Ms. Jessica Montgomery for her guidance, extreme patience, and input which brought this project to fruition.

To our readers, may the information presented here, which we believe to be an under-researched topic of great importance, be of value in your endeavors to better serve your students.

Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D
Chief Enrollment Specialist
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About the Authors

Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed. D., most recently served in an academic appointment with the University of Missouri—St. Louis, where she was a clinical assistant professor in the College of Education and international Liaison Specialist in International Studies and Programs. She is currently President of enrollmentFUEL, a student search and enrollment consulting firm in North Carolina. She also conducts faculty development training for leaders of universities throughout Saudi Arabia. Dr. Elliott is currently serving as AACRAO Vice President for International Education and as editor of the SACRAO Journal. She received her doctorate in higher education administration from The George Washington University.

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Jesse Parrish is Assistant Registrar for Communications at Elon University, where he has served since 2015. Since coming to Elon, Mr. Parrish has worked extensively with undergraduate research students, mentoring them on research techniques, and has contributed to numerous publications.

Reta Pikowsky is the Registrar at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Ms. Pikowsky is a frequent presenter at regional and national meetings, covering

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subjects ranging from assessment in the registrar's office to policy development to achieving success in customer service. Ms. Pikowsky's current focus is on how the registrar's office can support teaching and learning on campus. With over 35 years of experience in higher education at many types of institutions, Ms. Pikowsky brings a broad perspective to discussions on a variety of topics.

Erin Walker is an Elon University alumna who completed her undergraduate degree in 2014. Ms. Walker served as a research assistant for Dr. Parks from 2014–2015, working specifically on the research for this book. Ms. Walker is currently a graduate student at the University of South Carolina, pursuing a Masters of Social Work. Upon graduation, she plans to work with veterans experiencing PTSD as they reintegrate into the civilian population.

Introduction

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One of the primary goals of admission and registration professionals is to ensure student success through the promotion and retention of four-year graduation rates. Each year, due to displacement, numerous students are hindered in their timely degree completion. Students who are exposed to traumatic events are often uprooted from their home institutions and forced to transfer to a different institution in the middle of the academic year (McCarthy and Butler 2003). Students who are displaced are suddenly thrust into considering contingencies which were, until then, not within their realm of thinking. Displaced students may face persistent challenges integrating into their new learning and living environments, and administrators are often ill-equipped to handle the unique needs of these students.

Literature Review

Little scholarship currently exists on the concept of student displacement. Studies have been done on students displaced by courtship violence (Belknap and Erez 1995; Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon, 2004; Fisher, Cullen and Tuner 2000), natural disasters (Clettenberg, Gentry, Held and Mock 2011; Pane and McCaffrey 2006; Sacerdot 2008), and what is commonly called award displacement—a process which creates financial stress on the student, causing them to displace (NSPA 2013; Weinstein 2014). The international research on displacement focuses on war, religious strife, and political turmoil. This book serves to fill the need for an academic investigation of how and why

students are displaced, and what college and university administrators can do to assist these students.

Although there is a plethora of research on the topic of attrition (Braxton and Cole 2013; Hermanowicz 2002; Tinto 2012), the authors recognize student displacement to be distinctly different. A displaced student is one who wishes to stay enrolled at the institution at which he or she has matriculated, but due to circumstances beyond his control, is unable to do so. This differs from student attrition, whereby a student leaves a school at which she has matriculated upon personal volition.

Audience

This book will be of particular interest to academic audiences, including administrators, students, and social scientists. Among higher education administrators, it will be most useful to admissions, student life, and registration professionals. It will also serve as a resource for those in academic affairs, as its findings can be used to inform academic and student policy. Furthermore, counseling and mental health staff working within the university setting will find this book of great interest, as it provides first-hand student accounts during various stages of traumatic events. Students will also be interested in the role university policy can play in fostering positive student outcomes in difficult circumstances.

Purpose

The following chapters document recent examples of student displacement and investigate how these events have impacted the people and institutions involved, and formed policy and practitioner best practices. These life-altering events have been identified by the authors as violence, natural disasters, medical outbreaks, school closings, financial displacement, sexual assault, and military deployment. A student's basic needs—both physiological and emotional—are threatened by exposure to these events, often resulting in displacement. For these reasons, institutions of higher learning must be prepared to react with specific action plans when students find their educational endeavors interrupted by these events.

Organization

This book is organized into seven chapters. Each chapter presents either literature or case study reviews of participants and concludes with recommendations for higher education best practices. The research presented here is not exhaustive but provides revelatory information on the topic of student displacement. The first chapter investigates the effects of individual financial displacement, including an analysis of cultural expectations, the root causes of financial issues, and the challenges of transfer and integration into a new setting.

Chapter Two encompasses the theme of violence and examines terrorism and school shootings. Examples include the responses and actions taken by both students and administrators during 9/11 and the Virginia Tech shootings. Chapter Three addresses the experience of military and veteran students in the typical undergraduate setting. Issues relating to the transfer of credits and student information, discrepant financial timelines, and social dissonance are explored through the lens of student experience, and administrative strategies to mitigate the significant dropout rate among military and veteran students are discussed.

Chapter Four examines school closings and their impact on student displacement. In particular, it addresses how students of Sweet Briar College responded to the school closing and how teach-out agreements were both formalized and actualized. Chapter Five examines sexual victimization and subsequent student displacement. The qualitative study focuses on the lived experiences of six female undergraduate students who experienced sexual violence and provides recommendations for their reintegration and retention.

Chapter Six reviews large-scale medical outbreaks on college campuses such as measles, mumps, meningitis, norovirus, and influenza. Several well-documented cases are presented to explore the impact on student populations and the effectiveness of administrative response strategies employed to minimize student displacement. Finally, Chapter Seven traces the history of recent natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes, and the ways in which they have challenged both students and college administrators. The chapter concludes by offering suggestions for best practices that could help mitigate the effects of a natural disaster.

Major Findings

The findings of the book provide insight regarding how and why displaced students respond to certain situations, their general sense of the world, and certain expectations they develop as a result of their experiences. The value of this section for the administrator lies in both a logical and emotional understanding of the complexity of the various situations. Listed below are the major takeaways for consideration.

- Across the research regarding the various types of displacement, students indicated they just “looked at the world differently” than before the event—they are thankful for life and have a better understanding of just how fragile it is. As a result, they often have difficulty reconnecting with other students their age who have a more carefree attitude about the value of each day.
- Students who have lived through a major act of violence, such as a school shooting or terrorism, emerge viewing life more like a nontraditional adult student. Their view about the reason for being in college becomes much more focused on the practical application of finishing the degree. Therefore, administrators working in the enrollment and registration process should gauge the best way to engage the individual student, rather than make general assumptions they will be like other traditional students.
- Many students who live through such an ordeal experience survivor’s guilt, and do not know how to handle this emotion.
- It is important for colleges and universities to keep records of even the smallest event that falls under the natural disaster category, in order to collectively build an archive of knowledge about best practices for handling the event and the aftermath.
- Victims of sexual assault who feel unsafe are more likely to feel alienated from peers and administrators. As a result, they are less likely to succeed academically and persist until graduation.
- Students living through the experience of a natural disaster will often feel angry, guilty, or have an extreme sense of denial about the experience. If these feelings are not identified and resolved, many students will not continue on to graduate.

- Financially-displaced students have not *one* but *two* major obstacles to overcome as a result of displacement. First, they have to work through the usual issues of traditional transfer students, such as forming new social support systems. They also have to manage a more intense sense of isolation and embarrassment as a result of their financial situation.
- In addition to experiencing certain levels of shock in the transfer process, financially-displaced students express a deeper sense of regret at having to transfer than do their traditional non-displaced transfer peers.
- In order to succeed academically in the classroom, student veterans are more likely to need special accommodations through disability services. To avoid student displacement, early detection and conversations with the student about such needs are critical.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research

The implications for practice, policy, and research in these areas are wide-ranging. The following are highlights of areas most cited and recognized by the interview participants and literature review.

- Professionals working on the front line of student service offices need to be trained and educated on cultural, socioeconomic, and courtship violence factors that lead to displacement and realize that these events are often beyond the control of the student, leaving him or her to feel trapped by the situation.
- Study findings emphasize that administrators, counselors, faculty, and student affairs professionals must have an awareness of the impact of displacement on students in both outgoing and onboarding situations. Students forced to leave a college of choice will experience periods of anger, sadness, confusion, and grief. Working to place students in a new institution requires empathy, patience, and a heightened culture of service. If possible, special support mechanisms should be put in place by the new institution in an effort to help students transition.
- A national database or archive of natural disasters and their impact on colleges and universities should be started in an effort to mine longitudinal data to better inform future policy. A standard template (similar to a project man-

agement template) of experiences and steps taken by the school should be made available and collected across institutions.

- It is important to gather information about natural disasters and acts of violence as quickly as possible after they occur. Research that is backward-looking only limits key points that were present in the minds of those involved *while* the event unfolded. Gathering intelligence as the event occurred, then doing studies afterward, provides a good perspective of the impact along the continuum.
- It is not enough to just have a major disaster plan. Those responsible for overseeing the execution of the plan in a real emergency need to run drills and allow campus constituents to practice the steps to ensure timely and effective evacuation.
- Institutions need an improved approach when helping sexual assault survivors. The stigma around the topic often impedes institutions from taking appropriate action.
- In light of recent fear of a possible Ebola or Zika outbreak in the United States, higher education institutions should take the time to formulate plans on how to handle a medical outbreak on their campus. These can be based on preparedness plans published by the CDC for colleges and universities to follow in the case of students traveling abroad to infected countries, visitors or foreign exchange students from an infected country who attend the university, and in case of an Ebola outbreak on campus.
- Student affairs, admission, and registration professionals on college campuses need to include the risk of displacement among factors included in attrition formulas and help educate cabinet-level staff on the difference between traditional attrition and displacement.
- Researchers studying college persistence patterns in higher education settings need to ensure that the relationship between displacement and attrition is included in research designs.

There are a multitude of findings and implications for policy makers and future researchers to consider as a result of this multidimensional look at student displacement. It is our hope that you, the reader, will be inspired to take action as an administrator at your college or university and make an impact.