

Facing the Realities of Admissions

*Interview with Dr. Jean Norris, Managing Partner
Norton Norris, Inc.*

CER editor Michael Cooney interviewed and discussed the impact and ramifications of the GAO report on the career college admissions process with Dr. Jean Norris over a several day period following the hearings. This interview has been edited from that exchange.

Michael: *How would you categorize the GAO's secret shopper findings compared to your own company's secret shopping findings, especially in regard to the misrepresentation of cost of tuition?*

Jean: The particular element of covering cost is something that we've seen and it typically relates to the admissions professional's comfort level. That is something that stumps a lot of people. Sometimes they avoid that question altogether or they tend to present it in the lowest common denominator, which is a technique that's been taught through the years. That is something we are seeing that perhaps correlates to what they're saying.

Michael: *Would you say this is a sector-wide practice?*

Jean: I would say from my experience yes, I think it's a sector-wide practice and concern. From the admissions rep's perspective I think there's an awareness that for-profit education is typically more expensive than other educational

options. In dealing with those students face to face and giving that number out, they're the ones seeing the looks of dismay and the frightened faces. I do think there's an educational component here, and that we can do some things at a training level to work with admissions reps, so they feel completely comfortable in presenting tuition. It's not really the number that's the issue. I believe some people have to get past their own perceptions of it being too expensive in order to actually promote their own school effectively. So that's something we see and I think that's a training issue.

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There are a few other things that we're seeing out there, too. First, the good schools out there are the ones who are doing mystery shopping consistently and using the results in a meaningful way. They're consistently looking at: where can we improve, what we can do better? Yes, some are looking at compliance; others are looking at customer service. Then they use those results to improve training, to inform their people: what could we do better, where are the opportunities?

Another thing that we see is that most schools have the same basic interview process. Generally, it's the greeting, gathering information, uncovering obstacles, giving information, overcoming obstacles, covering cost and the closing. It's interesting because I hear, "Well, we do it differently than everybody else," yet it's fundamentally the same process.

The third big point I'll put out here is we're seeing a need to increase what we call requisite variety. What that means is the admissions folks themselves need more ways of connecting with people. For instance, if they're taught a partic-

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ular way, if they're scripted, or if this is their seven-step interview process, or 10-step process—whatever it

is, they don't know what to do when somebody throws a question at them, or wants to get to the cost faster. They don't know how to deal with that. Requisite variety is about first meeting that student where they're at, and, secondly, having enough approaches,

enough information, or enough confidence, to be able to do different things based on where that student is coming from. We're seeing reps not spending enough time getting to even know the person because they've got their agenda; they've got their seven steps and that's how it's going to be. This limited approach leads to avoidance or uncomfortableness in presenting information, and it doesn't meet the student's needs at all. Unfortunately, this is one of the things that the sector is now being taken to task on since it appears to be manipulative or hardcore sales.

Michael: *The GAO experience of having undercover shoppers that go in and say I have \$250,000 in the bank and still have the admissions rep push them into loans is mystifying, especially in light of many schools' 90/10 issues. Is this a training issue, a management issue or a confidence issue?*

Jean: I must say that it is not something that we've seen on our school shops. We have not seen anything that's been super blatant and fraudulent like that. I think for the most part admissions and financial aid reps want to do the right thing.



DR. JEAN NORRIS began her own educational quest in a 10-month medical assisting diploma program. She credits the career college sector with providing her the motivation to continue her own education. Today, she serves as managing partner of Norton Norris, Inc., and leads the training

and research division. Jean is one of the leading advocates of the admissions profession and has dedicated her professional career to serving those in this role. In 2008, she became the exclusive licensee to train *Facilitating Buying Decisions*, which is the new, ethical way to sell in

higher ed, to admissions reps in the U.S. Jean began her career as a high school rep nearly 20 years ago. She has served in a variety of roles in both for-profit and not-for-profit education including Robert Morris College, Argosy Education Group, the University of St. Francis, and Rasmussen College.

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In the instances when someone is not giving factual information, or, in fact, with the GAO study, I think those are individual choices. I've also heard, or in at least watching some of those schools, that one of the reps had even said they (management) don't want us to talk about this. So they're cognitively aware they shouldn't do something, and, yet, they do it anyway. That's an individual choice with individual judgment coming into play at that point, which is unfortunate.

We're not seeing a lot of that happening in well over 1,500 or so schools. What we do see are people who might give incomplete information or avoid certain questions, and I truly believe those are training-related instances versus a malicious attempt to deceive someone.

Michael: *Your comment about avoidance leads me to conclude that some admissions reps are not fully comfortable with the school and what it does—including its price—and therefore hedge in the admissions interview.*

Jean: Absolutely. I think they may know the information, yet they're either not allowed to or have the ability to present information in a variety of ways based on the student that they're working with. They only know one way, which in the traditional training approach promotes not talking about money until the end. We have to update our training approaches to allow reps to professionally, ethically and effectively deal with any question and information when the student wants to deal with it. The training methodologies of old (and even some of the current methods) do not allow for that to happen.

Michael: *You've been a great proponent on dealing with today's student and not*

really doing it with yesterday's highly structured sales method. In today's highly competitive environment, are your techniques as effective as the "old ways"?

Jean: That's a good question. Until now, I felt like I was screaming into a black hole. There was more interest in sales training that "fit" with how it's always been done, with some new information tossed in.

Ethical approaches in recruitment weren't really in the highest of demand unless there was proven ROI and a track record of effectiveness. A funny thing is the admissions training out there may be proven, but it has become increasingly ineffective.

When we talk about effectiveness I define that as meeting the needs of the student and being highly ethical—and by the way, there's nothing wrong with making a profit; so it's serving the institution, it's serving the student, it's serving all stakeholders. That to me is effectiveness.

I get this question a lot when people inquire about our 7/8ths Selling, Power of Engagement or Ethical Enrollment Process training programs. They're like, "Yeah, these ideas sound good, but are they proven?" What we do is really unique, and it's been proven effective in other industries and other countries. It's proven and I think there's comfort in that—that it has worked for a long time.

I would challenge people to define what effective means for them. Is it effective to only enroll maybe 10 students out of 100 leads? Is that how effective is defined? And is it effective that the cost per lead and cost per start has increased so dramatically over the years? I can tell you, back in the day, those numbers would not have been deemed as effective. I think we've seen a continued progression

towards increased student acquisition costs once you put it all together.

Then we have people who are doing things that get the entire sector into big trouble. No one can tell me it's effective when all of our resources are leveraged to react to allegations of fraud and perceptions of unethical behavior. When the sector is pushed into the defensive mode, one has to think about how much time and money is being lost and not spent serving students.

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number of new ways to connect with students based on how they make decisions and want to "buy."

This translates into reaching enough

of the right students to enroll in programs that are a good fit for them. Additionally, are we getting them to stay and succeed in school, graduate and secure good jobs, and then want to talk to us the next day when it's over with? That's about real relationships. What we teach allows all of those things to happen. So, yes, I think we're tremendously effective.

Michael: *You have observed that large corporate organizations like predictable results in admissions, and, thus, they hire and train for predictability. Has that gotten us into this problem?*

Jean: I think it has definitely contributed to it. The whole advent of enrollment management has increased the focus on measuring every piece of data you can get your hands on. When predictability becomes the only focus, some organizations have become par-

alyzed and ruled by the data over other factors that must be considered.

This sole focus has created problems for for-profit and not-for-profit institutions alike. Even when you look at traditional colleges (not-for-profit institutions) enrollment managers had a similar goal—to increase the predictability of making the class—albeit there may be more focus on the academic, race or gender composition of the class as well as the number of students.

The concept of enrollment management is just that: getting the right kinds of students and spending a certain amount of money in order to make that happen. In the not-for-profit world they've done very similar things to what the for-profit sector is doing; they're just labeled differently. For example, many use financial aid leveraging and discount rates to determine how much money to award a student to get them to enroll. Many students don't pay the advertised tuition, and, in fact, have negotiated more dollars based on offers they've received from other colleges/universities.

It would be interesting to examine accessibility and ethics in how not-for-profits are parceling out those funds. If somebody wants to take a look at ethics related to that, there might be some interesting discoveries.

Michael: *You mean the fact that both my daughters went to a fine traditional non-profit college, and after the tuition discounts and scholarships, each daughter's tuition came surprisingly close to the public university right down the street?*

Jean: Isn't that interesting? As a former administrator at a couple of different not-for-profits, I can tell you—and I'm going to call it the game of financial aid

discounting—that nobody pays the same price. The idea is how can we use the pool of money we have along with government funds to get the most people to enroll. In some cases it may be I'm going to throw \$2,000 this person's way. If they say yes, great; if they say no, I might have to go up to \$2,500. What is that? Then, the prospect who doesn't negotiate, or isn't part of the desired student composition, is paying full boat. I don't know. I'm just curious if this practice is viewed as more or less ethical?

Michael: *Returning to the for-profit sector, according to the GAO report there appears to be a widespread problem of admissions not focusing on the students' needs and misrepresenting critical information in the admissions interview. Is this a training function? Is this a hiring function? Is it a corporate culture function?*

Jean: It depends on the organization and the individuals. Globally, I would say there's a combination of things that could be the solution here. I believe there is a corporate culture that needs to be examined and it's beyond the written word of compliance. It's also understanding the way things really get done—the unwritten word, and the unspoken word. That goes to corporate culture. All of us need to take a look at our organizations. What are we rewarding? What are we promoting; what are we saying versus what we're doing? I think those are critical components to understand that we may intentionally, or unintentionally, be incentivizing people to do the wrong things, although our intent may be good.

When it comes to the hiring function, I've heard this for a long time, especially in the admissions arena: the admissions reps of today

are different from the old days, so how do you know what the right kind of people are? Again, trying to put predictability to that, people are using more and more assessment tools. I

would caution

people to use a variety of methods to find the right people versus just one way. In fact, using one tool is very detrimental.

For instance, I hear about people using the DISC profile, and that you've always got to find

the high Ds to be in admissions.

That's not the intent of that tool at all. You certainly don't want to end up with an office full of high Ds since it's going to be out of balance for sure.

In the hiring process, we need to re-examine whom we're bringing in the door. Not only have students changed in how they buy, but also this generation of admissions folks coming in has different experiences and different skills. We need to examine this along with how we're on-boarding them, how we're training them, and how we support them. That support includes continued, meaningful training. In the absence of giving them effective training, many will resort to their own definitions of effectiveness or simply doing what works, or what they believe works. I work with admissions folks all the time that will pull me aside and tell me things that would probably curl your hair. Their biggest problem is they want to do the right thing and serve their students, but what they're forced (or trained) to do isn't working. So they resort to other types of approaches, and I think that gets them into trouble.

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Michael: *What I've observed, while doing student testimonial interviews, is the contempt that students have for school organizations who are clearly profit driven. The student comments are generally something like, "They didn't care about me; they just wanted my money." As a result, the student enrolls in the first school that treats him like a human and smiles at him.*

Jean: Isn't that the truth?

Michael: *It's stunning! The secret weapon is the receptionist who was nice! Many of the students I have interviewed seem to have very good radar for sales driven organizations and have selected out of that environment.*

Jean: We often say the approach that we take with our students will only get enrollments from the people who want to buy the way that we sell.

If your approach is—I'm going to call you 10 times until you pick up the phone, and when you finally do I'm going to do everything I can to get you to come on campus, and when you come on campus I'm going to use high pressure techniques to try to get you to enroll—then you're only going to get the people who will put up with that. You're not going to get the more sophisticated buyer who has done his homework, who may, by the way, be extremely intelligent, and who may have money to spend. You're not going to get those people because they're on to those sales techniques like you said. They know when they're being sold. They can see it coming a mile away.

I have a son who is going to be 20 and he laughs sometimes as he might be out mystery shopping or assisting on something. He's just like, "Oh, my gosh, it's hysterical that these reps

actually believe that people don't know what they're doing." It's very obvious to the younger generation.

Michael: *So what you're really telling me is that high-pressure techniques produce a student body of lesser intelligent, more compliant people who probably, on the job front, are harder to place?*

Jean: What I'm saying is that in any scenario, even if you have the most highly intelligent people, they have buying preferences.

Michael, let's say you're the kind of person who likes to communicate via email and buy things online. If you are inquiring about my product and I say you've got to come in so we can talk about it, you're going to tell me to take a leap. That's not how you want to buy. But if that's the only way I have for you to look at it, I'm going to lose you. I'm going to lose you as a potential customer because I don't have that requisite variety I was telling you about. I don't have options. But what if I say, "Sure, you could do that online, absolutely. Here's the site to go to and here's the link and the shopping cart," or "You know what, we can meet face to face, or we can do this in a Web chat, or a Webinar," or "Let me send you stuff in the mail"? The more options I have, the more likely I am to connect to more people because I'm satisfying how they want to experience the information, how they choose to buy it.

Michael: *The bottom line is that the admissions sales experience will have a major impact on the quality and diversity of the student body.*

Jean: Absolutely. I've had some schools say, usually on the faculty side, we should do more to get higher-

level students and really intelligent students. But if the only way that marketing is going about getting leads is via daytime TV, that's not very likely to happen because you're only getting the ones who are watching that show at that moment in time, which are probably unemployed folks sitting on the couch. So you are shaping your student body by the approaches you take upfront.

Michael: *Jean, if a client called and said, "We have a problem with our admissions people; they've been using some questionable practices and we want you to come in and change their ethics as well as their techniques," can you do that with people who have ingrained sales procedures, or do we have to start with a clean slate of new people?*

Jean: That's a good question. I do that kind of stuff a lot, so the approach I typically take is learning about the people who are part of the process.

I would say 99 percent of the time it's not about throwing out the old admissions reps, it's about helping them understand how the things that they're doing can still work with the addition of new skills sets. It's not about starting over; it's not that it's bad or awful. It's about what we can add to help you be even better. I think that approach has worked for a lot of people because change is scary for some. Even if they know they need to do it, and even if it's a good change, it's still uncomfortable. So my job is to make people comfortable with the change and help them understand how they can be more successful.

That's ultimately what salespeople want to know: how can I be more successful? Truth be told, most of these folks want to do it in the most ethical way and are really open to our

new approaches because they're all about that, and it helps them reach numbers on top of it!

Michael: *How do you address management's concern that the predictability results might be less because now we're not doing it by the rigid manner that got us to where we are today?*

Jean: I think you have to go into it realizing that with any kind of change you may take a step backwards before you take leaps and bounds forward, just because people are learning something new. So that would be the only thing in terms of predictability that we've seen—understanding that progress is dependent on the support of the people learning this and integrating it into their day-to-day habits. Once that takes off we see tremendous success. In fact, sometimes we see success even within days, where people are connecting to others that they previously couldn't even get to return their phone calls. I think that quick success helps management stick with it. It's like, "Hey, maybe there is something here."

Michael: *What else would you recommend now that the sector needs to reconsider its admissions practices?*

Jean: First of all, the people have spoken (students, reps and the government). As I look back in time from the fall of 2005, and look at presentations and articles and all of these publications that I've put out there, I feel like I'm just pounding my head against the wall saying the same thing. But it's not just me; it's number one: the groups have spoken beginning with our students. They don't buy the same way. We can look at the metrics and look at the numbers, and realize that we need to do something

differently. With current sales approaches we're losing more than we're getting anyway.

Secondly, our admissions and financial aid reps have told us that this is not working, so they tend to push old methods harder or try their own recipe, which gets us into trouble; hence, now we have government intervention. So we have to change. The good news is we created this situation, so we're the ones who can resolve it. Now, I'm not sure if the government will let us do that on our own, but we can avoid future complications by making some choices.

We need to give reps meaningful training that's going to help them meet the needs of all stakeholders. That means the old ways of doing things have got to go away. It's not

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even a question anymore, Michael, of predictability and effectiveness; we're not going to be allowed to do things the same old way. We've got to jump on some new model, some way that's acceptable. Unless we do that,

it's going to be mandated; but there are ways out there that are more predictable that are going to make it different, and, yet, can be highly ethical. They don't need to be mutually exclusive; we can have all these things together. We need to re-establish our credibility by giving those folks meaningful training.

I'm a big fan of looking at what we could do within our own sector, and the whole idea of self-policing is something I've been talking about for months now.

We have membership organizations out there. I'm not quite sure it's their job in terms of self-policing from a proactive reputation management standpoint, because they would have to be willing to kick people out. Some of the stuff I'm hearing is maybe we're at a place where we'll do that now. It hasn't really been the history of membership organizations to kick people out mainly because there's strength in numbers, so they want more people and that's how they're making their money. They tend to just be the government advocacy or the lobbying arm.

Self-policing: are we talking about accreditors? Should they be doing a higher level of self-policing? We heard in some of the testimony, and I think from history, that although there are written standards related to some of the aspects, the overarching focus for the accreditors is really student outcomes. I'm not saying this is wrong; I'm just saying that it's really not been their job to do self-policing and kick people out based on some of the unethical practices that have been brought forward.

Whose job is it? Whose job is it to self-police and have proactive reputation management for the sector? That's something we need to figure out.

I was interested in David Hawkins' comments as one of the witnesses in the recent hearings, and, in fact, I talked to him as part of my dissertation research back in 2005. One of the questions I had asked him is if the National Association of College Admissions Counseling is the largest national, I believe even international, organization for admissions professionals to come together to learn from each other and to have a meaningful dialogue for professional development with standards of conduct and ethics—

if that's what the organization is all about—how come for-profit schools cannot be members? He stated to me that there was a vote, back in 2005 I believe, where they were going to allow for-profit membership. However, at the 11th hour, there was a vote to keep for-profits out. He said it was based on the belief that they have different ethical standards—and that was going back to 2005.

So do we have an equivalent resource in the career school sector given that NACAC won't let us join? I don't believe we do. When our reps get into trouble, or they're doing the wrong things, it goes back to training and professional development and resources for them to know the difference, and to have avenues to go to for support.

Michael: *Given that admissions representatives are by their very nature performance driven people, and are expected to be performance driven people, don't they need some kind of little incentive along the way?*

Jean: I'm actually a fan of incentives. I'm not saying I'm a proponent of going back to commissions, even though I've worked for not-for-profits that have paid commissions, but it's something that the sector is not going to allow. We have to get past that and look for other ways of incentivizing people, which probably goes back to the point of getting the right people in these jobs.

Not everyone is motivated by money; there are other things that people are motivated by. If we have a clear understanding from the beginning of what the job entails—and, again, I believe most people want to help students—and if the basic requirements of the job are to

enroll students and serve those students and there are certain expectations on performance, I don't see anything wrong with that at all.

I think some of that just goes back to getting the right people, and developing those people to make sure that the job is understood and that they're managed correctly. With some of the folks in the GAO study, perhaps some of those elements weren't in place for them.

Michael: *Jean, that's all really nice and good, but if I'm a publicly traded company and I need 100 more students to make my quarterly report really blow out, I can't just trust the goodness of my admissions reps to get me the 100 people, can I? Don't I need to beat them, bait them, or something?*

Jean: I don't believe so. I don't think there's anything wrong with setting goals. We have to. There should be goals. There should be expectations of performance and people should be held accountable. What I don't see happening when we talk about accountability is giving them the tools to be successful. That's a huge piece that is missing. I'm

not necessarily talking about giving them money or bonuses to make that happen; I'm talking about real skills to make a difference to enroll more students. We're not giving them that.

I believe that we've gotten to this place by things that we ourselves have done. This isn't something that we've had done to us. We've made choices along the way that have brought us to the place we're at. Is it fair? None of that really matters. This is what it is; this is where we are.

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So we have choices to make. We have a choice of what we're going to do moving forward, and that choice needs to include some proactive and

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continued types of interventions, so that we don't end up in this place again. Hopefully we've learned from this. I don't think this is a big surprise to people. I just hope that people are—
whether it's nervous enough or just tired of coming back to this all the

time—willing to make changes, and those changes need to be in self-policing, they need to be in finding the right people and developing our people and staying in compliance. Those types of things, in terms of this sector, are going to help us earn our seat at the table.

This is an amazing sector with great people who do wonderful things for students that wouldn't succeed elsewhere. We owe it to them and all the people who work at these schools to step up and not put ourselves in this position ever again.

**Career
Education
REVIEW**

Evolution of Sales Methodologies in Higher Ed 1980s – 2010 (updated August 2010)

Prepared by Dr. Jean Norris, Norton Norris, Inc. and Michael J. Cooney, *Career Education Review*

Timeline	Sales Approach & General Features	Influential/ Environmental Factors	Issues/ Governmental Intervention	Well-Known Higher Ed Trainers
Early 1980s	<p>One-Off Selling</p> <p>First sales system based on door-to-door product selling was introduced to career schools</p> <p>Later became known as manipulation selling</p> <p>Characterized by structured approaches to objections and closing</p>	<p>Openness to in-home selling</p> <p>Somewhat unsophisticated buyers</p>	<p>Some for-profit colleges cited for abusing student aid programs by using high-pressure sales tactics to enroll students under false pretenses</p>	<p>John Benanti</p>
1988–1993	<p>Script-Based Selling Reverse (Negative) Selling</p> <p>Still manipulative selling but new techniques to “turn up the volume on the pain”</p> <p>Business sales practices in college language</p> <p>Highly structured – Uses elements of Xerox corporate sales techniques, i.e. “probing”</p>	<p>Relationships important but secondary to meeting enrollment goals</p> <p>Consumer concerns and lack of trust</p> <p>More women entering admissions positions and leadership roles</p>	<p>Some schools abuse the process by hiring commissioned agents to generate leads and enroll students in welfare and employment lines</p>	<p>David Bull</p> <p>Michael McKinney</p>

Timeline	Sales Approach & General Features	Influential/ Environmental Factors	Issues/ Governmental Intervention	Well-Known Higher Ed Trainers
1992 – ?	<p>Customer-Centered Selling Consultative Selling Needs-Based Counseling Relationship Selling</p> <p>Uses Dale Carnegie concepts</p> <p>More empathy and prospect-centric</p> <p>Some models still contain manipulative elements of older methodologies including ascertain/creating “pain” and questions deliberately used to determine problems and plants “seeds” to solve</p>	<p>Dissatisfaction since the solution (program/diploma) may not really solve the prospect’s problem</p> <p>Delivery of “service” may not meet student expectations as sold</p> <p>New sales mediums introduced (home shopping club, eBay)</p> <p>Women now make up the majority of admissions representatives & seeking alternate sales approaches that “fit”</p> <p>2000 – Millennials enter college with high expectations and helicopter parents</p> <p>Negative media reports</p>	<p>Reauthorization of <i>Higher Ed</i></p> <p>1992 – Congress enacts a ban, under the <i>Higher Education Act</i>, on paying commissions to admissions personnel</p> <p>2002 – Congress loosens ban on commission pay by introducing safe harbors</p> <p>2002 – NACAC votes to NOT allow for-profit admissions rep membership</p> <p>2004–2005 – Several federal and state investigations; lawsuits against for-profit providers</p>	<p>Nancy Rogers</p> <p>Richard Ashley</p> <p>Various Others</p>
2005 – ?	<p>High Probability Selling Inside/Out Admissions Modified Relationship Selling</p> <p>Disqualification to minimize wasted sales time</p> <p>More direct method</p> <p>Elements of manipulative sales techniques still used</p> <p>Assumes “more fish in the sea” but not effective method for prospects needing extra attention</p>	<p>“Entrepreneurial class” retires. Managers from other industries enter</p> <p>Web leads become dominant lead source over traditional mediums</p> <p>Prospects more savvy; seek customer-oriented approach</p> <p>Admissions reps seek new approach that is less “salesy” and improves performance</p> <p>News reports on possible violations of incentive ban continue, which may lead to strict reinforcement or penalties in 2007</p>	<p>2005–2006 – Several lawsuits against for-profit providers</p> <p>Numerous federal and state investigations</p> <p>Congress failed to reauthorize <i>Higher Ed Act</i>; 90/10 rule and 50 percent rule eliminated</p> <p>Ban on incentive compensation still in place but thought to be meaningless</p>	<p>Admissions sales training becomes an internal function</p> <p>Ad agencies offer admissions training as part of client services</p>

Timeline	Sales Approach & General Features	Influential/ Environmental Factors	Issues/ Governmental Intervention	Well-Known Higher Ed Trainers
2008– Present	<p>7/8ths System®</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical Enrollment Process™ • The Power of Engagement® • 7/8ths Selling® <p>First model in sector to balance the student's - decision and needs with selling</p> <p>Highly ethical model used in other countries/industries</p> <p>Does not require face-to-face meeting (can be used over the phone)</p> <p>Method precedes and envelopes best of consultative selling approaches</p>	<p>Closing techniques experienced for decades – manipulation in selling not tolerated</p> <p>Online education dominant</p> <p>Prospects buying without face-to-face visits</p> <p>Admissions reps “forcing” former models that don’t align with how people buy (lower conversions, rep turnover, increased student problems)</p>	<p>Crisis in subprime lending market – Reduction in student lender subsidies enacted in the <i>College Cost Reduction and Access Act</i></p> <p><i>HEA</i> passes (5 years overdue) with major themes in accessibility, affordability, and accountability</p> <p>Economic crisis</p> <p>Gainful employment</p> <p>GAO investigation of for-profits and Senate hearings on ethics (August 2010)</p> <p>2010 – Several negative media reports and press</p>	Jean Norris

The Admissions Professionals Code of Conduct

A Practical Guide

Developed by Dr. Jean Norris, Norton Norris, Inc.

As higher education professionals gather to create a formal document on ethics and compliance standards, we'd like to offer some additional tips for admissions professionals with the goal of serving students with the highest level of integrity and service.

1. Always tell the truth.
 2. Understand your own beliefs and value system to make sure it aligns with the organization you work for. If it doesn't, you need to leave.
 3. Excellent customer service doesn't equate to helping a student in ways that are unethical, illegal or hinders their development—even if the intent is moral.
 4. Don't prejudge or discriminate. Uphold admissions standards set forth by the organization to promote access and service to those students most likely to benefit from the education and training offered.
 5. Keep your eyes and ears open. Avoidance of a situation or not getting involved in something you know is morally wrong IS morally wrong.
 6. Make a commitment to act in morally appropriate ways—Always!
 7. Not providing complete information is just as bad as not telling the truth.
 8. In any communication, it is the responsibility of the sender to ensure the receiver understands the message.
 9. Seek training to expand your knowledge, skills and abilities to serve your students and your organization.
 10. Treat your colleagues and students as if they are members of your family (the ones you like).
 11. Ignorance is not a legal defense. It's your job to keep informed of the laws governing your profession, place of work, industry, state and country.
 12. Do not use materials or sources other than those approved by your organization. Although the intent may be to inform, you may actually be causing more confusion or harm.
 13. Since you won't be doing your student's homework for them, don't fill out any of their documents for admission or financial aid either.
 14. Immediately report to management the actions of others or information that you believe to be out of compliance, inaccurate or harmful to students.
 15. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.
 16. If you make a mistake, own it and fix it—*FAST*.
 17. If you wouldn't be proud to have your work showcased on national television, don't do it.
 18. Be proud of your profession and be an example for others to emulate.
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