2014

Canadian Registrars: Reporting Relationships and Responsibilities

WHITE PAPER

BY JOANNE DUKLAS, RESEARCHER AND CONSULTANT, DUKLAS CORNERSTONE CONSULTING

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions and encouragement lent by the following Canadian higher education associations and leaders:

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Canadian registrars: reporting relationships and responsibilities

In Canadian universities and colleges, the registrar role appears to be evolving. It absolutely remains a position focused on the diligent care and oversight of student academic records and related student services. However, those holding these roles are more often being called upon to create interesting and unique partnerships; actively support or steer enrolment management; oversee significant pan-institutional responsibilities and related accountabilities; and develop policies, procedures, and integrated systems that serve as the backbone for the institution and support overall student success. Registrars are exercising their duties in an increasingly virtual world where institutional boundaries are becoming less rigid and new approaches are becoming the norm. Examples include different course delivery models, online course and program offerings, new forms of inter-institutional collaboration, cross-boundary sharing of data, targeted access programs, increasingly mobile students, etc. The evolving role of the Canadian registrar suggests a close examination of current reporting line practices and responsibilities is timely.

As a beginning approach to examining this topic, specific research questions were probed: what is the norm for reporting lines for registrars in Canada and what functional areas sit within the portfolio? This White Paper is intended to summarize the Canadian findings and to provide initial reflections from three perspectives that are offered to inform decisions regarding reporting relationships: specifically, the degree of institutional impact and accountabilities inherent to the role; the importance of alignment with academic policies, culture, and leadership; and the need to support student success. The research did not include an exploration of the individual competencies, credentials, or backgrounds of those that currently hold these positions. Rather, the focus of the research was on an examination of the role itself.

The findings, informed by an examination of 139 Canadian institutions, revealed that a larger proportion of registrars report directly to the chief academic officer, an outcome that is very similar to the US market for both registrars and chief enrolment management officers. Additionally, a larger proportion of Canadian registrars situate in a position that is third down from the president in the organizational hierarchy – again, a finding similar to the US experience. This positioning seems to reflect the pan-institutional accountabilities and enrolment management responsibilities many Canadian registrars oversee.

Although further study would be helpful, the early findings regarding responsibilities highlight differences to both the US and the UK. A larger proportion of Canadian registrars oversee areas similar in nature to those overseen by **both** the US chief enrolment management officer **and** the US registrar. Looked at from another perspective, a larger proportion of Canadian registrars fall between the narrowly defined focus in the US on records and registration and the broader mandate evident in the UK registrarial leadership roles. The functions that appear to routinely fall into the Canadian portfolio include admissions (which sometimes includes recruitment),

enrolment management, frontline student support, records and registration, academic scheduling, graduation and convocation, and academic policy support. Although a more detailed study would be helpful, it would appear that the type of functions that sometimes fall outside the portfolio are financial aid, student accounts, institutional reporting, recruitment, and SEM communications (not necessarily all situate outside the registrarial portfolio in any given situation). Less common but important to acknowledge is that there is evidence of Canadian registrars overseeing responsibilities that either more closely align with the US registrar or are more akin to a higher level role with even greater responsibilities; however, these situations are not as common. Although further study would be helpful, the findings are suggesting that a larger proportion of Canadian registrars are well positioned strategically to support their institutions and student success. For those institutions that have the registrar reporting into a lower level, and/or that have the person disconnected from the academic leadership, the findings provide an opportunity for reflective reconsideration of the role and its position in the organizational hierarchy.

Approach

The research focused on the centralized registrar role; this isn't to suggest that there aren't other related roles supporting an institution. It is also not an attempt to ignore the value of registrarial colleagues that work within individual faculties or schools. Rather, there was a practical need to narrow the scope. Further, the institutional (versus faculty or departmentally focused) registrarial role, with a few exceptions, tends to have pan-institutional impact and related accountabilities.

The findings are not presented by type, cultural environment, or size of institution as this was intended as an initial foray into understanding the overall landscape. Further research, therefore, is needed.

As one final remark, the research was primarily informed by examining reporting relationships at colleges and universities as represented on institutional home pages at a particular point in time. This approach has a number of limitations; therefore, additional research is necessary to understand the underpinning rationales for the organizational decisions regarding registrarial reporting lines at each institution.

The Canadian findings

Institutional sample set

The web research encompassed 139 Canadian institutions in provinces and territories across the country. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) has 95 members and the Colleges and Institutes has 131 members for a total of 226 institutions.[1] The cohort for this analysis comprised approximately 62% of this membership. These included 45 colleges, 8 institutes, 4 theological or faith-based

---

[1] Sources: aucc.ca and collegesinstitutes.ca (note: campus/schools affiliated with a larger main campus were not included).

schools, and 82 universities. From a geographical perspective, 27 were located in British Columbia, 20 in Alberta, 6 in Saskatchewan, 9 in Manitoba, 37 in Ontario, 20 in Quebec, 6 in New Brunswick, 10 in Nova Scotia, 2 in Prince Edward Island, and 2 in Newfoundland and Labrador. Although primarily public institutions are reflected in the findings, there were some private schools examined. The research was conducted in the fall of 2014.

Reporting relationships

Table 1 highlights the findings regarding reporting lines for Canadian registrars. Although for 27% (37) of the institutions examined, it was not possible to ascertain reporting relationships from institutional websites, the evidence did indicate that 38% (52) reported directly to the institutional chief academic officer.

Table 1: Reporting relationships

Direct reporting relationship for Canadian registrars	Total
To the president	3 (2%)
To the vice president academic/provost	52 (38%)
Deputy provost/assistant vice president registrarial services/vice provost students (typically, these roles reported to the provost)	26 (19%)
To another vice president	21 (15%)
Unknown (information unavailable on websites)	37 (27%)
Total	139

The US offers similar indicators. The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) conducted a comprehensive 2007 national survey. Fifty percent (50%) of the registrars from 521 institutions (public and private 2-year and 4-year) reported directly to the "chief academic officer" (2007). Very small numbers reported either to the chief student affairs officer (15%) or to the enrolment officer (14%).

There is another lens to examining reporting relationships; specifically, the degree of distance between the registrar role and the president. The above AACRAO survey examined this topic for American registrars (2007). In the US, 59% (289 out of 491 respondents) of registrars reported being in a 3rd position down from the president (i.e., president, provost/vice president, registrar).

Table 2 outlines the findings with respect to position in the organizational hierarchy typical for Canadian registrars.

Table 2: Reporting level for Canadian registrars

Position down from the president	Canadian institutional totals
Two down (i.e., president, registrar)	3 (2%)
Three down (i.e., president, vice president, registrar)	72 (52%)
Four down (i.e., president, vice president, vice provost/assistant vice president, registrar)	25 (18%)
Five down (i.e., president, vice president, deputy provost, associate vice provost, registrar)	1 (1%)
Unknown	38 (28%)

The findings indicate that for the 139 Canadian institutions examined, 52% (72) of registrars were positioned three down from the president (i.e., directly under a vice president). It will be interesting to monitor this over a period of time to see if this positioning remains consistent. It does seem to suggest that for a majority of the Canadian institutions studied, there seems to be direct appreciation for the role's level of pan-institutional impact and importance (assuming level in the organizational structure represents a reasonable proxy). The similarity to the US findings is also of interest.

Functional responsibilities of registrars

Functions reporting into the registrars were somewhat more difficult to identify and quantify from institutional websites. For example, of the 139 schools examined, Admissions reported into 83 (60%) of the registrars. Five (4%) reported into another AVP/vice provost and 3 (2%) reported into a director of recruitment and retention or enrolment services. For the remainder, it was not clear where Admissions reported (48, 35%). Having noted this, Figure 1 provides a general overview of the types of functions that were commonly found to situate in the registrarial portfolio. Many nuances were evident. While some of the functions identified in Figure 2 seemed to fall into registrarial portfolios more generally, institutions appeared to be selective as to which ones. For example, sometimes financial services reported to the student affairs portfolio, other times to the registrarial portfolio. Sometimes bursar functions reported to the registrar, to financial aid areas, or to central administrative financial services. Programmers involved in student information systems; recruitment; strategic enrolment management leadership; and/or institutional reporting were examples of portfolios that sometimes existed in formal separation from the Registrar's Office. It did appear that those registrars positioned closer to the president or chief academic officers seemed to have most if not all of these functions within their portfolio.

Figure 1: Functions typically reporting to registrars
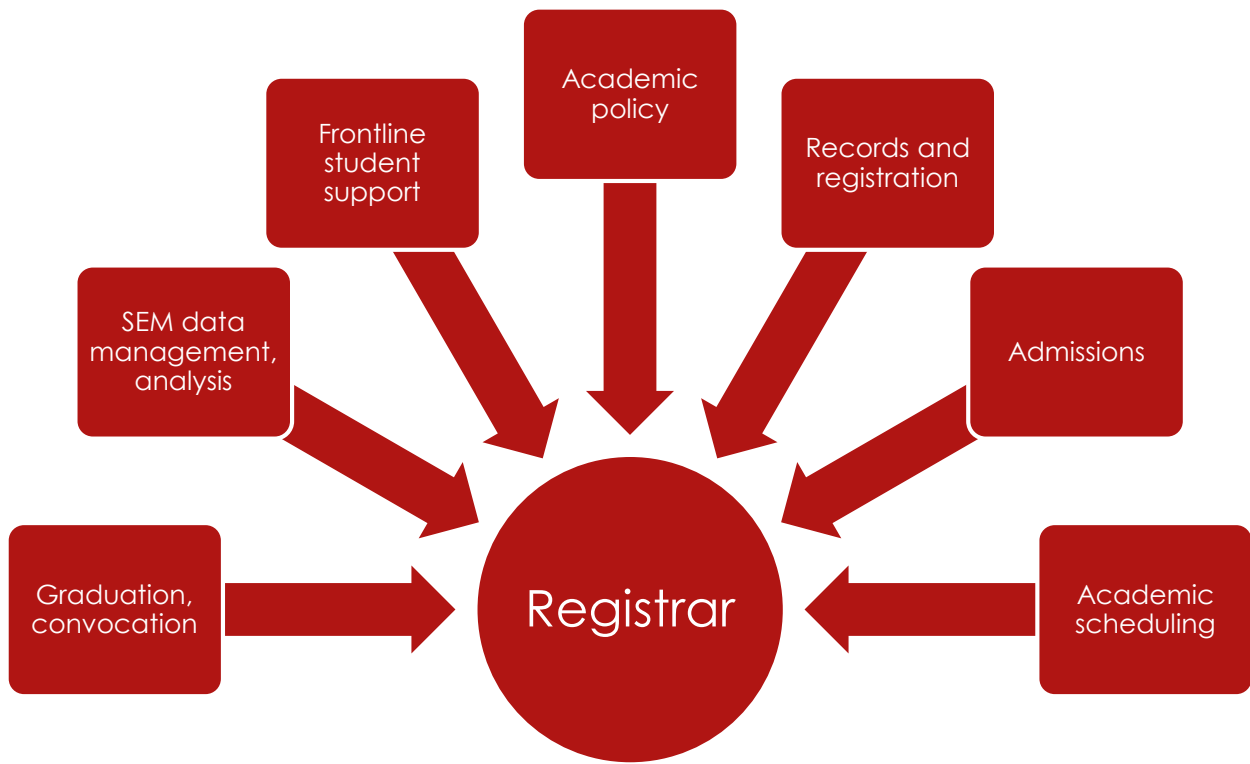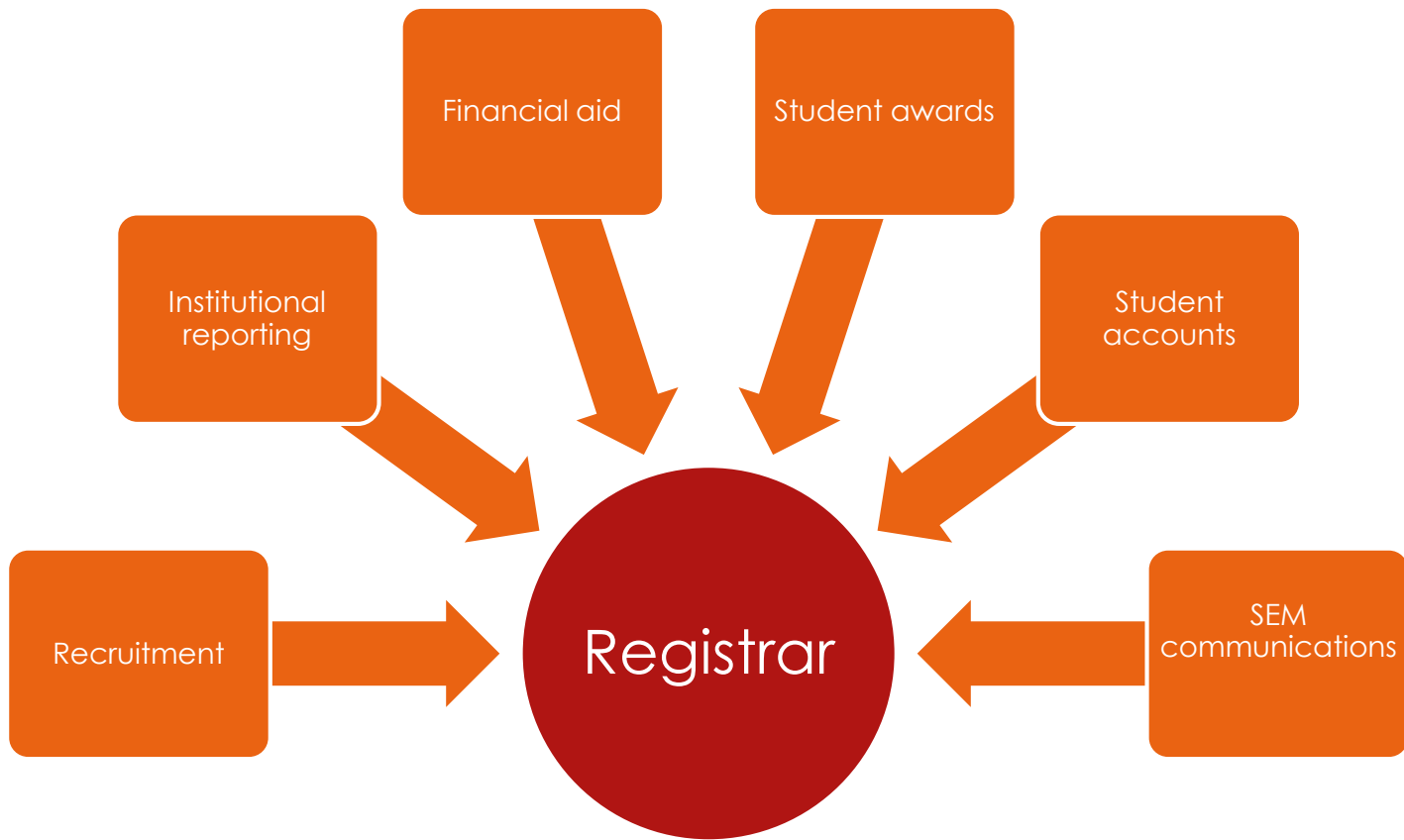
There is also at least one registrar at a very large institution in Canada that operates more as a strategic, pan-institutional policy and enrolment management lead with a number of the functions noted in Figures 1 and 2 being handled at the operational level by registrars within the various faculties and schools.

Although further study is recommended, it is reasonable to suggest that typically most aspects of a student's academic (and sometimes financial) life and related data management seem to situate within the registrar portfolio at Canadian institutions. These registrars also seem to play a role in strategic enrolment management and supporting academic policy and procedural innovations.

Select additional duties also appeared to reside in registrarial portfolios as illustrated by the titles held by registrars. Table 3 provides an overview of the findings for the 139 schools examined.

Table 3: Titles held by Canadian registrars

Title Used	Total Number	Examples	Sample of additional duties
Registrar	88 (63%)	Included acting registrar, registraire, university registrar, college registrar	No other title evident
Registrar combined with another executive level title	21 (15%)	Vice provost, assistant vice provost, vice president, executive director, senior director	Enrolment management*, enrolment services*, student services*, institutional reporting and planning, chief academic officer, student development
Registrar combined with another senior level title	22 (16%)	Director/manager	Academic services, financial assistance, admissions*, enrolment services/management*, library and student services*, student affairs, institutional research, customer service, recruitment and communications
Registrar combined with a formal governance focus	4 (3%)	Secretary	Academic governance
Registrar combined with other portfolios (less common)	3 (2%)	E.g., principal, dean	Lead for a particular academic or operational area not typically found in a registrarial portfolio
Unknown	1 (1%)	No registrar apparent	

* Most common additional functions

The Canadian evidence suggests that "registrar" as a stand-alone title is most commonly used. Reflecting additional duties through expansion of the title occurred; however, doing so was not typical. When it happened, enrolment management, enrolment services, student services, and admissions were the most commonly mentioned. This is not to suggest that these functions didn't normally fall within a registrar's portfolio even when the title simply indicated "registrar"; rather, when additional items were noted explicitly in titling, these were the more commonly mentioned.

The role of registrar in other jurisdictions

There are indicators of differences in the perceived role of the registrar in other international regions.

In the US and as an example, it would initially appear that the registrar plays more of a records management role. The AACRAO survey (2007) mentioned previously revealed some of the typical functions found in the portfolio. These included degree audit (79%), student records management (87%), registration (62%), overseeing and steering the creation of academic artifacts (e.g., transcripts 88%; diplomas 75%), scheduling (final exam 56%; classroom scheduling 59%; facilities scheduling 20%), master curriculum

record of approved programs and courses (56%), coordination of the institutional catalog (44%), transfer articulation (53%), one-stop for student services (26%), institutional research (20%), advising (17%), and so forth. Most of these functions typically rely heavily on systems, web-based tools, and automation highlighting technology and the web as priority areas for people holding this portfolio.

Notions such as preserving the integrity of the academic record and its artifacts; supporting the development, translation, and interpretation of institutional policies tied to the academic mission; delivering technology solutions; and being interpreters of data are evident as additional components of the US registrarial role (Williams, 2011).

In delivering their mandates, US registrarial professionals are guided by ethical standards provided by their own institutions and organizations such as AACRAO. These guidelines emphasize preservation of academic integrity, encourage a holistic support framework for students, and validate alignment with institutional academic mission.[2] The focus on student success and all it entails is readily apparent in the activities of ACCRAO, the professional association for registrars in the US. As a case in point, the ACCRAO 2014 Executive Symposium of the Strategic Enrollment Management professional development conference focused discussions around balancing institutional and student success (October 2014).

A recent article by Dr. Reid Kisling (2014) addressed the changing role of the US registrar and notes the opportunities for this position to become a partner with faculty as a means to enhance the provision of service and transformational change in the area of strategic enrolment management. He stresses the unique opportunities for strategic partnership between faculty members and the registrar due to the nexus wherein these roles situate – "between service to students and the academic programs that students pursue" (p.4). He further argues that a "shift must occur where registrar staff see themselves as peers of academics and partners in the delivery of educational programs" (p. 4).

Enrolment management is a significant thrust at institutions in the US. Given the more narrow survey findings regarding functional responsibilities of US registrars, interesting insights relevant to the Canadian registrarial lead role can be drawn from a recently released study by Dr. Wendy Kilgore, consultant for AACRAO, which focused on "chief enrollment management officers" (2014). The survey identified functional responsibilities from 152 enrolment officers which are reproduced in Table 4 (p. 19).

---

[2] A growing number of Canadian registrars are also members of AACRAO; most are members of the Canadian Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) and are therefore similarly guided by the professional ethics of the field.

Table 4: Portfolio of responsibilities of the chief enrolment management officers (n=152; adapted from Kilgore, 2014, p. 19)[3]

Functional Category	Percentage with supervisory responsibility
Recruitment	61.2% (93)
Admissions processing	62.5% (95)
Records and registration	41.4% (63)
Financial aid	55.9% (85)
Retention/student success	25.0% (38)
Institutional research	8.6% (13)
Enrolment research	30.9% (47)
Academic advising	14.5% (22)
Career services	13.8% (21)
Recruitment marketing	48.7% (74)
Institutional marketing	15.8% (24)
Institutional enrolment goals	12.5% (19)
Academic college/department enrolment goals	12.5% (19)
Veteran services	30.3% (46)

The findings indicate that US chief enrolment management officers are responsible for recruitment, admissions processing, and financial aid primarily. Recruitment marketing and records and registration are the second most common; veteran services and enrolment research are the third most common; and retention/student services are the fourth most common. Of this cohort, 55 (36.2%) report to the president/chief executive and 46 (30.3%) report to the chief academic affairs area (p. 9).

The functional responsibilities of the US chief enrolment management officer when combined with the recruitment, records and registration functions seem to approximate the responsibilities of the Canadian registrar. In addition, the evolutionary role of the registrar suggested by Dr. Kisling, seems to be a closer fit as well. As a codicil, there are examples of Canadian registrars that have less responsibilities aligning them more closely with the traditional records oriented US registrar; conversely, there are examples of Canadian registrars with even greater responsibilities than the US registrar and the US chief enrolment management officers. Although more detailed study would be helpful, the Canadian findings seem to indicate that degree of distance from institutional academic leadership (or, to put it another way, a greater degree of organizational hierarchy) seems to result in a diminishment of the responsibilities of the Canadian registrar.

The experience in the UK, both recently and historically, provides some additional insights on the role of registrar. The first registrar appeared at the University of Oxford in the early 1400s (Mallet, 1924 as cited in Williams, 2011). The role was described as follows:

---

[3] Permission to use data from AACRAO report: provided by Martha Henebry, AACRAO, November 17, 2014.

The officer's duties were to give form and permanence to the universities public acts, to draft letters, to make copies of its documents and to register the names of it graduates and the examanatory sermons (Mallet, 1924, p. 327 as cited in Williams, 2011).

While the registrars in the United Kingdom share similarities to Canadian registrars, there are fairly significant differences. Using the University of Oxford as an example, the traditional role of registrar in UK today is one that is more akin to a senior advisor to the president who is responsible for the institution's academic, administrative, council secretary, financial, and student services activities.

[At Oxford] the Registrar is the senior administrator within the University and is formally Secretary to the Council of the University. He is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor and to Council for the effective organisation of the University's administration, and is line manager for a large number of senior officers within the administration (University of Oxford, 2014).

As another example, the Constitution for the UK professional association called the "Academic Registrars Council", defines a registrar as follows:

…the postholder with responsibility for the majority or all of the following: student admissions, assessment and conferment; student fees; student record systems; academic planning; curriculum record management; timetabling; quality assurance; educational collaboration; academic audit and assessment; student services; research administration; student complaints and discipline (2013, p. 1).

While Canadian registrars appear to often support aspects of academic planning; quality assurance; academic audit and assessment; and research administration, and may even play a significant role in these areas because of strategic enrolment management and their positions on academic governance committees, the constitutional definition above suggests that the UK registrars maintain a primary leadership role in these areas. This does not seem to be true for Canadian registrars.

Where should a registrar report?

There are a number of considerations when determining the most appropriate reporting line for a registrar i.e., should it be direct to the chief academic officer, to the president, to another vice president, or lower down? At minimum and as mentioned above, senior leadership and the chief academic officer in particular might wish to consider the following when determining to whom the registrar should report:

- Level of pan-institutional impact and accountability inherent to the position's responsibilities and the potential impact on institutional risk and reputation.
- The cultures within the institution, its overarching priorities, and the degree to which access to key decision makers may assist or hinder the portfolio and the incumbent's success in areas such as supporting academic policy and

procedural innovations, enrolment management, and student success (for example, is success potentially impeded by lack of access to academic decision makers across the institution? Would the registrar be a more effective partner and implementer of strategic enrolment management needs if he or she sat at the dean's executive table?).

- The importance of the role in supporting student success and the development of the entire student.

This list is not meant to be comprehensive but rather to highlight a few considerations. Each are discussed below.

Pan-institutional impact and accountability

The extensive pan-institutional impact and accountabilities held by registrars are not always understood. For example, typically the registrar is often required to oversee the government attestation and reporting process for the entire student population on behalf of an institution – this is a function that requires one person in the organization be legislatively accountable to the government for ensuring that whatever registration and enrolment occurs and subsequent revenue claimed, the process is overseen in accordance with auditable regulations. Fulfilling this role successfully requires tight alignment with institutional analysis areas and government. Additionally and if the registrar is responsible for revenue collection, he/she is held accountable for steering the tuition and fees revenue collection for the entire institution and overseeing all systems, data, implementation, and resources supporting that process.

On the academic side, the registrar is likely required to steer and oversee the collection and management of the student academic data and any related degree audit, verification, and academic artifacts (such as transcripts and diplomas). For example and even if the registrar is not responsible for tuition collection or financial aid, student funding agencies (e.g., for financial aid, external scholarships, RESPs, etc.) and athletic associations (to name two examples) rely on the Registrar's Office to attest to student academic status to facilitate access to more funding and/or varsity involvement.

The registrar, if he/she is responsible for admissions, is typically held accountable for diligent document and admissions assessment processes. This is a highly complex area requiring expert knowledge of education systems from around the world and related academic document verification. To illustrate its importance, when accusations regarding document fraud emerge, these can have considerable impact on institutional reputation. The same can occur when problematic student record keeping results from poorly managed inter-institutional curricular arrangements. Problematic situations such as these have, in the past, resulted in challenging board relationships and executive level terminations in Canada – in situations such as the latter, internal and/or external provincial audits typically examine such accountabilities and related reporting relationships to ensure normal academic controls are not inadvertently bypassed by diminishing involvement and authority of key areas such as the Registrar's Office.

Less obvious from a reporting lines analysis is understanding and appreciating the important roles registrars play (or can play) to help institutions with developing pan-institutional retention systems (e.g., early warning); better understanding student marketing demographics (because of their oversight of student data); creating responsive student supports (e.g., online degree progress systems); facilitating academic planning (e.g., understanding the allocation of faculty resources across programs through teaching load assessments and student course loads); and more.

There are many more examples; however, the salient point is that a registrar's potential and accountabilities are typically pan-institutional, usually involve most of the primary revenue sources, and typically impact all students and alumni. Navigating these accountabilities and ensuring due diligence are complex tasks that require specialized training; unique strategic, networking, communication, and technical capacities; and an extensive knowledge base. As the data shows, sometimes institutions position another layer between the registrar and the chief academic officer (or another executive leader). This can result, although not always, in having someone above the registrar co-sign or sign to these accountabilities; however, the risk increases as distance from the operational action increases.

As a final point and regardless of organizational structure, registrars need to have a close working relationship with development and alumni relations, institutional planning, government relations, and central communications areas in order to effectively discharge their duties.

Academic policy development and navigating the academic cultures of the institution

Exploring the cultures within institutions is helpful since registrars deal, on a daily basis, pan-institutionally whether as guides; technical experts; change advocates; supporters, implementers, and interpreters of academic policy and procedures; crisis managers; student support professionals; and so forth. Regardless of institution, the registrar is routinely required to work closely and at a unique and deep level of detail with academic colleagues, leaders, and curricular governance committees whether to support academic innovations and policy development; advance enrolment management objectives, policies and procedures; or ensure holistic student support. While this is likely true of other pan-institutional leaders, what makes the registrarial roles stand alone is the degree to which these particular individuals must ensure (and be held accountable for ensuring) that the academic curricular vision, policies, and priorities are deeply embedded into operational practices and supporting system infrastructures as a support to each individual student. A registrar's success is directly a result of their level of access to the various leaders across an institution and is reflected in the success of recruitment and retention initiatives, enrolment management, degree audit, student institutional artifacts (e.g., transcripts, diplomas), and so forth.

To be effective and efficient, one could argue that the registrar needs both access and influence to at least the governance committees and leadership across all the academic cultures to facilitate supporting an Institution. As institutions become more

complex, this need grows. While it is impossible to fully understand and appreciate the complexities and nuances of academic culture in a short White Paper, William Bergquist and Kenneth Pawlak in *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy* (2008) provide a helpful and exceedingly comprehensive lens to illustrate the relevance of this point.

Setting the stage: postmodern institutions

In their work, Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) argue that North American postsecondary educational institutions, including those in Canada, are evolving from so-called 'modern' to 'postmodern' organizations due to changing higher education trends. This situation is both creating new cultures and having a tremendous impact on how the various areas relate and interact within these organizations (see Appendix A for a brief summary of cultural definitions according to Bergquist and Pawlak). It stands to reason that it is also affecting leadership and reporting relationships.

Paul Williams in *The Competent Boundary Spanner* (2002) explores the defining characteristics distinct to 'modern' and 'postmodern' organizations which have relevance to discussions regarding leadership and reporting lines. These are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Modern and postmodern organizations (Williams, 2002, p. 105)

	Modern Organization	**Postmodern Organization**
Domain	Intra-organizational	Inter-organizational
Metaphor	Mechanistic	Systems
Form of government	Administration	Governance
Form of organization	Bureaucratic	Networking, collaboration, partnership
Conceptualization	Differentiation; tasks and functions	Interdependencies
Decision-making framework	Hierarchy and rules	Negotiation and consensus
Competency	Skills-based professional	Relational
Solutions	Optimal	Experimentation, innovation, reflection

In a 'postmodern' institution, Williams (2002) and Jeffrey Luke (1998) among other leadership theorists argue that a different type of leadership is required; specifically and in the words of Williams, the "Catalytic Leader" is appropriate rather than the "sovereign, charismatic leader who enthuses firm and directive leadership" (p. 112). They note that a position of influence in a 'postmodern' institution and in public leadership requires a number of skills to work across organizations and networks including facilitation, collaboration, and diplomacy; building trust is a core antecedent to success (Williams, pp. 112-113; Luke, 1998, Chapter 2). Regularized access to thought leaders in these different organizations or networks is paramount for achieving trust, consensus and success.

With the evolution to 'postmodern' institutions there is an increase in demands being placed on registrars; therefore, enhanced access to internal leaders **across the**

academic cultures is necessary to successfully support academic policy and curriculum innovations, enrolment management, and student success. An important question to ask when determining registrarial reporting is as follows: will the positioning of the role in the hierarchy, in formal settings, and in leadership networks ensure regular informal and formal access to the academic leadership across the institution? The next section examines more deeply why this line of questioning matters.

Exploring academic culture

Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) suggest that six primary cultures exist amongst academic colleagues each of which has emerged in "response to trends that have occurred over the history of higher education and in response to the other cultures" (p. 228).[4] They suggest that the different cultures can sit at odds with each other, creating polarizing tensions that can impede institutional success and internal actors. Figure 2 provides a visual interpretation of their work; it emphasizes the less ideal potential reality when these cultures sit at odds (the arrows demonstrate the links between potentially opposing cultures); Figure 3 offers an 'ideal state' picture where, through "appreciative enquiry,"[5] collaboration and organizational success are achieved. Bergquist and Pawlak suggest that institutional leaders need to understand and work with and across the various academic cultures to ensure success. Registrars are an example of such a leader.

---

[4] Appendix A provides a brief summary of Bergquist and Pawlak's cultural definitions.

[5] "…a collaborative and highly participative, systemwide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the 'life-giving forces' that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic, and organizational terms." (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 14 as cited in Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008). The concept allows a "focus on strengths, vision, hope, and the future…" (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 220).

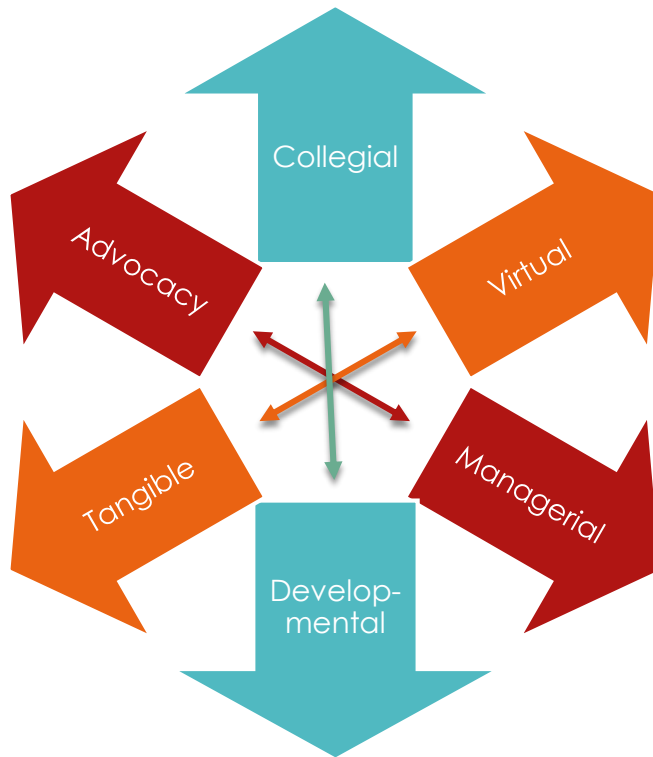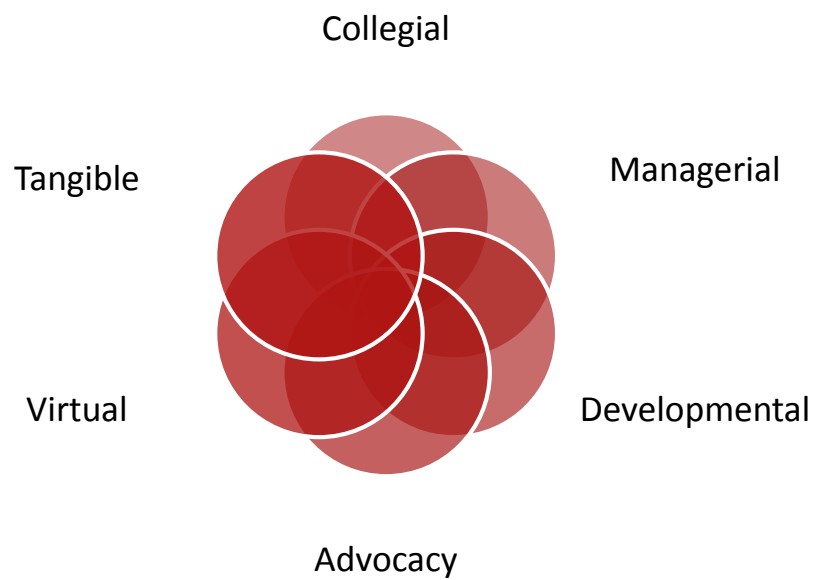*Figure 3: Tension polarities between the cultures (adapted from Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008)*

Figure 4: Ideal state achieved through appreciative enquiry across the cultures of the academy (adapted from Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008)

© Joanne Duklas, November 2014

An interesting further perspective on this issue is provided by Dr. Diamond, professor emeritus at Syracuse University, and P. DeBlois, director of EDUCAUSE and former registrar of Syracuse in *Accountability and Academic Innovation: Don't Forget the Registrar* (2007). They argue the registrar can be "a critical component in academic transformation…[and]… can play a vital role in academic innovation by providing invaluable policy counsel and advice about the degree to which information systems can be customized, and, ultimately, can grease the tracks for academic innovation." They further argue that the registrar can play a major role in "redesigning and improving the quality" of programs, enhancing "course management and delivery… [and]...translating academic policies into efficient and easily used procedures" to facilitate quality advising and decision-making. They note that often the registrar is ignored or not brought into the process until the very end which, according to them, impedes academic innovation and implementation. These reflections raise some interesting questions about how this professional role is situated and perceived within institutions. Is it viewed as a glorified and operationally focused records management clerk or as a major partner who delivers significant strategic value for an institution?

For a registrar to be strategically effective and support institutional goals in today's postmodern institution, it seems reasonable to suggest that the reporting line and access to the academic leaders should be at the highest level and, ideally, be tightly aligned with the academic portfolio. This seems particularly true if the registrar is overseeing functions that span the entire student academic experience. Otherwise, he or she may struggle in delivering key priorities. One registrar described this as "to be successful for your institution, you need to ensure you have a seat at the dean's table". Depending on your institution's culture, that may only be possible the closer you are to the chief academic officer, another vice president, or to the president.

Supporting student success

There is some tremendous research being conducted by academic colleagues and research organizations examining the areas of student success and strategic enrolment management. Some of the themes include (but are not limited to) the need to obtain more data and research; the importance of achieving demonstrative, transformational success for and with students; the value of transformational, student-services and communications rather than institutionally-focused, transactional services and communications (regardless of reporting line or organizational home); the demonstrated success of creating learning communities and shared communication venues to spread a vision for student success; and more. Regardless of where a registrar reports, it is critical to become familiar with the research and be mindful of the value to an institution that can be realized by focusing on student success.

Of relevance to this article, the topic of reporting lines for certain roles involved in student success have been examined by others. The authors of *Supporting Student Success: The Role of Student Services within Ontario's Postsecondary Institutions* (Seifert, T., Arnold, C., Burrow, J., Brown, A., 2011), a first phase report of a multi-year analysis of student success at Canadian institutions led by Dr. Seifert, notes that the registrarial

portfolio does not always situate within the student affairs area and further concludes the following:

> *A critical finding from this study was that student-focused or institution-focused approaches to organizational structure could be illustrated by any of three actual structures (centralized, decentralized, or federated).[6] It is as possible to have a student-focused approach with a federated SAS structure [in which staff members are embedded in faculties but report to a centrally-located supervisor] as it is to have an institution-focused approach with a centralized SAS structure (p. 4).*

George Granger, a former longstanding registrar and current executive director of the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC), highlighted the challenges inherent to the role when supporting students and institutions: "A good registrar knows when to be an advocate for the student(s) and when to be an agent of the university" (G. Granger, personal communications, November 2014). His point is well put – the challenge of balancing the needs of the institution with the needs of students seems at times to be an art, not a science. And yet for those in this role, tight alignment with the academic side of the institution can facilitate success when supporting student success because it allows registrars to simultaneously support academic innovation and students at a very granular and deep policy level.

Richard Morrell in "Be a Pine Tar Registrar" provides an interesting lens on the role of the registrar in supporting students and student success in the context of institutional rules.

> *Registrars make exceptions to rules almost every day they are at work. The truly great men and women in our profession are perhaps best defined by their ability to make wise and timely exceptions to any particular rule. Make too many exceptions and you risk losing the confidence of those who make the rules [e.g., academic governance committees]. Make too few exceptions and you risk being stereotyped as inflexible and tyrannical. Make exceptions without consistency and risk being viewed as Machiavellian (Morrell, 2014, p. 57).*

Morrell emphasizes the importance of a principled approach to leadership when supporting both institutions and students and stresses the value of understanding the academic rules AND their underlying intention. A registrar cannot always do that effectively when they are not in a position to engage routinely and deeply with the academic cultures and leaders across an institution.

---

[6] "Centralized" refers to people, offices and reporting lines that are at a central institutional level; "federated" means people may be embedded in faculties but report to a centrally-located supervisor; "decentralized" means people work in faculties, office operations are handled at the faculty level, and both people and offices report to a faculty-located supervisor (T. Seifert, personal communications, October 2014).

Concluding remarks

The Canadian data provide some interesting indicators regarding the reporting relationships of registrars. First, although further study would be helpful, it is reasonable to conclude that, like the US, a larger proportion of Canadian registrars report directly to institutional academic officers. Further, typical functional responsibilities cover the range of academic and, potentially, financial services across the student life cycle, legitimizing this direct reporting relationship. Nuances are evident, of course, but a general typology is emerging. What the Canadian registrar does not typically maintain responsibility for encompasses the other aspects of student life (e.g., faculty/departmental student support services, residence, sport, student development, disabilities, career advising, and so forth). There are certainly examples where registrars maintain responsibility for these additional areas; however, that appears to be the exception rather than the rule. Early indicators seem to suggest that there are very discrete and specialized functional responsibilities emerging at Canadian institutions that require highly specialized skillsets and competencies offered by those trained in enrolment management and registrarial service delivery specifically.

Although further study would be helpful, what also may be emerging at Canadian institutions is more akin to the reality envisioned by Diamond and DeBlois - a recognition of the role of registrar as a professional expert and partner with unique knowledge and skills that can and should be a significant actor in the realization of academic innovation, enrolment management, and student success. They serve a critical role particularly relevant in postmodern institutions given their daily requirement to work across all the academic cultures at an institution. Further, the role is guided by external ethics and is a formal profession in its own right with pan-institutional impact and accountabilities that necessitate a strong tie to institutional leadership in order to realize these accountabilities and related contributions. Lastly but not insignificantly, the registrar plays a significant role as a supporter of student success particularly given the deep tie to students' academic lives. In Canada, it seems to be emerging as a professional position that is re-earning a place at the senior table in its own right. To be a fully realized partner, registrars require access to academic leadership across an institution; when so situated, they are uniquely positioned to provide balanced strategic and operational support for both students and the institution they serve.

Appendix A: Explaining the cultures (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008)

Academic Culture	Characteristics
Collegial (p.p. 15, 31, 41, 43)	*meaning achieved through faculty disciplines;* *values faculty research and scholarship; quasi-political academic governance process; autonomy and academic freedom;* *sees institution's role as generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge and related value development to students;* *assumes institutional change takes place primarily through – and power resides in – the faculty-controlled governance processes.*
Managerial (p.p. 43, 62, 70)	*meaning achieved by the organizing, implementation, and evaluation of work directed toward specified goals and purposes;* *values fiscal responsibility; effective supervisory skills; efficiency and competency [both in and outside the classroom]; data and analysis;* *sees institution's role as inculcating specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in students.*
Developmental (p. 73)	*meaning achieved by creating programs and activities that further the entire community's growth;* *values personal openness; service to others; systematic institutional research and curricular planning;* *sees institution's role as encouraging potential for cognitive, affective, and behavioral maturation amongst community members.*
Advocacy (pp. 111, 141)	*meaning achieved by establishing equitable and egalitarian policies and procedures for resources and benefits;* *values confrontation and fair bargaining;* *focuses on developing service learning and related partnership models with community to facilitate change and support underrepresented populations;* *focuses on developing outcome-based measures to inform funding formulas.*
Virtual (p.p. 147, 167-169)	*meaning achieved by answering the knowledge generation and dissemination capacity of the postmodern world;* *values the global perspective of open, shared, responsive educational systems;* *conceives of the institution's enterprise as linking educational resources to global and technological resources, thus broadening the global learning network.*

	• *Sees impact of information digitization and the* knowledge economy, loosening of organizational boundaries (e.g., offsite campuses, the "unbounded" Internet, etc.), and the development of a *"virtual epistemology" contributing to this new culture.* • *The changing role of the Faculty when access to knowledge is ubiquitous and instantaneous is significant.*
Tangible (pp. 185, 187, 216-217)	• *meaning achieved by institution's tie to roots, community, and spiritual grounding;* • *Values the predictability of a value-based, face-to-face education in an owned physical location;* • *Conceives of the institution's enterprise as the honoring and reintegration of learning from a local perspective.* • *Reemphasizes standards…, the revitalization of academic institutions that are closely aligned with a particular ….doctrine….or set of values…, [and] …the efforts to balance "high tech" with "high touch"….* • *If there is to be change it must be gradual and … not challenge the status quo.* • *[Uses] …past intentions to remind us of our true mission.*

References

Academic Registrars Council. (2013). Constitution. Retrieved November 17 2014 from
http://www.arc.ac.uk/uploadedfiles/documents/ARC%20CONSTITUTION%20approved%
20for%20web%2006.12.2013.pdf

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO].
(2007). AACRAO Registrars Survey: Salaries, Office Location, One-Stop Shops, and
Office Functions. Retrieved October 21, 2014 from http://aacrao-
web.s3.amazonaws.com/migrated/registrarsurvey.pdf_51caedbe0794f0.13953787.pdf

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officer [AACRAO].
(October 2014). Cabinet-level administrators talk about student success. Retrieved
October 28, 2014 from http://www.aacrao.org/resources/resources-detail-
view/cabinet-level-administrators-talk-student-success

Bergquist, W., Pawlak, K. (2008). Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy. San
Francisco: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Diamond, R., DeBlois, P. (2007). Accountability and Academic Innovation: Don't Forget
the Registrar. Originally printed: Inside Higher Education, January 20th, 2007. Retrieved
October 28 2014 from
http://www.thenationalacademy.org/readings/accountability.html

Kilgore, W. (2014). 2014 Chief Enrollment Management Officer Career Profile Report.
Washington, D.C.: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions
Officers.

Kisling, R. (2014). The Strategic Role of the Registrar: Changing Responsibilities in Light of
Technology. In AC Solutions. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Collegiate
Registrars and Admissions Officers. Retrieved October 28, 2014 from
http://consulting.aacrao.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/AACRAO_Role-of-
Registrars_FINAL.pdf

Luke, J. (1998). Catalytic Leadership: strategies for an interconnected world. San
Francisco, U.S.: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers

Morrell, R. (2014). Be a Pine Tar Registrar. In Colleges and University, Vol 89, Issue No. 4.
Washington, D.C.: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions
Officers.

Seifert, T., Arnold, C., Burrow, J., Brown, A. (2011). Supporting Student Success: The Role
of Student Services within Ontario's Postsecondary Institutions. Toronto: Higher
Education Quality Council of Ontario.
http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Supporting%20Student%20SuccessEN
G.pdf

Williams, P. (2002). The Competent Boundary Spanner. In Public Administration, Vol. 80
No. 1, 2002 (103-124). Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Williams, R. (2011). History of the Registrar Profession. Session presentation at the 2011 Pacific Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers in Seattle Washington. Retrieved October 26, 2014 from http://consulting.aacrao.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/AACRAO_Role-of-Registrars_FINAL.pdf

University of Oxford. (2014). Oxford Glossary. Retrieved November 17 2014 from http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/history/oxford-glossary