

PCACAC Living History

Submitted by Karl Wolf, PCACAC President 1987-1988

Reflections on Admissions Counseling

In 1970 as a college senior about to graduate with a degree in accounting, marketing and economics from Shepherd, I was prepared for a career in public accounting. I had rejected offers from two of the “Big Eight” firms as they would not permit me to go to graduate school. Accepted into the MBA program at George Washington, I was determined to begin my graduate work as soon as possible.

However, in late March I received a call to meet with our college President on a Friday afternoon. As a former student government president, I often met with the President, but this time was different. He told me that the director of admissions had resigned to return to his old institution and that he wanted me to be the new director. I told him about my plans for graduate school and he said he would give me as much time off as needed to complete the MBA during the next three years. But, he needed an answer on Monday as he would have to advertise the position after that day. Over the weekend I consulted with my family and decided to accept the offer.

The President was delighted, but no announcement would be made until after I graduated in May. I had the summer to begin graduate classes and my directorship would begin September 1. My advisor at GW made all the arrangements for me to start early and I completed nine hours that summer. As the old director left June 30, I spent my summer both in graduate classes and in the admissions office getting the fall class completed and enrolled.

Like other admissions officers, my fall was eight to ten weeks of travel so no classes could be taken. The Registrar at GW worked with me to keep me enrolled and did my class registrations by mail. My advisor changed as my primary advisor was in Europe doing trade negotiations for the US. Luckily, I had only a 30-hour MBA degree requirement that I completed in 18 months.

Near the end of fall travel season, I was recruiting in Montgomery County and visited Albert Einstein High School where I met Joe Monte. Joe took me under his wing and became a life-long friend. He told me about PCACAC and he introduced me to many of the legends in our Association who also have become friends. A few months later in April, PCACAC was meeting in Annapolis and I got to meet many of those legends. All were gracious and wanted me to succeed and to stay in college admissions. At our conference social, sailing on the Severn River, I got to talk informally with many of those PCACAC legends.

I was hooked and could not wait until the PCACAC meeting in Williamsburg the next year; at that time, the By-Laws required us to meet in Williamsburg every other year. Marion Flagg made it her goal to introduce me to more VIPs in Williamsburg and convinced me to join the PCACAC Executive Board. When Jud Samon was elected President, he appointed me as the first College Day/Night/Fair Coordinator. I served on the Executive Board for nearly 25 years in

various positions. I have been an NACAC Delegate, PCACAC President, Counselor of the Year winner, and Richard Apperson award winner. After thirty-four years in Admissions, I had to change positions due to a family situation that would no longer permit me to travel. I enjoyed other positions at Shepherd for another thirteen years before retiring six years ago. I still serve on the Shepherd University Foundation Executive Board and was appointed to the University's Board of Governors in September.

All my success in PCACAC I owe to Joe Monte who made sure I knew what the organization was about and made sure I was part of it. I thank all of the Past Presidents and Apperson Award winners too. I can't wait to be with you soon as I have missed our times together over the last three years.

As a last thought, I believe that many of my long-time college friends (Jack Blackburn, Jean Rayburn, Tom Pollard, Conrad Warlick, Pam Spence, Marty Wilder, etc.) would agree on is that today's directors of admissions need to get out of their offices and travel. We all traveled as much as our youngest counselors did. They must do college day and night programs. They must meet with high school counselors and students in their high schools and they must meet students and parents where the students are. John Casteen made sure that he always visited the small, distant VA high schools to make sure those students knew there was a place for them in Charlottesville. And enrollment vice presidents also must travel and recruit. There is too much reliance on reports and computer-generated numbers and not enough reliance on actual personal college admissions counseling.