Creating a Career Ladder:
Motivating and Developing Staff

Lawrence Technological University (LTU) is an independent, coeducational accredited university founded in 1932 and offering over sixty academic programs at the associate, baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral degree level. The University is composed of the Colleges of Architecture and Design, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Management. Approximately five thousand students are enrolled in full-time, part-time, and non-credit programs.

We should begin with a little history of the admissions office. Before we can describe our current office dynamic, we need to describe how it used to be. Each admissions counselor position was focused to service a specific type of student or service (e.g., freshman, transfer, graduate or international, campus programming), which resulted in silos within the admissions office and the campus community. Counselors were knowledgeable and accountable only for what was related to their specific responsibility—for example, there was one admissions counselor responsible for on-campus programming. This counselor met with deans, associate deans, and student service offices to coordinate all activities for successful programs. Since this counselor was the only counselor who directly interacted with the campus community, the general belief was that this was the best counselor on staff, and that other
counselors were “wasting university resources” traveling to promote academic programs for which they appeared to lack knowledge or enthusiasm.

As another example of the silos within the admissions office, one counselor was assigned to graduate admissions, and another counselor was assigned to international students. If a student needing counseling for an international or graduate admissions issue entered the admissions office at a time when those admissions counselors were not present, he or she would be informed that the counselor who handled those students was not available. This not only frustrated the prospective student; it also frustrated the counselor, who was concerned for his or her population. A change was needed to bring a culture of student service and cross-training to the existing counselors.

The office was restructured with the idea that all admissions counselors need to build campus-wide relationships. In order to address this problem and prepare the admissions office for the future, new positions were created and job descriptions were revamped. The first major change was the creation of an Assistant Director position as a liaison between counselors and the director. A second Assistant Director of Admissions position was created four years later to help manage data entry and support staff. In addition, the job descriptions of the Admissions Counselors were redesigned to provide those positions with more breath and depth in all of the admissions functions.

The Admissions office now consists of forty individuals:
- Twenty student assistants
- Ten admissions counselors (levels one and two plus senior ACs)
- Three application specialists
- One transfer articulation specialist
- One part-time data entry specialist
- One part-time evening receptionist
- One receptionist
- Two assistant directors
- One director

The admissions office is responsible for recruitment and admissions for undergraduate students, graduate students, international students, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, and evaluation of transfer credit for our transfer students. It also coordinates the orientation and registration programs, including conducting placement assessments for new students. The redesigned admissions counselor positions have an active role in every facet of the admissions process. Their responsibilities are listed below:

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL TERRITORY
- Visit high schools
- Attend college nights
Process all applications

OUT-OF-STATE TERRITORY
- Attend National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) fairs
- Develop strategies to manage territory
- Process applications
- Visit high schools

UNDERGRADUATE TRANSFER APPLICATIONS
- Accept applications in assigned major and create transfer credit evaluation
- Meet with department chair to review transfer evaluations
- Build relationships with department and report back any new program information to the office

GRADUATE PROGRAM
- Communicate with assigned graduate program director about applications
- Build relationships with department and report back any new program information to the office
- Answer any inquiries, via e-mail or phone, related to assigned graduate program

ON-CAMPUS PROGRAMMING
- Plan and organize recruitment programs
- Communicate with academic departments for campus involvement
- Execute program and create report of results

APPOINTMENT BLOCKS
- Set aside one evening per week to cover office appointments and phone calls
- Be confident in providing information about LTU in the following:
  - Undergraduate programs
  - Transfer of undergraduate credit
  - Graduate programs
  - ESL programs
  - International students

The Admissions Career Ladder
The admissions ladder at Lawrence Tech is unique in comparison with many other universities. The levels at LTU are somewhat more informal than elsewhere, but their titles can be equated to standard titles in any admissions office, as we do just below. Accordingly, we
describe in detail the five levels of admissions professionals, with comparisons to common levels established at other universities. (See Table 43.1.)

In the rest of the chapter, for ease of reference, we will refer to the positions by the commonly used titles in the column above left, rather than by the LTU titles.

Admissions Counselor I (Entry Level/New Hire)

For Lawrence Tech this is typically a new hire to the admissions field.

At this level, the counselor is usually an individual who either recently graduated with an undergraduate degree or is someone looking for a career change to admissions. Some responsibilities and characteristics of such a person are:

- Requires supervision
- Useful for basic but necessary tasks
- Low level skills; rote activities
- No essential knowledge needed
- Recruitment territory trips
- Self-taught college materials
- Lack of understanding of the “big picture”
- No real commitment or (as yet) desire for development of a career
- Lack of broad understanding of the profession
- Beginners who stay beginners

Our office has three Admissions Counselors in this level. Typically new hires stay at this stage for approximately one year, a complete recruitment cycle. One of the main indicators of this level is the amount of supervision needed to complete all assignments. Another indicator can be an inability to make decisions independently, without a sign-off from an Assistant Director or Director. The new counselors may also have difficulty managing multiple responsibilities. However, these are all skills that we can help new counselors develop. This is where the understanding of the “big picture” can be assessed. Does the counselor meet the expectation set by the director for all duties, or does he or she focus only on the areas he is confident in? An example of the latter situation is a counselor who only focuses on the local territory and does not strategically research his or her out-of-state market to identify new markets for the university. Although not all counselors make the transition to the next level at the same speed, it is more of a priority at this stage to identify which counselors are not moving forward (or who are content to remain at this stage). In the past we have, in fact, had instances when the occasional counselor has chosen to remain at this stage for many years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Title</th>
<th>LTU Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Counselor 1</td>
<td>Entry Level/New Hire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Admissions Counselor 2</td>
<td>Admissions Counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Senior Admissions Counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Director</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Director</td>
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That was the era when an admissions counselor simply visited schools, attended college nights, maintained office hours, and evaluated files. However, with the admissions field evolving and requiring counselors to do much more than recruiting, it is essential that they progress and move beyond this basic level.

**Admissions Counselor II (Admissions Counselor)**

This employee has an understanding of the admissions field. The counselor at this stage can be expected to have the following attributes:

- Loyalty
- Understanding of the “big picture”
- Dedication
- Knowledge
- Developing leadership role
- Requires only limited supervision

Our office has three counselors at this level. At this stage, admissions counselors are confident in their responsibilities. They are contributing to the office in their assigned tasks. Less supervision is required, but supervision is still needed to verify that duties are being completed. In this stage, the counselor is learning more about the admissions field and is now identifying it as a possibility for a career. This counselor is interested in taking on additional one-time special assignments (*e.g.*, planning an impromptu recruitment event if inquiries are lagging or creating a flyer for a new recruitment event).

**Assistant Director (Senior Admissions Counselor)**

- Develops strategies for territory management
- “Out of the box” thinker
- Works autonomously
- Leader within the admissions office

Our office has four counselors at this level. At this stage admission counselors are active contributors to the office. They understand the admissions strategic plan, and are making suggestions to improve our processes. They also will identify processes in the office that need improvement and can provide solutions to make them run more smoothly. Another key attribute at this stage is the ability to work autonomously. These counselors are seen as leaders within the office and the campus community. They are excellent multi-taskers and have the ability to take on additional responsibilities while successfully completing their regular requirements (*e.g.*, updating content on our admissions Web site).
**Associate Director (Assistant Director)**

- Supervision experience
- Management of projects/plans
- Office management

At this stage the Assistant Director has supervision responsibilities. Training is a major responsibility of anyone functioning at this stage. The Assistant Director works with the counselors at all levels and spends quality time with the level one counselors to ensure they are meeting the expectations of the Director. In addition such a director must follow the progress and challenge the counselors at all other levels, to stimulate their growth in the admissions field. At this level, the Assistant Director must have the ability to address issues as they arise, so as to mentor admissions counselors and improve processes within the admissions office. It is essential that he or she has the ability to lead multiple projects and make certain they are successful. The Assistant Director spends a great deal of time with the Director to make sure all projects are aligned with the university and department strategic plan.

**Director**

Typically more than five years of admissions experience is needed for this stage. The Director must be able to manage the entire admissions office. This encompasses the staff, budget, and overseeing the quality and quantity of the students recruited. The Director must work with campus academic leadership as well, so as to coordinate an effective recruitment plan. He or she must also initiate agreements with community colleges and work with the campus community to develop articulation agreements. Generally he or she must manage all agreements with third party partners to assist in improving the yield of our enrolled students via such arrangements.

The Director serves as the main liaison for the admissions office to the campus community, by informing the campus community of the activities and successes of the admissions office and of the recent trends in admissions. The Director must actively work on guiding the admissions office to meet the strategic goals of the university. A successful Director is one who has the ability to focus the recruitment strategy a year prior — to ensure that the groundwork has been laid for the level of future enrollment expected by the institution.

**Building the Ladder**

Building the ladder for the admissions counselor rungs begins at the search for a new counselor. After a posting for a new counselor position, we can receive up to one hundred applications from a wide range of candidates — from new graduates to applicants with over ten years of experience, or retired professors, or high school teachers.\(^\text{269}\)

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\(^{269}\) Although it is the Director of Admissions who receives the applications, the Director reports to the Assistant Provost, and we have collaborated in writing this chapter. Hence, “we.”
A typical college student does not aspire to be an admissions counselor. He or she might have worked in the admissions office while attending college, but would not have considered it for a profession until they saw a posting for the job in the newspaper or online. There are many qualified individuals who are capable of performing the list of duties that we have presented earlier. All candidates usually state that they had a wonderful college experience and want to share that with others exploring college. They will also mention how they were so confused with the admissions process when they were searching for the best school to attend that they can use their experiences to help parents and potential students. Candidates are savvy and well trained to tell us what we want to hear. So it is not about identifying the candidate who can do the job. The key to building the ladder for your organization is to find the right fit in a candidate. You must identify who will make the maximum contribution to your team. One individual can compromise an effective team.

It has taken some time to build our current, very effective team. We have developed quite an intensive three-step interviewing process to make sure we continue to assemble the effective team. The interviews are structured as follows:

- **F**ifth — A phone interview conducted by the Director
- **S**econd — An interview with the Associate Director and Director of Admissions
- **T**hird — The candidate gives a five-minute presentation to the entire admissions office about any topic, and answers questions the office has designed for the new hires.

The first interview answers “why” the candidate is interested in the position. As Director of Admissions, I believe it is important to speak to the candidate in an informal setting to verify if his or her prior employment and experiences align with our goals. During this stage I explain the position and inform them of the responsibilities of the position. This first interview typically lasts approximately fifteen minutes. I do inform the candidates of the salary range, to identify and discourage those who have an unrealistic expectation of our noble profession.

The second interview helps us to answer what we want to know about the “ability” and “fit” of the candidate. Our Director of Career Services has developed questions that pinpoint the qualities I look for in an admissions counselor. For an Admissions Counselor I want to hire someone who is dedicated, hard working, a multi-tasker, trustworthy, and dependable. The questions devised by our Director of Career Services are shown in Table 43.2 (on page 572).

These questions were very successful in segmenting our candidates; many were not able to pass to the third interview. Although using these questions often required posting the position again and interviewing more candidates, we were able to confidently choose, for a third interview, candidates who would complement our admissions team.

The third interview involves the entire admissions staff in interviewing at least three candidates and observing the candidates’ five-minute presentation. All candidates are qualified for the position, and the Director and Associate Director would feel comfortable hiring any of
them. This interview is really for the staff to have input as to who will be a part of their team. The staff will prepare questions for the candidates about such issues as how the person works in a team, and qualities of dependability and loyalty. After the third interview, the staff discusses how well the candidate would fit into our team and work environment. After all interviews have taken place, we meet one more time as a team to discuss and decide who is the best fit for our office. Although the process is long, it has proven to be extremely successful.

**Expectations**

It is very important to set the stage for expectations on the first day. This gives the new hire some basic facts that will make their employment a success. Items discussed seem basic but are essential for the employee to hear. I preface this exchange with the statement that I will discuss items I hope not to have to address in the future. (Since they are a new employee, no poor work habits have been formed.) Items covered are the dress code, conduct on campus within the office or campus community, conduct required when traveling for recruitment or attending a conference, use of Internet and phone for personal use, the director’s pet peeves, and the probationary period. These items are presented so that the new employee understands from the beginning why not abiding by these ground rules breaks down the team which we have worked so hard to create. This is said not to threaten, but to let employees know my expectations. There have been times when I had to bring an employee back to my office after a few months to discuss performance on an issue discussed above, but such occasions have been few.

**Training**

The training program designed for new counselors is integral to their development and serves as an introduction for them to the office and the campus community; in addi-
tion it is also very important for the growth and professional development of our existing counselors.

A handbook was created to train new admissions counselors. It is updated prior to the new staff member’s first day of work for both the new counselor and the current counselors; all are expected to use it as a reference guide. During the interview phase, the Associate Director asks for input from all counselors about ways to improve the manual. This is beneficial because it allows the counselors to review the current processes to verify that they are up-to-date, and it also serves as a reminder to all of the correct procedures.

The Associate Director trains and supervises all new staff members and carefully reviews the manual to make sure that information is provided in a consistent manner. The counselor will use this document repeatedly in the first weeks on the job. The following is a list of information outlined in the Admissions Counselor Training Handbook with a limited sample of topics:

- Policies relating to students who are “First time in any college” — How to recompute GPA, admissions decisions, scholarship information
- Transfer student policies — How to compute GPA, make admissions decisions, and award transfer credit
- Graduate student policies — Procedures to complete application, contact information
- International student policies — How to make an admissions decision, F1 information, J1 information, I–20, general information
- Canadian student policies — Grading system
- General information — Financial aid, tours, Friday tour program, education centers, housing, advising
- Placement assessments procedures
- Dual degrees
- Admissions office policies — Calling in, time off, time sheets, laptops, dress code, overtime, office hours/flextime, expectations as to appointment coverage, application processing, phone procedures, lunch time, mailing procedures, inquiry requests, giveaways, professional organizations, education benefits
- Recruitment — Expectations as to office appointments, high school visits, college nights
- On campus programs — How to plan them
- Travel — Airline tickets, car rental, check requests, comp time, mileage reimbursement, schedules, travel advance, travel emergencies, travel reimbursements, out of state recruitment
- Banner — How to use our student management system

Team Mentoring
As prospective students come to campus to find out more information, current counselors have the new counselor join them during office appointments. It is very important that the new counselor observe each different counselor as they meet with prospective students and
parents. Also, it is important that they get an opportunity to experience an office visit with each of the major categories of students: traditional undergraduate, non-traditional undergraduate, international, and graduate.

I feel it is one of the most valuable experiences for the new counselor to see all of our “admissions counselor styles” of servicing students. We have a great set of counselors who each have a different but effective style in counseling our prospective students. It is important for the new counselors to experience those differences and to make use of elements of each in creating their own styles of serving students.

For the existing counselors, their participation in this kind of demonstration furthers their own professional development through their willingness to support a new team member and teach him or her about the profession. Typically, the senior level counselors tend to mentor the new counselors at a higher level than those at the “admissions counselor one” level, regardless of their tenure in the field.

During this time, the new counselor will be trained in making a decision on applications, creating an evaluation for the transfer student, and acquiring detailed knowledge of the Lawrence Tech academic programs. Student assistants are also given a role in the development of the new admissions counselor. The new counselor is required to go on several detailed tours conducted by different students to get a feel for what prospective students experience on a campus visit.

Before an admissions counselor will be allowed to work independently, the Associate Director will verify that he or she is knowledgeable in all of the different aspects of the job. In addition, before new counselors can take appointments, they must first give an admissions presentation to the Director and Associate Director to make certain that they are ready to be on their own. Even after this early immersion is nearly complete, the Associate Director (AD) may allow the counselor to see students in the office, make phone calls, or process freshman files—but may still require the new counselor to show all transfer credit evaluations to the AD for approval, since transfer credit evaluation is a complex process, with many ramifications if not completed accurately.

Faculty Mentoring

Lawrence Technological University is a very agile university; programs are often updated based on suggestions from a faculty/business/industry advisory board. Lawrence Tech is well known for engineering programs and its new labs and equipment, and courses are added to accommodate growing trends in technology. To keep the admissions counselors current in their information, faculty are invited to attend staff meetings periodically and to share program updates appropriate for prospective students. The admissions counselors visit facilities, labs, or projects valuable for that particular program as part of the update. Listening to individuals who are knowledgeable and passionate about a program provides the counselors the energy and excitement to evoke enthusiasm in prospective students.
Common Service Philosophy

The admissions office is located in the new Alfred A. Taubman Student Service Center. The building is home to all the student service offices on campus which were once housed in many different buildings throughout campus. The admissions office shares the floor with the University’s One Stop Center which consists of the registrar, financial aid, and student accounting offices.

Our admissions counselors are also required to have a functional knowledge of each of those offices. The directors of those offices acknowledge the reality that bricks and mortar alone will not change how students are serviced. So together we created a common student service philosophy as a new way of approaching our customers—a cohort which includes prospective students, parents, current students, faculty, staff, and alumni. This philosophy aims to improve the customer service provided to all. The values that determined the design of the building also form the core of our service philosophy—

In order to insure the success of our students, we will
+ Provide consistent high-level service
+ Focus on customer satisfaction
+ Create an environment of teamwork and improvement
+ Commit to a never-ending search for a better way

To provide a better service to our incoming students, the admissions office was cross-trained with the registrar’s office to advise new students, process overrides, and add students into closed courses. The registrar’s office also works with the academic departments to provide cross-training to ensure we can service our new students at a consistently high level.

This higher level of service eliminates the statements “I do not handle that” or “our office does not answer those questions, please go stand in that line.” If it concerns an admissions issue, it is an expectation that a student will receive a high level of service. If it is an issue concerning one of the offices of the One Stop Center, we have common consultation rooms so that a member of one of those offices can quickly join the appointment for better service and the counselor’s own professional development.

Merit Increases

Performance reviews are conducted on a yearly basis. It is important to be realistic, honest, and goal-oriented when writing a performance review. The more information provided to employees in a constructive manner, the better they will understand the expectations for their professional development. The first step in our performance review is a self-assessment completed by the admissions staff member. This provides a period of self-reflection on the year’s performance, and it also is an opportunity for the Director and Associate Director to review self-reported accomplishments. The rating scale for our performance reviews is shown in Table 43.3, on page 576.
Prior to the completion of the self-assessments or performance reviews, I discuss my expectations and let all staff members know that a “three” is required in each category for a merit increase. I am not one to provide an outstanding score for each category, even for the top performers. I want the outstanding scores to have meaning and value to those who do receive them, and I think providing them without merit diminishes the distinction. It is difficult when counselors give themselves high scores in their self-assessment, and the self-assessment does not accord with the evaluations of the Associate Director and Director. In this situation it is important for the counselor to provide specific examples throughout his or her review to substantiate the scores submitted. To assist me in remembering situations, the Assistant Director keeps files to remember successes and failures.

Each of the categories listed in Table 43.4 (on page 577) are the opportunities the Director and Associate Director have to discuss both positive work performance and areas that need improvement. A score of one to five must be awarded for each category.

These performance reviews are time-consuming to write, but if written constructively they can provide counselors with valuable information on their job performance. This is the time we can discuss their level of performance, and where the last year’s performance places them in the admissions ladder, whether they are performing as an Admissions Counselor I or II or as a Senior Admissions Counselor.

Also discussed are goals for the next year in recruitment, territory management, and professional development opportunities. After the review is written and the merit increase is provided, it is important to reference the specific goals contained in the reviews. All goals set are specific to each counselor, and in addition, are tailored to specific obligations regarding territory and other aspects of strategic initiatives. We provide this information to encourage the counselors to go back to that review and refer to it throughout the year, to reinforce what has been written concerning their performance and future goals.

### Merit Alternatives

Although merit increases are not very large at Lawrence Tech, it is important to recognize stellar individual and group performance. Appreciation rewards do not necessarily need to cost money to be valued by the recipients. The following are some ways to reward with only minimal cost:

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<th>Points</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Rating Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Outstanding performance requirements</td>
<td>Achieves performance levels that are judged to substantially exceed normal expectations; overall performance is clearly exceptional; consistently performs above and beyond normal expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exceeds performance requirements</td>
<td>Achieves objectives and consistently exceeds normal expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meets performance requirements</td>
<td>Performs in a competent and fully satisfactory manner; meets objectives that are in line with good solid performance and major job responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meets some performance requirements</td>
<td>Performs some job responsibilities in a satisfactory way but not all; may be new in the position; requires improvement to meet university standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fails to meet performance requirements</td>
<td>Does not achieve major job responsibilities and objectives; this performance level is not acceptable for continued employment.</td>
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After a weekday on-campus program send everyone home early! The Director or Associate Director then stay behind and answer the phone and take care of appointments for the rest of the day.

If there is a holiday coming up, have the office choose the day before or after to get an extra day off—yes, with pay! Example: If Independence Day is on a Wednesday, allow counselors to take one day off during that week to increase their holiday time off. As long as the time frame is restricted to one week and admissions responsibilities are being covered, this arrangement should not pose any problem.

To reward going above and beyond the normal call of duty, a day off with pay can be provided to an Admissions Counselor.

We use other appreciation methods that require some dollars, but which do not put a big dent in the budget.

It is a well known fact that admissions departments love food, and it is one of the best ways to show appreciation. I use food as a reward frequently, such as:
- Lunch for a staff meeting
- Ice cream treats on a hot day...or any day
- Host a Cinco de Mayo celebration with authentic food and virgin Margaritas
- Provide subs for lunch; counselors are responsible for their own drinks

Gift cards—The Director has gift cards in the amounts of fifteen, twenty and twenty-five dollars used for great performances, or in-office work competitions.

Acknowledgement of hard work or consistent work is always welcome and appreciated; sometimes it is the little things that are most appreciated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 43.4: Areas of Performance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem Solving/Decision Making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Productivity/Quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adaptability/Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependability/Accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Skills/Communication</td>
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</table>
There is another type of appreciation that can often be the most meaningful, but is not as easily defined. It is more of an intrinsic appreciation and greater sense of respect and trust that allows the counselor to have more of a direct effect on the goals of the admissions office, along with the Director and Associate Director. This type of appreciation was more stumbled upon than planned, but it arose because we have some great counselors on staff interested in taking on additional duties, while still effectively managing their assigned duties. The Associate Director and I first assigned a task to an admissions counselor during my second year as Director. Initially it was a temporary assignment; we assigned a counselor to assist with our Web site content management. The Associate Director and I were very impressed with the counselor’s ability to work on the temporary project and yet continue to excel in her assigned responsibilities, and we made the project permanent. Since then the Associate Director has been assigning tasks to those counselors who have been very successful in managing multiple projects. We call this technique of rewarding good performers with work which broadens their perspectives and responsibilities the “intrinsic appreciation method.”

Rises
I have made a conscious decision when hiring new admissions counselors to bring them in at the Admissions Counselor I level. My goal is to hire new counselors who have some experience, while starting them at the entry level salary range. I do not feel comfortable hiring a new admissions counselor, without any previously demonstrated loyalty to our team, at a higher salary than those currently on staff. I have been successful in cost savings from this salary policy, while directing raises to high-performing counselors. The Lawrence Tech administration has agreed that our successes are driven by the team in our office, and have supported the Director and Associate Director in rewarding our existing counselors.

Performance Improvement Plans
If counselors fail to meet and address expectations outlined in the performance review or policies outlined in the Admissions Counselor Manual, the Director and Associate Director meet to discuss the problem. Together we discuss the flaws in performance that have occurred, and monitor them to see if a minor problem gets worse. It is important to address performance deficits as they occur, because they may continue and then result in a larger performance problem in the future.

If performance does not improve after discussions with the staffer in question, we draw up a performance improvement plan, both to document formally the behavior in question and to provide a timeline and consequences. Below are the categories of the plan used by our admissions office.

- Level of Correction:
  - Verbal Warning
  - Written Warning/Probation
Final Warning/Probation
Investigatory Leave
Final Written Warning/Termination

Subject; Nature of Issue(s):
- Policy/Procedure Violation
- Performance Transgression
- Behavior/Conduct Infraction
- Absenteeism/Tardiness

The behavior is documented with dates to clearly describe the unwanted behavior, and contains a re-statement of expectations required in this situation. The counselor is able to write comments and the Plan is signed by all. These last steps are important, for this type of documentation shows the counselor the seriousness of the behaviors in question, the nature of the consequences to be expected if there is no improvement, and the final consequence of termination.

If you initiate a performance improvement plan, it is important that you followed up on it and not ignore it. The counselor must understand that this situation is serious and will be persistently addressed, with appropriate documentation. It is also important to contact your human resources office to review your performance improvement plan before you put it before the employee.

Conclusion
We believe that everyone comes to work every day wanting to do the right things to be successful. It is the Director’s job to provide an environment that teaches the entire staff within the Office of Admissions that there is more to the profession of admissions then just high school visits and college fairs.

Based on our experience, we believe that the most successful admissions offices create this sense of achievement — of professional growth — by developing a ladder of success when one is not otherwise apparent. This creation of a career ladder allows the more experienced members of the office to communicate a sense of progression from level to level. That sense of progression allows all within the office to try and achieve a more advanced level — and, just as important, to understand their role so it can be embraced in even the worst times.

Nurturing successful admissions professionals equates to healthy enrollments, because members of a staff where there is an emphasis on attaining higher levels of responsibility and recognition better understand their role within the enrollment process, and the benefits that they bring to their colleges or universities. Directors of Admissions need to set the tone for collaboration and communication — with the deans, the faculty, and with their own staff. The best way to accomplish that is to set a tone of service for others and to develop adaptable and enterprising admissions staff trained in every aspect of the admissions process.
Creating successful admissions ladders correlates with enhanced morale and enhanced results in a critical department. Far too often, when there is not any documented progression from a first year recruiter to an assistant director or a seasoned admissions professional, employees do not understand their role or see the context in which they are exercising their skills. They only see their functions as evaluating files, visiting high schools, and bringing inquiry cards back to the office. They perform tasks instead of developing strategy; they take direction instead of initiating ideas and solutions; and they look at their work as just a job and not a career or profession. If there is not a documented ladder, create one. Create a strategic plan and tie it to your overall university plan. Create goals and hold people accountable. Explain and communicate how everyone’s contribution makes a difference.

Healthy enrollments do not just happen. That good outcome is the result of a systematic approach to leading and developing an admissions staff—an approach that is interconnected to the broader campus community. Creating this kind of interactive structure with clear progressions will ensure success at all levels of the organization.