



The Trip from Educator to Educational Administrator

By Marianne Gumpper, Director, Graduate Admission, Fairfield University

Troy Sterk holds a love of education deep in his heart. As an avid reader who always loved school, it comes as no surprise that he ended up with a career in an educational field. Graduating from Western Washington University in 1996 with majors in history and education, and a teaching certificate, Troy went on to teach at both elementary and junior high school for five years. Shifting away from a long-term career in teaching, he sought out graduate school options. The one that really piqued his interest was the Student Development Administration program at Seattle University. He studied part-time at first and then during his required internship he gave up teaching, finished his degree full-time, and found a job on campus in the graduate admission office. He received his master's from Seattle U in 2004 and has never left. In 2011, he earned his doctorate in

educational leadership, also from Seattle U. He is currently a Senior Admission Counselor.

Reflecting on his graduate school search, Troy remembers back in the late 1990's how different it was from how students look for graduate programs today. The Internet as a way of marketing master's degrees had not yet taken hold. He remembers seeing a brochure from Seattle U, a school he did not know about at the time, and applied on a paper application. He feels the biggest changes in his 13 years in graduate admission have been the advances in technology. No more paper applications; now everything is scanned and all applications are submitted online with faculty also reading online. Another big advance is the use of a CRM to work with prospects to move them along the funnel to become enrolled students.

Like many of us in NAGAP, Troy feels these changes have improved efficiency. He also expressed that Graduate Enrollment Management (GEM) is recognized as much more of a profession today than when he entered the field back in 2004. But with the professionalization of our field has come more scrutiny. Daily reports are now the norm tracking inquiries, applications, confirmations and enrolled students. And with the tools to improve efficiency and an excellent CRM this is all possible. The one downside he pointed out to all of the improved workplace efficiency is he misses the contact on a more personal level with prospective students. With so much of GEM work happening online, he does enjoy when he can meet prospective students face-to-face at events and other recruiting opportunities.

Other changes that he has encountered during his tenure at Seattle U are a huge growth in new master's programs, over 50%, and an explosion in certificate programs that are sometimes taught online. More and more programs are being taught online or in hybrid formats. The challenge in his office is one that many of us encounter where we are semi-centralized: working the prospective students to application completion but having no hand in the admission decision. The demographics of the Seattle U population has changed with a much more diverse population and more international students.

Troy has been a member of NAGAP since 2004 and a member of JGAP since 2005, and he recently joined the NAGAP Publications Committee. He has found these professional associations to be "a wonderful community of professionals who help me stay informed of new issues and changes in our field." While reading is a favorite hobby, also as might be expected of someone living in the Pacific Northwest, he has a passion for the outdoors and hiking.