



The University of Texas at San Antonio

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs
Student Ombudsperson's 2005-2006 Annual Report

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I. Introduction

The Student Ombudsperson position officially began on September 19, 2005. The 2005-2006 annual report includes the following:

- a description of the role of this position,
- promotion efforts,
- a summary of the individuals served,
- areas of concern, and
- recommendations for change and/or improvement.

II. Role of the Student Ombudsperson

The primary role of the Student Ombudsperson is to assist students who are encountering challenges within the campus community by listening to concerns, providing and clarifying information, identifying and evaluating options, acting as a facilitator or mediator, serving as a referral agent, and making recommendations for change to enhance the mission of the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA).

The Student Ombudsperson offers confidential services to all students in a welcoming and safe environment and communicates with various representatives and offices to respond to and help resolve concerns in a timely manner. Parents and other individuals are also assisted within Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines in an effort to possibly remedy a particular situation. The Student Ombudsperson reports to the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) and can be reached by appointment, email, fax, phone, and mail. Walk-ins are also welcome.

III. Promotion

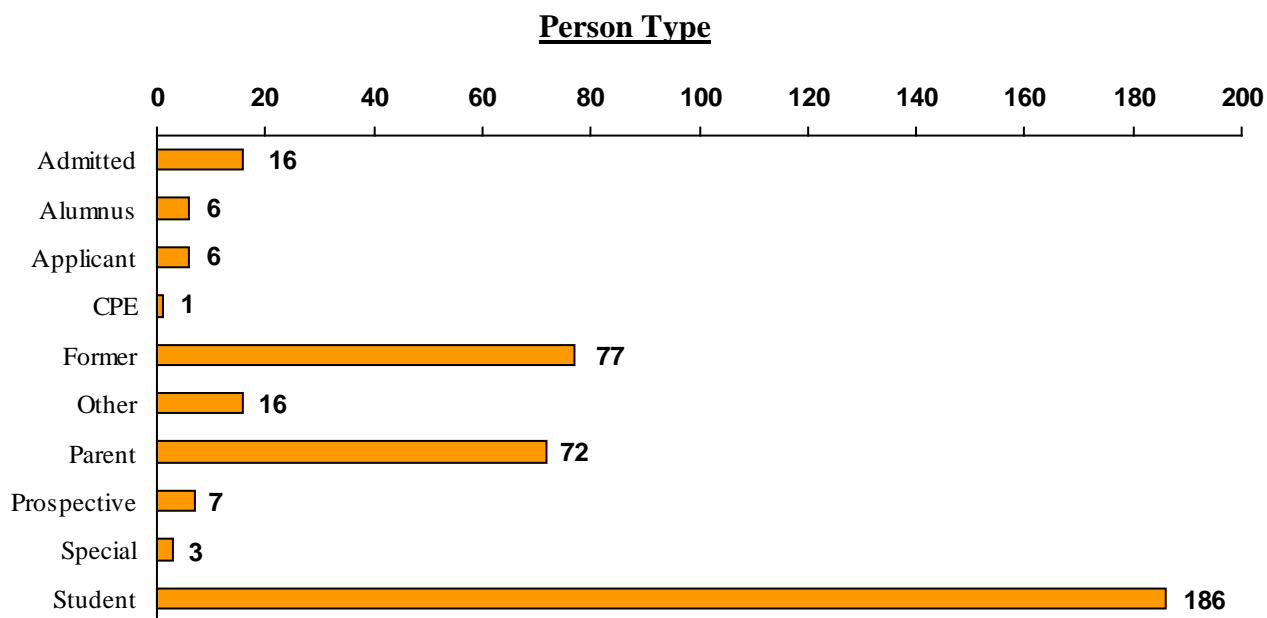
The Student Ombudsperson met with various on-campus areas throughout the year to learn more about University operations and programs. These meetings provided the opportunity to establish communication including explaining the role of the Student Ombudsperson. These areas included: admissions, advising, business manager's office, enrollment services, financial aid, international programs, orientation, registrar, scholarships, student government, student life, and student services. An article was also published about the Student Ombudsperson in the September 2005 issue of the Paisano (student newspaper). In 2006-2007, an online Student Concern Form will be available to students via the web.

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IV. Statistics



A total of 390 individuals were assisted by the Student Ombudsperson from September 19, 2005 to August 31, 2006. These individuals were as follows:

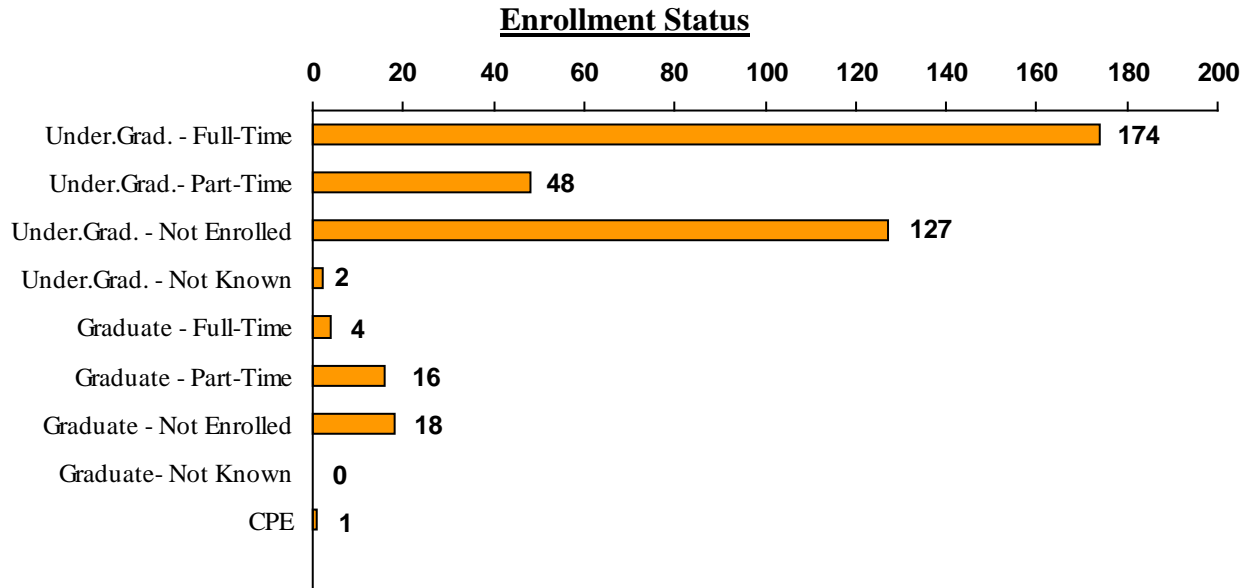
- Admitted Accepted to the University.
- Alumnus Graduated from the University.
- Applicant Applied to the University.
- CPE Enrolled in classes through the Center for Professional Excellence.
- Former Previously attended the University (not currently enrolled).
- Other Third party inquiry (e.g. aunt, uncle, counselor, etc.).
- Parent Inquiry by mother, father, step parent, or legal guardian.
- Prospective Interested in applying to/attending the University.
- Special Non-degree seeking.
- Student Currently enrolled at the University.

The majority of those assisted were comprised of currently enrolled students (48%), former students (20%) and parents (18%).

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Undergraduates constituted 90% of the contacts, whereby, most were categorized as either full-time or not enrolled. Enrollment statuses included the following:

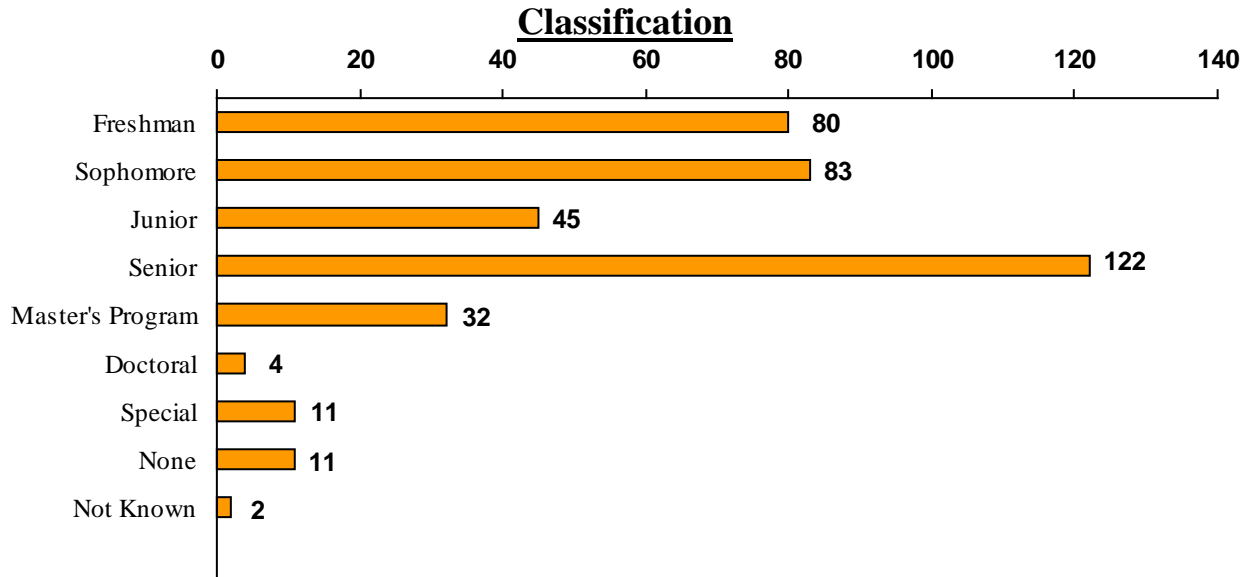
- Undergraduate Full-Time Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Special student enrolled at least 12 semester credit hours.
- Undergraduate Part-Time Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, or Special student enrolled less than full-time.
- Undergraduate Not Enrolled Not currently enrolled.
- Undergraduate Not Known Enrollment status not confirmed.
- Graduate Full-Time Doctoral, Master's degree, or Special student enrolled at least 9 semester credit hours.
- Graduate Part-Time Doctoral, Master's degree, or Special student enrolled less than full-time.
- Graduate Not Enrolled Not currently enrolled.
- Graduate Not Known Enrollment status not confirmed.
- CPE Center for Professional Excellence student.

Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, enrollment of the student was checked.

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Seniors (31%), followed by sophomores (21%), and freshmen (21%) made up the majority of the undergraduate contacts. Classifications included:

- Freshman 0–29 semester credit hours earned.
- Sophomore 30-59 semester credit hours earned.
- Junior 60-89 semester credit hours earned.
- Senior 90+ semester credit hours earned.
- Master's Program Enrolled as a graduate student in a master's degree program.
- Doctoral Enrolled as a graduate student in a doctoral degree program.
- Special Non-degree seeking at the undergraduate or graduate level.
- None Classification not available (e.g. prospective student, new admit, etc.).
- Not Known Classification not confirmed.

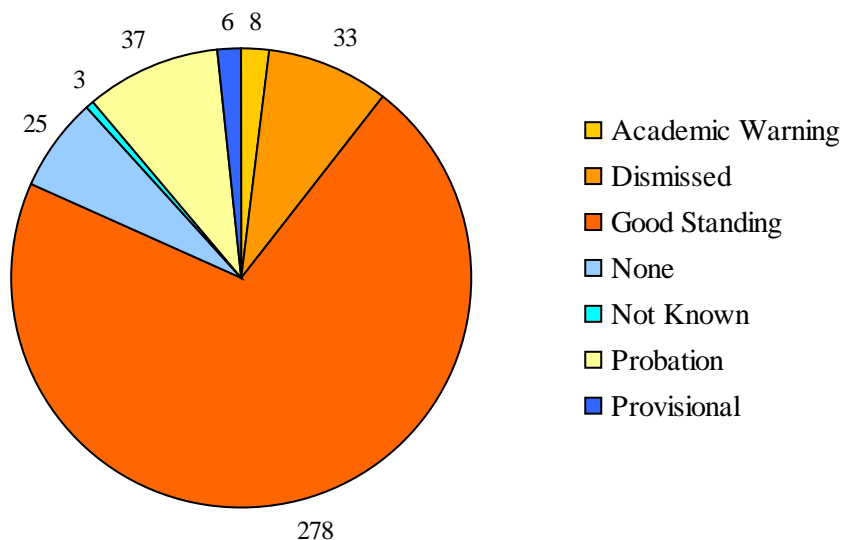
Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, classification of the student was checked.

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Academic Status



While 22% of the students were experiencing academic difficulties, 71% were in good standing with the University. The academic statuses consisted of:

- **Academic Warning** First-time undergraduate, admitted in good standing, who earned between a 1.00 and 1.99 semester grade point average during his/her first semester at UTSA.
- **Dismissed** Undergraduate on probation who earned below a 2.00 semester grade point average or a graduate who earned a grade point average of less than a 2.00 in any term, earned a grade of “F” in any course, or who was on probation and would be placed on probation again under the probation provisions listed below for graduate students.
- **Good Standing** Undergraduate who maintained at least a 2.00 or higher UTSA grade point average or a graduate who maintained at least a 3.00 or higher UTSA grade point average who did not fall into any of the categories which would cause a graduate student to be placed on probation or dismissal.
- **None** Academic status not available (e.g. prospective student, new admit, etc.).
- **Not Known** Academic status not confirmed.

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- **Probation** Undergraduate in good standing whose overall UTSA grade point average fell below a 2.00 or a graduate who failed to achieve a grade point average of 3.00 in any term at UTSA, or who earned a grade of “D” in any course in a term, also includes undergraduates and graduates admitted on probation and those who have been reinstated following dismissal.
- **Provisional** Undergraduate admitted as provisional due to deficiencies in entrance scores or high school records.

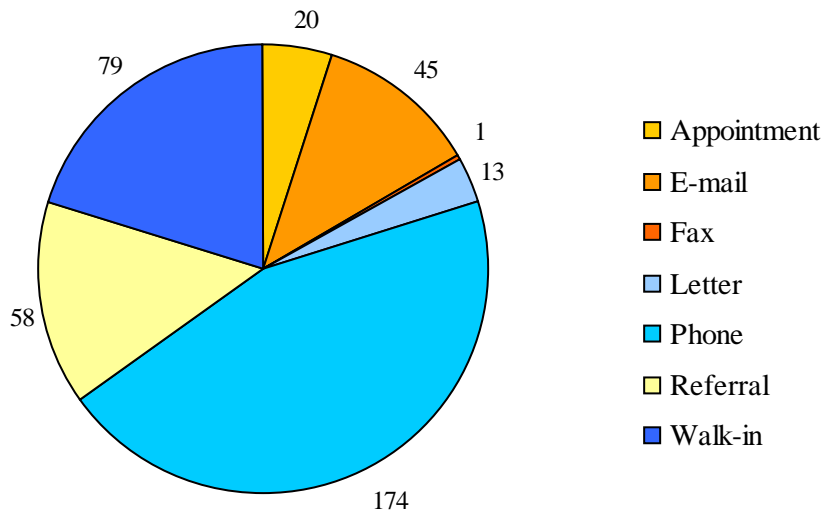
Note: If a parent or other (e.g. aunt, uncle, etc.) were assisted, academic status of the student was checked.

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Contact Type



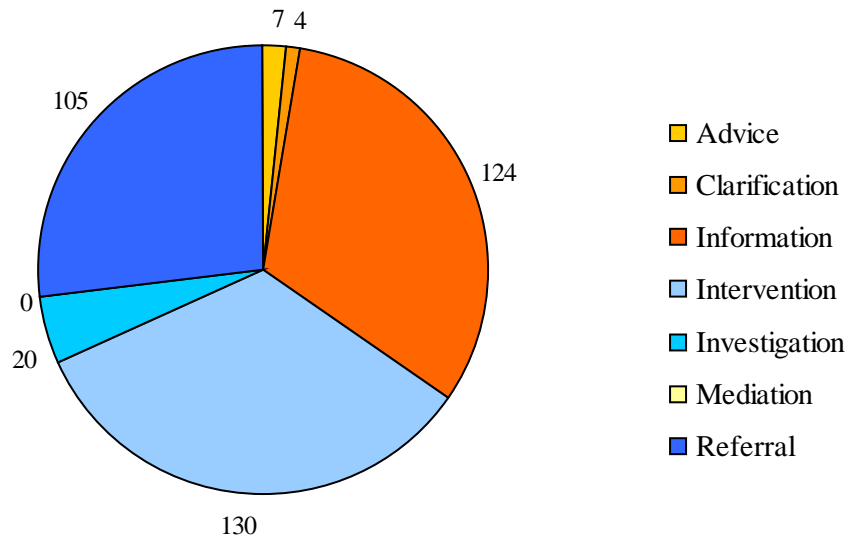
Contacts were primarily initiated by phone (45%), followed by walk-ins (20%), and referrals (15%). Face-to-face meetings, e-mails, faxes, and letters were other modes of communication used to express concerns.

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Action Taken



Intervention (33%) was the action used most often to help those seeking assistance from the Student Ombudsperson. This was closely followed by providing information (32%) and referrals (27%). Advice and clarification were also given. In some instances, investigation was necessary, while mediation was not used as a primary means to address a particular situation.

Note: Some actions included multiple actions. The primary action taken is listed above.

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V. Areas of Concern

Area of Concern	Total	Area of Concern	Total
Accessibility	1	Fiscal Services	21
Admissions - Undergraduate	23	Grade Grievance	11
Admissions - Graduate	0	Grade Point Average	2
Advising – Undergraduate	30	Grades	2
Advising - Graduate	7	Graduation	12
ASAP	1	Grant	2
Bookstore	2	Health Services	3
CAP Program	3	International Programs	0
Card Office	1	Internship	1
Challenge Exam	0	Judicial Affairs	3
Change of Grade	1	Library	2
Classification Change	1	Lonestar email	1
CLEP	1	Military Orders	2
Computer Lab	2	Off-Campus Housing	8
Core Curriculum	2	On-Campus Housing	24
Course – Attendance	17	Other	28
Course – Drop	6	Paisano	0
Course – Grading Process	7	Parking	18
Course - Instruction	16	Registration	2
Course – Make-up Exam	1	Reinstatement	11
Course – Missed Quiz	1	Repeat Policy	1
Course – Schedule	8	Residency	3
Course load Reduction	0	Safety	1
CPE	1	Scholarship	3
Dance Team	1	Student Organization	6
Diploma	0	Study Days	1
Disability Services	1	Testing Services	1
Dissertation	1	Transcript Request	8
Enrollment Verification	1	Texas Success Initiative	5
ExCET/TEsES	4	Tuition	1
FCSA Evaluation	2	University Police	6
Fees	1	University of Texas -Telecampus	2
FERPA	1	Veteran Affairs	0
Field Placement	0	Visa	0
Final Exams	10	WebCT	1
Financial Aid	28	Withdrawal	16
		Grand total	390

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Areas of concern included academic, business, and student affairs. Areas where concerns were expressed most often included admissions - undergraduate, advising – undergraduate, financial aid, fiscal services, on-campus housing, and other. Course attendance, course instruction, parking, and withdrawing from the University were also expressed frequently. These areas are addressed collectively below to provide background information on the types of situations that were brought forward for assistance.

Admissions - Undergraduate

- Prospective students interested in applying to UTSA.
- Status of incomplete files during peak periods.
- Appeal process for those who missed the application deadline or were denied admission.
- Other process issues such as when to reapply, electing academic fresh start, changing admission status (e.g. degree seeking to transient), etc.

Advising – Undergraduate

- Questions about appeal and petition processes, advising holds, returning after medical withdrawal, etc.
- Inquiries about changing majors, course equivalents, math placement, Texas Success Initiative, transfer courses, etc.
- Courses needed for major/graduation were full.
- Understanding the University advising structure, fees, etc.
- Options for communicating with advisors (e.g. email, fax, walk-ins, etc.).

Financial Aid

- Understanding awarding, verification, and alternative loan processes, unmet need, and whether additional assistance was available.
- Options when aggregate loan limits had been reached.
- Status of file and when funds would be disbursed.
- Appeal process for those who did not meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards or missed the SAP deadline.
- Other process issues which involved return of funds due to withdrawal, eligibility (e.g. degree seeking versus non-degree seeking), default on a student loan, etc.

Fiscal Services

- Account sent to collections, balance owed from previous terms, and scheduling payment arrangements.
- Process for appealing to the Business Manager.
- Status of appeals, refund checks, and loan disbursements.
- Courses dropped due to non-payment.

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On-Campus Housing

- Understanding housing charges on bill, scheduling payments arrangements, and eviction concerns.
- Tracking of housing applications and deposits.
- Inquiries about living on-campus, wait lists, and other options when on-campus housing was filled to capacity.
- Transfer requests due to living conditions and/or roommate issues.
- Other process and/or service issues such as following correct move out procedures, release due to military transfer, internet service, replacement of locks, etc.

Other

- Assistance with completion of certification forms (e.g. application to law or medical school, transferring to another college/university, etc.).
- Legal assistance with off-campus concerns; referred to Legal Aid, Pro Bono Law Project, etc.
- Requests for information/services (e.g. catalog, fundraising process, grievance channels, student bill of rights, student regent position, use of lap top, etc.).
- Concerns about on-campus solicitation, internship site, practicum, etc.

Course Attendance

- Notifications about car accidents, deaths in the family, illnesses, hospitalizations, and other extenuating circumstances.
- Inquiries about attendance policy for the University, available options (e.g. dropping a course, possible grade of incomplete, etc.) concerning course schedule, and how to connect with instructors.

Course Instruction

- Questions about course content, grading policies, passage rates, and teaching style.
- Communicating with instructors to discuss concerns.
- Process for appealing grades.
- Instructor behavior, racial statements, and classroom management.

Parking

- Holds for parking citations, removal of holds, immobilization boot on car, and purchasing a permit.
- Questions about parking policies, garage and visitor parking, wait lists, the availability of on-campus parking, etc.
- Process for appeals including status of appeals.

Withdrawal

- Questions about the withdrawal process including where to find the online withdrawal form.
- Inquiries about medical/mental health withdrawals including the appeal process when a request is denied.
- Retroactive withdrawal requests due to mitigating circumstances.

In most instances, situations were remedied by providing information and through clarification or by direct communication with on-campus representatives. Communications were timely and productive which aided in the resolution process. In other cases, situations needed to be sorted out to determine the best course of action including referrals if necessary.

Note: If there were multiple areas of concern, the primary area of concern was tracked.

VI. Recommendations

A couple of recommendations were made to improve information, processes, and/or services provided by the University. First, a small storage facility was constructed near Disability Services to store powered wheelchairs and scooters allowing for easier access. Next, information about Academic Fresh Start was posted on the main page of the admissions website providing greater visibility about this option. This information is part of a rotation of helpful admission information statements which are refreshed each time the main webpage is accessed. The Academic Fresh Start form was also modified to remove the staff signature requirement which streamlined the process. A statement was also added to the 2006-2007 UTSA Information Bulletin and the 2006-2008 Undergraduate Catalog clarifying undergraduate students did not have to be registered for classes during their semester of graduation if all University and degree program requirements had been met. In the next information bulletin, WebCT email addresses will be added to the FERPA section and are subject to restriction if a student elects to withhold directory information through the appropriate process. Last, a working group met to review the military withdrawal process which is being updated. In 2006-2007, a student toolbox will be available via the web as a way to more readily connect students with on-campus resources.

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Abbreviations

ASAP	Automated Student Access Program
CAP	Coordinated Admissions Program
CLEP	College Level Examination Program
CPE	Center for Professional Excellence
ExCET/TEExES	Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas/Texas Examinations of Educator Standards
FCSA	Foreign Credentials Service of America
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
SAP	Satisfactory Academic Progress
WebCT	World Wide Web Course Tools