

Higher Learning Commission
Self-Study Questionnaire/Report for Non-Instructional Units

Non-Instructional Unit: Admissions Office

Individual(s) Completing the Questionnaire/Report: Stephen J. McKellips, Director of Admissions

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Describe in a paragraph or two what your unit does (i.e., the services it provides).
Our major objectives of the Admissions Office are to educate and inform prospective students, parents and associated professionals about the value of a UW-Whitewater education and help them through the process of obtaining one.
2. Who is/are the constituency/ies you serve, and approximately how many of each constituency do you serve annually? (e.g., students, academic departments, classified staff, etc.)
 - Prospective Students for Admission, Scholarship and Residency - 60%
 - Prospective Students' Parents - 10%
 - High School Guidance/Other 2-year and 4-year College Professionals - 7%
 - Current UW-Whitewater Students for Transfer Credit, Scholarship, and Residency - 8%
 - UW-Whitewater Academic Departments/Deans' Offices - 2%
 - UW-Whitewater Administration/Athletic Department/Residence Life/Financial Aid - 5%
 - Graduate School for Residency - 3%
 - International Education and Programs for Admission, Scholarship and Residency - 5%
3. Overview and evaluate the adequacy of the human, physical, and fiscal resources your department deploys to serve students and meet other programmatic needs by answering the questions below:

Human Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the human resources (i.e., the # of employees (including student help) and their skills) relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (**completely inadequate**) to "9" (**completely satisfies needs**).

6 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The classified unit as a whole was built for its legacy. Having promoted Admissions Directors from within the previous three times, the over-arching structure of the office has not been evaluated in nearly 40 years. Since the "go-live" of PeopleSoft, the existing structure of the office responsibilities has proven to be somewhat inefficient. Currently, each person in our process is responsible for different parts of the admission process, and a file tends to flow to each member at varying speeds for varying reasons. There have been great technological advances in the office since replacing one Student Status Examiner position with an IT person. On the whole, however, the silo approach to our classified processing requires individual specialty. The volume has deemed cross-training impossible, leaving our classified staff to be quite silo-oriented. This

over-specialization has proven to be too taxed given the speed with which the application volume comes to the university in the new online environment. Changes will be addressed in the short term in attempt to become more efficient, more technologically literate, and much more automated.

The academic staff in the office also exhibit a silo-orientation toward their responsibilities. The individuality of their duties, and the university's specifically targeted audiences upon which they focus, renders their own version of cross-training impossible as well. The frequency of the travel, the differences of their audiences, and the scope of their regular duties has led each to function quasi-independently in such a way that successes in one area are not universally celebrated throughout the office. Changes will be addressed in the short term in attempt to become more efficient, more customer service friendly, more focused on the direct, person-to-person communication that will help an individual choose to attend the university. Presently, there simply isn't time to perform this high-quality method of recruitment, so we have simply chosen not to do it. There is quite simply no follow-up, no recurring communication from recruiter to recruit outside of a prospective student who routinely contacts the university to get answers to his/her own questions. There is no current practice of unsolicited recruitment whereby the university seeks out qualified students in attempts to introduce these students to the benefits of the campus

Physical Resources

Evaluate the general adequacy of the physical resources (e.g., office and storage space, supporting technology, other equipment) allocated to the unit relative to the unit's ability to serve the constituencies identified above and achieve other programmatic goals. Do this by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

4 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

The most unique strength that we have been able to utilize to help our needs be met stems from the inclusion of an IT professional to the office. The ability to manufacture a method of automation allows the office to develop shortcuts toward data entry volume and inherently speed up the process of getting data into the PeopleSoft system. Without the automation, the dependency of using PeopleSoft functionality included multiple pages of navigation and waiting for the system's resources to refresh had become quite time consuming and extremely inefficient. In response to this automation, we are continually experimenting with office practices to uncover other ways in which the routine data entry responsibilities can be benefitted by this flexible solution.

A constant detriment, however, is the physical layout of our facilities. Too few offices require the overlapping of classified staff in a workstation with no cubicle dividers, open access, and impersonal space that leads directly to the hallway and the public. There is no real storage available to the unit, forcing the use of two otherwise perfectly usable offices as floor-to-ceiling storage full of five years' worth of old files and all publication storage for future use. In addition, the age of the building impedes the ability to open windows in some cases or close them in others. My office includes a cold breeze as I type. All the screens are worn and torn, allowing late summer bugs direct access to our offices. There is no friendly gathering place for tour groups, so we improvise by starting our tour sessions in another facility, requiring only those who wish to speak directly to an admissions professional the need to really enter our building. There is no place for student work stations to be added to our present structure, and given the nature of how the building is currently wired, we have been quoted more than \$400/data jack if we wished to

have new work stations created. The ability to add staff, or even students, to assist in the processing of our current volume is severely hindered by the reality that there is no place to go with new personnel and no way to afford the cost of providing the access to technology in the areas not currently accessible to it.

Fiscal Resources

While recognizing that every unit would benefit from a larger budget, evaluate the general adequacy of fiscal resources allocated to the unit to serve its constituencies and achieve other programmatic goals by assigning a number between "1" (completely inadequate) to "9" (completely satisfies needs).

7 1-9

In a paragraph or two, discuss why you've assigned the score you have. Include, in particular, a discussion of unique strengths as well as important needs not being met or opportunities not being explored because of limitations.

I believe the future of admissions is online. As such, primary cost burdens will include the pricing of licensure and programming needs. Currently, we do not operate much online, and many of our human-driven efforts have led to poor fiscal charges. Mail costs, paper costs, staffing costs are all saved as information moves online, and the time saved by moving online allows staff to redirect their efforts into the other responsibilities of the office, including data entry and processing.

Many of the publications we produce are slated to be changed, but the cost of production may actually be reduced. Our current slate of more than 20 different publications will likely fall as we move more toward a person-to-person communication style. There will be increases in telephone charges, the possibility of cell phone expenses moving forward, but there will also be decreases in travel costs and unnecessary mailing costs to offset those figures.

Additional fiscal resources would provide the ability to provide more information electronically, provide this information more dynamically, and hopefully yield to more interest through interaction. However, at present, I believe there are sufficient fiscal resources available in the S&E portions of my budget to accommodate our short term goals of a more technological method of recruitment. The addition of another recruiter would help the ability to communicate with more students, more often, and cover the voluminous distances associated with our travel needs.

4. In a paragraph or two, overview significant changes made in your unit since 1996 (i.e., the last North Central Association Accreditation Visit). (e.g., re-organized, key staff changes, change in purposes, etc.) There are a few significant changes made within the unit. For the first time, a Director was hired from outside the UW-Whitewater community, which will lead the unit in a direction never before experienced on campus. This direction will include a change in departmental emphasis from the processing of applications to a much more targeted mission of recruiting students at every phase of the application process. The change results from working on paper historically to working with people in the present and future.

Another significant change represents the replacement of a Student Statuts Examiner position with an IT professional. This new position affords the unit the ability to retrieve valuable data encapsulated within the PeopleSoft environment. Also, this professional has been instrumental in the development of automated processing, which should lead to much faster data entry and better customer service.

The evolution of the online application has drastically changed the processing of applications in the office. Where there used to be much more manual data entry of application materials, now nearly 75% of all

applications come to UW-Whitewater online. As a result, only one person now is responsible for the posting, clean-up, and preparation of these files for future processing in the office.

Finally, the evolution of the internet is responsible for a slight shift in emphasis related to how our information is disseminated to our clientele.

In another paragraph or two, describe why these changes occurred.

Until recently, the internet has been viewed as a destination source. It was a place a student navigated to. It has been a searchable storage site for the user, full of tremendous volumes of information that may (or may not) be of interest. A new trend in internet use has emerged that will cause another shift in the utilization of this manner of communication. Websites are now tools being used to navigate with instead of destinations to visit. The UW-Whitewater Admissions website, hence, will become much more dynamic, interactive, and powerful in attempts to help share consistent information is an extremely fast, extremely friendly, and fun way. Preparations have already begun to convert to this new utilization by the end of the Spring 2005 semester.

MISSION & PLANNING

5. In a paragraph or two, describing any significant projects/initiatives that your unit is planning or currently has underway, but has not yet completed.

Development of the Prospect Module within PeopleSoft to be used to help understand the value of our recruitment initiatives and their impact on ultimate enrollment. Prior to my arrival, there was no investment in prospecting efforts, so this development is comprised of database management and table-setup. The structure will be created using in-house resources and the the current personnel will be trained to use it during the remainder of the Spring 2005 recruitment season. The plan is to have the entire structure in place, and in use, as we prepare for the recruitment of Fall 2006 prospects.

The investment in imaging software is a valuable resource that would yield tremendous benefit back to our office personnel. Currently, there are so many people who need to work on files for such different reasons, the efforts to even locate a file can take extraordinary amounts of time. The investment in the imaging software is a large one, but the pay-off should be well worth it. I will need help from the administration to afford this software package, but its deployment on campus already will hopefully increase the likelihood of getting it in the Admissions Office. It is my hope to have this functionality available for the recruitment of the Fall 2006 prospects as well.

6. Below are five “core values” the University identifies as central to its purposes and operation. Please evaluate the importance of each core value in terms of how each aligns with the purposes of your unit (i.e., take a hypothetical 100 points and distribute them among the five values, with those values that align more closely to the purposes of your unit receiving more points).

Core Value	Importance (100 points)
Commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding	15
Development of the individual	20
Personal and professional integrity	10
Commitment to serve	40
Commitment to develop a sense of community, respect for diversity, and global perspectives	15
Total=	100 points

7. Each and every academic and non-academic unit engages in planning for the future. Review the list of variables below and evaluate the extent to which each of the following influences decision-making behind

10. What outcome measures (i.e., data, information) provide evidence that your unit's objectives are being met?

Our ability to meet and exceed our enrollment targets has been an accomplishment in which Admissions has taken great pride over the years. In addition, minority enrollment (1045 in 2004 v. 656 in 1998) suggests that UW-Whitewater has impressively increased its students of color population on campus by 59.2% in the last five years.

The rise in applications since 1998 also helps indicate that the interest in UW-Whitewater as a destination campus for students (5561 for Fall 04 v. 4439 for Fall 98) as applications have increased by 25.2% during that time. Transfer applications have gone up as well, but they have not increased as significantly, growing only 13.2% (1275 for Fall 04 v. 1126 for Fall 98) by comparison.

Recruitment is accomplished through the delivery of various forms of information to prospective students and parents. Examples of in-person recruitment are campus visits such as Friday On Campus Day Programs (2,066 more visits per year than 5 years ago), Wheels to Whitewater (47 more visits per year than 4 years ago), and off campus recruitment including high school visits (329 per year) and College Fairs (14 fewer Fairs per year than 4 years ago). Another form of recruitment delivery is through the use of various types of media including the "A Day in the Life" website (with over 15,667 more hits now than 3 years ago) and a multitude of print media.

Evaluation of the criteria by which admission to UW-W will be granted has been made more efficient through utilization of the student information computing system. The system allows for data to be extracted to quantify students' ACT scores, class rank and previous school(s) attended g.p.a., to assist in the admission process. The number of well qualified students considering UW-Whitewater has increased steadily as evidenced by the improvements in ACT scores being sent here. In the past 5 years, submissions in the 18-22 range rose from 2,742 to 3,271 per year; in the 223-27 range from 1,645 to 2,006 per year; and in the top end 28-36 range from 319 to 398 per year. The total number of student/parent contacts with Admissions has increased from 12,059 in 1999-2000 to 41,142 in 2002-2003.

11. Related to question #10, does the unit regularly collect data/information to evaluate how effectively it serves its constituency(ies)? (This might include surveys of constituencies.)

Yes

No X, assumptions are made about how effective our service is from the apparent rise/fall of the application volume or other statistics associated with the admission cycle.

In Admissions in general, not serving a constituency typically results in a student's decision to not attend the campus, or not apply for admission in general.

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

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12. In a paragraph or two, describe specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in the preceding questions. Please be specific.

There have been requisite modifications to our daily routine that have stemmed directly from the increases in application volume, the direct effect of more applications arriving faster using the electronic application options, and a greater number of transfer applications and credit evaluations that need processing. To combat the volume increases, there have been shifts in personnel duties, specialization of efforts in the office, and the addition of a technology expert to help facilitate the much needed advantage of automation. We have developed a way of batch entry into the PeopleSoft system, and we have expanded its utility to offer faster means of prospect data entry, ACT score result data entry, and daily procedural entry in attempt to get as much information online as possible. Also, the implementation of a \$100 tuition deposit on credit evaluations has proven to be a valuable step placed into the process to inhibit the need for evaluating the records of students who have not yet committed to the university.

The development of imaging will be an enormous help in response to the quality of service we provide to our clients. It will be much easier to respond to inquiries, both locally and on the road, when the data is quickly available at the touch of a button. Faster processing times, more immediate answers to question from our audiences all play into the need to better organize our efforts internally to handle the volume of paper we receive. In addition, if these efforts yield better customer service to future students, everyone wins.

13. Please provide a list of services, if any, that your unit provides for constituencies that are external to the university.
- Promote exploration, application, and enrollment at UW-Whitewater for new freshmen, new transfers, returning students, adult and non-traditional students, local youth-options students and high school special students, international students, as well as non-degree students.
 - Provide counsel to high school guidance professionals, and student services professionals at 2-year campuses, to help these audiences adequately represent UW-Whitewater directly to their students.
 - Work with other members of the UW-System to modify the common application (both electronic and paper) and share in the information distribution across the many different UW-System institutions to maintain the common interpretations on procedure and practice in the industry.
 - Counsel to parents and grandparents of students who are seeking help in their pursuit of a UW-Whitewater education.
 - Award scholarship money to the students who qualify based on their academic performance; much of the money is awarded through Foundational efforts.
 - Work with the Wisconsin Association of College Admission Counseling to host one of the more than 20 different regional college fairs, drawing thousands of students from across the region to UW-Whitewater for a college fair that features nearly 100 different institutions.

If "yes," please list specific data/information sets that the UW-W Self-Study Committees, and/or the Higher Learning Commission's Visiting Accreditation Team can access to review/consult.

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17. What specific changes to the unit's operation or planning, if any, have resulted from the collection and use of the data/information identified in question #15? Please be specific.

SELF-EVALUATION

Strengths

18. List and prioritize no more than three primary strengths that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these strengths, you may wish to consider: What does your unit do very well? What good things do people say about your unit? How has your unit aided the campus in meeting its mission? In what ways has your unit "gone beyond the call of duty?"

After identifying each strength, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

1. Specific Strength: The Admissions Office serves the UW-Whitewater community as the primary promotional staff to celebrate the advantages of the campus to prospective students. Despite it being a relatively obvious core function in our office, we have continued to discover new and exciting ways to promote the uniqueness of the UW-Whitewater experience.
 - Supporting Evidence: Constant annual increases in applications (4,439 in 1998 to 5,561 in 2004) suggests our efforts are yielding more interest in the university every year. More importantly, the interest generated is genuine enough to convince students to apply for admission. The number of students who send their ACT scores to UW-Whitewater has risen across the board, with significant increases in the 18-27 score range (+890 or 20.2%).
2. Specific Strength: As quasi "salespeople," our strengths in promoting the campus to a diverse group of potential students, our understanding of their unique needs and wants, as well as our genuine interest to learn the ways in which we can help these students find success at UW-Whitewater ensure the legacy of this strength and explain why this unit values this strength above all others
 - Supporting Evidence: Our efforts to enroll more qualified students of color is aided by the fact there has been a steady increase in application volume on the whole. In addition, students of color applications have drastically increased along with enrollments, allowing for the University to become more selective with its entire applicant pool. There were 786 minority enrollments in Fall 2004 compared to 577 (+209 students or 36.2%) in 1996.

3. **Specific Strength:** The Admissions Office capitalizes on its mastery and the quality of the communication we have with our prospective students and are interested in communicating with this audience through whatever medium is most effective for the student. Admissions has taken this emphasis on communication, coupled it with the benefits afforded the unit in PeopleSoft, and combined the data to provide a more rich cross section of its prospect pool. Now, the campus community will be able to get a good look at the academic preparation quality of its incoming freshman class, but it will also be able to look at the individual investment of the potential student toward the campus as a whole.
 - **Supporting Evidence:** The increased familiarity with electronic media has created two new information streams with prospective students. Currently, aggressive use of the internet has been the first real implementation the unit has seen. Future efforts to better utilize email, the remaining web page information and other interactive media are still forthcoming. In terms of the web page, however, it must be acknowledged that the "Day in the Life" multi-media program has drawn significant attention from prospective students. Unable to access the information any way other than from our departmental webpage, the site experienced only 21,000 hits in 2001. Presently, there have been XXXXXX hits in 2004, which demonstrates an increased utility that we believe is associated with being able to help students learn the valuable benefits to utilizing this source.
 - The Admissions Office has begun to mass-produce more data entry, which allows for more students to be tracked and followed in the PeopleSoft system. Admissions has already been increasing the efforts of other units to record their recruitment activities and has been encouraging each of these units to record every contact. The more information available to Admissions, as well as to other units, the better the quality of the communication between campus and student in the future. But, to be successful, more units will need to take advantage of these convenient measures of recording.

Concerns

19. List and prioritize no more than three primary concerns that have emerged in your unit's efforts to meet its mission, goals, or objectives. To identify these concerns, you may wish to consider: What could be improved? What is done poorly? What do we, as a unit, avoid doing, even though we know it's important?

After identifying each concern, specify supporting evidence that suggests that the statement is true. This may include data/information gathered relevant to unit performance, trend data, information gathered from audits or external agencies visit, etc.

Finally, identify one or more recommended actions to address the area of concern. This may include actions that your unit has already begun, actions being planned, or preliminary thinking about how to address the area of concern.

1. **Specific Concern:** There is no time for recruitment staff to perform adequate follow-up with prospective students who express legitimate interest in UW-Whitewater. Due to staffing concerns and traditional travel schedules, there has never been a practical plan in place whereby recruiters can remain in contact with prospective students, answer questions as they arise, and help lead students and parents through the maze of the college selection process. Instead, our process has been to communicate once with prospective students (either through a high school visit or college fair) and hope enough valuable information has changed hands to convert that

prospective student into a potential enrollee. If other questions arise, our unit has been very reactive to either receive telephone calls or emails, but never actively seeks out students to assist along the way.

- Supporting Evidence: We are road warriors. With only three primary travelers, we cover all WI high schools and college fairs, and devote one traveling staff person exclusively in IL to cover both high schools and fairs there. Given our daily commitments, and our evening commitments, there has never been available time for adequate recruitment follow-up with prospects we actually meet on the road.
 - We return from our recruitment travels with piles of contact cards that need to be input into the computer, but often there is so much volume of cards that it will take until into the Spring semester before all the names are recorded. By that time, we're already back on the road. Without the names recorded in PeopleSoft, adequate follow-up is impractical even if appropriately budgeted for in terms of both time and money.
 - Since the convergences to PeopleSoft, the amount of data entry necessary to appropriately follow-up with prospective students has increased, and the amount of time it takes to properly record this information has increased even more significantly.
 - The priority in the office has been in maintaining a high-quality of service. There has never been a tremendous amount of effort devoted to the inputting of the prospect information into the system. In fact, until only very recently, students who telephoned the office were not even recorded into PeopleSoft; other units created and maintained their own prospective students lists (athletics and business, to name a few); no aggregate reporting measure had been put in place to adequately gauge the interest level of a prospective student ~ let alone that student's prospect information.
 - Recommended Actions: There has already been a concentrated effort to begin recording prospect information into the computer as quickly as humanly possible to assist in recruitment efforts in the future. Automated efforts are making this process even more practical, allowing for students to input cards faster, meaning it is quickly through the volume, meaning recruiters should have access to the names of the individuals from respective territories to follow-up with throughout the year.
 - Efforts have been made to coordinate with other units (athletics, business, ProjectASSIST) to begin to record the contacts made with prospective students in such a way as to be able to more efficiently gauge what units across campus are communicating with each student.
 - More information is being recorded in PeopleSoft that actually labels the different communications we have with students. Across the campus, direct access to what information is distributed to prospective students (or received from them) is becoming more and more available.
2. Specific Concern: Despite members of the campus community's best interests, we are not finding the messages distributed from the Admissions Office to be congruent with the messages provided from other units across campus. Through many coordinated efforts, it's essential that other units across campus have an opportunity to work directly with the potential student audience during the time in which these students are selecting a university to attend. It is extremely important that these students see our campus in its best light and with all the units working together to demonstrate our interest collectively with these students. However, we continue to get feedback from our students that, when they interact with other units across the campus, priorities change and presentations begin to conflict with each other. This process

represents some irreversible damage to our credibility, and I believe results in many students choosing to go elsewhere.

- Supporting Evidence: We work hard to provide prospective students with opportunities to meet with, and interact directly with, administration in academic units, athletic programs and student support services. We have had feedback from prospective students on many different occasions that other units provide completely different feedback than we share. Here's a short list of the more common complaints:
 - We cite financial aid opportunities for out of state students to make the tuition more affordable: they hear others communicate to out of state students that the costs are simply too high.
 - We cite that we have a talented education program for those interested in teaching: they hear that if they are not an elite student they shouldn't even bother trying to get into it.
 - We cite that our business program is highly regarded as being amongst the best in the nation in several areas; they hear if the program is so competitive that they have to be an outstanding student or they shouldn't even bother.
 - We cite there exist a plethora of programming opportunities to keep students busy on the weekends; they hear this is a suitcase campus where everyone goes home.
 - Recommended Actions: More needs to be done to develop (and monitor) a common practice of how to speak with prospective students. Everyone who comes into contact with our future students must realize their dealing with a delicacy, and a strong commitment to following the recruitment model must be demonstrated. As everyone begins to promote similarly, the consistency throughout the campus will extend the perception of quality within it.
3. Specific Concern: Budget shortcomings and System-wide fiscal decisions are becoming road blocks in the efforts to adequately recruit for the university. While the System has faced tremendous shortfalls and give-backs in an effort to help with the state's budget, there has needed to be some understanding and reallocation of efforts to uncover new, creative methods to recruit and follow-up with these prospective students. Efforts to better utilize the web, email and other forms of communication have already begun to displace the traditional communication methods. Further exploration into real time chat services, Powerpoint demonstrations and virtual tour options must continue to be explored.
- Supporting Evidence: We can no longer truly afford, fiscally speaking, the same volume of travel we have been doing the past several years. Recruitment of prospective students has been reduced to traveling to their high schools of events or fairs, but there's not been any funding opportunities to work with students and families individually. There were no formal plans for telemarketing efforts. There were no formal plans for batch emailing. There were no formal plans for efforts to help teach and complete the process of filing for financial aid. There were no formal plans for follow-up of any kind.
 - Recommended Actions: It is necessary to re-think the value of every trip we take. Do we go somewhere to meet only one student, or do we reposition our travel to try to have an impact on a much larger number of students and parents together? We cannot afford to travel great distances to meet with one (or none) with any interest. Instead, we have to devise ways to get larger numbers to attend fewer trips. That way, the time saved can be better used for individualized follow-up practices, providing personalized (one-on-one) attention with prospective students and their parents.

- Staff have to be re-conditioned to appreciate the ways in which potential students can be recruited. We're working a tremendous number of hours on "historical" practice more than confirmation that we're actually working "smarter." We have to actively talk with students and parents to learn what other ways we can get the university into their lives.
- Students are simply busier than they ever have been before. Teachers are now, more than ever, fighting to prevent students from leaving their classes to see a college recruiter. Schools have switched more and more to a block scheduling system, so teachers can have longer amounts of time to work through curriculum. Students are working more hours after school, participating in more extracurricular activities, and spending less time in places where college recruiters can catch them for a person-to-person chat. Meeting them in cyberspace may be the best, most cost-effective, solution.