Sheila Bogan
RECIPIENT OF THE WILLIAM B. BRETNALL AWARD

Given each year to a leader and educator who has made significant contributions to the field of admission.

As this year’s William B. Bretnall Award winner, you’re being recognized for your meaningful contributions to the admission profession. What does this award mean to you?

SB: I'm a huge collaborator, and I love working with other enrollment professionals. Hopefully, this recognition will allow me to add even more people to my circle. This is a wonderful field because it brings together like-minded individuals who share in the most non-competitive ways. It’s such a breath of fresh air.

Of your achievements in enrollment management, what has been your proudest?

SB: There's not one thing; there are small moments that accumulate. I'm proud of the kid I took a chance on, who I watched excel at our school and walk across the stage at graduation. I'm proud when I see a nervous 8th-grader get involved in clubs and teams and transform into a full person. I'm still in touch with families I worked with 20 years ago when I started in higher education admissions. That's why I'm in this. It's not for recognition—which is nice—but I'm in this for the students, and the relationship building, and being part of the school fabric. That means so much to me. I just recently lost a close friend, and it was very sudden and put everything in perspective. I realize I'm so lucky to truly love what I do. Who knew a job could be like this?

What would you say to other enrollment professionals who are just starting on this career path?

SB: At an EMA event many years ago, I was sitting and talking with a colleague in recruitment about my current position, which I loved, and it was the first time I felt like I had permission to stay put in this field and make it my career—but I knew it always had to be at a school that was the right fit.

That's what I love so much about this profession. I have a group of five enrollment colleagues from different New York City schools, and we text each other 20 times a day for help and advice. Yes, we cross over for applicants, but that's not what it's about. So put yourself out there and find your people, because this profession is something special—and it's the people who save you.

Finally, with all the current challenges and opportunities facing independent schools, what do leaders need to do now to prepare for future success?

SB: This has been a year of changes, challenges, and compounding issues. Yet what gets us through as enrollment professionals is staying flexible and recognizing we don't know everything. I'm confident that when you have the right people to lean on when new challenges arise, you can handle anything. Don't get so consumed by obstacles that you forget the job you're supposed to be doing, which is finding the right match for these students.

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Sheila Bogan is the director of middle and upper school admissions and director of financial aid at The Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn, NY, where she has been in that role since 2011. Prior to moving to a NYC day school, Sheila was the director of admissions and financial aid for six years at the Dublin School in Dublin, NH (boarding and day school).

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