University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research

Educational Administration, Department of

12-1-2010

Factors Contributing to Student Athlete Selection of Nebraska Wesleyan University

Benjamin M. Santo
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, bnsanto@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss

Part of the Higher Education Administration Commons, and the Other Educational Administration and Supervision Commons

Santo, Benjamin M., "Factors Contributing to Student Athlete Selection of Nebraska Wesleyan University" (2010). *Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research.* Paper 48.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss/48

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Administration, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Educational Administration: Theses, Dissertations, and Student Research by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Factors Contributing to Student Athlete Selection of Nebraska Wesleyan University

by

Benjamin M. Santo

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Professor Larry L. Dlugosh

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 2010

Factors Contributing to Student Athlete Selection of Nebraska Wesleyan University

Ben Santo, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2010

Adviser: Larry L. Dlugosh

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gain insight into which factors of recruitment were important to a student-athletes decision regarding their choice of college. It is vital for recruiters to recognize factors that potential student-athletes consider important in the recruiting process, because a successful recruiter is one who can build a strong relationship with the student-athlete. The researcher selected Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) football student-athletes to conduct the study for the research.

Seniors, juniors, and sophomores were selected to participate in the study. Participants completed a 12 question survey instrument that was designed to assess important recruiting factors. The student-athletes provided reasons about which factors were important to them.

Major findings from the study indicated there were no differences among the opinions of the seniors, juniors and sophomores who responded to the questionnaire. The three most important factors that appeared to have an impact for forming the decision of the student-athlete were:

1. a positive impression of the school and athletic program as portrayed by the football recruiter during the first high school visit,

2. follow-up calls by the football recruiter after the high school visit assisted the development of a positive level of comfort with NWU, and
3. a positive experience during the on-campus visit.

Acknowledgements

I have been blessed to have many people in my life that love me and want me to succeed. I would like to personally thank several important people in my life. First, I would like to thank my beautiful wife that has shown great support, she is my guiding light to stay on track. She has been by my side through thick and thin.

I would also like to thank Dr. Larry Dlugosh for helping finish this research project. He has been so gracious with his time in helping me further my education. His kindness and patience with me has given me confidence to finish what I have started in regards to this research project. His willingness to help me tailor my plan of study and my thesis research toward my professional goals has been wonderful. In addition, I would like to thank the faculty of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Educational Administration for pushing me to think on a deeper level in my graduate coursework.

It would have been impossible for me to attend graduate school if it were not for the generous gift from Nebraska Wesleyan University's Athletic Department for paying my tuition. My time as an assistant football coach at Nebraska Wesleyan University has given me the opportunity to meet many great people and learn valuable information on how to teach a boy to become a man. I will never forget the memories I have made as a Prairewolve!

I would not be where I am today without the never ending support and encouragement of my family and friends. I thank my parents for supporting me every step of the way and giving me the confidence to pursue my dreams. I thank my brother for being one of my closest friends. I have always worked to be a good role model for

him. I thank my cousins and other family members that fought for our country; I owe my life to them. I will never forget my cousin Nick Nolte that gave his life for our country. I love my family and friends!

Finally, I thank God because if it were not for him we would be lost and not know what path to walk down.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction 1

Research Question 3

Sub-questions 3

Limitations 4

Significance of the Study 4

Chapter 2—Literature Review 6

Students 6

Student Decision-Making 7

Econometric Models 8

Sociological Models 8

Combined Models 8

Choosing a College 10

Recruitment 11

What Works 13

The Influence of Decision Aids on High School Students' Satisfaction with their College Choice Decision 16

Expectations Drive Effective College Recruitment Strategies 18

Student Target Marketing Strategies for Universities 19

Athletic Program 21

Factors Influencing the College Selection Process of Student-Athletes 21

Comparative Analysis 22

Summary 22

Chapter 3—Methods and Procedures 24

Research Question 24

Sub-Questions 24

Assumptions 24

Design of the Study 25

Selection of Samples 25

Instrumentation 26

Data Collection Procedures 27

Chapter 4—Results 28

Purpose 28

Research Question 28

Sub-Questions 28

Questionnaire 28

Findings 30

Research Question 1—Did your financial situation of your family play a role in the overall decision to select NWU as your school of choice? 30

Research Question 2—Were the mailings that came to you from NWU effective in building your interest about NWU and the football program? 31

Research Question 3—What other means would you prefer that information would have been given to you to build a better understanding of NWU? 32

Research Question 4—Was the first high school visit by the NWU coach an important factor in forming an impression of the institution and football program? 34

Research Question 5—Did the follow-up calls after the first visit by the coach assist you in making you feel important to NWU and the football program? 35

Research Question 6—When did you perceive you were ready to participate in a university campus visit during the initial stages of the recruitment period? 37

Research Question 7—Describe your on-campus visit experience. (Did you feel that the university made you feel welcome and important during the visit?) 38

Research Question 8—How involved were your parents in your decision to select and attend NWU? 39

Research Question 9—Was the recruiter a factor on your college decision? 40

Research Question 10—In which month did you decide your college choice would be NWU? 41

Research Question 11—Did the history of success of the football program play a part in your decision? 42

Research Question 12—Did the possibility of the availability of playing time have any effect on the choice of enrollment? 44

Summary of Findings 45

Chapter 5—Discussion and Recommendations for Future Research 47

Discussion 47

Recommendations for Future Research 49

References 51

Appendices 53

List of Tables

Table 1 Financial Role Played Deciding Factor 30

Table 2 Effective Mailings..... 32

Table 3 Other Recruiting Media Preferred 33

Table 4 Importance of First Visit by the Coach..... 34

Table 5 Importance of Follow-up Calls by the Coach 35

Table 6 Perception of Readiness to Visit Campus..... 37

Table 7 On-campus Visit Description..... 38

Table 8 Parental Involvement in Decision..... 39

Table 9 Recruiter Factor in College Decision..... 41

Table 10 Month Athlete Made College Decision 42

Table 11 History of Program Played Part in Decision..... 43

Table 12 Availability of Playing Time 44

List of Appendices

Appendix A Survey Instrument 53

Appendix B IRB Consent Form 55

Appendix C IRB Approval 57

Chapter 1

Introduction

The factors involved in the development of the final decision for the school of choice for football student-athletes are important to understand for a recruiter. Knowledge of these factors and how an institution can improve their processes of achieving success with recruitment was the primary reason for this research project. The researcher surveyed a group of Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) football student-athletes to determine the most important factors that attracted them to the NWU campus.

Why do senior high school football student-athletes choose Nebraska Wesleyan University as their university of choice? In the state of Nebraska, NWU is the only Division III institution. Division III is unique because it does not allow the institutions to award athletic scholarships. In a state that is home to ten other college or university institutions that all give athletic scholarships, it is curious that student-athletes choose an institution that is not allowed to give them athletic scholarships over institutions that do.

Nebraska Wesleyan University is located in Lincoln, Nebraska and has an enrollment of approximately 1,500 students. The school has numerous academic programs from which undergraduates can choose. Nebraska Wesleyan University is a member of the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) while the other members of the conference are all associated with National Athletic Intercollegiate Association (NAIA), as is NWU. The NAIA allows their member institutions to award student-athletes athletic scholarships. NWU's football department is unique because it has dual membership with Division III and with NAIA yet does not award athletic scholarships. Dual affiliation means that NWU has to use the strictest form of the rule, so when it

comes to scholarships they have to follow Division III thus only using academic scholarships. NWU is the only football program in the country that is dual affiliated. The primary reason for NWU to not join a conference that has Division III institutions is travel expenses. Another reason why NWU is unique is that in the past five years their football team has been ranked among the top four conference teams, three times in a conference with 12 member institutions. NWU is not only a strong academic institution but also has a competitive football program.

During a time of economic unrest there has been much emphasis placed on recruiting and the improvements that can be made to enhance the student-athlete's recruiting experience, so they will ultimately choose NWU. With more people tightening their wallets and with university costs rising, the question arises: why do high school football graduates choose NWU for the next four years of their academic career?

Today institutions are re-evaluating their marketing procedures and searching for ways to attract new candidates. At Nebraska Wesleyan University the football program constantly searches for new techniques to be able to find ways to attract football athletes who will be a good fit for the program.

Recruiting is constantly evolving; schools are improving their techniques on how to draw recruits to their institutions. This research paper was created, so that recruiters who are not able to recruit with athletic scholarships can still be competitive. The research began with a single research question and from that question four sub-questions were created. A questionnaire was designed and sent to football student-athletes who attended Nebraska Wesleyan University during the 2010 football season.

The researcher drafted a proposal that was submitted to the IRB committee at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln which stated that all safeguards were up to their standards for the participants of the study. Once the approval letter was received by the researcher the questionnaire was sent to 30 of the football student-athletes at NWU. Of those 30 participants the questionnaire was sent to 10 sophomores, 10 juniors, and 10 seniors. The participants' names were put into alphabetical order by their class, then every third name was selected until the 10 names were picked from the each of the three classes to equal the desired 30 names. The researcher put a note on the selected participants' lockers that informed them to pick up the questionnaire and consent form in the researcher's office. The questionnaire contained 12 questions (see Appendix A). Along with the questionnaire was a consent form that stated the purpose of the study, that the study was optional, and that the respondent was under no obligation to respond to the study. It also stated that the information answered would remain confidential. The respondents who chose to take part in the study returned their completed questionnaire to a marked box in the researcher's office.

Research Question

Why do football student-athletes choose Nebraska Wesleyan University?

Sub-Questions

1. How much of a role does the approval of parents play in the overall decision of the student?
2. Does the financial situation for the student and his or her parents determine the outcome of the college choice?

3. When the recruiter enters the student's life does the recruiter have a large effect in gaining the interest with the student?
4. Does the campus visit help gain the majority of support from the student?

Limitations

The limitations of this study may be as follows:

1. The people involved in the study were sophomore, junior, and senior male Football Student-Athletes who already attend Nebraska Wesleyan University.
2. Responses were limited to the perception of the person completing the questionnaire.
3. The results of this study are only applicable only to Nebraska Wesleyan University Sophomore, Junior, and Senior male football student-athletes who were seeking a bachelor's degree.
4. The results of this study are subject to those weaknesses inherent in survey research using emailed questionnaires.

Significance of the Study

No research has been done on the reasons why a football student-athlete chooses Nebraska Wesleyan University over other institutions that provide athletic scholarships. NWU has not performed a study that researched the football recruiting operations. This research may also help the institution better equip itself to meet the needs of the future NWU prospects.

Knowledge of the factors that determine why a football student-athlete chose Nebraska Wesleyan University will allow the recruiter to waste less time during face-to-face visits, they will have the necessary tools to give the recruit the information that they

want and how they want that information shown to them. A recruiter has very little time to inform the recruit of why it is important to choose NWU, so it is beneficial for them to not improperly use the time available to them.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature review was divided into three sections: Students, Recruitment, and Athletic Program. Each section contains its own research articles that are tied to its own theme. The students' section deals with research that takes on the viewpoint of the student during the college choice process. The recruitment section has research that talks about the recruitment process and the factors that are involved. The athletic program section has research that involves the perspective of the student-athlete.

Students

The research done on the factors regarding why or how academic students choose their college of choice has been done for the last 30 years. The research studies that had been done helped the researcher determine if the factors that influence students for academic reasons are similar to the reasons for a student-athlete to choose their school of choice.

Student decision-making. High school seniors tend to go through stages when making decisions on college choice. Bateman and Spruill (1996) found in their article "*Student Decision Making"* that there were five components used for college choice. Those five components were: (a) a unique view of the stages of college attendance, (b) a proposal that new factors should be understood when assisting students with decision making, (c) a description of the process of attendance, (d) a characterization of college attendance as a funnel, and (e) an emphasis on the differences between student groups in decision making. Bateman and Spruill (1996) state that student development theory is commonly utilized by administrators as a source in helping students develop in several

domains including the moral, cognitive, and psychosocial. The idea of enrollment management is sometimes used for helping the administration understand what goes on with the student during the decision process. Based on the work of Hossler (1984), enrollment management is viewed as a continuum which extends from an initial desire to attend a college or university to the educational outcomes of attendance. What makes this article relevant to this paper is the importance of college choice in enrollment management.

The decision-making process started long before the student ever stepped foot on the college campus of his or her choice. Several years before matriculation is when the student started the college decision-making process. It has been a common misconception of faculty member or administrators that college choice ended when the student settled on the campus, but this process does not end. The student confronts decisions about choice of major, residence, and even lifestyle. This is why it is important for the school officials to understand what goes into the student decision-making to help alleviate the stress going into this process.

There have been numerous studies completed and models designed about the students' college experience, but no new models have been setup to study the process of college choice. These models evolved from econometric and status attainment theories. Bateman and Spruill (1996) stated that models may be grouped according to three categories based on the factors each model emphasizes: econometric, sociological, and combined.

Econometric models. Econometric models are based on the following criteria: geographic location, economic factors, and academic factors. These criteria are evaluated

based on students' family background and social context. From viewing this model one might hypothesize that college decision making is based on the economic benefit of attendance. For example, students may examine the financial rate-of-return of pursuing a college or university degree.

Sociological models. "Sociological models show that the status attainment process is concerned with the role played by various factors in the allocation of individual positions or occupations of varying degrees of prestige or status" (Bateman & Spruill, 1996, p. 2). Sociological models show different factors such as social and individual factors that lead to educational aspirations. Studying aspirations is very important to researchers, because it shows the process that individuals use to achieve higher status.

Combined models. "Combined models draw from both sociological and econometric models by combining the most powerful indicators in the decision-making process of each one, providing guidance to institutional decision makers" (Bateman & Spruill 1996, p. 2). Combined models use a wide range of variables from other models to identify factors which affect the decision making process.

Litten (1982) developed the expanded model of the college choice process which showed the relationship between personal and social situations that influence college choice. Litten (1982) used a funnel to help describe how a large body of students began the process of where they want to spend the next four years of their lives. The model divided college choice into three stages. The first stage emphasizes the sociological nature of choice while the second and third stages infuse economic variables. Five categories of variables are proposed in Stage One: background, personal attributes, high school attributes, student performance, and environment. Stages Two and Three include

four additional categories: influences, public policy, college actions, and college characteristics.

Litten (1982) identified the first stage of choice as including primarily sociological factors. "As students progressed to the second and third stages, economic factors became more important. There is no assumption that students developed higher order thinking skills, although such development is likely" (Litten, 1982, p. 4).

Bateman and Spruill (1996) stated that students often use "financial reasons" for leaving school; administrators may not fully understand what this term means. Several economic factors are important to consider including distance from home, rate-of-return, tuition costs, increasing/decreasing financial aid, and state or federal economic conditions. Understanding that decisions are influenced by a variety of factors increases the ability to influence and understand student decisions.

College attendance is a process. What occurs in the first stage of choice is likely to influence the second and third stages. College choice begins with aspirations and goes through matriculation. Thus, factors affecting choice are likely to influence attendance. For example, parental encouragement or expectations has been found to be the most powerful predictor of choice and retention (Bateman & Spruill, 1996).

Relationships between factors also affect the stability of decisions. Schmit and Hossler (1995) developed a study which examined the relationship between student's educational aspirations and parents' expectations; it was found that a high correlation between these variables yielded more stable decisions over time. The study included 135 first-year student-athletes enrolled at a large public, four-year, Research I institution that

enrolls almost 40,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The University had a large intercollegiate athletics program.

Bateman and Spruill (1996) found the most important factor for student-athletes was the degree program options offered by the university. Other important factors were the head coach, academic support services, type of community in which the campus was located, and the school's sports traditions. Two of the top three decision factors dealt with academics instead of athletics. The ability of balancing recruiting efforts with academics and athletics is the most effective way to gaining new top recruits.

Choosing a college. Ehrlich (2004) stated in his article, "*Choosing a* College," about how the rankings from the *U.S. News and World Report* do not tell the whole story about an individual college or university. These rankings do not show the true impact on what an institution will have on an individual incoming student. The rankings are based on the resources of campuses, their reputations, grades and test-scores of incoming students.

The basis for the rankings were important factors, but this only talked about what incoming students have done, but not how the students were doing in the institution. The rankings did not use the ability of the institution to simulate in and out of class and the pushing of students to excel. The campus visit is the most effective way to see if a college or university will be a right fit. Being able to listen to and visit with current undergraduate students about their experiences are good guides to what life will be like. The prospective student needs to see the importance of viewing the extra-curriculum and campus life (Ehrlich, 2004).

Ehrlich (2004) felt that the campus visit should be supplemented with as much information as possible about teaching and learning on a campus. The National Survey of Student Engagement is another way for students and parents to make informed decisions. Each year NSSE collects information directly from undergraduates at hundreds of campuses, based on research about how and under what circumstances students learn (Ehrlich, 2004). The student and parents may be able to obtain valuable insights about the extent to which students find the academic work challenging, the degree to which they are active learners, the extent of student-faculty interactions, the richness of the out-of-class experiences, the overall campus environment, the exposure to diverse cultural experiences, and the scope of technology uses.

> The quality of campus resources and of incoming student, and factors that dominate most rankings, are some of what should be considered in the rankings. But no one would choose a hospital based on the health of patients coming into the hospital, and no one should choose a college based primarily on the grades and test scores of incoming students. (Ehrlich, 2004, p. 2)

The researcher wants students to choose an academic environment that best suites their needs, so that they will be successful.

Recruitment

The question asked by this section, who is recruited and how students are recruited? The researcher wanted to look at what tools were used by the recruiter to influence the high school student to choose their school. These research papers look at both sides with what the high school student saw as successful recruiting tactics or techniques and what the recruiter viewed as successful marketing strategies.

Rogers and Sincoff (1978) stated in their article "*Favorable Impression Characteristics of the Recruitment Interviewer*" that their study did not deal with how a

high school senior makes his or her college choice, but instead showed how a college student assessed a recruiter from a particular job firm looking for future employees. Students' impressions of campus recruiters influenced student's decisions on eventual job choice. Rogers and Sincoff (1978) studied the effects of three variables—recruiter's age, recruiter's title, and recruiter's presentation—on students' impressions. The researcher believes from the study that it became relevant that the recruiter title and the recruiter's age had an impact on how the student was influenced, but if the recruiter had a non-fluent presentation; it would cause an unusual influence on the student's impression of the recruiter.

Rogers and Sincoff (1978) suggested a student's perceived impression of a recruiter affected their view of the recruiter; there has been no research to substantiate this claim. Maloney (1961) however, suggested that the title and stature of the interviewer affects the impression made. This has not been tested directly, but the literature on ethos, prestige, and credibility would seem to lend support to this conclusion.

Rogers and Sincoff (1978) research paper used a study that involved 376 college students with three different selection interviewers, having two different titles, and two different presentations. All the students favored the interviewer with the titled position, meaning that students felt important to have someone with an important status within the company interviewing them. This supported Maloney's (1961) contention that there can be no disagreement with the principle that the interviewer needs stature. A study done by Calhoon (1949) gave the idea that students did not notice fluency, but if the recruiter was choppy and did not give a fluent presentation, the student did notice and created negative

information and negative impressions. Rogers and Sincoff (1978) believed that the study in a small way backed up Washburn and Hakel's (1973) claim that age did make a difference. It is believed that age is the first impression on the student, which then is overtaken by the title. The reason for believing that age has any affect is that some students reported that the 20-year-old interviewer simply did not look like a College Recruiting Director.

In conclusion, age does have an initial effect and does set the stage for the interview. The first step of the interview is announcing the title of the recruiter is made known this then takes precedence over age and the effectiveness of the presentation. Second, Rogers and Sincoff (1978) concluded that after their study was performed it became evident that the interviewers or recruiters needed to be trained, so that it reduced the chances of a negative affect on the future students being recruited. Third, like stated before it is very important to state the job title of the recruiter, because the student needs to feel important, and having them know that someone of high distinction from the company or college that he or she was speaking for has a positive affect (Rogers & Sincoff, 1978)

What works. A research article done by Chimes and Gordon (2008) was a study that interviewed a high school guidance counselor and a male student that was going through recruitment. The article goes through the different tactics performed by colleges to persuade the student to attend their college. The counselor and student give their own opinion on what techniques the colleges should use to be effective during the recruiting process.

Chimes and Gordon (2008) gave the perspective of a senior high school student and the high school's guidance counselor. The student talked about all of the different tactics that colleges used to get information out to students. The use of mail is for the most part the first way a student gets information about a college or university. Sophomore year is when the student recalled when the mail from colleges started to be sent to the student's house. The student thought that this was quite peculiar because neither he nor his friends started to seriously think about his choice of college. Once the mail starts it comes nearly every day, what the student found unique is that some of the mail had his name misspelled, and found that his name was put in all caps. It doesn't sound like a very personable letter with one's name in caps, (DEAR JOHN).

The guidance counselor stated that the school will play host to about 40-50 college recruiters in a school year. The college recruiter on campus is usually the last effort of the admissions office to try and lure the student to their campus. These visits are not only to try and win more recruits, but also to strengthen the relationship with a student already set to attend the institution. These visits are a two-way street with the recruiter trying to sell the institution to the student and the student trying to sell his or herself to the recruiter. The student might be in a close battle for a coveted scholarship that the institution might be offering, or the student is trying to gain favor so that the student can gain admission into the university. This senior hopes to make a good impression to the admission officer. But what the senior doesn't realize is that the recruiter most likely is not the one that reads his or her transcripts and will have no pull for this student's admission or scholarship success. The guidance counselor has witnessed when this recruiter tells the student that he or she doesn't have the power to

decide what will happen in the admission process, but the task of the recruiter is just to give out information on the institution. The student becomes deflated and the recruiter is met with disinterested eyes. The guidance counselor stated that from her somewhat limited experience, the more prestigious or respected a school was, the more outstanding that respective officer's presentation was. These prestigious, most selective schools may have a larger marketing budget and their training may be better as well (Chimes & Gordon, 2008).

One surprising factor in all of this is the variety of shapes and sizes of mailings. Students are very busy and found that when a large packet comes in the mail from a college, that there was simply too much literature to consume. The truth was that the student grew bored and lost interest very quickly. But an effective mailing is possible. The school counselor advised that the mailings need to be short and concise. Let the student know some of the cool and interesting elements that the school has to offer. Figure out what is different about the school and concentrate on those unique, important elements. The mailings should be mailed to students that have a positive chance of attending the university. The mailings also need to catch the eye, with so much mail coming from so many different institutions, a mailer needs to catch the eye and contain concise information about the university itself (Chimes & Gordon, 2008).

There is no better way to get to know a college than a campus visit. Web sites, view books, conversations with alumni, guidebooks and admission reps all provided important clues about a school, but a campus visit is the best way to see if a school is right for you. The student found that watching a short film on a university while on a campus visit was one of the best ways to learn about the university. The film contained

information about the facilities, prominent alumni, teachers, and student types (Chimes & Gordon 2008).

The influence of decision aids on high school students' satisfaction with their college choice decision. Arkes, Jones and Kmett (1999) researched how introspecting about the bases of one's decision can result in lower satisfaction with the decision and lower equivalence between one's decision and that of experts who confront the same choices, and how these two ideas conflict with one another. Computer programs have been developed to help the user with developing bases for their decisions, and for the most part the software works to aid in making both good choices and high levels of user satisfaction with the choices. Other forms of decision aids like listing pros and cons for each option make the user develop ideas for consideration when thinking about a decision. This article, divided a graduating class of high school seniors into three groups, the groups used a decision aid to help them select a college to attend the following year.

Arkes et al. (1999) looked at a pro/con balance sheet to help high school seniors select their future college or university. What came from this study was that the control group that used this balance sheet scored significantly lower on a composite measure that contained post decisional regret and concern. Satisfaction is the most important value to study when looking for the value in using decision aids. This study looked at the satisfaction with one's decision. Finally, the study wanted to find out the related findings that those with high topical knowledge, highly accessible attitudes, or well-defined bases for their decision do not suffer the detrimental effects of examining the bases for their decision. During their senior year in high school, all of the students in this study were

asked to write a statement describing how they would select a college. One year later, they were asked to recall how they had selected a college.

The following two primary hypotheses were tested (Arkes et al., 1999):

Hypothesis 1: If articulating the bases of one's decision is detrimental to decision satisfaction, then those who used a decision aid during their senior year of high school should have lower satisfaction after their first semester of college than those who did not use a decision aid.

Hypothesis 2: If Wilson and colleagues are correct, then articulating the bases of one's decision should be detrimental to decision satisfaction only among those who could not recall the bases for their decision.

The participating students filled out a student questionnaire that asked the students what their college visitation plans were and to write a brief statement on how you think you will come to the best decision in choosing which college to attend.

The results suggested that students who did not benefit from the use of decision aids, that is, those who accurately recalled the bases of their decision, had already given more serious thought to their decision than had students who would benefit from the use of the aids (Arkes et al., 1999).

Two primary hypotheses were tested by this field study. Contrary to the first hypothesis, those students who either used a computer-based decision aid or listed the reasons for or against attending their top two colleges did not make clear if they felt a lower satisfaction with their eventual choice than did students in the control group. Contrary to the second hypothesis, among those students who could not accurately recall the basis of the decision made a year earlier, satisfaction with their eventual college choice was significantly higher if they had used either decision aid. Arkes et al. (1999) study pointed out that it was very important to state the fact that the pro/con list forced participants to rate their top two colleges on 21 dimensions. Therefore, this aid would

seem to have caused each student to think about the bases for his or her decision. The computer program asked students what were important criteria in choosing a college. The program then displayed colleges according to the selected criteria. Again, this aid would seem to have made the bases of each student's decision quite silent. Before the results, the question was that the two aids comprised a fair test of the idea that making the bases of one's decision prominent would have a detrimental effect of using either decision aid. Arkes et al. (1999) could find no detrimental effect of using either decision aid. Among the students who could accurately recall the bases of the decision made a year earlier, both aids had no effect. Among the students who could not accurately recall the bases of their earlier decision, both aids had a significant positive effect (Arkes et al. 1999).

Expectations drive effective college recruitment strategies. Cortez and Cortez (2004) interviewed different groups of respondents to find out what were the important factors that played a role in deciding their college or university of choice. The use of a focus group and individual interviews were used when asking high school administrators, counselors, high school students, and parents of high school students.

When answering what has helped students most in preparing for college, respondents most often mentioned visiting college campuses while still in high school and their parents' and families' encouragement. The top three findings that respondents cited as helping students select a college included matching individual student goals and scholarships to college, convenience in terms of transportation, and online access to help with registration. The most frequently mentioned barriers that students encounter on the

road to college were inadequate academic preparation, competing work and family responsibilities, and the lack of transportation (Cortez & Cortez, 2004).

Cortez and Cortez (2004) recommended that certain areas of the recruitment process could be improved. Communication was the first and probably the most important area of recruitment that could be improved and have a greater influence upon the student and family. When sending information, first find out who is getting information and then find out among those who do receive it, what conflicting or vague messages students and their parents are receiving the about what is need to enter and succeed in college and communicate the correct information. Communicate the expectation that all students are "college material." Make students and their parents aware that getting into college is not the hardest part of the college experience, but that challenges to staying and graduating can be addressed and overcome. Make sure that high school staff, college staff, and students have regular and ongoing communication.

Student target marketing strategies for universities. Many universities and other academic institutions have resisted the implementation of a marketing approach to lure prospective students, because the universities and other academic institutions fear a marketing approach a challenge to intellectual integrity. Hawes and Lewison (2007) argued that admission officers identify market segments among prospective students, researchers then create a conceptual model. The model is created by learning the attitudes of the current students and how things can be modified to attract new prospective students.

One of the marketing techniques is mass marketing strategy that seeks to attract anyone and everyone with a single broad-based marketing appeal. This technique treats

everyone as a target focused on how consumer needs are similar. Mass production and distribution, and sometimes mass communication are used to get the information out to the public (Hawes & Lewison, 2007).

Another form of marketing is target marketing. Target marketing focuses one or more selected market segments, and the developing separate marketing programs for each segment. Depending on the type and number of market segments to be targeted, the university could pursue one or more target marketing alternatives: (a) differentiated marketing, (b) concentrated marketing, or (c) orchestrated marketing. Differentiated marketing is where a university decides to focus its attention to a selected number of segments. A high degree of focused effort characterizes concentrated marketing. This marketing approach can be where a university decides to focus all of its attention on one segment, or create a plan to develop into other segments. Orchestrated marketing consists of developing a selective marketing program designed to meet the common needs of a market segment. The university will find key common characteristics of the segment, and focus on those common traits (Hawes & Lewison, 2007).

When selecting a marketing strategy the institution needs to consider the financial budget, but still being able to realize that with the higher costs the ability to offer what the prospective student needs is met. The university needs to realize that it will cost more to get the information they want to get to their target audience, but the university needs to also realize that the reward will out weigh the risk. A university must select a plan that maintains an appropriate balance between meeting the students' needs and being able to financially sustain the programs (Hawes & Lewison, 2007).

Athletic Program

This section looks at what research has been done on how the university or college successfully recruits their student-athletes. Very little research has been done in finding out what recruiting techniques have been successful and what factors student-athletes view as being important to helping them decide their athletic-school of choice.

Factors influencing the college selection process of student athletes. Recruitment is the life blood to any college or university. The ability to gain student-athletes that have been successful in their high school years only helps the college or university gain success. There has been a lot of added pressure onto the athletic departments, because research shows that with winning athletic programs there has been an increase in enrollment and booster support. Letawsky, Schneider, Pedersen and Palmer (2003) stated that since there has been research done on the college choice for students, that in their study they wanted to see what factors affected the student-athletes choice to attend a college or university. The findings of this study suggested that, although student-athletes have different factors that influence college choice, non-athletic related factors are just as important as athletic factors.

With budgets being constricted more and more administrators have seen the research done and realize the great potential with a winning program. A winning team not only brings home the trophy but also provides an effective means of advertising their institution and gaining more funding. With a successful athletic department the undergraduate applications rise and so does booster support. With an increase in undergraduate applications, institutions can be more particular with who can be admitted to the institution.

A prospective student-athlete does not limit his or her vision to just the academic institution, but wants to evaluate the team and coach. This is where the non-student-athlete and the student-athlete differ, at the beginning of the college selection process. The researchers state that a college coach's reputation, the ability to play early in their careers, and campus environment, all of these were viewed as the most important factors in student-athletes college choice (Letawsky et al., 2003).

Comparative Analysis

The researcher has drawn many similarities between all of the journals. Each one of the articles addresses the importance of recruiting and getting the right students for the institution is what determines the success of the student and the institution. The ability to communicate well to the prospective student and make sure that they have all the tools necessary to make a well informed decision helps with making the student feel comfortable with the recruiter. Having the ability to communicate well will help make the recruit build a level of trust between the prospective student and the recruiter. The appearance of the recruiter on the first in-school visit goes a long way for the student when forming initial opinions about the college or university. The researcher believes that all of these journal articles are in agreement with one another and that they all compliment each other.

Summary

After reading through these articles and journal entries the researcher was better informed on what decisions are being used when choosing a college or university of choice. Leadership is greatly needed to make the recruiting process go smoothly for the student, parents, and the college or university officials. The best tool that an effective

leader can use is communication. Communicating what needs the student has and how that institution is best suited to fill those needs of that student, can be taken care of by effective leadership. The three areas of influence that the researcher was looking at were all mentioned as heavy influencers. Students and their parents want to hear how the student will be taken care of and how the institution has developed a plan that doesn't stop working to support the student upon arrival, but the real work just begins.

It was important to the researcher to break down the research papers into three categories: Students, Recruitment, and Athletic Program. The research that has been done in the past has, for the most part, been performed for the students that only go to college for academic reasons. Breaking it down into categories helped the researcher compare what the recruiter felt were important to what the high school student felt were important factors to selecting a college or university. The research that was found about the athletic program compared past research done to view factors that were important for a student that did not participate in athletics to what factors were important to a student-athlete. The information that was gathered was important for the researcher of this paper to see what important factors were discovered. Knowing these newly discovered factors helped construct assumptions for the researcher's study.

Chapter 3

Methods and Procedures

Very little has been done to study the reasons why the football student-athlete ultimately chose to attend Nebraska Wesleyan University. This study focuses on factors (parents, recruits, and financial situation) why students and student-athletes chose the college of choice. The relationship among those determinants and the student recruitment strategies are important in choosing the college of choice. The following research questions provided the focus for the study.

Research Question

Why do football student-athletes choose Nebraska Wesleyan University?

Sub-Questions

1. How much of a role does the approval of parents play in the overall decision of the student?
2. Does the financial situation for the student and his or her parents determine the outcome of the college choice?
3. When the recruiter enters the student's life does the recruiter have a large effect in gaining the interest with the student?
4. Does the campus visit help gain the majority of support from the student?

Assumptions

The following assumptions were proposed to direct the shaping of the questions.

Assumption 1—The potential of playing time early is attractive to the recruit.

Assumption 2—The financial situation of the family has an impact on the decision of enrollment.

Assumption 3—The first impression of the recruiter sets up the high interest of the institution.

Assumption 4—Follow-up calls are where the relationship between the recruiter and recruit is strengthened.

Design of the Study

The primary purpose of this survey research was to find out what recruiting practices were successful with the current football student-athletes and what recruiting practices needed improvement. Survey research was used as the design of this study because descriptive and explanatory information was needed about student-athlete recruitment to Nebraska Wesleyan University. The number of players on the current roster is too large so the respondents were systematically selected with ten sophomores, ten juniors, and ten seniors being selected. A printed instrument was emailed for data collection with telephone and email reminder follow-ups.

Selection of the Sample

The survey population (n = 85) for this research study was undergraduate male football student-athletes from Nebraska Wesleyan University 2009-2010 class. Thirty football players were selected (ten sophomores, ten juniors, and ten seniors). They were systematically selected by choosing the third person in alphabetical order to fill the sample size. Each class was equally represented so that all views from different age groups have a voice.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was designed by the researcher after a thorough review of the literature related to the study. The questionnaire will be reviewed by the researcher's supervisors. The questionnaire contains 12 questions:

1. Did your financial situation of your family play a role in the overall decision to select NWU as your school of choice?
2. Were the mailings that came to you from NWU effective in building your interest about NWU and the football program?
3. What other means would you prefer that information would have been given to you to build a better understanding of NWU?
4. Was the first high school visit by the NWU coach an important factor in forming an impression of the institution and the football program?
5. Did the follow-up calls after the first visit by the coach assist you in making you feel important to NWU and football program?
6. When did you perceive you were ready to participate in a university campus visit during the initial stages of the recruitment period?
7. Describe your on-campus visit experience. (Did you feel that the university made you feel welcome and important during the visit?)
8. How involved were your parents in your decision to select and attend NWU?
9. Was the recruiter a factor on your college decision?
10. In which month did you decide your college choice would be NWU?

11. Did the history of success of the football program play a part in your decision?
12. Did the possibility of the availability of playing time have any effect on the choice of enrollment?

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher drafted a proposal that was submitted to the IRB committee at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln which stated that all safeguards were up to the required IRB standards for the participants of the study. Once the IRB approval letter was received by the researcher the questionnaire was sent to 30 of the football student-athletes at NWU. The student-athletes were selected for the study by placing their name in alphabetical order organized into their individual classes. Once the names were organized into their classes and put into alphabetical order, the researcher selected every third name in each class. The researcher selected every third name in the class until 10 names were selected in the senior class, 10 names were selected in the junior class and 10 names were selected in the sophomore class. The researcher put a note on the selected participants' lockers that informed them to pick up the questionnaire and consent form in the researcher's office. The questionnaire contained 12 questions. Along with the questionnaire was a consent form that stated the purpose of the study, that the study was optional, and that the respondent was under no obligation to respond to the study. It also stated that the information answered would remain confidential. The respondents who chose to take part in the study returned their completed questionnaire to a marked box in the researcher's office.

Chapter 4

Results

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain insight about the factors that were important for football student-athletes when they selected a university. Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) football student-athletes were used for the study because their situation is unique. Nebraska Wesleyan University competes with other institutions that give athletic scholarships while NWU are not allowed to provide athletic scholarships.

Research Question

Why do football student-athletes choose Nebraska Wesleyan University?

Sub-Questions

This study was guided by four questions, which include:

1. How much of a role does the approval of parents play in the overall decision of the student?
2. Does the financial situation for the student and his or her parents determine the outcome of the college choice?
3. When the recruiter enters the student's life does the recruiter have a large effect in gaining the interest with the student?
4. Does the campus visit help gain the majority of support from the student?

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed to draw responses from participants. The questionnaire contained the following 12 questions:

1. Did your financial situation of your family play a role in the overall decision to select NWU as your school of choice?
2. Were the mailings that came to you from NWU effective in building your interest about NWU and the football program?
3. What other means would you prefer that information would have been given to you to build a better understanding of NWU?
4. Was the first high school visit by the NWU coach an important factor in forming an impression of the institution and the football program?
5. Did the follow-up calls after the first visit by the coach assist you in making you feel important to NWU and football program?
6. When did you perceive you were ready to participate in a university campus visit during the initial stages of the recruitment period?
7. Describe your on-campus visit experience. (Did you feel that the university made you feel welcome and important during the visit?)
8. How involved were your parents in your decision to select and attend NWU?
9. Was the recruiter a factor on your college decision?
10. In which month did you decide your college choice would be NWU?
11. Did the history of success of the football program play a part in your decision?
12. Did the possibility of the availability of playing time have any effect on the choice of enrollment?

Findings

Research Question 1—Did your financial situation of your family play a role in the overall decision to select NWU as your school of choice? Nebraska Wesleyan University is a private institution that is among one of the most expensive schools to attend in the state of Nebraska. The researcher was interested in how their families' financial situation played a role in their decision. Results for Research Question 1 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Financial Role Played Deciding Factor

Class Status	Yes	No
Senior	4	3
Junior	1	3
Sophomore	2	0

The answers varied with the families' financial situation playing a large role. Seniors responded with four that stated yes and three that responded no. Juniors responded with one yes and three with no. Sophomores responded two with yes and none responded no. With the collection for this question there was no clear cut response one way. The respondents that stated their financial situation did not play a large role had answers similar to these: "The financial situation of my family played very little to no role in my selection of NWU. I am paying for school through student loans so therefore all debt accrued is my responsibility." "No, the financial situation wasn't a concern. Academic scholarships let me choose any college in Nebraska." "My family's situation

did not have a huge role in deciding NWU. I received enough financial aid from Wesleyan that it did not matter." The other respondents that had concerns with their financial situation and had this play a major role from them responded: "Yes, it was tough to come to Wesleyan because our family income is low. But through loans we made it work." "Yes, financial aid was a big part of my decision. I had to wait until nearly April to get the estimate for my educational aid before my decision was made." "Yes, it did, the amount of academic scholarship money I got from here was a big deciding factor for me and my family."

All of the respondents that answered yes had to wait until they received their financial aid package before they chose to come to NWU. Some were very confident because of their high school academic success or their ACT score was going to give them enough financial aid to choose NWU. For the others, even with the financial aid, they still knew that it was going to be difficult to make NWU financially feasible.

Research Question 2—"Were the mailings that came to you from NWU effective in building your interest about NWU and the football program?" Today's universities and colleges send mailings to try and gain attention towards their institutions. This question was formed to see if Nebraska Wesleyan University's mailings were effective. Results for Research Question 2 are shown in Table 2.

Seven seniors responded with four that stated the mailings were effective and three indicated the mailings were not effective. Four juniors responded with zero that stated the mailings were effective and four indicated the mailings were not effective. Two sophomores responded with zero that stated the mailings were effective and two indicated the mailings were not effective. For this question the answers from the juniors

Table 2

Effective Mailings

Class Status	Yes	No
Senior	4	3
Junior	0	4
Sophomore	0	2

and sophomores were overwhelmingly negative about the mailings. One of the respondents commented, "Mailings did not play a vital role in building interest, but they do provide that initial spark to begin considering the program they offer." "They were helpful, but not a big part of growing my interest." "I did not receive mailings." A few responded that they felt that the mailings were needed: "Absolutely, the constant mailings from NWU helped out a lot." "Yes, the mailings showed to me that the program was interested in me."

Based on the evidence, the mailings to most potential student-athletes did not play a major role in helping them make their decision. The mailings for some, however, gave them an idea about whom or what NWU was. The continual flow of mailings made a few of the respondents feel important.

Research Question 3—"What other means would you prefer that information would have been given to you to build a better understanding of NWU (e.g., short films, power points, mailings, etc.)?" It is important for recruiters to have an effective presentation to the potential student-athlete during the first face-to-face visit. With high school students using more technology, the researcher asked the respondents

what other means would have been effective in communicated what Nebraska Wesleyan University was. Results for Research Question 3 are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Other Recruiting Media Preferred

Class Status	Power Point	Short Film	Both
Senior	1	6	0
Junior	0	4	0
Sophomore	0	1	1

Seniors responded with one in favor of power point presentations and six in favor of a short film. Juniors responded none in favor of power point and four in favor of a short film. Sophomores responded none in favor of power point and two in favor of a short film. Most of the respondents did not live close to the NWU campus before making it their school of choice. For this reason they felt that having visual instruments would be very helpful in giving them an idea of what NWU is all about. "Short films and virtual tours would be helpful." "A short film would have been nice to see the beauty that this campus possesses both visually and socially." "Game footage would be cool to see when a NWU coach comes to visit."

All respondents perceived that NWU needed to improve in giving prospective student-athletes an electronic visual so they can have a glimpse of what day-to-day life is like at NWU. Some even wanted to receive highlights of our game film so they can see what current or past players look like and what style of football NWU plays.

Research Question 4—"Was the first high school visit by the NWU coach an important factor in forming an impression of the institution and football program? (Explain why it was important or not important.)" Recruiters spend much of their time on the road to visit potential student-athletes in their high schools. The researcher was interested if this time was effective or ineffective. Results for Research Question 4 are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Importance of First Visit by Coach

Class Status	Yes	No
Senior	5	2
Junior	3	1
Sophomore	2	0

Seven seniors responded with five that stated the visit by the coach was effective and two indicated the visit was not effective. Four juniors responded with three that stated the visit by the coach was effective and one indicated the visit was not effective. Two sophomores responded with two that stated the visit by the coach was effective and zero indicated the visit was not effective. Ten of the respondents perceived that this was one of the most important factors in choosing NWU, because it showed them that the football program was interested in them. "Yes, it was very important. You then 'associate' that individual as the face of NWU. As a high school student you are very excited to be talking to college coaches also." "The first visit was important because it gave me an idea of what type of coaching style and program it was. The personality of

the coach was really down to earth and relaxed was a big part of my decision, too." "Yes it was important. I didn't consider any schools that did not come to visit, even coaches who called and never visited."

For most of the responses indicated that the visit by the coach made them feel important and for the first time they could now have a face to associate with NWU. The coach had a personality that made the recruit feel comfortable and helped them learn more about NWU's football and academic program.

Research Question 5—"Did the follow-up calls after the first visit by the coach assist you in making you feel important to NWU and the football program? (Explain)" Follow-up calls take up a large amount of the recruiters' time along with the visits. These calls are placed mostly at nights, the researcher wanted to find out if the calls were of annoyance or were they effective. Results for Research Question 5 are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Importance of Follow-up Calls by the Coach

Class Status	Yes	No
Senior	7	1
Junior	4	0
Sophomore	2	0

Seven seniors responded with six that stated the calls were effective and one indicated the calls were not effective. Four juniors responded with four that stated the calls were effective and zero indicated the calls were not effective. Two sophomores

responded with two that stated the calls were effective and zero indicated the calls were not effective. For all classes, instead of one senior, it was overwhelmingly yes in favor of the follow-up calls. Just as the initial visit by the coach was very important, the follow-up phone calls helped show the prospects that the coach was serious about the importance of them becoming a member of NWU. "The calls made me feel really important because of the sense of concern about my choice of college made me feel important and made me feel like I could be an important figure on the team." "Yes, I felt like they wanted and needed me and didn't just want me to 'come if I felt like it'." "Yes, it made it sound like the coaches cared and actually wanted me to attend NWU to play football. It was very friendly, like you were already starting to form relationships with the coaches before you even start to play."

The statements submitted by respondents indicated it was important for the coaches to make the phone calls because the relationships that were formed helped them feel comfortable to pursue more information about NWU.

Research Question 6—"When did you perceive you were ready to participate in a university campus visit during the initial stages of the recruitment period?" Nebraska Wesleyan University does not put a deadline on when a student can take a visit to the campus. Knowledge of when student-athletes take their visits to campus helps the recruiter know when to make sure the school has enough staff members on the campus during the most popular times for these recruits to take a visit. Results for Research Question 6 are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Perception of Readiness to Visit Campus

Class Status	Unknown	Late Fall	After Coach's Visit	February
Senior	1	0	3	3
Junior	0	2	2	0
Sophomore	1	0	1	1

Seven seniors responded with one unknown when he was ready to take a visit, three decided after the coach's visit, and three during February. Four juniors responded with two that were ready to take their visit in late fall, and two after the coach's visit. Two sophomores responded with one unknown when he was ready to take a visit, and one decided after the coach's visit. The decision to take a campus visit was varied throughout the answers. Multiple factors played a role in deciding when the visit took place. Respondents had conflicts with sporting events, jobs, and ability to take days off from school. Most did want to take a visit right away, especially right after the initial coach's visit to his school.

Research Question 7—"Describe your on-campus visit experience. (Did you feel that the university made you feel welcome and important during the visit?)" The academic and athletic recruiting departments put a large emphasis on making sure the recruits feel comfortable on their visit to the campus. The researcher wanted to see what the student-athletes felt comfortable and wanted on their visit to NWU. Results for Research Question 7 are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

On-campus Visit Description

Class Status	Positive	Negative
Senior	7	0
Junior	4	0
Sophomore	2	0

Seven seniors responded with seven positive on-campus experiences and none had a non-positive experience. Four juniors responded with four positive on-campus experiences and none had a non-positive experience. Two sophomores responded with two positive on-campus experiences and none had a non-positive experience. Most felt very welcome with their visit to Nebraska Wesleyan University's campus. Some were surprised with having professors and coaches take time to answer their questions and they seemed committed to getting them the information they need. Some quotes from respondents were as follows: "My on-campus visit was very personal and it was the best visit out of the four colleges I considered." "It was really nice, I felt like I could live here, and it was the right size for me to feel comfortable in."

> My on-campus visit was the final factor in me deciding to attend NWU. The football player I stayed with made me feel very welcome and like I was already a part of the team. The professors I met with also made me feel like I was a part of the institution and important to them.

For some of the respondents they felt that this was when they felt that NWU was going to be their school of choice. The staff at NWU made the prospects feel like they were already apart of NWU and so when they needed to make a decision on where to go

they already had a good idea about what their future experience was going to be like at NWU.

Research Question 8—"How involved were your parents in your decision to select and attend NWU? (Why or why not?)" The decision of where to go to college is a very important choice for a high school student. The researcher wanted to know how involved parent(s) were with aiding their son's college choice. Results for Research Question 8 are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Parental Involvement in Decision

Class Status	None	Little	Moderate	Very
Senior	1	5	1	0
Junior	0	1	2	1
Sophomore	0	0	0	2

Seven seniors responded. One of the seniors indicated his parents were not involved, five stated that their parents were involved a little, and one said his parents were moderately involved. None of the seniors indicated their parents were 'very involved.' Four juniors responded that none of them had parents that were not involved, one indicated that parents were involved a little; two responded that the parents were moderately involved, and one indicated his parents were very involved. Two sophomores responded that parents were very involved. The answers varied among the respondents. Some stated that their parents played a large role with deciding on school of choice while others stated that the parents stayed out of their decision. The researcher observed that

the younger the respondents became the more involved the parents were. Parents wanted what was best for them including having family nearby. Quotes from respondents included: "My parents were involved in my decision by sitting down with me and considered my options. We decided this was the best one for academic purposes." "My parents were fairly involved, but ultimately they said the decision was mine to make and they backed me 100%." "(My parents were) very involved; they really persuaded me to come here. They loved the coaches and the campus." "My parents never nagged me or forced me to make a decision about school. They enjoyed being kept updated with my thoughts but never forced the issue because it was my decision to make."

For most of the respondents the parents helped by giving their son advice, but left the ultimate decision up to their son to make. Student athletes perceived the school did a good job of giving their parents a good experience, because most parents felt comfortable with having their son attend NWU.

Research Question 9—"Was the recruiter a factor on your college decision? (How?)" The recruiter spends a lot of time with the prospective football player either face-to-face or by the phone. Is this time spent between the recruiter and the recruit positive? Results for Research Question 9 are shown in Table 9.

Seven seniors responded. Six seniors stated the recruiter was a factor and one senior indicated the recruiter was not a factor. Four juniors responded; three stated the recruiter was a factor and one indicated the recruiter was not a factor. Two sophomores responded; two stated the recruiter was a factor and zero indicated the recruiter was not a factor. The majority of the respondents stated that their recruiter was a major factor in their college decision. The recruiter being persistent showed that the prospect was very

Table 9

Recruiter Factor in College Decision

Class Status	Yes	No
Senior	6	1
Junior	3	1
Sophomore	2	0

important. Having the information given to the prospect being truthful was very important, because the information they heard from the recruiter was echoed by other students they knew who attended NWU. Some quotes from respondents were as follows: "The recruiter was a factor in seeing how comfortable I was with interacting with them." "Yes, (the recruiter) made NWU out to be this fantastic place that it is. He made football sound fun, which it is."

The prospects enjoyed the fact that the recruiter had an enjoyable personality and made NWU sound like a fun place to be. The recruiter not only had a good personality that made the prospect feel comfortable and important, but he also very knowledgeable about the programs offered and how the prospect would gain from having an NWU degree. Students perceived that the recruiter was never critical of any of the other schools in the conference, but instead talked about the positives of NWU.

Research Question 10—"In which month did you decide your college choice would be NWU?" The recruiter wanted to know what month the recruit decided to choose Nebraska Wesleyan University as his school of choice. Since NWU is a Division III institution there is no official signing day, so the high school student athlete as the

same signing deadlines as a normal student. Results for Research Question 10 are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Month Athlete Made College Decision

Class Status	Unknown	January	February	March	April
Senior	1	0	1	2	3
Junior	0	2	1	1	0
Sophomore	0	0	0	1	1

Seven seniors responded with one unknown when he made his decision, none with a decision in January, one decision in February, two decisions in March, and three decisions in April. Four juniors responded with none unknown when they made their decision, two with a decision in January, one decision in February, one decision in March, and none with a decision in April. Two sophomores responded with none unknown when they made their decision, none with a decision in January, none with a decision in February, one decision in March, and one decision in April. The chart shows there is no clear pattern with the results of this question. This response varied but the decision mostly took place between the months of January through April. A few made their decision before January, and there was one that made his decision in June.

Research Question 11—"Did the history of success of the football program play a part in your decision? (Why?)" Recruiters have to deal with the ups and downs of a college football season, sometimes the season ends on a positive not, and sometimes on a negative. Recruiters might come from an athletic department that has a rich history

of success or a program with very little success. Nebraska Wesleyan University's football program has achieved success recently, but the researcher wanted to find out what the respondents felt about the school's football history and if it played a factor. Results for Research Question 11 are shown in Table 11.

Table 11

History of Program Played Part in Decision

Class Status	Yes	No
Senior	3	4
Junior	3	1
Sophomore	2	0

Seven seniors responded with three who stated the history of the football program was a factor and four who indicated the history (of the program) was not a factor. Four juniors responded with three stating the history of the football program was a factor and one who indicated the history was not a factor. Two sophomores responded with two stating the history of the program was a factor and zero who indicated the history was not a factor. The senior class was split on the statement that the success of the football team played a factor in their selection of NWU. The majority of the juniors and sophomores felt that the history of the football program was a factor. The answers varied among the respondents, with some stating it was important to them, and with others having it not being as important. "The history of NWU football had little to no bearing on my decision to attend NWU. I believed that no matter how good or bad the previous teams were I would help the NWU program achieve success." "No, I didn't care how good NWU was

in the past because I was coming to a whole new team." "Yes, I wanted to be at an established winning program."

It was important for the student athlete to have the feeling that he was going to be able to contribute to the future teams' successes. Most stated that being a part of a program that has achieved success in the past was important, but past success did not play that large of a role in school choice.

Research Question 12—"Did the possibility of the availability of playing time have any effect on the choice of enrollment? (Explain)" The researcher wanted to determine what student athletes were considering at the time they were being recruited regarding the availability of playing time and how big of a factor the amount of playing time was in their decision. Results for Research Question 12 are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Availability of Playing Time

Class Status	Yes	No
Senior	4	3
Junior	3	1
Sophomore	1	1

Seven seniors responded. Four stated playing time was a factor and three indicated playing time was not a factor. Four juniors responded; three stated playing time was a factor and one indicated playing time was not a factor. Two sophomores responded with one who stated playing time was a factor and one who indicated playing time was not a factor. The seniors and sophomores were split on their responses about

the availability of playing time as a factor. The majority of the juniors perceived the availability of playing time did play a factor in their college decision. Most of the recruits were told by the coach that playing early is very difficult but they would be given a chance to play as they worked and learned the system. The players appreciated the fact that they were not promised anything, but the fact that nobody's position on the team was safe and that anyone could earn a position on the field was very appealing. Quotes from some of the respondents were as follows: "Yes, I knew that without scholarship money playing time was fair game if you worked hard. Coaches made that clear, too." "Yes, if there were consecutive players who were All-American type ahead of me, it would have been hard to choose this school." "The possibility of playing time did persuade me on coming here. They (coaches) made it seem like if I worked hard I would get some playing time after a couple of years."

The possibility of playing time was very attractive for the prospects. For most of the respondents having the knowledge that playing time was there and they didn't have to wait till their senior year was very important to them. Reading through the answers from the respondents I did not see any change with the year in college. Respondents felt that they were attracted to NWU because they felt that playing time was open for players.

Summary of Findings

Major findings from this study indicated there were not any major differences among the seniors, juniors and sophomores when responding to the questionnaire. The recruiting coach being consistent with communication was important and the ability to access a promotional CD to give the student-athlete during the initial face-to-face visit was mentioned as indicators of what Nebraska Wesleyan University was all about.

The top three factors that appeared to have an impact to make the decision of the student-athlete were: (a) a positive impression during the first visit to the high school of the recruit by the NWU coach, (b) follow-up calls after the visit by the coach assisted in their comfort level of NWU, and (c) the positive on-campus visit experience. Data also indicated that having the possibility of playing time also was a factor in their decision.

The respondents felt that to be an effective recruiter meant that one had to be an effective communicator. This meant that not only did the recruiter have to put in the time to be in constant contact with the recruit, but have to communicate in an effective manner. This was stated with what means would be effective to communicate with the recruit, and the respondents answered with using short films. The respondents stated that they wanted to get as much information about Nebraska Wesleyan University and to be able to give them an effective picture of NWU was by using technology. Communication has to be able to help the recruit feel comfortable with the institution and feel comfortable with the recruiter. The constant contact helps the potential student-athlete feel important and that the football program feels that he would be a great fit for the program.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations for Future Research

Nebraska Wesleyan is an institution of higher education that provides a high level of academics as well as an opportunity to participate in athletics. Attention has been given to prospective football student-athletes to observe the academic setting and see what their comfort level was when meeting the coaching staff and current players. The purpose of this research was to determine what areas of recruitment for prospective football student-athletes are productive and where areas of change could take place.

Discussion

The results of the study did not indicate a difference among seniors, juniors and sophomores' with their responses to the research questions. The respondents for the most part had similar answers to the questions. Initially, the researcher perceived that the financial situation of their family might play a large role in the decision for most of the respondents, but data from the study indicated that was not the case. Some recruits had parents who had set aside money for college and they did not have to take on the burden of student loans. Other respondents felt that taking student loans was not a burden that would deter them away from NWU. The respondents that did perceive their families' financial situation played a large role in the decision-making process and that with all things considered NWU was situation that made sense for them.

Of the entire respondent pool almost all of them indicated the mailings from NWU were ineffective. The NWU mailings were not unique when compared to mailings from all of the other institutions. They did, however, indicate that sending a short film or PowerPoint to the recruit would be very effective. The ability to make NWU appear

unique in regard to giving the prospective student-athlete a visual about what Nebraska Wesleyan University's football team would be a powerful weapon. The researcher agreed with the respondents in the case of mailings; everyone gets mass mailings and most of the time they end up in the trash, but giving electronic visuals to prospects who have never been to the campus or seen a NWU football game would give the person the ability to experience the NWU environment from home.

The building of the relationship between the prospective football student-athlete and the football coach was viewed as important to the researcher. For most of the respondents having the coach come to their school and visit them showed the recruit that they were important and there was interest from NWU to find out more about them and their athletic and academic goals. It is very valuable to have the coach have the ability to meet with the recruit face-to-face and find out what kind of personality the young man has. The responses from the NWU football players indicated they felt the same way; this was their time to see what kind of personality the coach has and gauge what interest the coach had in the prospect. Most of the respondents were excited to take a visit to Nebraska Wesleyan University following the high school visit from the football coach.

Most of the respondents had a positive experience with their visit to NWU. They were able to meet with the football coaches and current players. And for the academics they were able to meet with current faculty and professors. Since Nebraska Wesleyan University is a Division III institution it is not allowed to give athletic scholarships. It is important for the school to set-up tours that encompasses athletics as well as academics. The tours are somewhat intense because of the necessity to visit with many people from the academic side and the athletic side of the equation. So it was very refreshing to see

that the campus tours were very helpful. The recruits felt important by having so many one-on-one interactions with coaches, staff, faculty, and current student-athletes.

The follow up calls were a very time consuming task that coaches take part in for an extended period of time so it was important to see if the calls were effective in gaining interest from the prospect. Almost the entire group of respondents indicated that they were able to feel a sense of comfort and that a true relationship was being built between the recruit and the recruiter. Respondents indicated the recruiter was truly concerned with the decision that the prospective football student-athlete was about to make. The results showed that for most of the respondents the recruiter was a major factor in their decision to attend NWU.

The researcher questioned what role the history of success of the football program might play in the student-athletes college decision, but the results from respondents were mixed. What was unique about the respondent pool was that all of the respondents when they entered NWU were following football teams that had 7-3 records. So the researcher was not able to determine if having losing seasons might play a factor in school decision. The researcher was also surprised that not all of the respondents felt that it was important to have the availability of playing time right away. The responses were almost equally split. It was important for all of them to feel that playing time was earned and not just given to a person because of years of service.

Recommendations for Future Research

A study of other institutions of the same size as Nebraska Wesleyan University who have the ability to give athletic scholarships would be very beneficial to develop comparative data. Such a study would allow the researcher to see if athletic scholarships

were a factor in deciding among one institution over another institution based on the capability to provide athletic scholarships.

Research could be developed to determine why an institution like NWU is successful in attracting new student-athletes while being located in the middle of other institutions that are able to give athletic scholarships. The research might have the possibility to highlight the ways NWU has a competitive edge over other institutions as well as where they have weaknesses.

Research about the relationship between the athletic department and academic department should be conducted to determine if a positive relationship plays a role in the recruitment of a student-athlete. The world of the recruitment of student-athletes is always changing. Not only can athletic departments rely on their athletic success, but they need a successful academic institution to make them attractive to new recruits.

References

Arkes, H., Jones, S., & Kmett, C. (1999). The influence of decision aids on high school students' satisfaction with their college choice decision. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25,* 1293-1301.

Bateman, M., & Spruill, D. (1996). Student decision-making: Insights from the college choice process. College Student Journal, 30(2), 182. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier database.

Calhoon, R. P. (1949). *Problems in personnel administration.* New York: Harper Brothers.

Chimes, M., & Gordon, S. (2008). What works: A student and counselor explore college recruitment. *Journal of College Admission,* 26-30.

Cortez, A., & Cortez, J. (2004). Research findings – Part III – Expectations drive effective college recruitment strategies. *IDRA Newsletter,* 1-6.

Ehrlich, T. (2004). Choosing a college. Carnegie *Perspectives,* 1-2.

Hawes, J., & Lewison, D. (2007). Student target marketing strategies for universities. *Journal of College Admission,* 14-19.

Hossler, D. (1984). *Enrollment management: An integrated approach*. Washington, DC: The College Board.

Letawsky, N., Schneider R., Pedersen P., & Palmer C. (2003). Factors influencing the college selection process of student athletes: Are their factors similar to non-student athletes?. *College Student Journal, 37*(4), 604-610. Retrieved on April 27, 2009, from: Academic Search Premier database.

Litten, L.M. (1982). Different strokes in the applicant pod: Some refinements in a model of student college choice. *Journal of Higher Education, 53*(4), 383-402.

Maloney, P.W. (1961). *Management's talent search: Recruiting professional personnel.* New York: American Management Association.

Rogers, D., & Sincoff, M. (1978). Favorable impression characteristics of the recruitment interviewer. *Personal Psychology, 31*, 495-501.

Schmit, J., & Hossler, D. (1995). *A nine year follow-up of college choice*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Washburn, P. V., & Hakel, M. D. (1973). Visual cues and verbal content as influences on impressions after simulated employment interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 58*, 137-140.

Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Santo Questionnaire

Why Do Student Athletes Choose to Attend Nebraska Wesleyan University?

Your year in College (circle one) Sophomore Junior Senior 5th Year

The questionnaire contains twelve questions:

1. Did your financial situation of your family play a role in the overall decision to select NWU as your school of choice? (Please explain)
2. Were the mailings that came to you from NWU effective in building your interest about NWU and the football program?
3. What other means would you prefer that information would have been given to you to build a better understanding of NWU (e.g. short films, power points, mailings, etc)?
4. Was the first high school visit by the NWU coach an important factor in forming an impression of the institution and the football program? (Explain why it was important or not important?)
5. Did the follow-up calls after the first visit by the coach assist you in making you feel important to NWU and football program? (Explain)
6. When did you perceive you were ready to participate in a university campus visit during the initial stages of the recruitment period?
7. Describe your on-campus visit experience. (Did you feel that the university made you feel welcome and important during the visit?)
8. How involved were your parents in your decision to select and attend NWU? (Why or why not?)
9. Was the recruiter a factor on your college decision? (How?)
10. In which month did you decide your college choice would be NWU?
11. Did the history of success of the football program play a part in your decision? (Why?)
12. Did the possibility of the availability of playing time have any effect on the choice of enrollment? (Explain)

Appendix B

IRB Consent Form

IRB Student Informed Consent Form

IRB #

Why do Football Student-Athletes Choose Nebraska Wesleyan University

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of student's perceptions of identified factors with the football recruiting process, and the overall decision with selecting Nebraska Wesleyan University as your school of choice.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this research and participation in this study will require only a minimal amount of time.

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the participants when electronic communications are used.

All the data gathered during this study will be kept strictly confidential. The results of this study may be published in journals or presented at professional meetings, but, if this happens, your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

You are free to decide not participate in this study or to withdraw at any time during the study without adversely affecting your relationship with the researcher and the Nebraska Wesleyan University. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may ask any questions concerning the research either before agreeing to participate or during the research study. If you have any questions that have not been answered by the investigator about your rights as a part of this research, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you are nineteen years of age or older, and that, having read and understood the information presented, you have decided to participate. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

Ben Santo	Principal Investigator	Phone # 402-883-7464
Larry Dlugosh (PhD)	Secondary Investigator	Phone # 402-472-6975

Appendix C

IRB Approval

August 3, 2010

Benjamin Santo
Department of Educational Administration
5600 Roose St Apt 11 Lincoln, NE 68506

Larry Dlugosh
Department of Educational Administration
141C TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20100810740EP
Project ID: 10740
Project Title: Why Do Football Student-Athletes Choose Nebraska Wesleyan University

Dear Benjamin:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46).

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 08/03/2010. This approval is Valid Until: 08/02/2011.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

William Thomas, Ph.D.
Chair for the IRB