

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Publications: Agricultural Leadership,
Education & Communication Department

Agricultural Leadership, Education &
Communication Department

January 2002

Recruiting Urban and Rural Students: Factors Influencing the Postsecondary Education Institution Choices of Rural Versus Urban High School Students

Timothy D. Hodges
The Gallup Organization

John E. Barbuto Jr.
University of Nebraska - Lincoln, jbarbuto@unlnotes.unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/aglcfacpub>



Part of the [Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Hodges, Timothy D. and Barbuto, John E. Jr., "Recruiting Urban and Rural Students: Factors Influencing the Postsecondary Education Institution Choices of Rural Versus Urban High School Students" (2002). *Faculty Publications: Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication Department*. 45.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/aglcfacpub/45>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication Department at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications: Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication Department by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Recruiting Urban and Rural Students: Factors Influencing the Postsecondary Education Institution Choices of Rural Versus Urban High School Students

Abstract

This study tests factors that are most instrumental to high school seniors when selecting postsecondary institutions. Forty-nine students were sampled in a structured telephone interview to ascertain the key factors. Results demonstrate some difference between urban and rural students influencing factors. Implications and a future research agenda are discussed.

Each year, hundreds of colleges and universities spend millions of dollars on recruiting high school students to attend selected postsecondary institutions. In recent years there has been a push, primarily by land-grant universities, to tap into the out-of-state student population. The rationale for doing this is twofold. First, the out-of-state students pay higher tuition rates than the in-state students, offering a financial boost to the institution. Secondly, by bringing in students from outside the state's borders, the institution's diversity is enhanced.

Many institutions are spending money to recruit these students to fill their classrooms. However, little effort is made to individualize the recruitment process. Instead, a more generalized approach is used as an economical way to contact more students. This method is often viewed as impersonal. Students comment that they feel more like a number than an individual. With this in mind, and realizing that students are not the same, using a more individualized approach has proven to be effective for many schools (Kuras 1997).

Because recruitment and admissions are hot buttons for many postsecondary institutions, it is important that the most effective methods are used. One difference that may impact students' needs is the setting in which they were raised. This study offers a comparison of students from rural and urban upbringings, and determines how their needs may be different.

Recruiting Strategies in the Field: Some Background

Because student recruitment is such a pressing issue for colleges and universities, a fair amount of research has been done in the area. Gose (1997a) looked at concerns over decreases in postsecondary enrollment and reported that private universities and colleges have suffered a drop in applications during the 1996-97 school year, in part because more applicants were opting for early admissions programs. These early admissions programs force applicants to commit to one institution earlier, thus limiting the number of college applications. Highly regarded public univer-

sities in Texas and California have experienced a sharp decline in applications from minority students, in part because of new and proposed legislation to adopt policies that abolish affirmative action admission programs. Filling seats is a pressing need for an increasing number of postsecondary institutions.

This poses some questions. How will these institutions fill their empty seats in classrooms? Are there certain groups of students that should be targeted? How can colleges and universities give these groups what they want? Gose (1998) describes how Temple University, a private institution, is recruiting aggressively in the suburbs. Temple University research shows that suburban students are better prepared academically and are more likely to live on campus, stay in school, and graduate. The University has decided to lure suburbanites by adding new buildings to the North Philadelphia campus. Temple hopes that the appeal of the new buildings will be attractive to this highly desired group of students.

Some colleges, such as the University of Detroit-Mercy, employ more personal contact of students from university officials to boost enrollment. Kuras (1997) discusses the plan that the University of Detroit-Mercy created to increase its enrollment rate. Dr. Robert E. Johnson, Dean of Enrollment Management, evaluated the correspondence system and developed a newer and more effective system. He used personalized correspondence to be distributed to those who contacted the admissions office. This initiative is thought to have caused the enrollment in the freshman class to increase nearly 25 percent.

T. Hodges is a Program Leader for the Gallup Organization in Lincoln, Nebraska. He conducts research in the areas of leadership, employee selection and development, education, and talent. He earned his M.S. in Leadership Education from the University of Nebraska.

J. Barbuto is an Assistant Professor of Leadership and the Director of the Leadership Studies Doctoral Program at the University of Nebraska. He conducts research in the areas of teaching, leadership, motivation, power, and personality. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Rhode Island.

With the use of Orbit Enterprises' RAS file (the new software package), each letter was "signed" by university staff members to show a more personalized touch.

Other such tactics are also being used to recruit talented students. For example, Gose (1997b) opens up to the issue of "putting a face" on student recruitment. Some colleges are using area representatives (admissions representatives who often live far away from campus) to attract applicants from new areas. Colleges without national name recognition establish admissions representatives to build relationships with students who would not have otherwise considered that school. The strategy is showing signs of success. This plan does not save the college much money, but it increases student diversity and recruiter productivity.

Even larger schools with name recognition have placed recruiters off-site. The host university in this study is finishing its pilot year with off-site recruiters. Markets with strong potential are made known by the presence of a strong alumni chapter and substantial numbers of applicants from the area. The host university off-site recruitment venture is being piloted in Kansas City, Chicago, Denver, and Los Angeles (Stelzer 1999). If successful, the host university has considered plans to extend its efforts to other metropolitan areas such as Minneapolis, Atlanta, and Dallas within the next few years.

Are there other players in the college search process? Parents, peers, and counselors have been discussed as major players in a student's decision of where to attend college. Parents are especially involved when it comes to the financial side of the decision. This parental influence has prompted many institutions to tailor their marketing efforts towards parents. Colleges and universities promote the viewpoints that higher education is an investment with value added; that their particular institution is affordable; and that the high costs will pay off in the long run in terms of higher incomes, better networking in the workplace, and a more satisfying lifestyle. Many institutions have also published parent brochures promoting career support services and campus safety. Special parental activities are being built into campus visit programs. An increasing amount of attention is given to parents from university faculty and staff as well.

A study on college selection at Carleton College in Minnesota by Sullivan and Litten (1976) showed that nearly 75 percent of students indicated that parental influence greatly increased their desire to attend. With this influence, it is no wonder that institutions are focusing on the parent as a stakeholder in the decision process.

As the parent of a college freshman, Rothman (1999) also discusses college selection. She discusses the efforts of the City University of New York to recruit talented students, and how middle-class children leaving for college work against the University's goal of retaining New York City's top talent. Rothman argues that if the college offered dorms and enhanced college life, they would see a greater enrollment of middle-class students, possibly including her daughter.

So what are the best ways to discover the specific needs of students? Krukowski and Kane (1982) discuss the importance of marketing in college admissions. They believe that admissions offices should do market research to discover perceptions of

potential applicants. This research may uncover valuable information about the perceptions of applicants on academic reputation, size, proximity to home, and many other factors.

Which Recruiting Strategies Work?

What specific factors really do influence a student's college choice? Seymour (2000) reports that, "A recent survey of 10,000 high school students revealed a university's Web site is the third most important source of information for prospective students, subordinate only to a campus visit and a conversation with a current student" (p. A11). Many university sites now feature virtual campus tours, course catalogs, student testimonials, listings of scheduled academic and extracurricular activities, and e-mail links to professors. Some educators believe that Web sites will eventually replace traditional brochures and guidebooks.

Hale (2000) reports a synthesis of over 100 studies conducted by The Gallup Organization for higher education institutions throughout the United States over the past fifteen years. Interviews were conducted with both "decisionmakers" (prospective students and their parents) and referral agents (high school guidance counselors and "key" teachers and coaches). The research was done with two-year community colleges, and four-year private colleges, private universities, and public universities. The four factors found to be "critically important" factors in college selection by students and parents were as follows: (1) How well the college prepares you for a career; (2) A quality education at a reasonable cost (a value); (3) The quality of the faculty; and (4) The quality of the specific academic program ("major") of interest to the student.

The Need for Understanding Rural vs. Urban Recruiting Differences

Although the research completed in the field clarifies the problem at hand and offers some potential solutions, there are some gaps. More research is needed to delineate efforts to individualize the selection process. One way, as proposed in this study, is to extend the idea in place at Temple University to better understand and recruit students from the suburbs (Gose 1998). Research should be done to assess the needs of students from rural and urban areas. In doing this, universities will be able to cater to the needs of recruits more effectively. More individualized marketing campaigns could be developed to entice students from all areas, helping to fill the vacancies in classrooms.

This inductive study examines the factors influencing the post-secondary institution choices of both rural and urban high school students. Because this paper reports a preliminary investigation of rural and urban differences, there are no specific hypotheses developed, but rather the relationships and differences are carefully explored so as to provide preliminary results and guide future research studies examining these domains of interest.

Methods

SAMPLE

The sample for this study was drawn from a population of 81 college freshmen that applied, were admitted, and were offered a "New Full Differential Scholarship" to attend the host univer-

sity. The scholarship was awarded based on outstanding academic success in high school as determined by standardized test scores and high school class rank. Approximately 64 percent of the students were currently attending the host university, while the others declined the scholarship to attend another institution. All of the students graduated from high schools outside the home state, and had not established state residency as determined by the host university's Office of Admissions. The population was 52 percent female and 48 percent male. All of the students in the population were at least 19 years of age at the time of data collection.

The census format of data collection yielded a response rate of over 60 percent. The actual sample size for the study was 49 students. This was a representative sample, as 69 percent were currently attending the host university. The gender breakdown of the sample was 51 percent female, 49 percent male.

MEASURES AND PROCEDURES

The students were contacted via telephone using a list generated from admissions data. Multiple attempts to contact the students were made if the first attempt was unsuccessful. The respondents were read an informed consent form (see Appendix A). The student then had the option to decline the survey and was informed that they had the option to terminate the survey at any time, and could request that their information not be used. Upon consent, the interview proceeded.

The survey was conducted as a structured phone interview using the script of questions as shown in Appendix B. Many of the questions on the instrument came from previous studies (Hale 2000; Ihlanfeldt 1980; Krukowski and Kane 1982; Litten 1991; Seymour 2000; Stelzer 1999; Sullivan and Litten 1976; Wright 1995). When determining what constitutes urban and rural, the questions identified as important. Open-ended questions were added to allow participants to convey any thoughts, attitudes, and ideas that may not have been addressed in the instrument.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Analysis of data included descriptive statistical and zero order regression. Two-tailed t-tests were calculated to determine the level of significance of each factor. The individual importance of each item was shown using descriptive statistical analysis.

Leverage analysis was also calculated to organize and understand the data. Leverage analysis summarized the data, in graphical form, into four categories. Each item was measured on the importance as an influencing factor in the student's college decision. The items were then analyzed as to the individual item's quality ranking at the host institution.

Results

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

As shown in Tables 1-3, the mean and standard deviation were calculated for each of the fifteen questions and their follow-up questions. The tables offer a comparison between the full data set (Table 1), the data from the rural respondents (Table 2), and the data from the urban respondents (Table 3). Zero order

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Survey Questions: All Respondents

Question	Overall n	Overall mean	Overall standard deviation
1. Web site	49	1.8571	1.4434
1a. Web site	31	3.5806	1.1768
2. Campus visit	49	3.7347	1.4829
2a. Campus visit	40	4.225	0.7675
3. Contact-recruiter	49	2.9796	1.6006
3a. Contact-recruiter	40	3.925	0.9443
4. Contact-students	49	2.7143	1.7078
4a. Contact-students	34	3.7941	1.038
5. Contact-alumni	49	1.2449	1.6397
5a. Contact-alumni	19	3.5263	0.9048
6. Contact-faculty	49	2.2041	1.8025
6a. Contact-faculty	24	3.6667	0.7614
7. Quality of faculty	49	4.4082	0.6096
7a. Quality of faculty	46	3.8043	0.778
8. Specific program	49	4.3061	1.0841
8a. Specific program	46	4.1087	0.6742
9. Reputation	49	4.1633	0.8502
9a. Reputation	48	3.9583	0.7978
10. Value	49	4.6122	0.6395
10a. Value	49	4.5102	0.6808
11. Financial aid	49	4.6939	0.6521
11a. Financial aid	49	4.1633	0.8502
12. Facilities	49	4.0612	0.9445
12a. Facilities	48	4.3125	0.689
13. Athletic programs	49	2.3061	1.3417
13a. Athletic programs	48	4.4167	0.8711
14. Proximity	49	3.1429	1.3385
14a. Proximity	49	3.6327	1.0347
15. Prepare for career	49	4.6122	0.6713
15a. Prepare for career	49	4.2449	0.7781

regressions were conducted, however, no significant correlations were found.

As shown in Table 1, the top factors influencing the respondents' postsecondary education institution choices are financial aid, value, how well the institution will prepare them for a career, the quality of faculty, quality of specific programs, and academic reputation. This is quite similar to the rural students' responses, as shown in Table 2.

The respondents from rural backgrounds indicated that financial aid, value, how well the institution will prepare them for a career, quality of faculty, quality of specific programs, and quality of facilities were the factors that most strongly influenced their postsecondary education institution choices. The contact from alumni appeared to be the least influential factor of those tested. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for the urban respondents.

The urban respondents indicated many of the same factors held great importance, such as financial aid, how well the institution will prepare them for a career, value, and quality of faculty. The urban students also assigned high importance to academic reputation and contact from faculty. Again, contact from alumni was the least influential factor.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Survey Questions: Rural Respondents

Question	Rural n	Rural mean	Rural standard deviation
1. Website	25	2.24	1.5621
1a. Website	18	3.7222	1.1275
2. Campus visit	25	4.16	1.1431
2a. Campus visit	20	4.3	0.5712
3. Contact-recruiter	25	3.12	1.5631
3a. Contact-recruiter	21	4	0.8944
4. Contact-students	25	2.68	1.7729
4a. Contact-students	17	4.0588	0.9663
5. Contact-alumni	25	1.08	1.4411
5a. Contact-alumni	10	3.5	0.9718
6. Contact-faculty	25	2.52	1.8511
6a. Contact-faculty	14	3.5714	0.8526
7. Quality of faculty	25	4.44	0.6506
7a. Quality of faculty	24	3.9167	0.8297
8. Specific program	25	4.4	1.0408
8a. Specific program	23	4.1739	0.7168
9. Reputation	25	4.08	1.0376
9a. Reputation	24	4	0.8847
10. Value	25	4.56	0.7118
10a. Value	25	4.32	0.8021
11. Financial aid	25	4.6	0.7638
11a. Financial aid	25	4.04	0.9781
12. Facilities	25	4.2	0.7071
12a. Facilities	25	4.2	0.7638
13. Athletic programs	25	2.24	1.4224
13a. Athletic programs	24	4.375	1.0135
14. Proximity	25	2.84	1.4047
14a. Proximity	25	3.72	0.9798
15. Prepare for career	25	4.52	0.7141
15a. Prepare for career	25	4.04	0.8406

The next descriptive analysis that was conducted was the comparison of means of the significant factors. Two-tailed t-tests were calculated to determine the level of significance of each factor. As shown in Table 4, the only factor that reached statistical significance was the campus visit, where the students from rural backgrounds rated the importance of a campus visit 0.87 points higher than the urban students when comparing the means for Question 2. While this is the only factor with statistical significance, the rural students also rated the Web site and contact from faculty higher. Proximity to home was rated higher by the urban students than the rural students. See Table 4.

LEVERAGE ANALYSIS

Following the descriptive analysis, a leverage analysis was completed to help organize and understand the data. With leverage analysis, the grand mean for the importance factor is calculated and plotted on the x-axis. The grand mean for the host university rating factor was calculated and plotted on the y-axis. This procedure creates four distinct quadrants, as shown in Figures 1-3. Each question is plotted as a data point on the leverage analysis graph. The first quadrant (Strengths) reflects those

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Survey Questions: Urban Respondents

Question	Urban n	Urban mean	Urban standard deviation
1. Website	24	1.4583	1.2151
1a. Website	13	3.3846	1.2609
2. Campus visit	24	3.2917	1.6806
2a. Campus visit	20	4.15	0.9333
3. Contact-recruiter	24	2.8333	1.6594
3a. Contact-recruiter	19	3.8421	1.0145
4. Contact-students	24	2.75	1.6746
4a. Contact-students	17	3.5294	1.0676
5. Contact-alumni	24	1.4167	1.8396
5a. Contact-alumni	9	3.5556	0.8819
6. Contact-faculty	24	1.875	1.7273
6a. Contact-faculty	10	3.8	0.6325
7. Quality of faculty	24	4.375	0.5758
7a. Quality of faculty	22	3.6818	0.7162
8. Specific program	24	4.2083	1.1413
8a. Specific program	23	4.0435	0.6381
9. Reputation	24	4.25	0.6079
9a. Reputation	24	3.9167	0.7173
10. Value	24	4.6667	0.5647
10a. Value	24	4.7083	0.4643
11. Financial aid	24	4.7917	0.509
11a. Financial aid	24	4.2917	0.6903
12. Facilities	24	3.9167	1.1389
12a. Facilities	23	4.4348	0.5898
13. Athletic programs	24	2.375	1.279
13a. Athletic programs	24	4.4583	0.7211
14. Proximity	24	3.4583	1.2151
14a. Proximity	24	3.5417	1.1025
15. Prepare for career	24	4.7083	0.6241
15a. Prepare for career	24	4.4583	0.658

items that are seen by the respondents as influential factors for which the host university has a high rating. Quadrant 2 (Maintain) holds the items that the students rated as less important than the grand mean, but for the host university, rated higher than the grand mean. Quadrant 3 (Secondary Opportunities) shows those items seen as less important factors influencing the college selection process, with the host university ranking lower than the grand mean. Finally, quadrant 4 (Opportunities) contains those items ranked as having high importance and a low host university rating. See Figures 1-3.

In Figure 1 (all respondents), the items listed as “Strengths” were the campus visit, strength of academic programs, value, financial aid, quality of the facilities, and how well the institution will prepare the students for a career. The “Maintain” quadrant holds quality of athletic programs, while quadrant 3 has the university Web site, contact with an admissions representative, contact with current students, contact with alumni, contact with faculty, and proximity to home. Finally, in the “Opportunities” quadrant were the quality of faculty and academic reputation.

When looking at influential factors and the host university quality rankings by rural respondents, the “Strengths” are iden-

Table 4. Two-tailed t-test data

	n	Actual mean difference	T=
2. Campus visit	49	-0.87	2.1063*
1. Web site	49	-0.78	1.9596
6. Contact-faculty	49	-0.64	1.2616
14. Proximity	49	0.62	-1.6499

Note. *Significance at $p < .05$

tified as the campus visit, quality of programs, value, quality of facilities, financial aid, and how well the institution will prepare the student for a career. The items to “Maintain” are the contact with current students and quality of athletic programs. The “Secondary Opportunities” are the university Web site, contact with an admissions recruiter, contact with alumni, contact with faculty, and proximity to home. Finally, the “Opportunities” for the rural students were the quality of faculty and the overall academic reputation of the institution.

Many of the factors that influenced the rural students have similarly influenced the urban students. The “Strengths” include the quality of the programs, value, financial aid, quality of facilities, and how well the institution will prepare the students for a career; all of which were also strengths for the rural students. The factors to “Maintain” for the urban students were the campus visit and the quality of the athletic programs. The “Secondary Opportunities” included the university Web site, contact with an admissions recruiter, contact with current students, contact with alumni, and contact with faculty. The “Opportunities” for the urban students were proximity to home, the quality of faculty, and the overall academic reputation.

Discussion

Many conclusions can be drawn from the data collected in this study. Although there was only one statistically significant difference between the urban and rural students, valuable information was gathered about both groups. The ability to reach out to both rural and urban groups of students was also measured, and the information should be helpful in future recruiting campaigns as well as future research efforts.

Because rural students rated the Web site, campus tour, and contact with faculty somewhat higher than did urban students when choosing schools, these factors represent a largely untapped opportunity for targeted recruiting strategies of rural students. Since Web site, campus tour, and faculty contact were all important to rural students, creative linkages may be possible to target rural students. For example, with today’s (and tomorrow’s) technology, a university that can create a high quality Web site will be more likely to appeal to rural students. If this Web site could have some high tech features on it, such as a virtual campus tour, it will likely increase its appeal to rural students. Also, the Web site may have detailed faculty information containing profiles, contact information, and links to faculty home pages. A step further may be online question and answer sessions with faculty, or even edited “frequently asked questions” (FAQs) with faculty responses that could be consolidated and updated regularly. Each of these suggestions address

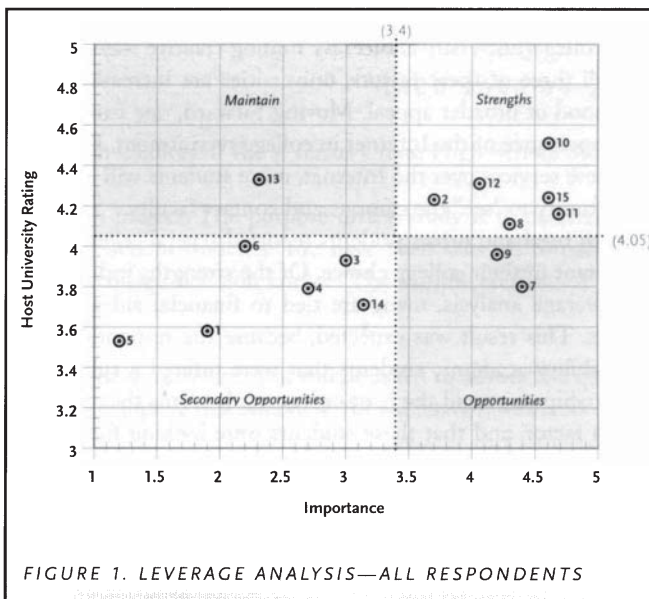


FIGURE 1. LEVERAGE ANALYSIS—ALL RESPONDENTS

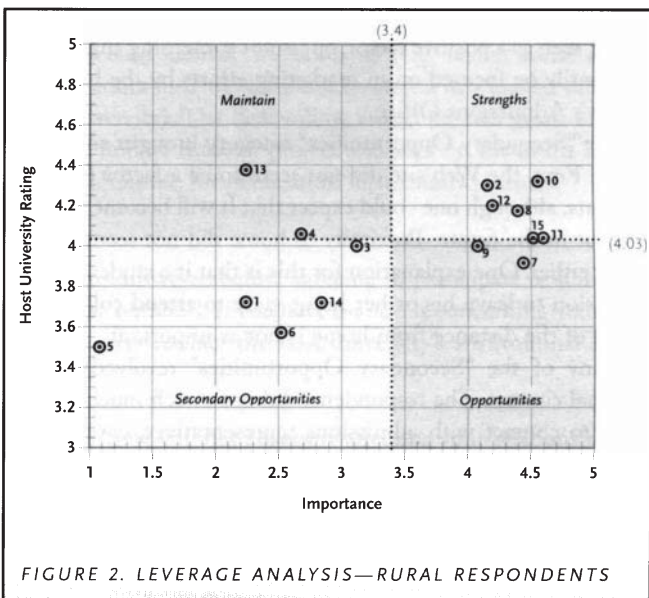


FIGURE 2. LEVERAGE ANALYSIS—RURAL RESPONDENTS

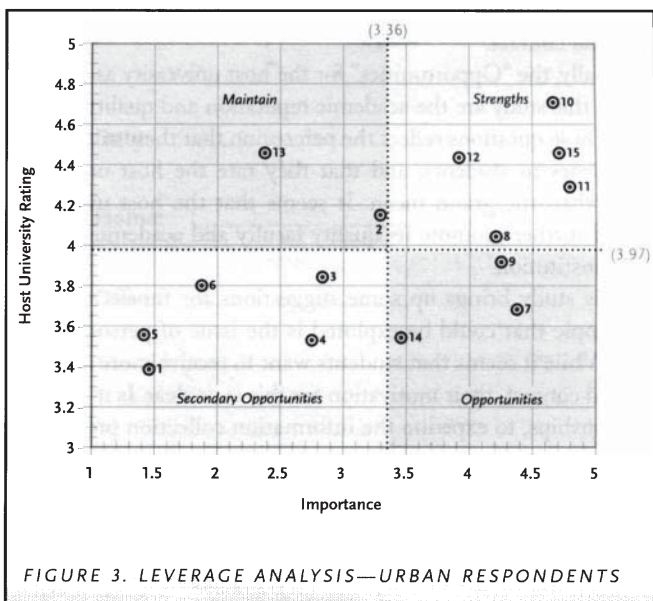


FIGURE 3. LEVERAGE ANALYSIS—URBAN RESPONDENTS

the three most important factors identified by rural students in their college/university choice. By finding creative ways to provide all three of these factors, universities are increasing their likelihood of broader appeal. Moving forward, one can foresee the importance of the Internet in college recruitment. By offering these services over the Internet, more students will have the opportunity to "see" the campus and contact faculty.

Both rural and urban students reported several criteria to be important in their college choice. Of the strengths indicated in the leverage analysis, many are tied to financial aid and academics. This result was expected, because the respondents are high-ability academic students that were offered a substantial scholarship to attend the host university. It seems that finances were a factor, and that these students were looking for a postsecondary institution that would allow them to continue their pursuit of academic excellence.

The "Maintain" quadrant could be expected. The "Strength" of the athletic programs consistently showed up as an item for which students rated the host university highly, but it had little impact on their college selection process. This is something that can be seen as a positive factor, but is not something that should necessarily be focused on in marketing efforts by the host university's Admissions Office.

The "Secondary Opportunities" category brought some surprises. First, the Web site did not seem to be a factor for these students, although one could expect that it will become more of a factor in the future. Proximity to home did not seem to be a factor either. One explanation for this is that if a student makes a decision to leave his or her home state to attend college, the extent of the distance from home is not as important.

Many of the "Secondary Opportunities" revolved around personal contact. The respondents did not attach much importance to contact with admissions representatives, current students, alumni, or faculty members. This may seem contrary to the information regarding the importance of personal contact as illustrated earlier this paper. One possible explanation for the low marks for personal contact may be that it is not the relationships with others that the students are really after; rather, it is the expedited information gathering that is possible from the personal contact.

Finally, the "Opportunities" for the host university as pointed out in this study are the academic reputation and quality of faculty. These questions reflect the perception that these are important issues to students, and that they rate the host university lower than the grand mean. It seems that the host university should further promote its quality faculty and academic success as an institution.

This study brings up some suggestions for future research. One topic that could be explored is the issue of personal contact. While it seems that students want to receive more individualized contact, their motivation for this is unclear. Is it to build relationships, to expedite the information collection process, or both? Studies could be done to determine the motivation of students in desiring more individualized contact. Additionally, studies could be conducted which are designed to ascertain which forms of personal contact are most salient across and between high school students in their college selection process.

Since respondents did not attach much significance to the university Web sites, it seems ironic that the future of college recruitment will feature students using the Web sites to apply online, take virtual tours, contact faculty and staff, and learn more about the campus. One research opportunity may be to examine the growth and importance of the role that the Internet plays in college recruitment over the next five to ten years. This would help to further understand the impacts of changes that occur in the field of student recruitment as attempts are made to identify key factors that influence the postsecondary institution choices of high school students. It is our hope that a fruitful line of inquiry may be stimulated from this work.

References

- Gose, Ben. 1997a. Colleges use field agents to get close to potential applicants. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 14 February: A39.
- . 1997b. Elite private colleges see a drop in applications. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 7 March: A35.
- . 1998. Temple U. raises standards to woo suburban students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 11 December: A61-A63.
- Hale, Jim. 2000. *Gallup Studies For Higher Education Institutions*. Lincoln, NE: The Gallup Organization.
- Ihlanfeldt, William. 1980. *Achieving Optimal Enrollments and Tuition Revenues: A Guide to Modern Methods of Market Research, Student Recruitment, and Institutional Pricing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Krukowski, Jan, and Herman Kane. 1982. Using market research to develop an admissions plan. In William R. Lowrey & Associates, (Eds.), *College Admissions Counseling: A Handbook for the Profession*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kuras, James. 1997. College recruitment that counts. *Fund Raising Management*. 28(7):22-24.
- Litten, Larry. 1991. *Ivy Bound: High-ability Students and College Choice*. New York: The College Board.
- Rothman, Barbara Katz. 1999. Going away to college: A mother's maxim. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 17 December: B13.
- Seymour, Liz. 2000. Giving the Web the new college try: Students online surf to sample life on campus. *The Washington Post*. 8 March: A11.
- Stelzer, Kristine. 1999. *The College Search and Decision-Making Process from the Perspective of an Out-Of-State Student*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Sullivan, Daniel, and Larry Litten. 1976. Using research in analyzing student markets: A case study. In *A Role For Marketing In College Admissions: Papers Presented at the Colloquium on College Admissions*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board.
- Wright, Ann. 1995. Admissions recruitment: The first step. In R. Dixon (Ed.), *Making Enrollment Management Work, No.71*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The authors would like to thank Lloyd Bell and Dann Husmann for their thoughtful input at various stages of this work.

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

IRB# 2000-04-251EX

The study is entitled "Factors Influencing Postsecondary Education Institution Choices of Rural versus Urban High School Students."

This is a research study that is part of an undergraduate honors research project. The purpose of the study is to determine the factors influencing the postsecondary education institution choices of high school students. You have been selected to participate because they expressed interest in the host university while making their college decision choice. The sample consists of college freshmen at least 19 years of age.

You are being asked to participate in a telephone interview regarding student recruitment. You will be asked to answer the questions honestly and as accurately as possible. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete this interview. All necessary information will be obtained through the interview.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this research. In the event of problems resulting from participation in the study, psychological treatment is available at the _____ Psychological Consultation Center, telephone (____) ____-_____.

The information gained from this study will be used to assist future recruiting efforts.

Your confidentiality will be strictly held. Individual responses will not be highlighted in the report; rather, all information will be presented as aggregated data. Any form of identification that may be used to identify the students (e.g. name, social security number, etc.) will be removed from the data before it is analyzed. The disk containing the data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the Department _____, located in _____ at the _____ (host university). The disk will be stored for two years, at which point it will be destroyed. The study will be published as an undergraduate honors research project and kept on file at the Honors Program Office, at the _____ (host university). The study may also be submitted for publication in scholarly journals.

There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate or during the experiment. Or you may call the investigator at any time, home phone, (phone number). If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the investigator, you may contact the host university's Institutional Review Board, at (phone number).

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator, the host university or other participating agent.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. At this time, please indicate whether or not you understand and agree to the information presented.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

_____, Principal Investigator

Home: (____) ____ - _____

_____, Secondary Investigator

Office: (____) ____ - _____

Appendix B: Instrumentation

Do you consider your upbringing more urban or rural?

Are you currently attending college? *(If yes, proceed with interview. If no, then conclude.)*

Where are you currently attending college?

Why did you choose this postsecondary institution?

0 1 2 3 4 5
not important slightly important fairly important moderately important very important extremely important

Please comment on the role your parents played in the selection of your postsecondary institution.

For each of the following items, please rate the significance to you when selecting a college or university. Then, as a follow-up to each question, indicate whether you received each form of contact from the host university. If not, indicate, "zero." If so, please rate the host university on each of these criteria on a scale of one to five with five being the highest.

Please rate each of the following questions on a 0-5 scale as follows:

University Web site

Campus visit

Contact with an admissions recruiter

Contact with current students from the institution

Contact with alumni from the institution

Contact with current faculty from the institution

Quality of faculty

Quality of specific academic program

Overall academic reputation of the institution

Value of education (Quality education at a reasonable price)

Financial aid package/scholarships

Quality of the facilities

Quality of athletic programs

Proximity to home

How well the institution will prepare you for a career

Of the above criteria, please rank the three most important factors influencing your college choice.

Is there anything else that comes to mind when you think back to the factors influencing your college decision?