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FRESHMEN AT COMPETITIVE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES: 
A SURVEY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for 
the Degree, Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate 
School of The Ohio State University

By

Robert Allen Sevier, B.A., M.S.

The Ohio State University

1986

Dissertation Committee:
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Dr. Paul Peterson

Approved by

William Moore
Adviser
Department of Educational 
Policy and Leadership
This dissertation is dedicated with heart-felt appreciation to Pat, my wife and best friend; to Andrew, our son; and to my parents. Thank you all for your continuing love and support.
Numerous individuals deserve recognition for their contribution to this research. At the very least, they include: My adviser, Dr. William Moore, Jr., whose advice and support were invaluable to the timely completion of this project; Dr. Jack Culbertson, whose intellectual drive and profound sense of humor provided a graceful balance between academics and humanity; Dr. Paul Peterson and Ms. Pam Creeden, for their willingness to help me wade through the academic bureaucracy and to see beyond OSU; Mr. Stewart Dyke, for his insights into the pragmatic aspects of collegiate marketing and public relations and his willingness to share his knowledge. And finally, to Emily Francis, whose words of encouragement at the most difficult times were greatly appreciated.
VITA

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<td>5.</td>
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1. Projected number of high school graduates: 1983-1998
2. Theoretical admissions funnel
3. Theoretical stages in the college choice process
4. Analysis of admissions research
5. Influences on student college choice
6. Geographic distribution of participant colleges
Our colleges are not filled with people because we do not furnish the education that is desired by the people ... We have produced an article for which the demand is diminishing. We sell it at less than cost, and the deficiency is made up by charity. We give it away, and still the demand diminishes. Is it not time to inquire whether we cannot furnish an article for which the demand will be, at least, somewhat more remunerative?, (Wayland, 1850, p. 34).

The transition in higher education, begun during the student protests in the 1960s, had been accelerated by the twin spectors of decreasing numbers of traditional college-age students and the increasing cost of operations caused by inflation. Higher education has gone from a seller’s market to a buyer’s market. Nearly every college and university has turned to marketing as a means of survival (Grabowski 1981, p. 1).
Chapter I
Introduction

1 The Environment of Private Liberal Arts Colleges

Historically, administrators at many small, private, competitive colleges suffered from what can be called an "admissions obsession." They believed that they merely had to open their doors and students would line up for admission. While this was perhaps once true, times have changed. Admissions officers, and their institutions, now face environmental constraints including:

1. A 25 percent decline in the number of high school students in the United States through 1995, (Dresch, 1975; Centra, 1978; Williams, 1983).

2. The keen competition for high scoring ACT/SAT students by other competitive colleges and public and private multiversities such as The Ohio State University, Stanford, and Harvard; institutions that have enormous resources to commit to student recruitment, (Newsweek, 1984; Time, 1984).

3. The increased competition by the military and two-year proprietary schools and community colleges for these students, (Church, 1977; Blake, 1984).

4. The tremendous increase in the cost of attending a private liberal arts college, (Suttle, 1983; Noah, 1983).
A 1983 survey of college presidents revealed that most do not expect these environmental factors to impact their colleges. Only 16 percent expected their schools to suffer decreased enrollment through 1994. Some 42 percent anticipated an enrollment increase. The remaining 42 percent said their enrollments would hold steady, (Breneman, 1983). Clearly, most of these college presidents do not acknowledge the influence that demographic uncertainties, increased competition for students, and rising costs will have on their institutions.

**Demographic Uncertainties**

A profound impact on higher education occurs when the supply of high school graduates fluctuates widely. A monograph by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (1984) estimated that the number of students graduating from high school is expected to drop by 14 percent from 1981 to 1986 — a drop of .4 million, from 2.9 million to 2.5 million. By 1988, the number of high school students is expected to rise slightly, reaching 2.6 million. The number will drop again to a low of 2.3 million in 1992. Eventually, that number will climb to 2.7 million by the year 2000. The year-to-year change, however, will not be smooth. Figure 1 (below) clearly shows how the number of high school graduates will fluctuate.
Although all regions of the country will experience such fluctuations, the downturns will be the steepest in the Northeast, the location of most of the colleges involved in this study. By 1999, the number of graduates in the Northeast is projected to be 30 percent below the 1981 level, (Western Interstate Commission, 1984).

Evangelauf (1984) noted that a less severe decline is projected for the North Central region, where the number of graduates will drop by 22 percent from 1981 to 1999. In contrast, the West will experience relatively mild downturns, and the number of graduates is expected to be 19 percent higher in 1999.
than it was in 1981. For the Southeast and South Central regions, the increase will be three percent, with Florida and Texas contributing to most of the growth.

**Increased Competition for Students**

Because of their relatively small size, many competitive colleges are in a potentially vulnerable market position. The anticipated 25 percent decline in high school age students is but one part of the problem. Within that declining pool is a smaller, but perhaps even more vital, population of high school students that is expected to drop even further, (Time, 1984). This sub-population, the high-quality students that Zemsky (1983) called the "nationals," has traditionally been the market of choice for private liberal arts colleges. However, as the larger public and private multiversities, and more affluent competitive colleges, commit their considerable resources to attracting these students, the smaller competitive private colleges may find themselves without a market, (Tierney, 1984).

The ability of Stanford University to attract high caliber students is indicative of the problem faced by institutions of even marginally lesser stature. In 1983, Stanford had a record 15,523 applicants - including 2,368 students with a 4.0 grade point average - vying for a freshman class of 1,610, (Winerip, 1984).
A comparison between the 12 colleges in the United States with the largest endowment and the 12 institutions with the largest number of Merit Scholars in 1984 is significant. Using combined data drawn from two articles in the April 15, 1985 Chronicle of Higher Education (See Table 1, below), it is easy to see where the best and the brightest students are heading.

Table 1
Comparison of Institutional Endowment and Number of Merit Scholars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions With the Largest Endowment*</th>
<th>Institutions With the Largest Number of Merit Scholars*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Harvard University</td>
<td>1. Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. University of Texas System</td>
<td>2. University of Texas at Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Princeton University</td>
<td>3. Yale University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Yale University</td>
<td>4. Rice University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Stanford University</td>
<td>5. Princeton University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Massachusetts Inst. of Technology</td>
<td>7. Stanford University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. University of Rochester</td>
<td>8. Massachusetts Inst. of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. University of Chicago</td>
<td>10. Trinity University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Rice University</td>
<td>12. Carleton College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chronicle of Higher Education
April 15, 1985

Eight institutions - Harvard, the Texas System, Princeton, Yale, Stanford, MIT, University of Chicago, and Rice - can be found on both lists. Clearly, institutions with substantial endowments and a high academic profile and/or reputation are using these characteristics to attract the student scholars with the greatest potential.
These 12 colleges, which account for less than one percent of the institutions of higher education in the United States, attracted 34 percent of the 5,858 National Merit Scholarship winners in 1984. With a combined endowment in excess of $12 billion, there is no reason to expect that, for these 12 colleges, the trend will not continue, (Chronicle of Higher Education, April 15, 1985).

The situation in Texas highlights the fierce competition for Merit Scholars. Among the 10 colleges that attracted the most freshmen Merit Scholars in 1984 are four Texas colleges: The University of Texas at Austin, Rice University, Texas A & M, and Trinity University. As USA Today noted, the Texas colleges are joined on the top 10 list by Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford. The difference? The Texas universities used financial incentives to attract most of their scholars; the Ivy League schools simply put out the welcome mat, (Lang, 1985).

In 1984, Trinity University attracted 121 Merit Scholars. A college spokesperson said Trinity made a conscious marketing effort to attract these top scholars. The rationale of Trinity is obvious, "As you attract more top students, it improves the overall picture of the university," (Barol, 1984, p. 16).

Trinity backs up this marketing effort with cash. By offering as much as $20,000 over four years to National Merit Scholars, Trinity attracted 10 such student scholars in 1981. In
1983, the number had jumped to 54. In 1984, the number was 121. In one year, Trinity moved from 24th in the nation to 10th with the largest number of Merit Scholars, (McGrath, 1984).

Theodore Marchese, vice president of the American Association for Higher Education, said that schools seeking Merit Scholars "bring into their classroom very able students who are pace-setters and role models for others." Marchese continued, "I think it's fair to say that it helps institutions to be aggressive in the market place - seeking top students as well as top faculty," (Lang, 1985, p. 8D).

An administrator for Rice University commented that "Rice University, with 2,500 undergraduates, can't match the University of Texas with almost 40,000 undergraduates in size, but 20 percent of our students are National Merit Scholars, and we're very proud of that," (Lang, 1985, p. 8D). A spokesperson for Trinity University, noting the stiff competition for Merit Scholars, said, "A lot of people here disagree with my philosophy (of actively recruiting Merit Scholars), but that philosophy, coupled with hard work, has brought the university students of a quality that faculty members here only dreamed of five years ago," (Biemiller, 1985, p. 15). In fact, through the recruitment of Merit Scholars and other top student scholars, the average SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) score of Trinity's freshmen has risen from about 1075 to nearly 1200, (Biemiller, 1985).
Some admissions officers have recoiled at the bidding war for Merit Scholars. The dean of admissions at Bates College called the bidding war a "zero-sum game" because he felt that the competition for Merit Scholars will impoverish all of higher education, (Barol, 1984). The director of admissions at Lafayette College agreed, "We're encouraging an unfortunate mentality when we engage in practices that encourage kids to shop for college the way you shop for a used car," (Barol, 1984). The dean of admissions at Tufts University occasionally received a call from a prospective student confessing that another college had offered a better package. He noted, "Sometimes the student will be asked to send in copies of the financial arrangement offered by the competing college so Tufts can study it and meet the competition," (McGrath, 1984, p. 81).

Not only are competitive, private colleges facing stiff competition for students from other members of the higher education elite, but also from the military and two-year technical colleges. Larry Blake, president of Oregon Institute of Technology, concluded that the military and two-year technical colleges will attract a disproportionate number of these high SAT/ACT students. Tomorrow's military, said Blake, is going to need an even greater number of soldiers trained in emerging the emerging technologies. As an incentive, the military has begun to offer superb training facilities, pay, bonus, and re-
enlistment incentives to their ranks. Blake felt certain that two-year technical colleges will attract more students than are presently enrolled and estimated that the nation's technical colleges will grow approximately 10-12 percent through the 1980s and beyond, (Blake, 1984). The 25 percent drop in 18-25 year olds projected by Centre and others, may actually reach 30 percent and beyond when military manpower requirements and growth of the technical colleges is included.

Rising Costs

Many of today's competitive, private liberal arts colleges are in a double bind. They face high tuition costs on the one hand, (Noah, 1983; Suttle, 1983), and what many perceive as the decreased value of private higher education on the other, (Bird, 1975; Drucker, 1983). In many cases, this bind has forced students away from the higher-cost, private liberal arts college.

Because many of America's private colleges are tuition driven, the problem of high cost is particularly problematic. Tuition driven colleges, those institutions whose annual budget is primarily met through student tuition and fees, are most susceptible to demographic fluctuations and competition for students. Zemsky (1983) argued that, given the current economic climate, most colleges cannot hope to reduce their reliance on tuition income by cultivating alternative sources of revenue, and
inflation limits the effectiveness of cost cutting. Zemsky noted that two basic options remain: institutional consolidation or enrollment expansion:

As a means to achieve financial viability, institutional contraction offers compelling advantages; as a transformation or violation of the educational community, it carries serious risks. Thus, most collegiate leaders seek instead to increase their institutions' share of a declining student market, allowing the question of scale to recede into an abstract, seemingly distant future, (p. 76).

A cursory view of how tuition revenues fit into educational finances can be obtained through using the TEPAG formula. Jones (n.d.) advanced the idea that budgetary balance (BB) is essential to institutional longevity and stability. On the income side, BB is dependent upon tuition (T), endowment (E), public sources (P), auxiliary income (A), and gifts (G). The basic formula is expressed on the next page.

\[ T + E + P + A + G = BB \]

For private colleges, such as those delimited for this study, the formula would exclude most public monies and only very minimal auxiliary income. As a consequence, a greater emphasis must be placed on tuition (T), endowment (E), and gifts (G). The modified formula is outlined below:
The modified equation graphically depicts the vital role tuition revenues play in financial stability. However, students cannot attend educational institutions they cannot afford, and there is growing concern that the cost of private higher education is simply too high. More than any other factor, the lower tuition at public institutions is credited with attracting high-achieving students. Facing the prospect of paying tuitions four or five times greater at private colleges, many students who could be admitted to those colleges are opting for schools that are state-supported. "The rising tuition gap is the single most important fact of higher education in the 1980s," said Philip M. Phibbs, president of the University of Puget Sound, (Maeroff, 1984, p. 40).

Most parents of the highest-achieving high school seniors are willing to pay anything to get their offspring into Stanford, Yale, Williams, Georgetown, and a small club of other high-prestige private institutions. But there are others - even those with ready cash - who are wondering these days if Olde Ivy is worth two to three times the price of a respectable public institution, (Moll, 1984, p. 39). Moll continued:
The list of colleges in the club for which parents will pay any admission price is shrinking. And given the competing demands for their dollar today, more and more Americans consider it out of the question to spend $12,000 to $15,000 for a second- or third-tier private college (p. 39).

El-Khawas, vice president for research of the American Council on Education, wrote, "Finances have been an overriding concern for the class of 1984 because the cost of attending college increased 39 percent while they were undergraduates," (Johnson, 1984, p. 51). El-Khawas continued:

In 1983-84 the typical student spent $6,932 while those at some Ivy League and other private institutions spent $14,000. This was a tremendous burden for many families and affected everything from how the student spent his summers to what career he chose, (Johnson, 1984, p. 51).

According to the Department of Labor, many private colleges raised their fees at twice the rate of inflation from 1980 to 1984, (Johnson, 1984). Evangelauf (1985) wrote that according to the College Board, the cost of going to college is rising at nearly twice the estimated rate of inflation. At private, four-year institutions, tuition and fees will average $5,418, up eight percent from last year, (p. 1).

In 1983, the Group Attitudes Corporation completed a study of how adults in the United States viewed higher education.
Several of the conclusions of the study reflected a growing national concern about the high cost of higher education:

1. A majority of Americans who have plans to help finance a college education for their children are concerned that they may have insufficient funds to do so, (p. 6).

2. A substantial proportion of Americans are critical of a move to reduce federal aid for college students. Clear majorities favor continued federal support for needy students and institutions, (p. 6).

3. A majority of Americans believe three very important reasons why people choose not to go to college are: 1) A college education is too expensive; 2) There are alternatives to college such as on-the-job training and technical schools; and 3) People don’t like school well enough to continue their education after high school, (p. 12).

In some cases, the problem of perceived high cost is paralleled by the inability or reluctance of colleges to advertise their financial aid programs. Even when colleges are able to offer significant levels of financial aid to students, students and their parents are sometimes not aware that such aid is available through the college, (Huddleston, 1978; Williams, 1983; Clear, 1984).

Even as students and parents grapple with the high cost of private higher education, some segments of society, including student consumers, are questioning its value. Zemsky (1983) wrote that college enrollment increased because young people had no-
where else to go. Over the long run, though, the economic value of their education diminished because the supply of college-educated workers outpaced the economy's demand.

Dresch (1975) had a similar conclusion. He argued that when the baby boom ended, there would not be enough high school seniors to both swell the college ranks and to fill new jobs in the economy. Because of the shortage of workers, the wages to attract workers, would increase. As wages increase, so would the lost earnings of those who elected to attend college. This would cause the net return of a college education to diminish in value. Ihlanfeldt (1981) indicated that a substantial number of colleges have found that their enrollments were inversely related to the rate of unemployment. For a larger number of people, according to Ihlanfeldt, higher education is still a lesser alternative to work, (p. 8).

The issue of value is also complicated by a shift in the labor market. Historically, competitive, private liberal arts colleges emphasized a liberal arts education. However, much of the current national economy is technologically oriented. For some, the belief that more education, particularly a liberal arts education, translated into better paying jobs, has been tarnished. Many young people are searching for lucrative positions that require technical skills rather than education, (Bird, 1975; Grabowski, 1981).
According to Moll (1984) the humanities and social sciences are often considered peripheral disciplines by potential college students. A College Board description of the Class of 1989 said most students, but especially women, now look to high-paying jobs as a result of technological training and plan to avoid the liberal arts.

Some authors contend that society's view of the value of a college degree has eroded in the past decade. Peter Drucker pointed out that the MBA of today must often work for five years to obtain a "total compensation package" which equals that of a blue collar worker who survives the 30-day probationary period, (Drucker, 1983).

The Group Attitudes Corporation survey (1984) cited earlier revealed many findings consistent with the decrease in perceived value of a liberal arts education. The survey found, for instance, that people living in the West appear to attach a greater importance to college education than do those who live in other areas of the country. Some 69 percent of the respondents who live in the West thought the things a person learns in college are "very important" in later life, compared to 58.1 percent who live in the South and even fewer of those who live in the Northeast (49.1 percent) and North Central (45.6 percent), the areas of the country with the highest concentration of competitive, liberal arts colleges, (p. 49).
The survey found that Americans who had never been to college were more likely to perceive that the quality of education was improving than were college graduates. Substantially more men believe it is getting worse. Americans with dependent children and in lower- and middle-income brackets were more optimistic about the future of collegiate education than were those who had no children and those in higher-income brackets, (See Table 2, next page).

The survey also revealed that most Americans place little emphasis on a college as a forum of ideas, a traditional goal of the liberal arts colleges. Rather, indicated the survey, Americans tend to see higher education as a means to very specific ends—such as career and technological advancements, (p. 56). In short, Americans play down the broader aspects of a college education that does not reap tangible, and fairly immediate, benefits. Many Americans (85.7 percent) saw education as a positive way to prepare for a career. At the same time, only 49.0 percent of the respondents said the free inquiry into controversial ideas was important. This was only slightly ahead of the importance of university athletics at 44.7 percent (p. 57). Table 3 (Page 18), highlights additional findings on the reaction to collegiate life.
Table 2

Is The Quality of a College Education Getting Better or Worse?

<table>
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<th>Generally Improving</th>
<th>Staying About the Same</th>
<th>Generally Declining</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>36.1%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
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<td><strong>Income Level</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less Than $15,000</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>25.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>$15,000 to $24,999</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $39,999</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 or More</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No College</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>College Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a Public College</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended an Independent College</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a Religious College</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or More</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Group Attitudes Corporation (1984)
Table 3
Reactions to Aspects of Collegiate Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very or somewhat positive</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>Very or somewhat negative</th>
<th>Mean Score (1-5 scale)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for a career</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific research</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of academic excellence</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic freedom</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International programs</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences on national issues</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing arts programs for the public</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free inquiry into controversial ideas</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big-time university athletics</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition costs</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty tenure and promotion</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Group Attitudes Corporation (1984)
The College Choice Phenomenon

The term "admission funnel" is often used to describe the steps prospective students take after they have decided to attend college and begin to define the number of institutions they are considering. A typical admission funnel is presented in Figure 2, below.

Figure 2
Theoretical Admission Funnel

Source: The Author (1985)
An admission funnel traces the 16- to 18-month decision process that prospects follow in narrowing a long list of possible college choices to one institution. Gilmour et al. (n.d.), in Grabowski, identified six phases a prospective student goes through when selecting a college: 1) Making the decision to attend college; 2) Developing a list of colleges; 3) Deciding where to apply; 4) Completing the applications; 5) Receiving acceptances; and 6) Making the final college choice.

Figure 3, below, depicts the relative timing of some of the stages in the college choice process. Like any model, it is oversimplified and may mask subtle dynamics. Its purpose is to illustrate the timing and type of information received by the student and to outline the influences of other actors beside the student in the college choice phenomenon.

Figure 3

Theoretical Stages in College Choice Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Contact</th>
<th>College Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Month 16 (late junior year)</td>
<td>Month 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 14 12 10 8 6 4 2 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<--- Stage 1 --->
<---------- Stage 2 -------->
<---------- Stage 3 -------->
<---------- Stage 4 -------->
<---------- Stage 5 -------->

Source: The Author (1986)
Stage 1

This step represents the first contact of the student by the college. Many of these contacts occur through the Student Search Service. A college may, for example, purchase the names of high school students who participated in the SAT sponsored by the College Board. The College Board then makes the names and addresses of these students available to colleges for purchase through the Student Search Service. The students may be categorized by SAT score, proposed college major, geographic location, etc. The college is able to choose the names of students that match a pre-selected demographic profile.

This first contact is used by the student to see if the college fits pre-determined needs and expectations. This information is used by the student to quickly sort the colleges into categories such as "Looks good," "Maybe," and "No chance." Most of the colleges will be rejected by the student at this point. This stage lasts three or four months.

Stage 2

The next stage emphasizes information from the college that is highly-personalized. Students are interested in specific programs, facilities, etc. At this stage, the student is carefully screening the remaining "Looks good" and "Maybe" categories of colleges. Information is used to confirm previous decisions. By
The end of this stage, most of the "Maybe" colleges have been eliminated. A few have been converted to the "Looks good" category. This second stage can last a year or more.

Stage 3

Roughly parallel to Stage 2 is Stage 3. Stage 3 incorporates information from the college that forms the basis of a yield strategy. Yield strategies involve communication that is carefully crafted to increase the "yield" of students still interested in the college. These contacts are highly persuasive, may appeal to fact as well as feeling, and include brochures, phone calls, visits to the campus, etc. The yield strategy is directed to both prospective students and parents. During this stage, the student may begin to apply to colleges that are high on the "Looks good" list.

Stage 4

Students must reduce the number of colleges in the "Looks good" and "Maybe" categories. During this period the contacts with the college can be extremely intense. Very specific questions are asked, and specific answers are expected. To increase their attractiveness to the student, colleges may offer financial aid or other incentives. During this time, the student has narrowed the field down and has applied to just a handful of the original "Looks good" schools. All of the "Maybe" colleges have
been eliminated from the competition. At the end of this stage the student enrolls in a college.

**Stage 5**

This final stage emphasizes the influence that other actors, usually parents, have on the student in the college choice process. This influence can be subtle or overt. In rare instances the parents actually choose the college for the student. More often, parents confirm college choices made by the student or, on occasion, let the student know which college or group of colleges they prefer.

### iii The Role of Marketing in Higher Education

As higher education shifts from a sellers' market to a buyers' market, more and more colleges are turning to broad-based advertising programs to develop systematic and even scientific approaches to student recruitment. Central to the development of a progressive recruitment effort is a concentrated emphasis on marketing. The vocabulary of today for student recruitment is replete with such marketing terms as "positioning," "demographic profiles," "product mix," "demand forecasting" and "product strategy."

Kotler (1982) and Litten (1980) pointed out that nonprofit administrators often confuse marketing with many other advancement functions including public relations, advertising, promo-
tion, and lobbying. For example, 300 officials, whose colleges were in trouble due to declining enrollments and spiraling costs, were asked to define marketing. In reply, 61 percent said they saw marketing as a combination of selling, advertising, and public relations. Another 28 percent said it was only one of these three activities. Surprisingly, only a small percent suggested that marketing had something to do with needs assessment, research, product development, pricing, and distribution, (Kotler, 1982, p. 5).

What is Marketing?

Kotler (1982) defined marketing as:

The analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization's offering in terms of the target markets' needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication, and distribution strategies to inform, motivate, and serve markets, (p. 5).

Kratchenberg (1972) defined marketing as "the concept of uncovering specific needs, satisfying these needs by the development of appropriate goods and services, letting people know of their availability, and offering them at appropriate prices, at the right time and place," (p. 389).
According to Kotler, several things should be noted about his definition of marketing. First, marketing is a managerial process involving analysis, planning, implementation, and control.

Second, marketing manifests itself in carefully formulated programs, not just random actions to achieve desired responses. Third, marketing seeks to bring about voluntary exchanges of values. Marketing strategists seek a response from another party, but it is not a response to be obtained by any means or at any price. Marketing is the philosophical alternative to force. The marketer seeks to formulate a bundle of benefits for the target market of sufficient attractiveness to produce a voluntary exchange.

Fourth, marketing means the selection of target markets rather than a quixotic attempt to serve every market and be all things to all people. Fifth, the purpose of marketing is to help organizations ensure survival and continued health through serving their markets more effectively. Sixth, marketing relies on designing the offerings of the organization in terms of the needs and desires of the target market, rather than in terms of the personal tastes of the seller, (Kotler, 1982, pp. 5-8).

Topor (1983) said that successful marketing strategies utilize four "Ps" that are "mixed" to devise a strategy. The
variables include: 1) Product strategy; 2) Place or distribution strategy; 3) Promotional strategy; and 4) Pricing strategy.

Marketing involves the development of a marketing plan based on information drawn from market research. A marketing plan includes short and long-range strategies that reflect changing social and economic conditions as well as changing attitudes of students, parents, and other actors involved in the college choice process (Ivens, 1979).

Marketing includes assessing the needs and desires of potential clients with regard to programs, courses, services, tuition/costs, and location. Too often, according to Fram (1971), decisions about these matters are made almost entirely on what administrators and faculties want, rather than what students may need. Fram stated, "In the higher education environment, a marketing approach can help the college or institution focus on the customers and to make realistic assessments of what they are and where they are going because, if the customers don't buy, the institution will die," (p. 15).

All elements of the marketing effort must be student-oriented and seek to assess and serve the needs and interests of current and prospective students. However, no institution should rely solely upon student desires. Instead, a college must juxtapose student preferences against the larger institutional mission and goals.
Market research is designed to provide reliable information for the marketing plan. Kotler (1982) defined market research as the systematic design, collection, analysis and reporting of data and findings relevant to a specific marketing situation or problem facing an organization, (p. 156). Market research fits easily into the traditional definition of the scientific method: 1) Awareness of a problem situation; 2) Development of alternative solutions (hypotheses); 3) Thorough investigation of alternatives; 4) Analysis of all results; and 5) Revision of ideas to reflect findings, (Kress, 1979, p. 6).

Many applications of market research (See Table 4, next page), have clear potential for higher education.

Market research is but one component of a larger marketing information system (MIS). A marketing information system consists of people and/or equipment organized to provide an orderly intake and exchange of the information (internal and external) needed to guide the decisions of an institution. A simplified MIS consists of five stages: 1) Analysis of information needs; 2) Evaluating available inexpensive data sources; 3) Determining the need for additional information; 4) Obtaining additional information; and 5) Evaluating of feedback, (Robin, 1978).
Table 4
Applications of Marketing Research

1. Research on markets.
   a. Analyzing market potentials for existing products and estimating demand for new products.
   b. Sales forecasting.
   c. Characteristics of product markets.
   d. Analyzing sales potentials.
   e. Studying trends in markets.
2. Research on products.
   a. Customer acceptance of proposed new products.
   b. Comparative studies of competitive products.
   c. Determining new uses of present products.
   d. Market-testing proposed products.
   e. Studying customer dissatisfaction with products.
   f. Product-line research.
   g. Packaging and design studies.
3. Research on promotion.
   a. Evaluating advertising effectiveness.
   b. Analyzing advertising and selling practices.
   c. Selecting advertising media.
   d. Motivational studies.
   e. Establishing sales territories.
   f. Evaluating present and proposed sales methods.
   g. Studying competitive pricing.
   h. Analyzing salesmen's effectiveness.
   i. Establishing sales quotas.
4. Research on distribution.
   a. Location and design of distribution centers.
   b. Handling and packing merchandise.
   c. Cost analysis of transportation methods.
   d. Dealer supply and storage requirements.
5. Research on pricing.
   a. Demand elasticities
   b. Perceived prices.
   c. Cost analysis.
   d. Margin analysis.

Source: Crisp (1958)
Stage I of a marketing information system is an analysis of the information needs of the organization. These needs may recur on a regular basis, or they may arise from a single problem.

Stage II is the evaluation of available inexpensive data sources. All inexpensive data sources should be exhausted before more expensive sources are tried.

Stage III is the determination of the need for additional information. This step requires the marketer to estimate both the costs and the value of additional information. By comparing these two figures, the marketing analyst can decide whether the information should be gathered.

Stage IV is obtaining additional information.

Stage V is feedback about the information and recommendations. The information may be satisfactory, or new information may be requested, (Robin, 1978, p. 164).

Development of a Marketing Plan

For a marketing strategy to succeed, an institution must not only be able to attract enough new students to maintain its enrollment, but to attract the type of students who will complete their course of study. Often, the base for such a strategy can be provided by seeking the answer to questions of the following nature:
1. Why are current students attending this institution?

2. Why do the students continue at this institution?

3. What are prospective students looking for?

4. Why do some admitted students not enroll?

5. Why do students withdraw from this institution?


Gaither (1979) wrote that a comprehensive marketing plan includes market research, positioning, strategy formulation, recruitment/admissions, communications, curriculum evaluation, retention, and evaluation. McCarthy (1975) noted that a marketing strategy consists of two distinct yet interrelated parts: 1) A target market: a fairly homogeneous group of potential clients to whom an institution wishes to appeal; and 2) a marketing mix: the controllable variables which the institution, in this case a college, combines in order to satisfy the target group, (p. 35).

When developing a marketing strategy, it is helpful to consider each of the three basic markets: the primary market, the secondary market, and the test market.

The primary market covers the applicants who are likely to enroll if admitted. They have similar profiles to those in the
past who indicated the institution was their first choice.

The secondary market includes candidates who probably would be accepted but are more likely to enroll at another school.

The test market represents the candidates who apply to the institution at the request of alumni or institutional representatives, but who otherwise would not have considered the institution as a first or second choice, (Ihlanfeldt, 1975).

This researcher would add a fourth market to the development of a marketing strategy. This fourth market, called a trial market, would incorporate special subsets of each of the above markets. Such subsets would facilitate the on-going testing and development of different elements in the marketing mix on a limited basis. The results of such experiments would provide useful information for the further refining of the marketing mix addressed to the larger primary, secondary, and test markets.

According to Grabowski (1981), the best market to pursue is the primary market. From a cost-benefit perspective, this pool has the most attractive yield. There is a diminishing return ratio in the secondary and test markets. An institution would have to multiply the number of prospects by a large factor when addressing secondary and test markets in order to obtain a student prospect as compared with the primary market (p. 19).
The Communication Function

Market research information is used to develop market strategies that are communicated to the primary, secondary, and test markets. A viable marketing approach provides two-way communication between an institution and its constituencies. Market analysis, or needs assessment, requires an institution to seek and listen to its constituent publics. This is consistent with the two-way symmetric model of communication and public relations outlined by Grunig (1984). The two-way symmetric model emphasizes mutual understanding between the institution and its publics. Grunig wrote:

The two-way symmetric model...consists more of a dialogue than a monologue. If persuasion occurs, the public should be just as likely to persuade the organization's management to change attitudes or behavior as the organization is likely to change the public's attitudes or behavior. Ideally, both management and publics will change after a public relations effort, (p. 23).

Most communication strategies have as their goal the recruitment of students. Mancuso (1975) applied the "advertising staircase" model to student recruitment. In this model, the interest of the student in an institution progresses through six steps, much like an admissions funnel. According to Mancuso, the first three steps are designed to affect the attitude held by the student. The second three steps are designed to cause the student
to act. As the students progress up the stairs, or through the funnel, their number declines. As a result, according to Mancuso, progressively fewer students: 1) Are aware of the college; 2) Are interested in the college; 3) Are familiar with the college; 4) Attend limited offerings such as campus visits; 5) Attend the college; and 6) Recommend the college to others.

These six steps can be easily matched to institutional communication objectives:

1. Establish awareness of the existence of the college.
2. Create inquisitiveness about the nature of the college.
3. Build interest to a peak.
4. Stimulate the prospect to act.
5. Obtain the commitment of the prospect.
6. Sustain that commitment.

Before a marketing strategy can be developed, however, administrators must initiate two ongoing tasks. First, they must begin to seek and establish a market position. And second, they must segment their audience, or pool, in light of this position.
Positioning

Ries and Trout (1981) called positioning the secret of marketing. Positioning starts with a product - a piece of merchandise, a service or an institution. Positioning, however, is not what is done with a product but, rather, what is done to the mind of the prospect. The product is positioned in the mind of the prospect, (p. 3).

To succeed in our message-saturated society, an institution must create a position in the mind of the prospect; a position that includes not only the strengths and weaknesses of an institution, but those of its competitors as well. Positioning involves distinguishing a product clearly from its competitors. As Ries and Geltzer noted, Avis' sales climbed as soon as it admitted that it was "No. 2" to Hertz. By calling itself the "Uncola," Seven-Up stood out against cola and noncola drinks and more than doubled its sales, (Ries and Trout, 1981, pp. 38-41). As Ries and Trout explained, "The basic approach of positioning is not to create something new and different, but to manipulate what's already up there in the mind, to retie the connections that already exist," (p. 5).

For colleges, positioning involves determining what the institution offers in relation to other institutions, and emphasizing this distinction to prospective students. Positioning necessitates answering the questions: "What makes us unique?" and
"What kinds of students would be attracted to this institution?"

To isolate an institutional position, college administrators must pursue the following queries:

1. What position does the institution hold in the mind of prospective students (and parents)?
2. What competing institutions hold an enviable position and need to be "outgunned"?
3. Does the institution have the ability to occupy and hold the chosen position?
4. Does the institution have the resources?
5. Are faculty and facilities adequate for the position the institution wishes to achieve?" (Corbitt, 1979; Ihlanfeldt, 1980).

Unfortunately, many institutions do not know precisely what they are selling, and they have no well-defined strategy to market themselves or their products. Shirley (1983) modified corporate strategic planning for education and identified six significant variables which administrators must consider for successful planning:

1. The basic mission of the institution.
2. The target group(s) of clientele to be served.
3. The goals and objectives that the institution must achieve in order to fulfill its mission and serve the needs of its clientele.
4. The programs and services offered (and the relative priorities among them) in order to obtain the goals and objectives.

5. The geographic service area of the institution.

6. The competitive advantage sought by the institution over competitors engaged in similar activities (Shirley, 1983).

Thornbury (1984) acknowledged the importance of institutional positioning in higher education:

When you think of Irish Catholics and football, what institution comes to mind? How about a college noted for educating United States presidents?...Now, when you think of a small, private college with a small student-faculty ratio, caring faculty, and innovative curriculum, what college comes to mind? I'd bet...that the first two answers came to your mind instantly, and that the third got lost in a muddle of possibilities. Notre Dame and Harvard are noted for other things, but are easily and uniquely identified by these positioning statements. On the other hand, some 400 colleges come to mind when the other descriptive terminologies are considered, and therein lies the problem, (pgs. 1, 15).

Thornbury advanced the notion that many colleges suffer enrollment problems because they attempt to be all things to all people. These colleges are not sure to which market segments they are most likely to appeal, so they try to appeal to them all. Rather than making any bold positioning statements, statements that might appeal to one segment, but be unappealing to another,
they opt for vague, non-offensive statements and definitions that ultimately appeal to no one. Because they lack a firm idea of who they are, and what kind of student they are looking for, their recruiting efforts are expensive and exhausting. They play a numbers game: Mail to 100,000 prospects...receive 10,000 inquiries...enroll 300 students.

Thornbury wrote, "It is interesting to note that one of the fastest growing sectors in higher education is the Christian college. Some try to explain this away as a religious fad. The truth is, these colleges are articulating their differences successfully," (p. 15). She concluded, "There is little question about what they represent and little disparity between their mission statement and market position statement. All their signals are consistent. Even with the declining 18-year-old population, most conservative Christian colleges are enjoying enrollment growth," (p. 15).

Closely allied to market position is the concept of institutional image. Barker (1985) said that perception, or image, is the ultimate reality. Institutional image, then, is the image of an institution that is held by prospective students and their parents. Topor (1983) noted, "It is an institution's image, and not necessarily its reality, that people respond to. An organizational image is the aggregate or sum of perceptions, attitudes, ideas, beliefs, and feelings that people have about the organiza-
An institution's actual quality is often less important than its prestige, or reputation for quality. Perceptions are critical, for quality and prestige do not always move hand-in-hand, (p. 55 in Topor).

Grunde (1976) argued that images and perceptions about an institution influence decisions to enroll in a college. Grabowski (1981) noted that while individual perceptions about an institution may not be accurate, it is to these images that people respond, (p. 11). Winerip (1984) entitled his article in the *New York Times*, "Hot Colleges and How They Got That Way." He wrote, "Once perceptions take hold, they gather a momentum of their own," (p. 168). Winerip described the the mother of an eight grader who asked a college admissions officer at a hot college for a copy of the current catalog so she could check to see if her son was taking the courses. The counselor suggested that the mother wait until the boy was actually in high school, (p. 71).

An institution should periodically evaluate its image with key constituent publics. Kotler (1982) advanced the notion of an institutional scorecard to monitor public image. The scorecard (see below) allows marketing and communication strategies to be readily directed at primary publics.
Table 5
Institutional Scorecard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Importance of Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school counselors</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school juniors</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General public</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kotler (1982)

The power of a positive institutional image is pervasive. Moll (1979) outlined a letter sent by a prospective student who had decided to attend another college:

As indicated on the enclosed card, I shall not be attending Bowdoin in the fall. Instead, I will be at Harvard. I feel, however, that after all you and the college have done for me, more than a simple card is required. Your every assistance while I visited your college, your invitation to a second weekend on campus, the letter from a professor—all were overwhelming. Nowhere else, at any time, did I receive such attention. Unfortunately, despite all you have done for me and despite all the obvious attributes of Bowdoin, I cannot turn down Harvard, (p. 98).
As a caveat to the development of institutional image, Topor (1983) wrote:

...There is the potential danger that higher education will adopt questionable advertising techniques. Some commercial organizations attempt to improve their product's position by denigrating another organization's product. An image that identifies the best institutional qualities can be communicated without slandering or judging the competition. Communications can shape and mold an image that is attractive and imaginatively projected, but one that honestly and accurately reflects the institution, (p. 58).

**Segmentation**

The second major component of marketing is audience segmentation. Segmentation involves dividing a prospect pool into discrete groups based on certain identifiable characteristics. Admissions officers seek to segment the pool of prospective students into homogeneous groups so that all members of the group, because their demographic profiles are known, can be treated as "individuals." This personalization increases the likelihood of response. Depending on financial and time constraints, it is possible to segment within segments almost indefinitely. Denison University, for example, divided the 14,000 names it obtained from Student Search in 1985 into three broad segments: general, minority, and honor categories. Each segment received a different letter from Denison. Accompanying each letter was one general information brochure that all 14,000
students received. In addition, the honors segment and the minority segment received honors and minority recruiting brochures that were designed to appeal to their special needs and interests, (Boyden, 1985).

Traditionally, marketing experts in higher education have sought demographic information such as SAT score, high school grade point average, and intended major of prospective students. Now, however, marketing experts can use psychographic (attitude) information and VALS (values and lifestyle) information, (Barker, 1985).

Kotler suggested that nonprofit organizations should study three distinct marketing strategies: undifferentiated marketing, concentrated marketing, and differentiated marketing.

Undifferentiated marketing does not involve segmentation of the prospect pool and is designed to appeal to wide, often heterogeneous audiences. An example of undifferentiated marketing is when a college sends the same brochure to all prospective students.

Concentrated marketing, on the other hand, divides the population into significant groups, but concentrates only on one segment. While this is slightly more effective than undifferentiated marketing and tends to conserve valuable resources, it virtually ignores all the publics in the population outside the concentration. An example of concentrated marketing is when a
college segments a pool by SAT score and sends information only to those students above (or below) a certain SAT.

Differentiated marketing, finally, divides or segments the population into groups based on specific needs and adapts the basic marketing strategy to match these needs. Colleges use differentiated marketing when recruitment strategies are developed for each specific segment of the pool. Minority students may receive one brochure, women another, and honors students a third. Differentiated marketing through pool segmentation is a means of using resources more efficiently by focusing on the potential candidates whose interests and characteristics best match the institution. These candidates, of course, are the primary market of the institution.

Colleges are responding to the use of marketing strategies in record number and spending record amounts. The president of Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology recognized the value of marketing via direct mail:

We start out every recruiting season with the assumption that none of the freshmen who will enroll a year later have even heard of Rose-Hulman...We send out 200,000 pieces of information to get 350 students. We hit them early and hard, and we try to convey the idea that while we don't take ourselves seriously, we take education seriously, (Fiske, p. 5).
According to David Ogilvy, it is no wonder that more and more colleges have placed a greater emphasis on direct mail. He wrote, "Direct mail has exploded - an explosion caused more than anything by computers. Computers make it possible to select names from mailing lists by every imaginable demographic classification," (Ogilvy, 1983, p. 143). Dominick (1980), in projecting the use of direct mail in the future, revealed that 54 percent of the admissions officers believe they will rely even more extensively on mailing lists to attract prospective students in the future.

Colleges are committing substantial sums to develop more sophisticated marketing strategies. Recruitment budgets in general are on an upward swing as colleges react to the stiffening competition. On the average, 15 percent of the annual operating budget of a college is directed toward recruiting, (Fiske, 1984). According to Erdmann (1983), it is not unusual for a college to invest $800 or more in recruiting each student for its freshman class. In a presentation before the faculty of Mount Vernon Nazarene College, the director of enrollment development said that MVNC spent approximately $1,100 for each student it enrolled for the 1982-83 school year (Rohmann, 1983). Trinity University spent $1,040 per new student in 1984, (Fiske, 1984). M. Frederick Volkmann of Washington University in St. Louis estimated that some of the brochures used in student
recruitment cost as much as $2.00 each - not much compared to the $3,000 that some colleges reportedly spent to recruit a single freshman, (Fiske, 1984).

Marketing Backlash

Not all students match the academic profiles established by the colleges. But for those that do, the marketing strategies of the colleges can be nightmarish. Students with high SAT/ACT scores or with demonstrated abilities in certain subject areas may receive in excess of 150 unsolicited mailings from colleges. Much of the information, particularly in this volume, is undigestible by the prospective student. Rowe (1980) suggested that a marketing strategy based on such "super-selling" is likely to prove ineffective in the long run since it ignores the needs of the client and overstates the nature of the product.

One result of the new directive to "market at all costs" is the increased sophistication of recruiting material. Fiske (1981) said that college advertising is starting to resemble cigarette ads. He cited a College of St. Elizabeth brochure that showed a girl with long blond hair lying in a field of flowers. Holding one flower gently in her hand, the girl stares wistfully into the eye of the camera. "Especially for women," reads the italic caption, "because women are creative, intelligent and
beautiful, resourceful and sweet, and generally different from men," (p. 27).

Marchese said that some college recruitment activities have crossed the line from promoting education as the route to a good life, to selling themselves as the good life. "Colleges are buying the advertising ethic," he wrote. "Everything is. couples holding hands under trees. The ads are full of latent sexuality - 'Come to us and be beautiful and successful,'" (Marchese, in Rowe, 1980).

While certain promotion and recruiting practices may be respectable and even necessary, some recruitment practices are deceptive and demeaning. North Kentucky State University had planned on releasing 100 balloons filled with scholarship offers, but scrapped the idea after public protests. At one time, St. Joseph's College of Indiana promised undergraduates $100 rebates for each new body they signed up. Student recruiters could earn a maximum of total tuition, (Kotler, 1982).

One recruitment abuse is the selling of immigration papers to attract foreign students. Windham College, a small liberal arts institution in Vermont that closed because of declining enrollment, admitted selling federal I-20 forms in a futile attempt to stay open. The papers, which allowed entry into this country, were sold blank, except for the signature of the college registrar, (Mackey, 1980).
Colleges and prospective students are not the only parties aware of these abuses. Early in 1973, the Federal Intra-agency Committee on Education established a Subcommittee on Consumer Protection in Education. This committee actively sought to identify educational abuses. The committee began their work by establishing an inventory of 25 educational abuses. Misrepresentation in selling, advertising, and promotional materials was third on the list. The first and second items were degree mills and discriminatory refund policies, respectively, (Willett, 1975).

A popular story on the sometimes dubious nature of some recruitment efforts is reported by Hoy (1980):

At a management institution sponsored by the New England Board of Higher Education and the New England Regional Office of the College Board, Michael S. McPherson, Williams College economist, raised some warning signals about the penchant for marketing in recruiting and admissions. "When everybody decides to spend more on marketing," he said, "it's a little like everybody showing up two hours early to get a good seat at the big game. Showing up early doesn't create any more seats. What happens is that you wind up with everybody sitting two extra hours waiting for the game to start in the same seat they would have had anyway," (p. 3).
iv Statement of the Problem

To flourish, small, private, competitive colleges must move from a purely admissions posture to a recruitment posture, and be managed by people adroit at using the tools of market research and segmentation, product advertising and image management, tools that have been used by business and industry for years, (Fellers, 1982; Kemerer, 1982; Kotler, 1982; Cochran, 1983).

In like manner, survival of these colleges will require that administrators become more responsive to the needs of the prospective students, needs that have all too often been secondary, or even neglected, as colleges sought to apply the "new" marketing technologies to recruitment, (Heckscher, 1978; El-Khawas, 1979; Mackey, 1980; Grabowski, 1981; Fiske, 1981).

The linchpin for such recruitment posture is understanding how and why students choose a college, information that is readily applicable to the development of marketing strategies. Currently, little research of the college choice phenomena has been undertaken at a specific type of institution. Almost all previous research has concentrated on the college choice process of students interested in single institutions, information needs that may include such items as financial aid, academic programs, tuition and fees, admission to graduate school, etc., (Kinnick, 1975; Druesne, 1977; Rowe, 1980). For students attending a
specific type of institution, little attention has been given to such factors as:

1. What kinds of information do students need from a college before they can make a decision on whether to attend?

2. How is the information about a college ordered in the decision-making process?

3. What actors, in addition to the student, are involved in the decision process, and what are the roles they play in the decision by the student?

4. What is the impact of financial aid and no-need scholarships on the decision on where to attend college?

5. Who are the students that attend these competitive colleges?

v Purpose of the Study

Previous research has led the writer to several tentative insights into some of the dynamics of the college choice process. One goal of this research project is to isolate a portion of these dynamics so that they can be incorporated into a proactive marketing strategy designed to attract specific types of students to the cohort of competitive, liberal arts colleges that were delimited for this study. While the working hypotheses advanced by the author are in no way exhaustive, they do, however, offer some direction for inquiry.
This author believes that the process of college selection is much more complex, begins earlier, and involves information from more sources than most admissions officers appear to believe. Students who are interested in attending competitive, liberal arts colleges are contacted by dozens and sometimes hundreds of colleges throughout the United States through the Student Search Service. Students respond to this "buyer's market" in two ways. First, they send out multiple applications. These applications go to two distinct categories of colleges: colleges that they hope will accept them and colleges they know will accept them. And second, the students are increasingly frustrated. Because of this overload (the difficulty of sorting and responding to this much information), students and their parents often develop a negative attitude toward Student Search. This has a tendency to reduce the influence of direct mail, particularly direct mail perceived as part of Student Search. One goal of this study, then, is to explore how students respond to Search. Do they, in fact, value the opportunity to participate in Student Search?

Second, this author recognizes that the parents of students, because of the large financial commitment involved in attending a competitive, liberal arts college, and because of the enormous consequences of the decision, are extremely active in the college-choice process. Closely allied to the role of parents in
the college-choice process is the availability, and in some cases, the perceived availability of financial aid and no-need scholarships. Another goal of this study, therefore, is to gauge the impact and influence of parents and other actors in the college choice process.

Next, the author believes that students and their parents are conducting more research on college selection over a longer period of time before the final decision is made. This has been partly facilitated by the availability of a myriad of college guides such as Peterson's Competitive Colleges, The New York Times Selective Guide to Colleges, Barron's Guides to the Most Prestigious Colleges, and marketing services such as those offered by College USA and Learning Resource Network and by a willingness on the part of both parents and students to visit colleges for first-hand evaluations. An additional goal of this research, then, is to document the timing and use of outside sources such as college guides by students and parents as they participate in the college choice decision.

Finally, the author believes that the information needs of the students change as the students move through the admissions funnel, the series of contacts between the students and the college. When the students enter the funnel, they are looking for information that will give them a quick overview of the college so the college can be "matched" to the criteria established by
the students. Later, the students are interested in information that will either keep the door to a particular college open or close that option off. At the final stage, the students are seeking information that confirms their choice, information that assures the students that they made a good decision. This is one of the most complex dynamics involved in college choice. It would be presumptuous of the author to advance the belief that this dynamic will be fully articulated. At the very best, the author believes that some notion of this phenomenon will be documented in a quantitative manner.

The knowledge and understanding gained from this research project can be used to clarify the dynamics outlined above and to provide input into the establishment of a longitudinal model of student recruitment. This model would place a greater emphasis on institutional adaptability to environmental constraints. In addition, the model would seek to more clearly articulate the mechanisms used to select, recruit, and retain high ability students.

vi Defining the Population

This proposal will outline a strategy for investigating how and why high school students choose a college. Specifically, this study is interested in the freshmen that Zemsky (1983) called the "nationals." According to Zemsky, nationals are students who
concentrate their college interests outside the region in which they live. In addition, national students usually have high SAT scores, have college educated parents, are committed to private higher education, are willing to bear substantial tuition and living costs, and have educational goals that include post-baccalaureate aspirations, (pp. 12, 34).

Moll (1979) wrote that colleges seek more than just national students. In fact, he said, there are five distinct types of students that must be recruited, as even the most selective colleges fill their freshman class. Those five included:

The Intellectuals: Superior students are uniformly admitted even if the applicant isn't lovable, the future "human contribution" is in doubt, and the alumni couldn't care less. If a student has opted to take every tough course, has emerged with a near-perfect record, and has exceptional intellectual power as demonstrated by the standardized tests, that student is almost invariably admitted.

The Special Talent Category: A good goalie does not compete against 3,700 candidates from the 380 freshman openings. He competes against the three other goalies who are applying.

The Family Category: The private system counts on alumni to fill the coffers. Most private colleges are generous in admitting alumni sons and daughters. At some, the percentage of legacies admitted is twice as high as for all candidates.
The All-American Kid Category: Most well-meaning and generally accomplished candidates fall into this group. They’re good kids who are decent but not outstanding students. They have the intelligence and common sense necessary to someday help the community and the nation keep moving along at a good pace and in the right direction.

The Socially Conscious Category: Because the elitist institutions of the nation were dominated for so long by children of the Protestant establishment, most of these colleges in recent years have tried to make good their debt to society. A respectable minority representation (now branching well beyond blacks) is an essential component of the prestige college's class today (pp. 126-128).

For the purpose of this study, the institutions that are the choice of these students were delimited according to the following characteristics:

1. Undergraduate enrollment between 750 and 3,500 students.

2. Private, independent (non-sectarian) control.

3. Strong liberal arts tradition.

4. Endowment greater than $1 million.

Institutions such as Kenyon College and Oberlin College in Ohio; Bryn Mawr College and Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania; Hamilton College and Bard College in New York; Smith College and Amherst College in Massachusetts; Pacific Lutheran University and Whitman College in Washington; Bennington College in Vermont;
Bowdoin College in Maine, and Carleton College in Minnesota all fit this profile. The Stanford Model, developed by Baldridge et al. (1978) classified colleges and universities in the United States into eight categories. The model would classify these institutions as Elite Liberal Arts Colleges. Baldridge wrote:

In American higher education, there have always been some small private liberal arts colleges that are outstanding, with highly trained faculties and high-quality degree programs. Although they do not receive as much federal research money as the multiversities, they nevertheless are strong scholarship and research centers. Normally, they are best known for high-quality bachelor's programs, (p. 60).

The Carnegie Model would classify these same institutions as Elite Liberal Arts I, Carnegie (1973). A more extensive, though undocumented description of these colleges can be found in Appendix A. A complete list of all the colleges in the United States that fit this profile can be found in Appendix B.

vii Some Limitations to the Study

First, though the "type" of college under investigation has been delimited, there is still some variability between institutions, variability that is dependent on such factors as location, size, program emphasis, age, and other factors.

At a theoretical and perhaps even a practical level, no two
institutions of higher education in the United States can be considered the same. Yet, to refrain from research that uses institutional typologies, such as the Stanford Model or the Carnegie Model, because of institutional variability, would be to neglect the development of crucial understandings of intra-institutional characteristics. Without the acceptance of reasonably-defined typologies, studies in such diverse areas as funding, governance, faculty decision-making, and even recruitment and admissions would be impossible. In all actuality, if the fear of organizational variability were to govern research, scholars would be forced to work with institutional typologies of just one institution.

A second limitation of this study is its rather "in vitro" nature. Students will be asked to stand away from their decision-making process and indicate the factors that helped them decide on where to attend college, a decision that was made months or perhaps years ago. They will be asked to hold their college choice up to the critical and often unfavorable light of hindsight. Helping them relive their actual decision process may cause them to develop an "If I had it do to over again..." mindset. At the same time, this aspect of the investigation may reveal some of the most meaningful and rich data.
An additional comment is required. The question of the generalization of these findings will rise quickly. The degree to which readers can generalize the findings of this study, to their institution and its prospective students, may well be the degree to which they can "match" their institution to the characteristics of the institutions found in Appendix A. Any attempt at generalization to populations and institutions decidedly different from the populations and institutions mentioned in this study must be left up to the reader.

viii Definitions and Terms

Like any specialized activity, the field of college recruitment and admissions has its own jargon. During the course of this proposal, several key themes and terms will be enunciated. They include:

**Admission Funnel**: The series of contacts between a prospective student and a college that usually starts with an initial inquiry by the student or the contact of the student by the college. The funnel includes direct mail, phone calls, high school visits, letters, publications, and visits to the campus and is designed to move the student from an initial contact to enrollment. In some cases, the funnel has been lengthened to include retention measures, matriculation, and even the development of a strong alumni program for future development and recruitment efforts.
Advertising: Any form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion that might be used to replace personal contact. For colleges, this might include direct mail, print, television, radio ads, and other mediums.

College Choice: The process whereby a student chooses a college. This decision-making process may include both manifest and latent elements such as the information needs of the student, information needs of the parent(s), influence of parents and others, timing of the flow of information, and the sources of information.

Image: The set of beliefs that a person or group holds of an object (Kotler, 1982). Images are perceptions that may or may not represent reality. Institutional image is often the single most important institutional characteristic. That image, however, changes over time and is subject to multiple interpretations. Audiences, or publics, have different images of the same institution, (Topor, 1983).

Marketing: The analysis, planning, implementation and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. Marketing relies on designing the offerings of the college in terms of the needs and desires of the target market, and on using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and serve markets, Grabowski, (1981). The elements of marketing include: research, advertising, and public relations.

Positioning: The act of placing or positioning a product or institution in the mind of a prospect. Positioning determines how a product will be presented to consumers in terms of its physical and/or psychological attributes.
Segmentation: Dividing or defining the pool according to specific demographic, geographic, or psychographic characteristics into subgroups with like characteristics. The emergent groups are relatively homogeneous and may be target marketed.

Target Marketing: A style of marketing where an organization distinguishes between different segments making up a market, chooses one or more of these segments to focus on, and develops market offers and marketing mixes tailored to meet the needs of each target market, (Kotler, 1982, p. 216).

Yield: The portion, usually presented as a percentage, of the prospect pool that is converted to the next stage in the funnel. For example, 10 percent of the students who receive unsolicited direct mail via student search may reply to the college. The yield from the pool of prospective students who actually apply is even smaller. As the body of students moves through the funnel, the yield decreases.

x Organization of the Document

This study will be presented in five chapters. Chapter One, as you have read, served as an introduction to the college choice process and included a review of marketing in higher education. The first chapter closed with a problem statement, an account of potential research questions, a discussion of the population of the study, and definitions of pertinent terms.

Chapter Two will examine the relevant literature in the field with a particular emphasis on the development of models of
the college choice phenomenon. This chapter will show how admissions models have evolved from two dominant types of admissions research, and include summaries and critiques of previous investigations into the college choice process.

Chapter Three will serve as a review of the methodology used to investigate the college choice phenomenon among freshmen attending a specific type of institution—competitive, private liberal arts colleges. The methodology review will include the instrument design procedure, execution of the data gathering, and methods of data analysis.

Chapter Four will outline the findings of this study and juxtapose these findings against the research questions advanced in Chapter One and in the literature review in Chapter Two. This chapter will also include ancillary findings not anticipated as part of the original study.

Chapter Five will offer conclusions drawn from the investigation and present avenues for future investigation.

This dissertation will close with the appendices and the bibliography.

xi Summary

The environment of private, liberal arts colleges is problematic. These colleges must cope with numerous environmental uncertainties, including:
1. A 25 percent decline in the number of high school students through the mid 1990s.

2. Increased competition for students from other private colleges, private and public multiversities, and the military.

3. Costs that are increasing faster than the rate of inflation.

4. Concern over the value of private higher education vs. their high cost.

One option for administrators at competitive liberal arts colleges is the establishment of a viable marketing approach to student recruitment. The basis for such an approach is understanding how, and why, students (and their parents) choose a specific college. The development of an admissions funnel for a particular type of institution would offer significant insight into the dynamics of college choice, dynamics that must be isolated for the development of a longitudinal marketing information system (MIS). A marketing information system serves to identify the elements of the marketing plan, elements that include the two-way symmetric communication function, image and market position clarification, the segmentation of the pool of prospective students into target markets, and the development of yield strategies.
Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Recruitment and admission research has become a growth industry in higher education, not so much because colleges and universities need students, but because they need the funds that those students represent, (Zemsky, 1983, p. ix). The prospect of a sharp decline in the number of high school-age students is seen by many colleges as a threat to this financial stability, (Trachtenberg and Levy, 1973). As a result, college administrators have placed tremendous pressure on their admissions officers to find more effective ways to attract, enroll, and even matriculate students, (Topor, 1983). The growth in the number of seminars, workshops, consultants, conventions, and professional journals devoted to the problems of recruiting prospective students bears great evidence to this concern. Colleges are committing substantial resources to the development of more sophisticated marketing strategies, more appealing programs, and better recruitment literature, (Domonick, 1980; Chapman, 1981).

As administrators in higher education sought to understand the recruitment and admissions phenomena, they discovered that three types of information were needed. First, American higher
education needed to better understand the market; it needed to know how many college-bound, 18-year-olds there really were.

Second, individual institutions needed to map their own visibility. In effect, they needed to know how many of these 18-year-olds knew of, and were interested in, their institution. And finally, the institutions needed a realistic assessment of their competitive market share—a calculation comparing institutional volume to total market volume. To be genuinely useful, however, such analyses needed to be taken a step further. The admissions officers needed to know the other types of colleges their prospective applicants were considering, (Zemsky, 1983, p. 3). As a consequence, some admissions officers turned to the growing body of literature in the field of recruitment and admissions for information that would offer direction for their enrollment problems. What they found was a body of research that seemed to have three fairly distinct areas of focus, (see Figure 4, next page).

One area of admissions research was involved with both the description and prediction of enrollment. This research included studies on national and regional population shifts and trends, (Centra, 1978); descriptions of current enrollment statistics, (Astin, 1984); evaluating the influence of federal and state financial aid policies, (Nolfi et al., 1978); determining the impact of financial aid on public or private matriculation,
and gauging the impact of the rising cost of private education on enrollment, (Suttle, 1983).

Figure 4

Analysis of Admissions Research

DESCRIBE-PREDICT ENROLLMENT <--------> ENROLLMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Demographic analysis/forecasting
- Policy analysis
- Market forces

\ /  \ /
\ /  \ /
------Admission Models------

Actors
Decision-Making Process
Market Forces

Source: The Author (1986)

A second focus of research was on admissions development. The goal of this research was to maximize the effectiveness of current marketing and recruitment strategies to maintain or increase enrollment. These studies, traditionally, were narrowly defined and usually involved research conducted at one institution. A typical study might, for example, describe the information needed by prospective students in the decision-making process, (Kinnick 1975; Rowe 1980); list some of the actors involved in the process; (Druesne, 1977); or, conversely, relate some of
the frustrations felt by prospective students as they reacted to the hard sell by college admissions officers, (Heckscher, 1985).

The majority of the predictive, descriptive, or developmental studies, however, did not link the components of the college choice phenomena: linkages that joined actors, time, information needs, college characteristics, and other market factors. It was the lack of this vital linkage that hindered the development of theory in the college decision-making process.

In his 1981 analysis of the current research in college recruitment and admissions, Chapman outlined two reasons to explain the lack, and somewhat confused and misdirected nature, of college admissions research:

1. During the time that college enrollments were growing, college administrators were not particularly worried about specific influences on students' college choice. The emphasis in admissions was on selection rather than recruitment.

2. There has been little theory to guide investigations of specific college choice. The models that have been posed have been concerned most often with predicting the impact on institutional enrollment due to changes in federal financial aid. (p. 491).

A third, slowly emerging body of research sought the development of admissions models that joined the various components of the college choice phenomena. This third area of research was longitudinal in nature and included elements of enrollment pre-

11 Research Describing or Predicting Enrollment

Studies of demographics have long been at the forefront of college admissions research. If nothing else, such studies have revealed the primary impetus behind the need for a proactive marketing information system - a 25 percent decline in the number of high school students through the mid 1990s. In many cases, such studies have not impacted market research as much as they have provided the rationale for such research. Research describing or predicting enrollment levels and trends is used to guide and justify marketing strategies. Such research reveals, in a sense, the problems that marketing attempts to solve. The study by Dresch (1975), cited earlier, is typical of many demographic studies. Dresch believed that higher education had overexpanded, and the relative income advantage enjoyed by earlier college graduates had declined considerably. He predicted a sharp drop in enrollment through the mid 1980s as students, attracted by the higher salaries available in a favorable job market, opted to join the workforce instead of the ranks of college students. By
the year 2000, he projected a decrease in undergraduate enrollment of 50 percent. Most of that decrease, he predicted, would take place before 1990, (Dresch, 1975).

In a similar study, the Carnegie Commission (1975) delineated numerous factors that could affect enrollment among various types of institutions of higher education. The first group of factors were external to the institution and included: 1) The diminishing pool of high school graduates; 2) The declining number and market for teachers; 3) The increase in the number of non-traditional students; and 4) The rising level of state support for private higher education.

The second set of factors evaluated by the Commission emphasized such institutional characteristics as: 1) Financial condition; 2) Academic and social reputation; 3) Size of the student body; and 4) Location. In analyzing the impact of both categories of factors, the Carnegie Commission concluded there were two basic types of institutions:

1. Those institutions which, on the average, are likely to do relatively well with their enrollments and institutional health -- the public community colleges, the universities, and the more highly selective liberal arts colleges.
2. Those institutions which, on the average, are likely to do relatively less well, given the same amount of effort, with their enrollments and institutional health -- the comprehensive colleges and universities (particularly the private ones) and the two-year private colleges, (p. 76).

Centra (1978) combined research from eight different demographic studies that included population migration shifts and trends in population decline, and indicated that a 25 percent drop in the high school age cohort will occur nationwide by the mid 1990s, (p. 2). He was, however, less specific about how different sections of the country or different types of colleges will be affected by the decline.

Centra wrote that college enrollments could be affected by any number of events, including an increase in the number of college courses for twelfth grade students, or, for the four year colleges, attracting more transfers from the two-year colleges and more comprehensive and generous student aid programs by the federal government, (pp. 24-25). He also noted that changes in government policy that would provide more jobs for college graduates (such as a large increase in research and development spending) could alter enrollment projections that had been made. Centra wrote that the declining college-age population is the major reason for a projected decrease in enrollment. He noted, however, that the most pessimistic forecasts, such as the one by
Dresch (1975), cited earlier, also factored in a lower rate of college enrollment because of a weak job market that would leave a surplus of college graduates unemployed, (p. 29). Centra wrote:

In addition to a weak job market for college graduates, other factors may depress enrollments even more than suggested by most projections. Inflation is one of these. Between 1965 and 1976, college budgets increased by some 84 percent according to HEW figures. Rising operating costs have led to fast-rising tuition and other college fees. Although incomes have gone up proportionally during the past decade, the rising cost of essentials, such as housing and food, has reduced the amount of income many families have available for higher education; other families may be able to pay the higher costs, but their willingness to pay remains a question, (p. 30).

Centra concluded:

Higher college expenses will be especially hard on families with more than one college-age child. An especially high fertility level and closely-spaced births in the 1950s has resulted in what has been termed a "sibling squeeze" (Morrison, 1976). These cohorts are now maturing to college age, which means that a higher-than-average number of families will be faced with multiple sets of college expenses in the years ahead, (p. 30).

Alexander Astin, the noted chronicler of higher education, has consistently monitored college freshmen. His 1984 description of freshmen characteristics and attitudes is typical. He noted, for instance, that 14 percent of the Class of 1988 applied to three or more different colleges, and that 4.4 percent applied to
six or more colleges. In addition, 2.6 percent of the freshmen were accepted at six or more colleges. He also discovered that reasons for attending a specific college were varied. However, the academic reputation of the college was rated as very important by 55.7 percent of the freshmen. The next highest rated item was social reputation, at 22.2 percent. Other items in the study by Astin included information on parental income, concerns about financing a college education, and sources of financial aid.

Nolfi et al. (1978) outlined methodology to provide policy-makers with a means of forecasting the changes in student behavior that would result from anticipated changes in the structure of the educational system, or from proposed modifications to educational policy. This analysis, while related to college choice, was directed at public policy formation rather than institutional administration.

Following Nolfi, Tierney et al. (1979) presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association that articulated the impact of changes in financial aid on public versus private matriculation decisions. They proposed that the probability of a decision by a student to matriculate in a public institution was a function of the sex of the student, ability of the student, family income, institutional
tuition, distance from the institution, institutional selectivity, and total financial aid offers, (Tierney et al., 1979).

Suttle (1983) studied the perceived high cost of higher education and its effect on enrollment. The focus of his study was Yale University. While tuition and fees at Yale were high (approximately $10,300 during 1982-83 - the time of the study), Suttle was concerned that prospective students and parents had the impression that expenses at Yale were increasing far faster than the national average, and that for many, or even most students, an education at Yale seemed simply out of reach, (pp. 259-260). Suttle concluded by saying that as long as the tuition rate at Yale does not get grossly out of line with tuition rates at other Ivy League schools, it simply will not be that important a factor in determining the composition of the student body, Suttle (p. 269).

Turner (1984) offered another perspective on the use of demographic data and the development of recruiting and admission strategies. Writing in a publication sponsored by the College Board, the leading source of demographic data on high school students via the Student Search Service, Turner directed readers to take advantage of the special population segmentation techniques available from the College Board. To respond to the increasing number of women in higher education and their impact on market strategies, for example, Turner wrote:
What implications might this have for the kind of recruiting approach that postsecondary institutions employ? An institution can conduct a search that uses sex as one of the selection criteria. An institution experiencing a shift in its student population may wish to segment its search along gender lines in order to track female/male enrollment patterns over a period of years; or it may wish to collect and maintain the volume projection data made available at the college's request through the College Board's regional offices, (p. 28).

iii Research on Increasing Enrollment

The second group of research was concerned with increasing the effectiveness of recruitment and admission practices. The number of studies of this type of research, termed enrollment development, far exceeded the other two bodies of research. Enrollment development research concentrated on the direct application of marketing and advertising solutions to the recruiting "problems" discovered in the demographic research. Not coincidentally, many of the strategies outlined in this type of research applied equally to the selling of cars as well as colleges. Interestingly, a segment of the body of research on enrollment development explored the impact of such marketing approaches on the prospective student. This research, which might be termed consumer research, reflected the larger national concern for consumer rights from the late 1960s through the late 1970s. Only now is this type of research beginning to wane. The decline in
this consumer research paralleled both the decline in national consumer issues and the increased competition for high school students among institutions of higher education.

The study by Kinnick (1975) is typical of enrollment development research. Kinnick developed a taxonomy of information items which high school seniors and enrolled college students felt were necessary in their decision-making process. Kinnick discovered that students sought information on admission, college selectivity, acceptance of transfer credits, costs, financial aid, student employment, physical description of the school and community, description of students, social life, teachers, the quality of instruction, housing, institutional reputation, and other items.

Stark (1976) writing from the emerging consumer orientation, noted that the research by Kinnick was not designed to determine which information was most critical. The study simply ranked and compared the information items that students viewed as important, and investigated how well admissions counselors understood the perceived needs of potential students. Stark wrote, "Kinnick ... seems to base her conclusions on the assumption that prospective students usually ask the right questions," (p. 63).

Stark argued that three diverse policies needed to be adapted to protect student consumers. First, institutions and professional associations needed to regulate consumer abuses and
to issue cautions and guidance tools to help students protect themselves. Second, institutions should make available clearly articulated comparison information so students may more intelligently evaluate diverse educational options. And third, institutions should establish a quality monitoring system by compiling, comparing, and reporting data on the educational functions of institutions and make judgments about why consumers should select one particular service over another, or would benefit more from one course of action than from another, (p. 64).

Druesne and Zavada (1977) sought information on increasing the effectiveness of college mailings. They discovered that students did not like impersonal letters, initial packets that contained too much information, and first-contact letters that stated the college wants them and almost assured them of admission if they applied. On the other hand, they noted that students did like letters that were personalized, mentioned their field of academic interest, and included concise fact sheets and prepaid return postcards in the initial mailings. Specific suggestions to increase the impact of marketing, particularly when using the Student Search Service, included:

1. Student response is much higher if mailings indicate that students' names were provided by the Student Search Service.

2. Special curriculum-related mailings were more effective than general mailings.
3. Materials sent by first-class postage produced a higher rate of response than materials mailed at other postage rates.

4. Materials with the highest response rates included printed materials that were direct, thorough, spirited, consistent in tone and genuinely sympathetic to the needs of students.

5. Mailings with low response rates had too little (or too much) information, were confusing, or had a patronizing attitude — particularly to minority students and women.

6. Students disliked "gimmickry" and "hard-sell" materials, but they admired good design and effective use of color.

7. Students were suspicious of colleges that emphasized geographic location and outdoor opportunities; they were much more interested in curriculum information and other practical information upon which to base their decisions — but they disliked extravagant claims of institutional excellence, (p. 10).

The authors, who both worked at the College Board at the time of the study, concluded, "In general, students report that they like to receive mail from colleges through the Student Search Service, and they view the service as a helpful system for obtaining educational guidance information," (p. 10). Just eight years later, Heckscher (1985) would write that many students resented the College Board and would label the Student Search Service as an opportunity for the College Board to "fatten its coffers," (p. 28).
At the close of this period of educational consumerism, Stark and Marchese (1978) sought the development of two methods for the verification of the accuracy and fairness of recruitment publications. Those methods, an internal audit and an external audit, were applied to 11 demonstration institutions, each of which received a grant from the National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice to participate in the study. One of the participants, Barat College, invited a team of analysts from the Department of Higher/Postsecondary Education at Syracuse University to attempt an external audit of its forthcoming "Prospectus," a recruitment publication. The analysts used the following criteria:

1. The auditor will examine drafts of the prospectus to determine whether they fairly and accurately represent the college. The entire document, excluding only those topical areas for which an examination is not possible, shall come under review.

2. The college will supply the raw data used in constructing the prospectus, including HEGIS reports, student surveys, attrition studies, other research studies, committee reports and minutes, registration reports and will provide access to faculty, staff, and students for brief reviews.

3. The chief audit criterion will be that of fair and accurate representation of the college. Auditors will expect current, random, and unbiased data collection, acceptable statistical treatment of data, full
presentation of controversial issues, and unambiguous language. The audit team will not judge the objectives of the college, academic program and processes, or its financial priorities.

4. A short-form auditor's report will be prepared describing the extent to which the public may have confidence in the material presented and will be published in the prospectus. It will state which areas of information have been examined, including any necessary qualification due to the nature of the examination, and define the relative responsibilities of auditor and college for the accuracy of the information.

5. An auditor's supplementary report will be prepared suggesting ways to make the prospectus more complete and understandable, covering matters deemed significant but which fall short of being grave omissions.

6. Disagreements which cannot be resolved by use of alternative wording or data description will be submitted to a neutral arbitrator, expert in college administration and acceptable to both parties, (pp. 84-85).

A three-person auditing team from Syracuse spent several days on the Barat Campus examining the draft of the prospectus and its data base. Several problems with the Barat College prospectus were identified by the auditing team. They included:
1. Language ambiguity.

2. Instances in which available data had not been utilized to support points included in the prospectus.

3. Use of adverb qualifiers which raised questions of appropriate generalization.

4. Difficulties of reviewing evidence for qualitative questions.

5. Questions of the relevance of material to an information prospectus.

6. The possibility of presenting misleading information through misplaced emphasis.

7. Questions of the materiality of omitted items.

8. Issues of when and how to present normative data so that college statistics would be set in fair context for the reader, (p. 85).

Stark and Marchese noted that the procedures used at Barat College to audit the prospectus had direct applicability to a wide diversity of educational situations and would assure that:
1) Participation of the educational community was obtained in constructing information materials for prospective students; 2) A group without vested interests had ascertained that the information document was constructed on sound principles; and 3) Sufficient explanation and interpretation are provided within the Barat Prospectus so that the public may judge fairly the adequacy and truthfulness of the information, (p. 82). The authors concluded:
Processes of open discussion and careful explication of sources lie at the heart of college traditions and characterize the work we ask students to join. These same processes logically and ethically extend to the preparation of materials we put in student hands prior to enrollment, (p. 92).

Heckscher (1978) reviewed the reactions of prospective students to the increased marketing efforts by colleges. Her somewhat critical review noted that while students were a "savvy bunch - well-informed, visually sophisticated, astute in their observations, demanding openness and professionalism in others," they were, at the same time, "painfully vulnerable. The pressures of their present plight and the uncertainties of their futures produce anxiety, bewilderment, even paralysis," (p. 27). To the query of what students wanted to know about colleges as they went through the admissions process, she replied:

1. First and foremost, they want honest, accurate, comprehensive data, not exaggerations, deceptions, (and) glossy-painted pictures. They want to know about ..., the level of pressure, the salability of majors offered.

2. Pictures should be relevant, serious in their intent and related to the content.

3. Most students see the social and extracurricular life of a college as critical to their overall understanding.
4. Each college should address its strengths and weaknesses — what it can or cannot provide. Most literature exaggerates the good, and this comes across as phony to young people.

5. An avalanche of "junk" mail arrives in the mail; students are bombarded with small, folded pamphlets that say nothing. Two good pieces, sent at the right time in a student's process of choosing, are worth six poor ones that offend student sensibilities, especially if unsolicited, (p. 28).

Heckscher concluded her analysis, "I hope for an admissions process that assumes less the marketing image — the carefully orchestrated program that seeks to hoodwink the vulnerable college-bound students," (p. 28). She admonished the admissions officers to "respond with openness and forthrightness to these aspiring young people ... Think of your applicants as unique individuals, every last one of them — and the care and concern you show in personalizing the admission process will carry you much further along the road to a full class than any clearing house psychology or mass marketing technique," (p. 28).

Paralleling the concerns of Heckscher, Lenning and Cooper (1978) developed a guidebook for presenting information to prospective students. The guidebook was, in part, a reaction to the Student Consumer Information section of the Higher Education Amendments of 1976 — Public Law 94-482, that stipulated that all postsecondary institutions participating in federal financial aid
programs must disseminate to enrolled and prospective students very specific consumer information. The book opened with a careful review of the information needs of prospective college students. Lenning and Cooper noted that "More than half of some 5,000 prospective students surveyed by the College Entrance Examination Board might have changed their mind about the kind of college to attend if they had had more complete information about costs and aid," (p. 1). They also reported that in interviews with over 500 college students, faculty, administrators, and high school counselors and parents, researchers from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) found unanimous agreement that much of the information currently being provided to prospective students by colleges is inadequate or being communicated ineffectively, (p. 1).

Lenning and Cooper included specific information on assessing the information needs of prospective students, considerations in upgrading the communication of institutional information to prospective students, and a review of potential avenues for the implementation of such a communication program. The guidebook concluded with an annotated bibliography of the 11 student consumer projects funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education. Those reports are delineated below, while a more complete bibliography of these works is available at the close of this dissertation. The titles indicated the strong
consumer orientation of the literature of this period. The reports included:


Lenning, Oscar: Does Form of Communication to Prospective Students Make a Difference in 'Better Communication'?, 1977.

Lenning, Oscar; Stark, Joan; and P. Wishart: Providing Comparable Information to Prospective Students: Issues, Problems and Possible Solutions, 1977.


The late 1970s saw a subtle shift in the tone of the research in enrollment development that, as mentioned previously, seemed to parallel the increased concern with the decline in the number of high school graduates. It would not be correct to imply that admissions officers were no longer interested in student consumerism or in student rights. It would be more correct, rather, to note that research of this later period had a different, but no less important, emphasis: the attracting and retaining of students.

The work by Stevens (1979) is typical of much of the research from this period. Concerned that only 57.6 percent of the 12,252 freshmen admitted in the fall of 1977 to Michigan State eventually enrolled, Stevens initiated a study to determine the cause. Specifically, the study was interested in comparing the characteristics of admitted students who did enroll with admitted students who did not enroll. The information from this study, according to Stevens, would have direct applicability to increasing the yield, or percentage of students offered acceptance who ultimately enroll. The study addressed the impact of nine dependent student variables. The variables included: 1) Academic orientation; 2) Career orientation; 3) Financial concern; 4) Commitment to the institution; 5) Family interest in education; 6) Size; 7) Interaction (interest in interacting in an
academic setting); 8) Autonomy (willingness to leave home); and 9) High school grade point average. The design was expressed as five null hypotheses:

1. There are no significant differences between admitted first-time freshman students who enroll and those who do not enroll with regard to the nine dependent variables.

2. There are no significant differences between out-of-state first-time freshman admitted students who do not enroll with regard to any of the nine dependent variables.

3. There is no interaction between student residency and student enrollment status with regard to any of the nine dependent variables.

4. There is no significant correlation between any of the nine dependent variables.

5. There is no correlation between items within each variable.

The results of the study by Stevens were interesting. The findings revealed that there were significant differences between admitted students who enrolled and admitted students who did not enroll at Michigan State. According to Stevens, students who enrolled were less career oriented, had a stronger commitment to the institution, had a greater large-school orientation, and had less family interest in education than students who did not enroll. They also had slightly lower grade point averages. The two groups, however, did not differ with respect to academic
orientation, financial concern, interaction, and autonomy, (p. 41).

The conclusion by Stevens was notable for its insight into the impact that such research could have on the development of a marketing information system. She wrote:

The type of research undertaken at MSU is just one example of what can be done to learn more about our institutions and more about the students we are likely to attract, and who are attracted to us. Although the particular findings are pertinent only to MSU, the methodology used and the concern expressed in the study is applicable to the vast majority of institutions of higher education. We are all, like it or not, involved in a business - the business of selling the product of higher education and our individual institutions to the consumer - students. We must 'analyze, plan, implement and control programs designed to bring about desired exchanges with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives,' (p. 42).

Dominick et al. (1980) reviewed current admissions practices under the auspices of Project CHOICE, the Center for Helping Organizations Improve Choice in Education. They asked 1700 high school guidance counselors and college admissions officers to rank a list of 27 different recruitment activities in order of the impact they felt the activities had on the college choice process. Essentially, the study was concerned with the answer to three questions: 1) What activities, in the view of admissions
officers and guidance counselors, were most effective in recruiting students? 2) What activities did they believe students relied on most? and 3) To what extent did counselors and admissions officers agree about these things?, (p. 24).

The results of that survey (See Table 6, next page), indicated that there was considerable agreement between high school guidance counselors and college admissions officers on the effectiveness of such recruitment activities as college visits, college day/nights, and the mailing of college catalogs. This did vary somewhat on whether the institution of higher education was a private four-year college, public four-year college, private university, or public university. Admissions officers from public colleges and universities expressed more confidence in the effectiveness of written information (letters, brochures, catalogs) than did admissions officers from private institutions, (p. 24). High school guidance counselors generally agreed about the importance of personal contact between the student and college, but they had a tendency to view their role in the college choice process as more important than was indicated by admissions officers. The high school guidance counselors also regarded commercially published directories as more important than did college admissions officers.
Table 6

Most Effective Activities for Recruiting Students by Overall Rank Order of Activity and Number and Percent of Schools Ranking Activity Among Top Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>High School Guidance Counselors</th>
<th>College Admissions Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall Ranking</td>
<td>Schools Ranking Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school visits by college admissions representatives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus visit days, when high school students visit campus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional participation in college day/night programs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekend visits, when individual high school students spend a weekend on campus</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of ACT and/or CSS student identification services</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of currently enrolled college students to recruit prospective students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The listing of college information in commercially published college guides</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor visit days, when high school counselors are invited to campus</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Domonick et al. (1980)

While college admissions officers and high school guidance counselors agreed on the activities on which students most relied when making their choice about where to attend college, the study identified an interesting anomaly between what respondents thought was most effective and what they believed students relied
on most in making their college decisions. Only the first two activities on the two lists matched (high school and campus visits). According to the authors, the significant difference was in the role of informational literature. While printed materials were not viewed as especially effective for purposes of recruitment, they were perceived to be among the sources of information students relied on most in making a college decision, (p. 24). The discrepancy between the importance of printed materials to the student might suggest that the role of personal contact in admissions is overstated as an actual influence on a student's decision on where to attend college.

In 1980, Druesne, Harvey, and Zavada expanded the earlier article by Druesne and Zavada (1977). The authors surveyed 400 institutions that had participated in Student Search about the results they experienced in using different types of searches and mailings. The authors were particularly interested in the timing of the search, types of postage used in distributing information to prospective students, the types of mailings used, content, personalization of salutation, and the impact of follow-up correspondence on the success of the Search.

The survey revealed that the Spring PSAT/NMSQT and Limited PSAT/NMSQT Searches were the most effective. Apparently, the earlier students were contacted, the more interested they were in investigating different colleges and the more likely they were to
request additional information. The 1980 study also revealed that there was little impact on the type of postage and student response. While the 1977 study revealed that first-class postage was more effective at producing initial response than less expensive kinds of postage, this difference had leveled off by 1980. The 1980 study found that both first-class and nonprofit rates of postage produced similar returns.

The 1980 study also disputed a conclusion of the earlier study that mailings related to specific curriculums were the most effective. The 1980 study revealed that the mailings that produced the highest rates of response were those announcing a special summer workshop or program, those designed to recruit minority students, and those describing the college. What the authors of the 1980 study may not have anticipated, however, is that the level of expectations of prospective students has greatly increased. Where prospective students were once surprised to receive information on specific majors, they now expect such information as a matter of course. It is not unreasonable to expect that future students will expect even more sophisticated brochures.

The 1980 study also noted that a personalized salutation such as "Dear Robert" increased the rate of response. In addition, mailings that were sent immediately after the college received the search names and addresses brought a higher rate of
response. This supports the previous conclusion that the sooner a student is contacted, the more likely the student will respond. Evidently, students who received dozens and even hundreds of college mailings were more willing, and perhaps able, to respond to the earlier mailings than the ones at the end of the cycle.

The authors noted that the sending of follow-up mailings had a significant impact on the rate of response. Institutions that did not send follow-up mailing had a rate of response slightly above seven percent. The rate of response increased to nine percent after one follow-up mailing, and to over 10 percent after two follow-up mailings, (p. 14).

For the 1980 study, high school seniors were asked what they liked and did not like about the initial college mailings. According to the authors, these high school seniors liked:

1. Letters that were personalized and mentioned their intended fields of study.

2. Concise fact sheets included in first mailings containing, in brief, information that would allow them to sort out the colleges that would interest them.

3. A prepaid return postcard that provided the opportunity to ask for additional information or (and just as important) to indicate that they did not want to receive additional information.
4. Strongly attractive envelopes that made students want to open them: envelopes with color, a picture or logo, or a personal message. Students liked the name of the college printed boldly across the envelope, (p. 16).

Students did not like:

1. First-contact letters that stated that the colleges wanted them and all but assured the students of admission if they applied.

2. First packets that contained too much information, including the application forms, and catalogs that they felt were more appropriate in later mailings.

3. Manila envelopes that lacked color and appeal, (p. 16).

In 1980, Rowe studied the information needs of high school seniors in Utah. The 733 students who participated in the study revealed that information on academic programs and costs were the most important information items. The same students also noted that while information on financial aid and specific courses was desired, it was seldom supplied by the colleges in early mailings. The students rated a representative from the college, letters from the college, and pamphlets and catalogs as the most effective sources of information, while pamphlets and catalogs, letters, and financial aid information were the most used information. When asked to rank the persons with the most influence in the college choice process, the students in Utah
ranked their family first. Familial influence was followed by influence of college representatives, written materials, teachers, friends, school counselors, and other college students. Finally, the students were asked to reveal the best time of year for receiving information from a college. They picked the September–October period of their senior year as the best time to receive information, (p. 4).

When asked to relate their perceptions of knowledge, the 733 high school students felt that they had very adequate knowledge about the reputation, religion, and location of the schools they were interested in. At the same time, the students felt they had only adequate information on general facilities, housing, costs, admissions requirements, high school preparation, campus life, standards, and student profiles. However, the students admitted to only limited knowledge of scholarship and financial aid information, part-time employment possibilities, courses, descriptions of majors, general education requirements, extracurricular activities, special programs, and total enrollment. Finally, the students revealed that they had no knowledge of faculty/course evaluations, academic counseling, vocational counseling, job placement services, job placement reputation, and transfer procedures, (p. 6).

Bradham (1980) was concerned about the lack of guidelines available to evaluate admission publications. Using both
qualitative and quantitative methodologies, she delineated five means to evaluate recruitment publications: 1) Evaluation as measurement; 2) Evaluation as assessment of congruence between objectives and achievement; 3) Evaluation as professional judgment; 4) Evaluation as decision-maker; and 5) Evaluation as comprehensive or goal-free assessment, (p. 17).

One of the problems with adapting quantitative evaluation methods, such as evaluation as measurement and evaluation as assessment of congruence between objectives and achievement, is correctly determining what publication gets credit for what response. In many cases, effects are cumulative and depend on a carefully-designed formula, or funnel, of brochures and other contacts. The purpose of the first publication, the search piece, may simply be to inspire the prospective student to respond and seek additional information. The purpose of that brochure, therefore, is not to convince the student to enroll. Rather, it is to move the student one step closer to enrolling. Isolating cause from effect is even more difficult when institutional reputation is considered. Because students seldom enroll in colleges they have never heard of, the initial search publication usually reaches a student that has been "softened" by previous knowledge, either accurate or inaccurate, of the reputation of the college.

Bradham suggested that as colleges attempt to define the role and function of specific brochures and other contacts in an
early attempt to gauge quantitative effectiveness, admissions officers should begin to code and trace reply cards from the initial search pieces.

According to Bradham, three sets of figures were needed: 1) The number of reply cards returned from mailers and viewbooks; 2) The number of applications; and 3) The number of paid deposits. (p. 19). The yearly tabulation of these totals, and comparison with previous years, would allow admissions officers to gauge the quantitative effectiveness of their publications and other contacts in the three key parts of the admission funnel. If, for example, a three-year analysis showed that the number of reply cards from the initial search publication and the number of applications had climbed an even six percent per year, but the number of paid deposits had dropped, then admissions officers could isolate the problem in the third, or yield portion of the admission funnel, and focus their attention on redesigning the yield strategy. At the same time, such year-to-year comparisons would allow administrators to manipulate and test specific elements in the funnel.

Evaluation through professional judgment would result from the scrutiny of the publications by a qualified professional who would examine and render an expert opinion regarding quality or effectiveness. Bradham wrote, "Submitting publications to those individuals whose education, experience, and stature equip
them to render a critical opinion and offer explanations and recommendations would produce a judgment of this sort," (p. 19). At the same time, noted Bradham, professional judgment also included student judgment. Students, after all, are the final consumers. Two methods of obtaining student evaluation were reviewed: 1) When a prospective student visits the campus, and 2) During focus group sessions with high school students at local high schools.

Evaluation as decision-maker involved the continual exchange of information between evaluators and administrators regarding the information needs associated with the college decision process. This included evaluating publications in terms of content, readability levels, and information expectations of students. Essentially, this involved monitoring the feedback from students, other college administrators and faculty, and high school counselors on both the impact of the brochure and on the changing information needs and methods of gathering information for prospective students.

The final method, goal-free evaluation, argued that "information about unintended side effects may be more important than the information relative to project goals or pre-identified decisions," (p. 20). Basically, Bradham wrote that publications have both manifest and latent effects. She was concerned that many of the latent or unseen effects of a publication may have a
greater impact on the prospective student than its manifest, or intended, purpose.

Zavada (1983) undertook a survey of 412 colleges to determine the "ideal" or most popular initial search package sent to prospective students. The results of that survey (See Table 7, below) indicated that the bulk of the institutions, some 46.8 percent, sent a letter, reply card, and color brochure as part of the Spring Search.

**Table 7**

First Search Package Configurations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents of Spring Search</th>
<th>N of Institutions</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter and reply card</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, card, and b/w brochure</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, card, and color brochure</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, card, b/w brochure and application</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, card, color brochure and application</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter and b/w brochure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter, color brochure and application</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/W brochure and reply card</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color brochure and reply card</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority brochure and letter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application only</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zavada (1983)

At the same time, the survey revealed that:

1. Most colleges (some 41.8 percent) used the Spring Search as a mechanism to distribute general information about the college, (p. 3).
2. Just over 46 percent of the colleges used personalized letters, (p. 3).

3. Over 50 percent of the colleges used bulk-rate postage to mail their search pieces. At the same time, only 20.6 percent of the colleges used first-class postage, (p. 3).

4. Sixty-five percent of the colleges sent from one to three mailings to a prospective student before sending the application, (p. 4).

5. Over 40 percent of the colleges spent more than $20,000 or more per year on publications. At the same time, the majority of the colleges (29.8 percent) spent less than $5,000 per year on direct mail, (p. 4).

Lopatin (1984) conducted yet another survey for the College Board on the effectiveness of the Student Search Service. The survey, initiated in 1983, addressed four primary questions: 1) How do students perceive and evaluate the Student Search Service; 2) What do students do with the direct-mail materials they receive through the service; 3) How satisfied are students with this information; and 4) Which direct-mail techniques do students appreciate most? Because not all students receive the same volume of mail from colleges, the College Board divided the sample into three groups to see if reactions to the amount of mail the students receive varies from group to group. These groups included: 1) High contact students; students whose names had
been reported to 30 or more colleges; 2) Medium contact students; students whose names had been reported to seven to 29 colleges; and 3) Low contact students; students whose names had been reported to fewer than seven colleges.

A significant result for the survey, from the point of view of the College Board, was the large numbers of students from all three groups who viewed direct mail as the ideal way to learn about a college (See Table 8, next page).

Table 8 reveals that 98 percent of the high-contact students, 98 percent of the medium-contact students, and 91 percent of the low-contact students felt that direct mail was a good way to learn about a college. For the high-contact students, the next highest percentage (81 percent) said that a visit to their high school by a college representative was a good way to learn about a college.

Heckscher (1985) wrote about the use of marketing and advertising strategies from the point of view of the prospective student. She cautioned admission officers to "humanize, not dehumanize the process, to view each student as a unique individual," (p. 26). She blasted the quality of most Search pieces as "poor." Labeling such Search publications as "tasteless copy, on cheap paper, with humdrum design," Heckscher noted "They tend to be imitative, tedious, cutesy-looking - too flattering, too eager, too obvious," (p. 28).
Table 8

Responses of Different Contact Groups Concerning Whether They Like to Learn About Colleges in Selected Ways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Way</th>
<th>Yes%</th>
<th>No%</th>
<th>No Have Experienced%</th>
<th>Total%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mail sent to their home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-contact students</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-contact students</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-contact students</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Source: Lopatin (1984)
Heckscher also took issue with the College Board and noted that many students felt that the Student Search Service was simply a way for the College Board to "fatten its coffers," and that many colleges appeared "desperate" for students, (p. 28). Heckscher concluded:

My final plea to you: don't devalue your institutions or these aspiring young people. They are asking to be treated as individuals. They want good information. They want to make decisions well. The care and concern you demonstrate in individualizing the process is your ticket to a full class. Here is where I would concentrate my time rather than through elaborate promotional designs. Direct your energies so that the work of the students and the integrity of your colleges stand squarely at the center of your attention, (p. 28).

iv Research on Admissions Models

It is difficult to precisely delimit an admissions model. Because admissions models are concerned with exploring the dynamic of college choice, such models must include, at the very least, the actors involved in the college choice, the timing of the choice, information needs of prospective students, college characteristics, and other market factors including demographics and competition from colleges and the work place. In many respects, admissions model research is a recognition and elaboration of the interactions and complexities depicted in the demo-
graphic and enrollment development research outlined earlier. They are context dependent, longitudinal, and seek to describe, and to a certain extent, predict college choice.

One of the first admissions models was developed by Holland (1958). He concluded that the most important factor in a student's choice of where to attend college was the prestige of the institution or the department in which the student intended to study.

In 1962, Kerr found that high school students felt their parents were the most important influence in their decision on where to attend college. Parents were followed by school counselors, teachers, relatives, friends, self, and college representatives.

Richards and Holland (1965) found evidence of four factors - intellectual emphasis, practicality, advice of others, and social emphasis - that influenced college choice. Just three years later Morrison (1968) conducted a factor analysis of 148 statements about possible reasons for choosing a particular college, and concluded that five factors were important to liberal arts seniors from middle and upper middle class communities in 10 states. These factors included student freedom, social mobility, dependency, personal observation, and practicality.
Stahmann, Hanson and Whittlesey (1971) reviewed the perceptions of both students and parents in the college choice process. During the course of the study, the authors asked students and parents to identify the three most important factors influencing college choice; to rank different actors and their influence on the decision where to attend college; and, finally, to rank the influence of sources of information on the students' decision to attend.

The parents ranked the advice of parents or other family member as the most influential factor. This was followed by cost of attending college and location of college.

When asked to rank the most influential people, both parents and students ranked parents as the most influential. Parents ranked brothers or sisters second, and high school counselors as third. The students paralleled the ranking of the parents for the first two influentials. However, students ranked friends in high school and friends attending college as more influential than high school counselors, (p. 22).

Finally, when asked to rank the most influential sources of information, parents listed campus visits, college catalogs, and handbooks printed about the colleges. Students also indicated that a campus visit was the most influential source of information. Next in order of importance were talking with college students and printed recruitment materials, (p. 22).
The authors concluded:

It was apparent that both the parents and their college-bound sons or daughters felt that the greatest factor influencing choice of college was the advice of parents or other family members. This supports the idea that information about college attendance should be disseminated to the home of college-bound youth if such information is to have an impact. Thus, those concerned with influencing choice of college should provide information which can be used in the home by college-bound students and their parents, (p. 22).

Stordahl (1972) sought the college choice reasons of entering freshmen at Northern Michigan University. Using a questionnaire similar to that used by Richards and Holland, Stordahl discovered that intellectual emphasis was the most important factor and the advice of others the least important. The other two important factors were practicality and social emphasis.

Seymour and Richardson (1972) explored the possibility of a perceptual generation gap between parents and current students at a large midwestern university. In the study, the perceptions of students were directly compared with the perceptions held by their own parents. The instrument used to collect the data on parents and students was the College Characteristics Index developed by Stern and Pace. This index was used to identify characteristics of college environments (Cole and Fields, 1961; Donato and Fox, 1970), and to determine the expectations of
college environments held by prospective students and their high school counselors (Seymour, 1968). The CCI measured 11 factors associated with the psychological environment of the college. This environment is broken down into intellectual and non-intellectual factors.

The results of the study were interesting. Almost as a whole, parents rated the university above average on the majority of intellectual factors and average or above on all of the non-intellectual factors, (p. 327). Parents saw the university as providing students with abundant opportunities for developing leadership potential and self-assurance in intellectual and non-intellectual areas of campus life. Students, on the other hand, perceived the university in a more negative fashion, (p. 329). In the intellectual area, where the majority of parental ratings were above average, all of the student ratings were well below average. Seymour and Richardson concluded:

...Some efforts need to be directed toward resolving parent-student differences such as those shown in this study. Is it any wonder that the older generation has great difficulty understanding today's college student when parents view the university environment of their own sons or daughters in a fashion almost unrelated to that of their offspring? Parents appear to be out of touch with the environmental ... conditions with which their sons or daughters must contend at the university ..., (p. 329).
In 1973, Bowers and Pugh combined the possible college choice reasons from earlier studies and designed a questionnaire that included 22 elements likely to be considered in the college choice decision. For each of the 22 factors, students and parents were asked to indicate if that reason had been "of no importance," "a minor consideration," or "a major consideration," (p. 220).

The study revealed that parents and students attached somewhat different importance to factors relevant to college choice. Students felt such items as social and cultural climate and informal channels of advice about the college were important. Parents, though, felt that financial, geographic, and academic factors were significant, (p. 223). According to the authors, such differences are not surprising: "Parents probably paid the living and educational expenses for a majority of the students, and because of this investment, they were concerned that their children receive the best education for that money ... Students, since they would be living on campus, were more concerned with social, cultural, and other living conditions," (p. 223). The authors noted that several other questions should be explored to shed more light on interaction between students and parents in the college choice process. The questions included: 1) Does parental weight (influence) tend to increase as the parental
proportion of financing increases?; and 2) How might parental weight be affected by the extent and nature of their education?

Mundel (1974) explored the questions: 1) Why do students decide to attend a specific college?; and 2) Why do students decide to attend college rather than do something else? After an examination of then current literature, Mundel concluded that the decision to go to college and then to enroll in a particular institution is affected by several factors, including his or her ability and achievement; motivations, tastes, and aspirations; the costs of attending various colleges; college characteristics (including programs, living arrangements, and student body characteristics); and the characteristics of the family of the student (including income and parental education). Mundel also noted that the decisions by the student were also influenced by the availability of alternatives to college, such as military service and employment, (p. 50).

Mundel articulated two complicating factors in developing a model of college choice. First, student preferences among particular colleges are difficult to judge. Just because a student is enrolled in a particular college, it cannot be inferred that it was his or her first choice. And second, particular colleges may have different attributes for different students. Financial aid, for instance, makes the cost of attending different for each student. In order to understand the impact of cost on the
decision of a student to attend or not attend, researchers need to know what financial aid offers students would have received in institutions for which they were eligible, (p. 50).

According to the model developed by Mundel, the decision by the student to attend college can be broken down into three stages. First, for every available college, the student decides whether to commute or to live on campus. Second, the student chooses the best college available in light of the decision on residency. And third, the student decides whether to enroll on the basis of a comparison between this best college and the option of not enrolling. Using data obtained from a sample of students from California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and North Carolina, Mundel noted the impact of key college variables on the decision to attend and where to attend college. First, according to the author, cost was an extremely important factor. The effect of tuition was strong and more negative at lower family income levels. At the same time, the cost of commuting and on-campus room and board costs were significant. In addition, students tended to prefer colleges with higher quality students (with quality measured by test scores) and to prefer colleges where students were like themselves.

The education of parents was also found to be a contributor to the choice of the student. If the father, in particular, had graduated from or even attended college, the student was more
likely to attend. There was, however, a decrease in the importance of parental education as family income rose. Mundel reported that the sex of the student was also a factor. At low incomes, female students were more likely to enroll in college. At higher income, though, males were more apt to enroll, (p. 51).

Munday (1976) explored the impact of educational development, family income, and financial aid in the college decision process. The student samples were drawn from the ACT Class Profile Service prepared for 1,200 colleges in 1972 and from 2,384 college students who were financial aid applicants during the same period. Essentially, the research project was concerned with exploring three issues: 1) The relationship between family income and the cost of both the college attended and colleges of interest; 2) The relationship between the family income of the student and educational development to the characteristics of the colleges attended and chosen; and 3) The relationship of the college characteristics to average student family income, cost, and mean ACT composite scores.

A summary of the findings by Munday included:

1. The majority of students at all income levels attend low-cost colleges. Thus, changes in student costs at these institutions would touch many people and have great potential impact.
2. There is little relation between the cost of college attended and students' family income. This is true for college students generally, and for aid applicants as well. College costs have the most significant impact on college attendance at the extremes of the income distribution.

3. Students sort themselves in college choice and attendance (or are sorted by colleges) on the basis of two dimensions: educational development and family income. In other words, college students enroll, and identify as college choices, colleges that enroll students who are like them in educational development and family income. This is true of college students generally, but not of financial aid applicants.

4. Average student educational development has a moderate and consistent relation to college costs, both for college-bound students generally, and for aid applicants.

5. Financial aid applicants enroll at colleges whose students are different from them with respect to educational development and family income. The latter finding would be expected. The former, which would not likely be anticipated, was the biggest difference found between financial aid applicants and college students generally, and is presumed to be the result of the financial aid reward, (pp. 13-14).

At the same time, Munday noted that several assumptions about college choice could not be confirmed through his research. The assumptions that college cost was a significant barrier to need students, that students chose a college primarily because of
its location, and that financial aid helped needy students enter colleges where they were similar to other students were not confirmed by the study.

The study by Munday reinforced, though, three key assumptions, including: 1) People tend to go to the college their relatives or friends have attended; 2) Teachers and counselors who worked with high school students often felt that the perceptions held by the student were more accurate than is commonly acknowledged; and 3) Social institutions reflect the stratification of society in terms of the people they serve, their diversity, and their purposes, and that family income and college choice was a part of that stratification, (p. 15).

Munday concluded his article with numerous questions and issues that, in his opinion, warranted further investigation. They included:

1. How do students get reliable information about colleges? Is the information differentially distributed, so that some of the students have accurate information and other students have no or incorrect information?

2. What is the consequence of most students attending a college whose students are primarily like themselves? Does this make it more difficult for college graduates to work and play with people from social and educational backgrounds different from their own?
3. Do financial aid applicants face adjustment problems in college? What are the consequences when the aid applicants go to a college whose students are not similar to them, especially when aid applicants are dissimilar in ways they cannot readily change?

4. What problems beset the college that enrolls large numbers of students on financial aid?, (p. 15).

Litten (1979), a researcher at Carleton College, examined the phenomena of market structure and institutional position in geographic market segments and their influence on the decision of a student to accept an offer of admission from a college. Defining a market segment as a group of clients with common characteristics which differ from those of other segments, Litten wrote that such segmentation recognizes that all consumers are not identical, that they have different concerns, interests, and preferences, and that these preferences must be met in marketing a particular product or service, (p. 60). Litten noted that the identification of market segments and the analysis of market structures and institutional position are of interest to the academic marketer and institutional researcher only if marketing strategies - institutional presentation and development, and the delivery of institutional services - can be developed which are particularly appropriate to a given segment. Litten wrote:
Marketing strategies are successful only to the degree that they effect desired behavior by potential clients at a reasonable cost - in college recruiting this means applications and matriculation by desired clients (academic institutions are not only recruiting fee-paying clients, but also they are building one of their academic resources, the student body). Thus, higher education market research should not only seek to produce research on consumer attitudes and perceptions and on market structures which help in defining the content of marketing strategies; it should also indicate how these consumer and market characteristics relate and are likely to relate to relevant market behavior, (pp. 61-62).

The research project developed by Litten was designed to answer the following question: Do regional segments exist in traditional student markets which give evidence of differing structures in the supplier's market, variations in potential clients' perceptions and evaluation of Carleton and its competition, and variations in the relationship between "position" and the decision to matriculate? Using data obtained from the candidates' reply form, the form on which admitted applicants indicated to Carleton whether they would enroll, Litten determined that the competition for Carleton does vary between geographic regions and that it changes between different stages in the application/selection process. Litten wrote, "By examining the characteristics of these principal categories of the competition by region, we can infer some basic facts which
are relevant to a marketing strategy. For example, the dearth of nonelite institutions in the East suggests that relatively high cost will not be as much of a consideration as it will be in the North Central states (where public and less selective private institutions are more of a factor)," (p. 79). Litten also noted:

The structure of competition in the suppliers market also varies by region ... There is a very tight market structure in the East, with ... strongly interrelated competitors. There are a few schools in the East which appear to have a special appeal of their own, but the overwhelming bulk of the applications go to a small set of Ivy League institutions and other selective colleges in the region, which between them share considerable overlapped applications from Carleton applicants, (pp. 79-80).

Litten indicated that the study revealed that Carleton's relative strengths and weaknesses provided some input into its marketing strategies. For example, students expressed interest and/or concern about the geographic location of the campus. As a result, Carleton, through promotional activities, emphasized campus programs that demonstrated the recreational and academic benefits of a winter climate and semi-rural location. Litten concluded the article with some words of caution:
Whether to capitalize on existing strengths or to improve present relative weaknesses ... is a marketing decision which lies beyond the market research process. Modifications of either sort must be carefully weighed against the possibility of alienating those who are presently attracted to the college and members of the institution who feel more than a monetary tie to the school, (p. 81).

Zemsky et al. (1980) were instrumental in developing the market segment model as an avenue toward a greater understanding of the college choice phenomenon. The model, first tested in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, sought to capture and describe the inherent clustering of colleges into competitive strata (p. 356). Essentially, the authors explored the notion that the mechanisms by which college demand was distributed among competing institutions were basically hierarchical in nature and specific to the segmented structure of a given market. The authors sought to quantify the notion of hierarchical segmentation using college choice data drawn from the College Board in 1979.

The results from the study suggested that the boundaries between market segments, or hierarchies, are fairly strong. This contradicted a widespread demographic scenario that held that because of the shortage of high school graduates, students will "shop up" as once-selective institutions dig deeper and deeper into their applicant pools. According to the authors, the self-
indexing, often in terms of SAT scores among the students, coupled with community traditions and experiences, will keep most students in their own market segments, (p. 373). The authors also noted that it is the self-contained local markets which will suffer the most from demographic pressures. They wrote:

Just as local students seldom develop regional or national options, the local institutions satisfying that demand seldom attract interest (or at least SAT score submissions) from outside their own communities. A handful of local colleges and universities in the Philadelphia metropolitan areas ... satisfy the local market, providing in the process each other’s principal and often sole competition, (p. 373).

The authors concluded:

Patterns within national market segments will be more diverse, given the broader and less articulated structure of those markets. It is suspected, however, that price-based marketing will play an equally divisive role, as a number of highly-selective/high-cost institutions begin to exhaust their enrollment pools. This same pattern is likely to be repeated among selective regional schools caught between local competition increasingly using price to keep students at home and national institutions attempting to supplement enrollment pools by intensive recruiting in regional markets, (p. 374).

Pope and Bell (1980) sought to develop a model that could be used to forecast and simulate enrollment. The key to their analysis was the partitioning of the incoming freshmen into four
distinct categories. Category One was comprised of students who had been accepted and had paid a deposit. Category Two students had been accepted but had not accepted the invitation to enroll. Category Three students were students who had applied, but who had not been accepted. Category Four was students who had not yet applied. This category, obviously, had the greatest amount of uncertainty. Essentially, the model constructed separate forecasts for each of the four categories and then combined the four sets into one overall forecast. To make the analysis more manageable, Pope and Bell divided the admission year into "decision periods." The decision periods largely parallel or mimic the admission funnel previously discussed.

The model developed by Pope and Bell demanded a great deal of information. First, the model required information on enrollment goals. Second, the model needed a standard against which it could evaluate data. Third, the model needed the expected percentage of accepted applicants who would eventually register as freshmen. These three bodies of information combined to form the parameters of the model. To these parameters, the model needed additional information on four variables. These variables included: 1) The application flow rate; 2) The overall percentage of applicants being admitted; 3) The number of applicants who will be admitted in the current two-week (decision)
The actual percentage of those admitted who will actually enroll.

The crux of the model was a comparison of the flow of applications from the previous year with the flow of applications from the current year. This comparison gave the researchers the opportunity to predict the total number of applications for the year. As the academic year progressed, the predicted total was adjusted for the admission rate, the response rate, and the number of applications already acted upon. The residual, according to the authors, was the Category Four forecast, (pp. 27-28).

The model developed by Pope and Bell had a dual purpose. Beyond the simulation and forecasting of enrollment, the model afforded admissions officers an opportunity to question and reformulate policy and to evaluate the reallocation of resources. For instance, if the admissions officers wanted to diminish the effort made in generating applications and let the number of applications fall by 10 percent, the model would allow them to gauge how much the enrollment rate of those admitted would have to increase to keep the enrollment stable. In another example, if the application rate or enrollment rate declined, the model would help the admissions officers determine how much the enrollment standards would have to be lowered to maintain enrollment. As the authors noted, however, the simulations would not tell admissions directors what their policies should be but, rather,
tell them what would happen if they made certain changes and allow them to approach such changes from a cost-benefit perspective.

In 1980, Dembowski responded to the anticipated decline in students by developing a model that would enable an admissions office to predict whether a student would enter the institution if offered admission. His student choice decision model was tested empirically, using a sample of 1,352 students that were accepted for admission to a large private university in New York State. The results demonstrated that the admissions process components, including variables such as campus tours, social-economic status, talking to faculty, SAT scores, and others, of the university were influential in the student's college choice decision process, (p. 112).

Chapman (1981) published a comprehensive model of the college choice phenomenon. The model suggested that to understand the choice a student makes of where to attend college, it is necessary to take into account both background and current characteristics of the student, the family of the student, and the characteristics of the college (see Figure 5, next page).
The model indicated that student college choice was influenced by a set of student characteristics in combination with a series of external influences. Student characteristics included socioeconomic status, aptitude, level of educational aspiration/expectation, and high school performance. These external influences were grouped into three general categories:
1. The influence of significant persons.

2. The fixed characteristics of the college.

3. The institution's own efforts to communicate with prospective students, (p. 492).

College characteristics, finally, included location, costs, campus environment, and the availability of desired programs. Chapman noted that all of the college characteristics, except location, can be manipulated by the college as part of the marketing strategy.

Chapman concluded:

At a time of intense competition for students, many college administrators are operating from an incomplete understanding of the multiple influences that affect students' college choice. This has often resulted in undue faith in the ability of a college to attract students merely by modifying the institutional self-description or the targeting of its recruiting... A fuller understanding of these multiple influences can help college administrators chart recruitment strategy, (p. 503)

Maguire and Lay (1981) explored the impact of image and decision in the college choice process. They argued that two subprocesses of college choice, the evolution of images about the college and the appraisal of those images that leads to decisions, were analytically distinct. The authors noted that when choosing a college, prospective students must act and react to a wide range of information sources and that images of the
college affect college choice in the way applicants assimilate information on both intellectual and emotional levels, (p. 123).

As prospective students begin to narrow their choices, they begin to carefully consider their options. At this time, college images are modified as more information is sought. When making a decision, images are broken down to those attributes which distinguish schools from one another and which are thought to be most important by the applicant. Maguire and Lay argued that it would be incorrect to view image-making and decision-making as sequential phases in which the second displaces the first. Rather, they wrote, decision-making does feed back to modify initial images. However, images continue to condition which schools are considered and how they are evaluated, throughout the choice process, (pp. 123-124). The authors concluded their analysis:

... Timing is a crucial consideration when devising an institutional recruitment strategy. The cognitive formations - image and decision - while achieving greatest impact during the applicant and matriculation phases, actually wax and wane in significance through all phases of the college choice process, (p. 137).

Maguire and Lay cited the discovery by Kotler (1980) of an overlooked phase in the choice process that can have significant impact on the final composition of an incoming freshmen class. According to Kotler, this phase begins after the declaration of
an intention to attend by the prospective student. This declaration, in most cases, is accompanied by a cash deposit. Because of the gravity of this action/decision, depositors almost invariably experience intense cognitive dissonance after making this commitment. Kotler recommended that this group be reinforced to reduce the rate of deposit withdrawal.

Lay and Maguire argued that at this crucial point in the admissions funnel, when a key decision has been made by the prospective student, the institution should respond with an image of the college that reduces dissonance and increases consonance for the student. In other words, the institution should respond with an image, or series of images, that supports the decision by the prospective student. The goal of the institution, wrote the authors, is to determine how the perceptions of accepted applicants may be improved to attract and enroll the best freshman class, (pp. 137-137).

Zemsky and Oedel (1983) elaborated an earlier model of college choice based on market segmentation developed from student characteristics. They divided students into four categories: locals, in-state, regionals, and nationals.

Local students concentrated on colleges and universities within their own market and tended to be commuters; were more likely to consider part-time programs of study; and frequently made the community college their first choice.
In-state students were primarily interested in attending school within their home state, including their home town. They were likely to prefer living on campus and tended to develop both public and private college options.

Regional students focused on institutions within their own region (New England, Middle States, or South). They sought colleges located outside their home state, and they tended to develop more private than public college interests.

National students concentrated their college interests outside the region. These were the students with the widest geographic aspirations. It is this segment of the population that is most committed to private institutions and most willing to bear substantial tuition and living costs in pursuit of educational goals, (Zemsky, 1983, p. 12). It is these students, further, that are the major clientele for the competitive, liberal arts college.

The authors noted that as the basis of a marketing strategy, colleges should match their primary strengths and weaknesses with one or more of student segments and tailor specific marketing and recruitment tactics to meet the specialized information needs of each group.

Erdmann (1983) examined empirical factors which influenced student choice in the college selection process. His study, which was conducted in 1981, incorporated surveys of high school
graduating seniors, guidance counselors, and directors of admissions. First, students and counselors were asked to rank, in order of importance, five reasons why students read unsolicited mailings. Both students and counselor groups ranked the reputation of the institution which sent the unsolicited mailing as the most important. In fact, the two groups (See Table 9, below), ranked all five items in the same order.

Table 9
Ranking of Factors Determining Reading of Unsolicited Mailings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>All Counselors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized Letter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Erdmann (1983)

In the second part of the study, students and counselors were asked to rank eight factors: location of the college, availability of specific academic programs, size of the college, cost of the college, reputation or prestige of the college, counselor recommendation, recommendation of a parent, and contact with alumni representatives, as to their importance in the college choice process. Again, the results were surprisingly
similar (See Table 10, below). Each group had the same three items, though in different order, at the top of the list.

**Table 10**

Student and Counselor Ranking of Factors Influencing College Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>All Counselors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Recommendation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor Recommendation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Contact</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Erdmann (1983)

Erdmann concluded that the availability of specific academic programs was the single most important factor to students in the college selection process. At the same time, noted the author, the reputation of the institution, its location, and its size were all powerful factors in the decision process, (p. 6).

Tierney (1984) replicated the earlier competitive structure studies by Zemsky et al. (1980) and Zemsky and Odel (1983). To test or confirm the work by Zemsky, Tierney used data on nearly 100,000 high school seniors obtained from the Comprehensive Undergraduate Enrollment Planning Project of the College Board in 1979. The author selected three counties in Pennsylvania - Erie,
Luzerne, and Montgomery—to illustrate the competitive structure of college markets.

Like Zemsky, Tierney maintained that college student markets can be segmented along two dimensions, geographical location and the geographic mobility or aspirations of the student, (p. 230). According to Tierney, the first dimension, geographic location, involved designating a particular geographical area in which the home of a potential student was located. The second dimension estimated how willing students were to travel by determining how far away from their home they sent their SAT/ACT scores. The author noted that one of the best ways of defining competition for a college is to record the institutions to which students simultaneously sent test scores.

Following an analysis of where the 10,704 students who lived in the three counties sent their test scores, Tierney described the numerous relationships that, for the most part, substantiated the earlier conclusions by Zemsky et al. (1980) and Zemsky and Oedel (1983). The relationships included:

1. Local students tend to come from families with a lower percentage of college educated parents, have lower family incomes, have lower levels of academic achievement, and consider fewer institutions than in-state residents, (p. 236).
2. In-state students tend to come from less well-educated parents, have lower family incomes, have low levels of academic achievement, and to consider fewer collegiate options than out-of-state students, (p. 235).

3. A relatively small number of local institutions almost completely absorb the college options considered by local students, (p. 237).

4. Institutional competition within local market segments clearly depends upon the mix of institutions geographically available to students, (p. 241).

5. Private institutions compete with one another for out-of-state students, (p. 241).

Krukowski (1985) asked the question: What do students want from higher education? Following some 40,000 interviews of high school students and teachers, college counselors, transfer students, and others, Krukowski concluded that students, and their parents, wanted status—especially the status that is attached to a prestigious institution, (p. 21).

According to the author, students were eager, and more than willing to pay, to attend a college with the reputation for programs they believed would lead to high-paying jobs and top professional schools. Krukowski wrote, "The market for entry papers to prosperous middle class life is booming; the market for an education, especially the liberal arts education that's been so central to our collegiate tradition, is dying," (p. 21).
As these students sought the colleges that would afford them the most status, they asked very specific questions about the institution. Using data supplied by Jan Krukowski Associates, a New York marketing firm, the author revealed that when high school students in 1984-85 were asked to rank college characteristics as attributes of academic prestige and status, the students placed the caliber of the undergraduate faculty at the top of the list. Closely following faculty credentials and reputation were proportion of students admitted to graduate and professional schools; ratings given by high school counselors and teachers; and jobs attained by graduates, (p. 23). Reviewing the importance of perceived academic quality, Krukowski wrote:

Currently, two new criteria appear among the top four indicators of academic quality; both reflect the attention college-bound high school seniors are paying to what comes after college. They are: 1) The record of a college's graduates in gaining acceptance to professional schools; and 2) Graduates' record in winning desirable jobs in business and industry. This shift in criteria from descriptors of the college to valued "outcomes" has been gradual but steady ... appearing at schools in every part of the country and regardless of students' academic interests and career goals, (p. 23).

Krukowski noted that a perception of prestige is often more important than academic quality. He cited an example where California high school seniors and their parents compared the University of California at Berkeley with Yale. These two groups
judged the two schools equal by all academic standards. Nevertheless, according to Krukowski, there was never any hesitancy in selecting Yale as the far more prestigious institution and as the one students and parents vastly preferred if given the choice, (p. 23).

Krukowski argued that the prevailing attitudes held by prospective students about the size and location of a college were changing. "Understandably," said the author, "smallness is associated by students with small classes, individualized attention, favorable student-faculty ratios—all positive factors fostering fine teaching and successful learning. However, smallness is not an advantage in today's recruitment market: it is in fact a serious liability," (p. 23). Krukowski wrote:

Some negative associations are sensible: size does have a relationship to the depth of academic departments and the quality of facilities. More damaging, though, are students' perceptions that a small institution is less known, less important, and less in touch with the real world, and therefore less able to ensure access for its graduates to desirable job interviews and prestigious graduate and professional schools. Small colleges are deemed suitable for weaker students who are unsure of their direction and need guidance and attention, but not for students on the fast track to success. The only exceptions to this rule are colleges such as Amherst and Williams, which are perceived to be elite institutions that guarantee success to all their entrants, (pp. 23-24).
v Summary

It is clear from the above literature review that much of the current research of the college choice phenomenon is largely an outgrowth of earlier research on demographics and admission development. Only with the development of admissions models does the research begin to address both the complexity and the context of the college choice process.

Obviously, there are numerous unresolved issues in models of college choice. Historically, the development of models of college choice has occurred along three avenues: 1) Research limited to single institutions; 2) Research limited to specific geographic regions; and 3) Research isolating only a portion of the larger dynamic. There have been few studies of the college choice phenomenon at a specific type of institution on a national scale such as that proposed by this author. Few studies have sought a longitudinal approach that will explore and, to some degree, document both the complexity and the context of the college choice process at a single type of institution. It is the purpose of this study to link the many dynamics that have been outlined in this literature review, and from this linkage, to seek the establishment of an early model of college choice at a specific type of institution.
Specifically, this study will:

1. Explore how information is gathered and ordered by students and parents.
2. Examine the type(s) of information sought by the students and parents.
3. Outline the actors beyond the student in the college choice process.
4. Review the influence of financial aid and campus visits on the decision where to attend college.
5. Describe the students who attend these competitive liberal arts colleges.
6. Juxtapose the findings of this study against the findings outlined in the literature review.

A key objective of this study, then, is to help admissions officers at these competitive, private liberal arts colleges better understand the college decision process. Ideally, this understanding will have two benefits. First, it will help administrators do a better job marketing their colleges. And second, it will help prospective students do a better job choosing the college that meets their educational and social needs.
Chapter III
Research Design

1 Introduction

This chapter will offer an overview of the research methodology used to gather and analyze the data for a nationwide study of 49,000 freshmen who have chosen to attend private, competitive, liberal arts colleges. This methodology will be presented in four sections: Design of the Study; Instrumentation; Selection of the Population and Sample; and Data Analysis.

11 Study Design

The investigation is a descriptive study, and its principal mechanism for data-gathering was a survey instrument.

A descriptive study was chosen because, as Van Dalen (1970) pointed out, before any progress can be made in a field of study, "Men must possess descriptions of the phenomena," (p. 184). Gay (1981) noted that descriptive research involves collecting data on the current status of the subject of the study - a descriptive study determines and reports the way things are. Van Dalen also indicated that descriptive studies are used:
To solve problems ... investigators ask the question: What exists - what is the present status of these phenomena? Determining the nature of the prevailing conditions, practices, and attitudes - seeking accurate descriptions of activities, objects, processes, and persons - is their objective, (p. 184).

Van Dalen wrote, additionally, "That descriptive studies that obtain accurate facts about existing conditions or detect significant relationships between current phenomena and interpret the meaning of the data, can provide educators with practical and immediately useful information." He concluded, "Descriptive studies supply not only practical information that can be used to justify or improve the immediate situation, but also the factual foundations upon which higher and higher levels of scientific understanding can be built," (p. 212).

A survey was chosen as the primary data-gathering procedure because of the magnitude of this study. Some 49,000 freshmen attended the 117 colleges identified for this study. Individual, in-depth interviews of students at each college, because of time, financial and geographic constraints, would be prohibitive.

Kerlinger, in 1973, wrote that survey research studied large and small populations (or universes) by selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations to discover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables.
In 1983, G. W. Moore wrote that the purpose of survey research is to obtain information that describes existing phenomena by asking respondents their perceptions, attitudes, and values. It is, therefore, a self-report assessment. Babbie (1973) indicated that surveys are frequently conducted for the purpose of making descriptive assertions about some populations: discovering the distribution of certain traits or attributes. Good (1963) emphasized that survey research allows the investigator to ascertain evidence regarding the existing conditions or current situations and to identify norms in order to plan the next step.

The principle of symmetry requires that some of the limitations of survey research also be noted. Good (1963) noted that surveys cannot be directed at securing exact quantitative predictions of things to come, and that information that is not known or not noticeable to the respondents cannot be secured. In essence, then, survey research is tightly tied to time and space. Data that are "reliable" at the time of the survey lose their vitality as time and other factors change. Kerlinger (1973) said that the survey interview "can temporarily lift the respondent out of his own social context, which can make the results of the survey invalid," (p. 423). Additionally, Kerlinger wrote that survey research ordinarily does not penetrate very deeply below the surface. The scope of the information sought is usually emphasized at the expense of depth. Van Dalen wrote that survey
research is sometimes disparaged because it provides the lowest level of understanding—descriptions of what exists, (p. 213).

Even with these potential shortcomings, a well-designed descriptive survey affords the researcher the best method to collect this data. Owing to the preliminary nature of this study and the size and dispersion of the population, the descriptive survey is still the instrument of choice.

iii Instrumentation

The device used to gather data for this dissertation was a questionnaire developed from four sources. First, a synthesis of instruments currently being used by admissions and/or research officers for institutional research at 70 private and public colleges in the United States was undertaken. Second, surveys were obtained from the authors of current books and articles in the field of admissions and marketing. Next, questions were drawn from an extensive review of admissions and marketing literature. And finally, questions were drawn from interviews with freshmen at competitive, private liberal arts colleges while the survey was developed and field-tested.

The questions from these four sources were combined and extensively reviewed. Duplicate questions or questions not relevant to this study were eliminated. After examination by admissions officers at Denison University in Granville, Ohio,
specific questions were then added to the instrument, and redundancies were eliminated. The questions were then organized and ordered into broad categories and typed into an early draft. This draft was reviewed by 25 freshmen at Ohio State University for clarity and question order. Criticism from this session was incorporated into the next draft, and the instrument was then duplicated for a two-stage field-testing regimen to increase validity and reliability. First, a group of five freshmen from Denison University was asked to evaluate the instrument according to the following criteria:

1. Are the items clearly stated?
2. Is the wording of the items biased or objectionable in any manner?
3. Can the items be arranged to have less influence on responses?
4. Can the number of items be reduced and still achieve the same results?
5. What other changes would you like to see made in the survey?

Following the completion of the survey, the five students were then asked to critique the survey. The comments from the students were then scrutinized. Special care was taken to consider the criticisms and concerns of the panel. The ensuing revision was then disseminated to five freshmen students from
Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. Their criticism, like that of their peers at Denison, was carefully reviewed.

Following these two review sessions, the instrument was then sent to the Polimetrics Laboratory at The Ohio State University for formatting and coding. The final survey (See Appendix C) comprised 49 questions arranged in five categories. The categories included:

1. How the student gathered information about where to attend college.

2. The types and sources of information used by the student.

3. The influence of financial aid information and campus visits.

4. The influence of the high school guidance counselor and parents on the decision.

5. Background demographic information on the student.

The survey incorporated multiple choice, Likert Scale or semantic differential, and open-ended questions. In addition, 20 percent of the surveys included an additional page of open-ended questions that were optional. Questions such as, "What was the most frustrating part about choosing a college?" or "What did you like about choosing a college?" were included in this section. The open-ended questions throughout the survey were used to obtain anecdotal information that highlighted or corroborated other responses and were not used in quantitative analysis.
Selection of the Population and Sample

This study used a random sample of a population of approximately 49,000 freshmen who attended competitive, private liberal arts colleges during the 1985-86 school year. It is important to note that it was the students attending these colleges, and not the colleges, that were the population under study.

In the spring of 1985, a letter and early draft of the survey were sent to the director of admissions at each of the 117 colleges delimited for this study (See Appendix D for a copy of this letter and pre-stamped reply card). The names of the admissions officers were obtained from the current academic catalog from each institution. These names were then cross-checked against the names supplied by The Peterson's Selective Guide to Colleges.

The letter asked permission to survey 10-20 students from that college during the first semester or quarter of the 1985-86 academic year. The letter also outlined the importance of the study and promised a copy of the conclusion to the director of admissions of each college that participated in the research.

In the letter, a basic sampling procedure was outlined. According to Hill, Roth, and Arkin (1962), a sample of 381 surveys was needed for a 95 percent confidence level ± five percent with a population of 50,000, (See Table 11, below).
An early goal of 12 surveys from half of the 117 colleges was established.

The letter to the admissions officers requested that a group of freshmen students from, for example, a first-term English composition class be surveyed. The officer was directed, with the cooperation of the teacher, to sample systematically the students in the class by dividing the total number of students in the class by the number of surveys required. If the class had, for example, 30 students, and 15 surveys were required, the teacher would distribute the survey to every second student on the class.
The survey was to be completed and returned during a normal class period. Beyond this, the sample was not controlled for gender, race, ethnicity, or any other variable.

By August 15, some 52 admissions officers, or their appointees, had agreed to participate in the study. This represented 44 percent of the total 117 institutions.

Each of the 52 institutions was asked to complete 12 surveys. A total of 624 surveys, with cover letters, was sent to the admissions officers at each college by the fourth week in August. It was their responsibility to see that the surveys were disseminated, completed by the students, collected, and returned to the researcher in the pre-paid, addressed envelope that was provided. On October 12, follow-up letters (See Appendix E) were mailed to the 19 officers who had not returned their surveys. One week after the mailing of the follow-up letters, telephone calls were placed to the admissions officers who had not returned the surveys. As an aid to this follow-up, the instruments were coded by batch (college) before sending them to the admissions officers, so that non-respondents could be tracked.

A cut-off point was established for October 20. Surveys received after that date were not incorporated in the study. Eventually, responses were received from 35 colleges. These colleges are listed in Appendix F. From these 35 colleges, a
total of 473 usable surveys were received. This represents 75.8 percent of the 624 surveys that were mailed.

A final "thank-you" letter (See Appendix 6) that reiterated a promise to send a copy of the results was sent to all participants when their surveys were returned to the researcher.

a. Distribution of Participant Colleges

The location of the colleges that participated in the study is depicted in Figure 5 (See next page). The distribution of these colleges is extremely skewed. Only 19 states are represented in the study, and except for the two colleges in the state of Washington, no colleges were found west of Minnesota. Some 28.5 percent of these colleges can be found in just three states: Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. Pennsylvania, alone, accounts for 14 percent of the colleges. Seven, or 20 percent, of the colleges are found west of the Mississippi. At the same time, nine, or 25 percent, of the colleges were found south of the Mason-Dixon Line.
Figure 6

Geographic Distribution of Participant Colleges

Source: The Author (1985)
v Data Analysis

Returned instruments were first reviewed for accuracy and then field edited. Responses were recorded, transferred to coding sheets, verified, and then keyed for computer processing by the Polimetrics Laboratory at The Ohio State University.

Because this was a descriptive and not a correlation study, fairly simple statistical procedures were applied to the data. All data manipulation, however, was juxtaposed against the basic research questions that guided this inquiry. Specifically, the researcher was concerned with seeking the answers to the questions outlined on page 130 of this study.

Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a frequency histogram was developed for each variable. These histograms allowed general comparisons and discussion of the responses. At the same time, all students who indicated that they had a B+ or better grade point average were treated as a sub-sample, and frequency counts were developed for their responses. A "profile" of a typical freshman was compiled from the data using information drawn from demographic data obtained at the close of the survey. Finally, anecdotal information was reviewed to "flesh out" the quantitative analysis.
Chapter IV

Results of the Investigation

1 Introduction

The findings of this investigation will be presented in six sections: 1) How college choice information is gathered and ordered by students and parents; 2) The types of information sought by students and parents; 3) The impact of financial aid and campus visits on the decision to attend college; 4) A review of the actors, beyond the student, that are involved in the college choice process; 5) A "portrait" of the typical freshmen who attend institutions; and 6) A summary of the findings including inconsistencies in the data and unplanned results of the investigation.

As aids to understanding some of the nuances of the data, three devices will be used to further exploration and explanation. First, when helpful, anecdotal information from the surveys will be used to flesh out the quantitative analysis. Second, when the differences are felt to be noteworthy, a distinction will be drawn between the overall body of data and the sub-sample of B+ students. Please remember, however, that the sub-sample of B+
students is also contained in the overall sample. The two samples have considerable overlap. And finally, when appropriate, the body of data from this research project will be juxtaposed against the findings in the literature review found in Chapter Three.

ii The Ordering of Information in the Choice Process

When asked to indicate how they first learned about the college they were now attending, a large number of the overall sample of students (23.7 percent) said that former students or friends currently at the college served as key resources (See Table 12, below). Just over 17 percent of the students felt that their parents were the source of first information about the college. Parents as sources of information were followed by recruitment publications from the colleges (11.7 percent) and college guide books such as Peterson's and Barron's (8.8 percent). The strong influence of friends and parents is consistent with earlier findings by Holland (1958), Kerry (1962), Stahmann, Hanson, and Whittlesey (1971), Bowers and Pugh (1973), Zemsky and Oedel (1983), and Moll (1985).
One of the difficult tasks facing admissions officers is predicting how many students who apply to their college are actually "shopping" for the best college by sending applications to several institutions and waiting to accept the best offer. The results of this data indicated that there is a fair degree of "shopping" being practiced by the students, though not as much as is predicted in the literature. When asked to reveal how many colleges they applied to for admission, a total of 24.9 percent of the overall sample indicated that they had applied to only one college (See Table 13, below).

### Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of First Information About College</th>
<th>Overall Sample of Freshmen as Most Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current or Past Students or Friends</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Recruitment Publications</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Guide Books</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Counselor</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Admissions Representative</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 480

Source: The Author (1988)
Table 13
Number of College Applications Sent by Overall Sample of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Applications</th>
<th>Percent Students Sending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total = 97.3%

N = 484

Source: The Author (1986)

At the same time, some 2.5 percent of the students said that they had applied to 10 or more colleges.

Evidently, the students who participated in the survey carefully targeted their colleges (See Table 14, next page). Nearly 13 percent of the respondents were accepted by five or more different colleges.
### Table 14

Number of College Applications Accepted
by Overall Sample of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Applications Accepted</th>
<th>Percent Students Sending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 483

Source: The Author (1986)

A comparison between the B+ sub-sample and the overall sample of students on the number of colleges applications sent is revealing. Of the 238 students who indicated that they had a B+ or better high school grade point average, nearly 22 percent said that they had applied to five or more colleges. For the overall sample of students, a total of 25.6 percent had applied to five or more colleges. At the same time, while 17.4 percent of the overall sample of students were accepted by five or more
colleges, just 10.8 percent of the B+ sub-sample could make the same claim.

Two dynamics can impact on this apparent anomaly. First, college admissions officers recognize that high school grade point average is but one indicator of college performance. Second, the overall sample of students is applying to both first- and second-tier schools and receiving acceptance at most of the second-tier schools and a percentage of the first-tier schools. At the same time, the B+ sub-sample is applying primarily to the highly-selective first-tier colleges, and because competition at these institutions is the keenest, they are garnering a smaller number of acceptances, and as a consequence, are forced to use the second-tier school as a "safety-valve."

Not surprisingly, both the overall sample and the sub-sample of B+ students indicated that the colleges they were now attending were their first choice, (See Table 15, below). A somewhat larger percentage from the overall sample of students, however, noted that their present institution was not their first choice (25.1% vs. 21.4%).
### Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Sample</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ Sub-Sample</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 484

Source: The Author (1986)

The very small number of students who said that their current college was not their first choice were asked to give anecdotal responses to the following question: If this college was not your first choice, what single reason influenced you to come here anyway? Less than 10 percent of the students responded to this question. Twenty anecdotal responses were randomly drawn from the surveys that completed that question. The responses are presented below:

**Question:** If this college was not your first choice, what single reason influenced you to come here anyway?

1. I received a $2,000.00 scholarship to this school
2. It was a small college.
3. The size and the environment.
4. The fact that I received a scholarship.
5. It was the only college that accepted me.
6. After visiting a couple of times, I seemed to feel more comfortable ... to fit in.
7. Because it was one of the first ones that accepted me.
8. I applied to two other colleges but didn't complete the admissions applications in time. Because I had the application for this college completed, I decided to come here.
9. It had such a friendly and pleasant atmosphere.
10. The football coach.
11. I feel that this is a place where I can achieve academically and in other areas.
12. I was not accepted into the schools that I really wanted to attend, so I arbitrarily chose this one.
13. I was accepted here, and the computer courses are very good.
14. I was denied acceptance into my first choice college.
15. The academic reputation.
16. This college is small, private, reputable, and fairly close to home.
17. The reputation and goals for the long run.
18. When I visited this college I felt much more wanted and cared about than at my first choice.
19. I liked the idea of the ______ community and its good academic reputation.
20. The appeal of its admissions policy. It felt as if this school wanted me.

The impact of college-age friends on the college choice decision was very pronounced. Some 40.1 percent of the overall sample of students and 37.0 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students said that friends who were already attending the institutions influenced their decision to attend.

iii The Types of Information Sought by Students

It could be expected that a vast majority of both sets of students would have participated in the College Board's Student
Search Service, and this expectation was verified by the study. A total of 70.4 percent of the overall sample and 83.6 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students said that they had participated in Search. For the most part, the reactions of the students to their participation in Search were positive. Of the 21 students who responded to the special page of anecdotal questions on Search, most of them said that their participation in Search "Opened new doors," "Gave information about colleges that I didn't know about," and "Offered new ideas."

In an effort to gauge the number of college contacts that the students received through Search, the students were asked to recount how many different mailings they received. The responses of the students support the conclusion drawn by Heckscher (1978) that students are being bombarded by mailings from colleges. The comment from Heckscher that many students found their participation in Search to be "bewildering," (p. 27), still applies.

Nearly 25 percent of the overall sample of students and 37.4 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students noted that they had received publications from 51 or more different colleges (See Table 16, next page). What was surprising was the discovery that nearly 10 percent of the overall sample of students and 16.0 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students revealed that they had received publications from more than 100 different colleges.
Table 16

Number of Colleges That Sent Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Colleges That Sent Information</th>
<th>% of Overall</th>
<th>% of Sub-Sample of B+ Who Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 or Less</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 25</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 50</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 to 75</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 to 100</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 100</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percent:</strong></td>
<td><strong>98.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 344 for Overall Sample
N = 196 for Sub-Sample of B+ Students

Source: The Author (1986)

Even as the students from both samples noted the number of different publications that they received, they were also willing to say that they did not read all the material that was sent. Only 15.6 percent of the overall sample of students admitted to reading 75 percent or more of the mailings. For the sub-sample of B+ students, students who received significantly more mailings than their counterparts, a total of 17.2 percent indicated that they read 75 percent or more of the publications. Almost as a whole, the sub-sample of B+ students read a greater percentage of the mailings that they received (See Table 17, next page).
Table 17

Number of College Mailings Read

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of College Mailings Read</th>
<th>% of Overall Who Read</th>
<th>% of Sub-Sample of B+ Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 or Less</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 25</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 50</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 to 75</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76 to 100</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Percent: 100.0 100.0

N = 348 for Overall Sample of Students
N = 200 for Sub-Sample of B+ Students

Source: The Author (1986)

To determine the impact and influence of Search, students were asked to note how many mailings they read from colleges that they had not previously considered. In both the overall sample of students and the sub-sample of B+ students, students indicated that they often read the mailings from colleges not previously under consideration. This supports the anecdotal evidence collected from students who felt that above all, Search made them more aware of collegiate opportunities and options they had not previously entertained.

When asked to name one reason why they opened mail from colleges that they had not previously considered, students from both samples said that the name/reputation of the institution was
the leading cause of their opening and reading the mail. Just over 20 percent of the overall sample and 23.9 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students said that the reputation of the college was what first attracted them to read the mailings from colleges that they had not previously considered. Other reasons included the offering of specific programs (13.0 percent for the overall sample and 13.4 percent for the sub-sample of B+ students) and the graphic design of the publications (10.7 percent for the overall sample and 12.6 percent for the sub-sample of B+ students). Only 6.2 percent of the overall sample and 7.1 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students indicated that the personalized letter from the admissions counselor had any impact on their decision to read the mailings.

One finding of this study was the very powerful influence exerted by the reputation of an institution in college choice. This finding is consistent with the finding by Maguire and Lay (1981) of the significance of image in the decision process. The reputations of these institutions, which may or may not be founded on facts, were extremely persuasive elements in the college choice process. The indication by students of the value of institutional reputation is also consistent with the findings by Krukowski (1985). She posed the question, "What do students want?" Her answer was status, the status that comes from
attending an educational institution with an enviable reputation, (p. 21).

The findings by Krukowski were also consistent with the intended majors of the students who attend competitive, liberal arts colleges. By and large, these students were interested in careers in business, law, and other professions. At the same time, Krukowski indicated that many of the top students of the nation were not interested in small colleges. The findings of this study, however, indicated just the opposite. The small size of the college was consistently rated as a significant factor for its selection. At least one factor can impinge on this apparent inconsistency. Students, in many cases, equate institutional size with reputation. Students are concerned that small colleges may not have the resources to develop or maintain strong academic faculties and facilities. For the top student scholars accepted at first-tier colleges, the point is mute. They have the best of both worlds—academic reputation and relatively small size. The students who attend the second-tier colleges, however, face a dilemma. They want a strong academic reputation, and in many cases they believe there is a high correlation between institutional size and reputation. At the same time, these students want small size. If forced to choose one quality over another, however, they will opt for reputation. Hopefully, in their
consideration of colleges across the country, these students were able to accommodate both needs.

When asked if they requested more information from colleges that sent them unsolicited mailings through Search, 41.8 percent of the overall sample and 55 percent of sub-sample mentioned that they had asked for more information. Those students were then asked how often they sought more materials from the colleges that contacted them. Slightly over 28 percent of the overall sample and 35.3 percent of the sub-sample of 8+ students said that they asked for more information from less than 10 percent of the colleges. At the same time, just under eight percent of the total sample and less than four percent of the sub-sample asked for information from more than 50 percent of the colleges that contacted them.

In an attempt to explore, in greater depth, the significance of Search in the college choice process, the students were asked if they ultimately enrolled in a college or university that they had not heard of before they received a Search mailing from the college. A total of 10.9 percent of the overall sample and 10.1 percent of the sub-sample indicated that they had been introduced to the college that they ultimately chose through Search. Finally, the students were asked how they preferred to be contacted by Search. In both the overall sample and the sub-sample, the clear preference was for personalized letters, even
when non-personalized correspondence would be more immediate. Slightly over 65 percent of the overall sample of students said that a personalized letter was more important than a form letter, while 74.4 percent of the sub-sample of students said that a personalized letter was more important. This finding was very consistent with the findings by Druesne and Zavada (1977), Heckscher (1978), Druesne, Harvey, Zavada (1983) and Lopatin (1984). Clearly, students relish personalized mail from college admissions officers.

Throughout the survey there was a strong undercurrent that the students valued the Search experience. Both samples of students, in fact, highly valued the opportunity to participate in Search. Some of the anecdotal comments on the positive aspect of Search, and the college that the student is currently attending, included:

I liked seeing the different programs available at the different colleges (Alverno).

I really liked the personalized letters from faculty, alumni, and the director of admissions (Randolph-Macon).

Search allowed colleges to look for me, if they felt that I would be interested (Alma).

Search gave me new ideas about colleges I had not previously considered (Pacific Lutheran).

I loved the personalized letters - especially the handwritten ones (Kenyon).
Some of the letters were personal. They sounded like they were talking directly to me (Wartburg).

Through Search, I was introduced to people who advised me and cared about where I went (Wartburg).

Even as students from both groups indicated that they valued the opportunity to participate in Search, they were also quick to decry some of the Search abuses. Anecdotal information drawn from the surveys revealed numerous instances when the students felt frustrated or overwhelmed by the Search experience. Comments by the students included:

I was annoyed by their persistence, even when I told them I didn't wish to attend the school (Alma).

The (Search) mailings were cold and impersonal (Alverno).

There were too many mailings (Millsaps).

I tired of the monotonous verbiage (Wooster).

It was frustrating to get the same letter a couple of times in a row (Houghton).

Some colleges would send me three or four of the same letters after I had already sent back a reply card saying I was not interested (John Carroll).

A lot of mailings were junk from places and colleges that I cared nothing about (Hamilton).
Some of the mailings were useless. I got pre-med brochures from one college even though my interest was in engineering (Whitman).

The mailings were so phony (Bryn Mawr).

One college sent me a rejection letter and then an acceptance letter (Wooster).

They came across as advertisements, rather than information pieces (Haverford).

Though the students realized the potential abuses that they might be exposed to because of their participation in Search, they also recognized the tremendous opportunity that Search afforded them to explore colleges that they might otherwise not have considered. In support of the findings of Lopatin (1984), the students clearly felt that the Search experience was beneficial, a valued means to learn about the greatest number of colleges in the shortest amount of time.

A central element of the survey dealt with the reaction of the students to a series of decision influence items such as advice of parents, the availability of merit scholarships, the size of the computer facilities, and others. For the survey, 33 decision influence items were listed, and the students were asked to rank each item according to how much they influenced their decision to attend the college. For the overall sample of students, the 10 most important influence items, in descending order of importance, are listed in Table 18, next page.
Table 18
Influence Items Ranked Very Influential by Overall Sample of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage Ranking Item Very Influential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reputation</td>
<td>71.2 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Faculty Ratio</td>
<td>61.9 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Faculty</td>
<td>60.9 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits to College</td>
<td>58.0 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>57.6 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of Campus</td>
<td>50.4 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Major</td>
<td>41.6 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of College</td>
<td>40.8 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad/Job Placement Record</td>
<td>40.9 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence from College</td>
<td>39.3 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 478

Source: The Author (1986)

The influence items ranked very influential by the sub-sample of B+ students were strikingly similar to those of the overall sample. Of the 10 items ranked by each group of students, nine items were common to each group. For the sub-sample of students, the 10 most important influence items, in descending order of importance, are listed in Table 19, next page.
### Table 19

Influence Items Ranked Very Influential by Sub-Sample of B+ Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reputation</td>
<td>79.8 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits to College</td>
<td>64.3 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Faculty Ratio</td>
<td>64.3 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Faculty</td>
<td>62.2 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>60.5 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of Campus</td>
<td>51.3 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of College</td>
<td>44.5 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad/Job Placement Record</td>
<td>42.4 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Major</td>
<td>42.0 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectivity of College</td>
<td>39.5 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 236

Source: The Author (1986)

Tables 20 and 21, on the next three pages, depict the rankings of the influence items by both samples of students.
Table 20

Impact of Influence Item on Overall Sample in Decision to Attend Specific College (expressed in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Item</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>NVI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice of Parents</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice of Sibling</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv. of Friend/Student</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv. of H.S. Counselor</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Ties to College</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectivity of College</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits to College</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen Seminars</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Campus Contact w/ Admissions Officer</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet w/ Faculty</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing of Film/Slides</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresp. from College</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Cost of College</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit Scholarships</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reputation</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Faculty</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Faculty Doctorates</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Faculty Ratio</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of Library</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Facilities</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad/Job Placement</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avail. of Majors</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppor. for Research</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors Programs</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study-Abroad Programs</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intramural/Varsity</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of College</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20 - Continued

Impact of Influence Item on Overall Sample in
Decision to Attend Specific College
(expressed in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Item</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>NVI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of Campus</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male/Female Ratio</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review in College Guide</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 478

Source: The Author (1986)
Table 21

Impact of Influence Item on Sub-Sample in B+ Students on Decision to Attend Specific College (expressed in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Item</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>NVI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice of Parents</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice of Sibling</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv. of Friend/Student</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adv. of H.S. Counselor</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Ties to College</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectivity of College</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits to College</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen Seminars</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Campus Contact w/ Admissions Officer</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet w/ Faculty</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing of Film/Slides</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresp. from College</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Cost of College</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit Scholarships</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reputation</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Faculty</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Faculty Doctorates</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Faculty Ratio</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of Library</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Facilities</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad/Job Placement</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avail. of Majors</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppor. for Research</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors Programs</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study-Abroad Programs</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intramural/Varsity</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of College</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of Campus</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 21 - Continued

Impact of Influence Item on Sub-Sample in 8+ Students on Decision to Attend Specific College (expressed in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Item</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>NVI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male/Female Ratio</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review in College Guide</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$N = 235$

Source: The Author (1988)

The very high interest by both samples of students in the advice of parents, the importance of the academic reputation of the college, access to faculty, campus visits, and other high percentage influence items is consistent with the findings by Holland (1958), Kinnick (1975), and Rowe (1980). The strong influence of reputation, in particular, is consistent with the study by Erdmann (1983) on the influence of academic reputation among both high school students and high school counselors, and the study by Maguire and Lay (1981) on the impact of image on the decision process.

While the students were ranking the influence items that were most influential, they also, by default, indicated which
influence items were least influential. For the overall sample of students, the five influence items ranked as having the least impact can be found in Table 22, below.

**Table 22**

Influence Items Ranked Least Influential by Overall Sample of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage Ranking Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Cost of College</td>
<td>25.7% of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intramural/Varsity Sports</td>
<td>25.5% of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice of H.S. Counselor</td>
<td>24.9% of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice of Sibling</td>
<td>24.3% of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Facilities</td>
<td>23.9% of Respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 478

Source: The Author (1986)

For the sub-sample of 8+ students, the six influence items (note the tie between merit scholarships and computer facilities), ranked as having the least impact can be found in Table 23 next page.
### Table 23

Influence Items Ranked Least Influential by Sub-Sample of B+ Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage Ranking Item Least Influential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intramural/Varsity Sports</td>
<td>26.9 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice of Sibling</td>
<td>26.1 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice of H.S. Counselor</td>
<td>24.8 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Cost of College</td>
<td>24.8 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merit Scholarships</td>
<td>21.0 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Facilities</td>
<td>21.0 % of Respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 236

Source: The Author (1986)

The final question in this section of the survey simply asked the students if they had ever been asked to evaluate the recruitment and admissions materials of the college they chose. Only 21.4 percent of the overall sample of students had been asked to evaluate these materials. This finding reinforces the concerns of Stark and Marchese (1978), Lenning and Cooper (1978), and others involved with the National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice, that not enough is being done on the part of the admissions officers to involve students in the development and evaluation of recruitment publications.

There are numerous reasons why college admissions officers do not ask students to evaluate their recruitment materials. First, careful, proactive research takes time, time that
admissions officers often do not have. Second, admissions officers may not understand how valuable the insight of students can be in the evaluation of admissions publications. Third, some admissions officers simply do not have the basic skills in research to develop such an evaluation program. And finally, some admissions officers are afraid of exposing their recruitment effort to the light of day. These men and women do not want to face the problem of gathering and analyzing data that may highlight recruitment deficiencies.

iv The Impact of Financial Aid and Campus Visits

The third section of the survey was concerned with the influence of financial aid information and campus visits on the decision of the student to attend a specific institution. First, the students were asked if they had applied for financial aid. A total of 65.0 percent of the overall sample and 72.7 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students said that they had applied for financial aid.

When queried about whether they would have attended their current college without the availability of financial aid, 25 percent of the overall sample and 23.9 percent of the sub-sample said that they would have been able to attend. Next, the students were asked if the college they now attended offered them the best financial aid package. Just over 37 percent of the overall sample
and 42.4 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students answered this question with a yes.

The next two questions explored the impact of merit, or no-need scholarships, on the decision of where to attend college. Slightly over 35 percent of the overall body of students and 46.2 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students noted that they were currently receiving merit scholarships. Asked if the merit scholarship played a significant role in their decision to attend their current college, 25.1 percent of the overall sample and 33.2 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students answered in the affirmative.

The data on the influence of college cost and financial aid were inconsistent with both the larger body of literature and with the survey itself. Earlier, when asked to relate the most significant influence items, college cost (tuition and fees) was consistently rated as being of less importance by both samples of students. The net cost of attending the college, for example, was only rated as being very important to 30.3 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students. However, when queried about whether they would have attended their current college without financial aid, only 23.9 percent of the sub-sample said that they could have attended. In addition, 72.7 percent of the sub-sample indicated that they were on some sort of financial aid, and the aid package they received at their current college was a key factor in their
decision to attend. Perhaps, as Bowers and Pugh (1971) discovered, students deal with college costs in the abstract. While they may understand how expensive a college is to attend, they may not, because they do not have to meet these expenses, fully realize the implications. The students are only spending the money - the parents are paying the bills.

Because of the considerable impact of a campus visit on a decision of where to attend college, the students who participated in the study were asked if they had visited their current college before they enrolled (See Table 24, below). Over 85 percent of the total sample and 89.1 percent of the sub-sample indicated that they had visited the campus at least once.

**Table 24**
Percent Students Who Visited Campus Before Enrolling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Sample</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Sample of B+ Students</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 486

Source: The Author (1986)

The students who said that they had visited the campus were asked how many times they had visited. They expressed numbers ranging from just one visit to as many as five or 10 times. Just over 60 percent of the overall sample of students indicated that
they had visited the campus only one or two times. For the sub-sample of students, however, that percent was 64.3.

Not only were the students from both samples interested in visiting the campus, they were inclined to let the Admissions Office set up the tour. Slightly over 53 percent of the overall sample and 56.3 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students said that their campus tour was sponsored by the Admissions Office. At the close of this section, the students were asked about their reactions to the campus visit. Only 40.5 percent of the overall sample of students and 43.7 percent of the sub-sample of students said that they were very favorably impressed by the sponsored visit. At the same time, however, when asked if the campus visit played a significant role in their decision to attend their current college, 46.9 percent of the total sample and 49.6 percent of the sub-sample answered yes.

A Review of Actors in the College Choice Process

The fourth section of the survey was concerned with the actors beyond the students that were involved in the college choice decision. To explore the influence of both high school counselors and the college recruitment materials available in high school counseling centers, the students were asked if they reviewed material from different colleges and universities at their high schools. Nearly 70 percent of the overall sample and
65.5 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students indicated that they had reviewed materials in their counseling centers.

When the students were asked if they knew about their current colleges before they talked to their high school counselor, 85.4 percent of the overall sample and 90.8 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students said they had. At the same time, the students were asked if they shared any of the college mailings they received with their high school counselors. Only 37.7 percent of the overall sample and 35.7 percent of the sub-sample indicated that they had. Asked if their high school counselors suggested that they explore their current college, only 10.1 percent of the overall sample and 7.1 percent of the sub-sample indicated that their high school counselors had suggested they explore the college they ultimately chose.

Finally, the students were asked if they felt their high school counselors played a significant role in their decision to attend their current college. Only 18.3 percent of the overall sample and 16.0 percent of the sub-sample of students said their high school counselors were significantly involved in the decision process.

These findings support the conclusions by Dominick et al. (1980) that the role of the high school counselor as an advisor in the college choice decision is diminishing. Dominick et al. suggested that high school counselors might overestimate their
own importance in the college choice process. While no interviews with high school counselors were undertaken as part of this research, the data supplied by the students are consistent with that of Dominick and his colleagues. The influence of high school counselors was consistently rated as low to none by both the overall sample of students and the sub-sample of B+ students. The survey instrument failed to explore, however, if the influence of the high school counselor might have been replaced by another high school mentor such as the advisor to the National Honor Society or some other student organization.

At least two factors may have contributed to the apparent decline of the impact and influence of the high school counselor in the college choice process. First, students and their parents are now able to collect and analyze a considerable amount of information on colleges without the aid of high school counselors. Search, for example, allows colleges to directly contact the student. In addition, college guides such as Barrons' and Petersons' afford students and parents an opportunity to examine colleges independent of high school resources. Another factor may be the size of the work load for high school counselors. As more and more high school students are opting to attend college, the ability of the high school counselor to develop a strong working relationship with each student may have diminished.
As one means to determine the influence of parents on the decision of where to attend college, the students who participated in the study were asked to describe the role that their parents played in the decision to attend their current college (See Table 25, below).

The data suggest that parents are extremely involved in the college choice process and that their involvement included suggesting specific colleges and helping their sons and daughters narrow the field.

Table 25

Influence of Parents on College Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall Sample</th>
<th>Sub-Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Involved Throughout</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrowed Field and I Chose</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Specific Colleges</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Did Not Help</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>98.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>98.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 478 for Overall Sample  
N = 235 for Sub-Sample  

Source: The Author (1986)
vi A "Portrait" of Typical Freshmen

The question of what kinds of students attend a competitive liberal arts college is pivotal for the admissions officers. The profile of the 483 students who participated in this study reveals a striking similarity between these students and the students that Zemsky and Oedel (1983) called the "nationals" — high ability students from upper-middle class backgrounds who were willing to travel great distances to attend a specific college.

The data from this survey revealed that these freshmen graduated from a public high school 74.9 percent of the time with a grade point average in excess of a 3.0. Their collegiate academic interests at the time of the survey were oriented toward business (16.9 percent), or pre-professional majors in law, medicine, or engineering (18.5 percent). In addition, some 13.6 percent of the students indicated that they were undecided about their major (See Table 26, next page).

In addition to fairly firm academic interests, slightly over 46 percent of the students indicated that they plan to go on to graduate school. Only 15.8 percent indicated that they were not interested in graduate school, while some 37.2 percent noted that they were still undecided. For those that were going to opt for graduate school, however, majors in law, medicine, and business
were the clear choice for 26.4 percent of the graduates. The next highest field of graduate interest was psychology, with 4.3 percent of the students indicating interest. Also, it must be noted, 4.9 percent of the students who said that they would go on to graduate school were undecided as to their future.

Table 26

Major Expressed As Present Academic Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Overall Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/Political Science</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Professional</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion/Philosophy</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech-Communication</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 482

Source: The Author (1986)
The students who responded to the survey were also quite willing to travel to attend colleges. Just over 52 percent of the overall students and 50.1 percent of the sub-sample said that they traveled more than 200 miles to attend college. A total of 13.2 percent of the overall sample and 11.8 percent of the sub-sample of B+ students said they were attending college more than 1,000 miles from their home. While this data does reveal a willingness on the part of students to travel great distances to attend their college of choice, most of the students who participated in the survey lived in the area of the country (the New England States and upper Midwest) with the highest number of colleges. Even while willing to travel, most did not have to. This realization hints at the geographical structure of educational markets studied by Litten (1978), Zemsky et al. (1980), and Tierney (1984) and suggests, as noted by Tierney, that institutional competition within local market segments clearly depends upon the mix of institutions geographically available to students, (p. 241).

To highlight what admissions officers call "legacies," the sons or daughters of alumni of the institution, the students were asked if any relative had attended their current college (See Table 27, below). Clearly, the college attendance habits of families have significant impact on the college choice decision.
When the legacies issue was expanded to include good friends, a surprising 36.8 percent of the overall sample of students indicated that they had good friends who had attended their current college.

Table 27

Percent Overall Sample With Relative or Friend Attending This College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother or Father</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>79.0%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relative</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Friend</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N/A = No answer
N = 440

Source: The Author (1986)

The sub-sample of B+ students closely paralleled the overall sample of students in the mother or father, sibling, other relative and close friend categories (Yes Mother/Father = 9.2%; Sibling = 12.6%; Other Relative = 13.0%; Good Friend = 34.9%).

Next, the students were asked if they were satisfied with their decision to attend their current college. Exactly 94 percent of the overall sample indicated that they were satisfied with their decision, while 97.5 percent of the sub-sample of students made this claim. When asked if they planned to graduate from their current college, 87.4 percent of the overall sample
and 90.8 percent of the sub-sample said they did. Of the 12.6 percent of the overall sample who said they were not going to graduate from their current college, 3.3 percent said they would transfer to another private college, 6.0 percent said they would transfer to a public college, and the remaining students did not know, or would not reveal, what their plans were.

The strict demographic profile of the overall sample of students also closely matched the profile established by Zemsky and Oedel (1983). More than half (58.4 percent) were female, and the vast majority (92.4 percent) were Caucasian (See Table 28, next page).

The final question asked the students to reveal their approximate family income. Only 7.2 percent of the students said their family income was less than $20,000 per year. At the other extreme, however, slightly more than 36 percent indicated that their family income was in excess of $50,000 per year.

Table 28
Ethnicity of Overall Sample of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Afro-American</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Chicano</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>92.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

N = 483

Source: The Author (1986)
The demographic profile and academic interests of the students who participated in this study supported the concept of a "national" student, as espoused by Zemsky and Oedel (1983). Two of the central attributes of national students, and to a lesser degree, regional students (as opposed to local and in-state students), however, are their willingness to travel out of state to attend college and their relatively high socio-economic status.

While this survey did ask students how far they traveled to attend college, it failed to ask if they crossed any state borders. As noted earlier, just over 50 percent of each sample indicated that they had traveled in excess of 200 miles. Considering the rather compact nature of many of the home states of many of the students that participated in the study, it is conceivable that a large portion of these students did, indeed, cross state lines. In addition, the survey did not explore in any great detail the educational backgrounds of the parents. One indicator of nationals, after all, is that they tend to be the sons and daughters of well-educated parents.
Summary

The quantitative and anecdotal data gathered by this survey have both confirmed and challenged many of the hypotheses expressed by the authors in the literature review found in Chapter Three.

First, the survey revealed that friends and parents play significant roles in the college choice process. At the same time, the students who participated in the study indicated that the role of the high school counselor as mentor has diminished in significance. This finding is, largely, consistent with the findings of Stahmann, Hanson and Whittlesey (1971), Bowers and Pugh (1973), Zemsky and Oedel (1983), and Moll (1985) in describing the powerful role played by friends and parents in the college selection process.

Even as the survey related the influence of parents and friends, however, it also noted that both samples of students participated in a great deal of "shopping" for the best college offer. Again, this is consistent with the emerging literature, including studies by Moll (1985) and Krukowski (1985).

When queried about the sources of information they needed to make a decision, the students gave responses that were fairly predictable. For all its shortcomings (Heckscher, 1978), Search was seen by the students as an extremely valuable mechanism for
gleaning information about a myriad of colleges in a relatively short time. The students did note and document, however, the potential for the abuse of Search by college admissions officers including the bombarding of high ability (B+ sub-sample) students with dozens and even hundreds of contacts through the sometimes haphazard use of computer-generated mail. Search is such a powerful medium, in fact, that over 10 percent of the students who participated in the study said that their first contact with the college in which they ultimately enrolled was through Search.

One influence item consistently documented in both the quantitative and anecdotal data was the pervasive power of the reputation of a college. A strong collegiate reputation, as documented by Maguire and Lay (1981) and Krukowski (1985), was confirmed by both samples of students as the single most important influence factor. Other high influence items revealed by both samples of students included student/faculty ratio, access to faculty, visits to the campus, the number of students, appearance of the campus, the availability of a specific major, the location of the college, the graduate school and job placement record of the college, and correspondence from the college.

A somewhat surprising finding of the study was the lack of influence that students attached to such items as the net cost of attending, the advice of a high school counselor, the advice of a
sibling, and the availability of computer facilities. Two of these items, the net cost and the advice of a sibling, are in conflict with other findings of the study. In the section of the survey dealing with financial aid, for example, the students expressed keen interest in cost factors including the availability of financial aid, and in several instances, the students indicated that a majority of them would not be at their current colleges if they did not receive financial aid. Clearly, more research needs to be done on the impact and influence of net cost and financial aid in the college choice process.

The students were asked if they had the opportunity to evaluate recruitment materials at their current college. Predictably, only one student in four had participated in such an evaluation. This, too, is consistent with many of the findings by Stark and Marchese (1978), Lenning and Cooper (1978), and Heckscher (1985).

In the same section of the survey that dealt with the influence of net cost and financial aid (as discussed above), the students revealed considerable impact in the role of a campus visit in the college choice process. Significantly, 85.4 percent of the students indicated that they had visited their current college at least one time before enrolling, and that many of these students participated in tours sponsored by the Admissions Office.
The fourth section of the survey was concerned with determining who, beyond the student, was involved in the college choice process. As mentioned previously, the influence of the high school counselor, as revealed by the students, has declined considerably. In addition to the students, the parents have remained as the single most important and influential actors in college selection. Over 30 percent of the overall population of students and 27 percent of the sub-population of B+ students said that their parents were very involved in helping them choose a college.

The survey closed by drawing a "portrait" of the freshmen who participated in the study. The profile of these students closely paralleled that of the "national" student documented by Zemsky and Oedel (1983). The students who participated in this study were affluent, largely Caucasian, willing to travel to attend college, possessed high academic ability, and had slightly more females in their ranks than males. In addition, the undergraduate academic interests of both samples were largely pre-professional, and the majority are planning to attend graduate school even though they were often unsure as to their ultimate graduate major.
Chapter V
Conclusion and Implications

Introduction

Marketing in higher education is suddenly the subject of the most intensive scrutiny in history. College constituencies are demanding greater and sometimes unreasonable productivity from their admissions officers. And as one possible solution to their enrollment dilemma, admissions officers are responding with an increasing enthusiasm to marketing. In many instances, however, this devotion to marketing is haphazard. At the one extreme are the admissions officers who define marketing by the nature of the tasks that they are already performing. Their definition of marketing often includes strong overtones of advertising, publicity, and public relations, and though these tasks are valuable in their own right, they are not marketing.

At the other extreme are hard-sell admissions marketers who often neglect, or refuse to accept, the people — students and parents — that are the end-users of college marketing. Their marketing effort is little more than a numbers game based on
volume, and their efforts are directed at reaching as many people as possible. They are not concerned with meeting needs. Admissions officers at both extremes, as a result, face continual disappointment when their enrollments remain unstable.

Many marketing problems actually emerge from a poorly conceptualized understanding of what marketing is, and is not. Kotler (1982) defined marketing as:

The analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. It relies heavily on designing the organization's offerings in terms of the target markets' needs and desires, and on using effective pricing, communication, and distribution strategies to inform, motivate, and serve markets, (p. 5).

Essentially, marketing involves assessing the needs and desires of potential clients with regard to programs, services, and tuition/costs, and institutional responses to meet these needs. Today's admissions marketers must realize, as Fram (1971) so succinctly noted, "If the customers (students) don't buy, the institution will die," (p. 15). Therefore, at its most fundamental, marketing involves the development of a marketing information system; a mechanism designed to provide the orderly
intake and exchange of information needed to guide the decisions of an institution.

A central goal of this research project, then, was to gather marketing information about the students who attend the competitive, liberal arts colleges defined in Chapter One. At the same time, this study sought to add this marketing information to the growing body of research on admissions models: models that attempt to define, and to some degree, predict the college choice process.

Specifically, this study sought illumination of the following research questions:

1. How is information about colleges gathered and ordered by students and parents?

2. What types of information are most valued (or least valued) by students and parents?

3. What actors, in addition to the student, are involved in college choice?

4. What is the impact of financial aid and campus visits on the decision of where to attend college?

5. What kinds of students attend competitive liberal arts colleges?
Major Conclusions

The summary in Chapter Four outlined the major findings of this study. From these findings, however, conclusions must be drawn, conclusions that both summarize the research that was undertaken and, at the same time, offer direction for future investigation.

One major conclusion of this study was a disclosure of the pervasive nature of institutional reputation as an influence factor. There is considerable evidence that institutional, or even departmental, reputation is the most powerful of all influence factors. At the same time, there is some evidence that the images held by students and parents about an institution and its reputation are not necessarily accurate. The issue of reputation is also complicated by the sometimes vagarious nature of institutional reputation. Not everyone has the same image of a reputation. However, for institutions that are able to maintain a reputation across chronological, geographical, and demographic boundaries, the value of that reputation is beyond estimation. First-tier institutions, by definition, all have such reputations. Students and parents all recognize the Stanfords, Harvards, and Princetons of the academic world. It is assumed, by the virtue of such a reputation, that all their academic programs and courses are excellent and without peer, when in fact, there
is conceivably a wide disparity between programs among these institutions. And, as is probably the case, better programs in some disciplines can be found at second- or even third-tier schools.

A second conclusion of the study was the large (some might say enlarged) role of friends and parents in the college choice process, and at the same time, the decline of the influence of the high school counselor as a mentor. While a conclusion can be drawn that parents are heavily involved in the college decision process, there is little evidence beyond speculation as to why their role is so central though most researchers feel that there is a correlation between parental involvement in the college choice process and the cost of the institution that the student hopes to attend.

A third major finding was the utilitarian nature of Search. Search not only introduces students to a myriad of different colleges, but in some cases, it actually introduces students to the college they will ultimately attend. At the same time, Search is a significant legitimizing mechanism for both students and colleges.

As a legitimizing mechanism, Search performs two distinct tasks. First, it helps the student confirm college choice decisions made after reviewing other factors. And second, a well-conducted Search legitimizes, or establishes unknown, or lesser-
known colleges to populations of students and high school counselors. Such legitimacy is central to the establishment of regional or even national collegiate reputations.

At the same time, the survey revealed three key drawbacks of Search. First, Search makes it easier for students to "shop" for a college. Because students have more options over a longer period of time, it is difficult for admissions officers to accurately gauge their applicant and enrollment pool and to know which students are really interested in their institution. This makes the awarding of financial aid particularly difficult. If a large amount of aid is offered to a high quality student early in the choice process, that student can provisionally accept the aid until he or she gets a better offer. In the meantime, another student who is keenly interested in the institution may be denied aid and an opportunity to attend, because that aid is "frozen" by the first student. The second student, then, is forced to make plans to attend a second choice institution.

Another drawback of Search is that it makes it easy for colleges to "shop" for students. By merely expanding their Search pool, colleges with large financial resources are also able to significantly expand their applicant pool. The college is then in a position to cull the applicant pool for the best and the brightest.
A further problem with Search is that it provides colleges with a mechanism to quickly develop and implement marketing strategies that are not well-defined and tested. Recruitment strategies based entirely on Search are extremely two-dimensional. In many cases, they lack both depth and appreciation for the individual student. In the anecdotal portion of the survey, many students labeled Search materials they received from colleges as "phony" and chided such colleges for the "hard-sell" approach.

Another significant finding of the survey was the revelation of the cumulative nature of recruitment strategies. It is very difficult to isolate the impact of a single element such as a campus visit or financial aid on the college choice process. As single items, few of these factors would convince a student to attend an institution. Yet, when carefully orchestrated in a well-developed admissions funnel, their overall influence can be overwhelming. There was, also, considerable evidence that some recruitment tactics only have an impact when they are absent. For example, this research revealed that students prefer personalized correspondence from admissions officers. However, this correspondence, by itself, will not cause a student to attend the institution, but its absence may cause a student to reject the college for another.
With the increasing level of sophistication among students, and because of the highly competitive recruiting market, there is a strong sense among admissions officers that they must "keep up with the Joneses," or in this case, the Stanfords. In many cases, colleges resort to specific recruitment tactics, such as using video tapes or advertising in certain magazines, not because they believe it will help them, but rather, because other colleges have adopted these tactics. Not only are such recruitment tactics cumulative, they are also expensive and raise the stakes for everyone. As Hoy (1980) indicated, it is similar to everyone standing at a football game - the relative advantage of standing is lost.

An additional finding of the survey was the confused role of college cost and financial aid. The survey offered no clear insights into these pivotal issues in college choice. There was some indication that while students were concerned about cost and financial aid, their main concern seemed to be institutional reputation. And, because parents were not queried as part of this research project, there was not any exploration into discussions that might have been held between students and parents on how college cost might have served as a delimiting factor in college choice. For example, do parents set a "ceiling" on the amount
they will pay and leave it up to the student to find the best offer from a college to cover the balance?

Finally, the survey confirmed the notion by Zemsky and Oedel (1983) of a "national" student. The criteria expressed by these two authors closely paralleled demographic and psychographic characteristics of the students who participated in the study. For admissions marketers, this means that students are keenly interested in status, especially the status that comes from attending an institution with a national reputation. And, when these students enroll, they will probably seek majors in the professional disciplines such as business, pre-law and medicine, and other majors that offer better than average employment prospects after graduation.

iii Developing a Marketing Information System

One premise for this study was the necessity of gathering data for the development of a marketing information system so that competitive liberal arts colleges might be more successful in marketing their institutions. Much of the data from this study is directly applicable to such a marketing system in at least two ways. First, in many areas of the college choice process, the data offer significant insight for admissions marketers. For example, students who attend these colleges are primarily interested in pre-professional majors and are less interested in
traditional liberal arts programs such as literature and philosophy. At the same time, however, the data also offer significant insight into what dynamics of the college choice phenomenon need to be examined more closely. Section v, below, outlines several avenues for potential exploration.

Admissions officers who must immediately begin to develop a viable marketing effort should find considerable guidance from this research.

First, institutions that wish to enhance their marketability would be wise to conduct research into the image they have among their constituencies and primary and secondary markets. An exact understanding of the image an institution has among these constituencies is pivotal to the establishment of a progressive marketing effort and will provide the necessary insight so practitioners can begin to successfully manipulate the marketing mix variables.

The revision, or in some cases creation, of an institutional image, however, is not an easily or quickly accomplished task, and it must include the analysis of not only programs, but of all institutional structures and policies. Furthermore, the establishment of a credible institutional image requires a long-term institutional commitment that includes well-orchestrated programs in public relations, media relations, community relations, development, marketing, and admissions.
One potentially strong marketing tool is Search. Search offers tremendous advantages for institutions that wish to establish a presence in the minds of future students. However, a well-conceived Search effort must recognize that students and parents are increasingly sophisticated and demand substance as well as polish in their Search materials. Admissions officers, in addition, must recognize and act on the very considerable ethical issues that are involved in using Search. Search cannot be used to salvage a dying program or institution. Instead, Search must be seen as simply one tool in an overall marketing strategy.

An additional consideration for admissions marketers is the increasing role of parents in the choice process. There is some indication that parental influence increases as the cost of attending the college increases; and because competitive liberal arts colleges are fairly expensive to attend, it is reasonable to expect the role of parents to increase even more. At the same time, there is some evidence that the role of the high school counselor, and perhaps the high school itself, seems to be declining. These two factors indicate that much of the college choice process is taking place at home as students and parents use Search, college guides, and video tapes to screen potential colleges. Admissions marketers would do well to examine how their colleges are depicted in such publications as Barrons'.
Peterson's, Lovejoy's, etc. Such an examination should include content analysis of the institution's portrayal in each publication, and significantly, an examination of the portrayal of other colleges that compete with the institution for students. Marketers should also consider becoming involved in other mediums that cater to students and parents at home, such as Private Colleges Magazine, services that distribute video tapes about colleges directly to the home, and advertising in regional magazines. Colleges also might consider the adaptation of an admissions slide show to video so they can be distributed to students who are interested in the college but are out of the travel schedules of college admissions counselors. In addition, considerable attention must be given to the information needs of parents in the college decision process. Admissions marketers would do well to survey parents of current freshmen to determine exactly what kind of information they want to know about a college as they advise their sons and daughters.

Another means to improve the overall marketing program is to increase the analysis of current recruitment publications. This analysis should include, at the very least, evaluation of the publications by both high school students and current freshmen. High school students should be asked if the publications are attractive, if the information is straightforward and easy to digest, and if all logical questions are answered. Current
freshmen should be asked if, after some experience at the college, they felt the recruitment publications honestly depicted the programs and facilities. Other, more sophisticated analyses might include readability measures to determine reading difficulty, and content analysis to determine if the information in the brochures is valued by the student and to determine what other information could be added to the brochures to increase their effectiveness.

Concomitant with these analyses should be an effort to determine how each publication fits into the admissions funnel and the development of a mechanism to determine how effective that publication is in moving students to the next level of the funnel.

One final marketing strategy is the evaluation of the campus visit program. This study, and the literature, is replete with data on the tremendous importance of a campus visit to both students and parents. The campus visit program should be adjusted following research into parent and student information needs to determine if the campus visit provides the maximum amount of valued information to students and their parents. Also, careful consideration must be paid to the choice and training of tour guides so that they understand the tremendous responsibility and importance of their jobs.
a. The Generalizability of This Data

Even as these admissions officers seek insight into their marketing problems and possibilities from this research, a caveat is in order. The generalizability of these data is not universal. The sample of students (and colleges) who participated in this study are primarily from a region extending east from Minnesota that parallels the Great Lakes. Any attempt to apply this marketing data to students outside this region, or to colleges that do not closely match the description of colleges delimited for this study found in Appendix A, must be done with extreme caution.

Areas for Future Research

Like all research, this study responded with both answers to questions and more questions. While considerable insight was gained into the college choice process, the phenomenon remains multi-faceted, complex, and difficult to quantify. First, there is the realization that college choice is enormously complicated and is marked by periods of rationality, non-rationality, and even whimsy.

Second, college choice is a highly personal decision that is often fraught with elation, anxiety, and disappointment. Because of the myriad and mercurial nature of the emotions involved in
the college decision process, it is difficult to ascertain whether there is a "sour grapes" element to some of the responses by students. For example, not all may have been willing to admit that the institution they were now attending was not their first choice, or that they may, indeed, have sent out 20 applications instead of only 10.

Even as some issues have been explored and adequately explained, additional issues remain unchallenged. Considerable tangential research - research that further links this study to the development of an admissions model, and to the larger body of admissions research - remains yet to be undertaken.

While there are literally endless opportunities for future research into the college choice phenomenon, several areas, as highlighted by this study, are perhaps more worthy of additional investigation. These areas, and possible research questions, include:

**The Timing of Recruitment Information**

1. When should high school students first be approached through Search?

2. Would these students be more receptive to Search information before their junior year in high school?

3. When is "too early" for a college to contact a high school student?

4. How can these high school students be reached earlier?
5. When should parents be brought into the admissions funnel for optimum impact?

Sources of Influence on College Choice

1. Is the influence and impact of Search increasing or decreasing?

2. What other marketing mediums, beyond the traditional Search, might have significant impact on the college choice process?

3. How will video marketing, through such firms as LRN and Info-Disk, impact on the effectiveness of Search?

4. How does "shopping around" by students affect an institution's marketing strategy?

The Influences of College Cost and Financial Aid

1. What are the differences between student and parent perceptions of college cost?

2. How can financial aid information be more effectively disseminated to students and parents?

3. How is college cost reconciled against institutional reputation?

4. Are parents willing to spend more to have their sons and daughters attend a first-tier as opposed to second-tier college?

5. Do parents become more involved in the college decision process as the cost of attending college increases?

6. How important are merit scholarships in the choice process?
Secondary Actors in the College Choice Process

1. Has the high school guidance counselor been replaced as a mentor in the college decision process? If so, by whom?

2. How can students currently enrolled in a college be used to help recruit other students?

Issues of Institutional Image and Reputation

1. How can institutions separate institutional image from institutional fact in the minds of students and parents?

2. How can institutions manipulate their image to enhance their reputation?

3. How can an institution create an image?

4. What factors combine to form an image of an institution?

5. Are image factors consistent among students and their parents?

To further complicate the research issue, the opportunities and avenues of future research also need to be expanded to include all students attending institutions of higher education if warranted insights into the full range of college choice questions are to be answered.
Summary

A key objective of this study was to help admissions officers at competitive liberal arts colleges better understand the college decision process. This understanding will have two benefits. First, it will help administrators do a better job marketing their colleges. And second, it will help prospective students do a better job choosing the college that best meets their educational and social needs.

a. A Final Word

While the establishment of a viable and ongoing marketing strategy is one objective of research such as this, a word of caution is in order. Peters and Austin (1985) reminded readers that the most effective marketing strategist is the worker who decides not to drop the computer on the loading dock. In college admissions, it does no good to spend $100,000 advertising an 800 number if no one answers the phone. First, and foremost, marketing involves people.
Appendix A

An Undocumented Description of
Competitive Liberal Arts Colleges
A Working Description of
Competitive, Private Liberal Arts Colleges
A Rough, Undocumented Draft

They are called competitive, private liberal arts colleges for two reasons. First, students and parents actively pursue admission to these colleges because of their reputation for strong academic programs and/or because graduates of the institution are well received in the major professional and graduate schools or in the private sector.

Second, these institutions are highly competitive. They actively seek, and compete for, the better-quality high school students. "Better quality" is situationally dependent and defined by the colleges as a student who graduates from high school with high honors, or who has a combined ACT/SAT median score above the base-line score of the institution or, through his or her abilities, will contribute to the academic, cultural, and/or social reputation of the institution.

These institutions can also be noted for the following characteristics:

1. They tend to have substantial endowment.

2. Increasingly, they are able to offer "no need" or "little need" scholarships to attract the caliber of students they seek.
3. They often accept just a portion of the applications they receive, with the more competitive institutions accepting a smaller portion than the less competitive institutions.

4. They tend to have students who, once accepted, do enroll.

5. They have a well-known, but sometimes undefined reputation as a "good school." This reputation is pervasive. It stretches beyond educational circles, across geographical boundaries, and over time.

6. They tend to have many "legacies," students who are the sons and daughters of alumni.

7. They have a history of continuing environmental stability, but are currently losing more and more top-quality students to the large private multiversities and emerging private multiversities.

8. They are inclined to hire outside consultants as an integral part of their ongoing marketing and recruitment effort.

9. For small colleges, they have an unusually high number of Ph.D.s on the faculty.

10. The faculty tend to stay at the institution for a long period of time. Rapid turnover is very rare.

11. Competitive colleges also tend to be the most expensive of the private colleges, except for the private multiversities.
Appendix B

A List of Competitive Liberal Arts Colleges by State
Geographical Index of the 117 Competitive Private Colleges That Qualified for This Study

Based on 1984-85 Data

Criteria: Established liberal arts curriculum
Private Non-sectarian
Selective/Competitive
Mean SAT V/M above 1000
Undergraduate enrollment above 750 and below 3,500
V/ at least 90 percent total undergraduate enrollment

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<th>Undergrad Enrollment</th>
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<td>367 - 1541</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clark University</td>
<td>509 - 2050</td>
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<td></td>
<td>College of the Holy Cross</td>
<td>669 - 2467</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hampshire College</td>
<td>303 - 1150</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mount Holyoke College</td>
<td>539 - 1884</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Smith College</td>
<td>687 - 2850</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wellesley College</td>
<td>825 - 2141</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wheaton College</td>
<td>387 - 1204</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Williams College</td>
<td>497 - 1907</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>476 - 1783</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alma College</td>
<td>307 - 1055</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hope College</td>
<td>599 - 2450</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kalamazoo College</td>
<td>286 - 1235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minnesota:
- Carleton College 512 - 1877
- Concordia College 745 - 2500
- Gustavus Adolphus College 618 - 2278
- Hamline University 313 - 1399
- Macalester College 396 - 1695
- St. John's University 489 - 1850
- St. Olaf College 764 - 3059

Mississippi:
- Millsaps College 219 - 1200

Missouri:
- Drury College 238 - 1021
- William Jewell College 300 - 1410

New York:
- Alfred University 440 - 2083
- Bard College 176 - 752
- Colgate University 676 - 2621
- Hamilton College 422 - 1640
- Hobart/Wm. Smith College 534 - 1800
- Houghton College 282 - 1160
- Le Moyne College 458 - 1850
- St. Lawrence University 617 - 2227
- Sarah Lawrence College 220 - 830
- Siena College 604 - 3331
- Skidmore College 629 - 2138
- Union College 535 - 2043
- Vassar College 587 - 2250

North Carolina:
- Davidson College 343 - 1395
- Guilford College 302 - 1120

Ohio:
- College of Wooster 512 - 1757
- Denison University 635 - 2172
- John Carroll University 680 - 3230
- Kenyon College 384 - 1421
- Marietta College 394 - 1148
- Oberlin College 719 - 2749
- Ohio Wesleyan University 578 - 2257

Oregon:
- Lewis and Clark College 420 - 1654
- Reed College 250 - 1120
- Willamette University 312 - 1271
Pennsylvania:
- Albright College 350 - 1406
- Allegheny College 575 - 1900
- Bryn Mawr College 304 - 1118
- Bucknell University 813 - 3188
- Dickinson College 521 - 1776
- Franklin and Marshall College 540 - 1950
- Gettysburg College 548 - 1850
- Grove City College 534 - 2256
- Haverford University 265 - 1060
- Juniata College 375 - 1318
- Lafayette College 543 - 2047
- Muhlenberg College 428 - 1530
- Swarthmore College 345 - 1287
- Ursinus College 287 - 1168
- Washington and Jefferson College 275 - 1058

South Carolina:
- Furman University 633 - 2441

Tennessee:
- Southwestern at Memphis 242 - 1006
- University of the South 286 - 1020

Texas:
- Austin College 319 - 1137
- Trinity University 546 - 2209
- University of Dallas 254 - 1070

Vermont:
- Bennington College 176 - 632
- Middlebury College 509 - 1900

Virginia:
- Hampden-Sydney College 250 - 777
- Hollins College 250 - 955
- Randolph-Macon Women's College 250 - 772
- Sweet Briar College 250 - 759
- Washington and Lee University 363 - 1350

Washington:
- Pacific Lutheran University 669 - 2950
- Whitman College 361 - 1183

Wisconsin:
- Alverno College 350 - 1360
- Beloit College 286 - 1071
- Carroll College 305 - 1150
- Lawrence University 279 - 1059
- Ripon College 297 - 931

Total Freshmen: 49,269
Total Enrollment: 187,910
Appendix C

Survey Instrument
This survey is part of a nation-wide research project involving over 49,000 freshmen students at 117 private colleges like this one. The purpose of the research is to help improve the quality of the information flow between prospective students and colleges. You are being asked to participate in this study because of your recent experience in the college selection process.

This survey will require about 15-20 minutes of your time to answer. When you are finished, please return the survey to your instructor. All of your answers on this survey will remain confidential. You will not be identified beyond the brief demographic information you provide at the end of this instrument.

Your thoughtful answers on this survey are extremely important.

Again, thank you for your time and cooperation.

I. This first section of the survey will explore how you gathered preliminary information about where to attend college.

1. How did you first learn about the college you now attend? (Circle only one)
   01. From a college-placement service
   02. From my parents
   03. From current or past students or friends
   04. From a high school counselor
   05. From college guide books such as Peterson's or Barron's
   06. From recruitment publications from this college
   07. By reputation
   08. Talked with a college admissions representative
   09. I don't remember
   10. Others (Please specify) ____________________________

2. To how many colleges did you actually apply? ________ colleges

3. How many of these colleges accepted you? ________ colleges accepted

4. What single reason caused you not to enroll in the second choice college that accepted you?

5. Was the college you are now attending your first choice of where you wanted to attend?
   1. Yes
   2. No

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1983
5a. If this college was not your first choice, what single reason influenced you to come here anyway?

6. Did any of your friends attend this college before you decided to attend?
1. Yes
2. No

II. This part of the survey is interested in the types and sources of information you received as you were making your decision.

7. Did you participate in the College Board's Student Search Service program when you took your PSAT/NMSQT?
1. Yes
2. No (IF NO, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 13)

8. About how many colleges sent you information because of this service?
1. None
2. 10 or less
3. 11 to 25
4. 26 to 50
5. 51 to 75
6. 76 to 100
7. More than 100

9. Overall, about how many of these mailings did you read?
1. 1 to 10 percent
2. 11 to 25 percent
3. 26 to 50 percent
4. 51 to 75 percent
5. More than 75 percent

10. About how many of the mailings did you read from colleges that you had not previously considered?
1. 1 to 10 percent
2. 11 to 25 percent
3. 26 to 50 percent
4. 51 to 75 percent
5. More than 75 percent
11. What first attracted you to the mailings from colleges that you had not previously considered? (Circle only one answer)

1. Name or reputation of the college
2. Location of the college
3. Visual attractiveness of publications (graphic design)
4. Written information in the publications
5. Mention of specific programs of interest
6. Personal letter from an admissions counselor
7. Other (Please specify)

12. Did you ask colleges which sent you unsolicited mailings for more information?

1. Yes
2. No (IF NO, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 13)

12a. From about what percent of the colleges did you seek more information?

1. 1 to 10 percent
2. 11 to 20 percent
3. 21 to 30 percent
4. 31 to 50 percent
5. More than 50 percent

13. Did you enroll in a college or university that you had not heard of before you received an unsolicited mailing?

1. Yes
2. No

14. When a college contacted you, were you more interested in:

1. A personalized letter that mentioned you by name but may take longer to reach you
2. A non-personal letter that may be addressed "Dear Student" but is more immediate

15. In your decision about which college to attend, please rank the following items according to how they influenced you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VI</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>NVI</th>
<th>NI</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Advice of parents
b. Advice of a brother or sister
c. Advice of a friend or former student
d. Advice of a high school counselor
e. Family ties to this college
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f. Selectivity of the school (average ACT/SAT scores, percent admitted)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Visits to this college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Freshman seminars or summer orientation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Off-campus contact w/an admissions officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. On-campus contact w/an admissions officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Meeting with specific faculty member of this college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Viewing of film or slide show about this college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Correspondence from this college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. Net cost (price minus financial aid)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o. Availability of financial aid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. Availability of merit scholarships</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q. Academic reputation of this college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r. Access to faculty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. Proportion of faculty with doctorates</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t. Student/faculty ratio</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u. Size of the library collection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Computer facilities and equipment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w. Graduate school and/or job placement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x. Availability of courses/majors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. Opportunities for student research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z. Availability of an honors program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aa. Availability of study-abroad programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bb. Intramural/varsity athletic programs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cc. Geographic location of the college</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dd. Overall appearance of the campus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ee. Number of students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. Please indicate five characteristics which were most influential to you in your decision to attend this college. Use items from the above list or add your own.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

17. Please check all the statements below that describe how much influence recruitment materials played in your decision to attend this college.

- I was uncertain about enrolling at this college that the materials made no difference to me.
- I made my decision on the basis of discussions with admission representatives and/or a visit to the campus; the materials had little or no influence on my decision.
- The admissions materials interested me in applying to this college although I had not previously considered it.
- My parents were impressed with the admissions materials and that influenced my decision to come to this college.
- The recruitment materials were very persuasive and convinced me to attend this college.
- The recruitment materials seemed to confirm a decision made on other factors.

18. Have you been asked to evaluate this college's admissions materials?

1. Yes
2. No

III. This portion of the survey is interested in the influence of financial aid information and campus visits on your decision to attend this school.

19. Did you apply for financial assistance from this college?

1. Yes
2. No (If no, please skip to question 22)
20. Without financial aid, would you have decided to attend this college?
   1. Yes
   2. No

21. Of all the colleges you applied to, did this college offer you the best financial aid package?
   1. Yes
   2. No

22. Were you awarded a merit scholarship (Not based on financial need)?
   1. Yes
   2. No (IF NO, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 24)

23. Did this merit scholarship play a significant role in your decision to attend this college?
   1. Yes
   2. No

24. Did you visit this college before you enrolled?
   1. Yes
   2. No (IF NO, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 31)

25. How many times did you visit? _________ time(s)

26. Did you ever participate in a campus visit sponsored by the admissions office?
   1. Yes
   2. No (IF NO, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 31)

27. What was your reaction to the sponsored visit?
   1. Very favorable
   2. Somewhat favorable
   3. No reaction
   4. Not very favorable
   5. Very unfavorable

28. Did the campus visit play a significant role in your decision to attend this college?
   1. Yes
   2. No

29. Did your parent(s) accompany you on the campus visit sponsored by admissions?
   1. Yes
   2. No
30. What was their reaction to the overall visit?

1. Very favorable
2. Somewhat favorable
3. No reaction
4. Not very favorable
5. Very unfavorable

IV. This part of the survey is concerned with the influence your high school guidance counselor and/or your parents might have had on your decision.

31. Did you review material from different colleges and universities in your high school counseling office?

1. Yes
2. No

32. Did you share any of the college mailings you received with a high school guidance counselor?

1. Yes
2. No

33. Did you know about this college before you talked to your high school counselor?

1. Yes (If YES, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 33)
2. No

34. Did your counselor suggest that you look into this college?

1. Yes
2. No

35. Did your high school counselor play a significant role in your decision to attend this college?

1. Yes
2. No

36. How would you describe the role your parents played in your decision to attend this school? (Check only the one answer that best applies)

1. Parents were very involved all the way through the decision-making process.
2. They helped me narrow the field then let me decide which college.
3. They recommended specific colleges for me to attend.
4. Did not help me in the decision-making process.
40. Do you plan to attend graduate school after graduation?
1. Yes
2. No
3. Undecided

41. Please list the number of the major that best corresponds with your immediate graduate school interest. Again, please pick only one.

42. About how far is this college from your hometown?
1. Less than 200 miles
2. 201 to 400 miles
3. 401 to 600 miles
4. 601 to 800 miles
5. 801 to 1,000 miles
6. More than 1,000 miles

V. This final section of the survey is designed to provide some very important background information about you.

37. From what type of high school did you graduate?
1. Public
2. Private - religious affiliation
3. Private - independent
4. Other (Please specify)

38. What was your approximate high school grade average?
1. A
2. A-
3. A
4. B+
5. B
6. C

39. From the list below, please pick the one major that best corresponds with your present academic interest.

My present academic interest is ______ (Indicate by writing corresponding number)

1. Art
2. Biology
3. Business
4. Computer Science
5. Education
6. Drama
7. English
8. Foreign Language
9. History/Political Science
10. Journalism
11. Literature
12. Mathematics
13. Music
14. Physical Education
15. Physics
16. Pre-Law/Business/Engineering/Medic
17. Psychology
18. Religion/Philosophy
19. Secretarial
20. Sociology
21. Speech-Communication
22. Undecided
43. Have any of the people below attended this college?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Mother and/or father</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Brother(s)/Sister(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Other relative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Good friends</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44. Are you satisfied with your decision to attend this college?

1. Yes
2. No

45. Do you plan to graduate from this college?

1. Yes (IF YES, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 47)
2. No

46. Why not?

1. Will transfer to another private college
2. Will transfer to a public college
3. Will drop out of college
4. Will join the military
5. Other (Please specify)

47. What is your sex?

1. Male
2. Female

48. What is your race?

1. American Indian or Alaskan native
2. Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino
3. Black or Afro-American
4. Hispanic, Chicano, or Spanish-American
5. White or Caucasian
6. Other (Please specify)

49. What is your approximate combined family income per year?

1. Less than $11,388
2. $11,388 to $15,388
3. $15,388 to $23,388
4. $23,388 to $32,388
5. $32,388 to $44,388
6. $44,388 to $55,388
7. More than $55,388
Please answer the following questions as completely as possible.

What was the most frustrating part of choosing a college?

What did you like most about choosing a college?

What did you like least about mailings from colleges?

What did you like most about mailings from colleges?

What would you do differently about choosing a college if you had a chance to do it over?

Did you like participating in the Student Search Service? Why or why not?
Appendix D

First Letter to College Admissions
Officers and Reply Card
Do you remember me?

Last fall I wrote to you about research I am doing in recruitment marketing for my dissertation in Educational Policy and Leadership at OSU. At that time I sought samples of your recruitment literature and you were kind enough to send me copies of these materials.

Now I am ready for the second stage of my research - a nation-wide survey of freshmen at 117 competitive liberal arts colleges like yours.

To do this, however, I once again need your help. Would you allow me to survey a small group (no more than 20) of your freshmen during September of the upcoming school year? The survey will take about 20 minutes and is the central element of my research.

As you can see from the enclosed survey, I am interested in how and why prospective students choose a college, and the many factors that are involved in that decision. In an era of increased competition for students and declining resources, the value of such a national study is obvious and I am sure that you would like to be a part.

If you agree to participate in this study, I will send you a set of surveys for you to distribute to a randomly selected group of freshmen at your institution during September. You might, for instance, contact an English composition instructor and see if s/he would allow you to distribute the surveys during a class period. The only stipulation is that all respondents be freshmen, and that the survey be conducted in a classroom situation.

As I mentioned before, I am planning to send you a copy of the results of this research project to show my appreciation for all your help.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you are able to participate in this study. If you are not able to help, perhaps you could direct this letter to one of your associates. I have enclosed a pre-paid postcard for you to use in letting me know if you can, or cannot, help me with this project.

I do appreciate your help with this and hope that I can count on your support. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to drop me a letter or give me a call.

Sincerely,

Bob Saviar
403 N. Gay
Mount Vernon, OH 43050
(614) 392-9391 (evenings)
Yes. I would like to participate in this study.

No. I will not be able to participate.

Your Name: Christopher Bakrigan
Title: Associate Director of Student Affairs
College: Bennington College
Address: c/o Bennington College
Bennington, VT 05301
Phone: (802) 442-3401

Bob Sevier
403 1/2 N. Gay Street
Mt. Vernon, OH 43050
Appendix E

Follow-Up Correspondence to Admissions Officers at Participant Colleges
August 1985

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project on marketing and recruitment strategies. Accompanying this letter are 15 surveys and a pre-paid, self-addressed envelope for their return.

The surveys should be distributed to randomly-selected first-term freshmen in either a non-honors classroom or other controlled situation. Randomness can be assured by choosing every 2nd, 3rd, or 4th name on a class (or some other list), until 15 students have been selected. The sample does not need to be controlled for gender or race. Randomness, however, is important.

The surveys must be returned no later than September 27 to be included in this study. However, if they could be returned earlier, I would really appreciate it.

I am sure that you will find the results of the surveys to be extremely interesting and helpful as you plan your recruitment activities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Again, thanks for your help with this study.

Sincerely,

Bob Sevier
493 1/2 N. Gay
Mount Vernon, OH 43050
(814) 492-3391 (evenings)
September 1985

Name--

Has something gone wrong?

I still haven't received the 15 surveys I sent you in August as part of my research on marketing and recruitment strategies at competitive liberal arts colleges.

The information from your college is essential to the successful completion of my project and I hope that you are still willing to participate. If there is a problem, please give me a call (614) 392-9391 (evenings), to see if we can come up with a solution.

If, as might be the case, you have already returned the surveys and I hadn't received them before I sent this letter, please accept my apology. I know you appreciate the value of this research.

Again, thanks for your help in this project. A copy of the conclusion will be sent in January or February 1986.

Sincerely,

Bob Sevier
403 1/2 N. Gay
Mount Vernon, OH 43050
(614) 392-9391 (evenings)
Appendix F

List of the 35 Participant Colleges
### 35 Colleges That Participated in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma College</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alverno College</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beloit College</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowdoin College</td>
<td>Maine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bryn Mawr College</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Bucknell University</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Carleton College</td>
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<td>Centenary College</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
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<td>DePauw University</td>
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<td>Drury College</td>
<td>Missouri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eckerd College</td>
<td>Florida</td>
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Iowa
Millsaps College  
Mississippi
Pacific Lutheran  
Washington
Randolph-Macon Women's College  
Virginia
Rollins College  
Florida
St. Olaf College  
Minnesota
University of the South  
Tennessee
Wartburg College  
Iowa
Whitman College  
Washington
William Jewell College  
Missouri
College of Wooster  
Ohio
Appendix G

Final Thank You Letter to Admissions Officers
Thank you for returning the surveys.

Your help in this project is greatly appreciated. As promised, I will be sending you a copy of my dissertation abstract and conclusion in January or February 1986.

I hope you will find the conclusion helpful as you plan your marketing and recruitment strategies for the future. If there is anything that I can do to help you, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Again, thanks for all your help.

Sincerely,

Bob Saviar
403 1/2 N. Gay
Mount Vernon, OH 43050
(614) 392-3591
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