

Institutional Factors and Characteristics Which May Impact Recruitment In Colleges of Agriculture (COAs)

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Introduction

The literature suggests that there are a variety of factors influencing recruitment and enrollments at universities and COAs. The process of career choice has a large influence on a student's choice of a college. Six common influences for career choice are interests; direct and vicarious exposures to work-relevant activities; work conditions or reinforcers; self-efficacy or their perceived ability to accomplish a job; and leisure experiences (Lent et al., 2002). Not only does career choice play an important role in a student's college decision-making process but there are a variety of internal and external factors that influence the choice as well. Significant persons, high school performance, recruitment efforts by the university, cost, location as well as many other factors play a role in this process (Chapman, 1981).

Colleges of Agriculture (COAs) are working to develop recruitment strategies to attract both traditional and non-traditional students. A variety of studies have been done at individual COAs to determine factors that influence a student's major and career choice. A few of these factors include exposure to agriculture, family and friend influence, recruitment activities implemented by the COA, campus visits, and interaction with faculty (Washburn, Garton, & Vaughn, 2002; Wildman & Torres, 2001). This study examined a broader sample of COAs from across the nation to determine factors that affect enrollments as well as recruitment methods that are used.

Objectives

- Categorize 1862 Land Grant universities COAs according to enrollment trends over the past five years (increased, declined, or equivalent).
- Develop a profile of institutional factors and characteristics as they relate to enrollment trends in COAs.

Methodology

To determine what institutional factors and characteristics related to recruitment and subsequent enrollment in COAs, a web-based 27-item questionnaire was sent to Associate Deans at 1862 Land Grant Universities (N=50). Thirty-one surveys were returned for a response rate of 62%. Based on the information presented in the survey, the COA was categorized into either increasing enrollment or decreasing enrollment.

Results

COAs with increasing enrollment reported an average of 41.4% male enrollment and 58.5% female enrollment, whereas, COAs with decreasing enrollment reported an average of 53% male enrollment and 47% female enrollment. The Asian American and Hispanic/Latino populations made up a larger percentage of the population in COAs with increasing enrollments whereas COAs with decreasing enrollments had relatively low percentages of both of these groups. The percentages of Caucasians and African-Americans were fairly equal in both growth categories. The researcher did find that COAs with increasing enrollment trends had a higher percentage of students who began at main campus versus transferring in at a later time. Likewise, COAs with decreasing enrollments had close to half of their students transferring into the college. On average, increasing enrollment COAs offer fewer academic majors and minors. In regards to branch campuses, the most often reoccurring number of branch campuses was zero for COAs with increasing enrollment compared to four for COAs with decreasing enrollment. Also, three is the most often occurring number of professional schools for COAs with increasing enrollments whereas 1 is the mode for decreasing enrollment COAs. Professional schools include medical, law, and veterinary medicine schools. Finally, the decreasing enrollment growth category has a higher average cost to attend per semester.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Determine the relationship between these recruitment strategies and enrollment.
2. Assess the impact of a college's name on student perceptions and/or the level of attraction or interest in regard to enrollment.
3. Determine the impact of COA personnel, print, and/or non-print media have on enrollment decisions including the impact these items have on parents.
4. Determine the effectiveness of recruiting through youth organizations (4-H/FFA)
5. Investigate recruitment practices at departmental levels and the impact those efforts have on overall enrollment at the college level.

References

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