



A Student Recruitment Program: The Salient Points To Emphasize

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Abstract

A survey of students in the College of Agriculture and Home Economics at New Mexico State University indicated they chose to attend this university rather than another primarily because of proximity, availability of specific areas of study, favorable college reputation, and lower living costs and in-state tuition.

"Good teachers," "favorable student/teacher relationships," and "good variety of courses" were identified by the students as the most important factors which should be emphasized to prospective recruits from high school seniors.

Recently, a concern has been expressed about dwindling student enrollment in colleges of agriculture throughout the country. Carter et. al. (1978) surveyed member institutions of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges regarding enrollment in the agricultural colleges. They reported:

The 1978 undergraduate enrollment dropped to approximately the 1975 level . . . The sharp increase in enrollment which began in the mid 60's has reached a peak and has begun to decline . . . the 18-year old population which began a precipitous decline this year (1978) is expected to drop by 20 percent during the next ten years. Then after a modest increase, a further decrease is expected . . . Farm-reared youth no longer constitute a majority of our student bodies.

Obviously, this apparent drop in number of students, coupled with a slowing down of financial support from the federal level, will cause a cutback in personnel, teaching programs, and flexibility in variety of courses offered, and spill over to affect research and extension.

These decreases in current and anticipated enrollment suggest the potential for increased competition among institutions of higher education in attracting students. One component of the knowledge needed to compete effectively concerns information from current stu-

dents on reasons for their institutional selection, positive and negative aspects of the college, and selected socio-economic data from the students.

This paper reports results of a survey of students in the New Mexico State University (NMSU) College of Agriculture and Home Economics and draws implications for a more effective recruiting program. The objective of the survey was to gain information from the present student body to develop a program to increase enrollment.

Survey Of Related Literature

The reasons a student selects a particular institution have been the subject of limited research. The American Council on Education's Cooperative Institutional Research Program has included reasons for college choice as a part of its survey. Fidler (1977) compared the profile of entering freshmen at the University of South Carolina to the national norms compiled by the Council. He asked participants to select reasons that applied to their individual decisions and obtained the following:

| Reasons for Attending | USC Data National Norms | |
|---|-------------------------|------|
| | % | % |
| College has a good reputation | 37.7 | 57.8 |
| College offers special educational programs | 22.5 | 26.3 |
| Advice of someone who attended | 14.0 | 13.6 |
| College has low tuition | 13.2 | 13.1 |
| College offered financial assistance | 8.5 | 12.4 |
| Relatives wanted me to come | 8.4 | 5.7 |
| Advice of guidance counselor | 3.7 | 5.6 |
| Friends suggested | 8.7 | 5.6 |
| Wanted to live at home | 6.5 | 4.5 |
| Teacher advised me | 2.4 | 3.5 |
| College representative | 2.4 | 2.2 |
| Not accepted anywhere else | 2.4 | 2.1 |

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Table 1. Class Rank and Distribution of Students

N - 589

| | DEPARTMENT OR MAJOR | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|------|--------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|---------|
| | ANSC | AGRO | H. EC. | HORT | AXED | ENTO | AGEC | GENAG | W. L. | COLLEGE |
| Total Enrollment ¹ | 391 | 101 | 247 | 115 | 70 | 31 | 155 | 31 | 269 | 1410 |
| Class Rank | | | | | | | | | | |
| Freshmen | 34 | 6 | 12 | 17 | 18 | 4 | 11 | 8 | 35 | 145 |
| Sophomores | 44 | 8 | 31 | 19 | 9 | 3 | 23 | 7 | 22 | 166 |
| Juniors | 30 | 15 | 24 | 9 | 13 | 4 | 24 | 0 | 17 | 136 |
| Seniors | 31 | 16 | 36 | 17 | 5 | 5 | 13 | 0 | 20 | 142 |
| Totals | 139 | 45 | 103 | 62 | 45 | 15 | 71 | 15 | 94 | 589 |

¹1978 Fall Enrollment Figures

Table 2. The Number and Percentage of Student Source By Origin of Residence N - 588

| | ANSC | | AGRO | | H. EC. | | DEPARTMENT OR MAJOR HORT. | | AX. ED. | | ENTO. | | AG. EC. | | GEN AG | | W.L. | | COLLEGE | |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|------------------------------|-----|---------|-----|-------|-----|---------|-----|--------|-----|------|-----|---------|-----|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Total Enrollment ² | 391 | | 101 | | 247 | | 115 | | 70 | | 31 | | 155 | | 31 | | 269 | | 1410 | |
| High School ¹ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rural | 59 | 43 | 14 | 32 | 34 | 33 | 17 | 27 | 28 | 62 | 3 | 20 | 31 | 43 | 5 | 31 | 28 | 30 | 219 | 37 |
| Urban | 56 | 40 | 17 | 40 | 47 | 46 | 32 | 50 | 14 | 31 | 9 | 60 | 29 | 40 | 11 | 69 | 49 | 53 | 264 | 45 |
| Out-of-State | 16 | 12 | 5 | 12 | 21 | 21 | 14 | 22 | 2 | 05 | 2 | 13 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 00 | 15 | 16 | 83 | 14 |
| International | 7 | 05 | 7 | 16 | 0 | 00 | 1 | 01 | 1 | 02 | 1 | 07 | 4 | 06 | 0 | 00 | 1 | 01 | 22 | 04 |
| Totals | 138 | 100 | 43 | 100 | 102 | 100 | 64 | 100 | 45 | 100 | 15 | 100 | 72 | 100 | 16 | 100 | 93 | 100 | 588 | 100 |

¹Urban students are those who indicated they came from Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Los Alamos, Farmington, Las Cruces, Carlsbad, Roswell, Portales, and Del Norte (El Paso).

The Rural students were classified as those coming from New Mexico places other than those representing the urban category.

²1978 fall enrollment figures

At the University of California-Davis, Winkworth's survey (1974) of undergraduate students showed campus atmosphere (socio-environmental) to be the primary reason, followed by "students felt they could get a good education at Davis," "academic reputation" and "special strength in their intended major."

Taking a different angle, Bailey and Anton, at the University of California-Berkley, completed a study on admitted freshmen who decided to attend another university. The most common reason was smaller size.

At Grand Valley State College in Michigan, Twedale (1975 and 1976) completed a series of studies including reasons students chose that particular institution in 1973. The top two reasons were "availability of special study programs" and "location." Two years later, he sampled students from the earlier study to see whether their reasons had changed. This time, they gave "good faculty" and "intellectual atmosphere" as the major reasons for choosing Grand Valley State College.

In the College of Agriculture at Texas A & M University, Williams and Webb (1971) studied curriculum choice. "Reputation of college" and "special programs" were the most important reasons students chose A & M. Listed as major influences were parents, former students, friends, and the fact that A & M had vocational agriculture training.

Method

All students in the College of Agriculture and Home Economics at NMSU were asked to complete a questionnaire while pre-registering in a three-week period during the fall of 1978.

The questionnaire was prepared and pretested by faculty, changed and pretested again by 15 students, appropriately changed, and administered. There were 602 returns from the 1410 students. Table 1 shows the number and class rank of respondents, or major, by department, and the total enrollment in each. The class distribution of those responding was relatively uniform; 145 freshmen, 166 sophomores, 136 juniors, and 142 seniors completed the questionnaire.

Forty-five percent of all students had attended high school where a majority of the students came from urbanite families (Table 2). Only in the Department of Agriculture and Extension Education were more than half (62 percent) of the responding students from rural areas. In the departments of Entomology, Horticulture, Wildlife, Agronomy, and Home Economics, 20, 27, 30, 32, and 33 percent, respectively, and 31 percent of the general agriculture majors were from rural areas.

Results

Only 41 percent of the respondents indicated they were reared on a farm or ranch (Table 3). These data reinforce the information in Table 2. These data also reveal that a small percentage of students coming from farms or ranches study horticulture, home economics, and wildlife, with 11, 19, and 33 percent, respectively. Animal science, agronomy, agriculture and extension education, entomology, agricultural economics, and general agriculture had 54, 38, 76, 40, 55 and 67 percent, respectively, of their students coming from farms or ranches.

It might be expected that many students in the college of agriculture and home economics would have

Table 3. Residential Location of Students N - 590

| | ANSC | | AGRO | | H. EC. | | DEPARTMENT OR MAJOR HORT. | | AXED | | ENTO | | AGEC | | GEN AG | | W.L. | | COLLEGE | |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|------------------------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|------|-----|---------|-----|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Total Enrollment ¹ | 391 | | 101 | | 247 | | 115 | | 70 | | 31 | | 155 | | 31 | | 269 | | 1410 | |
| Residence | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Farm/Ranch | 75 | 54 | 17 | 38 | 19 | 19 | 7 | 11 | 34 | 76 | 6 | 40 | 41 | 55 | 10 | 67 | 31 | 33 | 240 | 41 |
| Other | 64 | 46 | 28 | 62 | 83 | 81 | 55 | 89 | 11 | 24 | 9 | 60 | 33 | 45 | 5 | 33 | 62 | 67 | 350 | 59 |
| Totals | 139 | 100 | 45 | 100 | 102 | 100 | 62 | 100 | 45 | 100 | 15 | 100 | 74 | 100 | 15 | 100 | 93 | 100 | 590 | 100 |

¹1978 Fall Enrollment Figures

Table 4. College of Agriculture and Home Economics Students Previous Membership In Youth Organizations N - 698

| Total | ANSC | | AGRO | | H. EC. | | DEPARTMENT OR MAJOR | | HORT | | AXED | | ENTO | | AGEC | | GEN. AG. | | W. L. | | COLLEGE | |
|-------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|---------------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|----------|-----|-------|-----|---------|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Enrollment ¹ | 391 | | 101 | | 247 | | 115 | | 70 | | 31 | | 155 | | 31 | | 269 | | 1410 | | | |
| Youth Organizations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4-H | 64 | 34 | 7 | 15 | 29 | 25 | 10 | 15 | 24 | 39 | 2 | 13 | 25 | 29 | 6 | 32 | 16 | 16 | 183 | 26 | | |
| FFA | 66 | 35 | 3 | 07 | 8 | 07 | 13 | 19 | 30 | 48 | 4 | 27 | 28 | 33 | 7 | 36 | 17 | 18 | 176 | 25 | | |
| FHA | 9 | 05 | 1 | 02 | 28 | 25 | 3 | 04 | 1 | 02 | 0 | 00 | 1 | 01 | 0 | 00 | 3 | 03 | 46 | 07 | | |
| None | 51 | 26 | 35 | 76 | 49 | 43 | 42 | 62 | 7 | 11 | 9 | 60 | 32 | 37 | 6 | 32 | 62 | 63 | 293 | 42 | | |
| Total | 190 | 100 | 46 | 100 | 114 | 100 | 68 | 100 | 62 | 100 | 15 | 100 | 86 | 100 | 19 | 100 | 98 | 100 | 698 | 100 | | |

¹1978 Fall Enrollment Figures

belonged to youth organizations with rural orientation, such as 4-H, FFA, and FHA. Of the responding students, however, only 26, 25, and 7 percent, respectively, had been members of these groups. (Table 4). Approximately 77 percent of those enrolled in agricultural education had been members of 4-H or FFA. Only 25 percent of those enrolled in home economics were previous members of FHA.

The respondents were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that the college is "... meeting my educational needs," and the entire college fared relatively well (Table 5). The scores were weighted (4, 3, 2, 1) with 4 representing the "strongly agreed" end of the scale. The college earned a 3.16 score with a range among the departments of 2.92 to 3.30.

When asked, "As compared to other colleges and universities, what were your reasons for coming to New Mexico State University?," the students cited four main reasons (Table 6). These were proximity, availability of a specific area of study, good reputation (of the college and university), and lower living costs and in-state tuition. The responses in total and each reaction level from freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior were essentially the same.

Since the students would have a more recent memory of high school and since high school students are the source of future students for the college, students were asked, "If you were talking to a group of high school seniors, what would you tell them were the strong points of the College of Agriculture and Home Econom-

ics?" By far the most frequently mentioned points were "Good teachers," "favorable student/teacher relationships," and "good choice of courses" (Table 7). Of these three, the 238 respondents suggested that "good teachers" and "favorable student/teacher relationships" were the most important.

Reasons given by those who indicated they resided in rural or urban areas were as follows:

| | Rural | Urban |
|--|-------|-------|
| "Proximity" | 107 | 164 |
| "... Specific Area of Study" | 100 | 128 |
| "... Good Reputation" | 73 | 98 |
| "Financial" | 85 | 47 |
| "Environment" | 26 | 73 |
| "Favorable Reputation for Specific Area" | 20 | 29 |
| "Peer Relationship" | 20 | 31 |

Students appeared to hesitate to respond to the question, "What would you like to see improved in the College of Agriculture and Home Economics?" since only 148 responded to the question (Table 8).

Furthermore, no particular items or issues were predominant. Students may have answered "improve pre-scheduling program," "more variety of courses," and "more flexibility in course offerings" because they were asked to respond during pre-registration. This situation itself, however, from a composite viewpoint, could be very revealing. Had students felt a need strongly, they would have expressed it.

Table 5. Reaction to the Question "The College of Agriculture and Home Economics Is Meeting My Educational Needs" N - 497

| Total | ANSC | | AGRO | | H. EC. | | DEPARTMENT OR MAJOR | | HORT | | AXED | | ENTO | | AGEC | | GEN. AG. | | W. L. | | COLLEGE | |
|-------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|---------------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|----------|-----|-------|-----|---------|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Enrollment ¹ | 391 | | 101 | | 247 | | 115 | | 70 | | 31 | | 155 | | 31 | | 269 | | 1410 | | | |
| Need Reaction | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 36 | 27 | 11 | 31 | 13 | 22 | 8 | 14 | 13 | 30 | 3 | 20 | 11 | 19 | 3 | 21 | 13 | 16 | 111 | 22 | | |
| 3 | 97 | 73 | 23 | 66 | 38 | 63 | 42 | 75 | 30 | 70 | 12 | 80 | 45 | 77 | 10 | 72 | 65 | 78 | 362 | 73 | | |
| 2 | 0 | 00 | 1 | 03 | 8 | 13 | 5 | 09 | 0 | 00 | 0 | 00 | 1 | 02 | 1 | 07 | 3 | 04 | 19 | 04 | | |
| 1 | 0 | 00 | 0 | 00 | 1 | 02 | 1 | 02 | 0 | 00 | 0 | 00 | 1 | 02 | 0 | 00 | 2 | 02 | 5 | 01 | | |
| Total | 133 | 100 | 35 | 100 | 60 | 100 | 56 | 100 | 43 | 100 | 15 | 100 | 58 | 100 | 14 | 100 | 83 | 100 | 497 | 100 | | |
| X̄ | 3.27 | | 3.28 | | 3.1 | | 3.0 | | 3.30 | | 3.20 | | 3.13 | | 2.92 | | 3.07 | | 3.16 | | | |

¹1978 Fall Enrollment Figures

**Table 6. Reactions From Respondents To The Question
"As Compared To Other Colleges and Universities,
What Were Your Reasons For Coming To NMSU?"
(In Rank Order by General Reason Category)**

| REASONS | N - 1001 | NUMBER |
|---|-------------------------------|--------|
| *Proximity | *For a specific area of study | 215 |
| In-state school | | 47 |
| Get away from home | | 8 |
| | | 271 |
| Because it is an agricultural school | | 60 |
| Because of a pre-veterinarian program | | 9 |
| Because of Entomology | | 2 |
| Because of Home Economics | | 25 |
| Because of Animal Science | | 18 |
| Because of Agricultural | | |
| Extension Education | | 11 |
| Because of Horticulture | | 26 |
| Because of Agricultural Economics | | 17 |
| Because of pre-forestry | | 1 |
| Because of Agronomy | | 7 |
| Because of Range Science | | 8 |
| Because of Wildlife | | 44 |
| | | 228 |
| *Good reputation | | 97 |
| Good agricultural school | | 62 |
| References from other students | | 6 |
| Good courses | | 4 |
| Good teachers | | 2 |
| | | 171 |
| Financial | | |
| In-state tuition | | 48 |
| Received scholarship | | 13 |
| Received financial aid | | 4 |
| *Cheaper | | 66 |
| Received financial help | | 1 |
| | | 132 |
| Environment | | |
| Small campus | | 15 |
| Nice campus | | 18 |
| Size of school | | 28 |
| Type of town | | 7 |
| Small town | | 1 |
| Climate | | 30 |
| | | 99 |
| Favorable reputation of a specific department | | |
| Home Economics | | 14 |
| Human Nutrition | | 6 |
| Horticulture | | 5 |
| Animal Science | | 7 |
| Agricultural Economics | | 3 |
| Agronomy | | 3 |
| Range Science | | 1 |
| Wildlife | | 10 |
| | | 49 |
| Peer relationship | | |
| Friendly people | | 16 |
| Student attitude | | 1 |
| My friends are here | | 17 |
| Family | | 13 |
| Counselor recommendation | | 4 |
| | | 51 |

Others mentioned included, better than UNM (7), better than Eastern (1), individual attention (2), had to (1), NMSU is more conservative (1), mixed up (2), type of courses (3), cultural change (1), personal observations (5), good presentation to high school (1), good beer (1), girls (3) job (2), individual judgement (2), easiness (1), growing college (1), no choice (2), always wanted to come here (3), university concerts (1), good facilities (1), fun (1), etc.

*These four items (proximity, good reputation, for a specific area of study, and cheaper) denote the four main reasons for students coming to the NMSU College of Agriculture and Home Economics.

**Table 7. Responses To The Question
"If You Were Talking To A Group Of High School
Seniors What Would You Tell Them Were The
Strong Points Of The College Of Agriculture and
Home Economics?"**

| STRONG POINTS | N - 481 | NUMBER OF RESPONSES ¹ |
|--|---------|----------------------------------|
| Good teachers | | 135 |
| Favorable student/teacher relationship | | 103 |
| Good choice of courses | | 70 |
| Good _____ department | | 47 |
| Friendly people | | 22 |
| Good curriculum | | 21 |
| Excellent facilities | | 10 |
| Good courses | | 10 |
| Great opportunities | | 8 |
| Small classes; individual attention | | 8 |

¹Responses mentioned less than 8 times are not listed.

*The total responses to this question from freshmen (79), sophomores (87), juniors (68), and seniors (97) were about the same.

**Table 8. Major Responses To The Question
"What Would You Like To See Improved
In The College Of Agriculture?"**

| NEEDS IMPROVEMENT | N - 148 | NUMBER OF RESPONSES ¹ |
|--------------------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Improve pre-scheduling program | | 21 |
| More variety of courses | | 18 |
| New wildlife building | | 17 |
| More flexibility in course offerings | | 10 |
| Improve teaching | | 10 |
| None | | 9 |
| Better professors | | 7 |

¹Responses mentioned less than 7 times were not listed.

Summary Results

There were no particular items that many students mentioned as needing improvement in the College.

A large majority of the students who responded indicated they came from urban high schools. In only one department, Agriculture and Extension Education, were more than half the students (62 percent) from rural high schools. Most respondents indicated they came from non-farm/ranch backgrounds.

Only in the departments of Agriculture and Extension Education, Animal and Range Science, and Agricultural Economics and among the general agriculture majors were more than half the students from farms or ranches.

Only a fourth of the respondents indicated they were previous members of 4-H and/or FFA and/or FHA. Departments with more than half their students as former 4-H and/or FFA and/or FHA members were

Animal and Range Science, Agriculture and Extension Education, and Agricultural Economics. More than half the general agriculture majors were also former members.

It appears the students feel the College is doing well in meeting their educational needs.

The students indicated four main reasons for coming to New Mexico State University: proximity, availability of a specific area of study, good reputation of the College, and lower living costs and in-state tuition.

"Good teachers," "favorable student/teacher relationships, and a "good choice of courses" were mentioned most often by students as points that should be emphasized.

Implications and Recommendations

The main objective of the study was to gain information from students in the College to help develop a program to increase, or forestall a decrease in, future enrollment. On the basis of the results, the following recommendations are made:

1. Recruiting should be predominately focused in the urban areas, especially for wildlife, horticulture, and home economics, since students from urban areas appear to be more attracted to these areas of study.
2. Since approximately half of the students have urban backgrounds, it may be necessary to provide educational situations to compensate for the lack of agricultural experiences.
3. The rural orientation of FFA and 4-H youth organizations should make them fertile areas for student recruitment. It appears that the present student body has a low previous membership in those organizations, so recruiting plans should include efforts in those areas.
4. Future recruiting efforts should strongly emphasize the proximity of NMSU, the good reputation of the College, and the relatively low cost and low in-state tuition. These efforts should also stress opportunities in specific areas of study. Three additional areas should be strongly emphasized, namely good teachers, favorable student/teacher relationships, and a good choice of courses.
5. It was not clear what the students meant by "good teachers" and "favorable students, it is strongly recommended that further study determine what factors students associated with "good teachers" and "favorable student/teacher relationships." How can we, for example hire, develop, and evaluate

teachers and build a good teacher program unless we are certain what it is? After this study, programs for continuously improving teaching in the College should be re-examined for relevance.

What the students identify as "good teachers" should be compared with what the literature already reveals is "good teaching" and considerations should then be made for inclusion of identified salient factors in a teacher improvement, evaluation, and recruitment program.

6. While the College received a relatively good score to the question ". . . is meeting my educational needs," it should do all it can to hire, develop, and maintain good teachers and continue to build favorable student/teacher relationships.
7. A caution is expressed regarding the danger of regressive recruiting for specific curricula in which employment or placement opportunities are limited.



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N. Omir Rawlins. **Introduction to Agribusiness.** Prentice Hall, 1980. 248 pp. \$10.95 Clothbound.

Introduction to Agribusiness is a well-written, well-organized overview of the scope and role of agribusiness in agricultural industry today. It is a surprisingly complete overview, considering its brevity of the agribusiness sector which is defined as all firms and people involved in the off-farm aspects of agriculture. The book fulfills the author's purpose, "to provide basic insight to the definition and scope of agribusiness with special emphasis on 'who' and 'what' agribusiness is."

The author defines and discusses three groups of agribusiness firms: resource firms which provide the feed, seed, fertilizer, farm machinery, and other forms of capital to farmers; agriservice firms which provide various types of services including research, education, advertising and promotion, communication services, political representation, and computer services; and marketing firms which move farm products from the farm to the final consumer.

Introduction to Agribusiness is organized into six parts. The first defines what agribusiness is and gives an overview of the general changes occurring in agriculture as well as some of the evolving issues of concern to the future of agriculture. It points out the complexities in-