Informal Recruiting Undergraduate Methodologies

Larissa Adamiec* Ph.D.
Deborah Cernauskas Ph.D.
Todd Kelsey Ph.D.
Jodi Houlihan

Benedictine University
5700 College Road Lisle 60532
USA

Abstract

Formal high school programs in which students spend half of a day on campus learning and applying college topics such as entrepreneurship, digital marketing and business analytics as taught by University professors serve as an informal college recruiting event which increases the knowledge of high school students about the University as well as specific majors at the college. Recruiting efforts on University campuses typically include formal open houses, various events and athletics. These become the first point of contact for student involvement, which introduces students to the University (Astin 1984). Formal recruiting events are formally followed-up within the University through the recruitment department which creates further student involvement.

Previous research has demonstrated student's preference for Universities based upon field of study preferences, course and institutional reputations, courses, entry scores and easy access to home (Maringe 2006). Since this research has been published, higher education facilities have become more competitive in recruiting students (Sautar and Turner 2002). Students still gain knowledge of the University through typical formal recruiting efforts; however, more informal recruiting events are starting to occur which have the opportunity to create a higher student involvement leading to higher recruitment and higher retention.

This study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of a formal high school event which also serves as an informal recruiting event for Benedictine University. A group of 197 local high school students spent half a day on Benedictine's campus kicking-off their semester long research project. The University professors guided the students in developing their investigative approaches to their research thesis and research methodologies while they were on Benedictine's campus. University instructors introduced their respective fields of digital marketing, business analytics, entrepreneurship and finance. Throughout the workshop instructors made themselves available to the students to provide guidance for their research inquiries. The introduction to the campus, instructors and majors should heighten the students Benedictine brand awareness. Additionally, having participated in active learning sessions involving the professor's respective disciplines, the students should gain a deeper knowledge of these business majors as well as their respective applications. The study collects anonymous survey data understanding the student's prior knowledge of Benedictine and the associated business majors as well as the post-ante knowledge of Benedictine and the associated business majors.

Keywords: 5 E Design Thinking Model, Informal Recruiting, Recruiting

Informal Recruiting

Traditional undergraduate recruiting involves open houses and campus tours. Both of these events require students to travel to the University to which students and their parents then listen to speeches from admissions, have the opportunity to speak to professors and walk through the campus. These types of events often have a low success rate of having the student enroll on campus.

Previously students made their higher education selection based on field of study, reputation, course entry scores and distance to home (Maringe 2006). At the time of the study the financial landscape was different. Students graduated with some loans or student debt. However, the level of debt was manageable allowing for students to be able to move forward with their lives while simultaneously paying down their debt. Currently many graduates have crippling levels of debt which has delayed their next steps of life including marriage, home ownership and having children. As a result, incoming student expectations of higher education has changed. Parents and students want the highest level of value for their tuition dollars. With a heightened sensitivity to cost and perceived value traditional recruitment has suffered. Parents now ask more pertinent questions related to the long-term benefits of the University as opposed to teacher-student ratios.

Utilizing the 5 E model (Entice, Enter, Engage, Exit and Extension) into an informal recruiting event for high school students allows students to better understand the value of the University. Students from a local high school were brought onto campus to work on their school research projects. The University ran a half day workshop on project management and research organization. The workshop was taught by University professors with assistance from undergraduates. High school students were able to participate allowing for them to understand how a college course from the University uses interactive student engagement throughout delivering course content. The undergraduate students were able to provide assistance to the high school students in terms of both the workshop material and general advise for incoming undergraduate students.

The 5 E Design Model: Entice, Enter, Engage and Extension

The 5 E model breaks up a complete experience into 5 different stages allowing for the customer to fully be immersed in the experience. The model focuses the designer to innovate within the five experiential stages of the 5 E model framework around the end user needs. The ultimate goal is to create and foster a long-term relationship which incorporates innovative experiences at each step in the journey (Kumar 2012).

The five stages of the model are: entice, enter, engage, exit and extension. The first stage of entice focuses on how the customer first learns about the service or event. Next, the model creates a first impression as the customer enters the experience. This step kicks-off the user experience as this is where the end user is getting prepared to engage. The longest lasting phase of the model is the engagement phase. This stage is where the end user or customer interacts and uses the services. The next step is how the customer exits the experience. The final stage is one of the most critical as the extension defines what the customer takes away with them both mentally and physically.

Event

The workshop consisted of three pieces: time management instruction, research management instruction and wrap-up. The first two pieces were taught by Benedictine University professors to the high school students. The workshop allowed for the high school students to actively participate and learn. Students are expected to incorporate the information from the workshop into their semester long academic project.

The final piece of the workshop included an open question and answer section to the Benedictine University students. The high school students were able to ask any questions to the students. The questions ranged from what they liked best about college to more practical questions on how to save money while a college student. Initially the high school students were shy, however, as the session progressed the students became more comfortable and as a result were able to ask bolder questions.

The five E model was applied to the event. The application is as follows:

- Entice: The step that is used to design experiences to bring awareness of Benedictine University to potential students who have no knowledge of Benedictine University.
- Enter: The step that is used to design experiences to create positive first impressions in the minds of the potential students regarding Benedictine University.
- Engage: The step that is used to design the experiential interaction(s) between students and the Benedictine University community and campus.
- Exit: The step that is used to create experiences that form a final long-lasting positive impression of the Benedictine University community and campus by the potential students.
- Extension: The step that is used to create a positive long-lasting relationship between the students and the Benedictine University and campus.

Student Results

Of the 197 participants in the workshop, 108 filled out the survey. 81 (75%) of the students were in their junior year. 27 (25%) of the students were in their senior year. Responses are demonstrated in table 1.

Year	Responses	
Junior	81	75.00%
Senior	27	25.00%

Table 1: Year in High School Responses

The majority of the students who attend Benedictine University live near the school. The University serves its neighbors. To better understand the workshop participants, we determined the approximate distance of the student to the University. Less than 3% live within 10 miles, over 80% live between 21 – 50 miles within the University. Only 3.70% live outside of 50 miles to the University as displayed in table 2.

Distance	Responses	
1-10 Miles	3	2.78%
21-25 Miles	50	46.30%
26-50 Miles	41	37.96%
+50 Miles	4	3.70%
No Response	10	9.26%

Table 2: Distance to University Responses

To better understand the academic performance of the group of high school students, the students were asked their grade point averages and SAT scores. The results of the survey data are located in tables 3 (GPA) and 4 (SAT scores). 90% of the respondents have a B average or higher. The majority of the participants have a SAT score within the range of 801 – 1200.

GPA	Responses	
2.0 - 2.5	2	1.85%
2.6 - 3.0	15	13.89%
3.1 - 3.5	46	42.59%
3.6 - 4.0	44	40.74%
No Response	1	0.93%

Table 3: Grade Point Average Responses

SAT	Responses	
400 - 800	6	5.56%
801 - 1200	74	68.52%
1200 - 1600	23	21.30%
No Response	5	4.63%

Table 4: SAT Score Responses

Incoming students have become much more sensitive to the rising costs of tuition as well as the potential looming student debt. 75% of the respondents are juniors in high school. 56% of the respondents are already considering attending community college, even though this group of students is academically prepared to start at a 4-year institution. In addition, these students are already aware of potentially taking student loans as 71% of respondents state they use loans to pay for tuition. Table 5 shows the breakdown of community college and table 6 demonstrates the breakdown of students planning to take on student debt to pay for tuition.

CC	Responses	
Yes	56	51.85%
No	49	45.37%
No Response	3	2.78%

Table 5: Community College Responses

Loans	Responses	
Yes	71	65.74%
No	32	29.63%
No Response	5	4.63%

Table 6: Loan Responses

To better understand whether participants gained knowledge about Benedictine University, the survey asked the student to rate how well they felt they knew Benedictine prior to the event. The student was asked whether they knew Benedictine University: Not at all, A little, Some, Well or Very Well. The student was also asked whether the student felt they knew Benedictine University after the event. The student was asked to rate this knowledge as either: Not at all, A little, Some, Well or Very Well.

The results of the survey are listed in table 7. 53% of participants said they knew Benedictine "Not at all." 25% of participants said they knew Benedictine "A Little." 11.11% of participants said they knew Benedictine "Some." 6.5% of participants said they knew Benedictine "Well." And finally, 2.8% of participants said they knew Benedictine "Very Well." 85 of the participants increased their knowledge of Benedictine. 17 participants had a neutral responses meaning they neither learned more nor less by having participated in the workshop. 4 of the participants said they knew less than they had prior to participating in the workshop.

Prior	Post	Responses	
Not at All	Not at All	4	Neutral
Not at All	A Little	15	Positive
Not at All	Some	25	Positive
Not at All	Well	11	Positive
Not at All	Very Well	2	Positive
A Little	Not at All	0	Negative
A Little	A Little	2	Neutral
A Little	Some	14	Positive
A Little	Well	10	Positive
A Little	Very Well	1	Positive
Some	Not at All	0	Negative
Some	A Little	0	Negative
Some	Some	8	Neutral
Some	Well	3	Positive
Some	Very Well	1	Positive
Well	Not at All	0	Negative
Well	A Little	1	Negative
Well	Some	1	Negative
Well	Well	2	Neutral
Well	Very Well	3	Positive
Very Well	Not at All	0	Negative
Very Well	A Little	0	Negative
Very Well	Some	1	Negative
Very Well	Well	1	Negative
Very Well	Very Well	1	Neutral
No response		2	

Table 7: Knowledge Survey Responses

Conclusions

The workshop was designed to give the high school participants an opportunity to learn about project management and research development for their science elective. In addition, the workshop provided an opportunity for Benedictine University to have an informal recruiting event. Allowing the students to have an on-campus experience allows the student to have a long lasting memory of the University.

Of the 197 students who participated in the workshop, 108 students filled out the survey. The majority of the participants lived within 50 miles of the University, had B averages with competitive SAT scores. In addition, these students demonstrated being budget conscientious by stating they were thinking of attending community college and were planning on taking on student loans to pay for tuition.

Students gained knowledge of the University by participating in the program. 78.7% of the participants said their knowledge of the University had increased from participating in the workshop. Almost 16% of the participants said they knew the same amount about the University prior to participating as post participating in the workshop. 4 of the respondents said they knew less about the University from participating.

Two students approached two different Benedictine Professors after the formal event had concluded. One of the students was interested in participating in an upcoming Benedictine event in the upcoming weekend. The other student was interested in a formal Benedictine tour as they were now interested in attending Benedictine in two years' time.

References:

Kumar, Vijay. *101 design methods: A structured approach for driving innovation in your organization*. John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Astin, Alexander W., et al. "How service learning affects students." (2000).

Astin, Alexander W. "Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education." *Journal of college student personnel* 25.4 (1984): 297-308.

Soutar, Geoffrey N., and Julia P. Turner. "Students' preferences for university: A conjoint analysis." *International Journal of Educational Management* 16.1 (2002): 40-45.

Maringe, Felix. "University and course choice: Implications for positioning, recruitment and marketing." *International Journal of Educational Management* 20.6 (2006): 466-479.

Appendix:

1. What year are you in high school?
   a. Freshman
   b. Sophomore
   c. Junior
   d. Senior
2. How is your approximate distance from Benedictine University?
   a. 1-10 miles
   b. 21 - 25 miles
   c. 26 – 50 miles
   d. 50 + miles
3. Do you intend to go to community college before transferring to a 4-year institution?
   a. Yes
   b. No
4. What is your GPA?
   a. 2.0 – 2.5
   b. 2.6 – 3.0
   c. 3.1 – 3.5
   d. 3.6 – 4.0
5. What is your SAT score?
   a. 400 – 800
   b. 801 - 1200
   c. 1201 - 1600
6. Do you plan to play a sport in college?
   a. Yes
   b. No
7. Do you plan to take on student loans to pay for college?
   a. Yes
   b. No
8. Do you want to go to a college which students are similar to you?
   a. Yes
   b. No
9. How well did you feel you knew about Benedictine before the workshop?
   a. Very well
   b. Well
   c. Some
   d. A little
   e. Not at all
10. How well do you feel you know Benedictine after the workshop?
    a. Very well
    b. Well
    c. Some
    d. A little
    e. Not at all