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Development of a student ambassador program

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DEVELOPMENT OF A STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

By

Heather James
Masters of Science
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2008

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

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ABSTRACT

Development of a Student Ambassador Program

by

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The need for colleges to explore alternative methods of increasing enrollment provides new opportunities and challenges in the quest to attract students. These challenges and opportunities can be addressed with the development of a Student Ambassador Program. This work presents the creation of an ambassador program consisting of current and former students who reach out to local high schools, career seminars, and industry related venues in order to both increase awareness of the program while also answering questions and being a point of contact for potential students. The implementation of the program involves a targeted recruitment strategy, coupled with training sessions for the potential ambassadors. Next, the program has performed benchmarking and research studies against other ambassador programs in order to target key strengths, and has also adopted the Gaps Model of Service Quality, which provides critical insight into what the students' expectations are and how the program can meet them. Several literature reviews were also referenced in order to get a perspective of ambassadors' experiences, career development needs, and prospective employment opportunities. Finally, the relationships made through the program are invaluable to all parties involved. The ambassadors get valuable personal enrichment and community outreach experience, the potential students gain valuable insight into the program and a point of contact to resolve any issues, and the school gets a needed exposure in the community and a pool of new students.

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PART ONE

Introduction

Higher education recruiting has become much more competitive, and colleges are being forced to use alternative strategies to focus on getting and retaining students. Many schools are using a more business-like approach to student recruitment. Schools are moving away from large scale recruitment activities, due to the fact that they are costly and inefficient. Departments are under more scrutiny as to how recruitment budgets are being spent, which means the entire process of student recruitment has evolved into quantitative modeling, demographic analysis, and leveraging financial aid. Austin Community College (ACC) is evaluating its current recruitment strategy in order to ensure recruitment is more diligent, cost effective, and focused.

This case study is based on a directive from the District President of ACC, Dr. Stephen B. Kinslow. Dr. Kinslow has communicated a system-wide goal to each department to engage in recruitment of new students. The goal is to increase enrollment by 15% by academic year (AY) 2010. In addition to enrollment, the president has articulated that the increase in students will also increase community outreach and provide more educational opportunities to the Central Texas region, Austin Community College (ACC). An inter-departmental review of the Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts Departments, which includes the programs of Meeting & Event Planning and Travel & Tourism has identified that enrollment has only increased 5 - 7% per academic year over the last five years. These programs have targeted a 17% enrollment increase by 2010.

The Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts programs have a total enrollment of 568 students as declared majors. With the targeted 17% enrollment over the next two years,

the department will be in excellent standing to compete with many of the larger departments at the College for its coveted resources.

Recruitment

The Austin Community College District is the eighth-largest single-college, multi-campus community college district in the nation, offering university transfer, workforce training, continuing education, and adult education programs (ACC At A Glance, 2007). The Austin Community College Recruiting Department does not recruit for specific majors forcing academic departments to seek potential students on their own. The Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts Departments attend major high school recruiting fairs held every spring and make visits to schools upon request for information. Due to time constraints and the abundance of recruiters, high school students are often overwhelmed by the information presented at various recruiting booths (R. Sandoval, personal communication, March 10, 2008).

Seeking to increase community outreach and provide educational opportunities to the Central Texas region, Austin Community College (ACC) has stated a desire to increase enrollment by 15% by academic year (AY) 2010. The college recruiting department's main focus is to visit high schools and city-wide job fairs to discuss continuing educational opportunities. The following is the recruiting department's mission:

“to expand student recruitment efforts to increase access to higher education for the ACC service area, to recruit students from underserved and historically underrepresented populations, and to assist students' transition to the community college” (Student Recruitment Office, 2008, ¶1).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify and explore a selected number of recruitment and retention models that would fit a community college like ACC and by extension offer strategies for student enrollment in the identified programs via the creation of a Student Ambassador Program (SAP). The purpose of the SAP will be to seek establishments such as Austin area high schools, local area hotels, restaurants, country clubs and other industry related venues. The SAP is a student appointed program that will visit Central Texas career fairs, high school career seminars, and industry partners to discuss our programs to current employees who are potential students. Once this goal is realized it will benefit the students, faculty, community, and the entire ACC system.

Statement of problem

The Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts programs at ACC have too few students and it seeks to increase its enrollment. There are only four full-time faculty and several part-time faculty that instruct the various courses offered. The full-time faculty is always on overload and the adjunct faculty budget has escalated over the past two years. The departments are conducting too many 'high cost courses' each year because of the lack of proper class scheduling and courses are conducted with small numbers because students need the courses in order to graduate. The issue at hand is to devise a strategic plan that would involve students and faculty working collaboratively to provide a solution to a system-wide problem.

Justification

This study has come along at an opportune time in the life of the department. With faculty overloads - and burnout not far behind; escalating adjunct budgets, small class sizes,

an administration that is growing wary of funding a department with diminishing student returns, increased enrollment and retention is a must for this department.

Additional students in the Hospitality and Culinary departments will not only fund the department and by extension increase the coffers of the entire institution; it will give visibility to ACC since it is the only full-time program in the city of Austin. Also with the increase in hotels and restaurants in the Austin metroplex, the school is being told by the industry managers that there are not enough qualified students to fill the co-op and full-time positions that are available in the area. Increased numbers of degree qualified students would ease the hospitality and culinary employment situation, increase the visibility of ACC, and would also satisfy the president's quest to increase community outreach and provide more educational opportunities for students.

On a departmental level, increased numbers of students would ease faculty overload and allow faculty to participate in conferences and workshops and increase their visibility and level of professionalism in the industry. In addition, the administration will be pleased because the department may become somewhat self-sufficient at that time.

Constraints

The constraints of this self study will be based on the voluminous amount of models to be identified and selected for the study and the time allotted to complete the study. There are many schools that have had to contend with the same issues and have written about their dilemma and ultimate success. However, with organization, research, and time management, the constraints could be minimized.

Glossary

Student recruitment is the strategy of providing proactive follow-up with prospects to convert them to students. Recruitment is an action that allows the college or university to stay connected with prospective students and keep your school in the forefront of their minds.

Student retention serves to identify and focus appropriate targets, strategies, and recommendations for intervention and retention of current students before they decide to leave the college or university.

Student ambassador program is group of students dedicated to the positive promotion of their college or university. Student Ambassadors have the opportunity to interact with campus VIPs and alumni, many of whom become valuable career contacts. Ambassadors also have the chance to develop and receive training in communication, public relations and interpersonal skills.

PART TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review examines the results of several literature searches conducted for related student ambassador programs. The results revealed a lack of literature on the subject due to the fact that many programs are in their inception or there is not enough data available to provide conclusive evidence on whether the program is effective. However, literature on recruitment and retention had some valid data about ambassador programs. The relevant literature is used on this work to support the recruitment activities taken by ACC.

Recruitment and Retention

“Rapidly developing trends are forcing schools to make recruitment strategies more efficient, more effective, and more service-oriented. In other words, schools are starting to look a lot more like businesses” (Tsai, 2007, p. 18) Creating publications, counseling perspective students and parents, understanding how to attract minority populations, realizing the impact of financial aid, mastering record keeping techniques, and incorporating retention strategies are all essential components of a successful recruitment program on college campuses. Parents are much more likely to be involved and have influence in a potential student’s decision, meaning that marketing and advertising strategies must change to reflect this. Also, music, movies and the internet are part of everyday life for potential students. College recruiters have to know which radio stations, movies, and websites that prospective students are involved in, maximizing marketing effort to this key demographic.

Colleges and universities must also use their website as a focal point of their recruitment strategy. “Web sites provide the opportunity to communicate practically

unlimited information...to communicate information via multiple channels (e.g., plain text, graphic images, audio files, interactive links), and to communicate this information to a large number...at a relatively low cost” (Allen, Mahto, and Otondo, 2007, p. 1697). No institution, no matter how great its reputation, will be able to compete effectively without using and embracing today’s technological tools. Potential students are much less likely to call around for information, preferring instead to use the internet to get their questions answered. The key to successful recruitment tactics via the internet hinges on the website content and layout, and easy ability to access key items like the enrollment application and other forms.

As colleges move toward a more holistic, relationship-based model, they must build marketing strategies around students as lifelong customers. Trust is one of the most important factors in implementing a relationship-based model. “Trust is the corner stone of any lasting relationship and that trust should be the earliest goal in any relationship building effort” (Bennett, 2002). Once trust is established and the relationship model is adopted, student ambassador programs become a key part of the positive reputation and future of the institution. “You’re building a relationship rather than simply marketing a product ... You go with the student from prospect to long after they’ve graduated” (Tsai, 2007, p.18).

Efforts by the Student ambassadors at ACC

The Student ambassadors will be the primary tool in the Hospitality Management and Culinary arts Departments’ efforts for diversity and outreach. The program's implementation of this specialized recruitment strategy will emphasize early outreach and target underrepresented students. As part of the plan, the ambassadors will undertake a comprehensive set of duties, which will enable the college to secure its presence in high schools and bring the college message to students in elementary, junior high and high

schools.

The ACC Student ambassadors will participate in the following student services areas:

- a. Assist in the delivery of outreach programs and services targeting historically underrepresented populations while promoting enrollment through local schools and the community.
- b. Provide peer-advising services for high school students.
- c. Develop workshops, seminars, and presentations for elementary school, high school, and junior high students.
- d. Represent ACC during career fairs, school visits, college nights, and other informational programs.
- e. Lead and conduct campus tours.
- f. Assist in the planning and implementation of special activities such as scholarship fund raising, African American History Month, Transfer Student Day or Cinco de Mayo.
- g. Staff the campus information booths during registration periods and orientation.
- h. Ensure the distribution of ACC class schedules and informational brochures to area schools.
- i. Participate in in-service training and leadership workshops as scheduled.
- j. Participate in New Student Orientation events each semester.

The Gaps Model of Service Quality

The service industry is under increasing pressure to ensure that services are customer-focused and that an organization has moved toward a model of continuous improvement.

Austin Community College is unique, and the challenge of managing financial and resource constraints are much more varied and complex than in the typical service industry. Therefore, it is essential that ACC understand and measure customer expectations, as well as identify any gaps in service quality. Using this information, ACC and the Hospitality Management and Culinary arts Department Student ambassador Program (SAP) can target cost-effective ways of closing service quality gaps and prioritizing which gaps to allocate resources toward.

The ACC Student ambassador Program used the Gaps Model of Service Quality (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2006) as a tool to measure service quality by focusing on how to reduce the gaps between what potential students expect and how they perceive service they

receive from ACC. The Gaps Model helps in viewing service quality as a measure of how the level of the delivered service matches student expectations. Service and educational organizations must effectively manage levels of service quality, because it is imperative they understand and measure customer expectations and ensure that any gaps in service quality are properly identified, managed, corrected and re-evaluated. The following diagram illustrates the Gaps Model. An explanation of each area follows the diagram.

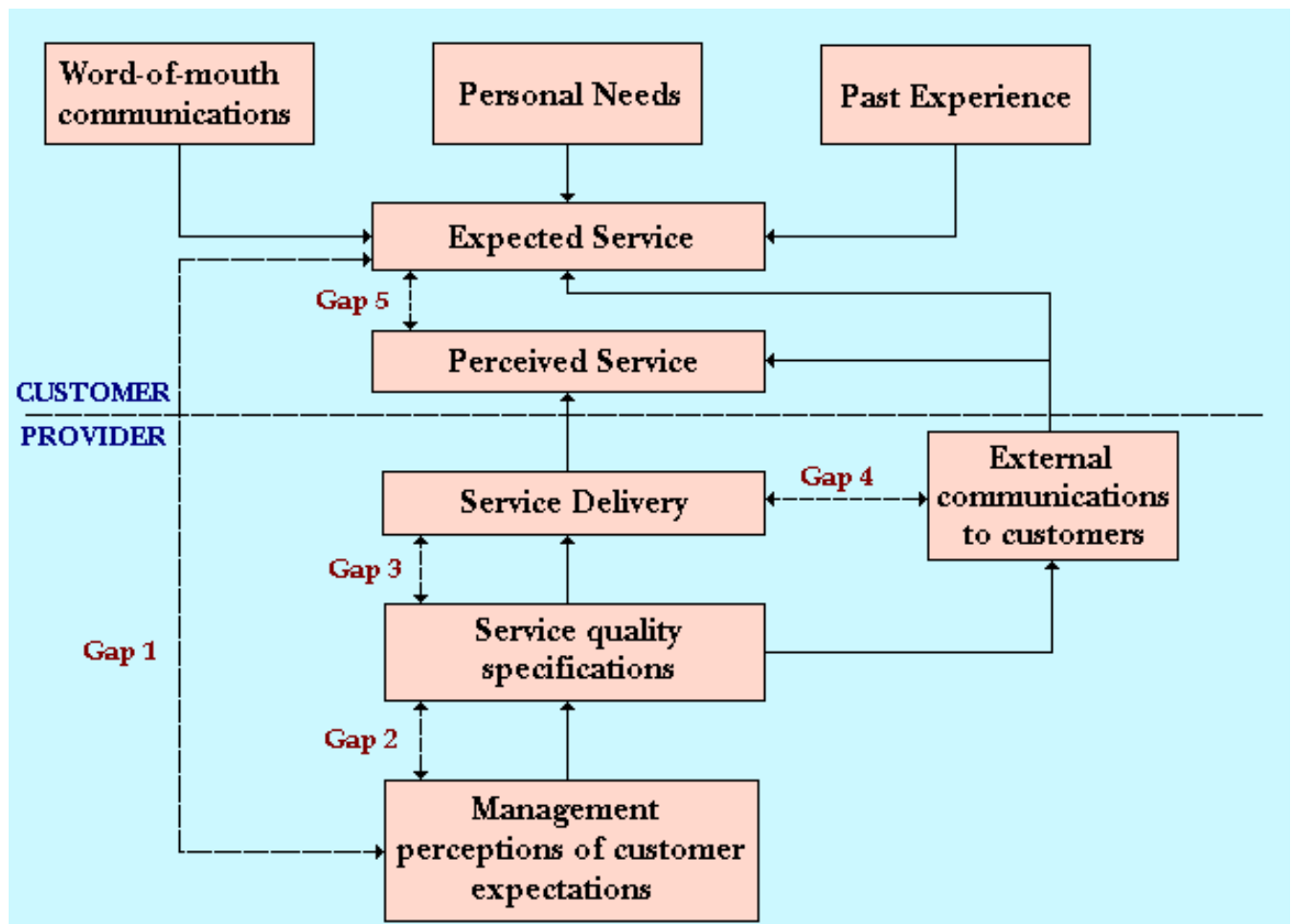


Figure 1: Courtesy of Marketing for Hospitality Tourism, 4th ed. by Kotler, Bowen, and Makens

The first gap of the Gaps Model is to identify the customer's expectation as it relates to the disconnect with the department's perception, resulting from the lack of a marketing research oriented focus and inadequate or poor communication. The SAP addresses Gap one because the ambassadors are a liaison between the potential students, the school, and

hospitality industry.

Gap two is to identify the department's perception of service quality compared with desired service specifications. This gap is due to a lack of commitment to service quality, a perception of unfeasibility to complete projects, an inability to standardize tasks, and lax goal setting. The ambassadors will address this gap by conducting campus tours, staffing booths at Austin area career fairs, and assisting in area volunteer projects. This will help to standardize the means in which information about the department and college is communicated, while providing a clear view of the mission and goals of the Hospitality Management Department.

Gap three aims to identify service quality specifications in order to assure seamless delivery of service. The ambassador program will close this gap by reducing role ambiguity and conflict, addressing poor job role fit and poor technology fit, and bolstering teamwork. This will be accomplished through email lists and information sessions for both students and industry partners who will keep them informed about current and upcoming employment opportunities. This will create open information exchange and allow the creation and audits of skills assessments.

Gap four concerns the delivery of service in reference to external communication. The ambassador program will address this by reducing inadequate horizontal communications and being available via phone or e-mail to answer questions and address concerns, providing for a better experience when interacting with the departments.

Gap five concerns the need for experienced service delivery. The discrepancy between what the customer expects and how they perceive the service delivered is a result of the influences exerted from the customer and the shortfalls on the part of the service provider, which are ACC's Hospitality Management and Culinary arts departments. Customer

expectations are influenced by word of mouth recommendation, past service experiences, and personal needs. The SAP will be able to provide individual question and answer sessions, professional development sessions, student mentoring, networking, and accounts of past experience. Being able to provide real life experiences is helpful to students and provides a greater understanding.

The main way that the SAP will eliminate concerns presented by the model is by making the intangibles tangible. Service is the hardest concept to put a price on or to physically touch, therefore; students will create a positive and memorable experience for potential students to remember. Some examples of how the student ambassadors will perform this task are by maintaining a professional appearance, discussing how the equipment in the kitchens are used by current student, and providing physical tours of our facilities. Also, the ambassadors will exude reliability through the ability to perform the promised service accurately and dependably.

The ambassadors will focus on responsiveness by being willing to help and provide prompt service when needed. The program will display assurance in credibility, competence, security, courtesy, trust, confidence and most importantly knowledge. No program can be without empathy towards others, which include access, communication, understanding the customer and caring about others by providing individualized attention when needed.

Student and School Benefits

There are a number of schools and university across the United States that have Student Ambassador Programs. Research was performed through questionnaires sent to program advisors and directors asking questions concerning their program's performance, retention metrics and associated statistical data in order to compare and evaluate the effectiveness of

ACC's SAP against others. A sample listing of the following institutions have been identified as having an ambassador program:

1. MiraCosta College
2. University of Houston – Hilton College
3. Brookhaven College
4. Ohlone College
5. University of Nevada, Las Vegas
6. Washington State University
7. Appalachian State University

The interest in creating student ambassadors at colleges and universities is growing.

The desire to increase enrollment numbers on all Higher Education programs, ... To achieve this aim, various recruitment activities need to be undertaken (Rhodes, Sherwin & Smith, 2006, p. 44). Student Ambassador programs are becoming a much larger part of this recruitment activity.

In “Jenny Mennerick, student ambassador: You're a leader on campus” A 19-year old sophomore exhibited her positive experiences through being a student ambassador at her college. Jamie was asked how her job connected her to the campus? She responded: "You're a leader on campus representing the school. You meet students (while) giving tours and then you recognize them when they decide to come to school here” (Ingle, 2006, p. 1). She was also asked how the job helped her with future academic plans of becoming a teacher. She said "I'm getting a lot better at being articulate and I don't get nervous talking to the parents” (Ingle, 2006, p. 1). Jamie believes that student ambassadors are one of the first people a prospective student meets (Ingle, 2006, p. 1) and can be a deciding factor when considering a college or university.

At the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom, students are adopting a more consumerist approach to higher education decision-making (Maringe, 2006, p. 466). When

considering a higher education institution, students are looking not only at academic offerings but also extracurricular opportunities, which will provide a glimpse into prospective majors and employment opportunities. These offerings provide additional marketing tools and enable the institution to be positioned or ranked against a similar institution.

Differentiation between institutions is extremely important and the SAP is one of those distinctions. Administrators at the University of Southampton believe that the importance of the labor market translates into employment and career prospects. These attributes significantly outweigh those related to pursuing an advanced education solely on the basis of a love for the subject, and choice is a process that is constrained by a perception of a person's opportunities and shaped by their personality (Payne, 2003, p. 13).

Many schools have developed a SAP model in which applicants are placed with a current student who answers any questions the potential applicant may have from the moment of inquiry through registration (Maringe, 2006. p. 477). Usually, these relationships go beyond the registration period and a life-long friendship is developed. The university's promotional messages should emphasize issues students find most important instead of focusing on issues universities think are most important to students (Maringe, 2006, p. 477) The SAP is able to address students' issues which creates a discussion about college expectations and allows for less confusion on the students part.

According to Mary Douglas, Director of Placement Services and Advisor to Student clubs at the University of Houston Conrad N. Hilton College, the Hilton College's program is extremely prestigious and has contributed to a 300% increase in enrollment over the last 5 years. (M. Douglas, personal communication, June 29, 2007) In addition to fulfilling academic requirements, the ambassadors also demonstrate a talent for leadership and an

involvement in extracurricular and university-related activities. Many of the Ambassadors are members of other University of Houston student organizations and some work as interns or hold full- or part-time jobs.

Many ambassador programs are moving to more holistic, multiphase models that include several elements designed to give potential ambassadors a fuller view into what the experience is like. The Partnership for Advanced Chemical Technology (PACT), collaboration between Ohio's Quantum Chemical Corporation, Miami University, and William Mason High School, provides a real-life example of this multi-tiered model. Students at the PACT program first go to a seminar, then go on industrial site visits, and finally have a laboratory experience that is geared towards solving a particular problem. This approach provides multiple viewpoints, interaction with industry experts and higher education professors, and provides role models for the students to learn from and become acquainted with. The results of this program are extremely positive for all who attend, as well as being an educational experience for all. In addition to observing increases in students' content knowledge and insights into the application of chemistry and technology in the workplace, the high school teacher noted that some of the lower-achieving students, who had to be coerced into attending weekly chemistry help sessions and lab make-ups before the Ambassador program were proactive in meeting the requirements of the Ambassador program (Sabo, Sarquis, and Ennis 1997, p. 451).

Also, not only did students benefit, but industry has also benefited by having improved public relations, additional credibility in the community, providing a better understanding of the technological problems faced by the industry, having a base of informed students to recruit, and gaining a better appreciation for the concerns of teachers (Sabo,

Sarquis, and Ennis 1997, p. 451). The PACT program has been such a success that other industries such as nursing and engineering have formed partnerships to carry out Ambassador programs of their own.

The nursing program at Staffordshire University in the United Kingdom developed a program to recruit more people into nursing, as well as to contribute to recruitment events and activities, which is similar to the objectives of ACC's SAP.

The development of the SAP at Staffordshire University has allowed nursing students who have assisted with program activities to be recognized for the work they have provided in the past. Staffordshire reports that students have always participated in certain recruitment promotions, and prospective students have a positive attitude toward their involvement (Rhodes et al., 2006, p. 44). Staffordshire University felt its best assets were current students. Once the ambassadors were chosen their objectives were to recruit members of the public into nursing, to contribute to in-house recruitment events and activities (Rhodes et al., 2006, p. 45). What better way to increase enrollment than to have current students speak to potential students. At the end of various sessions, evaluations were provided to the participants to complete. These evaluations and comments allow Staffordshire University to measure their success and provide viable information when requesting funding. The school reported that recruitment activities involving student ambassadors included time spent alone with the prospective students to get them to give honest and candid answers to questions that they might have not provided otherwise (Rhodes et al., 2006, p. 45). This one-on-one time allows for honest discussion concerning the daily demands of the program, campus life and expectations upon graduation.

Potential ambassadors for the nursing program identified that their main motivators were a desire to help people and job satisfaction; however, they also had to balance these with effective time management between recruiting and coursework, an issue that almost all ambassador programs must mitigate.

Staffordshire chose people from a variety of different backgrounds and experiences, including mature entrants with children, as well as people with varied and unrelated employment experiences. This has been a benefit due to the wide variety of people the ambassadors came into contact with during recruitment work (Rhodes et al, 2006, p. 45).

A study performed to assess women's experiences of the program found that they were unsure of what to expect, had to learn the game, and also had concerns about courses of study, placements, and shift work (Rhodes et al, 2006, p. 45). A crucial element of the nursing ambassadors' sessions with applicants is for them to be able to create a realistic picture without being overly negative while also not glamorizing the program. The ambassadors shared their coping strategies for dealing with the realities of long shifts and travel. This is something that is of great importance and relevance to ACC's students, due to the fact that many of ACC's students have inflated expectations about the industry and what their career choices are after they leave the program. Many new students to the Hospitality and Culinary Arts programs mistakenly believe that the industry is like what they see on television such as the Food Network. Our ambassadors go out and present the program in a positive light, but must also inform potential students of the long hours, sometimes low pay scale, and long shifts that are required by newcomers to the industry. With better training, ACC's ambassadors can prepare students for the realities before they get to the program so that the students can be better informed about both the school and the industry. The

previously mentioned nursing example indicated that student ambassadors provided realistic perceptions of nursing, which allowed students to make informed choices, which is likely to increase retention. This is crucial to both ACC's goals and ensuring that students do not make a wrong career choice.

Finally, Staffordshire ambassadors supported potential students all the way through the application process, which was found to increase the number of successful applications to the school. Students who came to the program through ambassadors showed that they enjoyed the experience and benefited from having a personal relationship with the ambassadors.

At the Miami Valley Career Technology Center (MVCTC), their ambassador team is comprised of 34 upper class students from several different programs. These students are given leadership training, and host open houses, career exploration days, and advisory dinners. They also go out to local area high schools to recruit students through seminars, presentations, and question-and-answer sessions, and also field questions from students about career opportunities upon completion of each program.

Ambassadors have a lot of responsibility in learning about the different programs at Miami Valley Career Technical Center (MVCTC), as well as potential career paths that can be pursued upon graduation. This information is critical to share with potential high school students so that they can be informed and make the right choice. MVCTC's superintendent, John Boggess, feels that the student ambassadors are "one of the best recruitment and marketing tools the MVCTC has. MVCTC visitors always enjoy meeting and talking with the student ambassadors. The excitement they have about MVCTC is very evident when they talk about their career technical programs, the friends they have made, and their plans for the future." (Bernard, 2007, p. 21). This approach has resonated with potential students. MVCTC

notes that many students recall visits by student ambassadors who visited their school when they were sophomores, and recall the great impression it made on them and influenced their decision to choose a school.

Industry Benefits

Student ambassador programs also have proven benefits for industry corporations and workers. Companies who hire student ambassadors derive benefits from student liaisons and can also find talented students to recruit through their ambassadors. “Students listen to other students, ... Companies ... rely on that informal structure. They are hoping that other students will become enthusiastic about them” (Cox, 2004, p. 1-2).

Some companies see the benefits of the programs, and take steps to attract talented students. Nortel Networks has ambassadors at three colleges in North Carolina, and they have several roles, including coordinating job events on campus, informal talks between students and employees, and also answering questions about the company. Even though jobs are not guaranteed for the ambassadors after graduation, it still gives the students a head start over their peers, as well as allowing them to make contacts within the industry which might lead to a job elsewhere.

Conclusion to Literature Review

ACC’s student ambassador program continues to grow, and its continued success will allow the department to seek further funding to increase recruitment. The department has been pleased with the results of the program, the attitudes and willingness of the ambassadors to be a part of the program, and the invaluable industry contacts made for both the students and the department. The findings from this review helped to bolster the department’s ability to increase recruiting efforts by holding more events at area high schools as well as working

more closely with industry partners for recruitment and internships. Also, other departments at ACC have begun to develop their own programs using our existing program as a model.

The department will now shift focus in evaluating its long-term recruitment strategies as well as determining how each of the departments developing their own programs can align goals and resources to ensure that the Student Ambassador Program is an integral part of ACC's strategy to optimize costs and increase student enrollment.

PART THREE

Introduction

The purpose of this section of the project was to gather the perceptions and recommendations of college administrators about their Student Ambassador Programs (SAP). These administrators were asked to respond to specific issues about their programs and how they deal with recruitment, retention, advertisement, and other issues. In addition, the administrators were asked to describe their typical response rate and benefits of the program. A total of 21 surveys were sent out, and 7 were received before the deadline of this part of the project, for a total of 30%.

Methods of Instrumentation

The survey instrument consisted of eleven open-ended questions. Likert-scale surveys were determined to be too limiting for the amount and type of information required for this project. The survey questions were written to reflect issues such as total SAP adoption, marketing, advertising, and other issues discussed above. When this survey was disseminated via email, all respondents were assured of total anonymity, so all names have been removed; however, some respondents chose to identify the program name, which would indicate the school that the program belongs to. All answers responses to the questions are 100% unedited and in their entirety.

Sample and Procedures

Colleges and universities that currently use or have used any type of Student Ambassador program were identified as the participants of this study. The list of colleges and universities was obtained through informal research using the internet, as well as industry contacts which ACC has with other colleges and universities that have a SAP. From this group, twenty-one schools were identified for which complete contact information was

available. Each subject received the survey through email, as well as a follow-up call to ensure that the survey was received. A total of seven responses were received, and others pledged to complete them but were unable to do so within the necessary time frame. Most of the reasons behind non-returned surveys were that respondents were too busy, felt that their program did not meet our needs, or that their information was private and could not be shared. There is still ongoing communication with the remaining respondents, and it is expected that more surveys will be returned before this entire project is complete, and those responses will be included in the final edition of this project.

One of the limitations of this study is the low sample size of twenty-one institutions and response rate. However, the information gathered in the responses gave some good insights into SAPs. In addition, the longevity of some of the programs shows that there are significant benefits to these programs.

All of the respondents were employed at a two-year and four-year college or university, although the survey distribution included both two-year and four-year colleges. Respondents indicated a wide range of years that their ambassador program has been active, ranging from thirty years to less than six years. The number and type of programs with a SAP also varied, some having one for each program, and some having one for a specific program and looking to replicate their success along other programs

Results - Use of the Student Ambassador Program to aid Retention

Surveys were sent out to twenty-one colleges or universities, and seven replies were received. The respondents were informed that their identities would not be revealed but some chose to provide their college or university names in their responses. The surveys are located in Appendix A, page 29, and have not been altered.

Overall, the sample participants reported frequent use and a high level of confidence in their programs. It is evident that with the continued use of the programs, the institutions are reaping the benefits from the students ambassadors programs. The following is a summary of the responses that were received.

Most responded that the SAP serves offices such as Admissions, Alumni Association, Chancellor, and various academic departments. The student ambassadors assist with recruiting fairs and other recruiting events in order for the institution to capitalize on as many events as possible. Oftentimes, the recruiting staff is stretched thin during the recruiting season and the ambassadors represent the institution. Many students welcome the opportunity to speak with students at recruiting fairs since they have first hand knowledge about the institution and can answer many questions for which the recruiters may not be able to answer.

Eighty percent reported having a SAP for 6 years or longer, which provides good data as a basis for decision making. All respondents reported using the ambassador program for increased visibility, such as tours, recruitment, promotion, and just to “provide a face” to the program. One institution reported that they “recognized that the best recruiters and spoke persons for our school are our students”. The statement speaks volumes for student ambassador programs because institutions see the value in such programs and invest time and training in the students and the students can have a sense self worth by giving back to the institution.

Sixty percent report that they have an official method of capturing enrollment and other statistics around ambassador recruitment. The numbers are tracked based on the number of calls the student ambassadors make, against the number of enrollees. One school

reported that they frequently receive feedback from campus visitors and friends of the university that are impacted by the student ambassadors.

Eighty percent of the respondents say that they have been effective in reaching out to ethnic and under-represented diverse groups of students, and one school makes it a specific point to include representative minority students to their Ambassador selection process. The respondents felt that this is important to the institution to have ethnic minorities as ambassadors who are able to speak truthfully to ethnic minorities which majority “recruiters may not be able to do even though they may be alumni”.

Retention strategies were mixed, with all schools having some type of retention strategy, but all differed in what that strategy was and how they used it. However, the common thread is consistent and open communication, and ensuring that the program is rewarding for the ambassador, the school, and the potential students. One school emphasized “service, service, service” as their retention strategy. They spend a great deal of time with their ambassadors and consider the students as extended family.

Eighty percent of schools use some type of on-campus recruitment activity, including tours, fairs and other events to attract potential students. The remaining twenty percent use media, such as email and television. The schools also have some type of retention strategy for recruiting existing students, although the methods vary among the schools, including organizational fairs, and information sessions.

Sixty percent report a very high response rate to SAP applications, twenty percent report a low rate, and twenty percent declined to answer. Of the schools with high response rates, most report that they have more applications than available slots.

All of the schools report that they enjoy the benefits that the ambassadors bring, such as increased enrollment, enthusiasm, and ability to relate to other students about the program. Finally, almost all of the schools have a plan to ensure continued success of the SAP. Twenty percent report that they only need to make minor changes because they have worked out the details. The common thread among the remaining eighty percent is increased visibility and relationships both within and outside of the school.

Conclusion

The use of Student Ambassador Programs by a number of colleges and universities across the United States shows a great interest in reaching the surrounding communities and exposing individuals to the potential for receiving a higher education. A SAP also provides opportunities for students to gain experience, speak publicly and serve others to better prepare them for careers in their chosen major. The importance of exposing students to the SAP is to enhance their confidence in being able to encourage prospective students to attend their institution by portraying to them the benefits that they have enjoyed by being a student at the institution.

The goal of the student ambassador is to reach out to perspective students, including high school students who may or may not have been considering higher education. Another goal is that such a program would increase prospective students' awareness and knowledge of the different facets of a higher education in general, and what careers are available to them once they have made a career choice. Such information can improve students' perception about what is needed to succeed in the workplace and should generally improve the students' performance at school.

Institutions, utilize the ambassadors to provide the prospective students with as much detail as possible about the institution in order to encourage them to make an informed decision about the school, college life, professors, course offerings, available services, the student body, activities, computer lab and equipment, parties, and any other pertinent information that the students may need to make a tangible connection to the school. The institution also views the student ambassadors as providing community outreach and maintaining involvement with area high schools. It is important to establish and maintain ongoing relationships with high school students and other prospective students and making a connection with industry personnel and their employment needs.

One of the main ingredients that is paramount in a SAP is the student ambassadors sense of volunteerism. Ambassadors seem to return year after year to the SAP because they find satisfaction, a spirit of community, and they enjoy the camaraderie in the program. All the participants in the survey believe in reaching out and obtaining those students that want to learn and in return these students become ambassadors and have the opportunity to give back to the school and the communities they came from. Being able to communicate with other colleges and universities and discover their efforts in enrollment, promotion, and retention provides hope that the Student Ambassador Program at Austin Community College is headed in the right direction and has the potential to accomplish its goals. ACC will utilize best practices that have been received by the respondents of this study along with additional initiatives from ACC's strategic plan to enhance its Student Ambassador Program. The approach will be a team approach that will include several departments at the college; it will utilize a holistic multiphase model, which will include training/teaching, team building, skill

building for the ambassadors, and mentors. The ambassadors will be expected to go on a site visit so that the students can experience at least one facet of the industry first hand.

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APPENDIX A

Survey #1

1. *What academic programs are using the SAP?*
Our Student Ambassador organization currently serves the Office of Admissions, Alumni Association, and the Office of the Chancellor.
2. *How long has the SAP been in existence?*
30 years
3. *Why did the SAP begin?*
The Student Ambassador Program responsibilities consisted of offering campus tours and assisting with Alumni Programs as host and hostesses.
4. *How do you track your enrollment numbers due to the efforts of the SAP?*
We maintain records on our campus tours and track those who matriculate. We also regularly receive feedback from campus visitors and friends of the university who are impacted by the student ambassadors.
5. *Has the SAP program been effective in reaching out to different ethnic groups or particular student groups? If yes, please explain.*
Reaching out to diverse and under-represented populations is a university wide initiative that is very important to the student ambassador program. We strive to serve these groups and reach out to them through campus events, tours, supporting diversity celebrations on our campus and through our recruitment process.
6. *What is your retention strategy?*
Our organization is extremely lucky to have active and dedicated members. We generally do not have a problem maintaining our members. Every member has a leadership position within the organization which gives them ownership of the group and creates more of a sense of responsibility to the group, the university and to the other members. We also provide social activities for the members to form friendships that create a close bond for professional and personal relationships.
7. *How do you advertise your academic programs to potential students?*
All five colleges within our University are highlighted on our campus tours. We have over 90 undergraduate majors and our ambassadors are trained to answer questions, however if specific questions arise the ambassadors send the questions to admissions or the specific departments.

How do you advertise the SAP to currently enrolled students?

We have a recruitment process that begins in November of each year with publicity and visiting other clubs and organizations and freshman seminar classes to discuss and promote the group. The membership process begins in January with applications,

posters, radio and news paper announcements, sandwich boards and contact tables in the student union.

8. *What is your response rate to SAP applications? Why?*

Generally we get over 100 applications for on average around 15 open spots.

9. *What has been the biggest benefit of the SAP?*

The ambassadors bring a priceless element to admissions, alumni and the chancellor's office. They are the face of our University to so many people and their love for their school is evident in their actions and representation.

10. *What changes do you plan on making to continue to see success of the SAP?*

We are constantly re-evaluating our processes and activities to make sure that we are serving the University to the best of our ability and staying true to our mission statement. Each year we make minor changes to improve our projects and our service to fit and change with the needs of our University.

Survey #2

1. *What academic programs are using the SAP?*
We utilize Student Ambassadors for all recruiting events (Approximately 20 events as well as Homecoming and any other special school receptions.) I hand pick my Ambassadors who are required to maintain a 3.3/4.0 grade point average, who are adept at public speaking and are knowledgeable about Purdue. (If you are speaking strictly academics nearly all of Purdue programs incorporate Ambassador programs. From agriculture to pharmacy, all colleges and schools, as well as many departments utilize Ambassadors.)
2. *How long has the SAP been in existence?*
We began in 1999.
3. *Why did the SAP begin?*
It was an administrative decision as we recognized that the best recruiters and spokespersons for our school are our students.
4. *How do you track your enrollment numbers due to the efforts of the SAP?*
We do not track enrollment numbers as it pertains to our Ambassador program. Fortunately, Purdue University Admissions utilizes a set number of students that will be accepted to our school and the demand for spots greatly exceeds our set limits. Enrollment management is handled by Admissions and we receive outstanding candidates!
5. *Has the SAP program been effective in reaching out to different ethnic groups or particular student groups? If yes, please explain.*
We are fortunate have a diverse student population that exceeds our university diversification efforts but I make it a point to include representative minority students to our Ambassador selection process. I make a strong effort to include minority students who may not have applied to our program for whatever reason.
6. *What is your retention strategy?*
Service, service, service! We spend a great deal of advising time just talking with students. We like to think of our school as extended family and make it a point to know our kids names and to meet their parents whenever possible. Our average number of student contacts is greater than 4 per semester. We have cookie days and doughnut days and celebrate holidays. We offer coffee and hot chocolate during finals.
7. *How do you advertise your academic programs to potential students?*
We have a callout once a year in the Spring. We purchase shirts for each Ambassador to wear. Most are polos but we have used dress shirts also. We make each year different.

8. *How do you advertise the SAP to currently enrolled students?*

We utilize a list serve that reaches all of our students. Again we are fortunate in that we offer applications once a year and the response rate is most often greater than the numbers of students we are able to enroll. I have an average of 25 Ambassadors in any given year. We only accept juniors and seniors into our program. Formerly we were open to sophomores but we received too many applications from qualified students. We could have easily recruited more students than we could comfortably manage.

9. *What is your response rate to SAP applications? Why?*

I have a terrific return on applications. By word of mouth, I tell anyone who listens that we have the best and brightest students that Purdue has to offer. I am a cheerleader, confidant, friend, and offer support to any of my Ambassadors at any time of the day or night. I am extremely loyal to my students which extends beyond the time they are with us. I have a Facebook group that includes former students who are currently physicians, dentists, physical therapists, medical and health physicists, industrial hygienists, medical technologists, chiropractors, etc. I use it as a networking tool for my current students who may need practical advice from a practicing professional.

10. *What has been the biggest benefit of the SAP?*

The greatest benefit has been for our potential students and parents who want real answer to practical questions. The last thing they want to hear is a canned speech about our school. We answer all questions truthfully and I only ask that our students not mention any particularly negative comments about any other college within our university or to do so in an objective manner. We offer to exchange emails with any potential student.

11. *What changes do you plan on making to continue to see success of the SAP?*

I am particularly interested in developing and deepening relationships among our current students and our alums. It is imperative that our students understand as much about their chosen field as possible. I do not foresee making changes to our program as it is very affective. When you recruit high caliber students, the programs take care of themselves.

Survey #3

1. *What academic programs are using the SAP?*

University of Houston, Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel & Restaurant Management

2. *How long has the SAP been in existence?*

Since Fall of 2003

3. *Why did the SAP begin?*

The Conrad N. Hilton College Ambassadors was created with the same idea of the University of Houston's and that was to assist with recruiting and promoting the Conrad Hilton College.

4. *How do you track your enrollment numbers due to the efforts of the SAP?*

N/A

5. *Has the SAP program been effective in reaching out to different ethnic groups or particular student groups? If yes, please explain.*

Yes.

6. *What is your retention strategy?*

Our ambassadors are required to have and maintain a 3.0 GPA in order to be able to interview for an ambassador position.

7. *How do you advertise your academic programs to potential students?*

At our organization fair that is held at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semester.

8. *How do you advertise the SAP to currently enrolled students?*

We communicate both with email and our bulletin board that is located in our student lounge.

9. *What is your response rate to SAP applications? Why?*

No Answer

10. *What has been the biggest benefit of the SAP?*

The biggest benefit is to have 20 fully trained ambassadors to give a tour on any given day of the week.

11. *What changes do you plan on making to continue to see success of the SAP?*

We are always finding ways to better our ambassador program. The great thing about our program is that it is truly student run were ever year we have a different board of directors elected and greets a fresh set of ideas to add to the already successful program. I love my student ambassadors.

Survey #4

1. *What academic programs are using the SAP?*
We don't have specific departments that we work with, but we try to accommodate any department who requests an ambassador. Business and engineering make more requests than other departments.
2. *How long has the SAP been in existence?*
6 years
3. *Why did the SAP begin?*
The ambassador program began as a way to enhance the efforts of the professional staff and add a student voice to our presentations. We are also able to cover more fairs and high school events (like tabling at high school basketball games) because we have ambassadors who are willing to go into their communities and talk about the benefits of college and their university in particular.
4. *How do you track your enrollment numbers due to the efforts of the SAP?*
We use the Recruitment Plus admissions database to track the calls our students make to prospective and current students and who enrolls, though you can't say there is a direct cause and effect there. At events we ask about the tours and panels given by the guides, looking for the impact meeting with other students had on their admissions decisions. We also keep track of how many students and parents we give tours to and plan campus visitation events for, that include student ambassador components.
5. *Has the SAP program been effective in reaching out to different ethnic groups or particular student groups? If yes, please explain.*
Yes, having current students from different underrepresented ethnic backgrounds go and talk to prospective students is very eye-opening for many students. The prospective students feel they are getting the real truth (and we have our students be truthful and appropriate about their experiences at a PWI). This is not something we as admissions folks can convey even if we are alumni of the institution and also people of color.
6. *What is your retention strategy? For ambassadors or students in general?*
Ambassadors can return as ambassadors as long as they can demonstrate that they are learning from their participation. It is important they maintain their enthusiasm for outreach and for the university. It's also important that this job teach them about themselves and about having a job and all that that entails.
7. *How do you advertise your academic programs to potential students?*
The student ambassadors work closely with the professional recruitment and outreach team and we work closely with admissions to get the word out to students about the programs we offer and the admissions process

How do you advertise the SAP to currently enrolled students?

We send out emails to student groups, have current ambassadors get the word out, tell the EOP and admissions offices about available positions, and post the positions in various online and actual places on campus, like the Ethnic Cultural Center.

8. *What is your response rate to SAP applications? Why?*

We typically get 30 applications each year which is plenty to choose from for excellent students to be an ambassador.

9. *What has been the biggest benefit of the SAP?*

Having student voices talking with other students. Having students sharing their experiences as students of color at a PWI. Being able to learn from them about the challenges they face and the climate of the campus. This knowledge informs our work and makes us better at outreach to all students.

10. *What changes do you plan on making to continue to see success of the SAP?*

I think having a system in place for doing things so that the specifics become rote (setting up campus visits, going on tours, being on a panel, what to include in a presentation, take to a college or community fair). There are certain things we always want to be sure to cover/have with us and we want to do it consistently. Then the people who are ambassadors can add their own personality to how they say things and the personal stories they add to their presentations. I also think we need to add more diversity in our ambassador group, specifically, getting more Native American/Alaskan Native students onboard, as well as Pacific Islanders.

Survey #5

1. *What academic programs are using the SAP?*
The School of Hospitality Business Management at Washington State University and the College of Business.
2. *How long has the SAP been in existence?*
The School of Hospitality Business Management has been in existence for ten years.
3. *Why did the SAP begin?*
The SAP began to help the School generate enrollment and management a high number of campus visitors each spring and fall.
4. *How do you track your enrollment numbers due to the efforts of the SAP?*
We use student seat requests for the fall semester along with the number of new files assigned the School each fall.
5. *Has the SAP program been effective in reaching out to different ethnic groups or particular student groups? If yes, please explain.*
SAP has been moderately effective in reaching different ethnic groups.
6. *What is your retention strategy?*
Retention strategy is implemented through a high certification grade point standard. Students who certify graduate because they have taken close to 75% of the required classes.
7. *How do you advertise your academic programs to potential students?*
WSU advertises on TV and radio. We send out brochures to high schools and also visit high school on request.
8. *How do you advertise the SAP to currently enrolled students?*
We conduct a spring and fall orientation and information session. Interested students attend and find out about the program. We then conduct interviews and select students based on their interviews and background.
9. *What is your response rate to SAP applications? Why?*
Our response rate is low usually about 20 applications each year.
The current SAP utilizes about 15 students from all different class levels.
10. *What has been the biggest benefit of the SAP?*
A significant increase in new freshman files and student seat requests. In addition, the enhanced public relations helps bring in future students to the major.
11. *What changes do you plan on making to continue to see success of the SAP?*
We anticipate minor changes since we have worked out most of the details the past ten years. We need to have more high school visits to enhance visibility.

Survey #6

1. What academic programs are using the SAP?

The SAP is housed within the Office of Undergraduate Admissions (UGA) at Nova Southeastern University (NSU), Fort Lauderdale, Florida. UGA is a central service office that provides all undergraduate academic programs with marketing, recruitment, admissions and operations functions. While this particular SAP is directly connected to the undergraduate student population, an auxiliary Presidential Ambassador program at NSU has been established to fulfill larger university-wide and community events needs.

2. How long has the SAP been in existence?

The UGA SAP has been in existence for 10+ years, however consistently has been going through reorganization periods over the past 3 years and will continue to do so over the next 2 years.

3. Why did the SAP begin?

The UGA SAP began with a main focus of bringing current enrolled students into the recruitment of prospective students. As the university has continued its emphasis on the traditional student population, the introduction of student ambassadors to conduct campus tours, prospective student phone calls and student panels at recruitment events, became increasingly a priority.

4. How do you track your enrollment numbers due to the efforts of the SAP?

We currently have no tracking process and hope to include that within our next round of reorganization.

5. Has the SAP program been effective in reaching out to different ethnic groups or particular student groups? If yes, please explain.

Yes to both. Based on recruitment opportunities we have chosen select student ambassadors to work with targeted populations of prospective students. For example: We have increased our recruitment efforts in Puerto Rico, therefore we have hired 3 student ambassadors from PR, where as they contact all PR prospects and are the only students who complete tours to families from PR. In addition, we host on campus a number of local high school student groups. Based on their characteristics we attempt to match appropriate student ambassadors. For example: A local magnet medical science high school visits campus and we have 3 current Pre-Med students conduct the campus tour and participate in the student panel, thereby speaking directly about a particular major/program.

6. *What is your retention strategy?*

N/A

7. *How do you advertise your academic programs to potential students?*

The UGA has a multi-channel integrated advertising plan that consists of print, radio, TV and web presence in targeted areas based on recruitment priorities.

8. *How do you advertise the SAP to currently enrolled students?*

The UGA is currently redesigning its website to include a specific page(s) about the SAP and its students. The intent is to bring that live in the summer 2008. At this current time, we do no other advertising of the SAP program, but do highlight current students throughout our publications.

9. *What is your response rate to SAP applications? Why?*

We currently do not have a formal application process for the SAP. It is the intent to create a more formal program over the next reorganization period.

10. *What has been the biggest benefit of the SAP?*

The biggest benefit to the SAP students is the interaction amongst faculty and administration across campus. In addition it gives them the opportunity to increase their public speaking, communication and marketing skills. Our SAP consists of paid student work-study positions, so in their minds I am sure their paycheck is a bigger benefit. ☺

11. *What changes do you plan on making to continue to see success of the SAP?*

The next phase of reorganization includes many of the following:

- Website inclusion
- Tracking of campus tours
- Create a formal application procedure

Survey #7

1. What academic programs are using the SAP?

At one time or another, I believe every Academic Department has utilized the Student Ambassadors in at least one capacity. From providing Campus Tours to faculty candidates when they visit for an interview to helping greet at a Career Fair, the Ambassadors help in many capacities on our campus and in the community.

2. How long has the SAP been in existence?

We just completed the 4th Selection Process for our new 2008-2009 Ambassador Team. Our 3rd group (2007-2008) is just finishing up their last week of duties.

3. Why did the SAP begin?

See other attachment, Student Ambassador Proposal. We were preparing to move from a transfer/graduate University to a 4-year University, so that is one of the major reasons for beginning the Student Ambassador Program.

4. How do you track your enrollment numbers due to the efforts of the SAP?

This is done in more of a qualitative format based on feedback compiled at events the Student Ambassadors play critical roles in such as our ROAR Orientation Program, providing regularly scheduled campus tours Monday through Friday, and Preview (a recruitment event for prospective transfer and freshman students and their families). In addition, they travel with Admissions Counselors to area high schools to provide the real student perspective. This is much more effective than having only an Admissions Counselor on hand for questions. High school students and community college students need to hear and want to hear the student perspective of campus, and that is what our Student Ambassadors can provide. It is a part of providing quality service to our community and prospects. WSU Vancouver is very community focused, so not only do the Ambassadors serve as the face of the University but they also serve as higher education Ambassadors in general. Here is the Ambassador Mission Statement:

Student Ambassador Mission Statement**Ambassador Program**

The mission of the Student Ambassador Program is to share the WSU Vancouver experience with prospective students, their families, and community members. Our objective is to practice [WSU Vancouver's Purpose and Values](#) while addressing questions and concerns. As proud Cougars, we will encourage higher education as an opportunity for all people and strive to strengthen the relationships among faculty, staff, students, and the community.

WSU Vancouver Purpose and Values Statement

Purpose: Washington State University Vancouver's purpose is to enhance the intellectual and practical capacities of the individuals, institutions and communities that we serve.

Values: The enactment of purpose through specific institutional decisions and actions is

guided by a commitment to quality embodied in a set of core values that jointly give WSU Vancouver its distinctive identity.

Intellect - Intellectual growth is at the heart of WSU Vancouver's mission. The university strives to instill within students, faculty, staff, and those whom we serve, a love of learning. We are committed to fostering intellectual inquiry and developing the capacity for thoughtful reasoning, reflection and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Practice - We believe in the inherent value of applying knowledge and expertise to address complex issues that have a strong regional focus, and whose scope extends to encompass national and international concerns.

Character - WSU Vancouver aims to create, through our work and the relationships we develop among our constituencies, a context that cultivates individual virtues, institutional integrity and the good of communities.

Engagement - We are guided by an ethic of leadership and service that recognizes the importance of identifying, creating and responding to the interests and needs of WSU Vancouver's diverse constituencies. Engagement must occur in a reflective way, sensitive to the interplay of various interests and commitments among these constituencies.

At any point in time, one or more of these values may be tested or particular values given added emphasis. Three additional institutional values give needed balance and support to the challenging interweaving of intellect, practice, character and engagement.

Stewardship - Purpose and values are most likely to be achieved when faculty and staff at WSU Vancouver take ownership for upholding the full scope of values, and acknowledge the tensions created in fulfilling these values in light of financial and human resource limitations.

Caring & Community - We recognize that in order to serve our diverse communities, we must first be a community within WSU Vancouver. As a community of faculty and staff, we demonstrate our concern and regard for each other through extending mutual respect and acknowledging the dignity of each individual.

Diversity - We embrace diversity and inclusion by honoring racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic and ideological differences.

5. *Has the SAP program been effective in reaching out to different ethnic groups or particular student groups? If yes, please explain.*

Yes, we strive to create a team of Student Ambassadors who adequately represent our student population. Word of mouth seems to be the best way to get the word out to students who may not otherwise consider applying for this type of leadership opportunity. This needs to be done in a direct way to the students themselves. For instance, I identified a student during freshman orientation who I thought would learn

a lot from the Ambassador experience, and I told him about the opportunity when he was waiting for the bus. In his application to become an Ambassador, we wrote that a lady stopped him at the bus stop to tell him about the opportunity and that was why he applied. Also, it is important to use word of mouth with colleagues who specifically work closely with underrepresented student groups, and especially ask them to encourage students to apply and encourage them to nominate students.

As we work through our selection process, (online application, group interview process, and the final individual interviews) we consistently focus on selecting the best team of individuals to represent our full campus community. This means making sure we select a team of diverse individuals in terms of degree program, background, ethnicity, age (we have many non-traditionally aged students on our campus which adds to the richness of the academic experience), gender (typically we have overwhelmingly more females apply which is somewhat consistent with higher education Student Affairs in general), experience, etc. I think you can gain more information from the website at http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/ss/ambassador_app_info.htm . At the top of that site there is a link to an article which gives a nice overview of our Ambassador Program. I think it will help to answer some of your questions as well. The main page at <http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/ss/ambassador.htm> will provide you information that would be helpful too.

By selecting a diverse team we are able to meet the needs of the community, especially in terms of increasing our diversity recruitment efforts. I've seen firsthand how a Student Ambassador from an underrepresented background can talk with students and connect in a way that makes them feel at home.

6. What is your retention strategy?

Our Ambassadors are involved in our retention strategy in that they are Orientation Leaders and continue connection with their Freshman Orientation group throughout the school year. Our freshmen enroll in a GE 101 course and this is the group they are in at Orientation. So, the same Ambassadors who lead their group at Orientation connect with their GE 101 class throughout the year. We are expanding this piece this next school year, so the Ambassadors may be even more integrated into the GE 101 course. Let me know if you need more here. The Ambassadors also provide student involvement programming throughout the year, so current students have social opportunities to get to know one another. As you can see, their roles are extremely multi-faceted on our campus because of how small our student population is in general. We have about a total of 2500 students, including graduate students. A basic fact sheet is available at <http://www.vancouver.wsu.edu/marcomm/fact-sheet> . There is also a printable version available at this site. That may be helpful to review to get a sense of the campus size and general demographics.

7. How do you advertise your academic programs to potential students?

We advertise our academic programs through our website (there is a PDF for every undergraduate program we offer...these were created based on a Student Ambassador's idea), search piece materials, other publications, on campus tours with Ambassadors, in our one-on-one Admissions Appointments, at Preview Days all departments representatives are on hand to interact and answer questions during the Academic Fair portion of the event, and we organize middle school and high school visits to campus in which they oftentimes experience a college classroom and learn about 1-2 different degrees we offer. Each academic department representative (Academic Coordinator or Director) teaches the Ambassador Team about their degree programs and highlights what they expect the Ambassadors to know and talk about on campus tours. Because we are a small campus, we can connect prospects directly to an Academic Coordinator or faculty member if they ask more specific questions which go beyond general information. So, prospects are able to hear directly from departments which helps to promote each program. Each department on our campus is supportive of our recruitment efforts, and I am always able to find a professor who is willing to talk to a group of high school/middle school students or sometimes they even let us sit in on their classes.

8. *How do you advertise the SAP to currently enrolled students?*

We send a letter out to all currently enrolled students who have completed Fall Semester with a minimum of a 3.0 cumulative GPA giving them a general overview of the opportunity and including a one page fact sheet. It directs them to the website and gives them details about when the online application is due. I list my direct contact information on the fact sheet, so they can contact me with any questions. Let me know if you would like any of these documents. I am happy to share them with you, if you think it would be helpful.

We also create flyers to post around campus, including table tents in the commons and cafeteria. Current Ambassadors staff a table during the lunch hours (11am – 1pm) a couple weeks before applications are due with candy and pass out a half sheet about the program to encourage folks to apply. I send out an all call to the campus community (all staff and faculty) inviting them to nominate students via email, and include the announcement in FYI Vancouver (our on campus publication for faculty/staff). We also put the announcement in the student newspaper. Then those nominated receive a special letter notifying them of the opportunity and explaining who nominated them to apply. I'll attach the timeline we created for promotion, as I think that will be helpful too. I also ask our Administrators to make announcements in regular meetings they attend where all academic departments are represented in terms of nominations and just to help get the word out. Again, word of mouth on an individual basis and in terms of regular meetings, was important for us to get the word out across campus.

9. *What is your response rate to SAP applications? Why?*

Each year we have increased the amount of applications received. This year we received about 60 applications and have hired a team of 12 from the initial 60 applications for the 2008-2009 academic year.

10. *What has been the biggest benefit of the SAP?*

This is a difficult question. I honestly do not know how we would function without the SAP. The Student Ambassadors serve as a true arm of the Office of Admissions, are Orientation Leaders, campus tour guides, and really serve as the face of the University in so many capacities. Because we are a small campus, we all wear many hats in our positions. The Student Ambassadors are no different. I think there are three biggest benefits:

1. The students who serve as Ambassadors every year report how much they gained from the program. They report that it added a richness and depth to their undergraduate experience, they feel more connected to their alma mater, the skills they gained have helped them develop as leaders, and they made friends they never would have across many academic disciplines. They also report having learned how to interact with others different from themselves and accepting others as well as the idea of true teamwork. Basically, first and foremost, what the Ambassadors gain from the experience is irreplaceable.
2. We rely on them in the Office of Admissions in our recruitment activities, and in all of the feedback we hear about how important the current student perspective is for prospective students so this is essential.
3. They energize the campus community and help create a welcoming social atmosphere to encourage students to get to know each other (at a campus which does not provide housing). One main example of this is their role as Orientation Leaders. Although throughout the year they create programming and fun events on campus.

11. *What changes do you plan on making to continue to see success of the SAP?*

I think we are at a point where we could develop two separate groups of Ambassador, one primarily to work with Orientation and connecting with new students/programming and another group to serve as the campus tour guides and liaisons to the Office of Admissions (attending recruiting events at high schools, community colleges, Preview, etc.).

This would also allow more students to get involved on our campus in a leadership opportunity to add a richness to their undergraduate experience and connect them in a deep way to their alma mater.