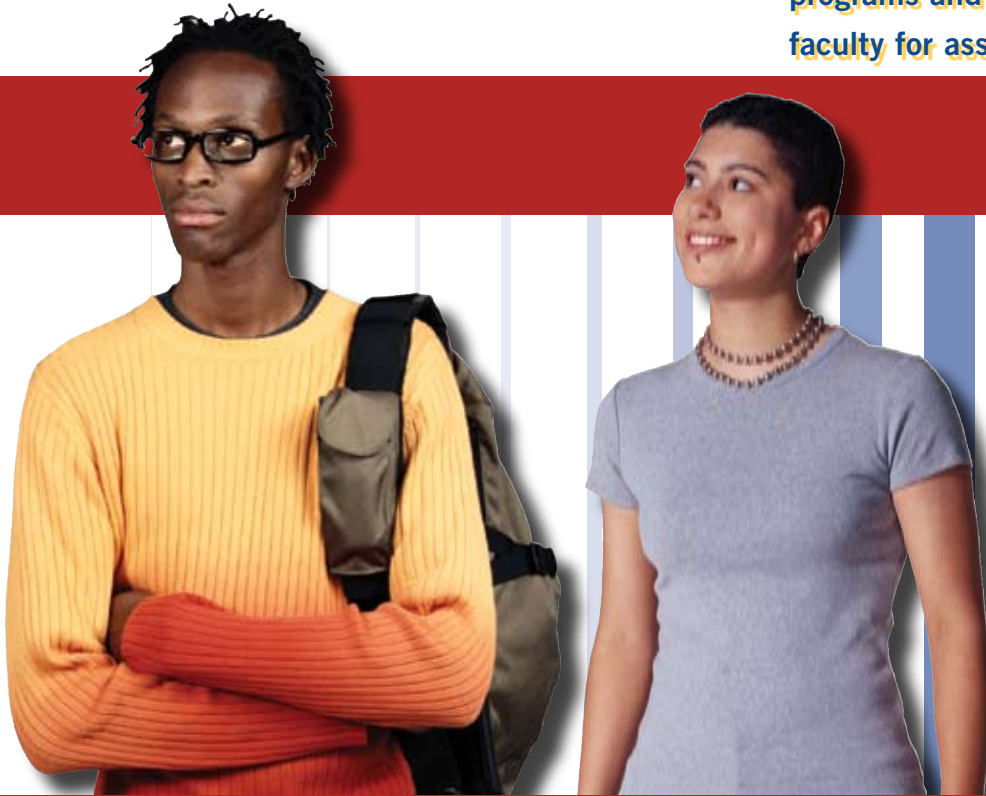


Administrative personnel may strongly emphasize the necessity to increase enrollment in and the visibility of these programs and turn their attention toward faculty for assistance in this endeavor.



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Faculty Involvement in Graduate Student Recruitment:

Administrative Directive or Professional Preference?

Abstract

This study explores graduate faculty involvement in graduate student recruitment at a research university to determine if, because of challenges to enrollment trends, faculty are involved, and, if they are, is it because administrators mandate it or because faculty have a professional desire to be involved? The sample size consisted of 148 graduate faculty. An overwhelming majority of the respondents indicated that graduate student recruitment is a part of their job responsibilities, but they are not required to engage in recruitment. Results also revealed that graduate coordinators, faculty and department chairs are involved in student recruitment. Faculty in the College of Education was the only group to indicate that their dean is involved in student recruitment.

Introduction

Student recruitment is a challenging phenomenon that has captured the attention of administrative personnel in many higher education institutions. The budgets of state legislatures have decreased tremendously, causing a severe reduction in the state appropriations normally allocated to public higher education institutions nationally. States have shifted the burden of financial responsibility to higher education institutions (Yudof, 2002). As federal research efforts have diminished in universities, so has federal support for student enrollment. As a result, the cost of a college education has increased dramatically, while there has been a decrease in student enrollment; accountability, time-to-degree and faculty workloads have become a heightened concern (Eason, 1996). The increase in competition among for-profit institutions has also impacted the enrollment patterns of the student body in postsecondary education.

Administrative personnel, as a result, have been forced to critically assess resource reallocation and those institutional components that could be eliminated without severely impeding institutional functioning. Budgetary cutbacks normally begin with

a reduction of part-time faculty and staff. Because part-time faculty members are considered to be peripheral to the centralized functions of the academic enterprise, they are more vulnerable to economic retrenchment than any other group. The reassessment of workload distribution for full-time faculty and staff, and the eventual dissolution of academic degree programs, which would lead to the elimination of full-time faculty positions, follow in respective order of importance for most executive administrators. The last resort would be, more than likely, a reduction of the full-time faculty line. Administrative personnel may have to contend with an unprecedented shrinkage in the academic workforce, as they may be forced to reduce it to a critical operating core. Thus, senior administrators may propose that faculty members acquire the workload responsibilities of one or more employees. They may implement policy protocol that mandate faculty to engage in student recruitment efforts in order to compensate for the reduction in academic personnel and student enrollment.

Background

Demographic projections have estimated that the number of high school graduates would decrease by one-fifth, causing greater

competition among higher education institutions for college candidates (Eason, 1996). Webb, Coccari and Allen (1996) contend that the declining trends in enrollment at the undergraduate level are a result of a scarcity of eligible students between the ages of 18 and 22. These trends in undergraduate enrollments have negatively affected graduate enrollments. Although graduate enrollment increased by one percent during 1993 for some groups and decreased for others, according to Syverson (1995), graduate enrollment growth is stagnant. Syverson also contends that women continue to outpace men in collegiate enrollment, international student enrollment has declined, and enrollment trends for various disciplines indicate growth in some and decline in others. The reduction in economic resources and student enrollment for traditional age college students underscores the need for student recruitment and retention (Eason, 1996).

Traditional formal recruitment initiatives have been limited to the recruitment of undergraduate students, as it is a more centralized component of institutional operations. Normally, student affairs personnel are charged with operationalizing this important task. Graduate student recruitment, on the other hand, is a more decentralized activity for higher education institutions and is conducted at will in more of an individualized manner by certain faculty within an academic program, department or division. Some graduate faculty members do not consider recruitment as a part of their job responsibilities.

This concept is very difficult to grasp for traditional academics who were involved in the profession in the 1950s to 1970s, when swelling enrollments characterized the higher education scene. However, this centralized/decentralized approach is becoming obsolete as institutions struggle with enrollment challenges and institutions assume a more salient role in the coordination of graduate student recruitment.

Because economic retrenchment now characterizes the financial state of most postsecondary institutions, they may resort to a heavy dependence upon student tuition and student credit hour production during times of challenging fiscal crises in order to maintain fiscal viability. In this case, fiscal reconfiguration is inevitable. Subsequently, academic degree programs become vulnerable to the prospect of dissolution based upon student enrollment patterns. Newly developed graduate degree programs may be more vulnerable to the repercussions of low enrollment and decreased student credit hour production than older, well-established academic programs. Administrative personnel may strongly emphasize the necessity to increase enrollment in and the visibility of these programs and turn their attention toward faculty for assistance in this endeavor. Academic executives may restructure the reward system for faculty to include student recruitment as an evaluation criterion.

Faculty members in academic programs plagued with low enrollment may be required to increase program visibility and

dialogue about marketing and advertisement strategies. Public demand for an increased level of faculty accountability, burgeoning budgetary constraints, and increased competition among higher education institutions have compelled administrators to closely scrutinize the tenure process and consider an increase in tenure standards. Thus, faculty may become more involved in recruitment efforts, and if student recruitment was integrated into the reward system for tenure-track and tenured faculty, it is likely that it would be classified as a service component (Todd and Crofton, 2001) because the duties that characterize student recruitment are not consistent with activities related to teaching and research.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the level of graduate faculty participation in student recruitment and to explore whether graduate faculty engage in student recruitment activities as a result of administrative directive or professional preference.

Research Questions

1. Is there a difference in recruitment activity among graduate faculty as a result of administrative directive based upon gender, age, race/ethnicity, rank, or discipline?
2. Is there a difference in faculty engagement in student recruitment activities based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, rank, or discipline?

Methodology

The population for this study consisted of a sample of all full-time tenured and tenure-track graduate faculty at a medium-sized, research-extensive Midwestern university. There were a total of 356 full-time tenured or tenure-track graduate faculty employed at this institution. Of the 356 people that were surveyed, 148 participants responded, yielding a response rate of 42 percent. The survey consisted of a Likert scale that contained 25 questions related to recruitment activities at the institution. Some of the questions used in this study replicate survey questions used in Eason's (1996) research on graduate student recruitment.

Analysis

Analyses were conducted using simple frequency counts and descriptive statistics. In order to test the significance of the variables, and since the variables being tested were nominal, the chi-Square Test of Independence was used. The data analysis for this study was produced using the SPSS statistical software package.

An overwhelming majority (92 percent) of the graduate faculty in this study were 36 years of age or older. There were more male respondents (59 percent), and the majority of this faculty group were white (80 percent); three percent were Asian; three percent were black; one percent were Na-

tive American; and seven percent of the respondents were classified as “other.” Twenty-four percent of the respondents were assistant professors, 38 percent were associate professors, and 35 percent were full professors. Fifty percent of the faculty were affiliated with the College of Arts and Sciences; 10 percent with Business Administration; 21 percent with Education; six percent with Nursing; three percent with Optometry; and three percent with a college that was not specifically listed on the questionnaire but classified as “other.” Four percent of the faculty respondents had been full-time faculty for less than one year; 26 percent, two to five years; 11 percent, five to 10 years; and 58 percent, 11 or more years. Twenty-one percent of the faculty teach one class; one-half of the faculty teach two classes; 21.4 percent teach three classes; and three percent teach four or more classes per semester. (See Table 1).

Literature Review

Considering the significant role that student recruitment plays in the survival of higher education institutions, the supply of studies that have investigated this topic is not proportionate with demand.

During the early to late 1980’s, dialogue ensued regarding the role that faculty should play in enrollment management, as well as increased faculty accountability, and that conversation has been revitalized in the new millennium (Todd and Crofton, 2001). Still others (Bristow, 1998; Huneycutt, Lewis, and Wibker, 1990) suggested that marketing faculty and marketing techniques should be employed in order to enhance the student recruitment process. However, those that present research models target undergraduate student populations.

The research on graduate student recruitment is even more scarce. Thus far, there is only one study (Eason, 1996) that investigates faculty involvement in graduate student recruitment. However, the population sample deviates from that which is used in this study because it includes administrators as research participants. It also explores several additional variables, including student recruitment strategies, philosophies of recruitment, and retention efforts. Additionally, this study included a qualitative component that assessed departmental recruitment strategies.

The dearth of research on graduate student recruitment could have been a result of the burgeoning enrollment patterns in the undergraduate student population that were characteristic of the admission movement. There was a surplus of prospective graduate students, which permitted graduate schools to scan the undergraduate student population and select quality graduate students for their academic programs (Webb, Coccari and Allen, 1996). However, as enrollment statistics have entered a state of steady decline for some institutions, the need for research on graduate student recruitment has become paramount.

Table 1: Demographic Frequencies of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-22	0	0%
23-28	0	0%
29-35	10	6.9%
36 and older	134	92.4%
Gender		
Male	86	59.3%
Female	58	40.0%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	116	80.0%
Asian	4	2.8%
Black	5	3.4%
Indian	1	.7%
Alaskan Native	10	6.9%
College		
Arts/Sciences	73	50.3%
Business Admin.	14	9.7%
Education	31	21.4%
Nursing	8	5.5%
Other	5	3.4%
Optometry	5	3.4%
Years of Employment		
>1	6	4.1%
2-5	37	25.5%
6-10	16	11.0%
11-up	84	57.9%
Rank		
Assistant	35	24.1%
Associate	55	37.9%
Full	51	35.2%
Courseload		
1 class	30	20.7
2 classes	74	51.0
3 classes	31	21.4
4 or more classes	4	2.8

Results

Frequency counts and descriptive statistics provide valuable information on graduate student recruitment activities. More than half of the respondents indicated that their departments/divisions have implemented a graduate student recruitment plan, and 64 percent of these participants indicated that they had not been asked by an administrator to engage in graduate student recruitment activities.

**Table 2:
Graduate Student
Recruitment Is
Not a Part of My
Job by Age**

	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	χ^2	df
Age						
28-35	0	11.1	88.9	0	.037	3
36-up	10.9	20.2	40.3	28.7	.037	3
Courseload						
1 class	17.2	10.3	20.7	51.7	.033	9
2 classes	7.1	22.9	47.1	22.9	.033	9
3 classes	10.0	20.0	56.7	13.3	.033	9
4-more	0	25.0	50.0	25.0	.033	9

**Table 3:
Faculty in My
Department Are Not
Required to Recruit
Students by Age**

	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	χ^2	df
Age						
28-35	0	0	100	0	.003	3
36-up	9.2	19.1	38.9	32.8	.003	3
1 class	10.3	17.2	41.4	31.0	.036	9
2 classes	8.3	16.7	51.4	23.6	.036	9
3 classes	0	19.4	35.5	45.2	.036	9
4 or more classes	50.0	25.0	25.0	0	.036	9
Race/Ethn.						
White	9.6	12.3	45.6	32.5	.035	12
Asian	0	0	75	25	.035	12
Black	0	40	40	20	.035	12
Indian	0	0	0	100	.035	12
Other	10	60	20	10	.035	12

Forty-five percent of the respondents agreed that they were heavily involved in graduate student recruitment for their respective disciplines, and more than 25 percent of the respondents indicated that their college/department/division requires that they are involved in graduate student recruitment. Approximately 68 percent of the respondents believed that graduate student recruitment is a part of their job responsibilities.

An analysis of chi-square results revealed significant results for variables such as age, race/ethnicity, academic unit/college, and the total number of classes taught. These variables are used to explain faculty involvement in recruitment activities.

Age

Age was a significant factor ($c^2 = .037$) as it relates to faculty responsibility and graduate student recruitment. An overwhelming majority of the faculty respondents between the ages of 29 and 35, and 70 percent of the faculty 36 years of age and older agreed that graduate student recruitment is a job responsibility. (See Table 2).

Age was also significant ($c^2 = .003$) in faculty opinions about graduate student recruitment as a job requirement. One hundred percent of the faculty respondents between the ages of 29 and 35 indicated that they were not required to participate in graduate student recruitment. However, only 72 percent of the faculty 36 years of age and older indicated that they are not required to participate in graduate student recruitment. (See Table 3).

Race/Ethnicity

Race is also a significant variable ($c^2 = .035$) regarding faculty opinions about the inclusion of graduate student recruitment as a job requirement for faculty. A large majority (79 percent) of white faculty members disagreed that they are required to participate in graduate student recruitment. African American faculty also disagreed, but to a lesser degree; however, Asian and American Indian faculty unanimously disagreed that they are required to participate in graduate student recruitment.

**Table 4:
Faculty Opinions of
Individuals Most Involved in
Recruitment by College**

	Graduate Coordinator (%)	Faculty (%)	Depart. Chairs (%)	Deans (%)	χ^2	df
College						
Arts/Science	49.2	45.8	5.1	0	.037	15
Business	80.0	0	20.0	0	.037	15
Education	45.0	35.0	10.0	10.0	.037	15
Nursing	75.0	25.0	0	0	.037	15
Other	75.0	0	25.0	0	.037	15
Optometry	100	0	0	0	.037	15

**Table 5:
Senior Administrator Asked
Faculty to be Involved in
Recruitment by Courseload**

	Yes (%)	No (%)	I Don't Know (%)	χ^2	df
Courseload					
1 class	51.7	44.8	3.4	.037	6
2 classes	20.5	75.3	4.1	.037	6
3 classes	29.0	67.7	3.2	.037	6
4 or more classes	75.0	25.0	0	.037	6

College

The college with which faculty are associated is also a significant variable ($c^2 = .037$). A substantial majority of the faculty in the College of Business Administration (80 percent), Optometry (100 percent), Nursing (75 percent), and "Other" (75 percent), indicated that graduate coordinators are most involved in graduate student recruitment. Nearly one-half of the faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences (49.2 percent) and Education (45 percent) indicated that Graduate Coordinators are most involved with graduate student recruitment, but they also indicated that faculty are nearly as involved with graduate student recruitment as Graduate Coordinators in these colleges (45.8 percent and 35 percent, respectively). (See Table 4).

Courseload

Courseload was also significant regarding faculty engagement in graduate student recruitment ($c^2 = .036$). Seventy-five percent of the faculty who teach four or more classes per semester agreed that they are required to engage in student recruitment.

Courseload was also significant ($c^2 = .037$) for faculty who had been asked to engage in graduate student recruitment by a senior administrator. Faculty respondents who taught four or more classes per semester (75 percent) were approached more often by a senior administrator and asked to participate in graduate student recruitment than any other faculty group. (See Table 5).

Discussion

A large majority of the faculty agreed that graduate student recruitment is a part of their job responsibilities. However, the

percentage was higher for faculty between the ages of 29 and 35. This could be due to the fact that faculty in this age category are tenure-track faculty and therefore may be forced to engage in recruitment if the older tenured faculty refuse to participate. After all, tenured faculty have a high level of employment security and protection, but to be on the tenure track is to be in a very precarious position. After all, this activity could require an extraordinary time commitment that could impede research productivity, so tenured faculty who may be interested in professional advancement understand that obtaining a promotion would be dependent upon the amount of time that one devotes to research.

The findings also indicated that faculty who taught two classes per semester were approached less often by an administrator and asked to engage in graduate student recruitment activities than any other faculty group. It is possible that executive administrators are considerate of the plight of junior faculty on the tenure track who are attempting to obtain tenure and therefore feel that it may be counterproductive to ask them to engage in this activity.

Even though faculty respondents indicate that graduate student recruitment is a part of their job responsibilities, they indicate that they are not required to engage in graduate student recruitment. This contradiction may be indicative of faculty willingness to engage in graduate student recruitment voluntarily, or the fact that graduate coordinators who engage in recruitment are also faculty members.

Faculty in different racial categories disagreed that they are required to engage in graduate student recruitment, but 100 percent of the Asian and American Indian faculty strongly disagreed. This response may be discipline induced. Asian and American

Indian faculty typically specialize in science, engineering or mathematics and may feel that faculty involved in traditional disciplines such as these should not be required to recruit because these disciplines are part of the required academic core and impart fundamental skills which provide the building blocks necessary to perform more complex, multi-faceted cognitive tasks that would be otherwise impossible (Bax, 1996).

The findings also revealed that graduate coordinators in most of the colleges performed the majority of recruitment tasks. Faculty in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Education, however, believed that faculty were nearly as involved in graduate student recruitment. Faculty in various departments within a college assume the role of graduate coordinator, which may explain the latter responses. It is also interesting that only faculty respondents in the College of Education indicated that their dean was also involved in recruitment. This could be discipline induced also. Because education is a discipline in which faculty and administrative personnel are required to have extraordinary patience and interpersonal skills due to the nature of the discipline, the dean may be more acquiescent to participate in recruitment.

Recommendations

Additional compensation. Administrators should identify faculty, especially senior faculty, who have an interest in recruitment and nurture their interest in this pursuit. Junior faculty should be warned that extensive involvement in recruitment may hinder success in earning tenure at research universities, especially for those involved in new or recent programs.

Reorganization of the faculty reward structure. College and university faculty are considered for promotion and/or tenure based upon teaching, research and service. The weight assigned to the research component will be dependent upon institutional type. Student recruitment is considered to be a service function, and service is the least valued component in the reward structure. Administrators and faculty should discuss the limited value that is placed on graduate student recruitment as it relates to the faculty reward structure. Student recruitment is considered to be a service component, but administrators and faculty may want to modify the reward structure to include student recruitment as a category of the teaching component. In this way, all faculty would become more motivated to engage in this important task.

Recruitment seminars. Administrators must identify a means by which to educate all faculty about how the decrease in state funding has dramatically impacted the fiscal condition of higher education institutions, but in particular, they should sponsor recruitment seminars for those faculty who have an interest in graduate student recruitment. These officials must emphasize that as the fiscal conditions have changed, institutions have become more dependent upon the financial contributions of students. In this age of consumerism, students

view themselves as consumers and as such, they understand that there are a plethora of institutional types that they may consider in order to obtain a college degree. Given that higher education institutions fiercely compete to convince a large proportion of college students to consider attendance at a particular institution, it is imperative that faculty become more sensitive to the classroom experience, the increase in faculty-student interaction and the establishment of a personal rapport with students outside the classroom.

Recruitment consultant. The institution may consider the services of a consultant who could meet with the faculty as a group to discuss the advantages of engaging in student recruitment, articulate recruitment strategies, discuss successes and failures during recruitment visits, and share information that may enhance recruitment.

Conclusion

In the past, faculty members have played a peripheral role in the recruitment of students because enrollment figures swelled significantly and propelled higher education institutions to the forefront of academic life. However, as enrollments in undergraduate education are challenged and the pipeline of potential graduate students diminishes, faculty may understand that they need to dialogue more about various marketing strategies that will enhance graduate student recruitment, and academic administrators may understand that it is imperative to encourage faculty to engage in graduate student recruitment in order to promote institutional survival and employment security for academic personnel.

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