

What are Universities Doing to Help Prospective Teachers Find Positions?

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The average tuition of a four-year public college is \$3510 per year (Adriane, 2003). In this study, letters were sent to the education departments of fifteen state universities in a southern state by a school level administrator. Each university was asked to help the local education agency (LEA) find prospective teachers from the universities' recent and/or future graduates. This article looks at the response times as well as which universities invite future success of their graduates.

Background

Higher education is expensive and getting more expensive with the average tuition of a four-year public college at \$3510 per year (Adriane, 2003). Most students attend these colleges with the hope of getting a job. What do universities do to help fulfill the hopes and dreams of students? Are universities are willing to do a little extra to help these students find a job upon graduation?

Many Southern states are experiencing a teacher shortage, as is much of America. One middle school assistant principal spent many hours in the summer of 2002 looking for quality teaching applicants. He looked to the state universities for assistance. In February his school sent letters to fifteen state supported universities comprising both prestigious flag-ship research institutions and regional institution with mission specifically designed to support state initiatives.

The letters asked for contact information for recent graduates as well as future graduates in education. A sample letter is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample Letter to Universities

February 24, 2003

University Address Inserted Here

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is _____ and I am the Assistant Principal at _____ Middle School. As spring graduation approaches I know that many future graduates are starting the hunt for fall employment. Our school system will be coming to job fairs to seek potential applicants. I would like to take recruiting a step farther.

Last summer we experienced several vacancies during the summer. I tried to contact several universities to see if any recent graduates had yet to attain employment. Since it was the summer it was hard to get in touch with the appropriate people that might help fill the need of our school and your students. I would like to know if it would be possible to get contact information for Spring or Summer graduates in case the same situation were to occur this summer.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Signature
Assistant Principal
_____ Middle School

Results

Of the fifteen Universities approached, only five responded. These responses took the following form:

Within three weeks, a representative from University A called. University A is a regional university in a rural setting. It is known nationally for its teacher education programs. The representative reported that she could not give out contact information due to privacy restrictions but she would like to help. She gave her e-mail address and phone number. She asked to be contacted about each vacancy. She would then forward the vacancy information to each qualified graduate.

A representative from University B called within a month of the letters origination. University B is the largest land grant institution in the state and is a doctoral granting major research institution. This representative also reported that she could not give out contact information due to privacy restrictions but she would like to help. She provided contact information and, like University A, asked to be notified of each vacancy and promised to contact each qualified graduate on file in the placement office.

That same week, an envelope was received from University C which was an historical black institution with a strong reputation within the state. The enveloped contained a spreadsheet listing of students. The list was arranged in alphabetical order and contained the student's major, local/permanent address and local/permanent phone number. There was no letter or any school contact information.

Six weeks after the initial letter, an envelope was received from University D containing a spreadsheet listing of candidates for positions. University D is a doctoral granting research university

that had undergone transition from a regional to a nation institution and was the recipient of the state's newest medical school. It resided in what some called an "underserved" region of the state. The listing was in a table format and the tables were separated into the following categories: Birth -K, Elementary K-6, Middle Grades (6-9), Secondary Education (9-12), Special Subject Areas K-12, and Vocational Education roughly following the state's teacher certification areas. These tables were listed in alphabetical order and contained the student's internship school system, county of residence, phone number, and licensure area. There was a letter stating that the students had given permission to make the information available to school systems. The letter also gave contact information and a request for feedback.

At about two months after initial request for information a representative for University E called the research and provided information regarding the school's constantly changing website. University if widely recognized in the state a major teacher education institution with certification programs in almost every area of the curriculum. The institution provided the researcher directions as well as login facilities and within six minutes of the telephone call and provided the needed information.

No information was received from the other ten institutions within a six month period of the initial request.

Conclusion

State universities are wonderful places to receive an education. However, based on the basis of this survey, many do not utilize opportunities presented by the public school system to assist student in locating appropriate teaching positions. Purkey (1990) states, "The long-term success of any organization depends on the satisfaction of the people who live and work there." The findings

of this survey are not a good reflection on the state university system examined in this research. It should be noted, that this system has been recognized as one of the most outstanding higher educational systems in the nation. Surely, universities have a moral obligation to their students to facilitate their progression into the workplace. Ten of the fifteen universities in this survey did not take the time to call the researcher to tell him a reason for not giving out contact information. While two institutions explained the reasoning for an inability to comply, it was possible to anticipate inquiries and have information releases prepared as did University C. Clearly, most universities in the study could improve their outreach employment programs to the state school systems they are to serve. The good news is that five of the universities did respond. Even though several of the universities could use some help in creating more inviting correspondence, they did respond.

References

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