

1-1-2008

Graduate Recruitment At A Midsized Midwestern University

Sharese N. Shannon

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Counseling and Student Development](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Shannon, Sharese N., "Graduate Recruitment At A Midsized Midwestern University" (2008). *Masters Theses*. 134.
<http://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/134>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

SPEC.

COLL.

LB

1861

.C57x

E36

2008

S49

c. 1

GRADUATE RECRUITMENT AT A MIDSIZE,
MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

SHANNON

THESIS MAINTENANCE AND REPRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

TO: Graduate Degree Candidates (who have written formal theses)

SUBJECT: Permission to Reproduce Theses

The University Library is receiving a number of request from other institutions asking permission to reproduce dissertations for inclusion in their library holdings. Although no copyright laws are involved, we feel that professional courtesy demands that permission be obtained from the author before we allow these to be copied.

PLEASE SIGN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University has my permission to lend my thesis to a reputable college or university for the purpose of copying it for inclusion in that institution's library or research holdings.

Shawna M. Shaw

6-20-08

Author's Signature

Date

I respectfully request Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University **NOT** allow my thesis to be reproduced because:

Author's Signature

Date

This form must be submitted in duplicate.

Graduate Recruitment at a Midsize, Midwestern University

(TITLE)

BY

Sharese N. Shannon

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Masters of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2008

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

James H. Wallau 6/19/08

THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR DATE

Robert M. Auguston

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE

James Harden 6-19-08

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER *efc* DATE

R. R. 6/19/08

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL CHAIR DATE
OR CHAIR'S DESIGNEE

Adrian R. 6/19/08

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER DATE

GRADUATE RECRUITMENT AT A MIDSIZED MIDWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

Sharese N. Shannon

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Counseling and Student Development of
Eastern Illinois University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

June 19, 2008

Committee:

Dr. James Wallace, Chairperson

James H. Wallace

Dr. Robert Augustine

Robert M. Augustine

Dr. James Harden

James Harden

Mr. Rodney Ranes

Rodney Ranes

Copyright 2008
Sharese N. Shannon

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my family. Without their everlasting support and encouragement to finish strong, I would have never finished. I am cognizant and ever indebted to family who sacrificed and paved a way for education to be a possibility. This entire document is truly for my family members Mom, Dad, JR, Granny, Aunts, Uncles and Cousins. I would not be a Master without you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank God for giving me the strength and determination to complete this Thesis. I know that the Lord had a plan and placed people in my life to constantly encourage my journey towards completion. I am thankful for my thesis committee Dr. James Harden, Dr. Robert Augustine and Mr. Rodney Ranes for taking time to assist with my research objectives and patience. My gratitude, thanks and appreciation are heavily extended to Dr. James Wallace, my thesis chair. He taught me how to have a thick skin and know that my words truly had power to create change.

I would also like to acknowledge my forever friends: Erika, LaToya, Richetta, Courtney, Carah and Alexis. Your constant availability, honesty, bluntness and being a phone call away truly meant a lot to me. I truly love you all like blood sisters. Also to my support team: Antwione, Andre, Makesha, Steve, John, Curtis, Danielle and Bethany. I thank you all for constantly calling and being positive during this process. To my housing family: Brian J., Quiana, Terrance, Zuri, Connie, Josh, Terry, Ashley and Grads. Thanks for providing moments of laughter, conversation and prayer throughout the process. I am truthfully thankful for the lord placing you all in Charleston, Illinois. To my "circle of trust": Temetria, Kristin, Sunni, Paul and classmates. We have learned a lot from each other and constantly supported each other's efforts. I thank you all for being an influential part of finishing this document.

Lastly to my professors, thank you for changing my life during my graduate school tenure. I will be a better professional as a result of your influence.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to dialogue with several graduate programs at Eastern Illinois University to better examine their admissions requirements and philosophy on recruitment. Graduate recruitment at a midsized public institution, such as Eastern Illinois University, has strengths and weakness in regards to attracting students. Location, class size, reputation and preparing students for doctoral programs were reported as factors associated with attracting perspective graduate students. Many graduate programs did not actively recruit students because of heavy reliance on representatives from the graduate school.

The researcher discovered how departments defined their responsibility towards recruitment, how they defined a recruitment plan and their methods of assessing current methods of interacting with perspective students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
ABSTRACT.....	5
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	6
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	8
Purpose of the Study.....	9
Research Questions.....	9
Significance of the Study.....	10
Limitations of the Study.....	10
Definitions.....	11
Content Summary.....	12
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	13
Background Information.....	13
Undergraduate Student Knowledge.....	14
Institutional Responsibility.....	16
Diversity.....	18
International Students.....	20
Content Summary.....	20
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY.....	21
Design of the Study.....	21
Participants.....	21
Site.....	21
Instrument.....	22
Data Collection.....	22
Treatment of Data.....	22
Content Summary.....	22
CHAPTER IV RESULTS.....	23
Admission Requirements.....	23
Admission Practices.....	24
Recruitment.....	24
Content Summary.....	24
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	25
Discussion.....	25
Recommendations.....	30
Conclusions.....	35

Recruitment 6

Summary.....	37
REFERENCES.....	38
APPENDICES.....	40
Appendix A Interview Questionnaire.....	42
Appendix B Interview Questionnaire Table	44

CHAPTER I

Introduction

More students than ever started master's programs during Fall 2007. The number of students earning degrees has doubled since 1980 and grown 150 percent since 1970, (McCormack, 2007). Knowing that students are interested in attending school to obtaining an advanced degree is one reason why graduate recruitment is important. With awareness that students plan on attending, a university would need to ensure that they are distributing information both regionally and nationally about their programs.

A year of graduate school costs, on average, anywhere from \$17,000 for a master's at a public university to more than \$56,000 at a private dental school, (Kountze 2006). Master's degrees are known to be an expensive endeavor with four out of five full-time graduate students receiving financial aid averaging \$20,000 a year. Seventy-five percent of a graduate student's expenses are paid for by student loans, (Kountze 2006). A graduate school can use the cost of attendance compared or contrasted with national numbers in order to recruit students. It can be perceived that there are students who have already decided to attend a graduate program, but have not chosen a particular institution because they are, in theory, waiting to be recruited by a graduate school. Offering master's degrees can be a lucrative investment for universities that choose to expand their programs. The downside of increasing graduate program are the costs associated with smaller class sizes and enrollment numbers, (Fairfield, 2007). A March 2007 article in Communications of the ACM highlighted the ambiguity associated with

graduate admission criteria. The article stated that many departments provide little or no useful information on their admission criteria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine current recruitment practices of the graduate programs at Eastern Illinois University(EIU). Using a qualitative research design, the researcher comprehensively examined information obtained from several graduate degree programs.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the present study.

1. What is the dominant philosophy among members of the university community with regard to the recruitment and retention of new students? Minority Students? Students of Color? International Students?
2. How much weight is placed on the following components of the recruitment and or application decision?
 - a. Application fee paid
 - b. Personal statement
 - c. Degree sought
 - d. Student's ability to pay and not attend on financial aid
 - e. Student's ability to secure an assistantship
 - f. Pre-enrollment interview with department faculty
3. What specific actions are undertaken by academic departments to recruit and retain new students?
4. What amounts of departmental funds are allocated for new student recruitment?
5. What personnel have new student recruitment as their primary responsibility?

Significance of the Study

During the fall of 2007, President William Perry introduced the First Choice program designation for graduate programs at Eastern Illinois University. To receive First Choice designation, a degree program must demonstrate efforts to recruit and retain students, among other requirements. Current recruitment efforts throughout the university suggest that few departments have programs in place to recruit students. Historically, most departments have not engaged in new student recruitment efforts. They have relied on the regional reputation of the university to attract applicants or enrolled students who just completed undergraduate degrees at the EIU. Thus, efforts to recruit new students are either non-existent or minimal among most departments.

Limitations of the Study

There are a couple of natural limitations to the present study of graduate recruitment practices at EIU. First, because this study is limited to only one institution, generalizations can not necessarily be made to reflect the recruitment practices of other midsized institutions in the Midwest. A second limitation to the study may be that institutional and department cultures are a reflection of historic reliance on the university's regional reputation as a recruitment tool. Additionally, the present study could be perceived by the graduate academic community as unnecessary and a new area of concern due to the requirements and benefits outlined in the guidelines for designation as a First Choice program.

Definition of Terms

Campus visit: The opportunity for a perspective student to physically assess a university. The visit often provides the opportunity to interact with faculty and current students.

Cohort: A group of students admitted during the same academic period that often simultaneously participate in the same sequenced academic courses and graduate at the same time.

Educational Testing Service (ETS): The company that creates and administers admissions exams such as the Graduate Record Examination.

Grade Point Average(GPA): A measure of scholastic attainment computed by dividing the total number of grade points received by the total number of credits or hours of course work taken.

Graduate Assistantship: Funding a monthly stipend in exchange for duties performed in research, teaching and service, as well as a tuition waiver scholarship. The scholarship waives tuition only, not fees.

Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT): An exam of general skills and abilities acquired over time. It measures the potential academic success in a graduate business program.

Graduate Record Examination (GRE): An exam required for admission in many graduate programs. It measures quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and analytical writing skills.

International Student: A student with natural origins outside of the United States.

Minority Students: African American, Asian American, Native American or Latino/a students.

Nontraditional Students: Students who are generally older than 21-24 who have gone straight through their educational process. They often have families or prior work experience.

Personal Statement: An essay often required for admission, that outlines a student's goals and preparedness for a graduate program.

Predominately White Institution: A university where the minority population has historically been less than the total population. The national average is approximately eight to ten percent.

Preview Day: Another term for campus visit.

Rolling Admission: An admission practice that allows reviewers and decides on applications until all the spots are filled in an entering class.

Students of Color: African American, Asian, Native American and Latino students.

Content Summary

Contained within Chapter I is an introduction, the statement of purpose, the research questions, significance of the study, and the limitations of the study. Also included in this chapter are definitions of terms used throughout the study.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The first section of this review of literature highlights the background of graduate education. In order to discuss graduate recruitment, its origins and importance it is necessary to validate this topic. The second section discusses undergraduate student knowledge toward graduate education. The purpose of this section is to provide the student perspective of graduate education. The third and fourth sections examine institutional responsibility and diversity. These sections are included to bring attention to institutional responsibilities towards educating undergraduate students and the importance of a diverse graduate student population. The final section highlights international students and their importance as a part of graduate education.

Background Information

Harvard College awarded the first American master's degrees in the mid 1600's. They were awarded to individuals who completed one to three years of advance study beyond the baccalaureate degree. Today, the United States dominates graduate education worldwide. The Council of Graduate Schools in 2005 reported that during the 2003-2004 academic year, ninety percent of all graduate degrees awarded were from colleges and universities in the United States.

The pursuit of graduate education has recently increased due to a changing workforce. Many careers now require post-baccalaureate training. It is a common perception that graduate education enhances communication and technical skills

and it helps prepare individuals to participate in an ideas-driven society and economy, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2003). The face of the graduate student has also changed due to emerging career fields, increasing salaries and required skills enhancement. Nontraditional students represent a large portion of graduate students because of ever evolving work demands. Master's degree holders usually include K-16 teachers, social workers, librarians, scientists and scholars in general. These individuals are of great importance and influence because they contribute to the nation's economic, political, educational and social well-being through their advanced managerial, leadership, clinical and applied research skills. Undergraduate students should be educated to understand that the term graduate education is not only associated with law or medical school. Individuals recruiting at this level of education should highlight the benefits and variety of master's degree programs and opportunities available. The opportunity for research, career development, and personal growth are intangible characteristics, travel and networking via professional organizations.

Undergraduate Student Knowledge

Undergraduate knowledge about graduate school admissions was another focus area in regards to graduate recruitment. Brihl, in a 2001, study explicitly stated that students tended to underestimate the average GPA and GRE scores of individuals accepted into graduate programs. Colleges and universities that have graduate schools often educate undergraduates about the importance of supplemental materials such as personal statements, letters of recommendation, interviews, GPA and GRE scores. However, many students remain

unknowledgeable about the politics necessary to obtain these supplemental materials. Students who are actively engaged in learning, both in the classroom and outside of the classroom, will receive stronger letters of recommendation. (Scepansky & Bjornsen, 2003)

Student knowledge of graduate programs at their current institution was highlighted as a graduate recruitment issue. Undergraduate students often dismiss graduate education because they have no interest in the graduate programs offered at their current institution. Stressing the diversity of programs offered and partnering graduate programs and organizations with undergraduate student associations helps peak students' interest in graduate programs. Understanding the mindset of students toward graduate school provides insight as to how higher education professionals can improve recruitment materials.

Debt is often a major concern for students considering graduate study. Many undergraduate students are unaware of funding opportunities. Graduate programs have a responsibility to educate students about balancing life and securing funding for advance study. Students are also unaware of the variety of graduate programs available: Thesis or non-thesis, professional or traditional, practical or theoretical and terminal or preparatory, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2005). Students interested in programs that will enhance their skills for community positions would benefit from community centered programs. Apprenticeship programs prepare students for regulated professions, while career advancement programs are usually geared towards working adults who want to progress in their current positions. The last program mentioned in which students

were commonly unaware of are ancillary programs. Ancillary programs award master's degrees en route or in lieu of a doctorate degree offered by the department of study, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2005).

Institutional Responsibility

As previously stated, the institution is an influential element in preparing students for graduate study. Recruiters should be able to articulate the goals of their graduate programs. Students are often the best recruiters for a university and specific graduate programs. Being able to connect prospective students to professional organizations, social groups, clubs and churches highlighting the university as well as the surrounding community is an important aspect of recruiting students. Archived student testimonials can be an invaluable source for increasing recruitment and retention, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2003b). Using student testimonies allows intangible aspects of a program to combine with quantifiable attributes. Research opportunities and campus visits are an additional institutional responsibility when recruiting.

Monitoring admissions practices is a very important factor of the admissions process. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) stated its disgust with graduate admissions processes that heavily rely on the GRE. ETS specifically stated that the GRE should be used in conjunction with other admissions elements, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2003b). Cross departmental collaboration was also highlighted as an important factor associated with institutional responsibility. Application reviewers should be open to

recommending a student for a different program if they feel that it would be a better fit for the student.

Interaction between faculty and students at the graduate level is very important. Graduate students benefit and learn from seasoned professionals at conferences and meetings. University interaction with businesses, industry, government and nonprofit organizations is essential to learning about regional issues and concerns to prepare students entering the workforce, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2005).

Promoting a cultural change on campus helps create an inclusive environment for all students. The institution has a responsibility to make sure minority students are treated properly during and after they are recruited. Paying attention to student progress, respecting cultural richness, diversity and assisting with graduate school adaptation are important in retaining students of underrepresented groups. Inclusiveness must be approached holistically and is a team effort. The student experience is important. Learning what a student is experiencing and what they need to be happy produces better adjusted and more successful student outcomes. Students who drop out of graduate school often do so because of a lacking support system and a misunderstanding of the nature of graduate level study. Environment is important because it is a basic piece that can be compared to other institutions. Engaged graduate students who saw an outlet in their research interests were more likely to value the graduate experience, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2003c).

Diversity

The goal of achieving a graduate population reflective of society is a constant obstacle in recruitment. Combining cultural backgrounds increases the overall academic experience and prepares students for the evolving global society. Diversity also enhances intellectual stimulation and discussion. Multiple perspectives shared on campus allow students to learn about cultures outside of their own. Placing an importance on diversity also facilitates the reversal of racial segregation patterns and separation historically rooted in the United States higher education. Higher education is believed to be the best arena to revolutionize historic blueprints of society. Educating students in a manner to produce leaders that can work effectively with individuals from all backgrounds is the ultimate testimony of an inclusive graduate program.

Presenting inclusiveness and diversity concerns as global issues was one suggestion presented by the Council of Graduate Schools for all individuals to accept initiatives. Graduate programs that are successful in creating an inclusive environment have an active game plan. The undergraduate population will eventually shift to primarily represent the current underrepresented population. Ignoring the current underrepresented population will ultimately reduce the potential talent pool by half. (Council of Graduate Schools 2003).

A study of Psychology students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln revealed that Caucasian students had false ideas about minority classmates. False meanings ranged from benign associations, such as special funding opportunities for minority students, to more negative connotations such as the ideas of

preferences, quotas, percentages and reserved slots for minority students. (Zamboanga & Parker, 2000). Zamboanga and Parker also reported the need to increase support for minority graduate students. Particular interest was given to Midwestern universities located in non-metropolitan areas. Stating that because of the social climate in these remote areas, educational programs and or courses focused on diversity may be necessary.

Creating an environment for open communication about racism and providing individuals available to support student concerns was a suggestion from the Council of Graduate Schools recruiting for success inclusiveness series volume 2. It is known that in some minority cultures, the family is a very important factor. An emphasized obstacle in the recruitment of diverse student populations was a university's location. Creating a welcoming climate that appreciates and recognizes students and their families is one way to recruit and retain a diverse graduate population. Providing information to help students with ways to connect with the community, recruiting students in cohorts so that they are not alone and making lucrative offers to be competitive with other programs were suggested as ways of recruiting a diverse student population, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2003). Being able to demonstrate the success of students from diverse populations attending the institution is another way to recruit a diverse population. Opening the door to graduate education is important, but providing resources to walk through the door is equally important. Mastery of data is critical to the strategic planning for inclusiveness. Providing information about funding is very important in recruiting students of underrepresented groups. Recent court

decisions have eliminated minority specific funding sources forcing states to reallocate funds, (Council of Graduate Schools, 2003b). Being able to articulate numbers and need are ways to secure funding from new sources.

The importance of diversity in graduate education must come from the top down. Graduate Dean's and administrators must mandate the importance of diversity. Conversations to facilitate recruiting and retaining diverse student populations must be made a priority in order to yield results (Council of Graduate Schools, 2003b). Faculty must be open to learn things from a diverse student population. Faculty members that do not buy into the benefits of a diverse inclusive student population often hinder the success of recruiting and more importantly retaining students.

International Students

Graduate recruitment includes a focus on both international and domestic students. Many institutions have achieved cultural diversity through a large influx of international students. In the fall of 2007, the Council of Graduate School announced a seven percent increase in international recruitment (McCormack, 2007). An article published in November of 2007 named the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as fourth in national numbers for international student populations, (Institute of International Education 2006-2007). One author expressed that nine international students applied to Stony Brook graduate programs for every domestic students.

Chapter II contains review of literature. Areas of focus within the review of literature were background information, undergraduate student knowledge, institutional responsibility, diversity and international students.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Design of the Study

The present study utilized a qualitative design. Data and findings for the present study were presented in narrative and table formats. The voices of the participants (i.e., statements made in response to specific interviews) were presented in narrative format in order to characterize requirements and feelings towards graduate admission and recruitment. Responses to the survey instrument are presented in table/chart formats where possible. The questionnaire contained data required for admission and individual responses to specific questions created by the researcher.

Participants

The participants in the current study are graduate department chairs, coordinators and professors at Eastern Illinois University during the 2007-2008 academic year. Participants were recruited through the request of a personal interview by email and phone calls.

Site

The location of the study is at Eastern Illinois University. Located in Charleston, Illinois, Eastern Illinois University was founded in 1895. During the 2007-2008 academic year, roughly 1,750 graduate students account for the overall student population of 12,179 students.

Instrument

The researcher used a questionnaire in the present in order to maintain a holistic approach. One on one interviews were conducted with graduate chairs, coordinators and professors. These interviews were conducted to gain insight on admission requirements and recruitment philosophy. Fifteen departments participated in interviews.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred during the 2007-2008 academic year. Interviews were held individually in administrative offices of the interviewee or in the graduate school office.

Treatment of Data

Graduate programs participating in the study were assigned letters to maintain confidentiality. Only the principle investigator and sponsor will had access to the subject identifiers. Field notes were taken during the interviews and the information was stored in locked cabinets.

Content Summary

Chapter III highlighted the methodology for the present study. The narrative format gathered from the interviews described from the instrument justified the qualitative research design. Eastern Illinois University and the graduate population were described in the site. The graduate chairs, coordinators and professors at Eastern Illinois University, were the study participants. A description of data collection and the treatment of data were illustrated in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Fifteen of the twenty eight graduate degree programs participated in personal interviews for a return rate of over fifty percent. This chapter highlights information assembled from the fifteen interviews. The questionnaire of the present study can be found in Appendix A.

Participants from the present study were from Arts & Humanities, Business & Applied Sciences, Education & Professional Studies, and Science degree programs. Forty percent of participants were from the departments of Arts & Humanities and Business and Applied Sciences. Twenty-seven percent of interviewees were from Education & Professional and thirty-three percent were from Science degree programs. Interviews revealed admission requirements along with information about rolling admission, cohorts, assistantships, knowledge of recruitment funds and direct or indirect recruitment partnerships with other institutions (Appendix B). The main areas reported were admission requirements, admission practices and recruitment.

Admission requirements

All of the programs interviewed required that perspective students submit transcripts and all but one required a minimum grade point average of 2.75. Forty-seven percent of programs required the GRE, goals, letters of recommendation, and undergraduate preparation or experience for admittance. Twenty percent of programs required interviews, resumes, essays and program applications. One

program required an assistantship, while another required a portfolio/audition or survey to be considered for admission.

Admission practices

Many of the programs participated in various admissions practices when filling their incoming graduate classes. Seventy-three percent of the interviewed programs admitted less than twenty students yearly. One program admitted twenty one to forty students and twenty percent of programs admitted more than forty-one students. Thirty-three percent of programs practiced admitting their students with a cohort while the other admitted students individually, then tailored their classes to meet academic goals.

Recruitment

The graduate school department at Eastern Illinois University provides paper recruitment materials for all departments. All of the programs interviewed for the present study were aware of recruitment materials available through the graduate school but did not dedicate additional funds towards recruitment. Of the fifteen departments interviewed, four were aware of funds in their program budget for recruitment of new students. Thirteen programs reported having official or unofficial partnerships with undergraduate institutions for recruitment. A partnership was defined as a direct connection or amount of students that enter a program from a specific institution. Many of these partnerships were based on the presence of alumni or colleagues that encouraged students to apply to programs at Eastern Illinois University.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussions

The prevailing philosophy among members of the EIU graduate program community in regards to the recruitment and retention of new students is that it is responsibility of the graduate school staff to attend recruitment fairs to attract new students. Whereas several departments felt that students chose to attend Eastern Illinois University based on their own programs reputation, regional, or national reputation or the convenience of continuation of their education after they earned their bachelor's degree in the same discipline. A few departments specifically stated that graduate fairs were an inefficient use of funds. The recruitment at fairs were viewed as inefficient because departments declared that students interested in their specific programs typically did not attend such fairs. One department chair in particular stated that institutions or representatives that received the most attention at fairs were ones that offered the popular degree program of the moment.

Specific attention to the recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minorities and students of color was not a shared priority among many graduate programs. A few programs stated that they wish they had more minority students but did not know how to effectively recruit them. Several programs also stated that they blindly admit students and are unaware of their backgrounds until the first day of classes. One program had had only one student of color throughout the

entire program. Other programs based their whole concept of having a diverse student population on the presence of international students.

International students appeared to be a valued component to the philosophy of recruitment and retention of students. All of the programs interviewed were aware of how many international students were present in their programs. One program stated that their application numbers were directly influenced by the restrictions placed on international students after the bombings on September 11, 2001. International students were primarily appreciated in programs in the physical and natural sciences and technology.

None of the programs interviewed expressed particular concern on a student's ability to pay an application fee in order to be admitted to the program. A third of the programs interviewed required a departmental application fee in addition to the application fee required by the graduate school. Only a third of the programs had explicit application deadlines, while the other two thirds admitted students on a rolling basis. Forty percent of programs interviewed mandated an essay or goals statement in order to be considered for admission.

Many of the departments interviewed offered multiple degrees or areas of specialization as part of their programs. None of the departments that offered multiple degrees stated that students were admitted based on their area of interest. One program stated that students were admitted to the program were expected to work with the graduate coordinator to make sure that they were meeting the course requirements for their specialization. All but two of the programs interviewed required a 2.75 grade point average for admittance. Over seventy

percent of the programs required prior undergraduate experience in the discipline as an admission requirement. Forty percent required graduate entrance exams such as the GRE or GMAT.

All of the departments interviewed reported having departmental assistantships available. However, departmental assistantships were limited and highly competitive. Over fifty percent of departments reported assisting students looking to secure funding for study. Graduates typically secured funding for serving as teaching assistants, from external grants and agencies, working for campus departments or community colleges. An assistantship was only required for one department interviewed as a requirement for enrollment, but was a condition for individual learning space for another. Forty percent of the programs interviewed required applicants to participate in a personal interview as a term of admission. More than fifty percent of programs offered classes in the late afternoon or evenings allowing students time for full-time or part-time employment. Twenty percent of programs offered a mixture of classes being offered during the day and in the evening. Three programs mentioned weekend, summer or internet format for class offerings.

All departments interviewed were aware of the recruitment efforts of graduate school personnel. All interviewed departments reported heavy reliance on websites and email to recruit and correspond with perspective students. All of the programs spoke of the importance of websites, but a few specifically admitted that their websites were out of date. Only a few academic departments advertised in trade magazines and attended additional recruitment fairs specific to their

discipline. A lot of recruitment came from building relationships with colleagues from other institutions and taking recruitment materials along on guest lecture opportunities. Over eighty percent of programs reported having an indirect partnership with other schools to attract students. Graduate professors that taught undergraduate courses talked to their students about graduate study. Two programs specifically sent letters and recruitment materials to high achieving undergraduate scholars to create interest in graduate study.

A few of the departments interviewed reported having a method for tracking and measuring recruitment efforts. One method was maintaining student files and contacting perspective students missing materials prior to the application deadline. Another method was making sure to contact a student three times by email, phone and letter to maintain interest. The majority of departments interviewed reported a specific method of tracking measurable outcomes for recruitment efforts. One department stated that recruitment was a new concept and that they were unaware of expectations to participate in attracting new students.

No department interviewed was able to provide a specific budget or range on what was spent on the recruitment of new students. All of the departments were aware that the graduate school produced the recruitment brochures for distribution, but did not have any departmental budget information. Printing and travel costs associated with recruitment were not shared or strictly monitored. Many programs stated that they received money as needed if they were planning to go on a trip or wanted to try a particular recruitment initiative. Three programs

highlighted a campus visit or preview day as a part of their recruitment efforts. Campus preview days were held in order to provide structured dates and times for students to participate in personal interviews. These days allowed perspective students to learn more about Eastern Illinois University, interact with current students and faculty members. One department stated that arranging campus visits were the responsibility of faculty members. A student was typically invited for campus if they were a top candidate. Another department cut funds for student recruitment after the graduate school began producing the majority of printed materials.

For all of the graduate programs at Eastern Illinois University, no one person had sole or primary responsibility of recruiting graduate students. All of the departments were aware of the recruitment efforts of individuals working in the graduate school but did not have one person per academic discipline designated to recruit graduate students. All of the programs had a contact person to answer questions that students may have about a graduate program but questions were not always answered in a timely or useful matter. All but two of the programs reported responding to email responses within a week's time but this was not always the practice. Some graduate coordinators were unavailable during posted office hours or had full voicemail boxes when correspondence attempts were made. Three programs reported working with current students to serve as representatives at recruitment opportunities. One program was specifically developing a recruitment manual for alumni to assist with the recruitment of new students.

Recommendations for Practitioners

On the basis of findings in the present study, several recommendations for graduate recruitment programs are proposed along with recommendations for future research in the area of graduate student recruitment.

Suggestions for practitioners encompass (1) maintaining appropriate information, (2) having knowledge of regional and national recruitment opportunities (e.g., recruitment fairs), (3) engaging in follow-up practices, (4) having knowledge of available resources to support graduate study, and (5) sharing information with colleagues and recruitment professionals.

Maintaining Appropriate Information

Information on programs should be as up to date as possible. This includes information displayed in websites, brochures, posters, catalogs and etcetera. An essential proficiency for a practitioner recruiting graduate students is knowledge. A recruiter or program coordinator may be a perspective student's first contact with a university and is expected to know basic information. Admission requirements, available programs, university and community demographics as well as community offerings should be readily provided to perspective students. In the event that a practitioner is recruiting primarily for a specific program, they should also be well-informed of other university curricula. Familiarity with other programs may assist a student in connecting with the university and determining if another program could be a better fit. Maintaining appropriate information is also very important because inaccuracy influences credibility. In the current information age of the 21st century, websites must have updated information.

Printed materials are still used, but students may follow up or primarily look on the internet for information.

Having Knowledge of Regional and National Recruitment Opportunities

Knowledge of regional and national recruitment opportunities displays a practitioner's awareness of where to get students and determination to attract the best and most talented. If searching for students to boost a specific program, a recruiter should be knowledgeable of what undergraduate institutions specialize in that discipline. If attempting to expand a program, it may be helpful to focus on institutions with missing programs in specific disciplines and strong undergraduate programs that have potential to support expansion efforts.

Engaging in Follow-up Practices

Follow-up is an imperative attribute of being an effective practitioner. It must be remembered that attracting students to one program versus another is a competitive undertaking. Students investigate institutions just as much as institutions evaluate students. A practitioner must periodically check-in with perspective students to maintain interest. This can be completed through emails, phone calls, student interactions and ultimately campus visits. Campus visits can be the deal breaker for any recruitment effort. Purposefully connecting perspective students with faculty, staff and current students can be useful in helping students decide if the institution is a good fit for them. Intentional interactions can also be facilitated so that perspective students feel that the people with whom they interact know something about them and actually care. Overall, using current resources and creating norms is the most beneficial factor in

graduate recruitment. Students and alumni have been designated as the best recruitment enhancers. Students currently in programs can provide firsthand testimonies, while alumni are the examples of where a degree from the institution can take a prospective student. Creating recruitment norms allows a practitioner to track numbers and appropriateness. Manuals and talking points highlighting university and program information assist in validity and consistency. Teaching programs how to recruit and report measurable outcomes helps to document the need for support. Creating networking opportunities for departments to share best practices and areas of concern can facilitate uniformity throughout the graduate school.

Having Knowledge of Available Resources to Support Graduate Study

The National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals is the primary organization for graduate recruiters. The Council of Graduate Schools is the governing and accrediting body for all graduate schools. These two organizations produce the principal journals and trade magazines for graduate recruitment. There are also special interest groups that can provide information on various graduate populations. The National Black Graduate Student Association is an interdisciplinary organization geared to the support, recruitment and retention of African American students interested in pursuing advanced degrees. Every campus has a governing body for graduate students or including graduate students. Depending on the university, the structure may be only graduate students, or graduate students are included as members of the overall student

government. A researcher can benefit from interaction with these groups through direct connection with the graduate student population.

Sharing Information with Colleagues and Recruitment Professionals

Sharing information between colleagues and recruitment professionals is important for consistency. If a recruitment officer is recruiting students for a program, they need to be prepared to gather information and be explicit with perspective students. Distributing information across departments enhances graduate programs as a whole by creating learning opportunities from strengths and weaknesses.

Recommendations for Researchers

Recommendations for researchers include: (1) having knowledge of recruitment journals and professional organizations, (2) understanding budget structures and priorities, (3) using measurable outcomes to justify recruitment efforts, and (4) utilizing innovative recruitment practices.

Recruitment Journals and Professional Organizations

A suggestion for individuals conducting research on graduate recruitment is having comprehensive knowledge of journals and professional organizations whose primary focus is the recruitment and retention of graduate students. The National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals and the Council of Graduate Schools are the premier organizations for graduate admissions. The National Black Graduate Student Association and Latino Graduate Student Associations can provide specific information on these specific student

demographics. Paying attention to major specific professional organizations can also assist researchers with learning more about graduate students.

Understanding Budget Structures and Priorities

Budgetary trends and restrictions are imperative parts of researching graduate recruitment. A budget can explain critical information on strengths and limitations of a programs recruitment plan. A budget is also a direct case in point if a plan has been created. The importance of a budget is directly correlated to reporting measurable outcomes. Money and numbers are two characteristics that can make or break any endeavor. Administrators will not put money into an effort that cannot yield reportable measures.

Using Measurable Outcomes to Justify Recruitment Efforts

Basic information can be measured to produce numbers to justify the efforts of a graduate recruiter. Perspective students can be followed throughout their recruitment journey. Recruiters can report how many students complete data cards at fairs and which students actually apply after initial contact. Program acceptance numbers assembled from applicants and graduation rates are fundamental numbers that can assist any researcher interested justifying purpose and need. Student feedback is also important in reporting measurable outcomes because they can provide information on how they learned about a university and or a specific program. Overall interest and attractiveness is best known from the source.

Utilizing Innovative Recruitment Practices

Researching current recruitment trends is an imperative dynamic important for anyone researching graduate recruitment. It is known from current data that students are attending graduate school but how to attract a student to a specific institution is what associates researchers and practitioners. Researchers can receive direct data and best practices from the people who actually work to admit students. Examining a universities recruitment practice assists with drawing conclusions to improve or praise a method. Graduate recruitment occurs from the university level collectively and on the departmental level. Understanding the methods of practices can provide a recruitment rubric.

Conclusions

Graduate programs at Eastern Illinois University need to focus on three areas as a result of this study. Raising university graduate program recruitment expectations, tracking recruitment efforts and creating a recruitment position are the conclusions of this study. Graduate programs that are participating in a method of student recruitment should be recognized, while struggling programs need to be noticed and assisted. Research has recommended basic practices that are not being met by all the programs at Eastern Illinois University. Eastern Illinois University has created a recruitment standard that all programs are meeting, but the standard is to not competitive with other institutions. In order to attract an application pool comprised of the best and brightest students, a mindset of recruitment must be set as the standard.

Research explicitly characterized that a successful program had a plan in regards to recruitment but it is no way to truly track if plans are successful. Programs need to approach recruitment as a team effort to share information and raise the overall recruitment expectation throughout all of the graduate departments. In order to justify funding towards graduate recruitment, programs need to be able to produce measurable outcomes of practices. Currently some departments are going above and beyond to recruit students, while others are doing absolutely nothing on their own. Mandating that programs track their recruitment efforts would help clarify the need to increase or decrease funding or departments. Currently the graduate school produces the main paper materials but not all programs are using what is being provided. If programs are not actively recruiting or admitting students, then they are ultimately wasting funds. An extra position focusing on recruitment could assist in recruitment overall.

Creating a position that focuses primarily on graduate recruitment would be a way to support successful programs and help struggling programs. Departments that are actively recruiting students could use a full-time person to assist in creating and maintaining measurable outcomes to assist funding efforts for their efforts. A full-time professional could maintain the regional reputation as well as create national recognition. Eastern Illinois offers a variety of programs that produce professionals that are overwhelmingly ready for doctoral programs, but is not readily known outside of the region. One person focusing on reputation and recognition would create uniformity between perspective students and graduate departments. This person could also participate in recruitment

opportunities geared towards underrepresented student populations. One person specifically corresponding with graduate departments outside of the Dean, would allow departments to receive special attention when needed. A representative would also raise standards for recruitment so that departments would know that someone is truly paying attention to their activities.

Another responsibility for the position would be to create relationships between the graduate school and undergraduate student organizations. Research stated creating partnerships between graduate programs and undergraduate students increased knowledge of the admission process. Undergraduate partnerships also increased undergraduate interest in graduate study at current and other institutions. Ultimately a representative will assist in monitoring follow-up practices and assist with creating partnerships with undergraduate programs outside of the institution. A full-time professional will be able to identify undergraduate programs that could serve as feeder institutions to Eastern Illinois University. A full-time professional could also make sure that the greatest return for investment occurred universally.

REFERENCES

- Briihl, D. (2001). Life after college: Psychology student's perceptions of salary, business hiring criteria, and graduate admission criteria. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 3(2), 321. Retrieved February 6, 2008 from Academic Search Premier database.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2003). *Achieving an inclusive graduate community: Inclusiveness (1)*. Washington, D.C.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2003). *Ensuring success: Inclusiveness (3)*. Washington, D.C.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2005). *Master's education: A guide for faculty and administrators*. Washington, D.C.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2006). *Professional master's education: A CGS guide to establishing programs*. Washington, D.C.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2003). *Recruiting for success: Inclusiveness (2)*. Washington, D.C.
- Fairfield, H. (2007). Master's degrees abound a universities and students see a windfall. *The New York Times*. Retrieved online September 13, 2007
- Kountze, E. (2006, January). Boost your chances of getting someone else to pay for your masters or PhD. *Kiplinger*
- McCormack, E. (2007). Number of foreign students bounces back to near-record

Recruitment 41

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol Questions

1. Do you admit students on a rolling basis? Or once a year?
2. Approximately how many students do you admit yearly?
3. Do you admit students individually or as part of a cohort?
4. How many credit hours are required for degree completion?
5. Approximately how long does it take for a full-time student to complete the program? Part time?
6. How does the department recruit students to the program?
7. Do you assist students with finding a Graduate Assistantship?
8. Does your program require an assistantship?
9. Do you have partnerships with other schools for recruitment purposes?
10. Does the department earmark funds for recruitment?

Recruitment 43

APPENDIX B

Recruitment 44

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Trans- cript	2.75 GPA	UG Prep	> 2.75 GPA	GRE	GMAT	Inter- view	Goals	Letters	Resume	Essay
A	1	1	1		1			1	1		
B	1	1	1		1						
C	1	1					1	1		1	1
D	1			1	1			1	1		1
E	1	1	1		1				1		
F	1	1			1						
G	1	1									
H	1	1					1				
I	1	1						1	1		
J	1	1	1					1		1	
K	1	1	1								
L	1	1	1		1						
M	1	1	1			1			1	1	1
N	1	1			1		1		1		
O	1	1						1	1		
Total	15	14	7	1	7	1	3	6	7	3	3
%	100%	93%	47%	7%	47%	7%	20%	40%	47%	20%	20%

	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	Program App	Audition/ Portfolio	Survey	Rolling Admis- sion	Cohort	Assist- antship	Recruit Funds	Partner- ships	Class 1-20	Class 21-40	Class 41-60
A				1				1	1		
B				1					1		
C					1	1	1	1	1		
D				1			1	1	1		
E	1				1		1	1	1		
F				1	1			1	1		
G			1	1				1			1
H				1					1		
I				1				1	1		
J				1	1			1		1	
K		1			1			1	1		
L								1	1		
M	1			1			1	1			1
N	1							1	1		
O				1				1			1
Total	3	1	1	10	5	1	4	13	11	1	3
%	20%	7%	7%	67%	33%	7%	27%	87%	73%	7%	20%