A Case Study of Music Education Institutional Recruiting Practices at a Liberal Arts College

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The Problem

[Image of railroad tracks with "START" written on them]

[Image of a dollar sign]

[Image of a person touching a virtual screen with "Reputation"]

[Image of a cityscape with a large area of trees with autumn leaves]

[Image of a panoramic view of a coastal area]
The Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of music education recruiting practices at a liberal arts college.

Research Questions

What are perspectives of the college’s admissions department, administration, music education program, and music education majors regarding recruiting for the college and music education?

What recruiting practices did the participant students find effective and ineffective?

How could recruiting practices be improved?
PRIOR LITERATURE
Why and When Students Choose to Be Music Educators

(Bergee & Demorest, 2003; Rickels, et al., 2010)

(Bergee & Demorest, 2003)

(Jones & Parks, 2010)

(Bergee & Demorest, 2003; Madsen & Kelly, 2002; Rickels, et al., 2010)
The Admissions Process

Pool

Get them to Campus - Apply

Matriculate
What Works
(Noel-Levitz, 2013)

- campus open house events
- campus visit days for high school students
- encouraging prospective students to apply on the admissions website
- encouraging prospective students to schedule campus visits on the admissions website
- using enrolled students in recruitment/marketing
What Doesn’t
(Noel-Levitz, 2013)

- mailing course schedules
- online course fairs
- recruiting through business/industry
- asking current students/alumni for referrals
- online net price calculator
METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

- Intrinsic case study with elements of self-study (Stake, 1995; Lassonde & Galman, 2009; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009)
- Three phenomenological interviews per participant (Seidman, 2012)
- One focus group with all students
- Researcher journal
- A portfolio of recruitment materials
SETTING

• Program created in 2012.

• Small, four-year, liberal arts college located in a highly affluent area 30 miles North of Chicago.

• The student population of 1,500 students (86% residential) represents 47 states, 78 countries, and has a faculty to student ratio of 13:1.

• Tuition=$51,000 with extensive financial aid available.

• At the time of the study there were four full-time music education majors (now 15).

• Offers a music education major (BA & MAT) and a music education minor
PARTICIPANTS

Students

Rebecca (19 y.o.) Second-year BA music education major, voice.

Nick (29 y.o.) Non-traditional MAT music education major, cello. (Returned to the college after earning his political science degree six years prior)

Catherine (22 y.o.) MAT student graduated with her BA in Music in 2014, violin.

Nancy (21 y.o.) Undergraduate transfer music education major, violin.
PARTICIPANTS

Faculty/Administration

Jennie - Senior Associate Director of Admissions. She has worked in the admissions office at the college since 2010 after completing her BA in business. Her responsibilities include: manager of communication, data, and technology team; liaison with marketing and communication department; manager of the application process; and manager of the admissions' department budget.

Dean Amy - Associate Dean of Faculty. She has served as professor of art/art history and has assumed an administrative position overseeing student recruitment and faculty interactions. She has been at the college for 20 years. Her son is a professional musician and her perspectives provide insight into both her role at the college and that of a parent. The lack of a more robust parental perspective is a limitation of this study.

Prof. Scott Edgar (author). He is in his fourth (now sixth) year at the college serving as Assistant Professor of Music/Music Education Chair, and Director of Bands. He had extensive experience with K-12 instrumental music and recruiting efforts at that level prior to accepting the position to create and implement the music education program at the college.
FINDINGS
Small College/New Program Challenges

“What is this place? I’ve never heard of this place. I started doing some research and thought I was interested in going there” (Nancy)

“It’s very challenging to say music education is important but so is environmental studies. How do we as a department assist with marketing a program such as music education while not neglecting these other programs and making it equitable?” (Jennie)
Selling Points

Geographic location

“The location is terrific. The best of all worlds as far as I’m concerned. It’s a small liberal arts residential experience, but great metropolitan centers very, very close with all the opportunities that provides. Not surrounded by cornfields” (Dean Amy)

“It’s not as much of a selling point as they want to make it out to be. The concept that you can get there easily is great, but then with scheduling and cost, it’s not easy” (Nancy)

Scholarships

“People go to schools because of how much they give them. They’ll have two top choices and then ‘well I went here because they gave me more money’” (Rebecca)

“Free music lessons is a big one!” (Rebecca)

Broad curriculum/rigor of the music education major

“In the reality of getting a job in this field, it’s going to be very beneficial. We prepare you for what this field really looks like today.” (Nick)
Selling Points

Practical fieldwork experience in K-12 schools

“The fact that music ed does fieldwork in every single one of their disciplines, the practical classes really help even before you student teach. All of the people in other disciplines were freaking out, ‘I’m going to be in front of a class.’ We were just like, whatever?! We’re not scared” (Nancy)

Faculty

“I feel that music education is a unique program on campus because it’s overseen by faculty who care very deeply. It’s probably something the music education program does better than any department on campus” (Jennie)

“The whole faculty here are a selling point. It’s a talented and very welcoming group” (Rebecca)

Small college/program and community

“This is the little family that we’ve cultivated. That atmosphere is a very comfortable one. They’re coming out of high school and want that. They want to see that communities are formed and we’re collaborating” (Nick)
Recruiting Efforts

Multifaceted approach

“Think about any company who has tried to sell or recruit you. They may have sent you 12 emails, and texts, or a billboard and you’re not sure what eventually triggers it, but something eventually does. Our communication plan has an electronic component, it has a mailed component, there are phone calls, there are text messages, there is a branding and web component” (Jennie)

“Whether it’s a postcard you get in the mail or a banner you see on Facebook page or on Twitter, those things are equally easy to ignore if you’re not interested” (Nick)

“I’m not sure flyers are always the best” (Catherine)

Individualized attention

“Maybe it’s not the best to be a constant thing, but I see the rationale for it. It was a little too much. But I mean, I came, so I guess it worked in the long run” (Catherine)
Recruiting Efforts

Campus visits/Faculty interactions

“The visit was what convinced me more than anything else that I wanted to be here. It’s one thing to get all of these things in the mail which you read and throw in the trash. To actually come here and see the campus and sit in on class, and as a senior in high school know ‘oh my god, this could be my life soon.’ That’s a lot more effective than a postcard that says ‘hey, come to our school’” (Nancy)

“You were very easy to get in contact with. Much easier to get in contact with than admissions” (Rebecca)

Current student interactions

“The student is just going to give it to you straight, versus a professor who might be working hard to sell it and get people to come here. They’re going to paint things in a different light and a student would just tell you how it is” (Nancy)
With our flexible curriculum, music majors can focus their studies toward performance, theory, composition, history, or combine all of it—and our accomplished professors encourage experimentation and creative expression. Our music education majors combine theory, culture, and performance with rigorous study in the practical art of teaching strings, winds and percussion, elemental and secondary general music, and instrumental and choral ensembles.

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- Chamber Ensembles
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- Jazz Ensemble
- West African Drumming Ensemble

**POPULAR COURSES:**
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- African Music and Culture
- Hip-Hop, Rock, & Culture
- History of Rock
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- Music in Film
- Opera Workshop
- Songwriting
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- World: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Recorder, Saxophone
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- Musical Theater: Vocal, Piano, Keyboard, Guitar, Bass, Drums, Sax
- Guitar: Classical, Electric, Acoustic
- R&B: Vocals, Piano, Guitar
- Jazz: Vocals, Piano, Guitar
- World: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Saxophone
- Voice: Classical, Opera, Musical Theatre

**DANNY ROBLES ’19**
Major: Music
Research Project: Created a musical score for the silent film "Seven Years Bad Luck," which was originally released in 1921.
Read about Danny's path at lakeforest.edu/robles

Along with competitive music scholarships and financial aid, all music/music education majors and minors, and ensemble members receive free music lessons.

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THANK YOU!

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