

# Faculty Involvement In Recruitment

W. Anson Elliott

Everyone and everything about a university makes a statement that affects recruitment or the larger more inclusive issue of enrollment management. It is a very complex and multifaceted issue that needs addressing by looking at its component factors as this conference is doing. Gains made in one area can easily be lost due to changes occurring in another. Many of these factors are not even under one's control.

Changing demographics have caused recruitment of agriculture students to be extremely challenging. There is shrinkage of the traditional college age students but an increase in percentage of older, minorities, part time, and women students. There is also a negative image held by the general public as well as the traditional agriculture community of agriculture being a less rewarding field than others. Government and university policies which result in higher fees, lower financial aids, as well as higher entrance requirements in science, math, and language have reduced the attractiveness for some students. Other, environmental factors that have an impact and must be considered include the appeal of the campus and its location, the reputation of the university and strength of the academic and nonacademic programs. Studies have shown that the "feel of the institution" obtained during an on-campus visit was the factor having the most important impact on the selection process.

It is a commonly held view among the personnel involved in the activities of recruitment, retention and placement that faculty can have the greatest impact. Their primary responsibilities, however, are in teaching, research, and service, which may leave little time for recruitment activities.

While faculty can be the most effective, there are conditions which must be met in order to realize a positive effect. The faculty must be genuinely interested and concerned about students. Students of today come to us needing the same attention and having a psychological need for a "home base" that we needed. They and their parents expect faculty to impart the academic credibility, but at the same time deeply desire the assurance that faculty will provide the personal guidance required during that important period of their lives. With faculty helping to select courses, helping in the setting of life-long goals, helping in obtaining positions, and satisfying the need for a friend when challenges occur before and after graduation, it is evident their contact with potential students would have dramatic effects.

Excellent educators traditionally have relied upon job satisfaction derived from the knowledge they were

helping to shape lives as compensation to balance not taking a more financially rewarding position. Unfortunately, I believe within higher education, there is a trend for having higher rewards for activities other than student functions. These rewards tend to dull the efforts of even the good mentors over time.

Today, I believe universities are feeling the pressures of competition, so they pass these pressures for obtaining more grants and publications to the faculty along with the rewards. Without a direct reward for recruitment and retention, faculty are actually relieved at first for a reduced load associated with students. They can do more of the higher reward duties. At some point, however, the decline of students is felt drastically by faculty and administrators, and a fear may even occur there won't be a demand for a program even though it is known to be needed by society.

Committed faculty do need a product to sell. They need a program that is a part of the mission of the department, college, and university. Faculty who keep in contact with the employers through placement and internship activities and use that experience in program development can and will develop meaningful programs and speak with conviction about them to prospective students. These programs may be unique or they may be more traditional. While the need exists, the job of promoting traditional programs to higher administrators and the public is tougher than if a program is in a new trend area. The challenge is to discover and provide programs where your institution has a comparative advantage when combining the necessary resources of students, faculty, facilities, and employers.

While central admissions offices feel a responsibility for recruitment, their real reward is for their unit which may be the whole university. Therefore, in the final analysis, the responsibility for agriculture is really left to us. The admissions offices can and should provide data and clerical support, etc., but the most effective work for the "Agriculture unit" can be done at that level.

There are many examples where faculty are effective in recruiting students. Traditionally, service activities provided by faculty resulted indirectly in the recruitment of students. These include the judging of livestock, developing crops and science fairs, being workshop leaders for contests, being a guest lecturer to high school classes and civic club meetings, consulting with farmers and businessmen as well as making home visits with students.

Activities of faculty which are more specially aimed at recruitment include participating in college day events, hosting college visits, participating in phonathon recruitment programs, developing videos, brochures and newsletters as class projects and

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providing daily market information to radio stations where credit is given to the Agriculture unit.

As faculty interact and do more, they see more avenues to pursue, and they have to make choices for the most productive use of time and resources.

The challenge is a head of us. We are so inexperienced but we're gaining it quickly. We must, and I'm confident we will, find where we have our comparative advantages. Concerned faculty are vital to the degree we succeed in this task.

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## Getting to Know Advisees Effectively

Joseph E. Williams

Getting to know advisees effectively is a very broad but important topic. Webster defines effective as: "ready for service or action." Effective academic advising, therefore, requires advisers who are ready for service. From my perspective there are two essential components for effective advising or a state of advising readiness. The first component is a thorough knowledge of areas in which advisers are called on or are responsible for giving advice. The second, no less important than the first, is the ability to counsel students effectively and develop a good adviser-advisee relationship.

In most academic institutions, advisers receive very little adviser training or instruction and advising receives low professional priority and recognition. Although effective academic advising requires training and study, academic advising is looked upon by some faculty as an "extra duty" which is expected of them. Yet, advising is one of the most important and often overlooked responsibilities of educators. Advising can and should be both a professionally and personally rewarding experience.

The purpose of this paper is to identify those areas where advisers need knowledge and to outline methods of improving the knowledge base in each area. Procedures are identified and discussed which are effective in counseling students and maintaining a good adviser-advisee relationship. These procedures complement the role and mission of the academic adviser in supporting the achievement of academic excellence by students. The adviser's knowledge base and counseling skills are important in getting to know advisees effectively.

### Major Knowledge Areas

The knowledgeable adviser must be able to answer questions or refer students to people who can assist in solving the unanswered questions or problems. Adviser skills are required to answer questions that may range from routine enrollment questions to those which go beyond the adviser's level of knowledge or competence. Key subject matter areas where advisers need a solid knowledge base must first be discussed.

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### A. Departmental Course and Instructor Familiarity

Advisers should be familiar with current policies and administrative procedures within the department which relate to advising, academic matters, and course requirements. Advisers need to be knowledgeable concerning the frequency with which courses are taught, course content, prerequisite(s), and sequencing. This information is important when deciding which courses can be substituted or are essential in meeting the university, college, and/or departmental requirements for graduation. Knowledge about course content is valuable when advising students on courses to take in meeting career or personal objectives.

Periodic course reviews can familiarize advisers with the content of department courses. At Oklahoma State University, we have found it very beneficial to have course reviews every two to three years. The instructor of each course discusses or provides an overview of his course including objectives, texts, references, material and concepts taught as well as testing procedures with the teaching and advising faculty. Course reviews are typically accomplished in a one day session scheduled at a place outside the office yet within immediate telephone reach to minimize distractions. All course outlines have been compiled and are distributed to faculty in the form of a handbook.

One method of improving the knowledge base concerning non-Agricultural Economics courses is through seminars and written communications with teaching and/or advising faculty of other departments.

### B. University Policies and Procedures

Two useful methods of educating academic advisers about University policies and procedures are used at Oklahoma State University. First, a university wide committee developed and distributed an easily updated American Adviser's Handbook. The handbook was organized and written so as to be of maximum usefulness to academic advisers. The handbook provides information on policies, procedures, forms, and routing steps which are not available in the university catalog. The second method of educating academic advisers is again through department or college level meetings.

### C. University Student Services

The university community places many expectations and demands on students in the course of identifying, developing, and achieving academic and personal goals. These expectations and demands may