

# Implementing a Successful Enrollment Program in a Two-year Agricultural College

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### Abstract

*The Institute's present enrollment development program demonstrates a coordinated approach which has increased enrollment. This program is divided into nine activity clusters. These include college night programs, direct mail, telemarketing, individualized campus visits, specialized print and video materials, computerized student follow-up, special events, alumni network and periodic evaluation and reviews. These nine clusters are described, the results are analyzed and suggestions for possible applications for other institutions are included.*

The Agricultural Technical Institute's present enrollment development program demonstrates an effective approach to increasing enrollment. The purpose of this article is to describe the implementation of the enrollment development approach to increasing enrollment starting in 1984 and continuing to July 1990. The article is divided into four parts. The first part is the description of enrollment problems and their impact of enrollment at the Institute. The second part is a description of the enrollment development program and its implementation. The third part reviews the results to date of enrollment development. The fourth part contains suggestions for possible application to other institutions.

### Background

The Institute is a semi-autonomous academic unit within the College of Agriculture of The Ohio State University. It grants associate degrees of applied science in 21 technologies (majors). These majors range from production agriculture through horticultural operations, to business management and administration, to engineering technologies. The enrollment in 1989-90 was 703 (includes 18 non-credit students) students in 1988-89. This is up 26% from 540 students in 1987-88.

The actual enrollment development program was designed and implemented following a 37% decline in enrollment in 1984-85 of 564 students as compared to 740 students in the previous year 1983-84. The Institute's funding is largely dependent on enrollment for its operating budget.

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Hence, it was necessary to assess the admissions situation and develop a strategy to reverse the decline and increase enrollment. Table 1 details the Institute's enrollment from 1983-84 to 1988-89.

The Institute's declining student enrollment was due to a variety of factors. One factor, name recognition, is unique to the Institute. ATI is not usually associated in the mind of a prospective student with The Ohio State University. Opinion surveys of high school teachers and guidance counselors indicate that ATI is not identified with OSU in their thinking about college. A second factor is the negative impression about careers in agriculture. The impressions from the media about the farm crises of recent years do not encourage prospective students to consider careers in agriculture. Nancy Rehkugler of Cornell University's Office of Admissions describes this situation in her article on "Where Have All the Agriculturalists Gone." She says those students who do express an interest in agriculture are often actually discouraged by people full of free advice. A third factor is both the actual and the projected decline in high school students. Projections by Hodgkinson (1986) and The College Board (1988) indicate a continued decline of high school graduates in Ohio through the year 1994. Ohio high school graduates have decreased from 150,651 in 1978-79 to 139,739 in 1988-89 and will continue to decrease to an estimated low of 120,691 in 1993-94.

On the other hand, there is a shortage of graduates to fill the number of positions available for employment. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Study (1985) is predicting a shortfall of 13% per year of graduates to fill existing positions now and through the year 2000. ATI has 4 to 5 career opportunities for each graduate in horticulture, business, engineering and animal production technologies.

### Enrollment Development

This is the term used by the institute incorporating nine distinct but interrelated program activities. Each is designed to increase the number of students who enroll. They are closely related to the academic programs, to retention activities and to the placement program.

Hossler's use of the term enrollment management provides a useful framework for the discussion of enrollment development as described in this article and as it has been put in place by the Institute. Hossler (1984) defined enrollment management,

“as a process or activity, which influences by the size, shape, and the characteristics of a student body by directing institutional efforts in the areas of marketing, recruitment and admissions, as well as pricing and financial aid. Enrollment management involves the whole campus. It includes the elements of (1) student marketing and recruitment, (2) pricing and financial aid, (3) academic and career advising, (4) academic assistance programs, (5) institutional research, (6) orientation, (7) retention programs, (8) student services. Given the realities of the environment in which enrollments take place, a more accurate term would be enrollment influencing. While the objective is enrollment management, a more accurate view is that we influence more than control the outcome.”

This article describes the process and results of implementing parts of Hossler's elements such as (1) marketing and recruitment, (2) financial aid and pricing, (3) career advising, (4) research, (5) orientation. In the section on recommendations, the need to incorporate these elements (3) academic advising, (4) academic assistance programs, (7) retention program and (8) student services to provide a complete enrollment development program is discussed.

### Enrollment Development Activities

The Institute developed its admissions/marketing strategy adapting the enrollment management model described above. The author of this article was appointed in the Fall of 1984 to coordinate this comprehensive approach to enrollment. The assumption was that the enrollment management model provided the best broad-based, multi-dimensional approach to increasing student enrollment.

ATI's enrollment development program was divided into nine distinct clusters of activities. These include: (1) High School and College Night Programs, (2) Direct mail to targeted publics such as minorities, urban youth, homemakers, and part-time students, (3) Telemarketing to targeted publics, (4) Individualized on-campus visits for prospective students with faculty and admissions staff, (5) Specialized print materials including individual technology promotional pieces, view books and the Institute's Bulletin, (6) Prospective student follow-up through a computerized data base on a local area network with PC computers, (7) Special events designed to attract prospective students via on-campus career days, industry related on-campus field days and demonstrations, recruiting at industry tradeshow, and conducting state-wide career awareness workshops, (8) development of an alumni network for recruitment of students, (9) periodic review and evaluation of the effectiveness of enrollment

Table 1. Agricultural Technical Institute Enrollments for Fall Quarter

Enrollment Classification	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
First Year	353	253	258	261	272	298
Second Year	379	309	295	290	264	306
Specials	8	2	16	6	4	99
Total	740	564	569	557	540	703

activities through surveys, focus groups, and annual plan revisions.

These program activities were carried out with a staff of 4 persons working full-time, 3 persons part-time, 8 part-time students, and an advisory committee on enrollment. This enrollment development approach was started in October 1984 and continues to the present. It has been recently expanded (July 1989) to include financial aid and off-campus housing. Financial aid counseling and packaging is now an integral part of enrollment development. However it was a separate, organizational entity during the time these 9 activities were developed. The recent merger with enrollment activities should increase the number of students admitted and retained. This merger will provide more direct linkages between enrollment development activities and academic advising, student retention programs and student placement. It is anticipated these linkages will significantly increase the rate of retention and will link the faculty even more closely with the admissions functions.

The new objective of the combined program is to shift the focus to the recruitment of graduates and away from the recruitment of students. The critical factor has become the number of students graduated and placed instead of the number of students recruited and enrolled.

Table 2 lists the nine program areas and specific activities related to each area.

Table 2. Enrollment Development Activities

Activities	Results
1. High School and College Night programs	Visit 150 High Schools and College Night Programs in Ohio annually.
2. Direct mail to targeted publics.	Personalized letters sent to 20,000 high school students in Northeast Ohio annually. Quarterly mailing to local county residents.
3. Telemarketing to targeted publics.	Telephone calls made to 4000 prospects inviting them for a campus conference.
4. Individualized campus conferences.	Conducted 680 campus conferences in 1987-88.
5. Specialized print materials and audio visuals.	Presented 12,000 bulletins, 25,000 direct mail pieces, 1000 folders, 45,000 technology sheets.
6. Prospective student follow-up.	Telephone and letter contact with 680 students after campus conference. Sent periodic enrollment update to academic coordinators.
7. Special events.	Conducted four major on-campus recruitment events and participated in 51 other events, including FFA, 4-H, industry trade shows and career awareness workshops state-wide.
8. Development of an alumni network.	Invited 25 Alumni for training session as ATI Ambassadors in their home county.
9. Periodic review and evaluation.	Conduct survey of all first-year students, conduct Focus groups with second-year students. Contracted consultant to review admissions and retention.

## Results: October 1984 - July 1989

The quantitative results of the enrollment increase of 26%, as of 1989-90 academic year, indicates that the enrollment development program as described above has arrested the decline in enrollment since 1984-85, has prevented any additional decreases and, in 1988-89 showed significant percentage increase. These numbers are of additional significance when compared with other colleges and institutes of agriculture in the United States. In general, undergraduate enrollment in agriculture is continuing to decrease (Hutchinson, August 1988). Based on the 1989-90 increase of enrollment the nine basic program clusters will be maintained. They are under periodic review and are in the process of modification and adaptation.

The qualitative analyses is based on (a) input from the surveys and focus groups, (b) from state-wide career awareness seminars, (c) from the 1989 consultant's report on admissions and retention.

The cumulative impact of these periodic reviews has produced changes in the activities of these nine program clusters.

- ① The results in number of students enrolled from each high school are being used to determine which high schools will receive additional time and attention in 1989-90 recruitment year. High schools which have not had any students attend ATI in several years will be on the low priority list for visits. ATI alumni are being recruited to increase the enrollment development effort in their counties of residence.
- ② Direct mail to targeted markets. It will become more focused on high school seniors in selected counties in Northeast Ohio and the frequency of mailings will need to be increased from the current one-a-year, to three or more times. This should improve the current response rate of 2%. (Direct mail marketing indicates 2% response is satisfactory, but can be improved.)
- ③ Telemarketing to targeted publics has 3 persons working part-time making 4000 calls to prospective students. In 1987-88 their efforts produced over 400 on-campus visits. These efforts provide a direct person to person contact with prospective students and parents.
- ④ Individualized campus conferences. The rate of students enrolling at ATI who had a campus conference is 46.5%. The results of the first-year student surveys rate the on-campus conference as excellent. Public relations training sessions will be provided to faculty who advise prospective students in order to increase the number of students enrolling through the on-campus conference.
- ⑤ Specialized print materials and audio visuals. The results of focus group research are being used to revise ATI print materials. All materials have a common logo and are part of a more comprehensive public relations program. An Institute video tape was developed and distributed to 200 plus high schools in Ohio. It is a useful communications piece about ATI, according to survey results.

⑥ Prospective student follow-up. The computerized data base will be expanded beyond the current follow-up activities to include regular reports to the faculty who are advising prospective students. They will be able to personalize their follow-up communications to the prospective students to encourage them to enroll.

⑦ Special events. These are divided into the four categories. They are: on-campus/off-campus and prospective student contact/general Institute-wide public relations. The on-campus events include several open houses, one for seniors, the other for sophomores and juniors, and others for minorities and one for urban youth. Off-campus events include attending annually agricultural industry trade shows and field days.

First-year student surveys indicate that students enrolling at ATI typically have had various contacts with ATI prior to admission. They had visited the ATI campus as high school students for the FFA and Horticulture judging contests, as juniors for ATI Career Day and as seniors for Explore ATI Day. Minority youth are attending Career and Explore Days plus Urban Youth Day and the Summer Urban Youth Pre-College Camp at the Institute.

- ⑧ Development of an alumni network. Results of the first-year student surveys and focus group interviews indicate that an informal alumni network is currently functioning to refer prospective students to the Institute. Enrollment development staff have organized a formal network of ATI Alumni. They will provide orientation and follow-up during this recruiting year. The Alumni representatives will refer prospective students to ATI and attend high school college nights in their home county.
- ⑨ Periodic review and evaluations procedures. The use of student surveys and focus groups will continue. Annual planning sessions enables staff to add/delete and modify the activity clusters based on their effectiveness. The input from the outside consultant has been useful to look at both the overall contribution of enrollment development to the Institute as well as the effectiveness of the activity clusters.
- ⑩ Relationship to the Outreach Programs Office and the Public Relations Office. The comprehensive aspect of the Enrollment Development activities aided in and supported the development in 1988 of the Outreach Program Office and in 1989 of a Public Relations Office. Input gathered in the past from enrollment development staff, the local community, industry and alumni encouraged the Institute to start evening, weekend and off-campus classes in the Fall of 1988. The initial results of increased enrollment were encouraging. The comprehensive enrollment development approach helped the Institute to develop courses in new time frames and locations which resulted in additional enrollment.


The need to communicate the increasing number of Institute events, scholarship awards, recognition of students and faculty and alumni led to the addition of

a position to coordinate the Institute's general public relations program in 1989. This program should increase the awareness of the general public and of prospective students about the opportunities available at OSU/ATI. This should lead to increased enrollment for the Institute.

### Assessment

- A. The enrollment increase of 26% in 1988-89 indicates that the enrollment development program is effective. This is of particular interest in light of the decline in enrollment since 1984-85 at the Institute, the general decline in undergraduate enrollment in colleges of agriculture in the United States since 1978, and the decline in the number of high school graduates in Ohio since 1978.
- B. Enrollment development (i.e. enrollment management) provides an effective, coordinated, comprehensive approach to college admissions. While it contains various clusters of program activities, it maintains the focus on the main objective of actual enrollment of students.
- C. Enrollment development's multi-cluster approach provides sufficient flexibility to make necessary program changes to meet the changing needs of students in today's society.
- D. Increased effectiveness should result from the Institute's recent merger of enrollment development activities with the financial aid program, academic advising and the student retention programs. Working together under one administrator, these programs can increase their collective focus on serving the needs of students. The goal for each program cluster to do its particular job well and to collectively insure that as many students as possible will enroll, attend classes, graduate and find useful and productive careers.

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# Developing a Career In Global Agriculture

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### Abstract

*International agricultural development careers are becoming more abundant as people and technology move around the world. Opportunities abound for young scientists interested in working in another culture or continent. Many professional positions require several years experience. Planning an appropriate training program to gain the most relevant possible experience early in one's career is especially important. Technical competence, language capability, cultural sensitivity, awareness of gender roles, and broad knowledge of geography, history, political science, and economics are essential for a well prepared scientist. Benefits of professional work abroad include exposure to other cultures, cropping and production systems, values, and languages. Young scientists abroad often have administrative and program organization challenges that would come much later in a domestic career. On the other hand, isolation from the home country professional culture and contacts, difficulty in publishing results from applied research, and personal and family adjustment to a different living situation may cause problems. Concerns about re-entry into one's home culture and maintaining viable and documented competence in the professional field of interest are prevalent among those who work abroad. These are important factors for women and men to consider while preparing for an international career in agriculture.*

### Introduction

International careers in agriculture are becoming prevalent as professionals move more easily from one country and culture to another. Bilateral and multilateral programs and international agencies provide opportunities for training outside of the home country. Long-term assignments for experienced scientists, teachers, and extension specialists are available in our universities and federal agencies. International companies require scientists and executives to travel regularly to visit field operations or affiliates in other countries. Agriculture is a global business.

How can our system best prepare people, either during graduate training or as young faculty members, for this type of career? This question was addressed over 20 years ago in ASA Special Publication No. 15 (Cowan and Robertson, 1969). Technical competence is required, wherever the job. Graduate students report a need for more practical experience, greater exposure to production systems, and access to

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