Examining successful recruitment strategies utilized by volunteer alumni

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EXAMINING SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES UTILIZED BY VOLUNTEER ALUMNI

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Resource Education
And Workforce Development

by

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M.S., Louisiana State University, 2005
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a year of being with my new organization, I’ve established a model for the company that will assist with the reduction of turnover, decrease costs while increasing the number of new employees, and produce surveys to distribute within the company that will provide valuable feedback from the employees as the company grows. This model is projected to save my new company well over six figures within the next six months alone.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to describe the manner in which volunteer alumni recruiters at a flagship institution were able to recruit prospective students both in and out of the formal recruitment setting. Due to the challenges facing Louisiana State University with out-of-state recruitment, volunteer alumni recruiters provide a cost-effective alternative to assist this effort. Findings of this study can be used to expand the current alumni volunteer recruitment effort by providing insight into the strategies that result in success in the recruitment process, all the while encouraging fellow alumni to assist their effort.

The methodology for this study was a one-time, in-depth informal audio taped interview of purposely selected volunteer alumni recruiters. Saturation of the data was determined after six interviews. The following themes emerged from this method: motivation for involvement, volunteer training programs, social networking, minority recruitment, recruitment of new volunteers, recognition, other forms of recruitment efforts, parental involvement, the use of the internet for recruitment, and the reliance on the Division of Outreach as a tool in the recruitment effort.

Findings from this study revealed the following: volunteer alumni are motivated because of their passion for the University; many began their recruiting efforts without formal training; volunteer recruiters are able to network interest in different community settings; many reach out to communities labeled as under-privileged, but they do not approach the recruitment process differently; volunteer recruiters solicit fellow alumni to join the effort, and have no trouble retaining them; many gain feedback from students as
to why they would not attend LSU, but are rarely given feedback concerning the recruitment effort of the Division of Outreach.

Implications for research are to increase qualitative and quantitative studies of volunteer alumni recruiters to establish a framework of the fundamental approach that these individuals take inside and outside the formal recruiting setting. Further research should discuss the manner in which these individuals solicit other volunteer recruiters, and examine the motivations and expectations of those who become involved. The social networking ability of these volunteer alumni recruiters is important for a university that is spreading its “footprint” to understand.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Habben and Stewart (1980) reflected upon the introduction of volunteer alumni to the recruitment process of a university in the early 1980’s:

The acceptability of alumni in recruitment is a relatively new idea. As William Ihlandeldt has observed, admissions offices have historically opposed involvement by alumni in the recruitment process for a variety of reasons – overzealousness, a lack of propriety or expertise among graduates, or a fear that the recruitment effort would slip away from professional control. Recently, however, some have argued that alumni proud of their Alma Mater could provide a positive image of and a sense of identity with the university in hundreds of communities that can be reached on one-day visits (if at all) by an admissions counselor, and have spurred reassessment of the role which alumni can play attracting students to campus (p. 9).

This study focused on the involvement of developing a successful alumni recruitment program for Louisiana State University (LSU), Louisiana’s flagship institution. This program, which was in its beginning stages at LSU during this time, was essential for the University in terms of assisting the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Student Aid’s Division of Outreach in its effort to reach students across the country. It was my goal that, through this study, the current alumni volunteer recruitment effort would be enhanced by drawing on the experiences of the successful alumni who participate in the program.

There were two specific reasons why an enhanced alumni recruitment effort at LSU was needed: the establishment of Flagship Agenda and its effect on undergraduate student recruitment at LSU and the changing face of the Louisiana high school graduate. With this study, I examined the following: literature to support the use of alumni recruitment for educational purposes; literature to support the theory of volunteerism and its principles as the basis of an alumni’s willingness to be involved in this program;
literature to support the use of volunteer alumni in community based programs; examples of how other major institutions were utilizing alumni for the purpose of recruiting; a discussion of the manner in which major institutions use alumni to recruit special populations; an outline of the methods in which the writer intended to gather the information to support the results of the study, and a list of the outcomes and implications that resulted from the study.

The purpose of this study was to present various theories of volunteerism to promote use of alumni as effective recruiting tools (specifically for LSU) along with discussion as to what made these individuals successful. The information was gathered via personal interviews with successful alumni volunteer recruiters until a point of saturation was reached. Dr. Krisanna Machtmes and I determined the saturation.

**Problem Statement**

The primary purpose of this study was to describe what makes an alumni volunteer recruiter successful at gaining the interest of prospective students in their area of the country in both traditional and non-traditional recruiting settings.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of the study, the following terms were defined:

Recruitment was defined by Dolence as: The active process an institution undertakes to favorably influence a prospective student’s decision to attend the institution. The recruitment phase begins with identifying prospects, that is, those students who are eligible to attend and may have some affinity for the institution. Recruitment ends and retention begins once the student enrolls (as cited in Bowen, Carstenson, & Hansen, 1999).
Alumni Volunteer. Any graduate of LSU who has generously volunteered their time and effort to enhance the recruitment effort at LSU.

Alumni and Friends. Term used to highlight a volunteer of the university that may not have finished a degree.

Successful Alumni Volunteer. A successful alumni volunteer was any volunteer who had generated an interest in LSU from prospective students in their region by attending college programs, hosting receptions, or establishing scholarship funds. Their success was ultimately defined by the number of prospective students who are added to the Division of Outreach’s recruitment database. A significant number of new prospects would be roughly 250 prospects each recruiting cycle, which takes place annually every August to April. This number can be attained by having students fill out “prospect cards” which were put in the Division of Outreach’s recruitment database. These prospect cards detailed student information such as name, address and contact information, major of interest, ACT/SAT score, GPA, and other campus areas of interest.

Non-traditional Recruiting Setting: A situation in which a volunteer alumni recruiter was approached by a prospective student or parent outside of the traditional recruiting setting. A traditional recruiting setting refers to a college fair, or a recruiting event hosted by an alumni or alumni group, such as a reception in the home or a cookout.

LSU’s Flagship Agenda. The Flagship Agenda was defined as a seven-year plan to bring LSU to a new level of excellence. It focused on action steps that increased research and scholarly productivity along with the quality and competitiveness of our graduate and undergraduate students. The outcomes are designed to place LSU in a position to compete on all levels with the finest public universities in the country. As a national flagship institution, LSU will advance knowledge and intellectual inquiry by promoting

**Admissions Standards.** The criteria established by the University that all incoming undergraduates must meet in order to enroll as a freshman student.

**Minority Students.** Any student who does not fall in the race category of white or Caucasian.

**Limitations**

1. Since the research used a qualitative research design with purposeful sampling, the findings of the study had limited generalizability.

2. Participants were asked to reflect upon experiences that took place over the past several years prior to 2007. This may have caused the participants to experience recall bias.

**Significance of the Study**

Throughout the process of literature review, I discovered several important aspects of alumni recruitment that were addressed. Many institutions had successful alumni recruitment programs that have been in place for decades. Primary examples of this are the University of Michigan ([http://alumni.umich.edu/recruitment/index.php](http://alumni.umich.edu/recruitment/index.php)), and Pennsylvania State University ([http://www.alumni.psu.edu/groups/admissions/default.htm](http://www.alumni.psu.edu/groups/admissions/default.htm)).
One of the guiding factors discussed, which led colleges and universities to engage volunteer alumni in recruitment, was the economic value added to the institution. Examples of volunteer alumni providing cost-effective services such as attending college programs, hosting receptions in their homes, scholarship fund raising and telemarketing campaigns were highlighted in this study to illustrate how these volunteer programs can economically benefit an institution.

Many smaller programs, such as vocational educational programs and community based programs also used volunteer alumni recruiters. Dr. Ken Culp III (http://www.kenculp.com), whose works are cited in this study, developed extensive inquiries in these areas, specifically.

There is one distinct disparity that was evident after reading the literature: while these programs have outlined a need for alumni volunteers, along with pinpointed steps to making the program itself successful, not one of these organizations have determined what makes the alumni themselves successful in their regions. In other words, what steps were these alumni volunteers taking to ensure their success year after year in building a regional network that will ultimately create an interest in that particular university or program?

The knowledge generated from this study should be used to implement and improve the alumni recruitment program not only at LSU, but at colleges, universities, and non-profit community organizations across the country. This study contributed to the body of knowledge by having these alumni reflect upon their experiences in the field of recruitment, and what steps they took to increase the social network for the university that they represented. This information should be shared with new alumni volunteers when they make the commitment to assist the university in its recruitment efforts.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is designed to present a review of the literature pertaining to the following:

- The Flagship Agenda and its role with the University, specifically the changing student body because of the increased admissions standards and how recruitment of prospective students will change;
- The changing face of the Louisiana high school graduate;
- The role of the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Student Aid’s Division of Outreach took to reflect this change;
- The theoretical framework of volunteerism and how this theory shaped the study;
- The manner in which alumni volunteers assisted in recruiting efforts for different educational endeavors;
- The manner in which alumni volunteers assisted in recruiting efforts for different types of community outreach programs;
- The manner in which alumni volunteers assisted in recruiting minority students; how other institutions comparable to LSU utilized their volunteer alumni recruiters; and
- What changes LSU needed in their current program in order to maintain a successful alumni recruitment effort.

The Flagship Agenda and Its Effect on the University

This effort, which was spawned by former LSU Chancellor Mark Emmert in 2003, had as its primary goal, to take LSU to the next level in terms of a more diverse student body, top research faculty and staff, retention of the student body, and higher
graduation rates. In order to achieve this goal, the first step was the involvement of recruiting a stronger, academically-qualified student body.

Focus on Undergraduate Recruitment: Changing Admissions Standards

In 2003, with the implementation of the Flagship Agenda, LSU increased the admissions standards for each incoming freshman. Prior to this shift in philosophy, LSU had minimal admissions standards in place, but these standards were considered somewhat flexible. The Flagship Agenda, on the other hand, set forth specific guidelines that were to be followed.

The Flagship Agenda states in objective 3 “Increase quality of undergraduate students and programs”, Actions:

1. Increase undergraduate admission standards and move to a more competitive and holistic admissions model. Strategically recruit and retain top students.
2. Increase recruitment, orientation, and retention efforts of transfer students.
3. Provide a broad array of nationally-competitive undergraduate degree programs through a systematic review and targeted investments.
4. Provide innovative learning experiences that complement and enhance academic programs including international, multi-cultural, and interdisciplinary programs.


Clearly, item one provided direct involvement from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions’ Division of Outreach and its members. As of the fall of 2007, the admissions standards for this once open-admission University were as follows:

LSU will consider for admission the total high school record: rigor of courses completed, grades, test scores, educational objectives, school leadership, and breadth of experiences in and out of the classroom. Minimum expectations for consideration for admission are 3.0 Academic GPA* on 18 units of college-preparatory high school courses as outlined in the LSU Core and a 1030 SAT (Critical Reading and Math)/22 Composite ACT. Freshman applicants are required to submit the writing assessment portion of the ACT and/or SAT. Students must be eligible to enroll in university-level English and mathematics
courses, as evidenced by a minimum SAT Critical Reading score of 450 (ACT English sub-score of 18) and a minimum SAT Math score of 440 (ACT Math sub-score of 18). Preference for admission to LSU will be given to those students whose credentials indicate the greatest promise of academic success and the greatest potential for contributing to the diverse missions of the University. The 18 core units for Admission are as follows:

- 4 Units of English (I, II, III, IV)
- 3 Units of Math (Algebra I and II, and One additional unit consisting of courses such as geometry, trigonometry, Advanced Mathematics I or II, pre-calculus, calculus, Algebra III, probability and statistics, discrete mathematics, Applied Mathematics III, or Integrated Math III)
- 3 Natural Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics)
- 3 Social Sciences (American History, and One unit in world history, world geography, or history of western civilization One unit consisting of civics, free enterprise, economics, or American government)
- 2 Foreign Language studies (same language)
- 1 Math/Science Elective
- .5 Computer Studies
- 1.5 Additional Units (Two-and-one-half units from the categories above and/or certain courses in the visual and performing arts. Two units may be from advanced course work in the arts, e.g., fine arts survey, Art III, Art IV, advanced band, applied music, advanced chorus, Dance III, jazz ensemble, Music Theory II, advanced orchestra, wind ensemble, or Studio Piano III. LSU will accept, as one unit of this requirement, two units of basic performance courses in music, dance, theater, or studio art.)
- NOTE: For automatic admission to LSU, an applicant’s high school academic grade-point average (GPA*) is calculated solely on the basis of the academic units shown in Table I, using the standard 4.00 maximum scale (“A” = 4; “B”=3; “C”=2; “D”=1; “F”=0). The weighted scholastic GPA is considered in the holistic review. (LSU Web site, Admissions Requirements: http://www.lsu.edu/paurec/freshman.shtml)

Changes in the Current Undergraduate Student at LSU

To understand how these admissions standards were changing the face of the LSU student body overall, one must focus on the goals that were established by the Flagship Agenda in terms of how these changes would affect an average incoming student’s profile by 2010. The “projected outcome” of Action 1 in the Flagship Agenda stated that:
1. The LSU student population will be highly competitive with peers: freshman profile of 3.6 overall high school grade point average and average 26 ACT/1200 SAT, freshman-to-sophomore retention rate 88-90%, 5-year graduation rate of 55%, 6-year graduation rate of 64% (LSU Web site, Flagship Agenda Action Plans and Outcomes http://appl003.lsu.edu/acadaff/flagship.nsf/$Content/Action+Plans+&+Outcomes?OpenDocument).

The actual outcome as of the fall of 2006 had the incoming class at LSU as having the following credentials:

In the fall of 2006, the average incoming freshman at LSU attained a 25.3 ACT/1160 SAT (compared to a 24.4 ACT/1110 SAT in 2003), with an average high school GPA of a 3.5. The retention rate from freshman-to-sophomore was 82.6%. These goals are within reach before the 2010 deadline however, the declining student graduation rates in Louisiana will have an effect on these numbers, unless a proactive approach is taken to out of state recruitment (LSU Web site, Quick Facts http://www.bgtplan.lsu.edu/quickfacts/2006fallfacts.pdf).

Clearly, the change in admissions standards had a positive effect on the quality of the student body at the University. The goal that was instituted for the overall profile of the average incoming student was nearly reached in the fall of 2006, four years ahead of schedule. With this being determined, there was one problem that the Flagship institution of Louisiana faced: the change in demographics of high school students that were graduating in the state of Louisiana.

**The Changing Louisiana High School Graduate**

According to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, “the Louisiana High School graduation rate expected to decrease by nearly 15% in the next ten years” (as cited by Randle, 2006). With the increasing admissions requirements put forth by the Flagship Agenda, the scope of undergraduate student recruitment would have to adjust to this changing climate. In order to make this adjustment, an emphasis would have to be placed on the recruitment of non-resident students who met these qualifications for admissions.
As of the fall of 2007, the percentage of non-resident students enrolled at LSU was 18%. In order to keep in line with the increase in admissions standards, this number would have to increase to well over 20% in future years. This is the message that was delivered to the Division of Outreach, via personal communication, by Dr. Jim McCoy, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management at LSU.

**Organizational Structure of the Division of Outreach: Fall 2007**

A brief outline of the organization structure of the Division of Outreach in the Office of Undergraduate Admission and Student Aid for the fall of 2007 was as follows. All of this information was taken directly from the 2007-2008 Division of Outreach Recruitment Plan, which was printed annually every August, and distributed to departments and colleges across the LSU campus:

- Higher Administration: One Associate Director
- Three Classified Staff: Administrative Coordinator 4, Administrative Coordinator 3, Administrative Specialist A.
- Two Coordinators: one of which also serves as an Enrollment Advisor in the New Orleans area and the other as the alumni recruiting coordinator
- Three Regional Recruiters (Enrollment Advisors) in the cities of Houston, Dallas and Memphis
- Six Enrollment Advisors housed in Baton Rouge: three of which recruit in-state students and three of which that recruit out-of-state students.
- 12 professional staff members, along with three classified members (15 Total). All professional staff members act as recruiters.

The individuals who were primarily in charge of the recruiting aspect of the office
were those who held the title of Enrollment Advisor. The Enrollment Advisor’s primary job duties included:

- Identify prospective students, their parents, counselors, and alumni
- Participate in school visitation programs
- Initiate follow-up communication with students who were contacted personally at college programs and/or high school visits
- Respond to inquiries from high school principals, counselors, and alumni regarding admission requirements, particularly undergraduate admission requirements
- Conduct follow-up surveys of students who sent ACT and/or SAT scores to the University
- Maintain contact with counselors, principals, and alumni in target areas.
- Participate in cross training with University departments involved in the enrollment process.

**Challenges of Future Recruitment**

Clearly, the scope of the Enrollment Advisor’s duties was quite broad. This, however, was not the challenge facing the Division of Outreach. The challenge was how to maximize the efforts of these seven Enrollment Advisors to cover and recruit all 50 states in the U.S. Four of the seven Enrollment Advisors/Coordinators spent the entire year recruiting in the state of Louisiana alone. Obviously, with limited resources, this was not possible. The goal was to find other ways to find not only individuals to emulate some of the aspects of the Enrollment Advisor’s job duties, but also to find a large number of these individuals who lived across the U.S. One solution to this problem was to engage in actively recruiting volunteer alumni to help with the recruitment effort. To
be effective, those individuals at LSU who participated in the development of this program must have an understanding of what volunteerism involves, and the theories behind what made a volunteer organization successful.

**Theoretical Framework: Volunteerism and Motivation**

Wilson (2000) discussed the basic definition of volunteerism:

Volunteerism is any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or cause. Volunteering is part of a cluster of helping behaviors, entailing more commitment than spontaneous assistance, but narrower in scope than the care provided by family and friends (p. 215).

The focal point of this definition provided by Wilson was the time that was given *freely* to benefit another person, group, or cause. For quite some time, scholars had been studying what would motivate an individual to give of himself or herself to another person, or for the purpose of this study, to another group or organization. Understanding the combination of these two phenomena was important in order to establish a basis for a volunteer program coordinator to drive more individuals to volunteer on behalf of their cause.

Balenger, Sedlacek, and Guenzler (1989) discussed this phenomenon:

The relationship between volunteers and the organizations they serve is dictated by two elements: volunteer motivations and organizational needs. The point of contact between these two elements is the actual volunteer experience, which should satisfy the needs of both the volunteers and the organization which they serve (as cited by Culp & Schwartz, 1999).

McCammon (1999) added to this notion of motivation and volunteerism, “research indicates people volunteer when they identify a cause rather than an agency or a program. By committing to a cause their commitment is generally deeper and longer in term” (as cited by Tarifa, Arcemont, & Hebert, 2004). Clearly these statements were somewhat contradictory due to the fact that McCammon believed that a cause would
dictate the motivation of the volunteer however, the cause could be one of several motivations.

Clary et al. (1998) backed this notion of motivation for volunteerism by citing six potential motives for volunteering:

Values (expressing altruistic and humanitarian values); Understanding (acquiring learning experiences and/or exercising unused skills); Social (strengthening social relationships); Career (gaining career-related benefits); Protective (reducing negative feelings about oneself or addressing personal problems); and Enhancement (growing psychologically), (as cited by Finklestein, 2007).

The motivations that were highlighted in these six motives had to do with a specific cause, most of which were personal development. Leipper (2000) backed this notion, “Volunteering can lead to personally satisfying endeavors, career changes or paid employment. Volunteering provides individuals with an opportunity to work with people from a variety of backgrounds, educational experiences, and age groups” (as cited by Tarifa et al., 2004).

Each of the examples of volunteerism given above revolved around one central theme, which is a need to not only be motivated, but a need to belong. The literature below will highlight this sociological phenomenon.

**Volunteerism: The Need to Belong**

Wolford, Cox, and Culp (2001) stated “Volunteers want to learn new things and want to be affiliated with the organization and people in the program” (p. 6). A 1999 study by Culp and Schwartz with tenured 4-H volunteers agreed with this notion:

Tenured 4-H volunteers who attend state recognition banquets are not motivated to begin or continue their service to 4-H in order to receive individual recognition. Rather, tenured 4-H volunteers are motivated to begin their volunteer service due to an affiliation with either the 4-H organization or 4-H members (p. 2).
In what is perhaps considered to be one of the most significant studies of the human psychological need to belong as a fundamental tool for motivation, Baumeister and Leary (1995) first cited Maslow’s famous “Motivational Hierarchy”: “Maslow (1968) ranked ‘love and belongingness needs’ in the middle of his motivational hierarchy; that is, belongingness needs do not emerge until food, hunger, safety, and other basic needs are satisfied, but they take precedence over esteem and self-actualization” (p. 497).

Further in the study, Baumeister and Leary (1995) concluded the following regarding the need to belong:

The need to belong has two main features. First, people need frequent personal contacts or interactions with the other person. Ideally, these interactions would be affectively positive or pleasant, but is mainly important that the majority be free from conflict and negative effect. Second, people need to perceive that there is an interpersonal bond or relationship marked by stability, affective concern, and a continuation into the foreseeable future (p. 497).

In the realm of volunteerism, these features were important due to the fact that the volunteers must feel as though they were getting something in return for their effort. Starnes (2007) backed this notion:

Volunteers may develop perceptions that their nonprofit obligations will provide them something in return for their service. This concept of perceived reciprocity is often referred to as a “psychological contract.” Furthermore, volunteers may perceive their organization has not fulfilled its part of the contract. Perceived breaches may negatively affect the volunteer’s service to the organization (p. 26).

Handy and Srinivasan (2004) also discussed the need for a return on investment from the volunteer:

From the prospective of the volunteer, the value of their voluntary participation must be worth enough to induce donation of their time. This would include psychological benefits as well as monetary benefits. The total value of the benefits to them, monetary or otherwise, should, at the margin, be equal to the cost of volunteer participation…” (p. 48).
Organizational relationships, like human relationships, involved a sense of reciprocation. That is, the volunteer should feel as though they have gained something in return from their experience. As noted above, if this reciprocation is not evident, it could lead to the volunteer ending their relationship with the organization much as a human would with another. Baumeister and Leary (1995) furthered this notion when they stated “The need to belong is something other than a need for mere affiliation. Frequent contacts with non-supportive, indifferent others can go only so far in promoting one’s general well-being and would do little to satisfy the need to belong” (p. 500).

The same types of results for the need to belong have also been pinpointed for those volunteers who wish to participate in recruitment on behalf of a college or university. In a 2002 qualitative study of volunteerism by Zeilstra, volunteers were asked why they would give their time for their university. Zeilstra stated:

Three of the four volunteer leaders said the number one reason they agreed to service is because they cared about the institution. As an aside on the topic of motivation, which is not the focus of this study, it is interesting to note the consistency of responses (p. 25).

Aside from the human need to belong, there are also other benefits that can arise from volunteerism. Two examples of these benefits are health benefits for the volunteer and economic benefits for the organization. Below, these benefits will be discussed, along with examples from the literature in which these theories are highlighted.

**Volunteerism: Health Benefits**

Another motivation that vaulted to the forefront was the link between volunteering and positive health benefits. Jenkins (2005) referred to this notion in a study conducted in Ontario, Canada that found “volunteering not only improves self-esteem, but helps reduce blood pressure, and enhance the immune system. Furthermore,
a study on volunteerism and mortality revealed that older adults who volunteer actually experience a lower mortality rate” (as cited by Swinson, 2006). A 1992 study conducted by Luks and Payne also cited health benefits, such as “a more optimistic outlook, increased energy, better perceived health, less depression, less pain, more ease in relaxing and sleeping, an improved immune system, better weight control, a healthier cardiovascular system, and a speedier recovery time from surgery” (as cited by Swinson, 2006). Oman, Thorensen, and McMahon (1999) contributed to this idea, “Because volunteering is an additional social role, it can be expected to produce the beneficial health effects associated with more social ties. Additionally, ‘the altruistic features of volunteerism might reduce destructive levels of self-absorption’” (as cited by Wilson, 2000).

Throughout the remainder of this study, the future shaping the volunteer alumni recruitment effort for Louisiana State University will be the primary focus. Several other forms of volunteerism are discussed that directly involved issues such as volunteer motivation, with each correlating to how the theory of volunteerism as a whole, will positively affect the outcome of this recruitment effort.

**Volunteerism: Economic Benefits**

Often, the economic value that volunteers provide to an organization is something that is rather difficult to determine. In a 2009 article by The Independent Sector, the organization reflected this notion:

It is very difficult to put a dollar value on volunteer time. Volunteers provide many intangibles that cannot be easily quantified. For example, volunteers demonstrate the amount of support an organization has within a community, provide work for short periods of time, and provide support on a wide range of projects (The Independent Sector Web site, Research – The Value of Volunteer Time [http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html)).
The Independent Sector, however, was able to give a solid assessment as to how much a volunteer’s time was worth to an organization. The Independent Sector based this information on the following criteria:

The value of volunteer time is based on the average hourly earnings of all production and nonsupervisory workers on private nonfarm payrolls (as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Independent Sector takes this figure and increases it by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits (The Independent Sector Web site, Research – The Value of Volunteer Time http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html).

With this information at its disposal, the Independent Sector determined that the estimated dollar value for volunteer time increased from $18.77 per hour in 2006 to $19.51 per hour in 2007. The study by the Independent Sector also broke down the hourly value of volunteers on a state-by-state basis. For example, the value of a volunteer from the state of Louisiana in 2006 was roughly $16.95 per hour. This is important to note because the value that an alumni recruiter would provide a university in another state could also be estimated.

One more fact regarding the study by The Independent Sector was that “when a doctor, lawyer, craftsman, or anyone with a specialized skill volunteers, the value of his or her work is based on his or her volunteer work, not his or her earning power” (The Independent Sector Web site, Research – The Value of Volunteer Time http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html). This is important to note with volunteer alumni recruitment for a university simply because of the diversity of professions that the alumni recruiters would represent on the recruiting trail. This information is also necessary should an Admissions Office attempt to determine the dollar value they are receiving from these alumni volunteer efforts.
Later in this chapter, different forms of volunteer alumni recruitment will be discussed and information will be provided as to how these volunteers benefit a university when they perform duties such as attending college fairs, hosting receptions in their homes, and raising funds for scholarships. Although it is difficult to assess how many hours these volunteer recruiters labor while participating in these events, an estimated cost as to how much money these actions saved the university will be provided.

**Different Forms of Alumni Recruitment Efforts: Introduction**

In an October 1999 article titled *When A University is Worthy of Its Name*, Fincher discussed the role of alumni as, “alumni understand and apply the truism that the purpose of education is to learn and to continue to learning throughout life” (p. 5). This statement can take several different forms in terms of alumni involvement with an institution.

First, learning must be viewed as a life-long endeavor that should be pursued by anyone, especially those who are educated in an institute of higher learning. Those who have been educated in the past will often attempt to further their education if given the resources to do so. Life-long learning is often the mission and goal of any institution.

Second, and more importantly, it is the role of the alumni to help others pursue their education and to take an active role in assisting these individuals in the pursuit of that endeavor. Universities have become aware that involvement from those who have succeeded with educational endeavors in the past are quite often the best individuals to showcase when attempting to get others interested in what they may have to offer.

The idea of using alumni for recruitment was a phenomenon that developed in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Habben and Stewart illustrated (1980) this point:
An indication that universities are accepting and, indeed, seeking alumni participation in recruitment is evidenced by the fact that the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) has sponsored two workshops on student recruitment during this current academic year, and both emphasized development of alumni programs. Successful programs have been established at Boston University, Brown, Carnegie-Mellon, Indiana University, Northwestern, The University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Redlands; these have served as important touchstones for other schools looking for principles and practices with which to organize their own efforts (p. 9).

In an article by Moden and Willifor (1988), another role that alumni can indirectly play in the recruitment process was outlined when a university decides to use “Alumni Research” in order to outline policy decisions, whether for an individual college or recruiting and admissions processes:

Information on study outcomes can be used in institutional planning and budget review at several levels. For senior administrators, alumni information provides guidance in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of various aspects of the whole university. For example, information from alumni about the university’s image affects the development and direction of public relations and recruiting (p. 71).

**Volunteer Alumni Program Coordinator: Establishing a Successful Program**

To give an idea as to how a successful alumni volunteer program should be formed, McCoy and Allen (1991) listed ten essential steps that should be taken to insure success. After attending the Annapolis Educational Institute, I have come to the conclusion that in order for LSU to move in this direction, the following steps will need to be taken for the program to become a success. Below, the ten steps are listed and defined. In Chapter 5, these steps will be synthesized along with the needs of LSU for the development of a volunteer alumni program.

1. **Assess Institutional Needs** – Does your institution need a cadre of dedicated people in the field working to educate prospective students about your academic offerings?
2. **Set Goals for Volunteer Involvement** – Volunteers are successful when they are perceived as important partners in an important effort. They need to know what they are doing and how they will do it.
3. **Establish Resources and Funding for Support** – Volunteers are not free. They *must* be supported through staff time and material. If you are going to ask them to do a job then you must be able to provide them resources to do it well.

4. **Identify and Recruit Volunteers** – A key player in identifying your prospective alumni volunteer pool is your Director of Alumni Relations. The Alumni Office should be on board at the beginning and asked to develop an outreach effort to identify who may be interested in recruitment.

5. **Assign Activities Based on a Planning Calendar to Meet Set Goals** – Use a regular calendar to plan activities as it is much more familiar to the alumni than an academic calendar.

6. **Set Success Parameters Based on Identified Outcomes** – Volunteers want to know if their efforts are paying off. Parameters to success are very important and the recognition of those who reach their goals is also a crucial element to any successful program.

7. **Establish an Information Exchange Mechanism with Volunteers** – This exchange can occur by telephone, newsletter or computer hook-up but it must occur.

8. **Gather Outcomes and Maintain Records** – **Formulate a Bottom Line** - Accurate record keeping is essential if you wish to establish a cost/benefit analysis of any volunteer effort. Records should be kept on events attended, prospective students, and conversations of enrolled students as well as cost to accomplish your goals.

9. **Evaluate the Degree of Success** – This evaluation should occur yearly and be based on the positive and negative outcomes of your program.

10. **Revamp Goals and Resources Based on Bottom Line Evaluation** – Of course, the obvious last step is to continually upgrade your program to achieve institutional goals. In addition, as goals are reached, they need to be revamped and deleted or replaced. (p. 109-112).

Dawson (1994) focused on the perspective of an alumni volunteer recruiter.

Dawson lived in the Pacific Northwest and served as an alumni recruiter for Wellesley College. She discussed how much she enjoyed her involvement with the program and how much satisfaction she received when discovering students she recruited for the University were enrolling. She provided several rules “to keep in mind as you expand your own program”:

1. Do enlist the help of your local alumni leaders in recruiting enthusiastic alumni volunteers.
2. Do take time to discuss the job with new volunteers so they fully understand their responsibilities.
3. Do provide training and clear instructions about what you expect.
4. Do ask volunteers to maintain up-to-date files on local schools, which they can make available to the admissions office for future reference.
5. Do respond promptly to volunteers’ calls and letters.
6. Don’t take volunteers for granted (p. 41).

The rules listed above somewhat mirrored those of McCoy and Allen (1991), however, these were written from the perspective of an alumni volunteer who eventually went on to work in the admissions office of the aforementioned institution.

Now that one could gather an idea as to how a successful alumni volunteer recruitment program should be run, examples of alumni volunteer efforts are highlighted below. The first section outlines what specific types of duties alumni volunteers will be asked to perform, along with the manner in which these alumni were given the proper information needed to recruit prospective students. This section focuses on the need to continually develop these volunteer alumni, along with theoretical framework to enhance the effort. The second section involves the discussion of literature to support specific types of degree programs in which alumni were asked to participate, and whether or not these interventions were successful. In some cases, suggestions were given by the writers of the literature as to how to improve this volunteer effort. With each example that was given, the writer discussed whether or not this practice is currently in place at LSU if it pertained to the type of curriculum or program that is offered at LSU.

**Volunteer Alumni Program Coordinator: Training and Development**

It was essential that, prior to a volunteer alumnus being asked to represent the University, they must be properly trained and developed to handle the task at hand. If one were to reflect upon McCoy and Allen’s (1991) ten steps above for developing a successful program, steps four, six, seven, and eight directly involved the development of the volunteer coordinator. It was important that the university representative that is
appointed to coordinate this effort was well versed in volunteer development. Vineyard (1993) stated the importance of this fact:

The volunteer coordinator of the next century will have to command a broader range of expertise to be able to meet the challenges of leading volunteer efforts within organizations. Far deeper than knowing how to plan, organize, staff, direct, control, and reward, the Volunteer Program Executive will have to move far beyond these basic functions of management to embrace techniques and strategies that are both complex and independent (as cited by Boyd, 2003).

Bengels (1999), McKay et al. (1998), discussed the basis of volunteer development and how it should be shaped:

Development should be a comprehensive, continuous process through which individuals can extend, update, and adapt their knowledge, skills, and abilities to enhance their performance and potential. It may include training – instruction in specific skills for particular tasks, but development has a broader, long-term focus. A comprehensive development program introduces volunteers to an organization’s philosophy, mission and activities; helps cultivate the “big picture” of service; provides a sense of individual strengths and needs; and prepares volunteers with the information and skills needed to perform their assignments (as cited by Kerka, 2003).

Brudney (1990) also identified four activities in which alumni volunteers need to be competent, “(a) volunteer recruitment and publicity; (b) interviewing and screening volunteer applicants; (c) orientation, teaching, evaluating and recognizing volunteers; (d) serving as a resource and expert on all components of volunteer involvement and coordination as chief advocate for the volunteer program” (as cited by Culp & Kohlhagen, 2004).

While McCoy and Allen’s (1991) steps did, in fact, deal with the volunteer program and its development, more emphasis should be placed on the volunteer themselves. One of the most recognized volunteer development models that highlighted each area of Brudney’s list of competencies was the GEMS Model for Volunteer Administration. Designed by Dr. Kenneth Culp III in 1998, GEMS was an acronym for
“generate, educate, mobilize, and sustain” (Culp & Kohlhagen, 2004, p. 1). Among these four categories of the GEMS model, there are eighteen phases that are outlined as areas of need.

**The GEMS Model: Category One – Generate**

The first category of the GEMS model was “Generate”, which involved the phases of needs assessment, writing job descriptions, identifying, recruiting, screening, and selecting (Culp & Kohlhagen, 2004, p. 1). As mentioned, the needs assessment of volunteer alumni to assist the recruitment effort was the driving factor for the establishment of this volunteer organization. The job description for the volunteers was also noted, as well as several methods that are used to identify, recruit, screen and select.

The most important phase of the Generate category was the identification and knowledge of the volunteer base. Culp (1996) conducted his own study of 4-H volunteers in 1994 to determine whom to target for future volunteer service. This was important not only for Culp, but also for all 4-H Volunteer Leaders because the findings helped to develop other programs that would also ultimately shape the volunteer leader of the future. Three distinct findings of Culp’s study were as follows:

1. The profile of the “average” 4-H volunteer, as identified by this study, was a 43 year old married woman whose children were involved in the 4-H program.
2. Current and former volunteers were demographically similar with four notable exceptions: former leaders had fewer children enrolled in 4-H programs, had lived in their homes a shorter period of time, spend more than one hour per week more than current 4-H volunteers on 4-H activities and gave their own 4-H clubs a significantly lower rating than their current leaders.
3. Volunteer 4-H leaders were similar across time and geographic location (p. 52).

In a 2007 article Finkelstein noted “According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2006), 32.7% of adults between 45 to 54 volunteer, making them second only
to those ages 35 to 44. Volunteering does decline (to 24.8%) in those 65 and older” (p. 7). Steinberg and Rooney (2002) noted that “females are more likely to volunteer and give more hours to volunteering and individuals with more than a high school education are more likely to volunteer” (as cited by Tarifa et al., 2004). These facts mirrored Culp’s findings about 4-H volunteers almost exactly; however, these statistics did not necessarily reflect the average current volunteer alumni representatives at LSU. Of course, each representative held a degree higher than a high school education. Also, of the 270 current volunteers, 105 of them are females, with 165 being male. The average age, however, fell right into the majority that is listed above, which was roughly 50 years old.

This was important to note also because, as of 2006, the majority of Alumni Associations that represented LSU in different locations across the county (not necessarily working as volunteers for the Division of Outreach) were led by male representatives (Chapter Presidents). Also, according to the LSU Alumni Association, the majority of the members of these associations were alumni who have graduated from college more than five years prior. Generally, these individuals joined once they had established themselves in a career, a family, and had money and or time to donate to the University.

The GEMS Model: Category Two – Educate

The second category of the GEMS model was to educate. This category involved the phases of “orienting, protecting, providing resources, and teaching” (Culp & Kohlhagen, 2004, p. 1). The Division of Outreach followed several standard practices that other universities utilized in terms of educating their volunteer alumni. These methods fit right in with Culp’s GEMS model because each method gave information
that oriented the volunteer on LSU’s current mission, protected the alumni by providing factual information for the volunteer to recruit with, resources were paid for (in full) by the University, and the teaching methods were supplied. The following paragraphs list a few examples.

Before an alumni volunteer could be put before prospective students and parents, they should be able to answer questions about what the university has to offer, or they should be somewhat aware of the changes that were taking place on a daily basis on campus. Living a long distance away could often limit the alum’s knowledge of what new activities are taking place across the campus. To remedy this problem and maximize the advertisement of the university, recruiting offices were publishing manuals that alumni can bring with them to these college programs in case they were confronted with questions from prospective students and parents.

Christion (1994) writes:

Manuals are useful for training alumni recruiters, but they can be costly and difficult to update. The University of Redlands has solved this problem by offering fact sheets instead. They give details about college’s fairs as well as UR’s curriculum, admissions process, and campus life (p. 40).

Beginning in 2003, LSU printed an Alumni Recruitment Manual that was approximately 250 pages long. While it was very descriptive and comprehensive, it was thought to be too long. After conducting interviews with two other large universities in reference to their alumni recruitment efforts, these universities sent copies of their manuals to LSU for reference. These manuals were much smaller and the content within the manuals were just as effective. It was concluded that, beginning in 2007, LSU would follow this method.
Another effective method that universities used for preparing alumni is a form of a training program. Fogg (2008) illustrated this point, “The value of alumni is directly related to how well trained they are…Some are willing, but have a limited scope” (p. B13).

An example of this was also given by McCoy and Allen (1991):

Intense training weekends are held in June at a selected Commonwealth Campus. These weekends draw members and leaders together to share ideas, receive training and informational updates, and are recognized by the University for their outstanding achievements and service. Training is supplemented by a training videotape and a variety of related publications, including a Feedback newsletter produced three times a year (p. 107).

Hoover and Conner (2001) found that volunteers responded better to job responsibilities when they understood and were trained to the job assigned (p. 2). With this in mind, LSU employed a weekend training program for its alumni. This program took place every other summer, and involved the top alumni volunteer recruiters from across the country. Normally, there were approximately twelve to fifteen participants who travelled to campus. The program took place over two days, with presentations given by both the Division of Outreach and the alumni volunteers. Ideas from both parties were shared along with recognition of the top volunteer alumni’s accomplishments. On two separate occasions, in 2003 and 2005, I personally coordinated this training effort.

**The GEMS Model: Category Three – Mobilize**

The third category of the GEMS model was mobilize. This category had three distinct phases: “engaging, motivating, and supervising” (Culp & Kohlhagen, 2004, p. 1). The Division of Outreach chose to engage its volunteers in several different forms: attending college programs, hosting student receptions, and scholarship fund raising. The
manner in which these individuals were motivated was directly related to the studies that were cited previously that revolved around the affiliation with the University. The supervision takes place by having a representative from the Division of Outreach attend a program with new volunteer alumni in order to assist them with any questions they may have.

Another benefit that should not be overlooked was the net benefit a university would gain financially from having volunteer alumni participate in these types of programs. In a 2004 study conducted by Handy and Srinivasan, an evaluation of net benefits of hospital volunteers was analyzed with astounding results:

Using 31 hospitals in and around Toronto and surveying hospital volunteer administrators, hospital clinical staff members, and volunteers themselves, a striking pay-off for hospitals was found: an average of $6.84 in value from volunteers for every dollar spent – a return on investment of 684% (p. 28).

One must keep in mind, however, that the use of volunteers was not always a “free” endeavor. Handy and Srinivasan (2004) illustrated this point, “hospitals incur costs in recruitment, administration, liability, supervision, and recognition” (p. 30). Although the need for volunteers at a university differed than the needs at a hospital, as was the case in the aforementioned study, the cost and cost benefits must be observed. For each type of program listed below in which alumni volunteers participate, the cost and cost benefit will be discussed in order to show how an institution would gain from their participation.

**Alumni Involvement in Recruitment: Attending College Programs**

Sending alumni recruiters to college programs has proven to be a rather cost-effective endeavor for any institution. In the case of LSU, the cost of travel for an Enrollment Advisor to fly to a city such as Los Angeles could between $500 to $1,000,
plus the costs for a hotel, rental vehicle, meals, and the price of shipment of recruitment brochures to that particular location. Total costs for type of endeavor would exceed as much as $3,000. By using an alumnus to cover the program, the University would save on every item listed above with the exception of the cost of shipping materials. This cost was normally around $250, which was dependant on the size of the college program and number of students that were expected to participate with interest in the University. By virtue of having the alumni participate, the University would potentially save up to $2,750. If the alumnus was successful in promoting the University, thus generating applications and having students ultimately enroll, the benefits to the University then become a net gain in application fees, tuition, and room and board. Suddenly, this $250 investment had paid for itself, and its overall net gain would literally be immense.

Zimmerman (1996) discusses this avenue of volunteerism:

The benefit of a college fair or reception is that prospective students learn more about the college or university from an alumni representative who offers a new perspective on careers, the college experience, finances and other topics. The eventual benefit for a college or university is enrollment of a prospective student. The cost of a college fair or reception is minimal and paid for by revenue from application fees, deposits and tuition (p. 4)

Another example of alumni attending a college program was given by Christion (1994), “The University of Redlands sends pairs of older and younger alumni to college fairs. While a high school student can relate to a younger graduate, parents often find the older volunteer reassuring” (p. 40).

LSU attempted to use this practice when more than one alumnus was available, a rare situation. It was the discretion of the Coordinator of Alumni Recruitment and the Division of Outreach as to whether or not one alumnus could handle the program alone. Many programs that these volunteers were asked to cover could have as many as 1,000
participants. Naturally, if this were the case, then the volunteer would often be asked to bring along an assistant.

**Alumni Involvement in Recruitment: Hosting Receptions**

Many universities encouraged volunteer alumni to host special receptions in their homes. Christion (1994) writes:

The University of Western Ontario sponsors Senior Send-offs in a graduate’s home for incoming students. Alumni mingle with parents and students for the first 30 minutes and then present a slide show of campus. The volunteers end the evening by answering questions and giving out door prizes (p. 40).

Fogg (2008) also discussed this approach; “Admissions programs use alumni to connect with potential students through such varied activities as interviews, college-admissions fairs, and receptions for accepted students” (p. B13).

LSU encouraged this practice and experienced some success with alumni who had volunteered to open up their homes to prospective students. Alumni in cities such as Houston, Dallas, Jackson, Mobile, Birmingham, and Atlanta have hosted receptions. A format similar to the one mentioned above had been used for these sessions and the feedback from the participants was generally very positive. So positive in fact, alumni were encouraged every year to host as many as two receptions; one in the spring and one in the fall.

Financially, the benefit of having a volunteer alumni host a reception was astounding. A typical reception that is hosted on a University campus, specifically at LSU, would cost approximately $5,000 for room rental, food, invitations, and room set-up. On several occasions, if an alumni volunteer hosted the reception, the University would often not encumber any costs whatsoever. Much like college programs, the
overall benefit to the University could be infinite, dependant on how many students that attended the reception applied and enroll to the University.

**Alumni Involvement in Recruitment: Scholarship Fund Raising**

Many volunteer alumni groups contributed to the recruitment effort by hosting receptions that also raised money for scholarships. Some alumni auctioned off memorabilia from the University, or simply asked for donations. The money that was raised was granted to a student from their area and was intended solely for the purpose of attending that institution.

The University of Pennsylvania is a great example of this type of effort:

Penn Alumni’s Mid-Atlantic Regional Advisory Board (MARAB) celebrated its goal-breaking $7.5 million scholarship drive with a reception in Washington, DC, for 140 donors, scholarship recipients, and parents on April 23….MARAB beat its own target of $5 million a year ahead of schedule (University of Pennsylvania Alumni Web site, 2007: http://www.makinghistory.upenn.edu/node/198).

In the example listed above, the alumni from a specific region of the country banded together set forth a goal for scholarship fundraising, and succeeded admirably. This example may be unique in the sense that the amount of money raised was a rather large amount, but this is a good indicator that this type of program could work.

LSU’s alumni have been involved in scholarship efforts in the past and have made the announcement that they would continue to do so. The best example of this effort was crawfish boils that the alumni across the country hosted in order to raise money for local scholarships. During these programs, alumni would often ask for donations, or have an “LSU auction” in which they would obtain collectables from the University to auction off to the participants. Once this program was over, the scholarship money was then given to a student from their area that had expressed sincere interest in enrolling at LSU
following fall. If the student chose not to attend the University, the offer was then rescinded and given to another student.

In terms of financial benefit, the only cost often encumbered by the University was memorabilia that was donated to the different alumni organizations. Since the University was the organization that produces the memorabilia, the cost was minimized and the net benefit increases. Also, with the scholarship money being raised by the organization, this was another net benefit for the University; the University did not have to come “out of pocket” to produce the scholarship money for these particular students. That was extra money the University could allocate to other recruitment endeavors.

**Alumni Involvement in Recruitment: Tele-Recruitment Campaigns**

Many recruitment offices also utilized the time from their volunteer alumni to have these individuals make calls to prospective students. Christion (1994) wrote:

Redland’s volunteers also make phone calls to enrolling freshmen. “Alumni often speak to students and parents especially if the family is from the east coast,” Allen says. “Parents on the other side of the country have lots of questions because their children are traveling all the way to California to go to college” (p. 40).

While LSU did not involve alumni in its “Tiger Call” program (Benoit, Gilman & Prudhomme, 2006, p. 110-112), this method of recruitment would be beneficial for the Division of Outreach to consider. The Graduate Assistant in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Student Aid operated Tiger Calls. A program should be put together in which applicants to the University would be contacted by alumni in their areas during the course of their senior year of high school. Alumni would encourage these students to enroll in programs at LSU such as Spring Invitational, Orientation, or attend any one of the number of recruitment programs sponsored by the
Division of Outreach (Benoit et al., p. 103-110). If the student was not able to attend these programs, alumni could simply call and answer questions about the University.

The cost to the University would be that of a long-distance bill. Since many universities like LSU already had a tele-counseling program in place, this would be deemed as a cost that is already in existence and thus, much like receptions and scholarship fund raisers, the net benefit was immediately gained.

**Alumni Involvement in Recruitment: Online Recruitment**

Online recruitment is viewed as the wave of the future for colleges and universities across the country and across the world. Designing effective recruiting techniques on the web was a struggle that many universities were facing. Whiteside and Mentz (2003) highlighted this developing phenomenon:

> Those responsible for design and content on an institutional Web site should assume the mindset of the student. Most college marketing focuses on the product - the programs, the majors, and services provided by the college. This approach often leads to a “so what?” reaction on the part of the student. A more effective approach is to focus on the benefits and value of the experience (p. 63).

A great example of a university that was taking this approach with the use of alumni recruitment was the University of Missouri-Columbia. Beginning in 2003, the University had begun to use its Web site as a station for student blogs, which detailed both current and past students’ experiences at the University. Hollingsworth (2006) wrote, “Soon the admissions office started referring potential students to the University of Missouri Alumni Association’s Web site, which originally featured two freshmen but has grown to include blogs from upperclassmen and even a recent graduate” (p. 2).

The success of this online recruitment approach was a “trailblazing” effort in terms of alumni recruitment. With technology acting as an ever-changing variable in student recruitment, involving alumni in this effort would be important for admissions
and recruiting offices across the country. In terms of cost and net benefit, this is another service that, in some cases, would cost the University little to nothing. Every significant institution of higher education in the country should have in place a public relations office that was constantly using technology, specifically the World Wide Web, to promote itself. With this service for the University already available, the cost of having volunteer alumni participating in an existing program is minimal, at best. The volunteer would enhance this program and add also the feeling of additional service and care that is represented in the other forms of participation that are listed above.

**Alumni Involvement in Recruitment: Minority Populations**

One of the most important issues facing recruiting offices across the country at selective enrollment institutions (institutions with admission standards) was that of recruiting minority students. Institutions that fall under the category of selective enrollment were often deemed to be institutions that were not minority friendly.

In order to cope with this perception, many universities were turning to their minority alumni for help. As mentioned prior, online recruitment was becoming a priority of many universities, and the University of Michigan has found a way to deal with these two issues: “The University has also recruited minority applicants through the creation of a Spanish-language Web site and efforts by minority alumni and current students to reach out to prospective students” (The Michigan Daily, http://media.www.michigandaily.com/media/storage/paper851/news/2005/06/13/Opinion/An.Encouraging.Sign.Recruitment.Efforts.Key.To.Minority.Applications-1430680.shtml).

Other institutions were battling this problem by attempting to recruit minority students with the use of alumni in another fashion: the recruitment of minority faculty.
The University of Mississippi sought to remedy this problem by doing just that. Payne and Blackbourn (1994) wrote:

A system was developed to call every minority alumni and ask them if they knew of anyone that might interested in any of the faculty positions or of a contact who might be aware of such a person. This process would assist us in leveraging the knowledge and contacts of existing networks and at the very least help to get the word to the targeted population (p. 2).

Not only was the University of Mississippi actively increasing its alumni network, it was also able to establish a network of minority alumni who could not only be future recruitment volunteers, but also future members of their faculty. Faculty members that were also alumni were key players in any recruitment effort, particularly when students were able to visit with these individuals during the recruitment process.

Another approach that universities were taking with minority recruitment and alumni was the use of current graduate students as key members in the recruiting process. Myers et al. (1998) gave recommendations on how to develop a stable and continuing ethnic minority graduate student pool:

1. Incorporate ethnic minority graduate students as full partners in the development of ethnic minority recruitment and mentoring programs.
2. Have ethnic minority graduate students serve as recruiters for the program.
3. Have ethnic minority graduate students serve as research mentors and advisors to ethnic minority undergraduates.
4. Establish an ethnic minority alumni group, which can provide a valuable resource of trained consultants, clinical supervisors, adjunct faculty, recruiters, etc.
5. Use ethnic minority graduate students as alumni linkages back to their undergraduate universities and programs.
6. Focus special attention and efforts on ethnic minority student retention, graduation, and mentoring for academic, research, and professional careers. One of the most important criteria of a program’s readiness to train ethnic minority students is its record of success in training ethnic minority students (p. 3).
Just about every aspect of alumni recruitment was covered with this list for effective minority recruitment efforts. The use of minority alumni for not just recruitment, but also research, mentoring, and student retention was important for this effort to be successful. A minority student may often feel out of place in a university environment, instilling the initiatives listed above with fellow minority students would help to ease this transition. These suggestions should become a part of any graduate student program that wishes to retain minority students, and is also effective in recruiting undergraduate students to its program.

**Minority Recruitment: Challenges for the Volunteer Coordinator**

One of the biggest challenges for volunteer coordinators in any organization was the fact that minorities were less likely to volunteer, overall. Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1996) observed this notion “Data from a 1995 US national sample show 51.9% of whites and 35.3% of blacks having volunteered in the past month” (as cited by Wilson, 2000). Reasons for this phenomenon were discussed by Ferree, Barry, and Manno (1998):

Like age and gender, race makes a difference to what kind of volunteer work people do. Black volunteers focus on needs more pressing in the black community – efforts to deal with crime, provide human services, and organize local political initiatives (as cited by Wilson, 2000).

Hwang, Grabb, and Curtis (2005) backed the notion of community involvement as a motivation for minority volunteerism:

Here again, we can only speculate about explanations for our results, but they may indicate that, net of any socioeconomic, educational, religious, or other considerations, non-Whites simply have a strong sense of and experience with the unmet needs of the people in their communities (p. 400).

To remedy this potential roadblock, the Division of Outreach established two attitudes that were put into practice. The first was to establish that every recruiter that represented the office, whether they were an Enrollment Advisor, student ambassador, or
alumni volunteer was a “minority recruiter.” This approach was reflected in the literature in a 2004 article by Flanagan, Howard and Whitla. Flanagan et al. found three approaches that universities across the country utilized when establishing minority recruitment efforts, the second of which stated, “admissions officers, such as those at Agnes Scott, UC Berkeley, UT Austin, and Yale, work on the premise that everyone in the office is responsible for minority recruitment” (p. 2).

The second approach was to establish a position within the office that would assist with the recruitment of minority students and minority alumni volunteers. A “Coordinator for Minority Recruitment and Development” had been established within the office in the fall of 2007. One of this staff member’s primary initiatives was to go into the minority communities, targeting community-based organizations such as churches and recreational programs, in order to promote the benefits of LSU and what steps the University was taking to enhance the opportunities to minorities on campus. Flanagan et al. also discussed this trend that was starting to establish itself in minority recruitment efforts across the country, with the University of Stanford being a primary example. Flanagan et al. wrote, "Minority recruitment staffing at Stanford University offers a third approach. Stanford designates a recruiter for each ethnic community applying to Stanford, and these staff members coordinate recruitment activities for their respective communities” (p. 2).

**Alumni Involvement Recruitment: Quality of Service**

One of the most important and often over looked variables of volunteer service of any kind was the sense of perceived additional care and service that a volunteer provided. As one can see from the types of participation that were listed above, the alumni volunteer was visible to a prospective student in many forms. This can often serve as a
feeling of comfort to not only the student, but also the parents. In cases in which the alumni volunteer was recruiting on behalf of a university in another state or region, this additional sense of service was vital to the volunteer’s success. Handy and Srinivasan (2004) made this parallel with their study of hospital volunteers, “The contribution of volunteers results in an increase in the quality of perceived care in hospital settings (even with simple hand holding, information giving, and other nonmedical services)” (p. 31).

In the case of the volunteer alumni, this “hand holding” consisted of an assortment of actions such as describing the feel of a campus that was located far away, assuring the parents that their student would be taken care of even without their supervision, assuring the student there was a place for them at a university, giving the student first-hand information of ways to succeed in a university’s environment, the promotion of certain aspects of student life that the prospective student may find appealing, or, in cases of minor coincidence, an alumni volunteer that participated in the same major that the prospective student was seeking. Fogg (2008) discussed this point “More-recent graduates tend to connect well with prospective students, while older alumni connect with the parents” (p. B13). In terms of costs and net benefits, this additional perception of quality service is immense.

The GEMS Model: Category Four – Sustain

The fourth and final category of the GEMS model, sustain, consisted of five phases: “evaluating, recognizing, retaining, redirecting, and disengaging” (Culp & Kohlhagen, 2004, p. 1).

The evaluation process was also part of McCoy and Allen’s (1991) steps to a successful program, and has been addressed. Recognition, however, is an issue that has been debated for quite some time. Culp and Schwartz (1998) discovered that the
majority of 4-H Organizations recognized their volunteers with extrinsic rewards such as “plaques, certificates or pins, banquets, receiving complimentary fair passes, newspaper coverage, and receiving thank-you notes” (p. 2). The volunteers however, preferred the informal, intrinsic rewards such as “a thank-you note or a pat on the back, followed by attending recognition banquets” (p. 3). Reading between the lines of these results, one could conclude that just the recognition from their peers as being affiliated with the organization was an adequate reward.

The phase of retaining, redirecting, and disengaging, were all addressed in the final steps McCoy and Allen’s (1991) steps to success above. The evaluation process was one that has to be reconsidered year in and year out, depending on the scope of the program and the directives of the institution. The evaluation process was crucial for the continued success of the program. All data such as money spent, application numbers, student yield, and alumni participation must be taken into consideration in order to keep the program successful.

Alumni Involvement in Specific Degrees/Programs of Interest: Introduction

The use of alumni in recruitment for specific degree programs or specific forms of education (example: vocational education) was not a new practice. The studies below highlight this phenomenon and illustrate the effectiveness of alumni involvement in the recruiting process.

Four-Year Automotive Programs

In a 1999 study, Frisbee, Belcher and Sanders, wanted to determine what factors influenced students to attend four-year automotive programs. As part of their study, Frisbee et al. factored in the role of alumni because of the past success that other institutions had with the involvement of alumni in the recruiting process.
Isbell and Lovedahl (1989) “found that former students were consistently ranked within the top three recruitment techniques in their study of 169 universities. Based upon these findings, an up-to-date mailing list of graduates should be maintained with ongoing correspondence” (p. 40). Edmund and Devier (1980) added, “that teachers who were alumni tended to be important in the recruitment process” (as cited by Frisbee et al, 2000).

With this factor added to the study, Frisbee et al., (2000) surveyed 607 students to determine what factors influenced them to attend this type of four-year program. The results, specific to alumni recruitment, were as follows:

Findings of this study conflict with the past research in regard to the importance of alumni. In past studies, alumni were consistently rated as top recruitment methods. In this study, students indicated that alumni were important to them, but were on the low end of the important category (p. 12).

Although alumni were not viewed as one of the most important factors in recruitment for four-year automotive programs, they were still viewed as a strong influence. Frisbee et al. suggested in their future recommendations for recruitment that “Alumni also have a strong influence on prospective students and faculty are encouraged to continue their association with alumni” (p. 13). Perhaps these automotive programs were not using their alumni effectively. No information was detailed on the exact role the alumni played in recruitment, other than the fact that they were a visible factor that did assist the recruitment effort.

In a follow-up study conducted in 2006, Sandford, Frisbee and Belcher, wanted to determine the awareness, knowledge, and sources of influence that would lead students to enroll in four-year automotive programs. In other words, were the students aware of the
resources that were available to them regarding this type of institution before they actually enrolled?

The survey involved three specific phases: 1) sources of student awareness of four-year automotive programs, 2) sources of influence for student decisions to attend four-year automotive programs, and 3) awareness and influence items.

In all three phases, alumni involvement, whether the alumni were from that specific university, or alumni of the four-year automotive program in that university, placed in the middle range of a 20 item survey. In phase one, Sandford et al., found that alumni influence (alumni of the university, and alumni of the four-year automotive program) ranked eighth and ninth, respectively (p. 4). In phase two, Sandford et al., found that alumni influence ranked ninth and tenth, respectively (p. 5). Finally, in phrase three, Sandford et al., found that alumni influence ranked tenth and eleventh, respectively (p. 6). Once again, alumni influence had played a factor, that according to Sandford et al., “deserved attention” (p. 5), however, no information was given as to the specific role alumni played in the recruitment effort, or what steps were taken to enhance their role.

**Technology Education Programs**

In a 2004 study, Gray and Daugherty looked into the factors that would influence students to enroll in technology education programs. As part of the study, two separate questionnaires were generated, “one for technology teacher education faculty members in the Midwest and one from TECA undergraduate students in technology teacher education preparatory programs” (p. 3). These questionnaires were designed to answer two questions:

1. What were the effective recruitment techniques and influential factors through which current technology education undergraduate students discover, are attracted to, and enter the field of technology in Midwest institutions?
2. What recruitment techniques, as perceived by technology teacher education faculty members in the Midwest, are effective in recruiting undergraduate students into the field of technology education? (p. 3).

For question one, the questionnaire distributed to the undergraduate students was divided into three sections, with section two asking “student respondents to identify the types of recruitment techniques that their university or department had used (if any) to influence or recruit them to enter the technology education profession” (p. 5).

The results were listed as follows: “Eight respondents split the number one recruitment technique equally among the following: (a) university recruiter visiting their high school, (b) brochures, (c) face-to-face interactions with faculty, and (d) contact with alumni” (page 5). It was concluded that, once again, alumni played a role in the recruitment effort, but the article failed to detail what the exact role of the alumni recruiter was in terms of how the alumni were able to garner student interest in the university.

For question two, faculty members were asked to rate the different recruitment methods used by the University for enrolling undergraduate students. As with the student survey, the faculty survey was also divided into three sections, with section two highlighting recruitment techniques that faculty were aware of as deemed “effective” along with what the faculty were “actually doing” in terms of recruitment. What was determined, in the case of alumni recruitment, was that faculty viewed alumni as a somewhat effective form of recruitment; however, only 14% actually worked with the alumni or were aware of the availability of alumni to assist in the recruitment effort (Gray & Daugherty, table 4, p. 10). Once again, it is my conclusion that the alumni recruiting effort could be more effective if it were better utilized.
Agronomy and Crop Science

In a 2005 article written by McCallister, Lee, and Mason, the declining enrollment in agronomy programs across the country set off an alarm among those in the field. Several suggestions were given in order to remedy this situation, most of which focused on the recruiting aspect of the programs available.

In the fall of 2003, McCallister et al. surveyed a select group of 54 U.S. universities that awarded degrees in agronomy and crop science. One of the focal points of the survey conducted focused on recruitment methods, and what changes universities were making in recruiting the “non-traditional (i.e. non-farm or ranch) students” (p. 27). One of the up-and-coming methods involved the use of alumni. McCallister et al. wrote:

A third thrust involved more people-oriented efforts such as using alumni of the major to be representatives at high school career fairs and even having an annual pizza lunch with university general studies advisors, to make them aware of the potential for majors in agronomy, crop science, and related fields for current university student who are not yet decided on a major (p. 27).

Clearly, these 54 institutions (LSU was included) were utilizing alumni volunteer recruiters effectively, in particular, promoting the fields of agronomy and crop science. This trend was not something highlighted by just one university, but all of them. This was a situation in which the alumni were properly used (representatives at a college program) and the word of its success was obviously spreading from institution to institution.

Entrepreneurship Programs

In a presentation by Secor and Arion during the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA) annual meeting in 2005, the development of a strong entrepreneurial studies program was a point of discussion. In the conclusion of the presentation, Secor and Arion stated:
Developing a strong and sustainable entrepreneurial studies program requires careful planning and consideration to issues and considerations such as recruiting, orientation, advising, providing academic support, and creating an environment that promotes student involvement, engagement and success. Developing such a program can provide the following benefits to the college and its students: Improved relationships with students and alumni and increased satisfaction with job/school…Improved alumni involvement…Improved alumni giving…Strengthened partnerships with community (p. 25-26).

This was another example of effectively utilizing alumni for recruitment. The argument was also made that, in some cases, alumni should be integrated in parts of not only recruitment, but also as part of the curriculum; not in terms of curriculum development, but providing in the curriculum success stories of alumni that were involved, then having those same alumni present their stories either to a class or prospective students.

**Healthcare Management Education**

In a 2005 undergraduate program review of a self-study guide that was to take effect in 2008, the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) released a report outlining ways in which universities should shape their degree programs in order to make them more successful. One of the primary focal points was the “Professional and Alumni Linkages: The program must have established relationships with alumni and the professional community” (p. 11).

The review went on to list several ways in which this link should be established, “The program must have established linkages to alumni. This includes but is not limited to, alumni involvement in an alumni association, mentoring, internships, educational activities and program support” (p. 11). The review further suggested that the program should “describe how program alumni are linked to current students, faculty, and programmatic efforts” (p. 11).
Here was an example of using alumni for not only recruitment purposes, but also for working with faculty, helping students get involved with internships, mentoring current students, and offering other forms of program support. For an endeavor such as this, an alumnus with sufficient volunteer time would have to be involved.

**Alumni Involvement in Community Outreach Programs: Introduction**

The use of alumni to recruit individuals to become involved in community outreach programs was another common practice. Community outreach programs often have heavy volunteer involvement, which in turn would create a large number of individuals who could potentially volunteer to recruit more members. A few examples of this phenomenon are given to outline how these programs have utilized their alumni for the purposes of recruitment.

The driving factor around the use of volunteer leadership, specifically in the realm of extension, revolved around the theory that Snider introduced in 1985. Snider wrote:

In counties where volunteers assume leadership in the 4-H program the following results: (1) a stronger 4-H program, (2) clearer understanding of 4-H goals, (3) more volunteer ownership, (4) greater program diversity, and (5) increased support for 4-H (as cited by Fritz, Barbuto, Marx, Etling & Burrow, p. 40).

The results listed above also provided a backdrop of what those who coordinate alumni recruitment programs hope to attain when volunteer alumni assume this type of role in their area of the country.

**4-H Clubs**

4-H is a community program whose purpose is to reach children in adolescence in order to teach them life skill development. Cox (1996) stated that:

The mission of 4-H is to develop life skills among young people. In fact, life skills, the abilities that individuals learn that help them to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life, serve as the foundation of the 4-H program (as cited by Fox, Schroeder & Lodl, p 2).
The goal of this particular study was to determine what alumni of the 4-H program received from the program when they participated in it, and which alumni were still involved with 4-H programs in their community today. Astoundingly, despite all of the wonderful attributes that the cooperative extension program 4-H had contributed to their growth as an individual, many alumni did not give back to the program. Fox et al. viewed this as an opportunity to turn things around for the program, overall.

Fox et al. concluded:

It is somewhat surprising that the majority of 4-H alumni involved in this study are not involved in 4-H today. With the positive influence 4-H had on the lives of many of these 4-H alumni, a golden opportunity for volunteer recruitment exists. Given the multiple states where these alumni now reside, a national 4-H alumni database could serve as a valuable tool to track and recruit volunteers for support of Cooperative Extension 4-H programs.

Future research should be conducted to:
Investigate relationships among 4-H Club membership, life skill development, and participation by ethnicity and gender,
a. Search for other predictors of life skill development, and
b. Replicate research concerning life skill development with other youth development programs.

Cooperative Extension must continue to document the value that 4-H programs have on life skill development. As impact results are documented, the value of 4-H programs must be reported to funders and decision-makers, volunteers, parents, and potential members. It is through this documentation and reporting that the positive impact of 4-H on young people can be better understood by all (p. 6).

In the articles above that discussed the use of alumni in programs such as four-year automotive programs and the technology education programs, perhaps it would be in the best interest of those involved with these programs to conduct a study similar to the one conducted by Fox et al. It would be in their best interest to find out what the successes of the program were from the perspective of the alumni themselves, and relay that message to prospective students. This was the model that is adopted by
many universities and institutions, and clearly was something from which community outreach programs, among others, could also benefit.

**Community Leadership Programs**

In a 1993 study conducted by Earnest, it was determined that those who participated in community leadership programs were more likely to develop not only increased leadership skills, but also increased social networking skills: a key to promotion of any type of program. Alumni that attained the ability to network within their communities were more likely to be successful in terms of leadership, and thus, make whatever program they are promoting more successful.

In the conclusion of his study of community leadership programs, Earnest (1993) stated:

> Alumni were highly complementary of their respective leadership programs. The most common benefits reported by alumni were: (a) increased networking within the community; (b) developed a greater understanding and ability to interact with people; (c) increased self-confidence and the personal motivation to become actively involved in community affairs; and (d) developed an understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of their leadership responsibility as a citizen (p. 5).

One of the variables that I wished to expound upon in the future study of alumni recruitment was the variable of social networking. In terms of alumni recruitment, social networking was important because it was the basis of which the alumni was able to not only be viewed as a leader in the community, but to also have the ability to promote a specific program within that community. The university should use this as leverage in order to promote itself, even if this alumnus now lives hundreds of miles away. An alumnus that has a strong social network in their community will have the ability to promote their institution of higher learning in a positive fashion to a larger
audience, which in turn, would increase the applicant base of that institution to a part of the country it has not been able to reach.

**Rotary International**

Rotary International (RI) is a world-wide organization of businesses and professionals who pride themselves on various forms humanitarian services. As of 2007, there were approximately 1.2 million Rotary members (Rotarians) in over 200 countries that belong to approximately 32,000 clubs.

In 2005, the Rotary organization detailed a report on a trend with youth programs that it found rather disturbing: despite all the time and money put forth in this effort, many of the youths who were alumni in these programs sponsored by Rotary were not becoming involved in the Rotary organization after leaving these programs. The potential for growth was there, as stated in the report:

In 2004-2005, Rotary programs produced over 100,000 alumni. Most of them have had great experiences in their programs and are excited about Rotary. They are members of the Rotary family and have had significant exposure to all that Rotary has to offer. Some are already qualified to join Rotary (Rotary Club Website, Alumni Recruitment Summary Discussion: http://www.rotary.org/RIdocuments/en_pdf/memb_alumni_recruitment_summary.pdf, p. 3).

Clearly, something terribly wrong was happening here, but Rotary knew it had an idea worth pursuing with its strong alumni base. To determine the issues, Rotary conducted a survey among members of its alumni of youth programs to determine what was keeping these individuals from becoming lifetime members. They discovered five reasons alumni identified for not being interested in joining Rotary:

1. Too many other commitments/not enough time for Rotary
2. Cannot make attendance at weekly meeting
3. Membership is too expensive
4. Age difference between self and current members

5. Clubs are all (mostly) men (p. 2)

In order to capitalize on this opportunity to attract future members pass them by, the Rotary organization conducted a survey of its current members to determine what could be done in order to get more alumni involved. The results were as follows:

There are many strategies that clubs and districts can implement to better utilize alumni as a source of potential members, including:

- Build strong relationships with current program participants
- Develop an action plan for keeping alumni involved in Rotary activities and transitioning them into Rotarians
- Promote alumni so that the other Rotarians understand their importance
- Ask alumni to join – and continue asking even if initial invitation is declined
- Help alumni find clubs that meet their needs
- Use alumni to start new clubs
- Maintain contact with younger alumni until they are qualified for membership
- Involve alumni in other programs
- Involve alumni in club and district activities (p. 3).

This is a fantastic model that any organization, educational institution or community leadership program could use not only to promote its benefits, but also to recruit their alumni for the purpose of future recruitment. If one were looking into this model for alumni recruitment for university purposes, they could conceivably change the word “alumni” to “current students” and translate the programs available for these individuals into other forms of volunteerism that could benefit the university in the future. Despite being a model for an organization, it is my opinion that this model could be implemented for a university of any size.

**Alumni Involvement at Other Major Universities: Introduction**

Now that examples of alumni involvement have been highlighted in several forms, the focus will revert back to the original topic: the need for an alumni recruitment
program at LSU. With the changes in the overall face of the University that were highlighted in the Flagship Agenda, along with the changes needed in the phase of recruitment that were highlighted by the new admissions standards and the declining Louisiana high school graduate, LSU has begun to model its alumni recruitment effort after several other comparable institutions. These institutions discussed below are comparable in size, research status, admissions standards, and popularity.

**The University of Michigan**

In an interview I conducted with Jim Van Hecke, Director of Alumni Programs at the University of Michigan, information regarding the University’s alumni recruitment program was given. Much of this information can be found on their Web site at: http://alumni.umich.edu/recruitment/index.php.

As of 2007, the University of Michigan had an alumni recruitment network that consisted of nearly 900 volunteers. Each year, these volunteers attended approximately 150 college programs and came in contact with over 10,000 potential students. The University of Michigan’s alumni program was best known for its “adopt a school program” in which alumni were asked to become involved in two or three high schools in their specific community. These alumni were asked to establish a strong relationship with the guidance counselor(s) at these schools, visit these schools three or four times a year, become acquainted with top students from these schools, and continue to promote the University of Michigan as a viable option as a future education provider.

Alumni at the University of Michigan were also responsible for establishing several scholarship programs a year in their respective communities. Many alumni also opened up their homes for perspective students during the course of the school year in order to promote the institution. Alumni who are not able to host a program in their
home have also participated in other ways by hosting programs at restaurants or their places of business; all of which are positive advertisement for the institution.

The University of Michigan currently has three employees who focus on alumni recruitment. Along with Mr. Van Hecke, there was another member in the Office of Admissions that assisted him with this effort, along with an individual who worked jointly with the Office of Admissions and the University of Michigan’s Alumni Office. This concerted effort is important in keeping in contact with current alumni and also locating new alumni.

Mr. Van Hecke was also an active member involved in the Annapolis Educational Institute, which I will summarize later on in this chapter.

**Pennsylvania State University**

In an interview I conducted with Cathy Schwab, Assistant Director for Alumni Recruitment at Penn State University, information regarding the university’s alumni recruitment effort was given. Much of this information can be found on their Web site at [http://www.alumni.psu.edu/membership/benefits/programs.htm](http://www.alumni.psu.edu/membership/benefits/programs.htm)

As of 2007, the Penn State University alumni recruitment program consisted of over 1,000 volunteers, whose primary purpose was to; attend college programs, host receptions, establish scholarship programs in their respective communities, keep in formal contact with parents and students in their areas, and identify students who can qualify for Penn State’s admissions standards. This network covered all fifty states in the continental United States and has been in existence since the 1970’s.

At the time of this study, Cathy Schwab was the primary contact for this program. She traveled around the country meeting with these alumni recruitment groups, assisting them with issues such as training for recruitment programs, establishing their scholarship
program, and hosting receptions. Cathy was responsible for working as a liaison with Penn State’s Alumni Association when she was on campus. Cathy was also a member of the Annapolis Educational Institute, which will be summarized later.

An Overview LSU’s Current Alumni Recruitment Effort: Introduction

Beginning in 2003, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Student Aid’s Division of Outreach (formerly the Office of Recruiting Services) began to undertake an effort that would utilize alumni as a key recruitment tool for out-of-state students. The effort began with roughly 25 volunteer alumni across the country, with only one member of the Division of Outreach focusing their effort on this program. By the fall of 2005, with minimal advertisement or campus-wide assistance, this number of volunteer had increased to approximately 125 members.

In the fall of 2006, The Division of Outreach established a full-time position, and hired an individual whose sole purpose is to work with these alumni. The title of this position was Coordinator of Alumni Recruitment. This individual had managed to increase the number of alumni volunteers from 125 to 250, with representatives in over 25 states. While this person had done a wonderful job coordinating this effort, there was a need for assistance, along with the need for a position that would work with both the LSU Alumni Association and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

The current strategy with alumni volunteers was to target key areas across the country using geo-demographic data that was offered through the Recruitment Plus program (the Division of Outreach’s exclusive recruiting software). These data emphasized areas in which there would be students who would not only meet admissions requirements to attend LSU, but would also be able to afford the non-resident tuition.
The Office of Admissions, through various forms of outreach, determined if there was an alumni association in this area, contacted the president of this association, and inquired about interest in recruiting prospective students. The Alumni Association then determined who the “point person” for this area/region would be, and this individual kept in contact with Alumni Recruitment Coordinator regarding which programs to attend and what students to target.

**Changes Needed**

In reference to the literature that has been cited, as of 2007, LSU was clearly on the right path in terms of the direction in which the alumni recruitment program was taking. All of the programs that were mentioned by Jim Van Hecke from the University of Michigan were in place at LSU at the time this study was conducted. A Web site was being developed that would mirror those of Michigan and Penn State, along with an alumni newsletter that would be published twice a year with updates regarding the success of the alumni recruitment program. An alumni recruitment manual had also been published every year since 2003 and was disseminated among the alumni volunteers. Much like the manual that was available at the University of Michigan, this manual detailed almost every aspect of the University from scholarship programs to student services offered.

The primary change needed in terms of the Division of Outreach was the need for another position to assist the current Coordinator, along with a joint position between the Division of Outreach and the LSU Alumni Association. This position was highlighted earlier by McCoy and Allen (1991), but was also a point of emphasis by Myers (1998):

Running an alumni/admissions program requires a harmonious working relationship, despite inevitable conflicts. Before alumni volunteers can identify and assess prospective students, the admissions and alumni offices have to forge a
strong partnership, with each office giving consideration to the other’s goals and problems.

“An alumni/admissions program has two purposes: to extend the reach of the admissions office and to give alumni an opportunity to serve,” says Dorcey Baker of Brown University’s alumni-schools program (p. 28).

One benefit for the alumni association at the university is the fact that these alumni volunteers often become potential future donors. Fogg (2008) discussed this point:

Once they are involved with recruiting, they can be tapped for other activities, such as advising recent graduates on careers or even serving on boards of trustees. Another major benefit: Alumni who donate their time may in turn donate their money too (pg. B13).

Lucely for LSU, James S. McCoy, cited earlier in this study, was also serving as the Vice Provost for Enrollment Services at LSU. Dr. McCoy had been working with the Division of Outreach on improving the alumni recruitment effort and was determined to have a position that would work with both the Division of Outreach and the LSU Alumni Association. Steps had been taken to have this position in place as early as the fall of 2008.

In addition, more money was needed for the Division of Outreach’s budget in order to fit the needs of an expanding volunteer base. These needs included: the increasing costs of college program fees, postage for materials sent to alumni, and money to cover promotional items distributed by alumni. An approximate need of $20,000 had been established in order to cover all of these costs.

**Evaluation of Programs**

In many of the examples listed above, the alumni volunteer recruitment programs underwent some form of evaluation to determine its progress. For many, suggestions
were given as to how to improve upon the program. McCoy and Allen (1991) also stressed the need for ongoing evaluations in their “Ten Steps to Ensure Success.”

Van Deun summed up the evaluation process by stating:

Alumni administration is an art rather than a science. You try to use as much scientific information as you can – like quantitative analysis, cost-benefit analysis, and so on – but basically it becomes the art of knowing how to work with people. First you identify their needs, and then you respond. The best alumni associations have the artistic ability to respond positively to a changing society (as cited by Scalzo, 1993).

This statement was the basis of what the writer here was trying to solve: what caused the current volunteer recruiters at LSU to be successful? Despite the small numbers of volunteers in this new program, these individuals had made a difference in the recruitment effort. This is the gray area that I had discovered in the research up to this point. Literature was discovered that supported the need for alumni volunteers in recruitment efforts for many types of organizations: prospective students respond to alumni volunteers, but why? That was the question that I hoped to answer. In all of the evaluations that have been given in support of alumni recruitment up to this point, not one has mentioned the variable that has made his/her story a success, other than participation.

**The Annapolis Institute**

Professional development activities for volunteer managers were essential in the continuing development of not only the individual in charge of a volunteer organization, but also for the organization itself. If the individual learned how to develop and maintain successful volunteers, naturally, the organization would see the benefits. This phenomenon among 4-H Extension Development Agents was identified in a 2002 study conducted by Hange, Seevers, and VanLeeuwen. Hange et al. discovered that the
majority of 4-H Development Agents were, in fact, not attending professional
development opportunities that were provided to them. Hange et al. note:

This study revealed that 4-H Youth Development Agents do participate in
professional development activities related to volunteerism but at a relatively low
level. Agents most frequently participate in seminars and workshops, followed by
reading journals and other volunteer-related literature. Professional development
activities Agents engaged in the least were academic and continuing education
courses (p. 2).

This was a problem that must be resolved in any volunteer development
organization. Fortunately, for those who were coordinating a volunteer recruitment effort
for an institute of higher learning, there is the Annapolis Institute.

On the eleventh through the fourteenth of June 2007, I attended the Annapolis
Educational Institute conference. The workshop was designed to help professionals in a
university setting establish an effective alumni volunteer recruiting base. Their mission
was stated as follows:

The Annapolis Institute faculty teaches you to recruit, organize, train, and
maintain an effective network of volunteers. You will have the opportunity to
develop the basics or enhance your present program. The Institute faculty has
developed a proven core curriculum that is based upon success in the field.
Institute participants will be able to develop or enhance a successful plan based
upon their individual needs. This is what makes this Institute so unique
(Annapolis Educational Institute Web site:

The Annapolis Educational Institute was viewed by many in higher education as a
primary factor in establishing alumni as an effective recruiting tool. In the fall 2004 issue
of the Enrollment Management Review, Jim VanHecke stated:

The Annapolis Institute focuses on best practices occurring in alumni student
recruitment. In some EM (Enrollment Management) models, alumni student
recruitment assists the admissions office in converting admitted students into
paying students; in other approaches alumni help to increase the applicant pool.
With a little training, dedicated alumni fashion their communications to potential
students in a way that answer questions through a personal, meaningful response
(pg. 6).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine effective recruiting strategies utilized by volunteer alumni that assisted the Division of Outreach during the course of a recruiting cycle. The information that was gathered in this study should be used to enhance the current alumni volunteer recruitment effort at LSU by sharing what makes these volunteers successful in recruiting prospective students both inside and outside of the traditional recruiting setting. In this chapter, I explain the reasons why I chose to use the qualitative interview process to collect data as the methodology for this particular study. I explain my methods to ensure credibility, protection of the participants, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, ethical issues, guiding questions, and my personal biography as it pertains to the study.

Interview

Rubin and Rubin (2005) discussed the benefits of the interview process; “Through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate…You can extend your intellectual and emotional reach across age, occupation, class, race, sex, and geographical boundaries” (p. 3).

Rubin and Rubin also discussed the meaning of evaluation research, “The purpose of evaluation research…is to discover if programs and policies are working, for whom they are working, and what could be improved” (p. 9). The type of research I conducted is considered evaluation research, based upon the fact that I used the results to not only add to the body of knowledge for alumni volunteer recruitment research, but to also discover whether or not the current practices in place by the Division of Outreach needed to be enhanced.
I purposefully interviewed a group of specially selected alumni that were volunteers in the LSU alumni recruitment network. I specifically chose these individuals because of their success during the past few years with their involvement of undergraduate student recruitment. Each attended college programs, hosted student receptions in their homes (or coordinated with fellow alumni to host such an event), visited high schools to mingle with students and guidance counselors, and participated in an annual scholarship fund raiser. Each of these individuals had devoted 40 hours or more during the recruiting season while volunteering to assist LSU. Each had also established an applicant pool in their area of the country that otherwise would not have existed if it were not for their efforts. Several of these individuals were known in their communities as the “LSU contact” should any prospective students or parents have questions about what the University had to offer.

Each interview took place over the phone, with the use of a digital voice recorder that was capable of recording sessions that could potentially last up to four hours. Although I did not expect each interview to take this amount of time, the digital recorder also served as a more effective means to transcribe the interviews. I continued to conduct these interviews until data saturation was reached. In other words, the subjects unknowingly correlated responses and experiences that were similar in nature in terms of reasons for volunteering, methods of approach in recruiting, and expectations of their work. This “saturation” was determined by the process of triangulation with Dr. Krisanna Machtmes, my committee chair.

The transcriptions of these interviews were handled by a hired professional that followed the LSU Internal Review Board’s (IRB) standards of ethics. The IRB approval number for this study was E4334.
Credibility

Patton (1999) discussed credibility issues within qualitative analysis:

The credibility issue for qualitative inquiry depends on three distinct but related inquiry elements:

- rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data that are carefully analyzed, with attention to issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation,
- the credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self; and
- philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry, that is, a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling and holistic thinking (p. 2).

In discussion of Patton’s inquiry elements, the first phase revolves around issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation. During the qualitative research process, Patton (1999) felt as though these issues could be resolved by simply reporting the details of the methodology and allowing the researcher to draw their own conclusion. Patton stated, “The qualitative researcher has an obligation to be methodical in reporting sufficient details of data collection and the processes of analysis to permit others to judge the quality of the resulting product” (p. 3).

Triangulation, in terms of qualitative research, referred to “the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanations. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of data collection and analysis provide more gist for the research mill” (Patton, 1999, pg. 4). Patton later explained “It is possible to achieve triangulation within a qualitative inquiry strategy by combining different kinds of qualitative methods, mixing purposeful samples, and including multiple perspectives” (pg. 5).

I performed what Patton (1999) referred to as “triangulation of theory”, which was “using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data” (pg. 5). I achieved this
by purposely interviewing several experienced alumni volunteer recruiters to determine what motivated these individuals to volunteer in this program, what motivated these individuals to encourage prospective students to attend LSU and what these volunteers expected to receive from their participation. Triangulation was achieved by reflecting upon the data attained and theories that were developed with Dr. Krisanna Machtmes.

The second inquiry method, which revolved around the credibility of the researcher, was dependent on my ability to relate to the volunteers that I interviewed. The fact that I helped to establish this volunteer recruitment program and had a hand in building it into what it was at that time (2007) was sufficient in dealing with this topic. I had helped train these individuals to go out and recruit students, and in some cases, had been their year-round resource for assistance when needed.

The third inquiry method was the philosophical belief that qualitative inquiry, methods, inductive analysis, purposeful sampling, and holistic thinking all provide value to research. As a researcher, it was my job to convince those who analyzed my findings that the qualitative research method was the correct method for the study. In this particular case, I found this to be true because it was the experiences of these volunteer alumni within this particular program that would ultimately shape the future of this program. Their opinions on the creation, formation, and direction of this program were vital. Patton discussed this topic when he stated, “It is common for divergent stakeholders to disagree about program purposes, goals, and means of attaining goals” (pg. 8). Certainly, if this were the case within this organization among some of the key members, the researcher needed to get to the bottom of it.

Another credibility issue within qualitative research was that of transparency. Rubin and Rubin (2005) described transparency:
Transparency means that a reader of a qualitative research report is able to see the process by which the data were collected and analyzed. A transparent report allows the reader to assess the thoroughness of the design of the work as well as the conscientiousness, sensitivity, and biases of the researcher. Interviewers maintain careful records of what they did, saw, and felt and include portions of this record in their final write-ups so the reader can determine where and how the researcher went beyond what the interviewees said (p. 76).

The steps taken in order to maintain this transparency will emerge later in this chapter when I discuss data collection and analysis.

**Protection of Subjects**

In order to achieve this goal, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Louisiana State University (approval number E4334). Prior to each interview, each individual participant received an e-mail detailing the purpose of the study, along with a confidentiality agreement. Once each interviewee agreed to participate in the study via e-mail response; consent to perform the interview was inferred. Each participant was notified that the study was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at anytime. All information gathered was kept in a safe by the researcher. The researcher purchased transcription software in order to transcribe the interviews. All of the information is to be destroyed three years to the date upon completion of the dissertation.

**Sampling Strategy**

I purposely chose these individuals because of their experience with the volunteer recruitment effort at LSU. I solicited many of these individuals during my employment at LSU. It was my hope that this information could be used in the future to “train” new alumni volunteers in order to enhance the alumni recruitment effort as the program at LSU continued to grow.
As mentioned prior in this study, these individuals were one of the primary “point persons” in their regions who helped to coordinate the recruitment effort in their area. These volunteers supervised groups of other volunteers that consisted of as few as one other member to as many as ten to twenty other members. Once the Division of Outreach established which programs in their region needed representation, these individuals were contacted, received the proper information, and were asked to make sure they or one of their other volunteers carried out the program, whether it is a school visit, reception in a home, or scholarship fund raiser.

Data Collection

Participant’s interviews took place over the phone with a digital voice recorder. The following procedures were conducted for each interview:

1. Prior to the interview, each participant received a written form detailing their rights as a participant in the study. Geographic data regarding each subject was collected at that point, however, this was also the first question asked in the interview because of its importance to the recruitment effort.

2. Interviews were digitally recorded, with notes being taken during the process. Once the interview was complete, I recorded my own reflections.

3. Each interview was transcribed by a professional that followed all rules and regulations prescribed by the LSU Institutional Review Board.

4. Once each interview was transcribed, a copy of each interview was e-mailed to each participant to ensure the accuracy of the interview, also known as a “member check.” The member check took place and no changes were required.

5. I interviewed the subjects until the data reached the point of saturation, which was determined during triangulation with Dr. Krisanna Machtmes.
6. If deemed necessary, follow-up interviews were to take place once each participant read through the transcription of the initial interview, or member check process. No changes were needed upon the completion of the member check. Once again, participants were notified of their rights as a subject of the study. As mentioned prior, however, these individuals were excited about being a part of this program and were eager to share their information.

Data from the interviews were transcribed using computer software that was designed to transcribe each interview into Microsoft Word format. Any additional notes that I took along with the interviews are also listed in these transcriptions.

Data Analysis

Rubin and Rubin (2005) defined qualitative data analysis as:

The process of moving from raw interviews to evidence-based interpretations that are the foundation for published reports. Analysis entails classifying, comparing, weighing, and combining material from the interviews to extract the meaning and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of events into a coherent narrative (p. 201).

It was my job as the researcher to take the results of the interviews, code the responses, interpret the descriptions given by the volunteer alumni, and shape the theoretical framework of this analysis.

The type of theory development that I deemed necessary in this study was referred to as the grounded theory model. Rubin and Rubin (2005) discussed the steps taken with this approach, “this model argues that coding, recognizing concepts and themes, and theory development are parts of one integrated process. Further, the concepts and themes must emerge from the data without the use of literature” (p. 222).

Once the interviews were recorded and the transcription was complete, the first phase was recognition. Rubin and Rubin (2005) defined recognition as the stage:
In which you find concepts, themes, events and topical markers in your interviews. A concept is a word or term that represents an idea important to your research problem; themes are summary statements and explanations of what is going on; events are occurrences that have taken place; and topical markers are names of places, people, organizations, pets, numbers – such as dates, addresses, or legislative bills – or public laws (p. 207).

Since I operated under the guise of the grounded theory approach, this phase was taken one interview at a time, looking for concepts, themes, events, and topical markers that gave clues as to the alumni’s view of volunteerism on behalf of the institution.

The second phase was to examine the different interviews in order to clarify what each of the concepts and themes meant and, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) stated, “synthesize different versions of events to put together your understanding of the overall narrative” (p. 207). In other words, I needed to draw parallels into the meaning of what the volunteers were expressing. For example, if a volunteer discussed the fact that they hosted a “successful” scholarship fund raising event, what would, in the mind of the researcher, be deemed to be an “unsuccessful” fund raising campaign?

The third phase involved the process of coding each individual interview separately. This was a time consuming task, but the results from examining each interview separately and developing the basis for theory building in each proved to be quite rewarding.

**The Grounded Theory Approach**

The grounded theory approach involved what is referred to as open coding, which is different from the standard coding process of data analysis. Rubin and Rubin (2005) referred to the standard process of coding as “systematically labeling concepts, themes, events, and topical markers so that you can readily retrieve and examine all of the data units that refer to the same subject across all interviews” (p. 207), whereas open coding
was a process to “code each passage of every interview as they go along rather than develop a separate list of concepts and themes that are then applied to the interviews” (p. 222). I felt that open coding using the grounded theory approach would be more beneficial simply because each interviewee may have had a different interpretation of alumni volunteerism. Instead of developing concepts and themes that would cover all of the interviews prior to the coding process, this approach allowed for concepts and themes to build through the examination of each interview. Throughout the examination of the limited literature that was available for alumni volunteer recruitment, specifically, many of the theories of volunteerism that stood out for community-based programs did not stand out in university-based volunteer programs. This disparity in the literature for alumni volunteers at the university ultimately fueled this approach.

The final stage of the data analysis process consisted of theory building. The theory building model for the grounded theory approach was quite a bit different than most standard theory building approaches. Charmaz (2000, 2001) Strauss and Corbin (1990) discussed the basic principle of this approach, “Grounded theorists attempt to build theory solely from the data at hand and in doing so emphasize theory building rather than theory testing” (as cited by Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) further emphasized the basis of this approach, “The core of the grounded theory approach is that theory emerges (in an inductive way) directly from the interview or observational data through a series of steps labeled analytical induction” (p. 240). The reader must keep in mind that inductive reasoning is a process that moves from specific facts to detailed principles (syn: generalization) (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/inductive%20reasoning).
As the definition of *inductive reasoning* stated, this was a term that was synonymous with generalization. Rubin and Rubin (2005) discussed this unique relationship between generalization, theory testing, and theory building:

Because grounded theory is about theory building rather than testing theory, it is less focused on finding the limitations of a study or the extent to which the results can be generalized. All the cases or sites in the study are used to modify the themes and emerging theory, leaving none left over in which the theory can be tested (p. 241).

Fielding and Lee (1998) gave a summary of the steps in the analytic induction process and how this formulation of theory building is ultimately developed:

1. Identify the phenomenon you want to explain.
2. Formulate a rough definition of that phenomenon.
3. Formulate a working hypothesis to explain the phenomenon.
4. Study one case.
5. Ask “do the facts of this case fit my initial hypothesis?”
6. If the answer is “Yes” go on to study the next case. If the answer is “No” EITHER redefine the phenomenon to exclude the case OR reformulate your working hypothesis.
7. Continue Step 6 until you have a “universal solution,” that is, until there is a practical certainty that the emerging theory has accounted for all of the cases which have been considered. However, the occurrence of any negative case must lead to either redefinition or reformulation (as cited by Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, this type of theory building was essential in my research simply because there were no clear theories that were centered on why alumni spent time volunteering on behalf of their university. One of the most basic questions, such as “What was it that motivated you to begin volunteering your time for the purposes of recruiting prospective students to LSU?”, could result in many different outcomes. A hypothesis that could be formed from the question above would be that; Volunteer alumni dedicate their time to the University because they have a passion for LSU. Several other possibilities might include 1) philanthropy toward the University, 2) a hope for the alumni’s children to learn about and attend LSU, and 3) this activity would satisfy
community service requirements for some other organization. This type of theory building was essential for the completion of the research project.

**Ethical Issues**

Rubin and Rubin (2005) discussed ethical issues in qualitative research as having two areas of concern; the knowledge of an Internal Review Board’s (IRB) design of your work, and the relationship between researcher and interviewee. Regarding first issue, they wrote:

To handle the IRB’s insistence on knowing the design of the project before the research can begin, you can do one of two things. One possibility is to offer the IRB examples of the type of question and typical wording of questions, while making it clear that questions may evolve (p. 105).

A list of guiding questions was provided during the proposal process to avoid this problem.

Regarding the second issue of the relationship between the researcher and interviewee, Rubin and Rubin stated:

The transition from general informant to interviewee should be as natural as possible; pulling out a legal consent form to sign is an abrupt departure that says something has changed and now the conversation will be somehow risky…the form suggests a much more manipulative kind of research in which the interviewee is the passive recipient of some kind of treatment rather than an active partner (p. 105).

As of the conclusion of the study, no ethical issues surfaced regarding this interview process. Several alumni were notified in advance of the possibility of being involved as part of this research project. I stressed “possibility” because not all of those who were contacted initially were to be chosen for the interview process. Each expressed a desire to participate in this process because they felt as though it was a form of recognition of the hard work that each had put in volunteering their time for the University. Each stated that they did not mind having their answers appear in the body of
the dissertation, and each hoped that their contributions during the interview process would be used to further enhance the current effort put forth by all of the members of the volunteer recruitment network. Each interviewee gave their verbal and written consent prior to the interview process, and each had the option at any moment to stop the interview or remove their responses from the dissertation and its results.

**Guiding Questions**

Listed below were the intended guiding questions that were asked of the volunteers at the outset of the study:

1. Tell us your age, gender, profession, where you currently reside, your affiliation with LSU and how you found out about volunteering to recruit for LSU?
2. What was it that motivated you to begin volunteering your time for the purposes of recruiting prospective students to LSU?
3. Have you received any prior training on being a volunteer recruiter?
4. What is it that you like best about recruiting for LSU?
5. How would you define “success” as an alumni volunteer recruiter?
6. What, in your view, is the biggest selling point that LSU has to offer?
7. What type of students do you feel you have the most success recruiting?
8. How do you recruit students who may be in schools or communities that normally do not express an interest in LSU?
9. How do you approach minority students in terms of recruitment?
10. Do you find the Division of Outreach to be a valuable resource in your effort?
    
    When you correspond with Division of Outreach, do you ultimately get what you need?
11. How did you encourage others to become volunteer recruiters in your area?
12. Do you find the LSU Web site to be helpful to you and your effort?
13. Do students comment on the Web site as a tool that is effective for recruitment?
14. Do you receive feedback, if any at all, from students as to why they would not
    attend LSU? Would you like to receive this feedback?
15. If you could change any aspect about the way the Division of Outreach currently
    handles the alumni recruitment effort, what would it be?

Listed below are the guiding questions that were ultimately formulated. Additional
questions were added once demographic information from the volunteers was established
and other points began to surface during the interview process:

1. What was it that motivated you to begin volunteering your time for the purposes of
   recruiting prospective students to LSU?
2. Have you received any training prior to your initial involvement with recruiting? If
   so, what did this training involve?
3. What was considered a “success” when you first began recruiting?
4. What would you consider a “success” now after your many years of experience
   with the recruitment effort?
5. What do you believe is the biggest selling point LSU has to offer?
6. What type of students do you feel you have the most success in recruiting?
7. How do you recruit students who may be in schools or communities that normally
donot express interest in LSU?
8. Do you approach minority students any differently in terms of recruitment? (If the
   answer was “yes”, I would ask about their approach and how they determined this
   approach to be successful)
9. Are you viewed in your community as an LSU alum that can be approached in any type of setting to discuss interest in the University? Please provide some examples of this.

10. How do you encourage others in your area to become volunteer recruiters?

11. Do you find that these new volunteers have expectations in terms of what they will gain before they dedicate themselves to this effort?

12. Do you find that once they volunteer their time, you have success in keeping them involved?

13. Do you find that you and your fellow volunteers can interact with the parents of prospective students quite well?

14. What other forms of recruitment do you encourage others to become involved in outside of the traditional college fair?

15. Do you find the LSU Web site to be helpful in your recruitment effort?

16. Do students comment on the Web site as a tool that is effective for recruitment?

17. Do you receive feedback as to why a student would not attend LSU?

18. If the answer to the above question is “yes”, how do you counter this feedback?

19. Prior to 2007, did you find the Division of Outreach to be a valuable resource in your recruiting effort?

20. If you could change any aspect about the way the Division of Outreach handles the alumni recruitment effort, what would it be?

21. Do you feel as though there is a topic of further information that we may have left out that you would like to interject?
CHAPTER 4

ORGANIZING, ANALYZING AND SYNTHESIZING DATA

Introduction of Interviewees

The following introduction of the interviewees is intended to give basic demographic information regarding the research subjects. These individuals were purposely sampled based upon the following criteria: these volunteers were one of the primary “point persons” in their regions who helped to coordinate the recruitment effort in their area or assisted with this coordination effort; these volunteers also supervised groups of other volunteers ranging in number from one to twenty; once the Division of Outreach established which programs in their region needed representation, these individuals were contacted, given the proper information, and asked to make sure they or one of their other volunteers carried out the program, whether it is a school visit, reception in their home, or scholarship fund raiser. The names of these individuals were changed to protect their identity, however; their demographic information is factual.

Demographic Information

Seth – Seth is a 61-year-old white male that resides in Richmond, Virginia. Seth is currently an insurance consultant, a volunteer in his church and has been recruiting students in his area of the country for nearly 20 years.

Louise – Louise is white female who resides in Euless, Texas, which is a suburb of the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Louise’s profession is accounting. She also volunteers her extra time with her church and has been recruiting students in her area of the country for approximately 20 years.
Rita – Rita is white female whose profession is a medical equipment sales representative. Rita resides in Orlando, Florida. Rita volunteers her extra time at the local VA nursing home and has been recruiting students in her area for over 10 years.

Jennifer – Jennifer is white female who serves an Assistant District Attorney in Cyprus, Texas, which is near Houston. Jennifer volunteers her extra time with the local rodeo committee and has been recruiting students in her area for about 10 years.

Chad – Chad is a white male who works in the freelance entertainment industry and resides in Burbank, California, near Los Angeles. Chad volunteers his extra time with his church and has been recruiting students in his area for about 10 years.

Ross – Ross is white male who resides in Nashville, TN, where he practices law. Ross volunteers his extra time with his church and has been recruiting students in his area for over 35 years.

Interview Analysis: Introduction

All six of the alumni volunteer interviews are analyzed below. Each analysis includes a brief response to each of the guiding questions, along with other points the volunteer alumni recruiter may have shared that pertained to the topic. Once this initial analysis is complete, the next section of this chapter will summarize all of the significant findings of concepts, themes, events and topical markers that arose from the analysis these interviews. This process is taken directly from the Grounded Theory Approach, which is discussed in chapter three.

Seth

Seth has been recruiting students on behalf of Louisiana State University for approximately 20 years in the Richmond, Virginia area. Seth is in his early sixties, graduated from LSU in the mid-1960’s, and has been an insurance consultant his entire
career. Seth, like many fellow alumni volunteer recruiters, was solicited by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to begin spreading the word about LSU in his part of the country. When asked what his initial motivation was for joining this effort, Seth responded, “Mostly love for the school. Try to get kids to come down here and enjoy what we have. You know, what we all did. It’s a good place to go.”

When Seth was asked if he had received any prior training on how to recruit prospective students, he quickly responded, “no.” Since there was no prior training with his initial involvement, I asked him what the Office of Admissions expected from him and how he was to determine whether or not what he was doing was considered helpful or a success, he stated, “Initially, it was just about going out and meeting people. Meeting the kids. Telling the LSU story, getting them all excited and talking to them about what their interests are and what they want to do.”

When asked if the parameters for success have changed now that he has been involved with volunteer recruitment for nearly two decades, Seth stated that the main difference was that the Office of Undergraduate Admissions’ Division of Outreach would report application statistics to his group, and did a better job of tracking students that were interested in LSU. This began to improve with the use of prospect cards that students would fill out and request information from LSU. LSU was also tracking all correspondence with these students and letting the alumni know which students were most likely to attend LSU. This would encourage the alumni to keep in touch with the students throughout the course of their senior year.

Seth was then asked to discuss what he thought were the University’s main selling points. He stated, “The number of programs offered and what is encompassed in these programs.” He later pointed out that, despite traveling logistics, he encourages them to
visit campus. Seth believed that the beauty of the campus is a primary selling point. “We see them at the (college) fairs and we’ll say ‘go visit the campus.’ They have no idea about the beauty of the campus. No poster or brochure can show that.” It amazed Seth that he would meet students and parents from Virginia that had families in South Louisiana, and they had never visited LSU’s campus until he encouraged them to do so.

Seth was then asked to discuss what types of students he felt he had the most success recruiting. Seth replied, “The “B” students. The kids who are “B” and low “A” that don’t have the grades or the GPA’s to get into the University of Virginia. The kids we’re looking for are the average, everyday, run-of-the-mill normal kid. That is our target area, and they come flocking to us.” Seth was then asked if he approached students in communities or schools that may not normally be interested in LSU, “When we go out into the boonies, so to speak, the majority, 85% or so, are for Virginia Tech. They all want to go there. And we basically tell them we’re like Virginia Tech but farther south. Whatever Tech offers (academically, athletically, and socially), we offer.” Seth’s knowledge of the most popular colleges in his area was also an important dynamic in his recruitment effort.

Seth then discussed opportunities to recruit students outside of the traditional recruitment setting, such as a college fair, reception, or fund raiser. Seth stated, “People will come to me at church or people will come to me at business and say ‘Hey, my neighbor’s son or daughter is interested in LSU’. Or, people will just tell me that and what I do is at my own expense. I’ll go and I’ll get the brochures from home (that the University supplied) and all kinds of other stuff. I always throw in some Mardi Gras beads. I will often throw in a catalogue and mail it to them.” Seth then went on to give several examples of how he has recruited students from not only his church, but also his
bass club, which is another volunteer organization he works with. This type of social networking is also a key to success for any volunteer alumni.

Seth was then asked whether or not he handled his approach to recruiting minority students any differently. He replied, “No, not at all. However, we do look for the best minority students, but when they (minority) kids come up, it doesn’t matter (change our approach).” I found this interesting considering the push for minority enrollment that was being forged by the University for several years. Despite the fact that this message was being relayed to the alumni, Seth did not take any different approaches when talking with minority students.

Seth was then asked to elaborate on his methods for gaining interest from other alumni in his area to join the recruitment effort. Seth stated that he basically would just call them up and get them involved, but it had to be the right person. “If you don’t have the right person at that table (at the college fair), it can be a disaster. It can be very intimidating.” When asked if Seth knew of the expectations his fellow alumni volunteer recruiters had prior to joining he stated, “They do it to have a good time and because they love LSU.” Seth went on to discuss how he managed to attain a new volunteer in the Washington D.C. area, and now that volunteer is handling the entire D.C. area now on his own. The fact that Seth makes sure he has the right people in the right places at the right time ensures that they will have a good time, and thus, will continue to volunteer. That these individuals are content with just belonging to the organization with no recognition is proof that their expectations are minimal when they initially join.

Seth then discussed what other methods he and his fellow alumni use to recruit prospective students that did not consist of the traditional college fair. Seth stated, “We have our crawfish boil where we raise money for scholarships. We have $250 per
semester scholarships for kids from Virginia that attend LSU. We have two or three of those right now. We keep it very quiet.” This effort by Seth and his group does not go unnoticed. Although Seth could not specifically recall a prospective student whose decision to attend LSU may have been swayed because of this offer, he is aware that this extra money could be the difference between a student staying home in Virginia or coming to Louisiana.

In terms of having worked directly with parents of prospective students, Seth was asked whether or not he found the approach of alumni volunteers associating with the parents to be a successful endeavor. Seth replied, “You have to engage the parent and you have to bring the parent into the conversation. That is one of the secrets.” The fact that Seth is in his early 60s and has had children of his own graduate from college is also an experience he enjoyed sharing. This type of relationship building with the parents of a prospective student is priceless.

Seth was asked to discuss whether or not the LSU Web site was helpful in his recruitment efforts. With technology being at the forefront now, I was curious to find out if the Web site was a valuable tool with the volunteer recruitment effort. When asked if the Web site was helpful to him, Seth stated, “Yes and no. Sometimes I get lost on it trying to find out what in the world is going on here. It is a very helpful tool, but I have noticed that most of the kids want something in their hands.” When asked if the prospective students commented about the Web site, Seth responded, “Some kids are savvy on the Web site and some aren’t. For many, it is a matter of getting on the site, seeing what they want (quickly) and getting off.” When asked what could be done to improve the Web site, Seth stated, “Have a listing as to how or what the kids are thinking
Seth then reflected upon whether or not he gains feedback as to why students would not attend LSU. Seth responded, “Oh yeah. Too far. Logistics, period. That’s it. And the parents say the same thing.” When asked how he combats this issue, he replied “I tell them if they hop on an airplane from Richmond, they can be in Baton Rouge in 4-5 hours. It’s real fast. I say from here to Blacksburg (Virginia Tech Campus) it is 3-3 ½ (hour drive). Of course, it is the cost of transportation.”

Seth then discussed whether or not the Office of Undergraduate Admissions’ Division of Outreach was a valuable tool in the recruitment effort, prior to 2007. “Yeah, I think they are fantastic. They’re great. They are our lifeblood. We couldn’t do it without them.” Seth reflected upon the importance of the recruitment manual that was provided to his group. He often refers to this manual while standing at a busy table. This manual is another service that was provided to the Alumni beginning in the fall of 2004.

Seth stated that prior to 2007, he would have changed nothing about the manner in which the Division of Outreach handled its alumni volunteers, “Nothing I can think of because if we have a question, we can call and get it answered.”

Finally, Seth was asked to reflect upon other points of interest that may have been omitted during the interview process. He stated, “the Office of Undergraduate Admissions needs to get the effort back to where it was until the Spring of 2008, other than that, we enjoy doing what we do!”

Louise

Louise has been recruiting prospective students on behalf of LSU in the Dallas/Fort Worth area for approximately 20 years. She is an accountant and spends
most of her spare time volunteering for her church. When asked what her initial motivation for assisting LSU with this effort was, she stated, “Me, personally, just the love of LSU, just realizing the opportunities that I had there. I think, then, as far away as I am, it was a connection, wanting to tell other people about it.”

When asked if she had any formal training prior to her initial involvement, Louise stated, “No, absolutely not. It was just pretty much David (former Director of Admissions, name withheld) coming over and bringing brochures and explaining LSU’s admissions policy. He explained a few other things, and we went from there.” Louise also stated there were no specific parameters of success that were measured, “Ultimately the goal was you handed out brochures, you got them (students) to fill out the (prospect) card and let them know that LSU would be corresponding with them.”

When asked if the parameters for success have been better defined 20 years later, she replied, “We measure now by the numbers. Number of applications, number of students enrolled. This fall (2008) we had 156 kids from the Dallas/Fort Worth area and that is nearly twice what we had previously.” Louise’s knowledge of her area was quite extensive and impressive, considering the fact that she knew how many students enrolled from her area and was also familiar with the application breakdown from her area.

Louise was then asked to discuss what she found to be LSU’s primary selling points. “Probably the atmosphere,” she continued, “If we can get them on campus, get them to see the campus, we have them sold.” Louise was aware of the value of having the prospective students and parents come to campus for a tour. We briefly discussed all the benefits of the tour and stressed the importance of meeting other students and faculty.

When discussing the types of students Louise found she was most successful in recruiting, she replied, “Well, I think maybe not so much the really high (caliber)
students that have offers all across the nation. The ones that have responded were ones who have been given good scholarship offers and just need a little extra encouragement that yes, LSU is a good choice over another university.” When asked if Louise approached students in communities that may not express interest in LSU or if she approached minority students in a different fashion, without hesitation, she replied, “No, we really don’t. We approach every student in the same fashion.”

Louise was excited to discuss the manner in which she is approached about LSU outside of the traditional recruitment setting. When asked if she enjoys being known as the LSU recruiter, she responded, “Yes. I really do. I have never had any problem with giving my phone number or telling people to call me or getting addresses and sending them information. I have mailed brochures out a lot of times through the years myself from my home, because I keep a supply here.” This approach of sending students brochures outside of the college fair setting is quite popular among the veteran alumni volunteers.

Louise also shared how she actively recruited fellow alumni volunteers in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. She stated, “In the past, when it was sent out as “snail mail”, we had newsletters for our alumni group. There were always articles in there. We normally did this four times a year. ‘College night is coming up. If you want to volunteer, contact Louise.’ And I have had many, many more people volunteer than I have had slots for.” When asked if she felt as though her fellow alumni had any expectations prior to volunteering, Louise replied, “It’s not for recognition and I think it is an infectious thing. They are excited. They want to do it. We pretty much keep it on the plate all year long.”

Louise had a lot of input regarding other types of volunteer recruitment efforts outside of the traditional college fair. Louise’s group is responsible for the fund raising
programs, among a few others. Louise stated, “We attended the Explore LSU program (a program hosted by the University in the city of Dallas, in which University representatives would attend) back in the early to mid 90s. We also host a couple of home receptions targeting top scholarship students thinking maybe that by doing these that you could have kids from your area that they might feel more comfortable about coming into a home and there would be 5-6 other students with parents.”

On top of all of this, Louise and her husband also find time to make it to Baton Rouge once a year to help greet prospective college freshman to LSU. She stated, “One thing we’ve done the past 14-15 years is our chapter goes down to Spring Invitational (an annual on-campus event for incoming freshman) with the Houston chapters, and Austin chapters, and we split the expenses to supply cookies and punch at the program. We call it the ‘Texas Tiger’ Reception. What we do is invite all of the Texas kids who have gone down for Spring Invitational to come by with their parents. The first year we did this I remember we had 30-35 parents and kids. This last year, we had about 150.”

When asked to discuss whether or not Louise felt as though she could relate to the parents, she too agreed this was an integral part of the recruitment process. She is able to relate to the parents’ needs simply because she too was once a parent of a prospective student. “When I began recruiting, my oldest son was in the ninth grade. He graduated from high school in 1990, and I have been involved ever since.” So, perhaps Louise had a bit of personal motivation that persuaded her to initially become involved in the volunteer alumni recruitment effort. This experience for her, however, as mentioned above, is one she can share with the parents today, making their decision making process that much easier knowing there is someone who has gone through what they are currently experiencing.
Louise was then asked to give her opinion of the LSU Web site. She responded, “I admit, I don’t go to it nearly as much as I know these kids and parents do because they are so much more computer and techno savvy. That is what they are used to doing. That is what they are raised to do.” When asked if the students comment to her about the Web site, she stated, “Not that I have heard or noticed.”

Louise and I then discussed if students shared with her reasons as to why they would not attend LSU. She shared, “Well, a lot of it for us is they don’t want to go out of state or their parents don’t want them to go that far. That is the first thing that comes out.” When asked how she countered this concern, she replied, “My husband and I speak from a parent perspective, having sent students to LSU. But we try to offer counters to whatever objections they may have.”

When asked if the Office of Undergraduate Admissions’ Division of Outreach was a valuable tool to her effort prior to 2007, she replied, “I have been treated well, because I feel like I’m just an alum. I’m not on anyone’s payroll, but I rely on them heavily and have through the years.” When asked if she would change anything about the manner in which the Division of Outreach handled the recruitment effort, she stated, “I think probably advanced planning for the receptions in the fall. Get that done earlier so that we can get some publicity out there (for the events).”

Finally, Louise was asked if there was any point that was not discussed in the interview that she would like to include. She responded, “The Division of Outreach needs to get things back to where they were before 2008. I don’t know what is going on there, but the coordination seems to be lacking.”
Rita

Rita is a medical equipment sales representative that resides in the Orlando, Florida area. She has been recruiting students in her area for roughly ten years, and has witnessed student interest in the Orlando area increase to the point that necessitated a “regional recruiter” who resided in the Orlando area representing LSU on a full-time basis. Rita shared what motivated her to begin her involvement with the volunteer recruitment program. “Well, there were a couple of different things. Obviously, the love for LSU, and I learned more about my University, my Alma Mater, by doing that.” This connection to the University is clearly a theme that will be addressed further in this study.

Rita was then asked to if she had received any training prior to her first recruitment effort, to which she quickly responded, “None.” She did, however, share the fact that she had been to a training session for alumni volunteer recruiters in the summer of 2005. She stated, “I went to a recruiting event at the alumni center for a day and a half (training). And that helped a lot. I was able to meet other people who do it, got some ideas about what they do, to see if I could improve my efforts.” Rita, along with four other alumni who were interviewed for this study, all attended this recruiter training event. Each shared some great ideas with other volunteer alumni, and took these ideas back to their areas of the country.

Rita was then asked to discuss what were considered the parameters of success when she first began volunteering her time. She stated, “What we felt was successful was if everything that the Baton Rouge office sent us, like all of the forms, whether it was 100, 200, 300 prospect cards that they sent us, were filled out and sent back. We thought that was successful. When asked if those parameters have changed after nearly a decade of involvement, she responded, “I have more specific parameters now. Specifically, now
we can help the students look for what they are going for (specific majors). If there is a
certain major that no one else has (schools in her area) and LSU has it, we can discuss
that with the student. The numbers help, but sharing this knowledge now is more
helpful.”

Rita then discussed what she felt were the primary selling points for the
University she responded, “Diversity and the fact that it is very cost effective.” Rita was
referring specifically to the cost of LSU in relation to schools in her area. Rita’s
knowledge of this crucial selling point, degrees offered on campus, and available
scholarships, are just a few of the traits she possesses that make her successful as a
volunteer recruiter.

When asked what type of student she felt she had the most success recruiting, she
responded, “I don’t know the reason for this, but we have more success in the private
schools. In the public schools, kids just want the information to bring home. The private
school kids are very, very interested. They ask so many questions, especially about
particular degree programs such as pre-med and pharmacy.” When asked if she
attempted to recruit students outside of these areas that she deemed successful she stated,
“The University asked us to choose two or three high schools in these types of
communities to go and talk to. So, we brought posters and brochures to the students and
counselors.” Rita’s involvement of the high school guidance counselors is an important
element to recruiting prospective students. Other than parents, guidance counselors are
often the biggest influence on a student’s college decision. Rita was then asked if she
approached minority students any differently, to which she quickly responded, “No,
absolutely not.” Rita did not elaborate further on this topic.
Rita was then asked to share if she is approached outside of the traditional recruitment setting to discuss LSU. She shared, “I am a mentor for an LSU program in which people who are moving to Orlando can call and ask how I got into my field. Oftentimes, they will call and let me know about interested students in my area. Word has gotten around about my personal information being up on the site and that is how students have gotten my information. I also volunteer at a camp for chronically ill children. I have had questions about LSU come up during my time there.” Rita’s networking skills for her job clearly help her involvement with recruiting for LSU. Considering the fact that Rita is in sales, her move to “sell” LSU on a volunteer basis was clearly a smooth one.

Rita then discussed the manner in which she is able to recruit fellow alumni volunteers. She stated, “Well, what I do first is I treat it as a reward. I will take the new volunteer out for breakfast, then we will attend the fair.” When asked if she felt as though these new volunteers had any prior expectations before joining this effort, she stated, “No, they always said this is fun and have always enjoyed meeting everyone.” Rita also mentioned that once she has a volunteer join the program, they continue to be involved, “Well, they definitely gain more knowledge about the University. It has changed so much since we’ve been there. We’re in our 40’s now, and they enjoy learning the different things about LSU.”

Rita was then asked to discuss other volunteer recruitment events that she was involved in outside of the traditional college fair. She responded, “Our crawfish boil is our big fund raiser of the year and we ask anybody to come to our viewings (of football games). We’ve had students come to watch football, basketball and baseball games with us.” Rita was happy to share information about the scholarship fund raiser, “We have a
$1,000 a year scholarship for a student then we raise extra money for an endowment.”

Rita was asked if she knew of a specific student in which this money became the deciding factor for their attendance to LSU. She recalled a specific instance, but could not remember the student’s name. Regardless, the efforts of her fellow alumni were clearly making a huge difference in her area.

Rita was then asked if she went out of her way to discuss LSU with the parents of prospective students. She responded, “Yes, probably because I am most of the parents’ age now. So it helps. I’ll be going to schools, especially the last year or two, and my husband and his kids are at the age that they are starting to go (to college fairs). So, I see a lot of their friends and parents come in. I will see someone and they will respond ‘I did not know you did this,’ and it eases their mind.” Rita’s ability to relate not only to the counselors in her area, but also the parents, is an important element in gaining interest from students. Parents pay the bills, and “having their ear” is quite important.

When asked if Rita frequented the LSU Web site, she stated, “I have to use it ahead of time (before attending a college fair). This is really helpful for me and I am able to answer a lot of questions.” When asked if the students ever give her feedback about the Web site, she quickly responded “never.”

Rita then shared with the why students from her area may not attend LSU. She responded, “Location. They have grown up here in Florida, and want to attend a Florida school.” When asked how she counters this, she replied, “I let them know that I understand their apprehension because it is far away and I specifically talk about myself (experience). That I was in a situation like you, I lived in Louisiana, my parents moved while I was at LSU (to Florida).” Rita’s ability to relate to both parents and students because of her personal situation is quite important. Parents are often concerned about
the safety of their students. Having someone who can share his or her experiences of this first-hand is very important.

Rita was then asked to share whether or not the Division of Outreach had been a valuable tool in her recruitment effort. She stated, “Oh, they are extremely helpful. They are not only helpful with literature but if we ask for trinkets out at our table, they are great about that. They have gotten better over the years.” Rita was asked if she would change anything about the manner in which the alumni recruitment program is handled. She stated, “I would hold another training program every so often. I thought that was invaluable.” Rita clearly gained a lot from the training program that was hosted on campus and had other ideas she would like to share should another program like this take place.

Finally, when asked if there were any points of interest that she would like to share before we ended the interview, she stated, “I know some things have changed there, but I just think the communication needs to be better about the goals the University now has for us.” Rita went on to stress how the service from LSU was fantastic prior to the fall of 2008, but stated that she knew of possible changes in that office. She would try to continue to be patient and work with Office of Admissions in the future. Rita also stressed the fact that LSU needed to continue to convey its goals to its volunteer alumni recruiters. She explained that LSU was doing a good job of this in the past, but has not been doing this effectively the past year.

Jennifer

Jennifer is an Assistant District Attorney who resides in Cyprus, Texas, which is just outside of Houston. Jennifer volunteers her extra time with the local rodeo committee and has been recruiting students in her area for about 10 years. When Jennifer
was asked about what motivated her to become involved initially in the volunteer recruitment effort, she replied, “I love LSU. I’ve grown up loving LSU. My four years there were the best. I graduated from there in 1979, had been a long time fan, and had been going to games since I was 6 years old. I just wanted to see about letting the kids here in the Houston area know about my experience. I want to let them know there is a great alternative for their education just four hours down the road.”

Jennifer was then asked if she had received any prior training to her initial introduction to volunteer recruitment. She replied, “No. It was basically, we got the materials and I attended (a college fair) with a former (alumni chapter) President and I believe he had received some prior training. If we couldn’t answer a question, we just asked the student to call the school.”

Jennifer was then asked to discuss what the parameters of success were when she first began volunteering. She stated, “You gave them the literature, answered basic questions, and just introduced them to what LSU had to offer. We also encouraged them to do the tours. We then encouraged them to contact the school.” Basically, Jennifer was just asked to get the word out about LSU. When asked if those elements have changed, Jennifer stated that she can now spend more time with students and has more knowledge about what LSU has to offer them. She is able to share that knowledge with the students and parents, which is a large factor in assisting them with the decision making process.

When asked what she felt were the University’s best selling points, she replied, “Well, first off we have so many majors. That is huge. I think another thing is the Top Ten Percent rule in Texas.” Jennifer then explained the Top Ten Percent Rule is a rule in Texas in which high school students who are in the top ten percent of their graduating class are automatically admitted into all Texas state schools. This leaves the opportunity
for LSU to go after quality students because often strong “A” students in large graduating classes do not make the top ten percent. This is a great selling point for LSU if these students are left out of the state schools in Texas.

When asked what type of student Jennifer felt she has the most success in recruiting, she replied, “I’d say, probably, business, pre-med, and engineering, but also students that are average students and well-rounded. They have outside interests. They are members of their school band or something to that effect.” When asked if she recruited students from communities that may not express much interest in LSU, she replied, “Fortunately for us, LSU is really big here. It is hard to answer that question because LSU is big.” Jennifer is referring to the fact that, in the Houston area, LSU recruits quite well both academically and athletically. Many of these communities that may be considered difficult to gain interest from generally already have somewhat of an interest in LSU based upon the fact that the campus is only four hours away, and the alumni base is so large in Houston that there are multiple chapters.

Jennifer was then asked if she approached the recruitment of minority students any differently. She stated, “No, not really. I really don’t because when we’re at the table and they ask a question I answer their question as much as I would anyone else’s questions. I guess I don’t feel that way because I feel that everybody has as much of an opportunity to get into LSU as anybody else.”

I then asked Jennifer to discuss whether or not she is approached outside of the traditional recruitment setting to discuss LSU. She stated, “Absolutely, I’m on a rodeo committee here. They all know I’m an LSU grad. They always make sure at our auction there is an LSU item because they know it is going to be bought. I’m definitely somebody that people know and will contact about LSU.”
Jennifer was then asked to share how she was able to gain the interest of other volunteer recruiters in her area. She replied, “I just tell them how much fun we have. I tell them that it is a great way to get started with the alumni association.” When asked if she felt as though her fellow volunteer alumni had expectations prior to joining the effort, she stated, “No, I don’t think so. I think that a lot of them want to do it because they went to LSU and they enjoyed it. I think they just see it as an opportunity to provide students with the information about an alternative campus to visit and to research.”

When asked if she had any problems retaining their services once they joined, she replied, “Some people, sure. Other people might do it one time, but get busy with other things so they don’t have the time to do it again. And sometimes they might not stay involved with the high school recruiting, but they will stay involved with another aspect.” As mentioned prior, Jennifer has the luxury of working with quite a large pool of alumni in her area, so the fact that some did not stay involved for long is not surprising. Often, when the pool of alumni help is large, it is nearly impossible keeping everyone involved simply because there aren’t enough programs available to keep everyone busy.

Jennifer was then asked to discuss what other forms of recruitment efforts take place in her area outside of the traditional college fair. She responded, “We had receptions in the homes (of fellow alumni). We had Explore LSU for a while (same as Louise in Dallas/Fort Worth). Lately we have people (faculty and staff) come in from (the Baton Rouge) campus for the receptions in the home. The college night allows us to introduce ourselves and then we can get the other events together so we can share more specific information.”

Jennifer also shared information about the scholarship fund raising program, “Our whole greater Houston chapter is based on scholarships and professorships. We have
already endowed two along with the Texas Tigers Golf Tournament. We’ve endowed two scholarships and right now we have a scholarship going on with the Foundation of Champions. Everything we do is to raise money for scholarships. I think we raised roughly $25,000-$30,000 on our crawfish boil last year alone.” Jennifer gave a great example of the results of a well-coordinated scholarship fund raising program coupled with a large alumni pool.

Jennifer was then asked whether or not she took the time to discuss recruitment with the parents of prospective students. She replied, “Oh yes, absolutely. I think we do (a good job) because we come from every walk of life. I represent (pre-law), well I’m an Assistant DA, but we have engineers, geologists, and business people. A lot of us came from middle class (backgrounds) so we know what a burden it can be to send kids to school.” Jennifer brought up an excellent point here. Being able to afford school is a huge burden in middle class families. The fact that Jennifer can relate to this is a large factor in gaining interest from prospective students and parents.

Jennifer was then asked to share whether or not she found the Web site to be helpful. “Yes, it is, because now we can point them (students) to the Web site to give them information.” When asked if the students ever comment on the Web site to her, she stated, “They will comment that they know they can go to the site, or that they have been there, but they don’t tell me if it is helpful.”

Jennifer was then asked if she received any feedback from students as to why they would not attend LSU. She replied, “They want to stay in Texas. I haven’t had anyone tell me that they don’t want to go to LSU because there is some negative reason. They are from Texas and want to go to a Texas school. They are not putting down LSU.” When asked how she counters this, Jennifer stated that because of the high interest in the
University, there is not much negativity related to LSU. There is enough interest from students in her area, that this really is not a concern.

When asked if the Division of Outreach was a helpful tool in the recruitment effort, she responded, “I’m going to say yes, but I do know there were a few times we had trouble getting materials on time for the college fairs.” When asked if she would change anything about the manner in which the Division of Outreach handled this effort prior to the end of the fall of 2007, she quickly replied “no.” Jennifer did not have any further points that she felt were left out of the discussion.

**Chad**

Chad works in the freelance entertainment industry and resides in Burbank, California, near Los Angeles. Chad served as the Alumni Chapter President and he also volunteers his extra time with his church. Chad has been recruiting students in his area for about 10 years and responded as to why he first became involved in the effort. “Because I loved LSU when I was there and when I found out about the college fairs I thought it would be fun to do and it was. Plus, you get to meet people from throughout the country that live here in Southern California who work for other colleges and universities.”

Chad was then asked if he has any prior training before he attended his first college program, he replied, “No and found it was very easy. LSU gives you all of the samples of books and what not before hand. LSU provides you with so much information. Plus, when I was President, we had key chains, spirit bands, and ink pens to give away at the table.” Chad shared that he did attend the training event in 2005 that has been referred to prior in this study.
Chad was asked to discuss what the parameters of successful recruiting were when he first started his effort. He explained, “For me, all of them were fairly successful because LSU was making such a good run at football, and our name was out there constantly with sports. The fact that people were aware of LSU in an area that was so far away was a success in and of itself.” When asked if these elements of success have changed over the years, he responded, “Now it is not just the number of students you talk to, but also the number of parents and teachers I associate with as well.” Chad, like many of his fellow alumni volunteers, quickly discovered the fastest way to get the word out about LSU is to also talk with faculty at local high schools.

When I asked Chad what he felt the biggest selling point the University had to offer prospective students in Southern California, he added, “We have great (academic) programs that have become better. One of the selling points that I have heard from other alum is the cost of living compared to Southern California. Another experience I push here is the Louisiana culture that is so different from the rest of the country. What better way to broaden your horizons than to experience a culture that is different from yours?” Chad brought up two valuable points that had not been considered; cost of living and the Louisiana culture. These are two points that must be stressed, especially in areas of the country in which the cost of living is much higher than in Louisiana.

Chad was then asked to share with the researcher what types of students he felt he had the most success recruiting. He stated, “For the most part, I have a lot of success recruiting kids who had some type of family tie to Louisiana. A lot of minorities will come up to me and tell me that they have family in Louisiana.” I then asked Chad if he ever ventured into communities that normally did not show much interest in LSU. He stated, “We really haven’t pursued it because the recruitment center (Division of
Outreach) has been so good over the last few years about having all of our fairs lined up that we don’t have time to think about any other communities. We are blessed.” What Chad was referring to was the fact that the Division of Outreach would determine which fairs the alumni volunteers should attend based upon date that was gathered regarding the student demographics in his area.

Chad was then asked if he approached the recruitment of minority students any differently. He responded, “No, I don’t because I don’t feel there is a need to. As I mentioned earlier, I have several minorities that I talk to at each fair that have family ties to Louisiana, but I don’t treat anyone differently.”

Chad then shared with the researcher the fact that he is approached outside of the traditional recruiting setting about recruitment for LSU. He stated, “Well, definitely at church, I’m very active at First Presbyterian Burbank. I’m in the choir there and I’m also on a committee there that handles all of the other committees. I volunteer with the youth group at church and it is there that I am constantly asked about LSU.” Chad, like many other volunteers, is involved in other volunteer organizations outside of LSU and used this networking ability to garner more interest in the University.

Chad was then asked to discuss his methods for involving other alumni to volunteer for the recruitment effort. He shared this information, “I have gotten people to do it because they wanted to see what it is like. I send them an e-mail letting them know about what fairs are coming up and they are quick to volunteer. I think part of it is that we are farther away from Louisiana and LSU alums, the farther away you are the move you want to have an association with people from home and you also want to talk about home with people.” Chad made a very valid point here, with the fact that often,
volunteers will join an association to feel like they are still part of something they experienced in the past.

Chad was then asked if he felt as though his new volunteers had any prior expectations before joining. He stated, “No. They basically want to know about what they should tell people (prospective students). People come pretty open on what to expect. They just like the idea that they will get to tell kids about LSU and the opportunities that exist there.” When asked if he had trouble retaining their services once they volunteered, Chad replied, “No. There are some that just attend one fair a year because it is in their neighborhood. The thing about Los Angeles is that it is so large you tend to just stay within your particular neighborhood.”

Chad was then asked to share what other recruiting events he and his fellow alumni participate in outside of the traditional college fair. He discussed the fact that his chapter also hosts a crawfish boil and hosts events on days of LSU football games. When asked to discuss any scholarship fund raising activities, he described their effort, “Our biggest fund raiser has been our raffle during football viewings. We usually add $2,000 to our scholarship fund that way.”

Chad also discussed the relationships he attempts to build with parents. He explained, “I have had parents who have come to watch football games with us in order to meet us and see how we interact as an alumni group. They can get a feel for LSU this way before they send their kids there.” Chad also described how he continued to discuss the cost of living factor with the parents and how this is a valuable recruiting tool when dealing with the parents.

Chad was then asked to discuss whether or not he found the LSU Web site to be a valuable recruiting tool. He responded, “Yes I do. One of the things I really enjoyed is
that weekly e-mail I was getting from the Division of Outreach that I have not been
getting since the beginning of 2008. It would give me updates that I could put out to
students or just keep me informed of what was happening on campus.” Chad was
referring to the fact that the Division of Outreach had, prior to 2008, a Web site set up
specifically for alumni volunteers. This site allowed alumni volunteers the opportunity to
see what college fairs were taking place in their areas, gave weekly updates on
happenings in and around LSU, had copies of materials that provided key information to
alumni volunteers, and also had a section in which volunteers could report the results of
their recruitment events. This site was taken down some time in 2008.

When Chad was asked if he received any feedback from prospective students
about the Web site, he stated, “I didn’t get a lot of feedback from that. I would tell kids
to go to the Web site but I didn’t get any feedback from their visits.”

I then asked Chad to discuss any feedback he gained from students as to why they
would not attend LSU. Unsurprisingly, his response revolved around logistics, “The
biggest drawback for kids here is that it is far away from home, and that goes with any
student.” Chad admitted that this concern is rather difficult to counter, since LSU is
nearly a thousand miles away from Southern California.

Chad was then asked to give feedback as to whether or not the Division of
Outreach was a valuable tool in his recruitment effort prior to 2007. He replied, “Oh yes.
I literally just went blank on what to express on this topic because it was more than what
I could have ever asked for and the best compliment I ever received was from a Harvard
alum saying how our table stood out.” When asked if he would make any changes as to
how the Division of Outreach handled the volunteer recruitment effort, he stated, “Prior
to this fall (2008) they were fantastic, however, the one thing I would have changed was
to have a representative from the Baton Rouge come to Los Angeles to see what it is all about here.”

Finally, Chad was asked if there was any other point he would like to make that may not have been discussed during the interview. He stated, “Yes, I have really been happy as an alum with what LSU has done to present itself as a national university. I have been very happy with the strides LSU has made in the last years on just marketing itself more out of state. It offers so much and I really didn’t appreciate it until I lived out here. LSU is a lot better school than many Louisianans realize.” Chad was referring directly to the strides LSU has made in the Forever LSU campaign, the rising admissions standards, and success in athletics. All of these factors have helped to spread the word about LSU all across the country, and is ultimately changing the view that many people have about LSU.

Ross

Ross is an attorney that practices law outside of Williamson County, Tennessee. He resides in Nashville, volunteers his extra time with his church, and has been recruiting students in his area for over 35 years. When asked what his initial motivation was for starting this effort, he replied, “I just enjoyed the experience at LSU. I think LSU is a good school, of course, but I also think it is an opportunity. I think it is important for young people to leave the nest and get into a different environment.”

When asked if Ross had any training prior to his first recruiting event, he responded, “No.” Ross was then asked how he gauged whether or not what he was doing was a success. He stated, “Well, I remember we had a lot of people stop and talk to us. We initially communicated with the Alumni Association office. This was before there was a recruiting office (Division of Outreach). We just wrote kids’ names down, with
their addresses and turned that over. All we had to hand out were LSU Alumni bumper stickers.” When asked if those elements have changed after 35 years, he replied, “Yes, when I got involved with the Recruiting Services Office (became the Division of Outreach in 2007), I began working with individuals in that office that directed me to specific college fairs in Middle Tennessee. They also directed me to college nights in Nashville, Tennessee as well as college nights in Williamson County, which is a very affluent county. We had materials to give out and cards for the students to request information.” Ross then discussed how he was happy to have some direction and further goals and objections for each recruiting season.

Ross was then asked to discuss what he felt were the University’s biggest selling points to prospective students in his area. He stated, “Well, as I stated earlier, I feel as though young folks should get away from the next and see what type of culture that Louisiana has to offer. Louisiana is a unique place. And South Louisiana is different from North Louisiana. I think the academic experience is important as well as being able to attend football games at LSU. I’ve been to many other universities, but LSU is clearly a unique experience.”

When asked what types of students Ross felt as though he had the most success recruiting, he responded, “Those with good academics. You can talk about the ACT has moved up to a 26 now (for the average incoming freshman) and the residential colleges within the campus community.” Ross was referring, specifically, to the new living-learning environments on LSU’s campus also known as residential colleges. Residential colleges bring students of similar majors and backgrounds together in specific resident halls (dorms). These residential halls oftentimes have professors that frequent the lobbies
and sometimes hold class in the hall itself. Each residential college also has state of the art computer labs and wireless access for each room.

When asked if Ross had any success in recruiting students that resided in communities that did not normally express interest in LSU, he stated, “It’s hard. You have a lot of competition here. If the community is all UT (University of Tennessee), you make a stab at it, but if their blood is orange, you’re not going to change that. I think LSU is well respected in this area, though, and you cannot underestimate the value of the success LSU has had athletically.” When asked if Ross recruited minority students any differently, he quickly responded, “No. If they have the grades there is no difference. We welcome them all.” Ross then shared a story about his experience on campus when the first African American student arrived. He shared the fact the student was in his same dorm and everyone was excited to meet him.

Ross was then asked to share his experience of recruiting students outside of the normal college recruitment setting. Ross replied, “I always have something with LSU on. 95% of the time you will find me with something that identifies me with LSU. And it is amazing how many times in so many different places I am approached.” Ross then shared several examples of giving out recruiting information at his church and at the local McDonald’s restaurant.

I then asked Ross how he is able to get other volunteer alumni from his area involved in the program. He stated, “Well actually, what we try to do now is have everybody that is in our organization (Alumni Association) actively involved in recruiting. We have a few new members this year. We have a young lady, probably 25 or 26, who just joined us and is a great spokesperson for LSU.” I then asked Ross whether or not these new volunteers have any expectations when they initially joined. He
responded, “No. Really our group that we have, we really have a hard-core group of about 25. All of them don’t expect anything in return, they just expect to be a spokesperson, you might say.” I asked if he had any trouble retaining their services once they have joined, to which he responded, “Oh yes. They stay involved. Now, with the young people we have a lot of turnover because they are moving. I call them kids (laughing). The kids today are mobile, but we don’t have a hard time replacing them.”

Ross was then asked to discuss what other functions outside of the traditional college fair that his alumni volunteers were involved with. He responded, “We’ve started something about 4-5 years ago to really interest the little kids. We have a crawfish race at our crawfish boil.” Ross went on to discuss the annual crawfish boil and how it has become a success in helping to “seal the deal” with prospective students and parents.

When asked if Ross finds that he is able to relate well with the parents of prospective students, he replied, “Oh yes. I really do. When they come to the crawfish boil, they have a great time and we are able to associate with them quite well.”

Ross was later asked to discuss the LSU Web site to determine if he found it useful in his recruiting endeavors. He quickly replied, “I never use it.” When asked if prospective student discuss the Web site with him, he stated, “No, they tend to talk to the younger volunteers about the Web site.”

I then asked Ross if he gained any feedback from students about why they would not attend LSU. He replied, “Well, I have not, other than the fact that it is about 586 miles away.” When asked how he countered this concern, he stated “I tell them they can fly to Baton Rouge or New Orleans and it is not that expensive.”

Ross was also asked to discuss whether or not the Division of Outreach was a valuable tool in his recruitment effort. He stated, “In the past it was. Prior to 2008,
especially.” When asked what he would have changed about this effort, he replied, “I would say more visibility. I think a staff person should be more visible in our area. I would really like to see that office get back to where they were in 2001 to the beginning of 2008. Things are clearly in disarray now.”

Finally, Ross was asked if there were any additional points of interest that he would like to add to the interview, to which he responded, “No! Contact me at anytime and let me know if you need anything else from me.”

Concepts, Themes, Events and Topical Markers for the Grounded Theory Approach: Introduction

Due to the fact that I operated under the guise of the grounded theory approach, the next phase was to take one interview at a time, looking for concepts, themes, events, and topical markers that gave clues as to the alumni’s view of volunteerism on behalf of the university. Following this process, I then examined the different interviews in order to clarify what each of the concepts and themes meant and synthesize different versions of events to put together your understanding of the overall narrative. These themes were all brought to the forefront by the process of open coding, which is the process of coding each passage of every interview as they go along rather than develop a separate list of concepts and themes that are then applied to the interviews. Each of the themes highlighted below are important to understanding what makes these alumni successful and recruiting prospective students to LSU. Each of these guiding questions brought forth a common thread from the volunteer alumni’s responses, and each of these themes is important to stress for any future studies. Each theme is highlighted below, followed by a brief observation from the researcher regarding the interviewees’ responses.
Initial Motivational Factor

1. What was it that motivated you to begin volunteering your time for the purposes of recruiting prospective students to LSU?

**Seth:** Mostly love for the school. To try to get kids to come down here and enjoy what we have.

**Louise:** Personally, just the love of LSU, just realizing the opportunities I had there. I think, then, as far away as I am, it was a connection, wanting to tell other people about it.

**Rita:** Well, there were a couple of reasons, obviously the love for LSU, and I learned more about my Alma Mater by doing that.

**Jennifer:** I love LSU. Like I said, I’ve grown up loving LSU. My four years there were the best. I just wanted to see about letting the kids here in Houston know.

**Chad:** Because I loved LSU when I was there and I found out about the college fairs I thought it would be fun to do because all you get to do is talk about LSU and share your own experiences.

**Ross:** I just enjoyed the experience at LSU. I think LSU is an opportunity and offers a unique experience.

There were two common themes that emerged from this question: the volunteer alumni’s affinity for the University and a feeling of a connection with the University, despite living a long distance from campus. This was the overriding factor that influenced each to get involved and ultimately propelled the volunteer to actively pursue prospective students and parents in order to share their experiences about the institution they adored.
Prior Training

2. Have you received any training prior to your initial involvement with recruiting?

Seth: No, none at all.

Louise: No, absolutely not.

Rita: None.

Jennifer: No, but the person I attended with at the time had.

Chad: No, but found it was very easy.

Ross: No, absolutely not.

None of the volunteers had any form of training prior to their first experience with recruitment. Each was able to adapt quickly despite this, and each has attended some form of training since. As mentioned prior, I coordinated two separate training sessions in which five of the six interviewees attended. The sixth interviewee was trained in person by a representative of the Division of Outreach in their territory.

Parameters of Success for Initial Involvement

3. What was considered a “success” when you first began recruiting?

Seth: Just gaining interest from students in Northern Virginia.

Louise: Initially, just gaining interest from students in Dallas.

Rita: To have all of the information forms filled out and sent back to LSU in order for students to gain more information.

Jennifer: Just understanding the basic information to give to students about the University.

Chad: Just the fact that we were out in Southern California and students knew about LSU was a success.
Ross: We weren’t very successful. All we had were bumper stickers to hand out, and we wrote down the students’ names and addresses.

Parameters for success were quite elementary for the volunteers prior to their initial involvement. Other than gaining interest from students by representing LSU at the local college fair, the volunteers were not asked to perform many other duties. This issue was eventually remedied by the addition of training sessions and the evolvement of other forms of recruitment by the volunteers themselves. These other recruitment methods will be highlighted in responses that were shared later in the interview process.

**Parameters of Success after Years of Involvement**

4. What would you consider a “success” now after your many years of experience with the recruitment effort?

**Seth:** Total application numbers from students in Northern Virginia.

**Louise:** Application numbers from the Dallas/Fort Worth area, along with the number of students that attend LSU.

**Rita:** Being able to convey information about LSU to prospective students.

**Jennifer:** Knowing what information to convey to the students.

**Chad:** The number of students, parents, teachers, and counselors we are able to reach in Southern California.

**Ross:** The experience that we gain every time we host a program or attend a college fair.

The parameters of success and the volunteer’s knowledge of these parameters after years of involvement are reflected in the responses above. The responses also indicated that each was well-educated regarding their territory, along with the goals and objectives the University had for each of their regions.
LSU’s Selling Points

5. What do you believe is the biggest selling point LSU has to offer?

Seth: Number of programs offered and a beautiful campus.

Louise: Atmosphere, friendly environment, academic programs, and a beautiful campus.

Rita: Diversity, cost of living and a beautiful campus.

Jennifer: Great alternative from the Texas schools and a beautiful campus.

Chad: Academic programs, cost of living, Louisiana culture, and a beautiful campus.

Ross: Academic programs, Louisiana culture, and a beautiful campus.

Each of the volunteers focused on one specific theme: the beauty of the campus.

The alumni volunteers were aware that if they were able to convince a student to attend a campus tour, the likelihood of that student’s interest in the University increasing was inevitable. Once the student stepped foot on campus, they would get a feel for the intangibles that LSU had to offer: the friendly environment and glimpses of the Louisiana culture.

Types of Students That Are Successfully Recruited

6. What type of students do you feel you have the most success in recruiting?

Seth: The “B” student. The students who are “B” and low “A” that don’t have the grades or GPA’s to get into the University of Virginia. Normal student, doesn’t play sports, makes decent grades, has a good ACT score, comes from a good family, and will not get into trouble but knows how to have a good time.

Louise: Those whose parents are alumni, but also the average “B” student.

Rita: Mainly students that attend the private schools in the area.

Jennifer: Good students that are well-rounded.

Chad: Students with a family tie to Louisiana.
Ross: Students with good academics that are also well-rounded.

These responses reflected the volunteer recruiter’s knowledge of the admissions standards and what types of students these standards focus on. This is important because it further drives home the point that the volunteers are working in unison with the University’s goals and objectives.

**Student Recruitment in Other Communities**

7. How do you recruit students who may be in schools or communities that normally do not express interest in LSU?

Seth: Majority of those students want to go to Virginia Tech, so we make comparisons of what LSU has to offer to Virginia Tech.

Louise: We have primarily stuck with recruiting the schools that have expressed interest in the past.

Rita: We bring posters and other information to the counselors of these schools.

Jennifer: There are not many communities in the area that have not heard of LSU, or do not have much interest. We are fortunate here in Houston because LSU is well known.

Chad: We have not pursued any other communities outside of our own because our area keeps us very busy.

Ross: It is very difficult to turn people away from their state schools, but our success in athletics helps us there.

These responses reflect a need for the University to actively encourage the volunteers to engage other communities. In some cases, the volunteers themselves expressed the fact that extra time is not available; however, a representative for the University should step in and assume this role. Personal contacts should be made by representatives of the Division of Outreach to these communities, with the use of
volunteer alumni providing follow-up contacts. These contacts can be in the form of brochures mailed, phone calls, or have volunteers deliver materials to local schools.

**Minority Recruitment**

8. Do you approach minority students any differently in terms of recruitment?

Seth: No.

Louise: No, absolutely not.

Rita: Not at all.

Jennifer: Never.

Chad: No, we treat everyone the same.

Ross: No.

Each volunteer was quick to point out the fact that they did not engage any student differently in terms of recruitment. While this is a natural approach for a recruiter to take, the University needs to do a better job in garnering the help of minority alumni volunteers. No one wants to be viewed as someone who treats others “differently”, thus, the results of this question were better reflected with the responses to question seven, which discussed community outreach to areas that normally do not express interest in LSU.

**Other Forms of Community Outreach**

9. Are you viewed in your community as an LSU alum that can be approached in any type of setting to discuss interest in the University?

Seth: People will come to me at church or people will come to me at my business and say ‘Hey, my neighbor’s son or daughter is interested in LSU.’ Or, people will just tell me that and what I do is at my own expense. I’ll go and I’ll get the brochures from home
(that the University supplied) and all kinds of other stuff. I always throw in some Mardi Gras beads. I will often throw in a catalogue and mail it to them.

Louise: Yes. I really do. I have never had any problem with giving my phone number or telling people to call me or getting addresses and sending them information. I have mailed brochures out a lot of times through the years myself from my home because I keep a supply here.

Rita: I am a mentor for an LSU program in which people who are moving to Orlando can call and ask how I got into my field. Oftentimes, they will call and let me know about interested students in my area. Word has gotten around about my personal information being up on the site and that is how students have gotten my information. I also volunteer at a camp for chronically ill children. I have had questions about LSU come up during my time there.

Jennifer: Absolutely, I’m on a rodeo committee here. They all know I’m an LSU grad. They always make sure at our auction there is an LSU item because they know it is going to be bought. I’m definitely somebody that people know and will contact about LSU.

Chad: Well, definitely at church, I’m very active at First Presbyterian Burbank. I’m in the choir there and I’m also on a committee there that handles all of the other committees. I volunteer with the youth group at church and it is there that I am constantly asked about LSU.

Ross: I always have something with LSU on. 95% of the time you will find me with something that identifies me with LSU. And it is amazing how many times in so many different places I am approached.

The responses to this question reflect the fact that the volunteers are recruiting for the University on a year-long basis. This is important for the recruiting coordinator to
note because their contact with these individuals should be consistent throughout the year. Frequent updates to these volunteers regarding the goals and objectives of the Division of Outreach will only enhance the recruitment effort.

**Soliciting Other Volunteer Recruiters**

**10. How do you encourage others in your area to become volunteer recruiters?**

**Seth:** Make calls and approach them myself.

**Louise:** Snail mail, letters to alumni, and personal phone calls.

**Rita:** Phone calls, and then I treat the recruitment effort like a reward.

**Jennifer:** Phone calls and alumni association gatherings.

**Chad:** E-mail solicitation.

**Ross:** Encourage everyone in the Nashville alumni chapter to get involved.

These responses varied according to the capabilities of the volunteer. In other words, the older volunteers used more traditional forms of contact, whereas the younger volunteers used technology. The University coordinator for this effort should work with all of the groups to come up with a uniform manner to assist these volunteers in their efforts to recruit fellow volunteers.

**New Volunteer Expectations**

**11. Do you find that these new volunteers have expectations in terms of what they will gain before they dedicate themselves to this effort?**

**Seth:** They do it to have a good time and because they love LSU.

**Louise:** It’s not for recognition and I think it is an infectious thing. They are excited. They want to do it. We pretty much keep it on the plate all year long.

**Rita:** No, they always said this is fun and have always enjoyed meeting everyone.
Jennifer: No, I don’t think so. I think that a lot of them want to do it because they went to LSU and they enjoyed it. I think they just see it as an opportunity to provide students with the information about an alternative campus to visit and to research.

Chad: No, they basically want to know, what do I need to do and what do I tell people?

Ross: We have a really hard-core group of about 25. All of them don’t expect anything in return, they just expect to be a spokesperson, you might say.

Each response mirrored the response that the interviewee shared regarding the reasons why they initially joined the recruitment effort. The adoration for the University as a primary factor is reflected in all but one response. The fact that these fellow alumni volunteers do not expect anything in return also supports the theory that, by volunteering to support their Alma Mater, they feel a connection to the University. This connection serves as adequate motivation to not only get them involved in the recruitment effort, but to also keep them involved. It is important, however, that the University work with the volunteer leaders in their territories to come up with some form of recognition; whether it is an e-mail or letter from the Division of Outreach thanking them for their efforts.

Success in Retaining New Volunteers

12. Do you find that once they volunteer their time, you have success in keeping them involved?

Seth: Yes, definitely.

Louise: We do not have enough slots to keep them all busy, which is a good problem to have.

Rita: Yes, definitely.

Jennifer: Yes.

Chad: We always are able to keep them involved.
Ross: Yes, with the exception of the younger volunteers who tend to move away.

Each volunteer agreed that once a fellow alumnus volunteered their efforts, they could be counted on for future involvement. In some cases, there were more volunteers available than there were recruiting events to cover. If you are a coordinator of the volunteer recruitment effort, this is a great situation to find yourself in. The next challenge would be to come up with initiatives to keep all of these available resources busy so that they do not lose interest in the volunteer recruiting effort.

Interaction with Parents

13. Do you find that you and your fellow volunteers can interact with the parents of prospective students quite well?

Seth: You have to engage the parent and you have to bring the parent into the conversation. That is one of the secrets.

Louise: When I began recruiting, my oldest son was in the ninth grade. He graduated from high school in 1990, and I have been involved ever since.

Rita: Yes, probably because I am most of the parents’ age now. So it helps. I’ll be going to schools, especially the last year or two, and my husband and his kids are at the age that they are starting to go (to college fairs). So, I see a lot of their friends and parents come in. I will see someone and they will respond ‘I did not know you did this’, and it eases their mind.

Jennifer: Oh yes, absolutely. I think we do (a good job) because we come from every walk of life. I represent (pre-law), well I’m an Assistant DA, but we have engineers, geologists, and business people. A lot of us came from middle class (backgrounds) so we know what a burden it can be to send kids to school.
**Chad:** I have had parents who have come to watch football games with us in order to meet us and see how we interact as an alumni group. They can get a feel for LSU this way before they send their kids there.

**Ross:** Oh yes. I really do. When they come to the crawfish boil, they have a great time and we are able to associate with them quite well.

This is an important point because each volunteer recruiter is aware of the role that the parent plays in a prospective student’s decision to attend a university. Several of the volunteers have already put one or more of their children through college. Being able to relay this message to other parents provides a sense of comfort for these parents, especially when discussing a university that is several hundred miles away.

**Recruitment Outside of the Traditional College Fair**

**14. What other forms of recruitment do you encourage others to become involved in outside of the traditional college fair?**

**Seth:** Crawfish boils and scholarship fund raisers.

**Louise:** Crawfish boils, scholarship fund raisers, receptions in homes, Explore LSU, and Spring Invitational.

**Rita:** Crawfish boils and scholarship fund raisers.

**Jennifer:** Crawfish boils, scholarship fund raisers, Explore LSU, and receptions in homes.

**Chad:** Crawfish boils, scholarship fund raisers and football viewing parties.

**Ross:** Crawfish boils and scholarship fund raisers.

Each of these volunteers actively participated in other forms of recruitment outside of the traditional college fair. These other events, when planned properly, serve as great additions to the recruitment effort for the University. These events give
prospective parents and students a different perspective of what the University has to offer.

**Volunteer Utilization of the LSU Web Site**

15. Do you find the LSU Web site to be helpful in your recruitment effort?

**Seth:** I don’t use it much because I’m not as “techy.”

**Louise:** I don’t use it much because I’m not tech savvy.

**Rita:** Yes, I use it often prior to attending college fairs.

**Jennifer:** Yes, and I point students to it.

**Chad:** Yes, I use it prior to attending college fairs since I no longer receive communication from the Office of Admissions.

**Ross:** I don’t, but the younger alumni volunteers do.

These responses varied along generational boundaries: the older alumni did not pursue the information on the Web site, whereas the younger alumni did. This phenomenon is not uncommon, and was remedied by the Division of Outreach with the creation of a recruitment manual.

**Prospective Student Feedback on the LSU Web Site**

16. Do students comment on the Web site as a tool that is effective for recruitment?

**Seth:** Yes, they mention that it is hard to navigate.

**Louise:** Not much.

**Rita:** Never.

**Jennifer:** They have never commented that it is helpful.

**Chad:** No, they don’t comment on it to me.

**Ross:** No, not to me.
The fact that the students did not comment on the Web site to the volunteers could reflect a generational difference; however, the two volunteers that did receive feedback indicated that the students did not find the Web site to be helpful. This is a message that needs to be relayed to the University in order to determine what changes should be made to the Web site, if any.

Feedback as to Why a Student Would Not Attend LSU

17. Do you receive feedback as to why a student would not attend LSU?

Seth: Yes, logistics and desire to attend state schools.
Louise: Yes, logistics and desire to attend a state school.
Rita: Yes, logistics and desire to attend a state school.
Jennifer: Yes, but none of the reasons are ever negative. Mainly a desire to attend a state school.
Chad: Yes, distance.
Ross: Yes, distance and a desire to attend a state school.

The fact that each of the volunteers received feedback that focused specifically on logistics should reflect as a positive for LSU. In other words, cost, academics, or athletics were not factors that were commonly expressed to the volunteers. These responses indicated that LSU is viewed as a viable option to prospective students, even if the University is hundreds of miles away.

Countering Negative Feedback

18. If the answer to the above question is “yes”, how do you counter this feedback?

Seth: Discuss the atmosphere on campus and encourage them to visit.
Louise: Discuss the atmosphere and encourage a visit.
Rita: Describe her personal situation, discuss the atmosphere, and encourage a tour of campus.

Jennifer: Discuss LSU as a viable alternative to Texas schools and encourage a campus visit.

Chad: Discuss the Louisiana culture and the cost of living.

Ross: Discuss the atmosphere and encourage a campus visit.

When confronted with the issues of logistics, each volunteer was adamant about convincing the student to attend the campus. These responses also reinforce the primary selling point that the volunteers feel the University has to offer.

The Value of the Division of Outreach in the Volunteer Effort

19. Prior to 2007, did you find the Division of Outreach to be a valuable resource in your recruiting effort?

Seth: Yeah, I think they are fantastic. They’re great. They are our life blood. We couldn’t do it without them.

Louise: I have been treated well because I feel like I’m just an alum. I’m not on anyone’s payroll, but I rely on them heavily and have through the years

Rita: Oh, they are extremely helpful. They are not only helpful with literature but if we ask for trinkets out at our table, they are great about that. They have gotten better over the years.

Jennifer: I’m going to say yes, but I do know there were a few times we had trouble getting materials on time for the college fairs.

Chad: Oh yes. I literally just went blank on what to express on this topic because it was more that what I could have ever asked for and the best compliment I ever received was from a Harvard alum saying how our table stood out.
Ross: In the past it was. Prior to 2008, especially.

Each volunteer viewed the Division of Outreach as a crucial part of their effort. This is important to note because these volunteers always feel as though someone from the University was assisting them with their efforts, was aware of their needs, and was grateful of the time they dedicate to the University. These intangibles ultimately encouraged these volunteers to not only continue their efforts, but to also engage other volunteers.

Feedback for the Division of Outreach

20. If you could change any aspect about the way the Division of Outreach handles the alumni recruitment effort, what would it be?

Seth: Prior to the fall of 2008, nothing.

Louise: Advanced planning for programs that take place outside of the traditional college fair. Also, have the brochures ready earlier in the recruitment season because we host a training program for new alumni.

Rita: Yes, please host another alumni training program.

Jennifer: Yes, please have the materials ready for our training program that takes place prior to recruitment season.

Chad: Yes, please have a representative from Baton Rouge come to Los Angeles for a fair.

Ross: Yes, please have a representative from Baton Rouge come to Nashville more often.

Although the Division of Outreach is viewed as a valuable tool in their recruitment efforts, the volunteers would like to see other forms of participation by the University. These activities that were suggested would help each volunteer expand upon
the current recruiting effort in their territory and provide more assurance that the Division of Outreach is available any time.

**Additional Feedback from the Interviewees**

**21. Do you feel as though there is a topic of further information that we may have left out that you would like to interject?**

**Seth:** Discuss with volunteers what type of time is involved in this effort and have the Division of Outreach provide the service it had available prior to the fall of 2008.

**Louise:** Only advice for my fellow alumni that may begin a program is to start small and see what will work.

**Rita:** Yes, LSU needs to convey the goals of the University better to its volunteer alumni.

**Jennifer:** I have no further comments.

**Chad:** Yes, I have really been happy as an alum with what LSU has done to present itself as a national university. I have been very happy with the strides LSU has made in the last years on just marketing itself more out of state. It offers so much and I really didn’t appreciate it until I lived out here. Also, the Division of Outreach needs to continue to provide the service it had prior to the fall of 2008.

**Ross:** Yes, the Division of Outreach need to continue to provide the support system that was in place prior to the fall of 2008.

These responses varied because of the need for further communication from the Division of Outreach to these volunteers. Each expressed a need for the Division of Outreach to continue with the efforts it put forth prior to the fall of 2008. Although several of the alumni were frustrated with the lack of communication, they were still working to promote the university they cherished.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, OUTCOMES, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the research, along with a brief review of the content of chapters one through four. The results of this study will also be correlated to previous research that was brought to the forefront in the review of literature in chapter two. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings of this study to alumni volunteer recruitment, program coordination, and future research in the field.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to present various theories of volunteerism to promote use of alumni as effective recruiting tools (specifically for LSU) along with discussion of what made these individuals successful. The information was gathered via personal interviews with successful alumni volunteer recruiters until a point of saturation was reached. In chapter one, I described the need for the study, and explained what efforts universities such as LSU were putting forth in order to recruit high caliber students. LSU, in particular, is a university on the rise, and in this ever-changing environment to compete for the top students, the University is making strides to be at the forefront of consideration for prospective students across the nation. In order for LSU to continue this effort, the University instituted policies with its Flagship Agenda that have increased admissions standards for incoming students and, in turn, has increased the quality of the overall student that enrolled at LSU. The challenge that LSU now faces is the fact that the number of quality students from Louisiana is in a serious decline. I discussed the steadily decreasing graduation rate in the state of Louisiana, and explained that if LSU wishes to continue to compete nationally, the University must pursue students.
outside of Louisiana. I then discussed the need for more assistance in the recruitment effort due to staffing issues within the University’s Division of Outreach. Although the Division of Outreach has done an admirable job with its recruiting effort, the need for further assistance across the country is obvious. I then detailed how the use of alumni volunteers has been an avenue that many large universities across the country have pursued with great success.

In chapter one, I listed the problem statement as: The primary purpose of this study was to describe what makes an alumni volunteer recruiter successful at gaining the interest of prospective students in their area of the country in both traditional and non-traditional recruiting settings. The reason for this study was the fact that although sufficient literature existed to support the need for alumni volunteer recruiters, there were few studies in which the alumni volunteers themselves were asked about what steps they took in their areas to promote their universities outside of the traditional recruitment setting. Were these individuals marketing their university all year and if so, how were they going about this? Were these individuals utilizing their social networking abilities to further promote the university in other community settings? What was motivating these individuals to continually volunteer their time for this effort? These were just a few of the items that intrigued me.

In chapter two, I conducted a literature review that provided information as to the direction LSU was headed as a prominent tier one University, discussed the goals and objectives the Flagship Agenda contained for incoming freshman, discussed the changes that had already taken place because of this effort, and then detailed how this effort of increasing the quality of student will be difficult because of the declining graduation rates in the state of Louisiana. I then detailed the office structure of the Office of
Undergraduate Admissions’ Division of Outreach (as of the fall of 2007), and discussed the challenges of future recruiting with the current staff that was in place. The review of literature then shifted to the need of volunteer alumni recruiters and their motivations.

The next section of chapter two’s review of literature focused on volunteerism, the human instincts of motivation, and the need to belong. Popular studies that discussed these issues were cited and correlated with volunteerism. I then discussed how to use these motivations to establish a successful recruiting program, along with steps that should be taken to train and develop the volunteer coordinator and the volunteer recruiters.

Next, the review of literature focused on the GEMS model, which is one of the most famous methods of generating, educating, motivating, and sustaining a successful volunteer program to date. Each section of the GEMS model was backed with other research of different types of volunteerism, and then correlated with different forms of alumni volunteerism for education programs. For example, in stage four of the GEMS model, the researcher listed different forms of alumni volunteerism for recruitment in education programs such as automotive programs, technology education programs, agronomy and crop science programs, entrepreneurship programs and healthcare management programs. The review of literature then focused on the use of volunteer alumni in community outreach programs such as 4-H and Rotary International.

Lastly, the review of literature focused on the use of volunteer alumni recruiters at two other major research one institutions, discussed LSU’s current alumni recruitment effort, and described what changes needed to be made to this effort based upon the information that was derived from the review of literature. I discussed my findings while attending a conference that focused specifically on coordinating a successful alumni
recruitment program, along with other literature that was garnered from attending this event.

In chapter three I discussed the methodology and explained the qualitative interview process. The method for data preparation was detailed, along with an explanation for the grounded theory approach. I discussed my role as the researcher for the qualitative process, listed the credibility issues and concerns, discussed the sampling strategy used for the research, discussed the ethical issues and concerns, and gave biographical information about my involvement with the alumni recruitment effort. This chapter also explained the coding process that was used to determine overriding themes of the study, along with a list of the guiding questions that were utilized during the interview process.

In chapter four I explained how I organized, analyzed and synthesized the data. I explained the grounded theory approach and discussed the themes that became prevalent once the open coding process was complete. The triangulating analyst agreed that the themes were a common thread among all of the interviewees, were properly identified, and described to the reader. The primary emerging themes were volunteer motivation, the need to belong, the lack of a need of recognition for involvement, the ability to network successfully outside of the normal recruitment setting, the need for further training programs for the volunteers, the need to promote minority recruitment, and the willingness to increase their current volunteer efforts. Each participant’s transcripts were detailed in two different forms: first, a description of each interview was provided, along with several verbatim quotes. Second, a list of themes that emerged from the guiding questions were listed, with each interviewees’ responses summarized below it.
The findings from the data analysis revealed that the motivating factors for alumni volunteer recruiters centered on love for their Alma Mater and their willingness to share their experiences at the University with prospective students and parents. These alumni volunteers often begin this initiative on their own, with no expectation of recognition for their effort. Volunteer alumni ultimately ended up enjoying their role in the recruitment effort, had no trouble garnering the interest of other alumni to join the effort, and found that fellow alumni also have no expectations when they join. These veteran volunteer alumni have determined what recruiting methods work in their areas of the country, what selling points are important to the students in their territories, and know what the parameters for a successful recruitment season are for their territory. Lastly and most importantly, these volunteer alumni have become known as a primary contact within their communities for information about the University. These alumni gladly go out of their way to continue promoting their Alma Mater in any community setting on a year-around basis.

**Outcomes: Introduction**

The following outcomes are presented in correlation with distinct themes that emerged during the review of literature in chapter two. My approach was to compare themes that were developed during the interview process or other points that were interjected as a result of the guiding questions. In the cases below, the volunteer alumni recruiters that were interviewed reflected sentiments that were expressed by others in studies of volunteerism. These studies primarily focused on motivation for initial involvement, the need to belong, volunteer training programs, social networking, minority recruitment, recruitment of fellow alumni volunteers, recognition, other forms of recruitment efforts that were developed, parental involvement in recruiting, the use of
the Web site for recruitment, and the reliance on the Division of Outreach as a valuable
tool in the recruitment effort.

**Motivation**

The first overriding theme that developed during the interview process was the
common motivational factor that encouraged the volunteer alumni recruiters to begin
their effort: love for their school and the feeling of belonging to an organization that
represented one of their passions. These motivations correlated directly with a 2002
qualitative study by Zeilstra, in which volunteers were asked to give the reasons why they
would give their time to an institution. Zeilstra stated, “Three of the four volunteer
leaders said the number one reason they agreed to service is because they cared about the
institution” (pg. 25).

Another study that reflected these results was that of Baumeister and Leary’s
famous 1995 study of the need to belong. Baumeister and Leary stated:

> The need to belong has two main features. First, people need frequent personal
> contacts or interactions with the other person. Ideally, these interactions would be
> affectively positive or pleasant, but is mainly important that the majority be free
> from conflict and negative effect. Second, people need to perceive that there is an interpersonal bond or relationship
> marked by stability, affective concern, and a continuation into the foreseeable
> future (p. 497).

In the case of volunteer alumni, the frequent personal contacts are shared between
fellow alumni and prospective students and parents. All of these interactions are positive
because the volunteer alumni are reflecting upon past experiences that helped to shape
their lives in a positive manner. Attending LSU vaulted these individuals into a career
path, or put them in a place where they could network into a permanent career sometime
after college. The perception of an interpersonal bond or relationship is ultimately built
with new alumni that join the effort, or with students that will eventually enroll at LSU and become fellow alumni in the future.

**Training and Other Volunteer Efforts**

The next theme that emerged from the study was the alumni’s concerns regarding a training program and its availability. Each of these volunteer alumni had no training prior to their initial involvement in volunteer recruiting however; each had received some form of training within the past five years that I personally administered. Several of the volunteers requested that a frequent training program should take place. The need for a training program was highlighted in the review of literature by McCoy and Allen’s 1991 study on building a successful volunteer recruitment program. McCoy and Allen stated:

> Intense training weekends are held in June at a selected Commonwealth Campus. These weekends draw members and leaders together to share ideas, receive training and informational updates, and are recognized by the University for their outstanding achievements and service. Training is supplemented by a training videotape and a variety of related publications, including a *Feedback* newsletter produced three times a year (p. 107).

Once these volunteers were trained properly and became comfortable in their roles as recruiters, each had no qualms about discussing the benefits of LSU to prospective students and parents in any type of setting. Several examples were listed describing how these volunteers would promote LSU in their churches or some other community outreach program. Constant networking within their communities is a priceless asset to the organization they are promoting. It should be noted that all of the volunteer recruiters also dedicated their time to some other form of volunteer effort. This correlated directly with a 1993 study cited in the review of literature by Earnest which focused on a study of volunteers in community leadership programs. Earnest stated:

> Alumni were highly complementary of their respective leadership programs. The most common benefits reported by alumni were: (a) increased networking within
the community; (b) developed a greater understanding and ability to interact with people; (c) increased self-confidence and the personal motivation to become actively involved in community affairs; and (d) developed an understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of their leadership responsibility as a citizen (p. 5).

Minority Recruitment

Alumni volunteers, based on the responses during the interview process, do not concentrate their efforts in communities that may not express much interest in LSU, nor do they approach the recruitment of minority students any differently. This is a concern for a university such as LSU because of the initiative to promote diversity of the student body. Each of the volunteers was quick to point out that they do not treat a prospective minority recruit any differently than anyone else. While this view is appropriate, the need for an enhanced minority recruitment effort is obvious.

The literature cited in chapter two dealt directly with the challenges that face volunteer recruitment organizations and the volunteer recruiters themselves. On one hand, the literature stressed the importance of having minority alumni volunteer in order to relate better to students of color. Myers et al. (1998) listed six distinct steps on how to carry out these initiatives successfully. On the other hand, studies in the Review of Literature by Wilson (2000) and Hwang et al. (2005), discuss the low numbers of participation by minority volunteer recruiters overall to be a phenomenon that may be explained by the fact that minorities tend to be more focused on what is happening within their communities. Hwang et al. stated:

Here again, we can only speculate about explanations for our results, but they may indicate that, net of any socioeconomic, educational, religious, or other considerations, non-Whites simply have a strong sense of and experience with the unmet needs of the people in their communities (p. 400).

While LSU’s Division of Outreach is making an effort to combat this notion by establishing a “Coordinator for Minority Recruitment and Development” to reach out to
minority communities in and around campus, it would be in the best interest of the University to pursue more minority volunteer recruiters as they try to enhance this effort. From my past experience, minority alumni volunteers were pursued on numerous occasions, however, none of these potential volunteers ever followed through on their initiatives. Perhaps if fellow minority approached these prospects, their willingness to participate actively could be swayed in a positive direction.

Soliciting New Volunteer Recruiters

Alumni volunteer recruiters had no problems persuading other alumni in their area to join the recruitment effort. In fact, a couple of the alumni indicated that they run into situations each year in which there are too many volunteers available for their effort. Clearly, this is a good situation if you are coordinating the effort. The most interesting fact was that, similar to the alumni that persuaded them to join, these new alumni had no expectations of what they would receive as a result of their participation. A 1999 study by Culp, III and Schwartz in which tenured 4-H volunteers were polled about their expectations for joining the alumni recruitment effort reflected these sentiments:

Tenured 4-H volunteers who attend state recognition banquets are not motivated to begin or continue their service to 4-H in order to receive individual recognition. Rather, tenured 4-H volunteers are motivated to begin their volunteer service due to an affiliation with either the 4-H organization or 4-H members (p. 2).

Not only did this study directly correlate with the responses from the alumni volunteers, it also confirms Baumeister and Leary’s (1995) notion of a need to belong to an organization that makes you feel at “home.”

Pursuing Other Forms of Recruitment

The alumni volunteers were then asked to discuss if each had pursued another form of recruitment effort outside of the traditional college fair. The volunteer alumni
who were within a reasonable driving distance of campus (Houston, Dallas/Fort Worth) discussed their involvement in hosting receptions in the homes of fellow alumni. This form of recruitment was highlighted in the review of literature in the “mobilize” section Culp and Kohlhagen’s (2004) GEMS model. Christion (1994) describes a similar approach to this method of recruitment:

The University of Western Ontario sponsors Senior Send-offs in a graduate’s home for incoming students. Alumni mingle with parents and students for the first 30 minutes and then present a slide show of campus. The volunteers end the evening by answering questions and giving out door prizes (p. 40).

Each of the alumni volunteers also participated in an annual crawfish boil in which each alumni chapter would raise scholarship money for prospective students. This extra scholarship money often swayed a student’s decision to attend LSU the following fall. Jennifer, the volunteer alumni from the Houston area, discussed how successful their well-coordinated fund raising effort had been when she detailed the endowments that were available, along with other scholarship monies. All told, their Chapter raised roughly $25,000 to $30,000 annually. The review of literature reflected an extreme example of a well-coordinated fund raising effort that was conducted by volunteer alumni from the University of Pennsylvania:

Penn Alumni’s Mid-Atlantic Regional Advisory Board (MARAB) celebrated its goal-breaking $7.5 million scholarship drive with a reception in Washington, DC, for 140 donors, scholarship recipients, and parents on April 23….MARAB beat its own target of $5 million a year ahead of schedule (University of Pennsylvania Alumni Web site, 2007: http://www.makinghistory.upenn.edu/node/198).

Parental Involvement

Another important theme that arose from the interview process was the volunteer alumni recruiters’ willingness to involve the parents in recruiting. Several of the alumni have already sent a child to college, so their ability to relate these experiences to
concerned parents is vital in the recruitment process. In a 1994 article by Christion, this topic is discussed, “The University of Redlands sends pairs of older and younger alumni to college fairs. While a high school student can relate to a younger graduate, parents often find the older volunteer reassuring” (p. 40). Fogg (2008) also reflected this point “More-recent graduates tend to connect well with prospective students, while older alumni connect with the parents” (p. B13). The alumni volunteers recognized this fact and used it to their advantage.

Utilization of the Internet for Recruiting Purposes

The alumni volunteers also discussed their dealings with the LSU Web site. It was clear that the older alumni did not use the Web site at all, while the younger alumni volunteers used it frequently. Prospective students did not provide much feedback, if any at all, to the alumni volunteers, is also an interesting fact. LSU, like all major universities, views its Web site as an asset in terms of student recruitment. The Web site is designed to make navigation simple and information for prospective students available within one or two “clicks.” The fact that students do not discuss the Web site much with recruiters when asked about it is also addressed in the review of literature. Whiteside and Mentz (2003) highlighted this developing phenomenon:

Those responsible for design and content on an institutional Web site should assume the mindset of the student. Most college marketing focuses on the product - the programs, the majors, and services provided by the college. This approach often leads to a “so what”? reaction on the part of the student. A more effective approach is to focus on the benefits and value of the experience (p. 63).

According to this quote, the alumni volunteer is providing “the benefits and value of the experience” when discussing the University with the student. Perhaps this is the reason why the students have a “so what” attitude about the Web site when conversing with volunteer recruiters.
The Division of Outreach as a Valuable Asset for Alumni Volunteers

Lastly, the alumni volunteers were asked to share their opinions of the Division of Outreach as a valuable tool for their recruitment effort. All agreed that, prior to the fall of 2008, the Division of Outreach was extremely helpful. With the exception of one or two cases, the office provided information in a timely manner, produced a Web site that assisted the effort, and also produced a training manual that the volunteers could use while recruiting prospective students. This manual was designed as a quick reference check in case students or parents had questions that the volunteers could not answer.

Christion (1994) discussed the use of these manuals:

Manuals are useful for training alumni recruiters, but they can be costly and difficult to update. The University of Redlands has solved this problem by offering fact sheets instead. They give details about college’s fairs as well as UR’s curriculum, admissions process, and campus life (p. 40).

LSU assisted the alumni by producing not only a smaller version of a manual, but also fact sheets that could be placed on the tables during college fairs. When the alumni recruitment Web site was available, a copy of this manual and the fact sheets were available for print at anytime. Each volunteer expressed the need for these tools to be available once again in the near future, and regretted the lack of service that was currently being provided by the Division of Outreach.

Implications

An implication for those who are coordinating an alumni volunteer recruitment effort is to understand what ultimately motivated these individuals to join this effort, just as it is important to understand what they expect from the organization in return. This study showed that the personal motivations were minimal and in some cases non-existent,
however, this would not prove to be the case in every instance, as shown by examples in the review of literature.

Since these alumni volunteers often begin their efforts without any formal training, it is therefore imperative that a volunteer recruitment program coordinator determine what each individual needs to know for their territory. Each territory has a different need, and volunteer alumni, particularly experienced alumni, can adequately articulate this. It is also imperative that these individuals are given adequate information about expectations, and that each is kept up to date in terms of the organization’s goals and objectives. These goals and objectives can be for the upcoming year, or even the next five years.

Another implication for those who coordinate volunteer recruitment efforts across the country is to take the time to examine what the volunteers are doing outside of the formal recruiting setting. It is not sufficient to send a volunteer to a college fair and have them mail student information back to you. These alumni volunteers are actively going out on their own within their communities to promote the organization, whether or not the organization is aware of it. Many of these volunteers are approached in all types of community settings about your organization. It is up to you to find out whether or not these individuals are being provided adequate service in order to properly answer questions that they may receive.

Many volunteer alumni recruiters are also actively engaging in other forms of recruitment as well. It is important to encourage these individuals to continue this effort, and to show other alumni volunteers the results of these extended efforts. This study showed that many alumni host receptions in their homes or the homes of fellow alumni, host events such as scholarship fund raisers, and will often attend University-sponsored
events. Not all of these events will work in every territory, but it is important to know which programs will work and for whom. It is then up to the institution to promote these events.

Volunteer alumni recruiters also need to be encouraged to solicit interest from communities that may not have an inclination to show such interest. This study showed that some are taking the initiative to seek interest in these areas, while others do not feel it is necessary to even approach these individuals.

More minority volunteer alumni recruiters need to be located and encouraged to join these efforts. Studies in the review of literature showed the numbers of minority volunteers are low because minorities tend to focus on events within their respective communities. The involvement of more minority volunteers would help solve the issue of gaining interest from communities that often do not show interest in your organization.

Volunteer alumni recruiters are not only actively recruiting prospective students, but they are also actively recruiting other alumni to join the volunteer recruiting effort. It is vital to discover what methods these individuals are taking to gain the interest of fellow alumni and what these alumni are doing to retain their services. This will not only help establish programs in new territories, but will also help to retain these individuals once they have started.

Volunteer alumni recruiters are also gaining feedback from students in their areas as to why they would not attend the university. While this information may be obvious at times (such as logistics) it is still important to have complete knowledge of the territory to determine their interests and needs. In some instances, students may not be interested in the university because particular degree programs are not offered, or because certain student organizations are not available. Whatever the case may be, volunteer recruiters
should be intensely aware of these reasons. If not, encourage them to gain this feedback and relay it back to the institution.

It is important to understand what kind of service the institution provides to volunteer alumni. If they feel as though they are not receiving the services they need, be prepared to lose their help. Based upon this study, once the alumni volunteer feels as though they have the backing of the university’s recruiting office, they in turn, will adopt many endeavors on their own. Remaining stagnant with assistance and service will not encourage excellence on their part.

Finally, I believe it is imperative, especially during the current economic crisis, that every coordinator of a volunteer alumni recruitment program take the time to study the economic benefits that volunteer alumni provide. In the review of literature, information was provided that discussed not only the hourly dollar amount that these volunteers save an organization, but information is also given as to how much a volunteer will save the university when they host events, or raise money for scholarships.

While it is difficult to determine the exact value of what the volunteer ultimately brings to the university, the coordinator of these programs should begin to discuss with their volunteer recruiters the following: 1) how many hours each volunteer organization puts in per recruitment cycle, 2) how much the volunteer spends out of pocket to promote the university in non-traditional recruitment settings, 3) how much the volunteer spends out of pocket to host other types of recruitment events and 4) how much time each spends recruiting fellow volunteer alumni recruiters. This type of study would be time intensive, but would be extremely beneficial when the coordinator is requesting assistance from higher administration within the university to expand upon the volunteer recruitment effort.
With this implication in mind, I contacted Seth, the volunteer alumni recruiter from Richmond, Virginia in order to provide an example of economic benefits. It was my opinion that, once the interviews were complete, Seth’s annual participation would represent an average alumni volunteer point person’s workload for a given year. Seth relayed to me that he spends approximately 144 hours a year devoting his time for college fair preparation, travel, attending the fair, working at the crawfish boil, and contacting students outside of the recruitment settings.

In chapter two, I stated that The Independent Sector listed the state-by-state estimate of how much per hour a volunteer’s labor was represented, with Louisiana reflected at $16.95 per hour. Since Seth resides in Virginia, this rate would be roughly $20.08 an hour, according to the same study. If LSU had to pay a full-time recruiter to cover this volunteer labor, it would cost the University $2,891.52 per year. In addition, Seth mentioned in his initial interview that he also shipped materials to interested students from his home and he paid the postage himself. A solid estimate for this endeavor would probably cost an alumnus roughly $100 a year, based upon the size and weight of the brochures. Seth’s alumni volunteer group was also responsible for generating roughly 100 student applications a year. With the cost of a student application at LSU being $40 (located online at http://www.lsu.edu/paurec/apply.shtml), this is additional $4,000 in revenue for the University. If any of the students ultimately enroll at LSU, their tuition costs, campus living costs, and student fees all must also be added to this amount.

According to this estimate, Seth’s alumni association alone provides over $10,000 worth of service for the University. This amount is in accordance with Seth’s value as the point person being nearly $7,000 after including recruitment events, mailings, and
applications generated. This total excludes the value of the student enrolling on campus the following year to the University. This is quite an amazing implication to attempt to understand, but would ultimately benefit the study of volunteerism and its economic benefits on an organization.

Implications for LSU

In the review of literature, McCoy and Allen’s (1991) ten steps to establishing a successful alumni recruitment program was cited. Below, the ten steps are listed and defined. In the following section, these steps will be synthesized along with the needs of LSU for the development of a volunteer alumni program.

1. **Assess Institutional Needs** – Does your institution need a cadre of dedicated people in the field working to educate prospective students about your academic offerings?

2. **Set Goals for Volunteer Involvement** – Volunteers are successful when they are perceived as important partners in an important effort. They need to know what they are doing and how they will do it.

3. **Establish Resources and Funding for Support** – Volunteers are not free. They must be supported through staff time and material. If you are going to ask them to do a job then you must be able to provide them resources to do it well.

4. **Identify and Recruit Volunteers** – A key player in identifying your prospective alumni volunteer pool is your Director of Alumni Relations. The Alumni Office should be on board at the beginning and asked to develop an outreach effort to identify who may be interested in recruitment.

5. **Assign Activities Based on a Planning Calendar to Meet Set Goals** – Use a regular calendar to plan activities as it is much more familiar to the alumni than an academic calendar.

6. **Set Success Parameters Based on Identified Outcomes** – Volunteers want to know if their efforts are paying off. Parameters to success are very important and the recognition of those who reach their goals is also a crucial element to any successful program.

7. **Establish an Information Exchange Mechanism with Volunteers** – This exchange can occur by telephone, newsletter or computer hook-up but it must occur.

8. **Gather Outcomes and Maintain Records** – Formulate a Bottom Line - Accurate record keeping is essential if you wish to establish a cost/benefit analysis of any volunteer effort. Records should be kept on events attended, prospective students, and conversations of enrolled students as well as cost to accomplish your goals.
9. **Evaluate the Degree of Success** – This evaluation should occur yearly and be based on the positive and negative outcomes of your program.

10. **Revamp Goals and Resources Based on Bottom Line Evaluation** – Of course, the obvious last step is to continually upgrade your program to achieve institutional goals. In addition, as goals are reached, they need to be revamped and deleted or replace. (p. 109-112).

**Ten Steps to Success: Goals Established for LSU**

Each of these steps would differ for each university depending on the type of university (Ex. Small, large, public or private) and how large that university deems its alumni program should be. In terms of LSU, specifically, I have addressed each step based upon feedback that was gained in the interviews:

1. **Assess Institutional Needs** – As mentioned prior, LSU was moving toward strict admission requirements with the introduction of The Flagship Agenda. In order for the University to achieve this goal, the overall application numbers must increase considerably for out-of-state students due to the declining graduation rate in the state of Louisiana. The alumni can help this goal by going to more schools and gaining more interest in LSU in areas of the country that are not familiar with the University.

2. **Set Goals for Volunteer Involvement** – With LSU continuing to move towards strict admissions requirements, the University was in need of alumni to contact schools, parents, and counselors outside of the state of Louisiana that may not be familiar with LSU. It was at the discretion of the Division of Outreach to locate these volunteers and solicit their help. The volunteer program coordinator should continue to pursue the program that required all alumni volunteers to become familiar with two or three high schools in their area; preferably within a five-mile radius of their home. These volunteers should get to know the counselors and visit these schools at least three times a year. The volunteer could then keep in constant contact with that high school and be aware of who...
is interested in the University. The volunteer could then contact the students interested in LSU from their area and help to persuade them to enroll in the fall.

3. **Establish Resources and Funding for Support** – This step would take place each fall semester before the recruiting season begins. The amount of funding would be determined by the size of the volunteer effort for that given year, along with how many programs we expect these volunteers to attend. As of 2007, approximately $10,000 is set aside each year in the budget of the Division of Outreach for the alumni effort. I expected this amount to increase each year, with the support of Dr. McCoy.

4. **Identify and Recruit Volunteers** – This could be handled in several ways. First, gain a list of all of the Alumni Chapters across the country and contact the Presidents of each to determine who would be interested in assisting the effort. This list could be attained from LSU’s Web site. Second, find Web sites that discuss items such as LSU sports. A member of the recruiting office could log on to the site and begin a topic on the message board regarding volunteer alumni recruitment. This method has worked in the past with much success. Over 100 volunteers were brought into the fold from soliciting new volunteers at Web sites that networked LSU fans and alumni.

5. **Assign Activities Based on a Planning Calendar to Meet Goals** – This calendar would be added to the Division of Outreach’s recruiting fair calendar at the beginning of the recruiting season. Here, alumni could view which programs are going to be attended, along with who would attend them. The Division of Outreach would also put the results of that program on the Web site. Also, receptions or any other programs that the volunteers host would also be added to the list of activities.

6. **Set Success Parameters Based on Projected Outcomes** – It is vital that the alumni volunteers have an understanding of the goals of the Division of Outreach. These
goals would be sent to the alumni each fall via e-mail, newsletter, and also placed on the Web site mentioned above. Once the volunteers understand these expectations, they will feel as if they are really part of a team, not just working on this effort alone in their area.

7. **Establish an Information Exchange Mechanism with Volunteers** – This exchange would take place in three forms; e-mails once every-other week, an alumni newsletter, and the creation of a Web site. These three forms of information exchange are crucial as the volunteer effort grows in order to keep everyone informed. Newsletters would be sent three or four times per year, depending on need, and the Web site would be updated at least once a week.

8. **Gather Outcomes and Maintain Records; Formulate a Bottom Line** – This process would occur during the course of the academic year. Information would be gathered in the form of an evaluation form that each volunteer will be asked to complete upon conclusion of each program, reception, or fund raiser (mentioned below). This form would be available online and would also be mailed to each volunteer prior to each program.

9. **Evaluate the Degree of Success** – This would be determined each year by the Division of Outreach. If the goals are not reached, then step 10 must take place.

10. **Revamp Goals and Resources Based on Bottom-Line Evaluation** – This step may or may not need to be taken, based on the outcomes resulting from steps one through eight.

I believe that if these suggestions are followed by the current coordinator of the alumni recruitment program at LSU, the program will be able to sustain itself at a high level for years to come.
REFERENCES


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VITA

Eric Prudhomme is a 32-year-old male doctoral candidate, married to his wife Emily for seven and a half years, and is the father of one child, his son, Evan. He is currently the Director of Recruiting for a local IT company called Sparkhound. He has been employed with Sparkhound since April 28, 2008. Prior to this employment, he served as Associate Director for the Division of Outreach in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at LSU for four years, in which one of his duties in the office was to oversee the alumni recruitment program and establish it as a vital part of the recruitment effort.

When he took over the program in the fall of 2003, there were approximately 25 alumni volunteers who were active participants. These 25 volunteers represented 5 states (Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Alabama, and Florida). It was his job to not only expand this group in terms of numbers, but to also make sure that there were representatives in each state that was considered a “feeder” territory of prospective students. Initially, after receiving little assistance from the LSU Alumni Association regarding this endeavor, he took it upon himself to drum up volunteers with a phone and e-mail campaign. He also requested that when Enrollment Advisors hit the road recruiting in areas the office had never been to, that each attempt to contact an alumni in that area in order to gain interest in the program. It must also be mentioned that, in the fall of 2007, the LSU Alumni Association offered up their assistance, and became a huge asset in helping to continue to build this effort.

Another method he took was to join various LSU Web sites that had chat rooms. He would gain permission from that site’s owners or primary administrators to seek help in the recruitment campaign from individuals who were signed up to post on the site. He would label my user name as “Recruiting Services” and he would ask if anyone was
interested in assisting LSU with their recruitment efforts. One Web site allowed him to write a full-page advertisement, and posted such on the home page of the site for over a month. As a result of these types of efforts, within two years his network had grown from 25 members in five states, to over 125 members in approximately 20 states.

In areas that contained more than one volunteer alumni recruiter, he would designate one dependable individual as the “point person” for that region. This individual would bring the group in that area together for meetings to discuss what high schools and what programs were worthy of their time and effort. Once these programs were established, he would pay entry fees for the programs (if needed), ship materials to these alumni who would disseminate them to the necessary persons, and have the alumni evaluate the program to determine if there should be attendance in the future. This effort was working out well, but unfortunately, other duties in the office kept him from building the program in the fashion that he desired.

In the fall of 2006, Dr. Jim McCoy came on board as part of the LSU administration and his first order of business in terms of recruiting was to continue the establishment of this program and promote its growth. The Division of Outreach (formerly the Office of Recruiting Services) was granted funds to hire a full-time position for the purpose of overseeing the alumni recruitment effort. A new hire was made, and that individual was able to take over the program on a full-time basis. Within one year, the number of participants grew from 125 members, to nearly 250.

It is now the goal of the office to have this network contain; over 750 volunteers that will represent 40 states in the continental United States; to have these individuals cover nearly 200 programs a year; host up to 20 receptions a year; and assist in generation of scholarship funds for prospective students in their regions.
During his career at LSU, Eric was in charge of coordinating programs that brought students to campus for the purposes of recruitment, several of which he proposed and designed himself. He was also in charge of academic programs such as the Louisiana High School Rally Association (three years) and assisted in the coordination of the National Decathlon competition. He also oversaw the daily tour program at LSU, was in charge of the office budget (approximately 1.25 million dollars annually) and attained supervisory duties, which included the entire recruitment area of the office.

Currently, he is completing a doctoral program in adult education in the School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development at LSU. It is his hope that once he achieves this milestone, that he will be able to advance his career in the private sector by becoming a corporate recruiter and small-business consultant. It is his hope that all of these experiences, combined with a terminal degree, will ultimately take his career to the next level.