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**Lockwood, Brooks L. *Identification of Effective Recruitment Strategies for Public Technical Colleges Recruiting High School Students in West Central Wisconsin***

**Abstract**

The recruitment of quality students who have a great understanding of their technical college program is a goal for all public technical colleges. With the limited amount of resources that public technical colleges have and with the large amount of resources private-proprietary schools allocate to recruitment, it is important that public technical colleges recruit efficiently and effectively. This study surveyed high school students from across West Central Wisconsin in the counties of St. Croix and Pierce. These counties serve two public technical schools including one Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) campus and one Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) campus. The results of the study illustrate the importance of making general information delivered in a clear and concise format and to promote the investigation of the school on the respective college's website. The survey also indicates that social influences, such as parents, friends, counselors, and teachers need to be educated on the benefits of each school so they may be reinforced to the student's decision.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

The recruitment of working adults and high school students has been essential for the sustainability of for-profit technical schools and community colleges throughout the United States. Enrollment management first started within tuition dependent private colleges and universities. After decades of deep budget cuts for public higher education, similar tuition dependent behavior at public colleges and universities was created (Humphrey, 2008). Recruitment strategies were developed to inform and encourage students to attend a college or university. The more students are aware of certain programs a university or community college offers, the more applicants that school might have. Enrollment management organizations had to determine which students from their applicant pool were ready to enhance the learning environment for themselves and their peers (Humphrey, 2008). A stronger applicant pool can be developed by greater institutional visibility which is a result of more student responsiveness to recruitment efforts (Hossler, 1999). If students are made aware of opportunities at local community colleges and technical schools, the applicant pool would be of higher standard and the results might be a more successful college student.

According to a survey done by ACT, Inc. 54% of students at two-year public colleges returned for their second year in 2007-2008 (ACT, 2009). This indicates that 46% of students leave after their first year of technical college. This means that 46% of students are not staying in school. Keith B. Humphrey, Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Arizona, stated that if students' expectations match their experience, retention - and the continuing tuition revenue of the retained students bring- results in terms of sustainability and success in the classroom (Humphrey, 2008). If the students have a greater understanding of their college experience before they attend their preferred school, then they have a higher likelihood of being retained and having a successful college experience (Humphrey, 2008). The issue is finding the

right students for the community colleges, universities, and technical schools, so that the school and the students can achieve success, and a higher retention rate.

Although public universities compete for students in areas all over the nation, public technical colleges in West Central Wisconsin recruit students only for the geographical areas they serve. In the case of Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC), they serve 11 counties in West Central Wisconsin. However, private proprietary two year technical schools will recruit to any location. Near West Central Wisconsin there are two main public technical colleges, Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) and CVTC. The closest private/for-profit technical colleges in the area are the Minnesota School of Business or Globe University, Rasmussen College, and the University of Phoenix. However, according to [Collegetoolkit.com](http://Collegetoolkit.com), which has a list of proprietary/for profit schools, there are over 30 proprietary locations in the Twin Cities area ([Collegetoolkit.com](http://Collegetoolkit.com)). The Twin Cities area in Minnesota is just 15 miles from the nearest CVTC campus. This means there is an abundance of two year proprietary technical schools in close proximity to CVTC and WITC.

There are several differences between the two types of post secondary educational institutions. The main differences include how the schools are funded, their accreditation, tuition costs, faculty experience, and the goal or mission of the two organizations. The tuition costs at public institutions like CVTC and WITC are much lower than that of proprietary/for-profit institutions. Public institutions receive funding from the state, local, and federal government in the form of grants. The proprietary schools receive no local or federal funding (Miller & Mupinga, 2006). For example, the University of Phoenix charges about \$365 for an undergraduate credit, while the cost of an in state student credit at Chippewa Valley Technical College is \$102 (Chippewa Valley Technical College, 2010). One credit at the University of Phoenix is over three times more expensive than a credit at a local community college

(University of Phoenix, 2011). Other than public funding, another reason that for-profit schools are more expensive is because of just that: they are profit driven and expect a return on their investment. For example, the University of Phoenix is a publically traded company on the New York Stock Exchange under the stock abbreviation APOL. Dr. John G. Sperling, who is the founder and CEO of the University of Phoenix, owns 11% of type A common stock valued at over 660 million dollars (Appollo, 2010).

The accreditations also differ between many community colleges, technical schools, and technical colleges. For example, WITC is accredited regionally by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College also holds a number of technical area program accreditations ([witc.edu](http://witc.edu)). In comparison, a proprietary school in Minnesota, Rasmussen College, which is located 30 minutes from WITC New Richmond, also holds accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. However, the Minnesota School of Business, another proprietary school, which is located just 30 minutes from WITC and CVTC, only holds accreditation with the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges ([GlobeUniversity.com](http://GlobeUniversity.com)).

One main reason for-profit technical schools are able to be sustainable is the amount of resources they have put into the recruitment of students. For example, in the 2009 Annual Report for the Apollo Group, Inc., which owns the University of Phoenix, the company outlined its marketing strategies which included online advertising, broadcast, outdoor advertising, print, and direct mail (Apollo, 2009). An example of the magnitude of private for-profit educational institution's marketing budgets is illustrated by the amount of money used to sponsor a professional sports team. In 2006 the Apollo Group bought the naming rights to the stadium that the Arizona Cardinals NFL team plays in for \$5.8 million per year through 2026, with an



increase of 3% per year (Apollo, 2009). In another example, in the early 1990's Meg Krsacok was the public information coordinator for Green County Career Center (GCCC) in Xenia, Ohio. Krsacok identified that private vocational-technical schools were better at recruiting her students than GCCC, even though Krsacok knew that they had a better product at a lower price. Krsacok identified that it was a money issue. The private vocational schools in her area were spending \$90,000 on television advertisements in a nine-month period compared with about \$10,000 spent by GCCC (Dykman, 1994).

In this researcher's professional experience as a for-profit admissions representative, another main reason for-profit institutions can survive, in addition to advertising dollars and other resources, is a result of their strategies in recruitment. For-profit institutions use admissions counselors to promote to prospective students the ease and opportunity of the programs while providing encouragement to enroll (Woods, 2006). That encouragement to enroll can sometimes be aggressive. For example, a study was done to determine the type of feedback a prospective student would get from a for-profit technical school regarding a Masters in Business Administration program. In one instance the researcher contacted the school requesting information through e-mail, and in that request the researcher included several grammar and spelling errors. The researcher was delivered eight persuasive responses from the for-profit school encouraging the person to enroll, regardless of the spelling errors (Woods, 2006). This is one example of how the admissions representatives or education counselors try to persuade applicants to enroll in their institution.

For-profit institutions also promote the availability of the classes they can offer, which usually allows for working adults to attend their classes (Woods, 2006). Some community colleges have instituted programs that allow for the ease and accessibility of class time. For example, at Hennepin Technical College in Minneapolis, Minnesota, they offer HVAC night

programs to their students. This exhibits to administrators that recruitment can be as easy as making training more readily available (Siegel, 2000). In another example, Staffordshire University's Faculty of Health used a two day summer or winter term seminar to increase the interest level and recruitment of mental health student nurses. The courses were designed to allow the public some insight into a career as a mental health nurse (Bouic & Rhodes, 2007). Other institutions have followed for-profit technical programs in the last few years by appealing to non-traditional adult students by advertising in different venues. Search engines such as Google and Yahoo have been working with for-profit institutions like the University of Phoenix for some time, but recently nonprofit schools like Regis, Indiana Wesleyan and UMass Online can be found on these same search engines (Blumenstyk, 2008).

Community colleges have shown expansion in their reach and marketability towards students; however, for-profit schools have seen an increase in enrollment numbers over the past decade. For example, in Ohio, for-profit school enrollment increased by 60% from 2007 to 2008 (Prizinsky, 2008). Other for-profit technical schools have seen similar increases in enrollment over the past decade. The Apollo Group, which owns the University of Phoenix, has over 158 campuses from Salem, Oregon, to Guaynabo, Puerto Rico and enrollment doubled from 127,800 students to 255,600 students from 2000 to 2004 (Eryn, 2004).

With the increased emphasis on recruitment strategies in for-profit education, the competitive market for traditional schools has made many non-profit colleges implement yield-management techniques to ensure enrollment goals are met (Norris 2005). However, some community college administrators do not see for-profit technical schools as a source of competition. Marcia Ballinger, vice president of Lorain County Community College, in Elyria Ohio, indicated that she did not see for-profit schools as direct competition because the community colleges offer a wide range of affordable programs (Prizinsky, 2008). With the

increase in enrollment regarding for-profit community colleges, it is hard to determine why community colleges do not see for-profit technical schools as competition. In an interview conducted by Recruitment & Retention in Higher Education, Deborah Garrett, the Dean of Student Affairs at Ivy State Technical College in Indiana and president of the National Council on Student Development stated that her college can be their own worst enemy when it comes to recruitment because they know what the benefits of their programs are, but they do not explain them to the students effectively (2005). To increase the retention rate of two year community colleges and technical schools, more students need to be aware of the programs available at these schools and the benefits that they can carry with them. If the applicant pool is of higher standard and more prepared for the experience, the result should be a higher retention rate.

For-profit community colleges have larger advertising budgets and a deeper staff pool to recruit students to their programs (Apollo, 2009). In 2010 the University of Wisconsin System implemented \$255 million in budget cuts (Wisconsin, 2010). With the limited resources of public technical and community colleges, due to budget constraints, recruitment strategies can be analyzed to determine the best practices for recruiting students in their specific area. Finding the best strategies for recruiting students will allow the local technical and community colleges to recruit students more efficiently with better results (Hossler, 1999).

### **Statement of the Problem**

For-profit technical colleges are seeing increases in student enrollment, contributed by significant marketing and recruitment efforts. Publicly funded community colleges are challenged to compete with for-profit recruitment strategies because of budget constraints. Opportunity exists for public funded community colleges in West Central Wisconsin to examine spending patterns and recruitment strategies to determine the most effective means to recruit prospective students in an effort to increase the retention rate of current students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the most effective strategies for local community colleges in West Central Wisconsin. Identifying what students consider effective strategies and by identifying characteristics of prospective students, should allow for the most efficient way to recruit students in West Central Wisconsin.

The independent variables of this study will be the recruitment strategies of for-profit technical schools and public technical colleges and community colleges. Independent variables will also include the interests and opinions of junior high school students in West Central Wisconsin. The dependent variables of this study will be the local community colleges in West Central Wisconsin and the for-profit technical schools that recruit to that area. Other dependent variables would include the high schools, students, teachers, and counselors that are in West Central Wisconsin.

### **Research Questions**

1. How are local community colleges currently presenting their program information to local high schools?
2. In what ways would students like to receive the information from their local technical schools?
3. How well do high school students understand their local technical schools?
4. How influential are counselors, teachers, and parents on a student's decision to attend a specific college?
5. Do high school students understand their local proprietary schools?
6. What college admission representatives have they seen?
7. How influential is advertising on a student's decision to enroll at a technical school?
8. What type of advertising do students think is influential to investigate a technical school?

9. How important is the cost of tuition in the process of enrolling or investigating a technical school?
10. How important is the transferability of credits to enrolling or investigating a technical school?
11. What level of experience or exposure level are the students at in the recruitment process?
12. How influential is social media in a student's interest to investigate a technical school?

### **Importance of the Study**

This study is important for the following reasons:

1. Colleges across the country are updating their admissions process to attract students because of cuts in support for higher education and increased competition (Marketing Institutions and Recruiting New Students, 2004). Having an efficient recruitment strategy could reduce the costs allocated to recruitment and might increase the rate of retention. Lowering the costs for local community colleges on recruitment could benefit the students and the faculty because more of those resources could be used for other departments.
2. Developing an efficient and effective recruitment strategy would develop more interest in courses that struggle for enrollments. Having more students aware of struggling programs would allow for those classes to stay open. Having more students enrolled in the struggling programs could make these programs sustainable and less of a burden on a school's budget.
3. Currently, the process of moving from high school to college, including college choice and access, is more important than ever. Yet, all students do not experience this process in the same way, and for some students the process can be difficult (Green 2006). Having an effective recruitment strategy would allow potential students to make more

informed decisions about their future. By developing effective recruitment strategies, potential students can gain more knowledge about the features and benefits of school programs. An effective recruitment strategy can give students more knowledge about a school that they may have known little about because of an ineffective recruitment program.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Community Colleges.** Public, postsecondary institutions commonly organized into 2-year programs and offering instruction adapted in content, level, and schedule to the needs of the community in which they are located -- usually offer a comprehensive curriculum with transfer, occupational, general education, and adult education components (Eric Thesaurus).

**Enrollment.** The total number of individuals registered as participants in a program or activity (Eric Thesaurus).

**Education Counselor.** Assisting individuals to select a program of studies suited to their abilities, interests, future plans, and general circumstances (Eric Thesaurus).

**Enrollment Management.** A set of systematic, interrelated activities for controlling enrollment patterns -- involves marketing, recruitment, admissions, pricing, and financial aid (Eric Thesaurus).

**For-Profit Technical School.** They are not publicly supported through tax revenue, but the majority of their income comes from government subsidies of student tuition. They offer undergraduate and graduate degrees but only in a rather narrow range of fields. Many hold the same regional accreditation as their not-for-profit private and public sector cousins, though few offer a curriculum that has the depth and scope of a traditional college or university. Some are owned by individual proprietors, others by shareholders of multibillion dollar corporations, but

all reject the claim that private gain trumps the broader service to students and the society they provide (Kinser, 2006).

**Proprietary School.** Proprietary Schools are for-profit businesses which provide education and training. They may be privately owned, a partnership or a corporation. (NC Community Colleges, 2011).

**Technical School.** Secondary or postsecondary schools offering training in occupations at a level between the skilled trades and the professions (Eric Thesaurus).

**Student Recruitment.** Activity designed to encourage students or potential students to enroll in a particular program, course, or class, or at a particular institution (Eric Thesaurus).

**West Central Wisconsin.** Polk, Pierce, and Dunn Counties of Wisconsin.

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. The study will only focus on West Central Wisconsin. The results of a study completed for the entire population of students nationwide could have different results.
2. Parents will not be studied in this process. Parents are a huge part of the decision making process for students. Parents may want the information from a school delivered in a certain way.
3. Counselors will not be studied in this process. Counselors have a large impact on the decision process for students. Counselors may want the information from a school delivered in a certain way.
4. The focus of this study is on the recruitment of students for technical and community colleges. The study might yield different results if it just focused on college in general.

5. Only seniors will be surveyed during this study. Other classes could be surveyed to develop a higher rate of validity.



## **Chapter II: Review of Literature**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the main topics of research for this study. Also included is a literature review on the topics of: the role of advertising in recruitment, the characteristics of high school students' interests, a comparison of for profit technical schools and local public community colleges, the role of admissions representatives in recruitment, and the role competition plays in recruitment.

### **Characteristics of High School Students**

A student is driven by many different factors when deciding on a school. According to a survey done by Spartanburg Technical College in South Carolina on high school 11<sup>th</sup> graders from 14 different high schools surrounding Spartanburg Technical College, a number of factors influenced their choice of selecting a particular school. Sixty-seven percent of 11<sup>th</sup> graders indicated that their parents influenced their decision regarding post high school education (Quineley & Cantrell, 1998, p. 2). While 20% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders indicated that high school friends had an influence on their choice of school they attend (Quineley & Cantrell, 1998, p. 2). As much as high school counselors and teachers are involved in the process, only 17% indicated that a high school counselor would influence their decision and 12% indicated that they would be influenced by a teacher (Quineley & Cantrell, 1998, p. 2). Students can be influenced by others according to this survey. However, Quineley and Cantrell indicate that the programs offered by the institution that the student is going to attend was the number one factor according to their survey (Quineley & Cantrell, 1998, p. 3). Other factors that were important included the academic standing of an institution, availability of financial aid, availability of job placement, and the ability to work while attending (Quineley & Cantrell, 1998, p. 3). When the students

were asked how they heard about their local community college, 22% heard from a college administrator while 33% heard from a counselor or teacher (Quineley & Cantrell, 1998, p. 3).

### **Advertising**

Recently many community colleges have started to advertise, including Wisconsin Technical College, CVTC who has been running television ads to promote their schools. This is a change from the days when advertising was nonexistent because of large enrollment totals following World War II, and the baby boom that followed until the late 1980's (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 74). "Until recently advertising initiatives were a limited part of the recruitment equation, for most community colleges the advertising strategy meant mailing standardized literature to prospective students" (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 74). The influence of advertising can be explained by Wright and Rip who clarify in the *Journal of Consumer Research* that "people approaching a choice among unfamiliar options seek information on how to structure the problem" (Wright & Rip, 1980, p. 177). There has been evidence that advertising does impact college application totals. According to a report from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), colleges and universities that invest in advertising are more likely to see their enrollment numbers increase in comparison to those schools that do not invest in advertising (The Presidency, 2007).

One example of how advertising can affect school image was given by Onondaga Community College in New York (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 79). The community college put up billboards to challenge the famous Ivy League school Harvard (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 79). The billboard from Onondaga read, "A Harvard education at \$52,690 off" (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 79). The billboards got so much attention that Harvard administrators sent recruiters to the school (O'Konowitz, 2000). The arrival of Harvard recruiters elevated the school image and the value of the education at Onondaga, and it was done by the use of a simple billboard.

Another example of the effects of advertising comes from Iowa. A comprehensive community college in Iowa used market research, advertisement, and an administrator in charge of marketing, who directly reported to the president. The results were an increase in enrollment which doubled in a 15 year period with a relatively flat population growth, and the school is second in student awareness only to a large university (Self & Snell, 2003).

The impact of advertising on high school students was studied by Dr. Kristy Tucciarone, an Assistant Teaching Professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Dr. Tucciarone's work looked at the impact of effective advertising on high school students during different phases. The study was qualitative, students were asked a series of questions and Tucciarone made her conclusions based on those answers and previous research on the subject. Dr. Tucciarone concluded that "the data indicates that advertising initiatives by community colleges have an effect on student enrollment when combined with social influences" (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 82). Tucciarone went on to suggest that those influences include parents, friends, high school counselors, economics, and location, which she also concluded are more important than advertising (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 82). However, Tucciarone concluded that when "advertising identifies a key consumer insight, as well as serves as a reminder and reinforces what was learned from social influencers, then advertising is just as persuasive and can affect community college choice" (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 82). Tucciarone went on to conclude that advertising will only work for a community college if they understand the students they are trying to recruit and identify what they need from their community college (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 88). Further explained:

The result of insight will enable higher education to first focus on the students and, then, to communicate its message to an attentive and listening audience, which can increase an

institution's enrollment and ultimately become the best form of advertising. (Tucciarone, 200, p. 88).

Other forms of attracting students include the addition of sports programs, especially in the Midwest (Ashburn, 2007). In 2007 the number of two year colleges offering athletics reached 500 (Ashburn, 2007). At a small community college in Iowa, the men's cross-country and track team recruited about 60 students every year, men who probably would not have attended without cross-country; which is substantial given that the school only grows by 100 to 150 each year (Ashburn, 2007).

Advertising and creating new programs are effective ways to attract students according to the examples already given. However, there are many challenges facing higher education in the recruitment of students and the marketing of colleges and universities. In 2008 Michael Stoner, a consultant of higher education for over thirty years, put together a survey to determine the top marketing and communication challenges facing higher education. The survey gathered data from over 150 representatives of higher education institutions in 2008. The survey was given with open ended responses, but nine challenges emerged. The number one challenge listed was branding and messaging. Given the economic climate, Stoner and his colleagues figured budget constraints would be the number one issue, but that was listed at number six (Stoner, 2008). Other challenges included: rethinking and expanding communication outreach approaches and formats, incorporating new media and technology strategies, economic downturn in general, appealing to a wider range of prospective students, decentralization within the university and or marketing department, and internal organizational struggles and staff (Stoner, 2008). With branding and messaging being such an important challenge colleges and universities will need to tap the new generation of students in an effective and efficient way.

## **Advertising with Social Media**

A recent survey by the Chronicle of Higher Education determined that “admissions offices spend 23% of their budgets on in-person recruiting, slightly less on printed materials and twice as much on web-based tools” (Hoover, 2008, para. 25). The survey suggests that admissions offices are paying special attention to the amount of time students are inquiring about their school through the internet. One cost effective way schools have found to inform students through web-based means is by social media. According to Sarah Hannes, an e-recruiting specialist at Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyoming, her college has focused on Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, YouTube, and Flickr. The campus had 1,547 fans in 2010 on its Facebook page, and 205 followers on Twitter. Hannes stated that, “Our social media sites have become a huge recruitment tool” (Neibling, 2010, p.15). Hannes goes on to state that all of the content is provided by the students which Hannes feels is important because it gives the students a feeling of community and camaraderie (Neibling, 2010, p.15). The Director of Marketing and public relations at Central New Mexico Community College, Alexis Kershner, says that social media “offers a window for our college to learn what matters to our students, where our students spend their time away from school, and for employees to learn, firsthand, more about what makes our students unique and special” (Neibling, 2010, p. 15). Developing more knowledge about what the students like and dislike can give the admissions office information that they can use to make the school more presentable and to make sure that they are giving this information to the students up front. Social media also gives the school information about the student’s opinions on certain topics (Neibling, 2010).

According to Facebook.com CVTC has 182 likes on their fan page and WITC has 74 likes as of March 17, 2011, both colleges seem to be establishing a presence in the social networking world (facebook.com, 2010).

## **Admission Representatives**

One traditional way to attract students has been the use of employees in the admissions office who travel from high school to high school as admissions representatives. According to an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education regarding the importance of admissions representatives in today's climate, 10% to 20% of enrolled students come from recruiting visits (Hoover, 2008, para. 24). However, the article also suggests that a greater number of students come from "two categories: those who inquire via the Web and those whom the college contacts first after obtaining their names from a list provider, such as the College Board's Student Search Service." The article also references a recent survey that the Chronicle of Higher Education conducted which found that "admissions offices spend 23% of their budgets on in-person recruiting, slightly less on printed materials and twice as much on web-based tools" (Hoover, 2008, para. 25). In the same article Martha O'Connell, a former dean of admissions at McDaniel College was interviewed and she discussed how the admissions representative approach to recruitment is not cost-effective, but that it can be a terrific way to meet students when it works. However, McDaniel also indicated that at times they can be "notoriously iffy", and indicated that as many as a third of all visits go unattended (Hoover, 2008, para 26). The Chronicle article goes on to suggest that with the low pay of admissions representatives, between \$30,000 and \$40,000, there tends to be a lot of turnover between representatives, and according to Susan Tree, Director of College Counseling at Westtown High School, a private school in Pennsylvania (Hoover, 2008, para 38). "Most don't engage students at all," she says. "The kids' eyes glaze over, and afterward they confess to being turned off to the college because the rep didn't seem interested in them. I swear that the students remember how a rep made them feel - not what he or she had to say about the college" (Hoover, 2008, para 38).

Yet, according to Ali Bhanji, Director of College Counseling at the Potomac School, a private school in the Virginia near Washington, D.C. a large number of college visits by representatives have a positive effect on the parents, and he also said that it gives a face to a college and a resource for them if they have any questions (Hoover, 2008, para 36).

Furthermore, according to Terry W. Knaus, Senior Associate Director of Admissions at Indiana also stressed the importance of a good relationship with high school counselors, "If we weren't, counselors would notice that the University of Oklahoma was in Houston and Indiana was not" (Hoover, 2008, para 35).

### **Competition**

There are many different areas of interest when discussing the recruitment of students: marketing, student interests, the buying committee of parents, counselors, teachers, and of course the student. Another important area of interest for public community colleges is the rise of for-profit competition.

In the early 1990's Meg Krsacok was the public information coordinator for Green County Career Center in Xenia, Ohio. Krsacok identified that private vocational-technical schools were better at recruiting her students than GCCC, even though Krsacok knew that they had a better product at a lower price. Krsacok identified that it was a money issue. The private vocational schools in her area were spending \$90,000 on television advertisements in a nine-month period compared with about \$10,000 spent by GCCC (Dykman, 1994, para 1). Krsacok determined that they couldn't compete. As a result Krsacok started a marketing consortium between GCCC and eight surrounding public technical colleges. The result was an increase in an advertising budget and a long term plan to inform adult students, parents, and the work force, about the benefits and opportunities within the campus. The efforts were first targeted on private businesses in the area to connect current students with employers in an effort to develop a

connection between employers and the school, allowing the school to recruit students based on these connections. Although the consortium admitted that it was hard to judge the effects of the campaign, after several thousand dollars were spent on commercials they noticed that their high school numbers were flat, even though high school enrollment was down, and the adult enrollment numbers were way up (Dykman, 1994, para 35). It was concluded that the effects were positive because of the high number of adult students enrolling and the ability to keep high school enrollment numbers flat even though high school enrollment, overall, was down. The example of a marketing plan based on a consortium is one example of how public technical schools are competing with private technical schools and their large advertising budgets.

### **Comparison of For Profit and Public Community Colleges**

The differences between for-profit and not-for-profit two year schools should be discussed to help the reader understand what choices the students have when leaving high school. Although all technical institutions are commonly referred to as community colleges, this designation only refers to “institutions regionally accredited to award the associate in arts (AA) or the associate in science (AS) as its highest degree” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

In a study done by Indiana State University, two colleges in Indiana were studied to determine differences between for-profit and not-for-profit community colleges in that area. According to research analyst for the United States Department of Education, nationally, “40% of all traditional-age college students start their college education at two-year colleges and transfer to 4-year colleges” (Briggs, 2003). Transferring credits is important to almost half of all students. Yet, in this study none of the credits from the proprietary school would transfer to any local or statewide four year accredited institutions (Miller & Mupinga, 2006). However, the credits would transfer to other proprietary institutions (Miller & Mupinga, 2006).



The main reason for the difference in credit transferring is a result of the way each school is accredited. The proprietary school in the Indiana study was accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools and is also regulated by the Commission on Proprietary Education (Miller & Mupinga, 2006). The public institution is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS), this is the same organization that accredits local four year colleges (Miller & Mupinga, 2006, p. 571).

The costs were compared at each school to determine the difference in price at most proprietary and public two year post secondary institutions. “It costs approximately \$5,000 (\$80.30/credit hr. × 62 hrs.) to complete an associate degree program at Ivy Tech compared to \$16,000 (\$146.00/credit hr. × 109 hrs.) at the proprietary college” (Miller & Mupinga, 2006, p. 576). The main reason for the difference in cost is that the public institution receives funding from the state, local, and federal government in forms of grants. The proprietary school receives no local or federal funding (Miller & Mupinga, 2006).

In West Central Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College is accredited regionally by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (witic.com). Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College also holds a number of technical area program accreditations. In contrast, a proprietary school in Minnesota, Rasmussen College, which is located 30 minutes from WITC New Richmond, also holds accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (rasmussen.edu). However, the Minnesota School of Business, another proprietary school, which is located just 30 minutes from WITC and CVTC, only holds accreditation with the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges (globeuniversity.edu).

A local cost comparison can be done using the Minnesota School of Business and CVTC. At the Minnesota School of Business an associate's degree in Business Administration will cost a student 180 credit hours at \$435 per credit hour, that is a total of \$34,800 (msbcollege.com). This total does not include books which range from \$200 to \$1000 per quarter. The student is also responsible for lab fees (msbcollege.edu). According to the Estimate Cost Sheet published by CVTC, a similar program in Marketing Management would cost a student \$9,569 including books and special course fees (cvtc.edu).

Although private technical colleges have much higher costs than that of public technical schools the amount of students attending private technical schools continues to increase. With the shrinking budgets of public schools in West Central Wisconsin it is important that these schools have an efficient and cost effective plan, based on the interests and characteristics of students in the area, which will allow for the recruitment of qualified and prepared students, the result of which could be an increase in retention and graduation rate.

## **Chapter III: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The research methodology for this study was a descriptive study, concentrating on the evaluation of the recruitment process used by public technical schools in West Central Wisconsin. Ultimately, the goal was to identify effective and efficient recruitment strategies for these public technical schools in West Central Wisconsin. West Central Wisconsin was comprised of St. Croix and Pierce Counties, these counties are serviced by the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) and Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC), they are part of the Wisconsin Technical College System. Senior high school students were surveyed in these counties in the form of a questionnaire to address the research question which is to determine the interests of high school students to develop a more effective recruitment strategy for West Central Wisconsin public technical and community colleges. The students answered a series of questions that allowed them to reflect on their interest level in certain recruiting tactics and what influences their decision on a college.

### **Subject Selection and Description**

The students selected to participate in this study were high school seniors located in the counties of St. Croix and Pierce Counties in Wisconsin. The sample selection included three high schools in the recruitment territory of two technical schools, Chippewa Valley Technical College and the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College. The high schools were River Falls High School in River Falls, Wisconsin, Hudson High School in Hudson, Wisconsin, and Somerset High School in Somerset, Wisconsin. A total of ninety students were surveyed. A majority of the students were over the age of 18. High school seniors were selected because they have been exposed to the recruitment process most recently and they are currently in the decision

making process. The students included in the study were identified by selecting classes in which a broad range of seniors were enrolled.

### **Instrument Used**

The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire created by the researcher which included multiple choice, and Likert/scale response questions. The questionnaire was administered to classes at three high schools in west central Wisconsin. The survey was delivered in a hard copy format in a variety of classes and was administered only to high school seniors. The instrument was pilot tested to ensure validity, and that it would answer the questions the research study intended. The questionnaire was reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board.

The survey consisted of 28 multiple choice questions to determine the students interest levels in recruitment tactics currently used by colleges and technical schools. The students were first asked to identify the preferred way that they receive information from a prospective college. Students were asked three questions about presentations given by admissions representatives of various colleges. Students were asked if they would like to see a presentation by an admissions representative and if they would like to see a presentation from a random college. The students were also asked to identify what schools had given presentations to them individually or in a classroom.

To identify interest in advertisements by colleges, students were asked on a scale of one to ten to identify how influential each item was to their college decision making process. The advertisements identified included a billboard, a television commercial, an internet advertisement, a radio advertisement, and printed material (brochure or catalog). One question asked how influential on a scale of one through ten a college visit would be on a student's decision to enroll or investigate a technical school. Another question asked on a scale of one

through ten how influential comments on Facebook would be on a student's decision to enroll or investigate a technical school.

Social influences and collegiate influences such as cost, location, program availability, transferability of credits, and the quality of education were presented to the students to list their importance in the college decision making process. Social influences included parents, friends, counselors, teachers, and admissions representatives. The students were asked to rate these influences from one to five and to choose the most important influence.

To gauge what level of the investigative process the students were at, the students were asked several questions on their level of experience and knowledge of the college, recruitment process. The students were asked if they had made a decision on a major or a college and if they had preference for a two or four year school. To determine what level of knowledge they had on college tuition of certain colleges in the area, the students were asked a question that compared a for-profit school with a local technical college to determine if the students could identify that the for-profit school was more expensive. The last series of questions asked if the students had received enough information from their local technical schools to make a sound decision.

### **Participation and Data Collection Procedure**

All three sets of questionnaires were distributed in slightly different formats. At Somerset High School, a school counselor administered the survey in a class that was filled largely with senior students. Fifteen students were surveyed at Somerset High School and the survey was completed in the fall of 2012. At Hudson Senior High School, the survey was completed in the spring of 2011, and it was administered by a teacher at the high school in a senior level psychology class. Forty-two students were surveyed at Hudson High School. At River Falls High School, the surveys were handed out to their focus classes. Focus class is similar to a home room setting where students get announcements for the day and have the same

teacher for the duration of the year. Thirty-three students at River Falls High School were surveyed, and the survey was administered in the fall of 2012. All surveys were completed in the hard copy format. All students were required to sign a waiver and if the students were minors they were required to get a parent's signature.

### **Analysis**

All of the answers were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet by the researcher. Student responses were recorded in one column; each row represented an answer for each question. A one was entered in the cell for each answer. The total of that row identified how prevalent that answer was for each question by the sample group. If a question was not answered, the response for that question was not recorded. If a question had multiple answers, all of the answers were recorded.

### **Limitations**

The limitations to the study involve the limited number of participants. There are several other high schools in the area that did not participate in the survey. Also, the study only received information from high school seniors. Juniors could also be surveyed to determine how much exposure they have had in the recruitment process as compared to seniors.

### **Methodology Related to Research Questions**

In Table 1 each survey question is paired with the research question that was available in the questionnaire. All research questions were tied to a specific research question.

Survey Question	Related Research Question
1. How do you prefer to obtain information about a college, technical school, or university that you are interested in? Circle One: A. A college website B. Pamphlet or print materials (flyer, poster, information packet, etc.) C. School counselor D. A presentation from an instructor or an admissions representative from the institution E. Social media F. Internet/Other website	In what ways would students like to receive the information from their local technical schools?
2. Would you like to see a presentation from an admissions representative to learn more about a college that you are interested?	In what ways would students like to receive the information from their local technical schools?
3. Would you like to see a presentation from an admissions representative to learn more about a random college?	In what ways would students like to receive the information from their local technical schools?
4. Have you been on a college visit?	What level of experience or exposure level are the students at in the recruitment process?
5. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a <b>college visit</b> have on your decision to attend a college/university?	In what ways would students like to receive the information from their local technical schools?
6. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a broadcast television <b>commercial</b> have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?	How influential is advertising on a student's decision to enroll at a technical school? What type of advertising do students think is influential to investigate a technical school?
7. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a <b>billboard</b> have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?	How influential is advertising on a student's decision to enroll at a technical school? What type of advertising do students think is influential to investigate a technical school?
8. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would an internet <b>advertisement</b> have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?	How influential is advertising on a student's decision to enroll at a technical school? What type of advertising do students think is influential to investigate a technical school?
9. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a radio <b>advertisement</b> have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?	How influential is advertising on a student's decision to enroll at a technical school? What type of advertising do students think is influential to investigate a technical school?
10. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a <b>brochure or print materials (catalog, poster, flyer, etc.)</b> have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?	How influential is advertising on a student's decision to enroll at a technical school? What type of advertising do students think is influential to investigate a technical school?
11. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would <b>comments about the school on Facebook</b> have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?	How influential is social media in a student's interest to investigate a technical school?
12. Would you follow an institution on Facebook to receive information about that school?	How influential is social media in a student's interest to investigate a technical school?
13. Have you been educated on the types of programs offered at C.V.T.C. or W.I.T.C.	How are local community colleges currently presenting their program information to local high schools? How well do high school students understand their local technical schools?
14. Have you been educated on the types of programs offered at Rasmussen College,	How are local community colleges currently presenting their program information to local high schools?

Minnesota School of Business/Globe University, Dunwoody, or Brown College?	How well do high school students understand their local technical schools?
15. Would you like to know more about the kinds of credits you could transfer from C.V.T.C. or W.I.T.C. to other institutions?	How are local community colleges currently presenting their program information to local high schools?
16. Of the items listed below, please list from 1 to 5 the most influential item in your college decision. List the most influential as a 1 and the least influential as a 5. Write numbers 1 through 5 on the line provided. Cost Location Programs available Quality of the education Transferability of credits	How important is the cost of tuition in the process of enrolling or investigating a technical school? How important is the transferability of credits to enrolling or investigating a technical school?
17. Of the influences listed below, which one would be the most influential item in your decision making process? Circle One: Cost Location Programs available Quality of the education Transferability of credits	How important is the cost of tuition in the process of enrolling or investigating a technical school? How important is the transferability of credits to enrolling or investigating a technical school?
18. Of the influences listed below please list from 1 to 5 the most influential person in your college decision. List your most influential person at a 1, and your least influential person at a 5. Write numbers 1 through 5 on the line provided. Parents Friends Counselors Teacher Admissions Representative	How influential are Counselors, Teachers, and Parents on a student's decision to attend a specific college?
19. Of the influences listed below which one would be the most influential person when investigating a college? Circle One: Parents Friends Counselor Teacher Admissions Rep.	How influential are Counselors, Teachers, and Parents on a student's decision to attend a specific college?
20. If you had to make a decision right now what type of institution would you attend? Circle One: Two year College Four Year University or College Other (Technical Training Program)	What level of experience or exposure level are the students at in the recruitment process?
21. Which one of the following colleges has the highest rate in tuition? Circle the school or statement that best answers the question: Minnesota School of Business Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College Chippewa Valley Technical College I don't know They are all about the same	What level of experience or exposure level are the students at in the recruitment process? How well do high school students understand their local technical schools?
22. Circle the schools that have delivered a presentation to you about their school?	What college admission representatives have they seen?



Minnesota School of Business Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC) Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) Brown Devry WyoTech U.T.I. Lincoln Tech Dunwoody Rasmussen Other	
23. Have you determined your Major?	What level of experience or exposure level are the students at in the recruitment process?
24. Have you determined your College?	What level of experience or exposure level are the students at in the recruitment process?
25. On a scale of 1-10 how important is cost when determining what college to attend?	How important is the cost of tuition in the process of enrolling or investigating a technical school?
26. Do you feel that W.I.T.C. has given you enough information to make an informed decision about the school? Circle Yes or No:	How are local community colleges currently presenting their program information to local high schools? How well do high school students understand their local technical schools?
27. Do you feel that C.V.T.C. has given you enough information to make an informed decision about the school? Circle Yes or No:	How are local community colleges currently presenting their program information to local high schools? How well do high school students understand their local technical schools?
28. How would you like to receive more information about W.I.T.C. or C.V.T.C. Circle the items you would like receive information from: A classroom presentation from an instructor at C.V.T.C. or W.I.T.C. A classroom presentation from an admissions representative of C.V.T.C. or W.I.T.C. Social Media (facebook, twitter, myspace) Your school's counselor The school's website A tour of the campus A video presentation about the school Other – List Here	In what ways would students like to receive the information from their local technical schools?

*Table 1. Alignment of research and survey questions*

## Chapter IV: Results

The results of the survey included an examination of the interests high school students had in certain recruitment tactics and illustrate the information students require to make a decision. Moreover, the survey results identified the level of information the students currently have on the college recruitment process and the amount of exposure they have had to local technical colleges. Each research question is illustrated below followed by an analysis of how the study facilitated that question.

### Student's Preferred Sources for Information on Colleges

Table 2 illustrates how students prefer to obtain information from colleges when given six different options from which to select. Students were asked to select one of the six options presented in the questionnaire. The college's website is the preferred option for 44 of the 88 responses or 48%, followed by a presentation with 15 responses for 16%, followed by a pamphlet or print material with twelve responses for 13%, followed by a school counselor with eleven responses for 12%, followed by the internet or other website with seven responses for 8%, followed by social media with three responses for 3%. Ninety-eight percent of those surveyed responded to the question of the preferred way to gain information from a school or college.

Selection	Total Responses	Percentage
A college website	44	48%
Pamphlet or print materials (flyer, poster, information packet, etc.)	12	13%
School counselor	11	12%
A presentation from an instructor or an admissions representative from the institution	15	16%
Social media	3	3%
Internet/Other website	7	8%

*Table 2.* Preferred way to gain information from a college

School presentations are a large part of college recruitment tactics and the second most preferred form of information from our study. When students were asked if they would like to see a presentation from a random college only 15% indicated interest. However, when students were asked if they would like to hear a presentation from a college admissions representative about a school of interest to them, 75% indicated that they would.

College visits are a major part of the recruitment process and the survey asked questions about the students' experiences with them. A majority of the students had received information from being on a college visit, and this was indicated when 77% of the students surveyed indicated that they had been on a college visit. Also, 74% indicated that on a scale of one to ten, a college visit was between an eight and a ten on a ten point scale. Figure 3 shows the results of the question, "On a scale of one to ten how influential is a college visit on your decision making process?" The results show that 25 of the 90 who responded, or 28%, indicated that it was an eight on a ten point scale, followed by a nine with 24 responses or 27%, followed by ten with eighteen responses or 20%, followed by seven with ten responses or 11%. Answers one through six were all below five responses or 6%.

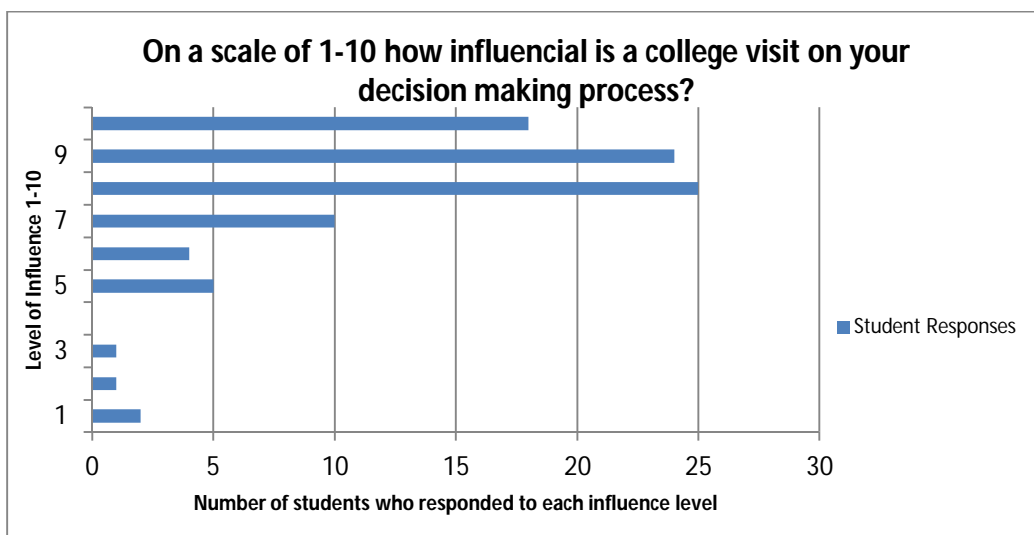


Figure 1. Influence of a college visits

Many students have received information through a presentation by a local technical college or private school. The students were given a list of a number of local private and local technical colleges and they were asked to circle the schools that have delivered a presentation to them. The results of that question are listed in Figure 2. The number one school was Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, a local public technical college, with 24 students witnessing a presentation from that school, followed by Minnesota School of Business, a local private for-profit technical college, with 21 students witnessing a presentation from that school. Tied for third with the most presentations witnessed was CVTC and Rasmussen College with eleven. Chippewa Valley Technical College is local public technical school and Rasmussen is a local private for-profit technical college. The fourth most witnessed school was Brown College with nine presentations witnessed. Brown College is another local for-profit technical school. The rest of the schools listed, Devry, Dunwoody, WyoTech, Lincoln Tech, and Universal Technical Institute (UTI) all had below three visits witnessed. “Other” was an option that the students chose. The most common responses in this category were Century, a local public technical school in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and St. Thomas, a four year private university in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

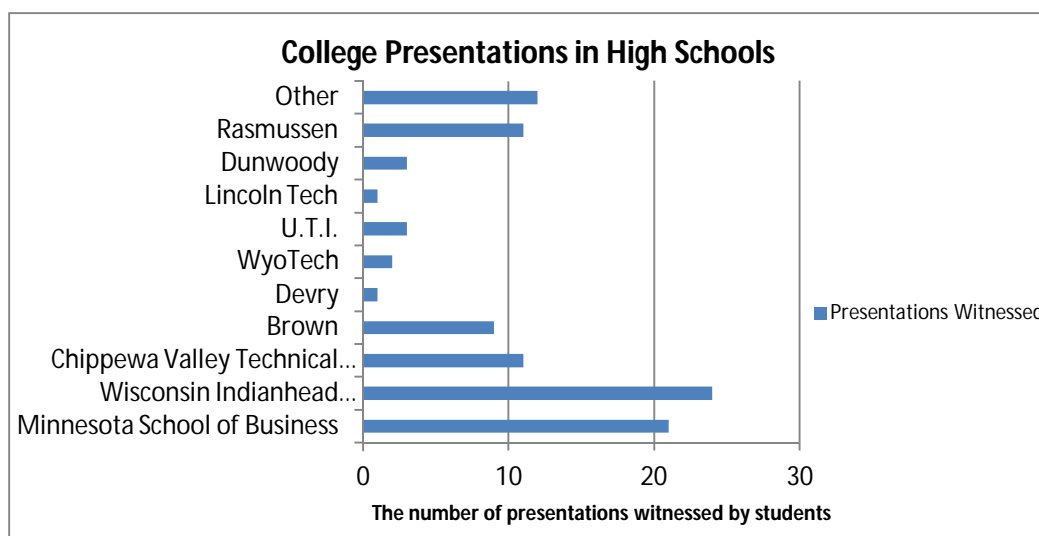


Figure 2. College presentations in high schools

## Recruitment Tactics and Its Influence

The students were asked how much certain advertising influenced them to investigate a college/university. Students were asked to rate these items on a scale of one to ten to determine which items were more influential, one being the least influential and ten being the most influential. Figures 3 through 10 illustrate the amount of influence a certain form of advertisement has on a student's encouragement to investigate a college. Figure 5 illustrates how the students rated the influence of billboard advertisements by colleges by selecting a number one through ten, one being the least influential and ten being the most influential. Number one was the most selected option with 24 students selecting that option, followed by three with twenty, two with seventeen, four with eleven, and five with eight. Numbers six through nine had less than four students select that as an interest level and ten was not selected by any students.

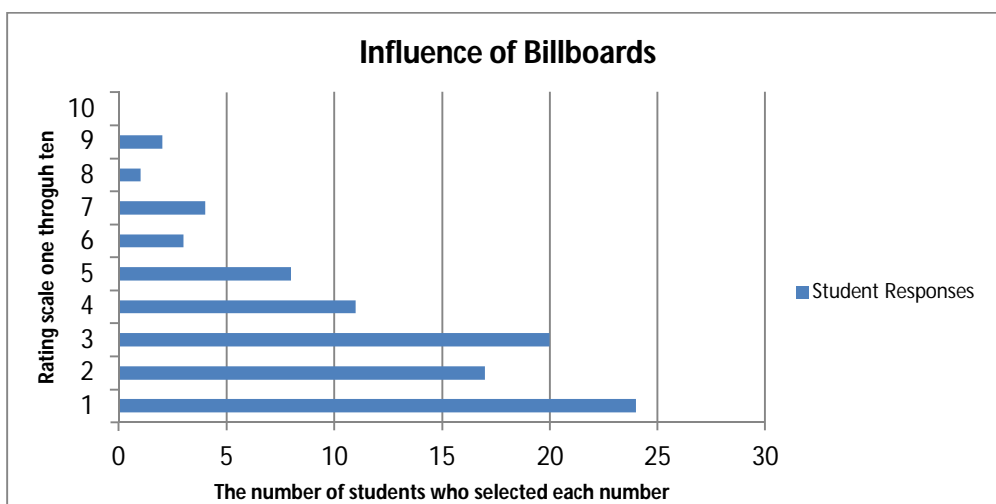
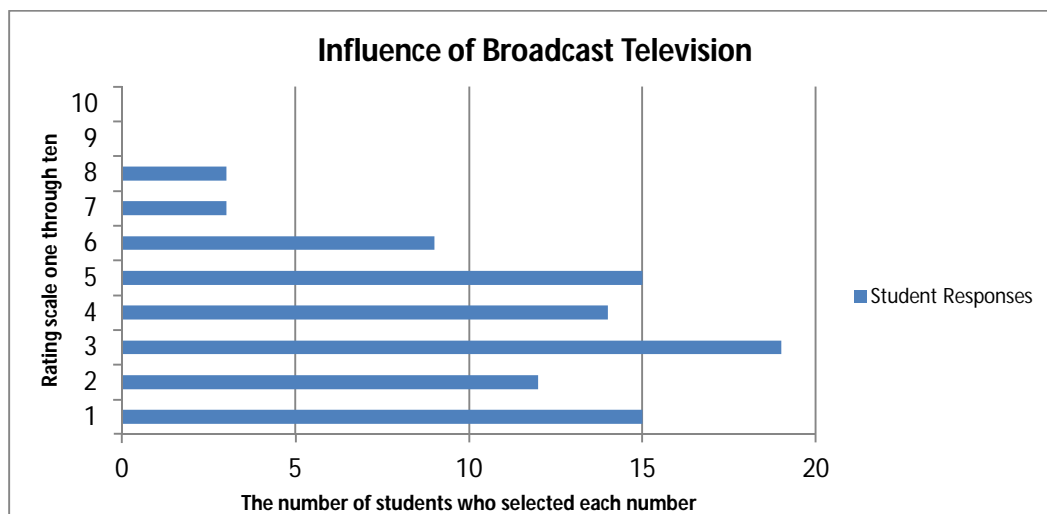


Figure 3. Influence of billboards

Figure 4 illustrates the influence of broadcast television on students. Students selected a number one through ten, one being the least influential and ten being the most influential to establish how influential a broadcast television commercial would be on their influence to investigate a college. The number one response was three with 19; the second highest response

was five and one with 15 responses, followed by four with 14, two with 12, and six with nine responses. Options seven and eight both had three responses and nine and ten both had zero.



*Figure 4.* Influence of broadcast television

Figure 5 illustrates the influence of internet advertisements on students. Students selected a number one through ten, one being the least influential and ten being the most influential to establish how influential an internet advertisement would be on their influence to investigate a college. Three was the number three response with 19 responses, followed by one with 17 responses, followed by two with 14 responses, followed by five with 11 responses, followed by four and seven with 10 responses, six with seven responses and eight with two responses, both nine and ten had zero responses.

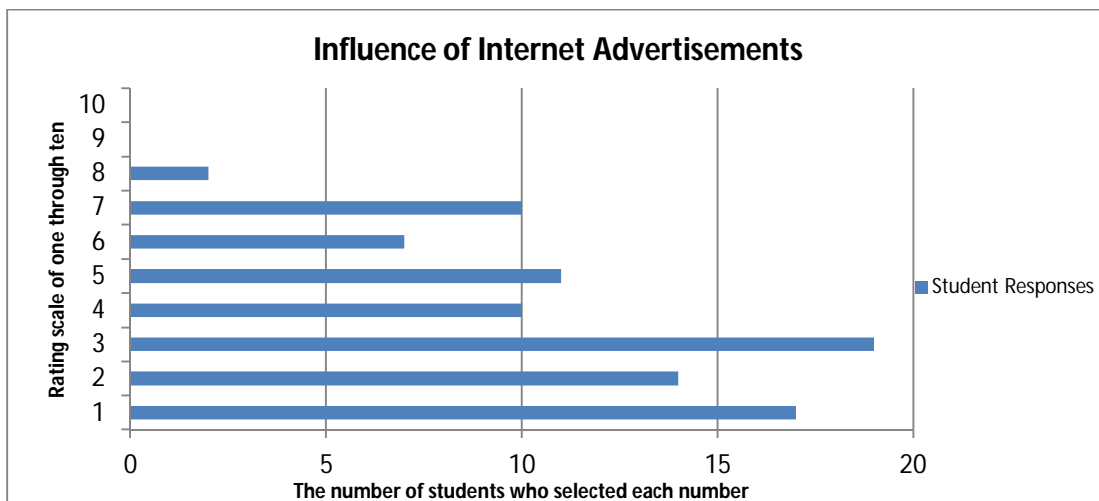


Figure 5. Influence of internet advertisements

Figure 6 illustrates the influence of radio advertisements by colleges. Students selected a number one through ten, one being the least influential and ten being the most influential to establish how influential a radio advertisement would be on their influence to investigate a college. The highest selected number was three with 27 responses and the second was one with one with 26 responses, followed by three with 12 and four and five with ten each. The numbers six through ten all had below three each.

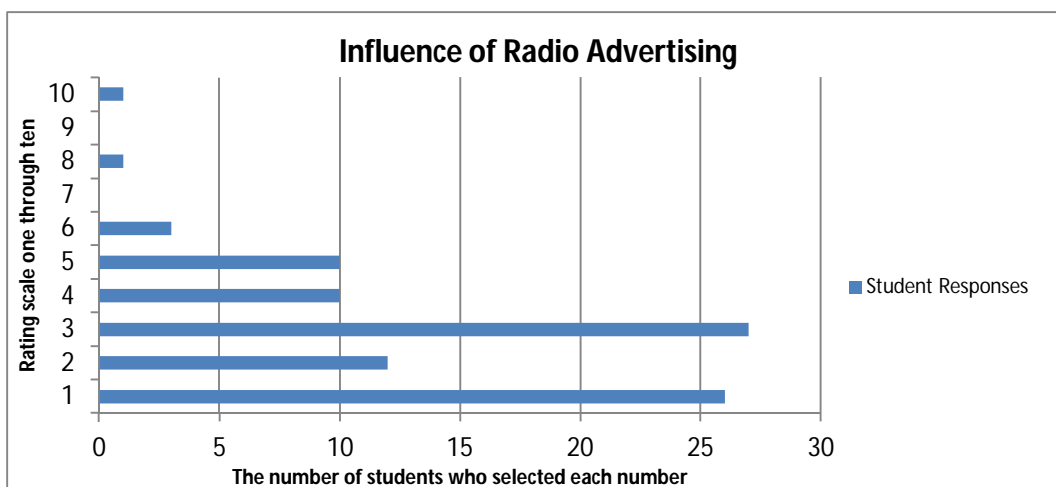
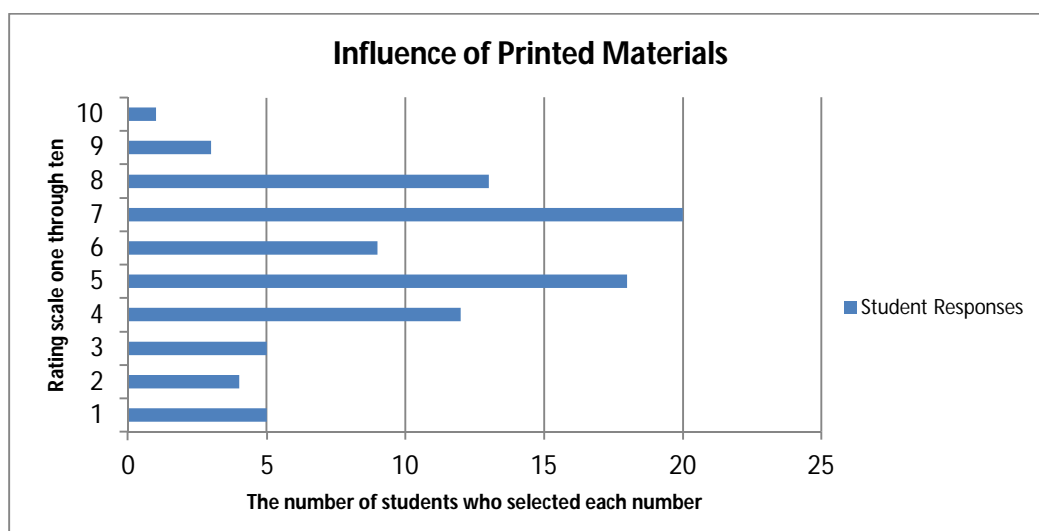


Figure 6. Influence of radio advertising

Figure 7 illustrates the influence of a brochure of print material (catalog, poster, flyer, etc.). Students selected a number one through ten, one being the least influential and ten being

the most influential to establish how influential printed material would be on their influence to investigate a college. The numbers indicated higher ratings for this piece of advertisement. The number that was selected the most was seven with 20 responses, followed by five with 17 responses. The third most selected option was eight with 13 responses followed by four with 12 responses, followed by six with nine, three and one with five, two with four, nine with three, and ten with one. Overall, printed materials were the most influential advertising item. Printed materials were more influential than billboards, radio, internet, and television advertisements.



*Figure 7.* Influence of printed materials

Figure 8 illustrates the influence that comments on Facebook would have on a senior students decision to investigate a college. The selections indicated that comments on Facebook have a mixed influence. The number one selection was one with 20 responses, second was three with 13 responses, seven and four tied for third with 11 responses, followed by five with ten responses, eight with seven responses, two with six responses, six with five responses, ten with three responses, and nine with one response.



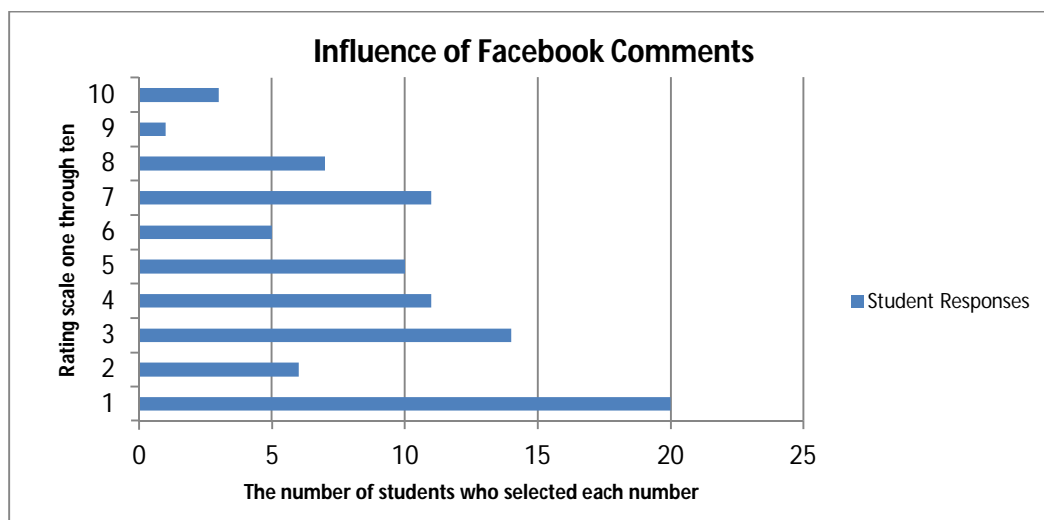
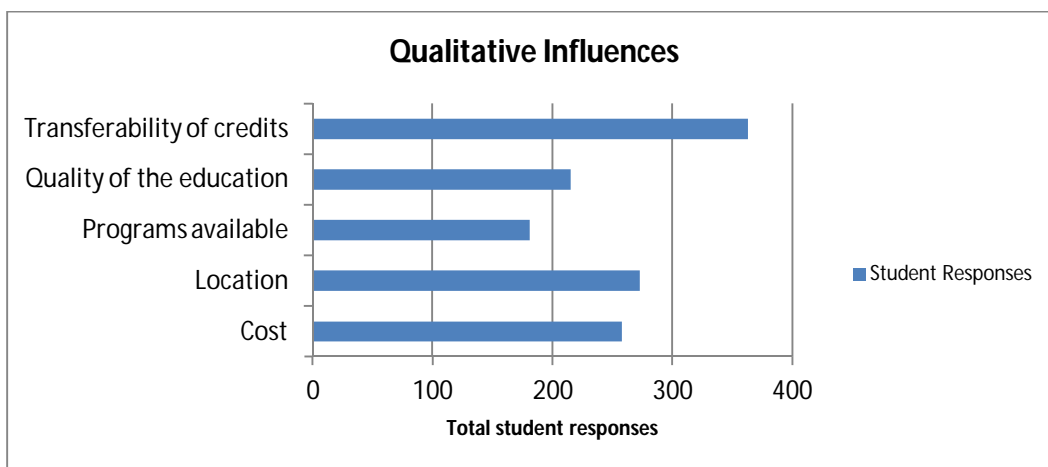


Figure 8. Influence of Facebook comments

In a separate question, students were asked to expound on their influence of Facebook by answering if they would participate in following a school of interest in on Facebook to learn more about that school. Fifty-two percent indicated that they would follow a school on Facebook to learn more about that school.

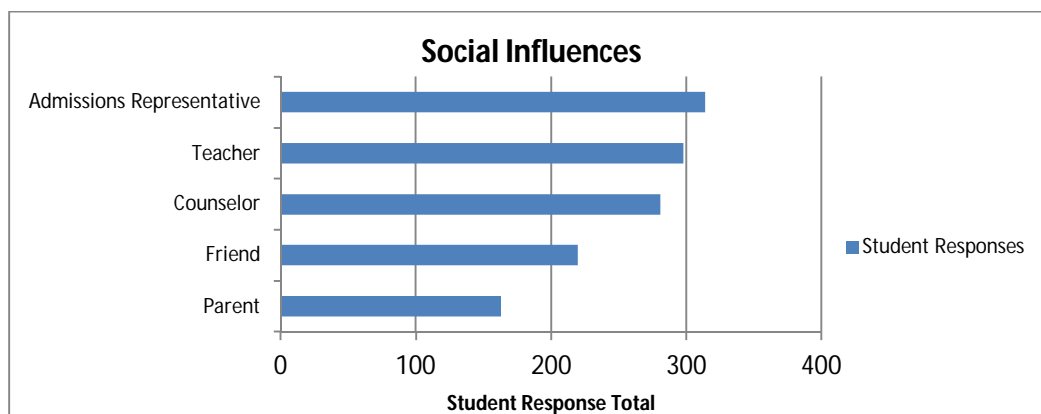
Certain qualitative influences were investigated to get an idea of what factors were most influential on a students decision to attend a school. Figure 9 illustrates the importance of these findings. The students were asked to rate the transferability of credits, the quality of the education, the programs available, the location, and cost on a scale of one through five, one being the most influential. The total of each student's response to each influence was recorded to determine which score was the lowest and thus the highest rated influence. The lower the score total indicated, the more influential. In this case, the programs available by the institution was the most influential item with a score of 181, followed by quality of education with a score of 215, followed by cost with a score of 258, followed by location with a score of 273, and finally transferability of credits with a score of 363. The programs available had the lowest score because the majority of students rated it between a one and a three on the scale.



*Figure 9.* Qualitative influences

A follow up question asked students to indicate on a scale of one to ten how important cost was when determining a school and the majority of the students, seventy percent indicated that it was a seven or higher.

Social influences were also measured to determine who had the most influence on a student's decision to attend a college. The students were asked to rate the most influential person to the least influential person on a scale of one through five. One being the most influential and five being the least. The total of each student's response to each influence was recorded to determine which score was the lowest and thus the highest rated influence. The lower the score total indicated, the more influential. The most influential social influence according to the survey were parents by a large margin, with a score of 163, followed by friends with 220, followed by a counselor with a score of 281, followed by a teacher with a score of 298, and finally the least influential person was an admissions representative with a score of 314. The majority of students indicated that a parent was the most influential person by rating parents between a one and a three. The findings are indicated in the Figure 10.



*Figure 10.* Social influences

A follow up question simply asked the students to indicate the most influential person on the college decision making process using the same options as listed in Figure 10. Forty-seven percent surveyed indicated that the parent was the most influential person on the decision making process.

### **The Student's Current Status of Information and Opinion**

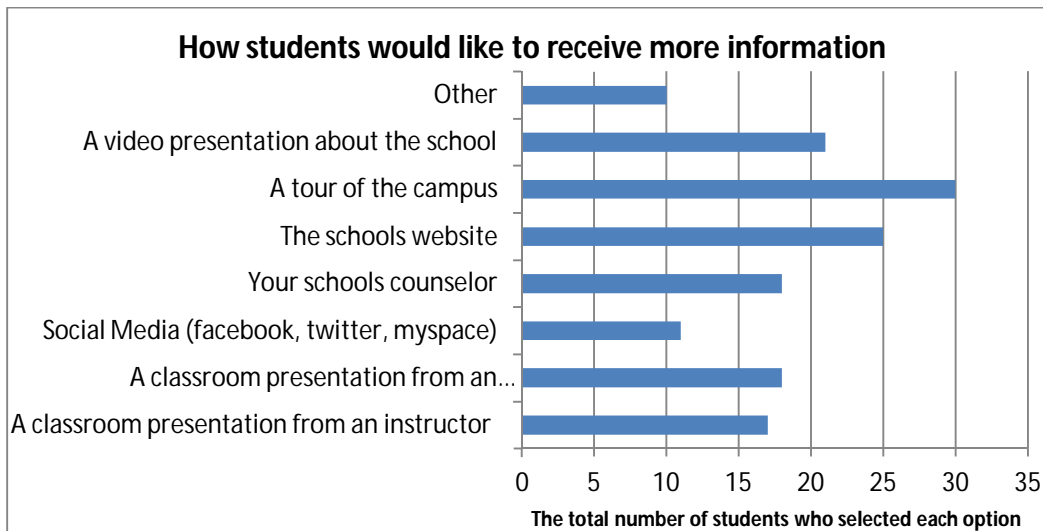
Students were asked a series of questions to determine their interest level in a type of college and to determine how much information has already been presented to them. The series of questions also helped the author gain information on the amount of exposure students have had to certain institutions in their geographical area.

When students were asked if they had been educated on the types of programs offered by their local technical colleges, CVTC and WITC, 47% indicated that they had, leaving 53% to say that they had not been educated on the types of programs offered. When students were asked if they had been educated on the types of programs offered by local private for-profit technical colleges 44% indicated that they had. When asked if the students would like to know more about what types of credits could transfer from CVTC and WITC to other four year institutions, 34% indicated that they would like more information.

The survey determined how well CVTC and WITC have educated the students about their respective schools. Students were asked if CVTC had given them enough information to make an informed decision on the school, 43% indicated that CVTC had given them enough information. Students were asked if WITC had given them enough information to make an informed decision, 31% indicated that WITC had given them enough information to make an informed decision.

To determine the level of understanding students had on the cost of their local technical colleges, versus the largest for-profit technical colleges in the area, the students were asked determine which school was the most expensive out of WITC, CVTC, (the local public institutions) and Minnesota School of Business, a local private technical college. Seventy-five percent of the students surveyed did not know the answer to the question by either selecting the response, “I don’t know” or “They are about the same.”

At the end of the survey students were asked how they would like to receive more information from their local technical colleges, WITC and CVTC. A majority of the students indicated that a campus tour would be the most effective way to gain more information with 30 of 81 responses, followed by the school’s website with 25 responses, followed by a video presentation with 21one responses, followed by a school counselor and an admissions representative presentation with 18, followed by a classroom presentation from an instructor with 17 responses, followed by social media with eleven, and finally the selection “other” with ten responses. Most of the “other” responses, students wrote that they did not want to receive more information from the school. Students were allowed to pick more than one option. The results of the students responses are listed below in Figure 11.



*Figure 11.* How students would like to receive more information

### Summary

Chapter Four presented the findings of a study conducted to determine the answer to the research questions presented. The research questions were constructed to develop survey questions that provided information that was used to construct an effective recruitment strategy for public technical colleges servicing West Central Wisconsin. Chapter Five will present a discussion of the research that was conducted.

## **Chapter V: Discussion**

The results of the study illustrated the importance of several influences that can help institutions better organize their resources for more efficient recruitment of high school students in West Central Wisconsin. With the increasing amount of competition from local private for-profit technical schools and colleges, the local public technical schools needed to determine an efficient way to recruit students. The process for recruiting students should meet the needs of the students and allow them to make an informed decision about what college to attend. Having a more informed first year student will lead to a more productive student body with a lower dropout rate.

### **Student Preferences for Receiving Information From a College**

According to the research, a student's preferred venue for receiving information from a college is through the college's website. In a distant second was a college presentation from an admissions representative.

Students believe that a college visit is very important to the process of selecting a college. This study illustrated that a majority of students rated a college visit between an eight and a ten on a ten point scale when asked how much of an influence it had on their decision for a college and 67% of the students surveyed had been on a college visit.

Students were not interested in radio commercial, broadcast television commercials, or billboards as a means for colleges to advertise, students rated these forms of advertising very low on their ability to encourage them to investigate a college. However, many students did feel that Facebook could help them in their decision making process by following that school on Facebook.

## **Frequency of Community and Technical Colleges Presenting Their Program Information to High Schools in West Central Wisconsin**

Of the presentations that the students witnessed from local technical colleges, the majority were from five schools, three private for-profit schools and two public technical colleges. Figure 2 indicates the number of visits by each school who gave a presentation.

The highest number of college visits was WITC with 24 respondents indicating that they witnessed a college presentation. The Minnesota School of Business which is a private for-profit technical school in the geographical area the study took place, had presented to more students in the study than CVTC, a local technical college in the area.

Although many of the technical colleges had visited all of the schools, only 25% of the students knew that the for-profit school was more expensive than the local technical colleges. This finding is significant considering that 60 of 85 participants rated cost a seven, eight, nine, or ten on a scale of one to ten, with seven being the highest, when asked how important cost is on their decision to attend a college. Cost was a major factor for these students; however they are not being educated about the cost of certain programs, either by the private sector or by the public sector. This lack of information can be a very important detail considering that the difference in cost to attend the Minnesota School of Business versus one of the local public technical colleges when completing a similar marketing program was significant ([msbcollege.com](http://msbcollege.com)).

With the number (over eight) of private for-profit technical schools and colleges visiting the schools in the study, and the large difference in cost, the public technical schools need to be educating students on the benefits of the school and low cost of tuition to the students.

When students were asked if they had been given enough information on CVTC or WITC to make a decision, 41% said WITC had given them enough information and 31% said CVTC

had given them enough information. A large number of students did not feel that either school had given them enough information to make a decision and all the students surveyed were seniors at their respective high schools.

### **Factors that Influence a Student's Decision to Attend a College**

According to the study the most influential social influence on a college decision was overwhelmingly a parent; a friend was a distant second. According to a survey done by Spartanburg Technical College in South Carolina on High School 11<sup>th</sup> graders from 14 different high schools surrounding Spartanburg Technical College, a number of factors influenced their choice of selecting a particular school. Sixty-seven percent of 11<sup>th</sup> graders indicated that their parents are influencing their decision regarding post high school education (Quineley & Cantrell, 1998, p.2). While 20% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders indicated that high school friends had an influence on the school they attend (Quineley & Cantrell, 1998, p. 2). These social influences should be taken into consideration when developing a recruitment plan. Parents and friends should be encouraged to be involved in the process.

This study indicated that advertising techniques were not valued by the students and did not encourage them to investigate the college any further. These tactics included billboards, radio commercials, and television commercials. The students did prefer the website and Facebook as a means to get information from their local colleges.

Some tangible aspects of a college were measured to determine what was more important. Out of cost, quality of the programs, transferability of credits, location, and programs available; programs available was the number one selection when asked what was the most important aspect when investigating a college. The number two rated response was quality of programs and the number three rated was cost. As a result of this survey colleges should be able to determine how influential each aspect is. When directing the message of the college to the



prospective students these benefits should be brought to their attention in a clear and concise manner. The types of programs each school offers should be easy to access and should be offered in all presentations and print materials.

### **How Well Students Understand Their Local Colleges**

A majority of the students felt they needed more information from their local public technical colleges and a majority of the students struggled to identify if a private for-profit school was more expensive than a public school. In fact 68% of the students said they needed more information from CVTC and 57% said they needed more information from WITC. The students indicated that a campus visit would be the preferred venue for further information on the school.

### **How Can the Local Community Colleges Use This Information for Recruitment?**

Based on the research from the students' responses, CVTC and WITC should promote their website and make information on that website about college courses and classes available easy to read and understand. Presentations should provide quick information about the programs available, cost, transferability of credits, and then leave them with information that can direct them to their website. Although many of the technical colleges had visited all of the schools only 25% of the students knew that the Minnesota School of Business, the most represented for-profit school in the area, was more expensive than the local technical colleges, CVTC and WITC. As a result, general information like cost, needs to be represented more heavily. In an interview conducted by Recruitment & Retention in Higher Education, Deborah Garrett, the Dean of Student Affairs at Ivy State Technical College in Indiana and president of the National Council on Student Development, stated that her college can be their own worst enemy when it comes to recruitment because they know what the benefits of their programs are, but they do not explain them to the students effectively (2005).

According to this study, students rated certain advertising very low as an influence for them to investigate a college. However, in a study done by Dr. Tucciarone, Assistant Teaching Professor at the University of Missouri-St.Louis, the impact of effective advertising on high school students during different phases was studied. Dr. Tucciarone concluded that “the data indicates that advertising initiatives by community colleges have an effect on student enrollment when combined with social influences” (Tucciarone, 2008, p.82). Tucciarone went on to suggest that those influences include parents, friends, high school counselors, economics, and location, which she also concluded are more important than advertising (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 82). However, Tucciarone concluded that when “advertising identifies a key consumer insight, as well as serves as a reminder and reinforces what was learned from social influencers, then advertising is just as persuasive and can affect community college choice” (Tucciarone, 2008, p. 82). Although students rate the advertisements very low, according to Dr. Tuccianrone it can be combined with social influences and a key consumer insight. The advertisements need to remind students of the benefits of the school and they need to be tied to a social influence such as a counselor or teacher.

A college visit is something that a majority of students indicated was very important in making a decision on a college and a majority of the students surveyed indicated that they had been on a visit. College recruiters from local technical colleges should be encouraging college visits and scheduling college visits with socially influential persons. Friends and parents are the most influential contributors to a student’s decision to attend a college, and they should be encouraged to attend the college visit to help the students make an informed decision.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the study illustrate the importance of making general information personally delivered by college representatives and supplemental materials in a clear and concise

format and promoting the investigation of the school on their website where the students can find more information. The benefits of the school, including the low cost, the transferability of credits, and the programs available should be explained so that they students can better understand why the local technical colleges are such a great resource. The study also indicated that socially influential persons, such as parents, friends, teachers, and counselors, need to be educated so that they can reinforce the benefits of each school. Furthermore, these social influences should educate and reinforce students about the difference in tuition costs between for-profit proprietary schools and local public technical schools.

The delivery can be done through sources that were presented as favorable in the study, such as a presentation, a tour of the campus, social media, and the school's website. Based on the research of this study the website should be where most of the attention is given. School presentations should be given to students, friends, and parents and they should explain the benefits for each school. The presentation should be connected to the website so that the students can reconnect and investigate the information further. Social media should be used to connect with students so that they can gain information from current students and faculty.

Students are unaware of the cost benefits of the local public colleges. They see a number of presentations throughout the year including the one from the local tech school, yet the benefits are not being explained to them in a way that they can recall the information easily.

If public institutions want to recruit more efficiently and effectively so that they can have a more successful student population, they need to focus their message on the benefits of the programs, such as cost and the quality of the programs available. These schools also need to help the socially influential persons understand the benefits of the programs. Furthermore, they need to direct attention to the website which has the benefits and costs illustrated in a way that is easy to investigate and recall.

With the increase in exposure and competition from local private colleges, the local public technical schools need to focus on explaining the benefits of their programs to students and socially influential persons through their websites, presentations, printed materials, and social media. Effectively communicating these benefits and information such as cost, the types of programs available, and the availability of more information via web media is essential to creating a recruited student that is prepared for their future college experience and is more likely to be retained and graduate from that public technical school.

### **Recommendation for Further Study**

A larger sample group from a number of different high school classes would allow a researcher to determine if there are larger differences between high schools. Core classes and technical classes should be surveyed to find out if there is a difference between the two sets of students. Also, juniors and seniors should be studied to determine any difference in the knowledge of the college recruitment process from year to year.

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## Appendix A: Survey

To take part in this survey you must be 18 or older or have signed written consent from a parent or guardian.

Title of the class this survey was taken in

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1. How do you prefer to obtain information about a college, technical school, or university that you are interested in? Circle One:
  - G. A college website
  - H. Pamphlet or print materials (flyer, poster, information packet, etc.)
  - I. School counselor
  - J. A presentation from an instructor or an admissions representative from the institution
  - K. Social media
  - L. Internet/Other website
  
2. Would you like to see a presentation from an admissions representative to learn more about a college that you are interested? YES NO
  
3. Would you like to see a presentation from an admissions representative to learn more about a random college? YES NO
  
4. Have you been on a college visit? YES NO
  
5. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a **college visit** have on your decision to attend a college/university?  
Circle a number 1 through 10:  
It would **not** influence me      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10      It would influence me
  
6. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a **billboard** have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?  
Circle a number 1 through 10:  
It would **not** encourage me      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10      It would encourage me
  
7. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a broadcast television **commercial** have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?  
Circle a number 1 through 10:  
It would **not** influence me      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10      It would influence me
  
8. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would an internet **advertisement** have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?  
Circle a number 1 through 10:  
It would **not** influence me      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10      It would influence me
  
9. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a radio **advertisement** have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?  
Circle a number 1 through 10:  
It would **not** influence me      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10      It would influence me

10. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would a **brochure or print materials (catalog, poster, flyer, etc.)** have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?  
Circle a number 1 through 10:  
It would **not** influence me      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10      It would influence me
11. On a scale of 1-10 how much of an influence would **comments about the school on Facebook** have on your encouragement to investigate a college/university?  
Circle a number 1 through 10:  
It would **not** influence me      1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10      It would influence me
12. Would you follow an institution on Facebook to receive information about that school?  
  
YES      NO
13. Have you been educated on the types of programs offered at C.V.T.C. or W.I.T.C. ?      YES      NO
14. Have you been educated on the types of programs offered at Rasmussen College, Minnesota School of Business/Globe University, Dunwoody, or Brown College?      YES      NO
15. Would you like to know more about the kinds of credits you could transfer from C.V.T.C. or W.I.T.C. to other institutions?      YES      NO
16. Of the items listed below, please list from 1 to 5 the most influential item in your college decision. List the most influential as a 1 and the least influential as a 5. Write numbers 1 through 5 on the line provided.
- Cost      \_\_\_\_\_  
Location      \_\_\_\_\_  
Programs available      \_\_\_\_\_  
Quality of the education      \_\_\_\_\_  
Transferability of credits      \_\_\_\_\_
17. Of the influences listed below, which one would be the most influential item in your decision making process? Circle One:  
Cost  
Location  
Programs available  
Quality of the education  
Transferability of credits
18. Of the influences listed below please list from 1 to 5 the most influential person in your college decision. List your most influential person at a 1, and your least influential person at a 5. Write numbers 1 through 5 on the line provided.
- Parents      \_\_\_\_\_  
Friends      \_\_\_\_\_  
Counselors      \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher      \_\_\_\_\_  
Admissions Representative      \_\_\_\_\_
19. Of the influences listed below which one would be the most influential person when investigating a college?

Circle One:

Parents                  Friends                  Counselor                  Teacher                  Admissions Rep.

20. If you had to make a decision right now what type of institution would you attend?

Circle One:

Two year College                                  Four Year University or College

Other (Technical Training Program)

21. Which one of the following colleges has the highest rate in tuition?

Circle the school or statement that best answers the question:

Minnesota School of Business

Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

Chippewa Valley Technical College

I don't know

They are all about the same

22. Circle the schools that have delivered a presentation to you about their school?

Minnesota School of Business

Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (W.I.T.C.)

Chippewa Valley Technical College (C.V.T.C.)

Brown

Devry

WyoTech

U.T.I.

Lincoln Tech

Dunwoody

Rasmussen

Other \_\_\_\_\_

23. Have you determined your Major? Circle One:                  YES                  NO                  N/A

24. Have you determined your College? Circle One:                  YES                  NO                  N/A

25. On a scale of 1-10 how important is cost when determining what college to attend?

Circle a number 1 through 10:

Not Important                  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10                  Very Important

26. Do you feel that W.I.T.C. has given you enough information to make an informed decision about the school? Circle Yes or No:                  YES                  NO

